

Topic 1: Communist Party of India — From Emergence to Institutional Consolidation (100 Years)

Origins and Early Development

The Communist Party of India (CPI) was formally established at **Kanpur on 26 December 1925**, marking the crystallisation of communist ideology as an organised political force in colonial India.

An alternative ideological genesis is traced to **Tashkent in 1920**, where **M.N. Roy**, operating within the **Comintern framework**, articulated the foundations of Indian communism.

The party's growth was not sudden but evolved through a **gradual fusion of overseas Indian revolutionaries, urban industrial workers, and peasant mobilisation movements**.

Key architects of the movement included **M.N. Roy, S.A. Dange, Muzaffar Ahmad, Ghulam Hussain, Shaukat Usmani, and Singaravelu Chettiar**, who collectively shaped its ideological and organisational base.

Relevance

GS-I | Modern Indian History

- Evolution of Left movements
- Labour and peasant mobilisation
- Ideological influences within the freedom struggle

GS-II | Political Ideologies & Party Systems

- Development of Left politics within India's parliamentary democracy

Global Ideological Context

The rise of communism globally emerged as a response to **industrial capitalism, widening inequality, and worker exploitation**.

Karl Marx's theoretical contributions—class struggle, surplus value, and historical materialism—provided the intellectual scaffolding.

The **Russian Revolution of 1917** energised anti-imperialist struggles worldwide, while the **Communist International (Comintern)** of the 1920s facilitated coordination among revolutionary movements in colonised societies.

Multiple Streams Shaping Indian Communism

- **Internationalist–diaspora strand** led by M.N. Roy
- Indigenous Left intellectual circles in **Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras**
- **Worker–peasant activism**, institutionalised through trade unions such as the **All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC, 1920)**

Colonial State Response and Repression

The **Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929–33)** symbolised colonial repression, leading to arrests, bans, and underground reorganisation.

Paradoxically, this episode cemented CPI's identity as a **serious labour-rooted ideological force** rather than a fringe revolutionary group.

Role in the National Movement

The CPI played a significant role in **organising strikes, plantation labour movements, and mill-worker agitations**.

During the 1930s, it cooperated tactically with the **Congress Socialist Party**.
In the Second World War phase, the party adopted the “**People’s War**” line following Nazi Germany’s invasion of the USSR.
Its strongest regional bases emerged in **Bengal, Bombay Presidency, Andhra, and agrarian belts of Punjab**.

Topic 2: Aravalli Mining — Interpreting the “No New Leases” Narrative

What Authorities Have Actually Stated

The claim that “**no new mining leases will be allowed in the Aravalli range**” is not an unconditional prohibition.

The current restriction applies **only to general minerals**, and only until the **Management Plan for Sustainable Mining (MPSM)** is finalised.

Explicit exemptions exist for:

- **Critical minerals**
- **Strategic minerals**
- **Atomic minerals** listed in the **First Schedule of the MMDR Act, 1957**

Existing mines may continue operations, and lease renewals can be permitted under stringent conditions.

In essence, the policy represents a **temporary regulatory pause**, not a permanent mining ban, with strategic-resource exceptions clearly retained.

Relevance

GS-III | Environment & Ecology

- Fragile landscapes
- Biodiversity corridors
- Desertification control and groundwater recharge

GS-III | Economy & Mineral Resources

- Critical minerals and strategic autonomy

Rationale Behind Strategic Exemptions

The **Committee on Uniform Definition of Aravalli Hills and Ranges** observed that the region contains **deep-seated, location-specific critical minerals**, many of which India imports heavily.

Strategically important minerals identified include **lead, zinc, copper, silver, tin, graphite, molybdenum, nickel, niobium, lithium, and rare earth elements**.

These resources are indispensable for:

- Clean-energy technologies
- High-technology manufacturing
- Defence production
- Supply-chain resilience

Hence, strategic minerals are categorised as **national-interest assets**, justifying exemption from blanket environmental restrictions.

Temporary Halt and Future Mining Framework

The **MoEFCC directive (24 December 2025)** instructs Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat to halt new mining leases until completion of the MPSM.

The plan is being prepared by the **Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE)**, with final approval vested in the MoEFCC.

The MPSM will:

- Identify ecologically sensitive and restoration-priority zones
- Demarcate conditional and permissible mining areas
- Follow the **Saranda–Chaibasa sustainable mining model**

The implication is **selective, science-based mining**, not complete exclusion.

Ecological Importance of the Aravallis

One of the world's **oldest mountain systems**, the Aravallis serve as:

- A barrier against Thar desert expansion
- A groundwater recharge system
- A biodiversity corridor connecting Delhi Ridge ecosystems

Decades of **illegal quarrying, fragmentation, dust pollution, and slope destabilisation** have already weakened the landscape, intensifying the trade-off between mineral extraction and climate resilience.

Governance Risks and Gaps

- Oversimplified public messaging obscures policy nuance
- Risk of misclassifying leases as “strategic”
- Enforcement variability across states
- Incremental ecological degradation through piecemeal approvals

Safeguards Needed

- Publicly accessible mineral-zoning maps
- Clear differentiation between mineral categories
- Independent ecological and social audits
- Cumulative-impact assessments
- Absolute protection for recharge zones and wildlife corridors

Topic 3: India's Renewed Tilt Toward Coal Power Despite Lower-Cost Renewable Alternatives

Why is it in the News?

Several Indian States — **Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh** — have recently entered into **coal-based Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs)** at tariffs ranging between **₹5.4 and ₹6.64 per unit**, even as renewable energy options remain significantly cheaper.

Current market benchmarks indicate:

- **Solar and wind power** costs between **₹2.5 and ₹4 per unit**
- **Hybrid renewable systems with storage** available at **around ₹5 per unit or lower**

Simultaneously, nearly **43 GW of renewable capacity**, representing investments of approximately **₹2.1 lakh crore**, remains stranded due to lack of assured offtake.

In parallel, India plans to add **around 100 GW of new coal-based capacity by 2032**, signalling a renewed reliance on coal despite stated decarbonisation commitments.

Relevance

GS-III | Energy, Economy & Environment

- Energy security versus energy transition
- Coal dependence, grid reliability, and climate commitments

GS-II | Centre–State Energy Governance

- DISCOM incentives and risk behaviour
 - State-level power procurement decisions
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India's Power Mix and Transition Objectives

Coal and lignite currently contribute **about 55–57% of total electricity generation**, while renewable energy sources — solar, wind, biomass, and small hydro — account for **around 30% of installed capacity**, though their share in actual generation is lower due to intermittency.

India has set ambitious long-term targets:

- **500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030**
- **Net-zero emissions by 2070**

At the same time, electricity demand is growing at **8–10% annually**, driven by industrial expansion, urbanisation, air-conditioning load, electric vehicles, data centres, and digital infrastructure.

This creates a structural tension between **rapidly rising demand** and **the need for dependable baseload power**.

Why States Continue to Prefer Coal-Based Power

1. Baseload Reliability Advantage

Coal power offers continuous, round-the-clock electricity, whereas renewable generation depends on sunlight and wind availability. Grid managers perceive coal as essential for ensuring system stability.

2. Constraints in Battery Storage

Current battery storage technologies typically support **5–7 hours** of supply rather than full 24x7 coverage.

Additional challenges include import dependence, supply-chain volatility, and **18% GST on storage services**, which raises effective tariffs.

3. DISCOM Risk Aversion

State DISCOMs prioritise short-term reliability over long-term cost efficiency. Power outages carry high political and social costs, while coal PPAs transfer operational risk to generators rather than utilities.

4. Renewable Curtailment Practices

In states such as Rajasthan and Gujarat, renewable output has been curtailed during periods of surplus, undermining project bankability and discouraging fresh investment.

Emerging Economic Signals

- Coal PPAs at ₹5.5–₹6.6/unit coexist with cheaper renewables at ₹2.5–₹4/unit
- **43 GW of stranded renewable capacity** locks significant capital
- Planned coal expansion risks long-term **carbon lock-in** and asset stranding

Strategic Implications for India's Energy Transition

Opportunities

- Immediate grid stability
- Support for industrial growth and peak-demand management

Risks

- Slowing of energy transition
- Jeopardising 2030 climate commitments
- Rising air pollution and public-health costs
- Loss of competitiveness in global green-manufacturing value chains

Way Forward

Short Term

- Scale up Round-the-Clock renewable + storage tenders
- Rationalise GST on battery storage
- Standardise risk-sharing PPA models

Medium Term

- Develop green transmission corridors
- Strengthen peaking and ancillary service markets
- Build domestic battery supply chains

Long Term

- Shift from coal-centric baseload to diversified dispatch
- Promote flexible thermal generation instead of new coal plants
- Align State procurement strategies with national transition goals

Topic 4: Fake / Adulterated Paneer and FSSAI's Proposed Regulatory Intervention

Why is it in the News?

The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** has proposed stricter labelling and disclosure norms to address the widespread sale of **fake or non-dairy paneer substitutes**.

Many loose and unpackaged paneer products sold in local markets are made using **vegetable oils, skimmed milk powder, starches, and emulsifiers**, which mimic the appearance and texture of real paneer but lack its nutritional value.

Given paneer's importance as a **primary protein source for India's large vegetarian population**, and the size of the market — **over ₹65,000 crore**, largely unorganised — the issue carries significant public-health implications.

Relevance

GS-II | Governance & Regulatory Institutions

- Role of FSSAI
- Consumer protection and labelling standards

GS-III | Public Health & Food Security

- Adulteration risks
 - Nutritional quality and disease burden
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Understanding Food Adulteration

Food adulteration involves the **addition, substitution, or removal of ingredients** to increase profits, reduce quality, or mislead consumers, often leading to health risks and nutritional loss.

It may be:

- **Intentional** — dilution, substitution, synthetic fats
- **Unintentional** — contamination during storage or transport

The regulatory framework is provided by the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006**, which empowers FSSAI to define standards, enforce labelling norms, and impose penalties.

Nature of the Paneer Adulteration Problem

Authentic Paneer

- Produced by curdling milk
- Rich in protein, calcium, and milk fats

Fake or Substitute Paneer

- Made using vegetable oils and starches
- Cheaper and widely sold loose
- Nutritional profile not disclosed to consumers

Market Drivers

- Organised sector share: ~10%
 - Loose paneer: ₹300–340/kg
 - Branded paneer: ₹450–500/kg
- Price differentials incentivise adulteration.
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Public Health and Governance Concerns

Consumers unknowingly ingest **trans fats, low-quality oils, and low-protein substitutes**, increasing risks of obesity, cardiovascular disease, and nutrient deficiency.

The practice violates:

- Right to informed consumer choice
 - Ethical food-labelling standards
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Why Enforcement Remains Weak

- Highly fragmented informal dairy markets
- Limited inspections at local mandis
- Low consumer awareness
- Weak traceability systems
- Seasonal demand spikes during festivals

FSSAI's Proposed Regulatory Measures

- Mandatory labelling as **“Paneer Analogue”**
- Prohibition on dairy-related terminology
- Mandatory sealed packaging
- Clear ingredient and nutrition disclosure

The approach shifts regulation from **post-facto punishment to preventive transparency.**

Way Forward

- Expand district-level food testing infrastructure
- Strengthen random sampling and audits
- Introduce QR-based traceability
- Support formalisation of local dairy value chains
- Promote consumer awareness campaigns

Topic 5: Indian Army's Revised Social-Media Policy — Controlled Digital Access with Operational Safeguards

Why is it in the News?

The **Indian Army has revised its social-media policy**, permitting **“passive participation”** by its personnel on selected digital platforms such as **Instagram, X (Twitter), YouTube, Quora**, and similar sites.

Under the revised framework, personnel are allowed **only to view or monitor content**, while **all forms of active engagement remain prohibited**, including:

- Posting or uploading content
- Commenting or reacting
- Sharing or forwarding material
- Direct messaging or online interaction

The policy also allows **limited use of messaging platforms** such as **WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, and Skype**, strictly for **general, unclassified communication with known contacts**.

At the same time, the policy reiterates an absolute prohibition on:

- Use of **VPNs**, proxy servers, or anonymous browsing tools
- Torrents, cracked or pirated software

- Unverified cloud-storage services
- Anonymous forums and risky applications

This revision replaces the **stricter 2020 directive**, under which officers and soldiers were instructed to delete social-media accounts and mobile applications amid heightened security concerns, including risks linked to foreign data harvesting and hostile intelligence penetration.

The shift signals a transition from total digital exclusion to calibrated, security-aware engagement rather than relaxation.

Relevance

GS-III | Internal Security & Cyber Security

- Operational Security (OPSEC)
- Espionage, cyber-threats, and information warfare

GS-II | Constitutional & Governance Dimensions

- Reasonable restrictions on speech under **Article 19(2)**
- State's security obligations under **Article 355**

Why Armed Forces Regulate Social-Media Use

1. Operational Security (OPSEC) Risks

Digital platforms enable inadvertent disclosure of sensitive information through:

- Geotagged photographs
 - Location metadata
 - Visual cues about troop deployment, logistics, or infrastructure
- Even innocuous content can cumulatively reveal patterns exploitable by adversaries.

2. Espionage and Cyber-Intelligence Threats

State-sponsored actors and non-state adversaries exploit social media for:

- Phishing and identity spoofing
- Honey-trapping of personnel
- Behavioural profiling using metadata and interaction history

3. Information and Psychological Warfare

Social media is a key domain of:

- Disinformation campaigns
- Cognitive targeting and morale manipulation
- Narrative shaping against armed forces

4. Data Harvesting and Privacy Risks

Many applications collect extensive behavioural and network data, creating intelligence vulnerabilities even without explicit information sharing.

Core principle:

In a military context, **there is no such thing as a “harmless post”** — fragmented data points can be weaponised.

Constitutional and Governance Framework

Article 355 — Duty of the Union

The Union is constitutionally obligated to ensure the security of the State and protect it against internal and external threats.

Maintaining strict digital discipline within the armed forces directly supports this obligation.

Article 19(2) — Reasonable Restrictions

While freedom of speech is a fundamental right, members of disciplined forces are subject to constitutionally valid restrictions in the interests of:

- Sovereignty and integrity of India
- Security of the State
- Public order and military discipline

Doctrine of Institutional Discipline

The armed forces operate on principles of:

- Hierarchy
- Confidentiality
- Collective responsibility

Unregulated online expression can undermine command structures and institutional cohesion.

Administrative Law Perspective — Principle of Proportionality

The revised policy reflects a **proportionate regulatory approach**:

- Moves away from blanket bans imposed in 2020
- Introduces **risk-based, minimal relaxation** without compromising security
- Balances national-security imperatives with practical digital realities

This demonstrates adaptive governance rather than dilution of discipline.

Civil–Military Relations Dimension

The policy reinforces the armed forces’ **political neutrality** by preventing:

- Political commentary

- Ideological mobilisation
- Identity-based polarisation through online platforms

By limiting engagement to passive observation, the Army ensures that personnel remain informed without becoming participants in public digital discourse.

Analytical Takeaway

The revised social-media policy does **not liberalise expression** but **refines control mechanisms**.

It acknowledges the inevitability of digital exposure while reaffirming that **operational secrecy, institutional discipline, and national security override individual online autonomy** within the military domain.

27th December 2025: Daily MCQs

1. With reference to the origins and evolution of the Communist Party of India (CPI), consider the following statements:

1. The Kanpur Conference of 1925 marked the first formal organisational consolidation of communist groups in India.
2. M.N. Roy rejected Comintern affiliation and argued for a purely indigenous communist movement.
3. The Meerut Conspiracy Case played a paradoxical role by simultaneously repressing and popularising communist ideology.
4. The CPI's "People's War" line during World War II aligned it with British anti-fascist strategy after Germany invaded the USSR.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: A

Explanation:

- 1 is correct (Kanpur 1925 formalised the CPI).
2 is incorrect (M.N. Roy was closely linked to the Comintern initially).
3 is correct (repression also amplified visibility and ideological spread).
4 is correct (post-1941 shift followed the Nazi invasion of the USSR).

2. With reference to mining regulation in the Aravalli range, consider the following statements:

1. The current prohibition on new mining leases applies uniformly to all categories of minerals.

2. Strategic and atomic minerals are exempt from the temporary restriction on new leases.
3. Existing mining leases may continue under regulatory oversight during the preparation of the Management Plan for Sustainable Mining (MPSM).
4. The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 is the sole legal framework governing mining in the Aravalli region.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: B

Explanation:

- 1 is incorrect (restriction applies mainly to general minerals).
2 is correct (strategic/atomic minerals are exempted).
3 is correct (existing mines may continue under regulation).
4 is incorrect (MMDR Act and environmental laws also apply).

3. Consider the following statements regarding recent power-sector trends in India:

1. Several States have signed coal-based power purchase agreements (PPAs) at tariffs higher than recent solar and wind bids.
2. Renewable energy projects worth over ₹2 lakh crore are currently stranded due to lack of buyers.
3. Battery-based energy storage systems can presently provide uninterrupted 24×7 baseload power at scale.
4. India plans to add around 100 GW of new coal-based capacity by 2032.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- 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:

- 1 is correct (coal PPAs at ₹5.4–₹6.6/unit).
2 is correct (large RE capacity stranded).
3 is incorrect (storage duration and scale remain limited).
4 is correct (coal expansion plans continue).

4. Which of the following best explains why State DISCOMs prefer coal-based power despite lower renewable tariffs?

- A. Coal-based electricity is exempt from indirect taxation.
- B. Coal PPAs transfer reliability and supply risks away from DISCOMs.
- C. Renewable power cannot be integrated into the national grid.
- D. Coal plants can be commissioned faster than solar and wind projects.

Answer: B

Explanation:

Coal provides firm, dispatchable baseload power and shifts operational risk to generators, making it politically safer for DISCOMs.

5. With reference to fake or adulterated paneer, consider the following statements:

- 1. Non-dairy paneer substitutes may use dairy-related terminology if full ingredient disclosure is provided.
- 2. FSSAI has proposed mandatory labelling of such products as “Paneer Analogue”.
- 3. The proposed framework seeks to restrict the loose sale of non-dairy paneer substitutes.
- 4. Food adulteration under Indian law includes both intentional and unintentional acts.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: C

Explanation:

1 is incorrect (use of dairy terminology is proposed to be prohibited).
2, 3 and 4 are correct.

6. FSSAI’s proposed regulatory response to fake paneer primarily represents a shift from:

- A. Centralised food regulation to State-level control
- B. Criminal enforcement to civil enforcement
- C. Reactive punishment to preventive consumer protection
- D. Voluntary standards to international harmonisation

Answer: C

Explanation:

The focus is on advance labelling, disclosure, and traceability to prevent harm rather than punish after damage occurs.

7. The constitutional justification for restricting social-media use by Indian Army personnel is most directly derived from:

- A. Article 14
- B. Article 19(1)(a)
- C. Article 19(2)
- D. Article 21

Answer: C

Explanation:

Restrictions fall within “reasonable restrictions” on free speech in the interests of security and public order.

8. Why are even passive social-media activities by military personnel considered a security risk?

- A. They reduce discipline and morale
- B. Behavioural metadata and viewing patterns can be exploited for intelligence profiling
- C. They violate international humanitarian law
- D. They interfere with operational command structures

Answer: B

Explanation:

Metadata generated through passive use can reveal patterns exploitable by adversaries.

9. The shift from a blanket social-media ban in 2020 to a risk-based policy in 2025 best illustrates which principle of administrative law?

- A. Natural justice
- B. Legitimate expectation
- C. Proportionality
- D. Delegated legislation

Answer: C

10. A common governance theme underlying all the discussed issues is:

- A. Judicial overreach
- B. Market failure
- C. Calibrated regulation balancing strategic, economic, and social realities
- D. Breakdown of federal relations

Answer: C

Mains: Assess the role of labour and peasant mobilisation in transforming communist ideology from an intellectual current into a mass political force in pre-Independence India. 150 words.