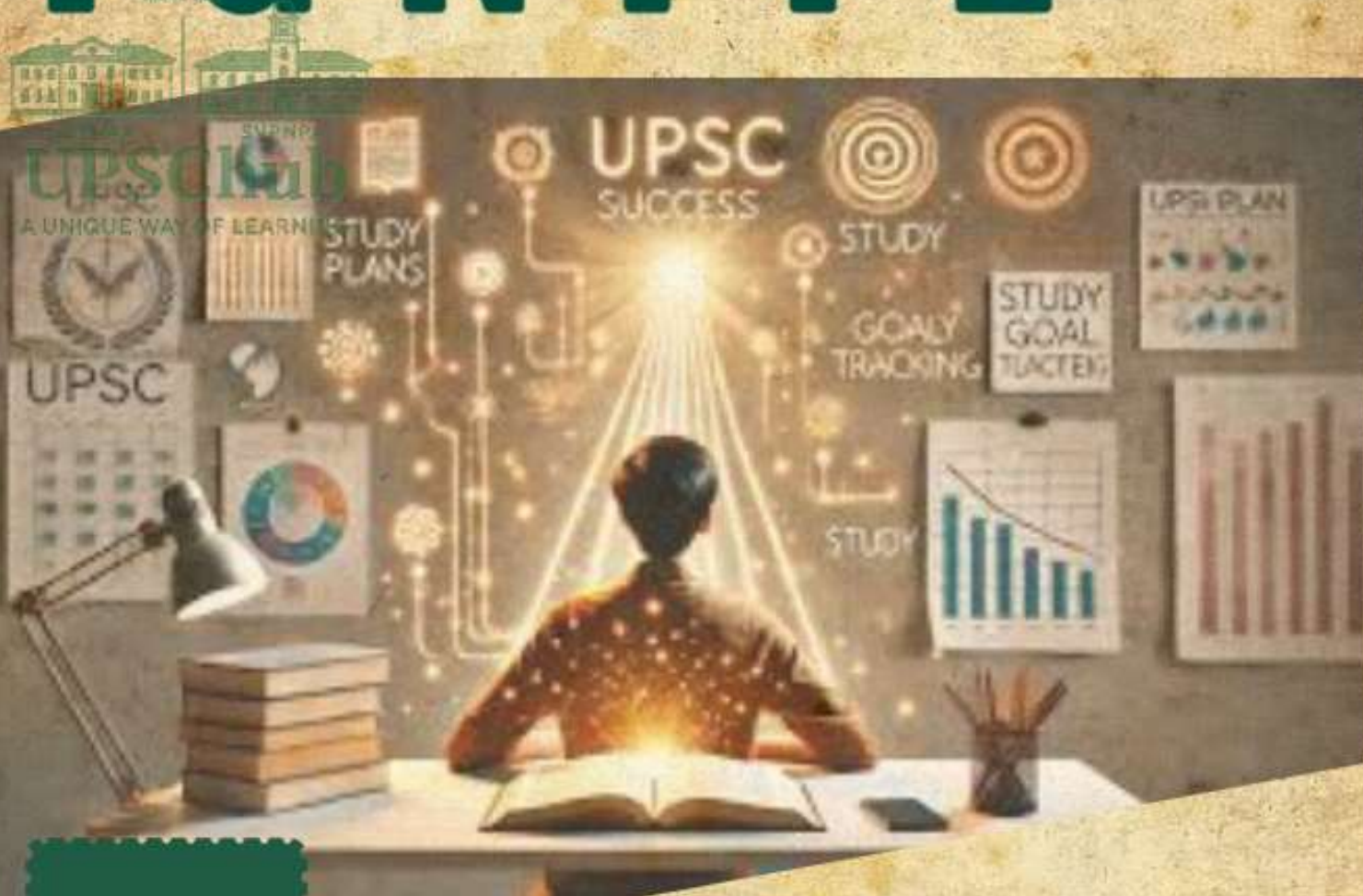


UPSchub PRESENTS

MOMENTUM IGNITE

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May

22-28
2025

weekly magazine
UPSC based magazine

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MOMENTUM IGNITE

Your Weekly UPSC Current Affairs Compass

Issue 01 | May 22 - May 28, 2023

Published by UPSchub

FORGING A NEW INDIA: Parliament, Policy & Global Positioning

Unpacking a Week of Defining Moments

Deep Dive: The New Parliament – Symbolism, Debate & Democratic Future

- **G7 Hiroshima Summit: India's Stand & Shifting World Order**
- **RBI's Fiscal X-Ray: Growth, Risks & Strategies**
- **NavIC's Next Leap: NVS-01 & Indigenous Prowess**
- **Special: Ethics Case Study | Prelims & Mains Drills | Map Focus**

EDITOR'S NOTE

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: Navigating a Transformative Week

Dear Aspirants,

Welcome to "Momentum Ignite"! This inaugural issue lands at a time of profound national and global churn. The week of May 22-28, 2023, has been etched in India's history with the inauguration of our new Parliament – a structure symbolizing not just architectural ambition but the very pulse of our evolving democracy. This event, and the discussions it has sparked, offers a rich tapestry for UPSC aspirants to analyze the interplay of tradition, modernity, governance, and constitutional values.

But the dynamism doesn't stop there. On the global stage, India's voice resonated at the G7 Summit, articulating the concerns of the Global South. Back home, the RBI's annual report provided a crucial health check of our economy, while ISRO continued its stellar journey with the launch of NVS-01.

"Momentum Ignite" is designed to be more than just a news digest. It's your strategic partner. We delve deep, connect the dots between current events and the static syllabus, offer analytical frameworks, and provide exam-centric tools to sharpen your preparation. From detailed policy breakdowns and ethical dilemmas to map-based learning and practice questions, every page is crafted to empower you.

This 25-page issue is packed with insights. Our aim is to ignite your curiosity, solidify your understanding, and maintain your momentum. Let's embark on this journey of learning together.

Wishing you a productive week ahead,
The UPSChub Team

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NATIONAL PULSE

INDIA THIS WEEK: DEFINING MOMENTS & POLICY SHIFTS

1. PM Modi Dedicates New Parliament Building to the Nation

- **Date & Details:** May 28, 2023. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the new Parliament building. The ceremony included multi-faith prayers, the installation of the historic 'Sengol' sceptre, and addresses by the PM and Lok Sabha Speaker.
- **PM's Address Highlights:**
 - Called it a "temple of democracy" and a symbol of India's determination and new energy.
 - Stated it would be a witness to the rise of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-reliant India).
 - Emphasized that the new building fulfills the aspirations of 21st-century India.
- **Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's Remarks:** Highlighted the need for the new building due to expanding parliamentary activities and technological advancements.
- **Controversy:** The event saw a boycott by around 20 opposition parties who contended that the President, as Head of State, should have inaugurated the building.
- **UPSC Lens:** GS1 (Art & Culture, Modern History), GS2 (Parliament, Constitutionalism). *[See Cover Story for extensive analysis]*

2. RBI Releases Annual Report 2022-23: A Mixed Economic Picture

- **Key Takeaways:**
 - **GDP Growth:** Retained India's real GDP growth projection for FY24 at 6.5%.
 - **Inflation:** Acknowledged elevated CPI inflation at 6.7% in FY23, projected moderation in FY24, subject to monsoon and global factors.
 - **Banking Sector:** Improved health with stronger Capital to Risk-weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) and lower Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPAs).
 - **Currency:** ₹2000 notes withdrawal process ongoing; slight increase in counterfeit ₹500 notes.
 - **Surplus Transfer:** ₹87,416 crore transferred to the Central Government.
- **Significance:** Provides an official audit of India's economic health, crucial for policy formulation and understanding macroeconomic stability.
- **UPSC Lens:** GS3 (Indian Economy, Banking, Fiscal Policy). *[See Economy Deep Dive for detailed analysis]*

NATIONAL PULSE (Contd.)

3. National Green Hydrogen Mission: High-Level Review Focuses on Ecosystem Development

- **Context:** A key inter-ministerial meeting assessed the progress under the National Green Hydrogen Mission, launched with an outlay of ₹19,744 crore.
- **Strategic Imperatives Discussed:**
 - **Demand Aggregation:** Identifying key sectors (refining, fertilizers, steel, transport) for green hydrogen consumption.
 - **Manufacturing Hubs:** Incentivizing domestic manufacturing of electrolyzers and other critical components under PLI schemes.
 - **Pilot Projects:** Scaling up pilot projects in various sectors to demonstrate viability.
 - **R&D and Skilling:** Fostering innovation and developing a skilled workforce.
 - **Infrastructure:** Developing storage, transport, and port infrastructure for green hydrogen and its derivatives (e.g., green ammonia).
- **Significance:** Vital for India's 2070 net-zero target, energy security, reducing import dependence, and becoming a global green hydrogen exporter.
- **UPSC Lens:** GS3 (Infrastructure: Energy, Climate Change, S&T).

4. Supreme Court on [Simulated: Right to Privacy in Digital Age]

- *(Simulated for illustration)* **Headline:** SC Expands Ambit of Right to Privacy; Calls for Robust Data Protection Regime for Minors.
- **Details:** Hearing a PIL concerning the digital safety of children, the Supreme Court reiterated that the Right to Privacy is a fundamental right. It directed the Central Government to expedite the finalization of the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, with specific emphasis on stringent safeguards for processing children's data, including clear consent mechanisms and age verification protocols. The court observed that children are particularly vulnerable in the digital ecosystem.
- **Significance:** Reinforces constitutional protection in the face of technological advancements. Pushes for stronger regulatory frameworks for data governance, especially for vulnerable groups.
- **UPSC Lens:** GS2 (Fundamental Rights, Governance aspects of e-governance, Role of Judiciary).

5. Government Enhances Focus on 'Digital India' Skilling and Connectivity

- **Context:** Various ministries reported progress on initiatives aimed at strengthening India's digital infrastructure and skilling its workforce for a digital future.
- **Key Developments:**
 - **PM-WANI (Wi-Fi Access Network Interface):** Efforts to expand public Wi-Fi hotspots, especially in rural and underserved areas, to enhance internet accessibility.

NATIONAL PULSE (Contd.)

- **FutureSkills PRIME:** Program by MeitY and NASSCOM focusing on upskilling/reskilling professionals in emerging technologies like AI, IoT, Cybersecurity, Cloud Computing.
- **BharatNet:** Continued focus on providing high-speed broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats. Challenges in last-mile connectivity and utilization are being addressed.
- **DigiLocker & UMANG:** Promoting wider adoption of these platforms for citizen-centric service delivery.
- **Significance:** Digital transformation is key to inclusive growth, improving ease of living, enhancing government service delivery, and boosting India's competitiveness in the global digital economy.

Think About It: *How can the Digital India initiative be leveraged to improve learning outcomes in remote areas, bridging the educational divide?*

GLOBAL HORIZON

WORLD STAGE: INDIA'S VOICE & GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS

1. G7 Hiroshima Summit: India Champions Global South, Calls for Reformed Multilateralism

- **Venue & Context:** Hiroshima, Japan (May 19-21, analysis continued). India participated as an invited guest country.
- **PM Modi's Interventions:**
 - **10-Point Action Plan:** Proposed plan to address global challenges in food security (ending food wastage, promoting millets), fertilizer availability, healthcare access (digital health, resilient supply chains), and climate finance.
 - **Reformed Multilateralism:** Called for reforms in global institutions like the UN Security Council to reflect contemporary realities.
 - **Ukraine Conflict:** Reiterated India's stance for dialogue and diplomacy, emphasizing that "this is not an era of war."
 - **Climate Action:** Highlighted India's 'LiFE' (Lifestyle for Environment) initiative.
- **Key G7 Communiqué Points:**
 - Strong condemnation of Russia's war in Ukraine and pledge of unwavering support to Ukraine.
 - Focus on "de-risking, not decoupling" from China; concerns over economic coercion and human rights.
 - Commitment to nuclear disarmament (Hiroshima Vision).
 - Outreach to Global South on issues like development finance, infrastructure (PGII), and climate change.
- **Bilateral Meetings:** PM Modi held significant bilateral meetings with leaders of US, Japan, Australia (Quad), UK, France, Ukraine, among others.
- **Significance:** Provided India a platform to articulate its independent foreign policy, champion the cause of developing nations, and strengthen strategic partnerships.
- **UPSC Lens:** GS2 (Bilateral, regional, global groupings; India's foreign policy). *[See IR Decoded for more]*

GLOBAL HORIZON (Contd.)

2. Sudan Conflict: Fragile Ceasefires and Worsening Humanitarian Crisis

- **Ongoing Situation:** Despite several short-term ceasefires brokered by the US and Saudi Arabia, fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) persisted in Khartoum and other regions.
- **Humanitarian Impact:**
 - Millions displaced internally and fleeing to neighboring countries (Chad, Egypt, South Sudan).
 - Severe shortages of food, water, medicine, and fuel. Hospitals barely functional.
 - Reports of widespread human rights abuses.
- **International Response:**
 - UN agencies (UNHCR, WFP, WHO) struggling to deliver aid due to insecurity.
 - Calls for a permanent cessation of hostilities and safe humanitarian corridors.
 - Regional bodies like the African Union and IGAD involved in mediation efforts.
 - India had earlier conducted 'Operation Kaveri' successfully evacuating its nationals.
- **Significance:** A major humanitarian catastrophe unfolding, threatening regional stability in the Horn of Africa and Sahel. Highlights challenges in conflict resolution and peacekeeping.
- **UPSC Lens:** GS2 (Effect of policies/politics of developing countries, International institutions).

3. Global Debt Sustainability: A Pressing Concern for Developing Economies

- **Context:** IMF and World Bank officials continued to voice alarm over escalating debt vulnerabilities in many low and middle-income countries.
- **Contributing Factors:** Pandemic-induced spending, rising global interest rates, slowing economic growth, climate shocks, and food/energy price volatility.
- **Challenges:**
 - Lack of timely and comprehensive debt restructuring under frameworks like the G20 Common Framework.
 - Diverse creditor base (Paris Club, China, private creditors) complicating negotiations.
 - Risk of a "lost decade" for development in affected countries.
- **Significance:** High debt burdens divert resources from essential services (health, education), increase poverty, and can trigger socio-political instability. Impacts global financial stability.
- **UPSC Lens:** GS3 (Indian Economy & global linkages, Inclusive Growth).

ECONOMIC ENGINE

DEEP DIVE: RBI ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23 – INSIGHTS & IMPLICATIONS

The RBI's Annual Report is a critical document for UPSC aspirants, offering data, analysis, and the central bank's perspective on the Indian economy. Let's dissect its key components for FY 2022-23.

I. Macroeconomic Performance & Outlook:

- **Growth Resilience:** Real GDP grew by 7.2% in FY23 (NSO provisional estimates). RBI projects **6.5% for FY24**, driven by strong domestic demand (private consumption, investment revival) and robust services sector activity. Agriculture also expected to perform well, contingent on monsoon.
- **Inflation Trajectory:** Average CPI inflation stood at **6.7% in FY23**, above the tolerance band. RBI expects it to moderate to **5.2% in FY24** but remains watchful of upside risks from geopolitical tensions, volatile food prices, and firm core inflation. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) remains focused on aligning inflation with the 4% target.
- **External Sector:** Current Account Deficit (CAD) moderated in H2 FY23. Forex reserves at **\$578.4 billion** (as of Mar 31, 2023) provide a buffer. Rupee exhibited orderly movement despite global volatility.

II. Banking Sector Health – A Turnaround Story?

- **Capital Adequacy:** Scheduled Commercial Banks' (SCBs) Capital to Risk-weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) improved to **17.1%** (Mar 2023) from 16.7% (Mar 2022), well above regulatory requirements.
- **Asset Quality:** Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) ratio of SCBs declined to a decade-low of **3.9%** (Mar 2023) from 5.8% (Mar 2022). Net NPA ratio also fell to 1.0%. This improvement is attributed to recoveries, write-offs, and better credit underwriting.
- **Profitability:** SCBs' Profit After Tax (PAT) surged, driven by healthy Net Interest Income (NII) growth and lower provisioning requirements.
- **Credit Growth:** Non-food bank credit registered robust growth, indicating pick-up in economic activity.

III. Currency Management & Digital Push:

- **Banknotes in Circulation:** Value and volume increased by 7.8% and 4.4% respectively in FY23.
- **₹2000 Note Withdrawal:** Announced May 19, 2023. Report notes these constituted 10.8% of banknotes in circulation by value (Mar 2023), down from peak of 50%+. Withdrawal aims for clean note policy and managing currency effectively.
- **Counterfeiting:** A slight increase in detected counterfeit notes, especially ₹500 (new series) and ₹2000 denominations. Vigilance remains key.

- **Digital Payments:** Continued exponential growth. UPI transactions crossed milestones. Pilot projects for Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) – e₹ (Retail & Wholesale) are progressing.

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IV. RBI's Finances & Surplus Transfer:

- **Income & Expenditure:** RBI's income for FY23 stood at ₹2.35 lakh crore, while expenditure was ₹1.48 lakh crore.
- **Surplus Transfer to Government:** A significant surplus of **₹87,416 crore** was transferred to the Central Government for FY23. This is much higher than the ₹30,307 crore in FY22. The increase is attributed to higher earnings from foreign exchange transactions and interest income.
 - **Mechanism:** Governed by Section 47 of the RBI Act, 1934, after making provisions for bad debts, depreciation, staff funds, etc. The Bimal Jalan Committee recommendations guide the economic capital framework.
 - **Implication:** Provides crucial non-tax revenue to the government, helping in fiscal management.

V. Challenges & Way Forward (RBI's Perspective):

- **Global Headwinds:** Geopolitical conflicts, slowing global growth, financial market volatility.
- **Domestic Risks:** Adverse weather events impacting agriculture and inflation, persistent core inflation.
- **Policy Priorities:** Anchoring inflation expectations, ensuring financial stability, supporting sustainable growth, and promoting innovation in the financial sector.

Analysis for UPSC:

- **Data Points:** Crucial for Prelims (CRAR, GNPA, GDP, Inflation, Surplus figures).
- **Conceptual Clarity:** Understand terms like CRAR, NPA, CAD, Core Inflation, MPC's mandate.
- **Policy Linkages:** Connect RBI's actions with broader economic goals (inflation control, growth support).
- **Mains Answers:** Use data and RBI's analysis to substantiate arguments on Indian economy, banking sector reforms, monetary policy effectiveness, and fiscal health.
- **Critical View:** While the banking sector has improved, concerns about loan quality in certain segments (e.g., unsecured retail) and impact of global slowdown on credit demand remain.
-

Think About It: How does the RBI's surplus transfer to the government impact the Centre's fiscal deficit targets and overall public finance management

COVER STORY

(Prominent visuals: Exterior shot of New Parliament, interior of Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha, image of Sengol installation)

A NEW CHAPTER FOR INDIAN DEMOCRACY: THE NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING

The inauguration of India's new Parliament building on May 28, 2023, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was not just a change of address for the country's lawmakers; it was an event laden with symbolism, historical echoes, political debate, and aspirations for the future of Indian democracy.

Why a New Parliament? The Genesis & Need:

The iconic circular Parliament House, a Lutyens-Baker creation from 1927, had served India for nearly a century. However, it was increasingly felt that a new, modern structure was needed due to:

1. **Space Constraints:** The old building was designed for a smaller legislature. With the freeze on Lok Sabha seat delimitation ending (potentially after 2026), an increase in the number of MPs is anticipated, requiring larger chambers.
2. **Ageing Infrastructure:** Outdated services, structural distress, and limited capacity for modern technological integration.
3. **Safety Concerns:** Non-compliance with current fire safety norms and earthquake resistance standards for a Zone IV city like Delhi.
4. **Operational Inefficiency:** Dispersed offices for parliamentary staff and committees.

The new building, a cornerstone of the ambitious Central Vista Redevelopment Project, aims to address these limitations.

Architectural Marvel & Key Features:

- **Design & Architect:** A triangular-shaped building, designed by Ahmedabad-based HCP Design, Planning and Management, led by Bimal Patel. The triangular form is for optimal space utilization and also draws from sacred geometries.
- **Capacity & Themes:**
 - **Lok Sabha:** Seating capacity of **888** (expandable to 1,272 for joint sessions). Theme: **Peacock** (National Bird).
 - **Rajya Sabha:** Seating capacity of **384**. Theme: **Lotus** (National Flower).
- **Constitutional Hall:** A central space envisioned to display the Constitution and narrate India's democratic journey.
- **Eco-Friendly ('Platinum Rated Green Building'):** Incorporates resource-efficient systems, rainwater harvesting, and solar power generation. Utilizes recycled materials.

- **Technologically Advanced:** State-of-the-art audio-visual systems, digital interfaces for MPs, paperless operations focus.
- **Enhanced Facilities:** Larger committee rooms, a modern library, a central lounge for MPs, dining facilities, and ample parking.
- **Accessibility:** Designed to be Divyang-friendly.
- **Cultural Showcase:** Artwork and installations representing India's diverse regional arts, crafts, and traditions.

Symbolism Woven into the Inauguration:

The inauguration ceremony was rich in symbolic elements:

- **The 'Sengol':** A gold-plated silver sceptre, historically significant.
 - **Origin:** Believed to be inspired by a Chola-era tradition symbolizing righteous rule (dharma danda).
 - **1947 Context:** Presented to Jawaharlal Nehru on the eve of Independence by priests from the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam (a Saivite mutt in Tamil Nadu) to mark the transfer of power from the British.
 - **Re-installation:** Placed near the Lok Sabha Speaker's chair, PM Modi prostrated before it. This act was projected by the government as reviving a sacred civilizational tradition and decolonizing national symbols.
- **Multi-Faith Prayers (Sarva Dharma Prarthana):** Conducted to signify India's religious pluralism.
- **Shramiks Honoured:** The Prime Minister felicitated some of the workers (shramiks) involved in the construction, acknowledging their contribution.
- **Timing:** The inauguration coincided with the 140th birth anniversary of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, a prominent Hindutva ideologue, which also drew comment.
- **'Atmanirbhar Bharat' Embodiment:** The project emphasized indigenous craftsmanship and materials, aligning with the self-reliant India vision.

The Controversy: A Divided House

The inauguration sparked significant political debate, leading to a boycott by nearly 20 opposition parties.

Their primary objections were:

1. **Exclusion of the President:** They argued that the President, as the Head of State and an integral part of Parliament (Article 79: "There shall be a Parliament for the Union which shall consist of the President and two Houses..."), should have inaugurated the new building, not the Prime Minister (Head of Government). They termed it an "insult" to the constitutional office of the President, particularly as the current President is a woman from a tribal community.

2. **Alleged Sidelining of Constitutional Propriety:** Critics viewed the PM's prominent role as a further centralization of power and a departure from established parliamentary norms.
3. **Historical Interpretations:** The emphasis on the Sengol and its specific historical narrative was also questioned by some historians and political analysts.

Government's Stance:

The ruling party and government officials defended the Prime Minister's role, stating that the PM, as the elected leader of the country and head of the executive that spearheaded the project, was the appropriate authority. They emphasized the historical and cultural significance of the Sengol as a symbol of righteous governance.

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Implications for Indian Democracy & The Path Ahead:

The new Parliament building is more than just a physical structure; it's envisioned as a catalyst for a more efficient and representative democracy.

- **Enhanced Legislative Functioning:** Modern facilities are expected to improve the efficiency of MPs and parliamentary committees. Digital infrastructure can aid research, debate, and bill tracking.
- **Accommodating Future Growth:** The increased seating capacity is crucial for the impending delimitation exercise, which will likely expand the number of MPs to better reflect India's growing population. This has implications for federal balance and representation.
- **Fostering Deliberation or Division?** While the central lounge aims to promote interaction, the true test will be whether the new space encourages more substantive debate and less disruption, which has plagued parliamentary proceedings in recent years.
- **A Symbol of 'New India' or Partisan Politics?** The legacy of the new Parliament will depend on whether it becomes a truly inclusive national symbol or remains associated with the political controversies surrounding its inauguration.
- **Upholding Parliamentary Traditions:** The effectiveness of the new Parliament will ultimately be judged by its adherence to democratic principles, the quality of laws passed, its role in holding the executive accountable, and its responsiveness to citizen concerns.

Conclusion:

The new Parliament building is a monumental undertaking, reflecting India's ambitions on the global stage. It stands as a symbol of continuity and change. While the architectural grandeur is undeniable, its true success will be measured by the strength and vibrancy of the democratic processes it houses. It must evolve into a space where diverse voices are heard, dissent is respected, and the collective wisdom of the nation shapes its destiny, truly becoming a "temple of democracy" for all Indians.

UPSC Relevance:

- **GS1:** Indian Art & Culture (Architecture, Symbolism of Sengol), Modern Indian History (Transfer of Power, Nationalist Symbols).
 - **GS2:** Parliament (Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Privileges), Constitutionalism, Role of President & PM, Federalism (Delimitation), Separation of Powers, Issues in Parliamentary Functioning.
 - **GS4 (Ethics):** Propriety in public life, constitutional morality.
 - **Essay:** Democracy, National Symbols, Tradition & Modernity, Role of Parliament.
-

SCIENCE & INNOVATION

TECH FRONTIERS: INDIGENOUS NAV & GLOBAL AI GOVERNANCE

ISRO's NVS-01 Launch: A Boost for NavIC Constellation

- **Mission Success:** On May 29, 2023 (reported this week due to launch window), the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched the **NVS-01** navigation satellite aboard the **GSLV-F12** rocket from Sriharikota.
- **Next-Generation NavIC:** NVS-01 is the first of the **second-generation satellites** for India's regional navigation system, **NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation)**.
- **Key Features of NVS-01:**
 - **Indigenous Atomic Clock:** Crucially, it carries a domestically developed **Rubidium atomic clock** (by Space Applications Centre, Ahmedabad). This addresses issues faced with imported atomic clocks in some first-generation NavIC satellites. Atomic clocks are vital for precise location data.
 - **Augmented Services:** Designed to ensure continuity and enhance NavIC services. It will transmit signals in **L1, L5, and S bands**. The introduction of L1 band signals is new for NavIC and will increase interoperability with other Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) like GPS, GLONASS, and Galileo, making NavIC signals accessible on more civilian devices.
 - **Longer Mission Life:** Expected to have a mission life of over 12 years.
- **Significance of NavIC:**
 - **Strategic Autonomy:** Provides India with an independent navigation system, reducing reliance on foreign systems, crucial for defence and security.
 - **Civilian Applications:** Supports a wide range of services including transportation (terrestrial, aerial, marine), location-based services, disaster management, surveying, geodesy, and precision timing.
 - **Coverage:** Provides accurate real-time positioning and timing services covering India and a region extending approximately 1,500 km around it.
- **UPSC Lens:** GS3 (S&T developments, Achievements of Indians in S&T, Indigenization, Space).

Global AI Regulation: Navigating Opportunities and Risks

- **Context:** This week saw continued global discussions around the need for Artificial Intelligence (AI) regulation, spurred by rapid advancements in generative AI models (like ChatGPT).
- **Key Concerns Driving Regulation Talks:**
 - **Bias & Discrimination:** AI models reflecting and amplifying societal biases.

- **Misinformation & Disinformation:** AI-generated fake news and deepfakes.
 - **Job Displacement:** Potential impact on employment across sectors.
 - **Privacy & Data Security:** Use of vast amounts of data for training AI.
 - **Accountability & Transparency:** "Black box" nature of some AI algorithms.
 - **Existential Risks:** Long-term concerns about superintelligence.
 - **Approaches to Regulation:**
 - **EU's AI Act:** A comprehensive, risk-based approach (classifying AI systems as unacceptable risk, high-risk, limited risk, minimal risk).
 - **US Approach:** More sector-specific and voluntary guidelines, though calls for federal legislation are growing.
 - **China:** Developing regulations focusing on content control and algorithm oversight.
 - **India:** MeitY is working on a framework, likely to be principles-based and focused on responsible AI development and deployment.
 - **UPSC Lens:** GS3 (S&T, IT & Computers, Awareness in emerging tech), GS2 (Government policies), GS4 (Ethical implications of AI).
-

ENVIRONMENT WATCH

CLIMATE & CONSERVATION: HEATWAVES & BIODIVERSITY EFFORTS

Intensifying Heatwaves: A Call for Urgent Adaptation

- **The Crisis:** Many parts of India, particularly in the northern and central plains, continued to reel under severe heatwave conditions this week, with temperatures soaring well above normal. The IMD issued repeated alerts.
- **Understanding Heatwaves:**
 - **IMD Criteria:** Based on maximum temperature thresholds for plains (40°C), hilly regions (30°C), and coastal stations (37°C), along with departure from normal.
 - **Causes:** Prolonged periods of high atmospheric pressure, clear skies, dry northwesterly winds, and the urban heat island effect. Climate change is exacerbating their frequency, intensity, and duration.
- **Impacts:**
 - **Health:** Heatstroke, dehydration, worsening of chronic illnesses. Outdoor workers, elderly, children, and those with co-morbidities are most vulnerable.
 - **Agriculture:** Crop damage, reduced yields, livestock stress.
 - **Water Resources:** Increased evaporation, water scarcity.
 - **Energy:** Surge in electricity demand for cooling, straining power grids.
 - **Economy:** Reduced labor productivity, potential supply chain disruptions.
- **Mitigation & Adaptation Strategies:**
 - **Heat Action Plans (HAPs):** Implemented by states and cities, involving early warning systems, public awareness, provision of drinking water and cooling centers, rescheduling work/school hours.
 - **Urban Planning:** Increasing green cover, cool roofs, promoting ventilation in buildings.
 - **Water Management:** Efficient irrigation, rainwater harvesting.
 - **Individual Measures:** Staying hydrated, avoiding peak sun hours, wearing light clothing.
- **UPSC Lens:** GS1 (Geophysical phenomena), GS3 (Climate Change, Disaster Management, Conservation).

[Simulated] Biodiversity Focus: New Protection for [Simulated: Wetland/Forest Area]

- *(Simulated for illustration)* **Headline:** 'Sundarvan Marshes' in [State X] Declared India's Newest Ramsar Site.

- **Details:** The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) announced the designation of 'Sundarban Marshes', a critical wetland ecosystem in [State X], as a Ramsar Site, recognizing its international importance for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. This takes India's Ramsar site tally to [updated number]. The marshes are known for their rich avian diversity, including several migratory species, and play a crucial role in groundwater recharge and flood mitigation for the region.
 - **Significance of Ramsar Designation:**
 - Commits India to maintaining the ecological character of the wetland.
 - Enhances national and international cooperation for conservation.
 - Promotes wise use of wetland resources.
 - **UPSC Lens:** GS3 (Conservation, Biodiversity, Environmental institutions like Ramsar Convention).
 - **Prelims Pointer:** What is the Ramsar Convention? Criteria for designating Ramsar sites. Location of important wetlands in India.
-

POLITY & GOVERNANCE (IN-DEPTH)

THE PRESIDENT & THE PRIME MINISTER: CONSTITUTIONAL ROLES IN CEREMONIAL ACTS

The controversy surrounding the inauguration of the new Parliament building by the Prime Minister, rather than the President, has reignited debates about the respective constitutional positions and ceremonial roles of these two high offices.

Constitutional Framework:

- **President (Article 52-62, 74, 75, 78, 79, 85, 86, 87, 111, etc.):**
 - Head of the State (de jure executive).
 - First citizen of India.
 - Integral part of Parliament (Art. 79: "Parliament...shall consist of the President and two Houses").
 - All executive actions of the Government of India are formally taken in his/her name (Art. 77).
 - Summons and prorogues Parliament, dissolves Lok Sabha (Art. 85).
 - Addresses Parliament (Art. 86, 87).
 - Gives assent to Bills (Art. 111).
 - Appoints the Prime Minister and other ministers, who hold office during his/her pleasure (but PM enjoys majority in Lok Sabha) (Art. 75).
 - Bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers headed by the PM (Art. 74(1)), except in certain discretionary situations.
- **Prime Minister (Article 74, 75, 78):**
 - Head of the Government (de facto executive).
 - Real executive authority.
 - Leader of the Council of Ministers and the Lok Sabha (if an MP of that house).
 - Principal channel of communication between the President and the Council of Ministers (Art. 78).
 - Advises the President on appointments, summoning/proroguing Parliament, etc.

The Debate on Inauguration:

- **Arguments for Presidential Inauguration:**
 - The President is the constitutional head of Parliament. Inaugurating the new building aligns with this status.

- Symbolically represents the entire nation, above party politics.
- Past precedents: The old Parliament House annexe was inaugurated by President V.V. Giri, and the Parliament library by President K.R. Narayanan.
- Upholds the dignity and neutrality of the highest constitutional office.
- **Arguments/Rationale for PM's Inauguration (as per government's perspective):**
 - The PM is the elected head of government, responsible for the project's conception and execution.
 - Represents the will of the people expressed through elections.
 - Several past instances where PMs have inaugurated significant government buildings or projects.
 - Reflects the executive's role in national development.

Constitutional Propriety & Conventions:

While the Constitution might not explicitly state who should inaugurate such buildings, constitutional propriety and established conventions play a significant role in a parliamentary democracy.

- **Propriety:** Demands actions that uphold the spirit of the Constitution and respect the roles of different institutions.
- **Conventions:** Unwritten rules that supplement the formal constitution, often evolving over time. The choice often reflects the political messaging the government of the day wishes to convey.

Implications:

Such controversies can:

- Strain relationships between the executive and the opposition.
- Lead to public debate on constitutional roles and democratic norms.
- Potentially set new, sometimes contested, precedents.

Conclusion:

The Indian Constitution envisages a parliamentary system where the President is the nominal head and the PM is the real head. While the PM leads the executive in policy and implementation, the President embodies the state's continuity and constitutional authority. The balance between these roles, especially in symbolic acts, often becomes a subject of political interpretation and public discourse, underscoring the dynamic nature of constitutional practices.

UPSC Lens: GS2 (Indian Constitution, Parliament, Executive, Separation of Powers, Constitutionalism, Conventions).

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DECODED

INDIA AND THE G7: A STRATEGIC CONVERGENCE?

India's consistent invitation to G7 Summits in recent years, including the Hiroshima Summit, signals a growing recognition of its global importance. But what does this engagement mean for India and the G7?

What is the G7?

An informal grouping of seven of the world's advanced economies: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, plus the European Union. It discusses major global economic and political issues. It lacks a formal charter or secretariat.

Why is India Being Invited?

1. **Economic Clout:** India is one of the fastest-growing major economies, increasingly relevant to global economic governance.
2. **Democratic Values:** As the world's largest democracy, India is seen as a natural partner for the G7 in promoting democratic norms.
3. **Geostrategic Importance:** India's key role in the Indo-Pacific, especially in the context of a rising China, makes it a crucial partner for G7 nations seeking a stable, rules-based regional order.
4. **Addressing Global Challenges:** India's cooperation is vital for tackling transnational issues like climate change, pandemics, terrorism, and supply chain resilience.
5. **Voice of the Global South:** India can bridge the G7 with the concerns and aspirations of developing countries, especially during its G20 Presidency.

Opportunities for India:

1. **Platform for Global Leadership:** Articulate its foreign policy perspectives and shape global agendas.
2. **Strengthen Bilateral Ties:** Engage with G7 leaders on the sidelines to advance bilateral cooperation.
3. **Access to Technology & Investment:** Foster partnerships in critical and emerging technologies, infrastructure (e.g., Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment - PGII), and clean energy.
4. **Influence Rule-Making:** Participate in discussions on global norms related to trade, technology, and climate.
5. **Counterbalancing China:** Align with like-minded countries on issues of regional security and economic stability.

Challenges and Considerations for India:

1. **Maintaining Strategic Autonomy:** Balancing closer ties with the G7 (largely Western bloc) while preserving its independent foreign policy and relationships with countries like Russia.

2. **Differing Perspectives:** Potential disagreements on issues like climate finance commitments from developed nations, approaches to trade, or geopolitical stances (e.g., on Russia-Ukraine).
3. **"De-risking" vs. "Decoupling":** India needs to navigate G7's evolving China strategy carefully, given its own complex relationship with Beijing.
4. **Avoiding an "Echo Chamber":** Ensuring that the G7's agenda doesn't overshadow the priorities of broader multilateral forums like the G20 or the UN.
5. **Expectations vs. Capacity:** Managing expectations from G7 partners regarding India's role and contributions.

Conclusion:

India's engagement with the G7 is a pragmatic move reflecting its growing capabilities and aspirations. It offers significant opportunities but also requires careful navigation to align with India's core national interests and its commitment to a multipolar world order. It's less about India "joining" the G7 and more about forging a strategic partnership to address shared challenges and shape a more equitable global governance architecture.

UPSC Lens: GS2 (Bilateral, regional, global groupings; India's foreign policy objectives; Effect of policies of developed countries).

ETHICS & INTEGRITY CASE STUDY (GS PAPER 4)

CASE STUDY: Public Office, Propriety, and Symbolic Acts

You are a senior civil servant in a ministry responsible for overseeing the execution of a prestigious national project, say, the construction of a new National Cultural Centre. The project is nearing completion and has been a flagship initiative of the current government, led by a charismatic and popular Prime Minister.

The inauguration ceremony is being planned. There's a proposal within the government circles that the Prime Minister, who has personally championed the project, should inaugurate it. However, established convention and protocol suggest that such national cultural institutions, which are meant to be apolitical and represent the entire nation, are typically inaugurated by the Head of State (the President). The President is from a different political background than the Prime Minister and is known for their independent stance.

Some officials argue that the PM's inauguration would give the project immense visibility and public connect. Others, including some from opposition parties and civil society, quietly express that involving the President would uphold constitutional propriety and the institution's apolitical character. Your minister, eager to please the Prime Minister, seeks your informal advice on how to frame the decision internally and manage public perception.

Questions:

1. What are the ethical dilemmas involved in this situation for you as a civil servant?
2. What are the various options available to you in advising your minister? Evaluate the merits and demerits of each option.
3. What course of action would you recommend and why? How would you justify it based on principles of public service and constitutional values?
4. What are the broader implications of such decisions for democratic traditions and institutional integrity?

Ethical Dilemmas:

- **Professional Duty vs. Political Expediency:** Your duty to offer impartial advice versus the pressure (implicit or explicit) to align with the political executive's preferences.
- **Upholding Constitutional Propriety vs. Loyalty to Minister/Government:** Balancing respect for constitutional norms and conventions against the expectations of your political superiors.
- **Public Interest vs. Partisan Interest:** Ensuring the institution serves the broader public interest and maintains its apolitical character versus allowing it to be perceived as a partisan achievement.

- **Courage of Conviction vs. Career Progression:** Risk of advising against the popular political view.

Options & Evaluation (Brief):

1. Advise for PM's Inauguration:

- *Merits:* Aligns with Minister's preference, gains political goodwill.
- *Demerits:* Undermines convention, potential public criticism, compromises institutional neutrality, sets a questionable precedent.

2. Advise for President's Inauguration:

- *Merits:* Upholds propriety & convention, strengthens institutional integrity, avoids controversy.
- *Demerits:* May displease Minister/PM, could be seen as uncooperative.

3. Suggest a Compromise (e.g., Both President & PM play significant roles):

- *Merits:* Attempts to balance interests, might be a politically feasible middle path.
- *Demerits:* Could dilute the President's ceremonial primacy, may still be criticized.

4. Remain Neutral / Offer No Specific Advice:

- *Merits:* Avoids direct confrontation.
- *Demerits:* Abdication of professional responsibility to provide sound advice.

Recommended Course of Action (Example):

Advise the Minister, respectfully but firmly, that adhering to the convention of the President inaugurating such national institutions would be in the best long-term interest of institutional integrity and would avoid unnecessary controversy. Emphasize that this upholds the dignity of both the office of the President and the new Cultural Centre itself by keeping it above partisan considerations. Justify based on principles of impartiality, integrity, respect for constitutional values, and public trust. The PM's contribution can be acknowledged in other significant ways during the ceremony.

Broader Implications:

Decisions on symbolic acts by high public functionaries impact:

- Public perception of institutional neutrality and fairness.
- The strength of democratic conventions and traditions.
- The balance of power and respect between different constitutional offices.
- The overall health and maturity of a democracy. Erosion of propriety can lead to cynicism and a decline in public trust.

(This case study mirrors the Parliament inauguration debate, providing a framework for ethical analysis.)

CONNECTING WITH HISTORY & CULTURE (GS PAPER 1)

THE SENGOL: FROM CHOLA TRADITION TO INDIA'S NEW PARLIAMENT

The installation of the 'Sengol' in the new Parliament building has brought this historical artefact and its associated traditions into sharp focus.

What is the Sengol?

- A Tamil word meaning sceptre, derived from 'semmai' (righteousness) and 'kol' (rod/staff). It symbolizes righteous rule, justice, and sovereignty.
- The specific Sengol installed is a gold-plated silver sceptre, approximately five feet long, crafted by Vummidi Bangaru Chetty, a renowned jeweller in Madras (now Chennai) in 1947. It is crowned by a Nandi (bull), a symbol associated with Lord Shiva and representing steadfastness in 'dharma' (righteousness/duty).

Historical Lineage:

- **Chola Dynasty Connection:** The tradition of presenting a sceptre during coronations or transfer of power is associated with the Chola Empire (9th-13th centuries CE), one of South India's most powerful and culturally rich dynasties.
 - During Chola coronations, the Rajaguru (royal priest) would hand over the Sengol to the new king, signifying the legitimate transfer of authority and the king's duty to rule justly.
- **Continuity in Tamil Traditions:** The practice of using sceptres as symbols of authority continued in various Tamil kingdoms and religious ஈடு (Adheenams/Mutts) even after the Cholas.

The 1947 Context:

- As India neared Independence, Lord Mountbatten reportedly asked Jawaharlal Nehru about a suitable ceremony to symbolize the transfer of power.
- Nehru consulted C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji), the last Governor-General of India. Rajaji, familiar with Tamil traditions, suggested the Sengol ceremony.
- He approached the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam, a prominent Saivite mutt in Tamil Nadu, known for its spiritual lineage and patronage of arts and culture.
- The Adheenam commissioned the Sengol. On August 14, 1947, a delegation from the Adheenam, including priests, presented the Sengol to Nehru at his residence in Delhi, marking the transfer of sovereignty. Traditional Tamil hymns, including verses from the Thevaram (Saivite devotional poetry), were recited.
- The Sengol was subsequently kept in the Allahabad Museum (Nehru's family home Anand Bhavan is in Allahabad, and it was later acquired by the museum).

Contemporary Significance & Interpretation (as per Government Narrative):

- **Revival of Civilizational Heritage:** The government has projected the installation as a revival of an ancient Indian tradition, symbolizing a break from colonial mindset and a connection to India's rich cultural roots.
- **Symbol of Righteous Rule:** Emphasizes the expectation that governance should be just and fair.
- **Continuity with 1947:** Links the new Parliament with the moment of India's independence.
- **Decolonization of Symbols:** Part of an effort to replace colonial-era symbols with indigenous ones.

Debates & Multiple Perspectives:

- **Historical Accuracy:** Some historians have questioned the direct, unbroken lineage of this specific ceremony or its universal acceptance as *the* symbol of transfer of power in 1947, noting limited contemporaneous documentation making it a central event.
- **Interpretation:** Critics argue it could be seen as an imposition of a particular regional/religious tradition onto a diverse national symbol like Parliament.
- **Political Messaging:** The emphasis on the Sengol is also viewed by some as aligning with the ruling party's broader cultural and nationalist agenda.

Conclusion:

The Sengol is undoubtedly a significant historical artefact with deep cultural roots in Tamil tradition. Its journey from 1947 to its prominent place in the new Parliament reflects a complex interplay of history, culture, symbolism, and contemporary political narratives. For UPSC aspirants, it's important to understand its historical context, the symbolism attributed to it, and the different perspectives surrounding its recent re-emergence.

UPSC Lens: GS1 (Indian Art & Culture – Chola art/traditions, Symbolism; Modern Indian History – Transfer of Power, Making of the Constitution).

MAP FOCUS OF THE WEEK

1. HIROSHIMA, JAPAN:

- **Location:** Major city on Honshu Island, Japan. Capital of Hiroshima Prefecture. Located on the Ota River delta.
- **Why in News:** Hosted the G7 Summit (May 19-21, 2023).
- **Historical Significance:** Site of the first atomic bombing on August 6, 1945, during World War II. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome) is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- **Strategic Importance:** Represents Japan's post-war commitment to peace and nuclear disarmament. The summit here underscored these themes.

2. SUDAN & KEY NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES/PORTS:

- **Sudan Location:** Northeast Africa. Bordered by Egypt (N), Red Sea (NE), Eritrea & Ethiopia (E), South Sudan (S), Central African Republic (SW), Chad (W), Libya (NW).
- **Key Cities:** Khartoum (capital, confluence of Blue & White Nile), Port Sudan (main port on Red Sea).
- **Why in News:** Ongoing conflict between Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF), leading to a humanitarian crisis.
- **Strategic Importance of Region (Horn of Africa/Red Sea):**
 - **Red Sea:** Major global shipping route (Suez Canal access).
 - **Port Sudan:** Critical for Sudan's trade and for humanitarian aid delivery.
 - **Neighboring Countries:** Affected by refugee flows (Chad, South Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia). Regional stability is a major concern.
 - **Geopolitical Interests:** Various global powers have interests in the region due to resources, maritime routes, and counter-terrorism efforts.

3. NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING, NEW DELHI, INDIA (Central Vista):

- **Location:** Raisina Hill, New Delhi, part of the Central Vista. Situated adjacent to the old Parliament House.
- **Why in News:** Inaugurated on May 28, 2023.
- **Central Vista Area:** A 3.2 km stretch in New Delhi, housing Rashtrapati Bhavan, Parliament House, North and South Blocks, India Gate, National Archives. Currently undergoing redevelopment.
- **Geographical Significance:** The heart of India's administrative and legislative governance. Its redesign reflects evolving national priorities and architectural visions.

Map Skill Exercise:

- On an outline map of the world, mark the G7 countries and India.
 - On an outline map of Africa, mark Sudan and its neighbors, the Nile River, and the Red Sea.
 - On an outline map of Delhi, try to locate the Central Vista area.
-

DATA POINT / REPORT SPOTLIGHT

RBI ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23: KEY METRICS AT A GLANCE

This section decodes crucial data from the RBI's Annual Report, vital for substantiating answers in GS Paper 3 and for Prelims.

Indicator	FY 2022-23 Value (or as stated)	FY 2021-22 Value	Significance / Trend
Real GDP Growth (RBI Projection FY24)	6.5%	(Actual FY23:7.2%)	Shows resilience in domestic demand. RBI maintains an optimistic outlook despite global slowdown.
CPI Inflation (Average FY23)	6.7%	5.5%	Remained above RBI's upper tolerance limit (6%). RBI expects moderation to 5.2% in FY24. Key policy challenge.
SCBs' CRAR (Capital to Risk Assets Ratio)	17.1% (Mar 2023)	16.7% (Mar 2022)	Improvement indicates stronger bank balance sheets and ability to absorb shocks. Well above the regulatory minimum of 11.5% (incl. CCB).
SCBs' Gross NPA Ratio	3.9% (Mar 2023)	5.8% (Mar 2022)	Significant decline to a decade-low. Reflects improved asset quality, recoveries, and write-offs.
SCBs' Net NPA Ratio	1.0% (Mar 2023)	1.7% (Mar 2022)	Indicates lower unprovisioned bad loans, further strengthening bank financials.
RBI Surplus Transfer to Government	₹87,416 crore	₹30,307 crore	Substantial increase providing fiscal support to the government. Helps manage fiscal deficit. Based on Bimal Jalan Committee framework.
Banknotes in Circulation (Value)	Increase of 7.8%	-	Indicates continued preference for cash for some transactions, though digital payments are rising rapidly.

Counterfeit Notes Detected (₹500 New)	91,110 pieces	14,533 pieces	Significant rise in detected ₹500 counterfeit notes, though still a tiny fraction of total notes. Underscores need for public vigilance and advanced security features. (₹2000 fakes also rose but are being withdrawn).
Foreign Exchange Reserves	\$578.4 billion (Mar 31, '23)	\$607.3 billion	Moderation from previous year due to valuation effects and interventions to curb rupee volatility. Still provides robust import cover (around 9-10 months).

Interpreting the Data:

- **Positive Signs:** Stronger banking sector health (CRAR, NPAs), resilient GDP growth forecast, and substantial RBI surplus transfer.
- **Areas of Concern:** Persistent inflation (though moderating), rise in specific counterfeit notes, global uncertainties impacting forex reserves.
- **Policy Implications:** RBI's monetary policy will continue to focus on inflation control while supporting growth. Regulatory oversight of banks remains crucial.

How to Use in UPSC:

- **Prelims:** Direct factual questions on these figures.
- **Mains:** Use this data to:
 - Analyze the health of the Indian banking sector.
 - Discuss the challenges and outlook for the Indian economy.
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of monetary policy.
 - Substantiate arguments on fiscal management and RBI's role.

PRELIMS POWER-UP

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE: WEEKLY MCQ CHALLENGE

- The 'Sengol', recently installed in the new Parliament building, is primarily associated with the traditions of which ancient Indian dynasty?**
 - (a) Maurya
 - (b) Gupta
 - (c) Chola
 - (d) Kushana
- NVS-01, launched by ISRO, is the first of the second-generation satellites for which Indian navigation system?**
 - (a) GAGAN
 - (b) IRNSS (NavIC)
 - (c) GSAT series
 - (d) Cartosat series
- According to the RBI Annual Report 2022-23, what was the approximate Gross NPA ratio of Scheduled Commercial Banks as of March 2023?**
 - (a) 7.5%
 - (b) 5.8%
 - (c) 3.9%
 - (d) 2.1%
- The G7 Summit 2023, attended by India as an invited guest, was held in which city?**
 - (a) Tokyo
 - (b) Kyoto
 - (c) Osaka
 - (d) Hiroshima
- Which of the following is NOT a primary objective of the National Green Hydrogen Mission?**
 - (a) To make India a global hub for green hydrogen production.
 - (b) To increase India's reliance on imported fossil fuels.
 - (c) To promote domestic manufacturing of electrolyzers.
 - (d) To contribute to India's decarbonization goals.
- The theme of the Lok Sabha chamber in the new Parliament building is inspired by:**
 - (a) The Lotus
 - (b) The Peacock
 - (c) The Banyan Tree
 - (d) The Tiger
- Article 79 of the Indian Constitution states that the Parliament for the Union shall consist of:**
 - (a) The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha

- (b) The President, the Lok Sabha, and the Rajya Sabha
 - (c) The Prime Minister, the Lok Sabha, and the Rajya Sabha
 - (d) The President and the Lok Sabha
8. **The term 'Rubidium atomic clock', recently in news, is crucial for the functioning of:**
- (a) Quantum computers
 - (b) Nuclear reactors
 - (c) Navigation satellites
 - (d) High-speed communication networks
9. **'Operation Kaveri' was conducted by India to evacuate its citizens from which conflict-ridden country?**
- (a) Ukraine
 - (b) Yemen
 - (c) Sudan
 - (d) Afghanistan
10. **The Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) is an initiative primarily associated with:**
- (a) BRICS countries
 - (b) G7 countries
 - (c) ASEAN countries
 - (d) Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)
-

Answers: 1(c), 2(b), 3(c), 4(d), 5(b), 6(b), 7(b), 8(c), 9(c), 10(b)

MAINS MASTERY

WRITING EDGE: PRACTICE QUESTION & MODEL FRAMEWORK

Question: "The new Parliament building is envisioned not merely as a modern edifice but as a symbol of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and a catalyst for strengthening Indian democracy." Critically examine this statement in light of its architectural features, the symbolism associated with its inauguration, and the ongoing debates surrounding it. (250 words, 15 marks)

Framework for the Answer:

Introduction (approx. 30 words):

- Briefly acknowledge the inauguration of the new Parliament building as a significant event.
- State the core assertion: it's seen as a symbol of self-reliance ('Atmanirbhar Bharat') and a means to strengthen democracy, beyond just being a new structure.

Body - Part 1: Symbol of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (approx. 70 words):

- **Architectural & Construction:** Designed by an Indian firm (HCP Design), built by an Indian company (Tata Projects).
- **Indigenous Materials & Craftsmanship:** Emphasis on local resources and showcasing diverse Indian art forms within the building.
- **Technological Self-Reliance:** Equipped with modern, largely indigenous technology for parliamentary functions.
- **Meeting Future Needs:** Designed for an expanding legislature, reflecting confidence in India's future growth.

Body - Part 2: Catalyst for Strengthening Democracy (approx. 80 words):

- **Enhanced Efficiency:** Modern infrastructure, larger chambers, committee rooms, digital tools aimed at improving legislative efficiency and debate quality.
- **Symbolic Elements (intended):**
 - **Sengol:** Projected as a symbol of righteous rule and transfer of power, connecting to democratic traditions.
 - **Constitutional Hall:** To showcase India's democratic journey.
- **Inclusivity & Accessibility:** Divyang-friendly design, spaces for interaction.
- **Aspirations:** Intended to foster greater accountability and responsiveness from the legislature.

Body - Part 3: Critical Examination & Debates (approx. 70 words):

- **Controversy over Inauguration:** Opposition boycott citing the President's role (Art. 79) – raising questions about upholding constitutional conventions and democratic spirit.
- **Symbolism vs. Substance:** Argument that a building alone cannot strengthen democracy; it requires adherence to parliamentary norms, robust debate, respect for dissent, and executive accountability.
- **Risk of Partisan Symbolism:** Concerns that specific narratives (e.g., timing, Sengol interpretation) might be perceived as partisan rather than universally national.
- **True Test:** The real strengthening of democracy will depend on the conduct of business within, not just the grandeur of the structure.

Conclusion (approx. 30 words):

- Acknowledge the new Parliament's potential as a symbol and functional space.
 - Reiterate that while it reflects 'Atmanirbhar' aspirations, its role in strengthening democracy depends critically on upholding constitutional values, inclusive practices, and the spirit of democratic deliberation by all stakeholders.
-

ESSAY IDEA OF THE WEEK

TOPIC FOR REFLECTION & WRITING PRACTICE:

"Democracy: Is it merely about grand structures and electoral rituals, or fundamentally about the spirit of deliberation, dissent, and accountability?"

Brainstorming Pointers / Dimensions to Explore:

1. Introduction:

- Define democracy in its multifaceted sense – not just procedural but substantive.
- Acknowledge the importance of institutions (like Parliament) and processes (elections).
- Pose the central question: are these sufficient?

2. The Indispensable Role of Structures and Rituals:

- **Parliament/Legislatures:** Provide a physical space for representation, law-making, debate. New structures can symbolize renewal/aspirations.
- **Elections:** Mechanism for popular sovereignty, choosing representatives, ensuring peaceful transfer of power.
- **Constitution & Legal Frameworks:** Provide the rules of the game, protect rights.
- **Symbolism:** National symbols, ceremonies can foster national identity and respect for democratic values.

3. Beyond Structures: The Indispensable Spirit of Democracy:

- **Deliberation:**
 - Informed debate, reasoned arguments, willingness to listen to diverse views.
 - Quality of parliamentary discourse, committee functioning.
 - Public sphere: media, civil society engagement.
- **Dissent:**
 - Right to disagree, protest, offer alternative perspectives.
 - Role of a constructive opposition.
 - Tolerance for criticism. Freedom of speech and expression.
- **Accountability:**
 - Executive accountability to the legislature.

- Transparency in governance.
- Responsiveness to citizen needs and grievances.
- Role of independent institutions (Judiciary, Election Commission, CAG, Information Commission).
- **Participation:** Beyond voting – active citizen engagement in governance.
- **Inclusivity & Equality:** Ensuring all voices are heard, equal opportunity, social justice.
- **Constitutional Morality:** Adherence to the underlying principles and spirit of the constitution by all stakeholders.

4. The Interplay: Structures Nurture Spirit, Spirit Animates Structures:

- Well-designed structures can facilitate better deliberation.
- However, even the best structures can be undermined if the democratic spirit is weak.
- Conversely, a strong democratic spirit can overcome structural deficiencies to some extent.

5. Challenges to the Democratic Spirit:

- Polarization, decline in civility of public discourse.
- Misinformation/Disinformation.
- Erosion of institutional autonomy.
- Majoritarianism vs. Pluralism.
- Criminalization of politics, money power in elections.

6. Conclusion:

- Reiterate that while structures and rituals are necessary foundations, they are not sufficient for a thriving democracy.
- The true essence lies in the democratic spirit – a culture of respect, reason, tolerance, participation, and accountability.
- Continuous nurturing of this spirit is essential for democracy to be substantive and meaningful.
- A call for active citizenship and institutional integrity.

(Consider using examples from India and globally to illustrate points.)

UPSC JARGON BUSTER / LOOKING AHEAD

UPSC JARGON BUSTER: KEY TERMS EXPLAINED

- **Economic Coercion:** The use of economic measures (like trade sanctions, investment restrictions, boycotts) by one state to pressure another state to change its policies or behavior. Often discussed in the context of great power rivalry. *Example: G7 concerns about China's alleged economic coercion.*
- **De-risking (vs. Decoupling):**
 - **Decoupling:** Complete separation of economic ties between countries, especially in critical sectors.
 - **De-risking:** A more nuanced approach. Reducing dependence on a single country for critical supply chains or technologies to mitigate risks, while not necessarily severing all economic engagement. *Example: G7's stated policy towards China is "de-risking, not decoupling."*
- **Greenwashing:** The practice of making misleading or unsubstantiated claims about the environmental benefits of a product, service, technology, or company policy to present a false image of environmental responsibility.
- **Constitutional Morality:** Adherence to the core principles and values underpinning the Constitution, including commitment to democracy, rule of law, social justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, not just by letter but in spirit. It guides the conduct of constitutional functionaries and citizens.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** A state's ability to pursue its national interests and adopt its foreign policy choices independently, without being constrained by external actors or alliances. A key tenet of India's foreign policy.

LOOKING AHEAD: WHAT TO WATCH FOR NEXT WEEK

- **Monsoon Onset & Progress:** IMD's updates on the Southwest Monsoon will be crucial for agriculture and inflation outlook.
- **G20 Working Group Meetings:** Keep an eye on outcomes of various G20 meetings under India's presidency as we move closer to the Leaders' Summit.
- **Developments in Manipur:** The situation in Manipur will continue to be a focus, with implications for internal security and ethnic relations.
- **Global Economic Data:** Release of inflation and growth figures from major economies can impact global markets and policy outlooks.
- **Follow-up on New Parliament:** Any further discussions or decisions regarding the functioning and sessions in the new building.

