UPSC Daily Current Affairs| Prelim Bits 08-04-2025

Equivalence Certificates for Foreign Degrees

Prelims – Current events of national and international importance.

Mains – *GS-II (Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources)*

Why in news?

The University Grants Commission (Recognition and Grant of Equivalence to Qualifications Obtained from Foreign Educational Institutions) Regulations 2025 were notified recently.

- **Equivalence certificate** – Confirms a foreign qualification (degree, diploma) is equivalent to a specific Indian qualification level for higher studies or employment.
- **Issuing Authority** – *University Grants Commission will now grant these certificates*, replacing the previous system managed by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU).
- This marks the first dedicated regulatory framework by UGC for this purpose.
- **Validity** – Valid for all UGC academic institutions, higher education, research, and employment requiring UGC-recognized qualifications with few exceptions.
- **Exceptions** – Medical, pharmacy, nursing, law, architecture and others regulated by the norms of respective Statutory Councils in India" will not be covered under the regulations.
- **Applicability** – Applicable to qualifications obtained via distance or online learning modes.
- Also applies to school qualifications (requiring min. 12 years of schooling) for UG admissions in India.

Conditions for Granting Equivalence

- Qualification awarded by a foreign institution recognized in its home country.
- Entry requirements (credits, thesis, etc.) comparable to similar Indian programmes.
- Programme pursued according to the foreign institution's norms.
- Qualifications from off-shore campuses are eligible if compliant with regulations in both the host country and the institution's origin country.

Process for granting equivalence

- Applications via a *dedicated UGC online portal*.
- UGC-appointed standing committee decides (accept/reject) within 10 working days.
- *Mechanism for review available in case of rejection*.

Need for the issuance of the regulations

- Aligns with *NEP 2020's focus on internationalization of higher education*.
- Provides a *structured, transparent, and statutory framework*, replacing the non-statutory AIU system.
- Ensures *clarity, consistency, and fairness* in recognizing foreign qualifications.
- Facilitates *seamless integration* of students with foreign qualifications into India's education system and workforce.

Reference

The Indian Express | equivalence certificates

Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007

Prelims – *Indian Polity and Governance*

Mains - *GS-II - Governance, Social Justice | Rights of vulnerable sections, legal safeguards for the elderly.*

Why in news?

Recently, the Supreme Court ruled on a case involving senior parents attempting to evict their son from their home under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007.

- **Purpose -** Enacted to ensure maintenance and welfare of parents and senior citizens ***(60 years and above).***
- Applies when the senior citizen is unable to maintain themselves from their own earnings or property.
- **Legal responsibility** - Places legal responsibility on children/relatives (legal heirs) to provide financial support, food, clothing, residence, and medical care.
- **Tribunals**
  - **Maintenance Tribunals** - To hear petitions from senior citizens.
  - **Appellate Tribunals** - To hear appeals against the tribunal orders.
- **Key Provisions**
  - **Property Transfer and Maintenance - Section 23(1)** - If a senior citizen transfers property with a condition that the recipient will maintain them and this is not fulfilled, then the transfer is treated as done under *fraud, coercion or undue influence* and can be declared void by the tribunal.
  - **Section 23(2)** - A senior citizen can enforce their *right to maintenance* from the estate.
  - **Penalties for Abandonment -** Abandoning a senior citizen is a criminal offense, punishable with imprisonment for *3 months or fined up to 5,000* or with both.
  - **Powers of the Tribunal -** The Tribunal may impose fines and sentence the children or relatives who disobey its orders with all or a portion of the monthly allowance for the maintenance and expenses of the Senior Citizens.
  - It may also impose a jail sentence that lasts up to one month or until the money is paid.

    - The maximum maintenance allowance *shall not exceed* Rs.10,000 per month.
    - **No Legal Practitioners - Section 17** - Prohibits parties from being represented by legal practitioners in proceedings before a maintenance tribunal or appellate tribunal.
- **SC Interpretation of Senior Citizens Act, 2007 -** The Act aims to protect vulnerable senior citizens, ensuring they live in dignity and security.
- While the act does *not explicitly* mention *eviction*, the Supreme Court has clarified that eviction is legally permissible if it ensures the maintenance and safety of senior citizens.

Reference

Indian express | Senior citizens act

Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025

Prelims – *Indian polity and Governance*

Mains - *GS II |Government Policies & Interventions | Statutory, Regulatory and Quasi-judicial Bodies.*

Why in news?

Parliament recently passed Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

- **Waqf -** A Waqf is a *permanent endowment* made by a Muslim for charitable/religious causes - like building mosques, schools, or hospitals.
- Once declared, the waqf property becomes *inalienable* - it can't be sold, gifted, inherited or mortgaged.
- Ownership is considered to be with God and the property is managed by *Waqf Boards*.

Waqf Board is constituted under the Waqf Act, 1995 (amended in 2013) by state governments to register, maintain and oversee Waqf properties in the state.

- **Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025** – It aims to update the Waqf Act, 1995 to fix issues in the management of Waqf properties.
- The proposed changes focus on
    - Overcoming the shortcomings of the previous act and enhancing the efficiency of Waqf boards
    - Updating the definitions of waqf
    - Improving the registration process
    - Increasing the role of technology in managing Waqf records.
- **Name of the Act -** Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency, and Development Act, 2025.
- **Key Provisions**

Formation of Waqf	• Removes waqf by user and allows formation only through declaration or endowment. • Donors must be practicing Muslims for at least 5 years and must own the property. • Waqf-alal-aulad ***cannot deny*** inheritance rights to female heirs. *Waqf-alal-aulad is a specific type of Waqf where income from the donated property is dedicated primarily for the benefit of the donor's family or descendants, recognized under Muslim law.*
Government Property as Waqf	• Any government property identified as Waqf will cease to be Waqf. • Ownership disputes will be resolved by the Collector, who will submit a report to the state government.
Power to Determine Waqf Property	• Waqf Board previously had the power to inquire and determine waqf property, so the provision has been removed.
Survey of Waqf	• Empowers Collectors to conduct surveys and mandates pending surveys to be conducted as per state revenue laws.
Central Waqf Council Composition	***Central Waqf Council -*** *A statutory body established in 1964 under the Ministry of Minority Affairs, to advise the Central Government and State Waqf Boards on Waqf matters.* • Two members must be non-Muslims. • MPs, former judges, and eminent persons appointed to the Council as per the Act need not be Muslims. • The following members must be Muslims - Representatives of Muslim organisations, Scholars in Islamic law, Chairpersons of Waqf Boards • Of the Muslim members, *2 members must be women.*
Waqf Boards Composition	• The Bill empowers the state government to nominate one person from each background to the Board. They need not be Muslims. • It adds that the Board must have • Two non-Muslim members • At least one member each from Shias, Sunnis, and Backward classes of Muslims • One member each from Bohra and Agakhani communities (if there is Waqf in the state) • Two Muslim members must be women.
Waqf Tribunal Composition	*Waqf Tribunal is a quasi-judicial body set up by state government under Waqf Act 1995 to adjudicate disputes concerning Waqf properties.* • A current or former *District Court judge* as chairman • A current or former joint secretary to the state government
Appeal on Tribunal Orders	• The Bill omits provisions deeming finality to Tribunal's decisions. • Allows appeals to the High Court *within 90 days.*
Powers of Central Government	• The Bill empowers the central government to make rules regarding registration, publication of accounts of waqf and publication of proceedings of Waqf Boards. • The Bill empowers the central government to get these audited by the CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General) or a designated officer.

Separate Waqf Boards for Sects	• Separate Waqf boards allowed for Bohra and Agakhani sects, along with Shia and Sunni sects.

- The Bill promotes *a secular, transparent and accountable* system of waqf governance.
- It aims to protect public interest and ensure that waqf properties serve *religious, social and charitable purposes* effectively.

References

PIB | Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025

PRS India | Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024

PM E-DRIVE SCHEME

Prelims – *Indian polity and Governance*

Mains *- GS II |Government Policies & Interventions*

Why in News?

As of now, 10.27 lakh Electric Vehicles (EVs) have been sold under the PM E-DRIVE scheme, which has led to a reduction of 230K tonnes of CO2 emission.

- **PM E-DRIVE Scheme -** PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) Scheme.
- **Launched by -** Ministry of Heavy Industry.
- **Aim -** To promote electric mobility in India by ***accelerating EV adoption***, developing charging infrastructure, and fostering a robust EV manufacturing ecosystem.
- **Duration -** 2024 – 2026.
- **Eligible category of vehicles**
  - Buses (only electric buses) (e-bus),
  - Three-Wheelers (electric) including registered e-rickshaws & e-carts and L5 (e-3W),
  - Two wheelers (electric) – e-2W,
  - e-ambulances (electric, plug in hybrid & strong hybrid), and
  - e-trucks and other new emerging EV categories (to be notified subsequently).
  - Charging infrastructures
  - Testing agencies under MHI
- **Components**
- **Subsidies** - Demand Incentives for e-2W, e-3W, e-ambulances, e-trucks and other new emerging EV categories.

Demand incentive is a financial (Subsidy) benefit offered to stimulate consumer demand to encourage the adoption of EV.

    - **PM E-DRIVE e-Voucher -** The Ministry of Heavy Industry (MHI) is introducing e-Vouchers for EV customers to avail the demand incentive under the scheme.
- **Proposed Incentive -** Demand incentive of Rs.5,000 per kWh for e-2Ws/e-3Ws registered in FY 2024-25, and Rs.2,500 per kWh for FY 2025-26.
- **Grants for creation of capital assets -** e-buses, establishment of network of charging stations & upgradation of testing agencies of MHI.
- **Deployment of e-ambulances -** The scheme allocates funds for the deployment of e-ambulances.
- **Deployment of public charging stations -** The scheme promotes the installation of electric vehicle public charging stations (EVPCS).
- These EVPCS shall be installed in the selected cities *with high EV penetration* and also on selected highways.
- **Administration –** It includes IEC (Information, Education & Communication) activities and fee for project management agency (PMA).
- Benefits under the PM E-DRIVE scheme ***will not be provided*** to EVs purchased by any Central or State Government department or its agencies.

References

India Govt | PM E-DRIVE Scheme

Tribhuvan Sahkari University Bill, 2025

Prelims – *Indian polity and Governance*

Mains - *GS II |Government Policies & Interventions*

Why in News?

The "Tribhuvan" Sahkari University Bill 2025 was passed by the parliament recently.

- The Bill seeks to establish the *Institute of Rural Management Anand, Gujarat (IRMA)* as the “Tribhuvan” Sahkari University. Currently, IRMA is registered as a society.
- **Objectives of the University** - Provide education, training, and capacity building in the cooperative sector and undertake research and development activities in related areas.
- It will offer degree programs, distance learning and e-learning courses, and develop centres of excellence in co-operative sector.
- It may establish outlying campuses or affiliate institutes in any other place in India or outside India.
- **Status of IRMA -** IRMA will become one of the schools of the University.
- Autonomous identity of IRMA will be preserved within the institutional framework of the University.
- IRMA’s administrative and academic autonomy will be subject to the framework specified by the central government.
- IRMA will have its own ***Executive Board and a Director.***
- Employees of IRMA will become the employees of the University, with no change in

their terms and conditions of employment.

- Any modification in the ongoing academic programs and courses at IRMA may be made only with the concurrence of the Executive Board of IRMA.
- The Bill also declares IRMA as a *centre of excellence for rural management.*
- **Governance of the University -** The University will have a Vice-Chancellor, who will be the principal executive and academic officer of the University.
- The Vice-Chancellor will be appointed by the central government for a ***term of 3 years***, and will be eligible for re-appointment for another 2 years.
- The Vice-Chancellor will head the Executive Council, principal executive body of the University.
- The *central government* will specify details for the constitution of the Council, its powers and functions, and terms of office of its members.
- The University will have a Governing Board whose key functions include
    - Reviewing broad policies and programs of the University, and
    - Nominating members to its various administrative councils.
- **Governing Board -** The Board will be headed by the **Chancellor**, who will be a person of eminence and will be appointed by the central government. The Chancellor will have a ***term of 5 years.***
- **Other members**
    - Vice-Chancellor,
    - Secretary to the Cooperation Ministry,
    - Four Secretaries of the central ministries dealing with cooperative sector,
    - Heads of boards such as NABARD, National Dairy Development Board, and National Fisheries Development Board,
    - Four eminent persons in the field of cooperatives.
- **Board for Affiliation and Recognition -** The University will have a Board for Affiliation and Recognition for admitting or affiliating institutes. This Board will be headed by the *Vice-Chancellor.*

References

1. PIB | The “Tribhuvan” Sahkari University Bill, 2025
2. PRS India | The “Tribhuvan” Sahkari University Bill, 2025

Ottawa Convention

Prelims – *Current events of International Importance.*

Mains (GS II) – *International Agreements.*

Why in News?

The Baltic States and Poland recently announced their withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty.

> *Landmines come predominantly in two varieties - Anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines. Both types have caused harm to civilian populations and continue to kill*

and injure long after conflicts end.

- It is an ***international agreement*** that prohibits the use, developing, acquiring, retaining, stockpiling, production, and transfer of ***anti-personnel landmines***.
- It is also known as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention or Mine Ban Treaty.
- **Anti-personnel landmines definition -** Designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and that will incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons.
- **Entered into force in –** 1999.
- The convention is *open to all nations.*
- It requires states-parties to destroy their stockpiled APLs within 4 years and eliminate all APL holdings, including mines currently planted in the soil, within 10 years.
- Countries may request a renewable extension, which can be up to 10 years long, to fulfill their destruction obligations.
- States-parties are also required *annually to report* their total APL stockpiles, the technical characteristics of their APLs, the location of all mined areas, and the status of APL destruction programs.
- **Member states – *164 States*** that have formally agreed to be bound by the Convention till 2022.
- The US, Russia, China and **India** are ***not party*** to the convention.
- **Significant producers and users of anti-personnel mines -** The United States, China, India, Pakistan, and Russia.

Reference

The Indian Express | Ottawa Convention

One Liners 08-04-2025

History, Art and Culture

Remnants of the Megalithic Era

Recently, a rock-cut chamber and artefacts were unearthed at Manimoola village in Bandadukka, Kerala.

• **Time period** – Nearly 2,000 years old under megalithic period.

• **Discovered items** – Black ware pots, five 4-legged jars, clay utensils resembling lids of large vessels, an iron stove stand with 3 support stones, and iron tools resembling penknives.

• Several bone fragments were also found.

• A *nearby stone structure* '**Pathaya Kallu'** is also believed to be a megalithic-era monument.

Wat Pho

Recently, the Prime Minister of India visited Wat Pho.

• It is an *ancient Buddhist temple complex*, located in Rattanakosin Island, south of Bangkok, *Thailand*.

• **Official name** – Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram Rajwaramahawihan, popularly known as Wat Pho.

• **Constructed in** – *16th century* as a monastery and was restored in 1788 by King Rama-I.

• **Significance** – It is home to the Thailand's oldest center for public education, home to a *school for Thai medicine* and known as the *birthplace of Thai massage*.

• It houses both the largest collection of Buddha images and the *largest Reclining Buddha statue* in Thailand

Geography

Kuirektykol Reserves

Recently, 10,00,000 tonnes of largest rare Earth metals deposit discovered in Kuirektykol site.

• **Located in** – To southeast of Astana *in Kazakhstan*.

• **Deposits** – Elements like Cerium, lanthanum, neodymium, and yttrium with an *average concentration of 700 grams* per ton.

• Rare earth metals are vital for technologies such as *electric vehicles, wind turbines, and defense systems*.

Kannadippaya – GI Tag

Recently, Kannadippaya has received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

• It is a *unique tribal bamboo mat* which is mainly woven by *5 ethnic groups*:
  - Oorali, Mannan, Muthuva, Malayan, and Kadar tribes.

• **Unique properties** – It is woven with a '*kannadi' pattern,* made from the soft inner layers of *reed bamboo*.

• It provides warmth during winter and cooling effect in summer.

• **GI Tag** – Boundary covers central & southern Kerala and along the western boundary of Tamil Nadu.

• It is the ***1st tribal handicraft product from Kerala*** to receive the GI tag.

Polity & Governance

Entrepreneurship Planning Digital Tool (EPDT) & Helpline Number

Recently, the EPDT and a toll-free number was launched.

• **Launched by** – *Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)*

• **Developed by –** LoKOS, a Mobile App that empowers users to efficiently manage Self Help Groups (SHGs).

• **Objective** – To support aspiring *Lakhpati Didis (SHGs members)* in crafting effective business plans.

• **Features** – *Simplifies data entry* for SHG members, *tracks entrepreneurial progress*, and offers necessary guidance for fostering entrepreneurship.

• **Helpline number** – To assist women with queries related to becoming Lakhpati Didis, with timely and effective support.

GP-DRASTI Program

Recently, Phase I of GP-DRASTI Program was introduced.

• **GP-DRASTI** – Gujarat Police – Drone Response and Aerial Surveillance Tactical Interventions.

• Gujarat police have employed *quadcopter drones* in several districts for policing activities. *The **quadcopter drones** will be flown at an operational flight ceiling of 120 metres above ground level.*

• **Objective** – To *track fugitives and find missing children*.

• **Usage** – Especially for crimes related to bodily harm and violence on the streets of major cities.

Economy

Tamil Nadu's Economic Growth

According to recent data by Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Tamil Nadu sets a real economic growth rate of 9.69% for 2024-25.

• **Real Growth Rate –** It measures the percentage change in output (goods and services) after adjusting for inflation.

• **Tamil Nadu's Sector's contribution to Gross State Value Added (GSVA):**

- Primary sector – 10%.
- Secondary sector –37%.
- Tertiary sector – 53%.

Security

Indian Naval Ship (INS) Sunayna

Recently, INS Sunayna was deployed as a part of Mission IOS SAGAR and set to sail from Karwar, Karnataka.

• *It is an Indian Navy Offshore Patrol Vessel (NOPV)*

• It comes under *Saryu-class Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV).*

• **Developed by** – *Goa Shipyard Limited*.

• **Mission** – It is carrying 44 naval personnel from 9 Friendly Foreign Nations (FFNs).

• It would be undertaking port calls at Dar-es-Salaam, Nacala, Port Louis, Port Victoria and Male and Joint surveillance of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of Southwest IOR.

Mission IOS SAGAR

• **IOS SAGAR** – Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) SAGAR (Security & Growth for All in the Region).

• It is an initiative towards continued cooperation with *Indian Ocean Region (IOR)* nations.

• **Objectives** – To bring together the *navies and maritime agencies of the Southwest IOR* on an Indian Naval platform.

• To provide comprehensive training to sea-riders from the Friendly Foreign Nations (FFNs) and marks an unprecedented collaboration in maritime security.

INS TRIKAND Medical Mission

Recently, INS TRIKAND was deployed to render critical medical assistance to a Pakistani crew of a Fishing Vessel (FV) to the east of the Oman coast

• It is a *stealth frigate* operating in the Central Arabian Sea.

• **Mission** – The Medical Officer of INS Trikand, along with a team *comprising MARCOS (Marine Commandos*) and the Ship's Boarding Team, boarded the FV to administer aid.

• Additionally, medical supplies, including antibiotics, were provided to the FV to ensure the crew's well-being until they reached their destination.