Topic 1: Bureau of Port Security (BoPS): Reinforcing India's Maritime Security Framework

Why is it in News?

The Union Government has announced the establishment of the **Bureau of Port Security (BoPS)**.
The Bureau is proposed as:

- A **statutory authority** under the **Merchant Shipping Act, 2025**.
- An institution modelled on the **Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS)**.

The move has been driven by:

- Rapid expansion in maritime trade volumes.
- Rising cyber vulnerabilities in port and logistics infrastructure.
- Increasing strategic risks in coastal and port security ecosystems.

Relevance

GS III – Internal Security & Infrastructure

- Coastal and port security architecture.
- Cybersecurity of critical infrastructure.
- Maritime security and supply-chain resilience.

Why Port Security is Strategically Critical

Ports constitute vital national infrastructure as they:

- Handle nearly **95% of India's trade by volume**.
- Serve as the backbone for **energy imports, exports, and global supply chains**.

The evolving threat landscape includes:

- Terrorism and sabotage.
- Smuggling networks and organised crime.
- Cyber intrusions targeting port IT, logistics, and navigation systems.
- Geopolitical disruptions across the Indo-Pacific maritime domain.

What is the Bureau of Port Security (BoPS)?

BoPS is envisaged as a **national-level specialised authority** responsible for:

- Security of ships.
- Security of port facilities.

Administrative Control:

- Under the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**.

Leadership Structure:

- Headed by a **Director General (IPS officer, Pay Level–15)**.
- **Transitional arrangement:** Director General of Shipping to function as DG, BoPS for one year.

Key Functions of BoPS

1. Regulatory and Oversight Role

- Frame security regulations for:
  - Ports.
  - Vessels.
  - Port facilities.
- Ensure compliance with national and international maritime security norms.

2. Intelligence and Information Management

- Timely collection, analysis, and dissemination of security-related information.
- Coordination with:
  - Intelligence agencies.
  - Port authorities.
  - Maritime enforcement bodies.

3. Cybersecurity Emphasis

- Dedicated division for protecting:
  - Port IT systems.
  - Cargo handling and logistics platforms.
  - Navigation and communication infrastructure.
- Addresses risks related to:
  - Ransomware attacks.
  - Supply-chain cyber sabotage.
  - Data breaches.

4. Risk-Based Security Framework

- Security measures to be graded and vulnerability-based.
- Tailored according to:
  - Trade volume.

- Strategic location.
- Port-specific risk profiles.

How is BoPS Different from Earlier Arrangements?

Earlier framework:

- Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) acted as a **Recognised Security Organisation (RSO)**.
- CISF handled:
  - Security assessments.
  - Port security plans.

Under the new framework:

- **BoPS becomes the nodal regulator and oversight authority**.
- CISF and other forces continue as **operational arms**.

Core shift:

- From fragmented and force-led arrangements → to centralised, professional, regulatory oversight.

Why Model BoPS on BCAS?

The BCAS model transformed aviation security through:

- Clear regulatory authority.
- Uniform security standards.
- Risk-based screening and oversight mechanisms.

Applying this model to ports aims to:

- Standardise port security nationwide.
- Improve accountability.
- Minimise ad-hoc and reactive security responses.

Strategic Significance

1. National Security

- Ports are potential gateways for:
  - Terrorist infiltration.
  - Arms, narcotics, and contraband trafficking.

- Dedicated oversight reduces systemic vulnerabilities.

2. Economic Security

- Port disruptions can:
    - Paralyse supply chains.
    - Trigger inflationary pressures.
    - Affect exports and investor confidence.
- BoPS enhances trade reliability and predictability.

3. Maritime and Indo-Pacific Context

- Supports India's expanding role in:
    - Global supply chains.
    - Indo-Pacific maritime security.
- Aligns with initiatives such as:
    - Sagarmala.
    - Blue Economy.
    - Maritime Domain Awareness frameworks.

Governance and Institutional Assessment

Strengths

- Statutory backing provides legal authority.
- Cybersecurity integration reflects contemporary threat perception.
- Risk-based approach avoids one-size-fits-all security deployment.

Challenges

- Coordination across multiple agencies and jurisdictions.
- Capacity building for cyber and maritime security specialists.
- Preventing regulatory overlap and bureaucratic duplication.

Way Forward

- Clearly defined Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) delineating roles of:
    - BoPS.
    - CISF.
    - State maritime police.
- Invest in:

  - Cybersecurity expertise.
  - Regular port security audits.
- Integrate BoPS with:
  - Coastal security architecture.
  - Maritime intelligence grids.

Topic 2: Antariksh Prayogshala (Space Labs): Nurturing India's Future Space Talent

Why is it in News?

The **Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe)** has issued a **Request for Proposal (RfP)** to establish **Antariksh Prayogshala (Space Labs)** in selected academic institutions across India.

The initiative forms part of India's broader strategy to:

- Strengthen the national space technology ecosystem.
- Create future-ready skilled manpower.
- Deepen collaboration among academia, industry, startups, and government institutions.

Relevance

GS III – Science & Technology

- Space technology ecosystem development.
- Research and innovation capacity.
- Skill development and academia–industry linkages.

What is IN-SPACe?

IN-SPACe is an **autonomous body under the Department of Space** that functions as:

- A **regulator**,
- A **promoter**, and
- A **facilitator** for Non-Government Entities (NGEs) in the space sector.

Its mandate includes:

- Enabling private sector and academic participation in space activities.
- Granting authorisations.
- Providing access to space infrastructure and funding support.

What is Antariksh Prayogshala?

Antariksh Prayogshala is envisioned as a **first-of-its-kind initiative** to create:

- **State-of-the-art space laboratories** embedded within academic institutions.

The focus areas include:

- Applied research.
- Early-stage innovation.
- Hands-on skill development in space technologies.

Target stakeholders:

- Students.
- Researchers.
- Startups.
- Industry collaborators.

Key Features of the Scheme

1. Financial Support

- IN-SPACe funding up to **75% of the total project cost**.
- Maximum financial support capped at **₹5 crore per institution**.
- Designed to lower entry barriers for advanced space research infrastructure.

2. Phased and Regionally Balanced Rollout

- Selection of **up to seven academic institutions**.
- One lab proposed in each geographical zone.
- Ensures balanced regional participation and pan-India talent development.

3. Two-Stage Selection Process

- **Stage 1:** Screening based on eligibility criteria in the RfP.
- **Stage 2:** Detailed technical and institutional proposal evaluation.
- Ensures institutional readiness and long-term sustainability.

Functions of Antariksh Prayogshala

The space labs will:

- Provide hands-on training in space systems engineering.
- Offer access to advanced testing, simulation, and prototyping tools.
- Enable work on:
    - Satellite subsystems.
    - Launch vehicle technologies.

- Space applications such as navigation, Earth observation, and communication.

They will function as **shared innovation spaces** linking academia, industry, and startups.

Why This Initiative is Important

1. Bridging the Academia–Industry Divide

- Addresses the traditional gap between strong theoretical knowledge and limited applied exposure.
- Aligns academic curriculum and research with real-world industry requirements.

2. Supporting India's New Space Ecosystem

- Complements post-2020 opening of the space sector to private players.
- Supports the growth of space startups by ensuring skilled human capital.

3. Long-Term Strategic Capacity Building

- Space is a dual-use domain with both civil and strategic applications.
- Skilled manpower is critical for space security, technological sovereignty, and global competitiveness.

Link with India's Space Sector Reforms

Following the 2020 reforms:

- **ISRO** focuses on research and missions.
- **IN-SPACe** handles promotion and regulation.

Antariksh Prayogshala aligns with the shift from mission-centric growth to **ecosystem-centric development** in a knowledge-intensive sector.

Challenges and Considerations

- Ensuring adequate faculty capacity and retention.
- Sustaining funding beyond the initial grant period.
- Avoiding infrastructure creation without measurable outcomes.
- Necessity of strong industry mentorship and outcome-based performance metrics.

Way Forward

- Integrate space labs with national space innovation and startup programmes.
- Promote international academic collaborations.

- Use labs as feeder institutions for:
    - Space startups.
    - ISRO projects.
    - Private-sector R&D pipelines.

Topic 3: Agniveers and CAPFs: Reservation Enhanced to 50%

Why is it in News?

The **Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has decided to increase reservation for **ex-Agniveers** in **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)** from **10% to 50%** in **Group C (constable-level) posts**.

- Immediate notification issued for the **Border Security Force (BSF)**.
- Similar amendments planned across all CAPFs.

The decision comes ahead of the first batch of Agniveers completing their four-year tenure in **2026**, and represents a policy reversal from the earlier 10% quota announced in 2022.

Relevance

GS III – Internal Security

- CAPF manpower planning.
- Defence reforms and internal security linkage.

GS II – Governance and Public Policy

- Public employment policy.
- Adaptive policymaking in response to social feedback.

What is the Agnipath / Agniveer Scheme?

Introduced in 2022, the scheme provides:

- Short-term military recruitment for **four years**.
- Around **25% retention** into regular armed forces.

Objectives include:

- Reducing pension liabilities.
- Maintaining a youthful armed force.
- Creating a disciplined and skilled civilian workforce.

The central challenge remains **post-service employment** for the remaining 75%.

What are CAPFs?

CAPFs operate under the Ministry of Home Affairs and include:

- BSF, CRPF, CISF, ITBP, SSB, Assam Rifles.

They perform roles related to:

- Border management.
- Internal security.
- Industrial and infrastructure security.

Policy Change: Then and Now

Earlier Policy (2022)

- 10% reservation for ex-Agniveers.
- Limited age relaxation.
- Partial coverage across forces.

Revised Policy (2025)

- 50% reservation in Group C posts.
- First implemented in BSF constable cadre.
- Gradual extension to all CAPFs.
- Age relaxation up to five years.
- BSF tradesmen absorption age increased from 30 to 35 years.

Recruitment Mechanics

- Ex-Agniveers exempted from PST/PET.
- Mandatory written examination remains.
- Two-phase recruitment involving nodal CAPF and SSC.
- Unfilled Agniveer vacancies to be carried forward.

Rationale Behind the Decision

- Employment security for trained youth.
- Strengthening CAPF manpower quality.
- Political and social stabilisation after protests.
- Creating a seamless security manpower pipeline.

Implications

Positive outcomes:

- Enhances credibility of Agnipath.
- Reduces training costs for CAPFs.

Concerns:

- Reduced open competition.
- Morale issues among civilian aspirants.
- Need for transparent and uniform implementation.

Topic 4: Forest Rights Services Go Digital – National FRA Portal (TARANG)

Why is it in News?

The Union Government has proposed a **national digital portal** to move all **Forest Rights Act (FRA)** services online.

- Proposal presented by the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.
- Beta version named **TARANG** already developed.
- Part of a comprehensive FRA Roadmap targeted for completion by **first half of 2026**.

Relevance

GS II – Governance & Social Justice

- Tribal rights.
- Role of Gram Sabha.

GS III – Environment & Sustainable Development

- Forest governance.
- Community-based conservation.

What is the Forest Rights Act, 2006?

The Act aims to correct historical injustices faced by:

- Scheduled Tribes.
- Other Traditional Forest Dwellers.

It recognises individual, community, and habitat-related forest rights.

Problems in Existing FRA Implementation

- Multi-layered manual process.
- Missing legacy data.
- Delays and high rejection rates.
- Poor coordination across departments.

What is TARANG Portal?

A single-window national digital platform with:

- Online claim filing and tracking.
- Digital title deeds.
- Legacy data repository.
- GIS-based FRA Atlas.
- Geotagging of forest rights.

Objectives of Digitisation

- Transparency and accountability.
- Faster recognition of rights.
- Integration with welfare schemes.
- Support for community-led forest governance.

Concerns and Safeguards

- Digital divide in forest areas.
- Capacity gaps at Gram Sabha level.
- Risk of over-centralisation.
-

Topic 5: Winter Session of Parliament 2025

Why is it in News?

The **Winter Session of Parliament, 2025** concluded with the passage of **eight Bills in the Lok Sabha**.
The session witnessed the adoption of several **structural and policy-significant reforms**, including:

- Repeal of the **MGNREGA Act**.
- Opening up of the **civil nuclear sector**.

- Approval of **100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the insurance sector**.

The **Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Om Birla**, released official productivity data highlighting **high legislative output**, even as concerns persisted regarding disruptions and the quality of parliamentary deliberation.

Relevance

GS II – Polity and Governance

- Parliamentary functioning and institutional health.
- Legislative scrutiny and law-making processes.
- Role of the Speaker, Opposition, and debate in a parliamentary democracy.

What is the Winter Session of Parliament?

The Winter Session is one of the **three regular parliamentary sessions**, along with the Budget Session and Monsoon Session.

It is typically held during **November–December** and serves multiple constitutional functions:

- Passage of legislation.
- Holding the executive accountable through questions and debates.
- Discussion on policy priorities and governance challenges.

The **duration and effectiveness** of the Winter Session often vary depending on political consensus, disruptions, and legislative agenda.

Legislative Productivity: Data Snapshot

According to official statistics released after the session:

- **Lok Sabha**
  - Productivity recorded at **111%**.
  - **Eight Bills passed**.
- **Rajya Sabha**
  - Productivity recorded at **82%**.
  - **Eight Bills passed**.

Interpretation of Productivity Figures

While the data points to **high legislative throughput**, it has also triggered a broader debate:

- Productivity, measured in hours and Bills passed, does **not automatically reflect the quality of deliberation**.
- Reduced discussion time and frequent disruptions raise concerns about:
    - Depth of scrutiny.
    - Opposition participation.
    - Parliamentary oversight over complex reforms.

Governance Concerns Highlighted

- Increasing emphasis on numerical productivity over deliberative democracy.
- Shrinking space for detailed clause-by-clause discussion.
- Growing perception of Parliament as a law-passing forum rather than a forum for debate and accountability.

Analytical Takeaway

The Winter Session of Parliament 2025 reflects a paradox in India's parliamentary functioning:

- **High efficiency in law-making**, but
- **Persistent concerns regarding the erosion of deliberative depth**, inclusiveness, and opposition engagement.

This raises fundamental questions about the balance between **speed, scrutiny, and democratic legitimacy** in parliamentary governance.

Topic 6: Year of Extremes – India's Near-Permanent Disaster Cycle in 2025

Why is it in News?

A report published by the **Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)** and *Down To Earth* revealed that:

- **331 out of 334 days** between **January and November 2025** witnessed **extreme weather events** in India.

This marks a sharp escalation compared to:

- **295 days in 2024**, and
- **292 days in 2022**.

The findings indicate the emergence of a **new climate normal**, characterised by **persistence of extremes rather than seasonal concentration**.

Relevance

GS III

- Climate change and global warming.
- Disaster management and risk reduction.
- Agriculture, food security, and livelihoods.

Impact Assessment: 2025

The cumulative impact of extreme weather events in 2025 included:

- **4,419 human deaths**.
- **17.4 million hectares of crops damaged**.
- **More than 1.8 lakh houses destroyed**.

These figures underscore the growing **humanitarian, economic, and developmental costs** of climate-induced disasters.

What are Extreme Weather Events?

Extreme weather events are defined as weather phenomena that **significantly deviate from long-term historical averages**.

Types observed across India include:

- Heatwaves and coldwaves.
- Heavy rainfall, floods, and cloudbursts.
- Cyclones, storms, and lightning.
- Landslides.

Primary drivers include:

- Global warming, leading to higher atmospheric energy and moisture.
- Changing monsoon dynamics.
- Local factors such as deforestation, urbanisation, and land-use change.

What Makes 2025 Distinct?

1. Near-Permanent Extremes

- Extreme events occurred on **more than 99% of days**.
- **Nine out of eleven months** experienced extreme weather every single day.
- The traditional “normal weather window” has contracted sharply.

2. All-Season Climate Anomalies
Earlier, extremes were largely confined to summer or monsoon months.
In contrast, 2025 witnessed:

- Winter floods.
- February heatwaves.
- Heatwaves in Himalayan regions.
- Post-monsoon floods and early onset coldwaves.

Scale of Loss and Damage

Human and Economic Costs

- Disaster-related deaths increased by **47% since 2022**.
- Crop damage expanded nearly **nine-fold** between 2022 and 2025.

Cause-wise fatalities

- Lightning and thunderstorms: **1,538 deaths**.
- Floods, landslides, and cloudbursts: **2,707 deaths**.

Agriculture and Livelihood Impact

- The monsoon season alone accounted for damage to **around 11 million hectares**, nearly **65% of total crop loss**.
- Erratic rainfall patterns resulted in:
    - Simultaneous flooding and rainfall deficits.
    - Nearly **20% of districts** recording deficient rainfall despite daily extreme events.

Regional Patterns and Uneven Burden

State-Level Trends

- Himachal Pradesh experienced extreme weather on nearly **80% of days**.
- Highest fatalities reported in:
    - Andhra Pradesh (**608 deaths**).
    - Madhya Pradesh (**537 deaths**).
    - Jharkhand (**478 deaths**).
- Highest crop losses recorded in:
    - Maharashtra (**8.4 million hectares**).

- Gujarat (**4.4 million hectares**).
- Karnataka (**2.75 million hectares**).

Regional Trends

- North-West India recorded the **highest number of extreme days (311)** and **highest deaths (1,459)**.
- Central India recorded **1,120 deaths**, highlighting combined agrarian and climatic vulnerability.

Climate Signals and Broken Records

- **February 2025** emerged as the **warmest February in 124 years**, with India witnessing its **first recorded winter heatwave** in Goa and Maharashtra.
- **March 2025** recorded mean maximum temperatures **1.02°C above normal**.
- **September–October** ranked among the warmest on record in terms of minimum temperatures.

The revised **IMD baseline (1991–2020)** indicates that even "normal" conditions today are significantly warmer than historical norms.

Seasonal Breakdown: Collapse of Boundaries

Winter

- Extreme events on **97% of days**.
- Heavy rainfall and flooding on **51 of 59 days**, compared to about six days earlier.

Pre-Monsoon

- Extremes on **99% of days**.
- Heatwaves extended into Himalayan states such as Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh.
- Heatwave-related deaths nearly tripled compared to 2022.

Monsoon

- All **122 days** witnessed extreme events.
- Daily floods and lightning incidents.
- Rainfall paradox of excess rain alongside district-level deficits.

Post-Monsoon

- Extremes recorded on **all 61 days**.
- Early coldwaves from **November 7**, affecting **13 states**, compared to only two states earlier.

Analytical Overview

1. Shift from Episodic to Structural Crisis
Climate disasters are no longer isolated events but have become a **permanent structural feature** of India's climate system.

2. Regressive Social Impact
Communities with the lowest contribution to emissions—

- Small farmers,
- Informal workers,
- Hill and coastal populations—

are bearing the highest costs.

3. Governance Stress Test
Disaster management systems face:

- Continuous overload.
- Fiscal stress.
- Data and coordination gaps.

A relief-centric governance model is proving inadequate.

Way Forward: From Reaction to Resilience

Mitigation

- Accelerated emissions reduction.
- Alignment with global climate ambition beyond **CoP30**.

Adaptation

- Climate-resilient agriculture.
- Urban flood management.
- Heat action plans extending beyond major cities.

Governance Reforms

- Integrating climate risk into:
    - Development planning.
    - Infrastructure design.
    - Fiscal transfers.
- Strengthening climate data systems and attribution science.

Equity Lens

- Targeted protection for:
    - Small and marginal farmers.
    - Informal sector workers.
    - Mountain and coastal communities.

Conclusion

India's experience of extreme weather on almost every day of 2025 signals a decisive shift from seasonal disasters to a **permanent climate emergency**, necessitating systemic adaptation, climate justice, and resilient development rather than episodic relief measures.

22nd December 2025: Daily MCQs

With reference to the **Winter Session of Parliament 2025**, consider the following statements:

1. The Lok Sabha recorded legislative productivity exceeding 100 percent during the session.
2. The number of Bills passed by the Lok Sabha was higher than those passed by the Rajya Sabha.
3. High legislative productivity necessarily implies a proportional increase in the quality of parliamentary deliberation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 and 2 only
B. 1 only
C. 2 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: B

Explanation

- **Statement 1** is correct: Lok Sabha productivity was officially reported at **111%**.
- **Statement 2** is incorrect: **Both Houses passed eight Bills each**.
- **Statement 3** is incorrect: The text explicitly notes that **productivity ≠ quality of deliberation**, highlighting concerns about debate and scrutiny.

MCQ 2

Which of the following reforms were associated with the **Winter Session of Parliament 2025**?

1. Repeal of a major rural employment legislation
2. Liberalisation of foreign direct investment in the insurance sector

3. Statutory creation of the Bureau of Port Security
4. Opening up of the civil nuclear sector

Select the correct answer using the code below:

A. 1, 2 and 4 only
B. 1 and 3 only
C. 2, 3 and 4 only
D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: A

Explanation

- **Statements 1, 2 and 4** are correct: Repeal of MGNREGA, 100% FDI in insurance, and opening of the civil nuclear sector were part of the session's legislative outcomes.
- **Statement 3** is incorrect: Bureau of Port Security was announced separately, not passed as part of the Winter Session Bills.

MCQ 3

According to the **2025 extreme weather assessment**, which of the following best explains why 2025 is described as a *"new climate normal"*?

A. Increase in cyclone frequency alone
B. Concentration of disasters only during the monsoon season
C. Persistence of extreme weather across almost all days of the year
D. Increase in coastal flooding events only

Answer: C

Explanation

- The defining feature of 2025 was **331 out of 334 days** witnessing extreme weather events.
- Extremes were **persistent and all-season**, not confined to cyclones, monsoon, or coastal areas.

MCQ 4

Consider the following statements regarding **seasonal distribution of extreme weather events in India in 2025**:

1. Winter experienced extreme events on nearly all days, including heavy rainfall and floods.
2. Pre-monsoon heatwaves remained confined to peninsular and central India.
3. Monsoon months witnessed a paradox of excess rainfall alongside district-level rainfall deficits.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 and 3 only
B. 1 only
C. 2 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A

Explanation

- **Statement 1** is correct: Winter saw extremes on **97% of days**, including heavy rainfall and floods.
- **Statement 2** is incorrect: Heatwaves extended into **Himalayan regions** (HP, J&K, Ladakh).
- **Statement 3** is correct: The monsoon showed **simultaneous flooding and rainfall deficits**.

MCQ 5

With reference to the **impact of extreme weather events in India in 2025**, consider the following:

1. Lightning and thunderstorms caused more deaths than floods and landslides combined.
2. Crop damage during the monsoon accounted for nearly two-thirds of total agricultural loss.
3. Deaths due to extreme weather increased by nearly fifty percent compared to 2022.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 2 and 3 only
B. 1 and 2 only
C. 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A

Explanation

- **Statement 1** is incorrect: Floods, landslides, and cloudbursts caused **2,707 deaths**, higher than lightning-related deaths (**1,538**).
- **Statement 2** is correct: Monsoon crop damage was about **65%** of total losses.
- **Statement 3** is correct: Disaster-related deaths rose by **47% since 2022**.

MCQ 6

Which of the following conclusions can be most logically drawn from the **2025 disaster data**?

A. Climate disasters in India remain episodic and seasonal
B. Disaster management systems are adequately designed for persistent extremes
C. Climate risk has evolved into a core development and governance challenge
D. Agricultural losses are declining due to adaptive practices

Answer: C

Explanation

- The report explicitly highlights a shift from **episodic disasters to a structural crisis**, stressing that climate risk now directly threatens development, livelihoods, and governance capacity.

MCQ 7

The primary governance limitation exposed by India's experience of near-permanent extreme weather events in 2025 is the over-reliance on:

A. Market-based mitigation mechanisms
B. Relief-centric disaster response frameworks
C. International climate finance
D. Early warning and forecasting systems

Answer: B

Explanation

- The analysis notes that **relief-centric models are inadequate** under conditions of continuous disasters, calling for resilience, adaptation, and systemic planning instead.

Mains: Discuss the implications of frequent disruptions and reduced debate time on the institutional health of the Indian Parliament. How can Parliament balance efficiency with deliberative democracy? (15 marks | 250 words)