

## MATERNAL MORTALITY RATIO (MMR): CURRENT STATUS

- **Progress:** Compared to 1990, maternal deaths decreased by nearly **1/5th** by 2023. The most significant decline was recorded between 2000 and 2015 due to government interventions and an increase in **Institutional Deliveries**.
- **Concerning Factor:** This progress has slowed since 2015. Currently, **10%** of global maternal deaths still occur in India.
- **SDG Goal:** The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 3.1) aims to reduce the MMR to **70** per 100,000 live births by 2030.

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## MAJOR CHALLENGES

1. **Medical Causes:** Hemorrhages, infections, and blood pressure-related disorders (**Preeclampsia**) are the leading causes of death.
2. **Impact of COVID-19:** During the pandemic, the diversion of frontline workers, delays in deliveries, and a decrease in **Antenatal visits** weakened the healthcare system.
3. **Regional Disparities:** While Southern states, Gujarat, and Maharashtra are moving toward the SDG goals, significant gaps remain in the healthcare systems of states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, and Assam.
4. **Social Factors:** Poor health outcomes are driven by malnutrition among women, **Anemia**, and a lack of **Social Agency** (decision-making power).

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## GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

- **LaQshya:** A scheme aimed at improving the quality of care in labor rooms and maternity Operation Theaters (OTs).
- **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA):** Focuses on enhancing the role of Anganwadi workers in tracking the health of pregnant women and encouraging the use of online portals.

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## CONCLUSION - WAY FORWARD

According to the **Lancet report**, a comprehensive strategy is essential:

- **Strengthening the Healthcare System:** Early detection of problems at primary and secondary healthcare centers should be prioritized. Availability of emergency transport (**Ambulances**), specialists, and blood bank facilities must be increased.
- **Social Determinants:** Beyond mere infrastructure, addressing the nutritional needs of women and enhancing their **Social Agency** or decision-making power in society is crucial to controlling maternal mortality.
- **Role of States:** Since 'Health' is a **State Subject**, the implementation of schemes depends on local administrative capacity and political will.

## ENERGY SECURITY & FOSSIL FUEL CRISIS

### 1. CURRENT CHALLENGE: THE FOSSIL FUEL DEPENDENCY

- **Geopolitical Instability:** Conflicts in the Middle East have put global energy security at risk. Reduced supply of oil and gas is leading to price hikes and resulting in **Inflation**.
- **Impact on Food Security:** Rising energy prices increase transportation costs, threatening to push the **Global Hunger** index to record levels worldwide.
- **Impact on Asia:** Asian countries import **40%** of their required oil through the **Strait of Hormuz**, which presents a severe geopolitical risk.

### 2. CLIMATE IMPACT

- The use of fossil fuels is increasing global warming, leading to disasters such as mega-storms, droughts, and flash floods (e.g., the floods in India and Nepal in 2025).
- Despite this, fossil fuels continue to receive trillions of dollars in subsidies globally, which contradicts environmental goals.

### 3. SOLUTION: CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION

- **Economic Benefit: Renewable Energy** is currently the most cost-effective source of power.
- **Sovereignty:** Resources like solar and wind energy do not depend on geopolitics or shipping routes. This provides countries with **Energy Sovereignty**.
- **Infrastructure:** Beyond just production, it is essential to improve **Modern Grids** and storage systems.

- **COP30 (Brazil):** A decision was made to invest **\$1 trillion** in grids and storage.

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#### 4. GLOBAL COOPERATION & CHALLENGES

- **Funding Gap:** Although **\$2 trillion** was invested in clean energy last year, the share reaching developing countries remains very low.
- **Just Transition:** This shift must occur without harming economies and communities dependent on fossil fuels, by providing them with alternative employment.
- **COP31 (Turkey):** The conference to be held in Turkey this year is expected to further advance clean energy goals.

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#### CONCLUSION - STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

The solution to global instability is not to move toward fossil fuels but to transition away from them rapidly. **Climate Cooperation** is not just an environmental necessity; it is a cure (**Cure**) for world peace and economic stability.

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#### KEYWORDS FOR ANSWER WRITING:

- **Energy Sovereignty:** Independence in energy production.
- **Geopolitical Shocks:** Disruptions caused by international political events.
- **Just Transition:** Equitable shift to a green economy.
- **Modern Grids & Storage:** Advanced electrical networks and battery capacity.
- **Climate Resilience:** The ability to withstand and recover from climate-related shocks.

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#### STAGFLATION AND THE CURRENT ENERGY CRISIS

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##### 1. WHAT IS STAGFLATION?

Stagflation is a combination of two words: '**Stagnation**' (economic recession/low growth) and '**Inflation**' (rising prices).

- **Characteristics:** A decline in economic growth rate (or negative growth), rising unemployment, and a simultaneous sharp increase in the prices of goods.

- **Historical Context:** Countries like the United States and the United Kingdom faced this situation in the 1970s due to the oil crisis.

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## 2. HOW DOES IT OCCUR? (SUPPLY SHOCK THEORY)

Generally, when prices rise, supply increases. However, when a '**Negative Supply Shock**' occurs:

- Production and transportation are damaged due to wars or natural disasters.
- This causes the **Supply Curve to shift to the left**.
- As a result, the availability of goods (Quantity) decreases, and prices (Price) increase. This leads to '**Stagflation**'.

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## 3. THE 2026 IRAN WAR - AN IMMINENT THREAT

The current Iran-Israel conflict is more dangerous than the crises of 2008 or 2022:

- **Price and Supply Shock:** While the 2022 (Russia-Ukraine) crisis was largely limited to price increases, the current crisis calls into question the very **Availability** of energy.
- **Non-linear Outcomes:** If gas or oil supplies stop, industries shut down abruptly. Once small businesses close, it is difficult to revive them.
- **Impact on India:** Compared to the 1970s, India today relies heavily on petroleum products (chemical fertilizers, LPG, plastics, polymers). Therefore, this crisis will have a severe impact on the Indian economy.

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## 4. WHY IS IT DIFFICULT TO TACKLE?

Traditional solutions used for common economic problems fail in the face of stagflation:

- If **interest rates are raised** to reduce inflation, it further damages economic growth (growth decreases).
- If the government **increases spending (Fiscal stimulus)** to boost growth, it further fuels inflation.
- **Solution:** Rather than traditional monetary and fiscal policies, this can only be solved by repairing and restoring broken **Supply Chains**.

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KEY POINTS FOR EXAMS:

1. **Definition:** Low growth + High inflation + High unemployment = Stagflation.
2. **Cause:** This is primarily a **Supply-side** phenomenon.
3. **Strait of Hormuz:** The most critical route in global oil transportation. Its closure is a major cause of a global supply shock.
4. **Challenge:** Demand management tools (Interest rates) have limited effectiveness in controlling stagflation.

## TRANSGENDER RIGHTS: JUDICIARY VS. 2026 AMENDMENT ACT

### 1. JUDICIAL PERSPECTIVE (JUDICIAL ARC: 2014-2025)

Over the past decade, India's constitutional courts have expanded the rights of transgender persons, prioritizing their **Personal Autonomy**.

- **NALSA Judgment (2014):** The Supreme Court recognized transgender persons as the 'Third Gender'. It affirmed the right to **Self-identification** as a fundamental right falling under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.
- **Navtej Singh Johar (2018):** The court clarified that sexual orientation and gender identity are innate to an individual.
- **Various High Court Rulings:**
  - Supported the right to change name and gender in educational and employment certificates without requiring **Medical Proof**.
  - Protected rights related to family, marriage, and **Live-in** relationships.
  - Allowed trans-women to contest elections for seats reserved for women.

### 2. 2026 AMENDMENT ACT - KEY DEVIATIONS

The 2026 Amendment Act stands in contrast to the 'Self-identification' principle proposed by the judiciary:

- **Reinstatement of Medical Boards:** It removes the right to self-identification and mandates a **Medical Board** recommendation for a certificate issued by the District Magistrate.
- **Mandatory Surgery:** It stipulates that undergoing **Surgery** is compulsory to obtain a revised gender identity certificate.

- **Removal of Definitions:** Categorizations such as 'Trans-man', 'Trans-woman', and 'Genderqueer' present in the 2019 Act have been removed, bringing everyone under a single 'Transgender' umbrella.

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### 3. CORE CONFLICTS

- **Omissive Discrimination:** In the 'Jane Kaushik' case (October 2025), the Supreme Court criticized the government for its "administrative lethargy," terming the failure to implement the law as **Omissive Discrimination**.
- **Lack of Consultation:** Bringing the 2026 amendment without consulting the advisory committee suggested by the court has led to significant criticism.
- **Violation of Privacy:** Although the Madras High Court previously ruled that medical examinations for gender certification violate the **Right to Privacy** and dignity, the new law has reintroduced them.

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### 4. CRITICAL ANALYSIS

While the Judiciary views transgender rights through the lens of **Human Rights**, the Legislature (Parliament) is attempting to bring them back under **Medical and Administrative Control**. This shift risks infringing upon the constitutionally granted right to self-determination.

#### UPSC Value Addition:

"By regulating the constitutional right to 'Self-determination', the 2026 Amendment Act has become a barrier to a dignified life for transgender communities. This highlights the diverging perspectives between the Executive and the Judiciary."

## ARTEMIS II: HUMAN LUNAR MISSION

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### 1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- **Return to the Moon:** This is the first crewed mission to the Moon in over 50 years, since the Apollo missions ended in 1972.
- **Four Astronauts:** The crew includes three Americans (Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch) and one Canadian (Jeremy Hansen).

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## 2. BREAKING THE APOLLO 13 RECORD

- **Maximum Distance:** The Artemis II astronauts will travel approximately **4,000 miles (6,400 kilometers)** farther from Earth than the previous record set by the Apollo 13 crew in 1970.
- **Figure-Eight Path:** This mission will not land on the Moon or enter its orbit. Instead, it follows a "free-return trajectory" (a figure-8 shape) that swings around the far side of the Moon before returning to Earth.

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## 3. MISSION OBJECTIVES

- **Observation of the Far Side of the Moon:** The crew will closely observe the lunar "far side," which was often too dark or difficult for previous Apollo astronauts to see in detail.
- **Solar Eclipse:** From space, the crew will witness a total solar eclipse, allowing them to view rare phenomena like the Sun's shimmering **Corona**.
- **Systems Testing:** The primary goal is to test the **Orion** spacecraft and its life-support systems to ensure they are ready for the upcoming Artemis III mission (which intends to land humans on the Moon).

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## 4. FUTURE PLANS (FUTURE MOON BASE)

The ultimate goal of the Artemis program is not just a single trip, but establishing a sustainable human presence on the Moon:

- **Moon Base:** Building infrastructure including landers, rovers, drones, and pressurized **Habitats**.
- **Gateway to Space:** Using the Moon as a base and stepping stone for future deep-space missions, such as those to **Mars**.

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## KEY POINTS FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMS:

- **Mission Name:** Artemis II.
- **Space Agency:** NASA, in collaboration with the Canadian Space Agency (CSA).
- **Spacecraft:** Orion.
- **Rocket:** Space Launch System (SLS).
- **Key Record:** The crew will become the humans who have traveled the farthest distance from Earth in history.

- **Gender Equality:** Christina Koch will make history as the first woman to travel to the vicinity of the Moon.

#### UPSC Value Addition:

"Artemis II represents the transition from 'exploration' to 'sustained presence.' It tests the viability of long-term deep-space travel and international cooperation in the new 'Space Age' or 'Space 2.0'."

### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE (IDSDP)

#### 1. BACKGROUND & SIGNIFICANCE

- **Date:** Observed globally every year on **April 6**.
- **Proclamation:** The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed this day in 2013. It has been officially observed since 2014.
- **Historical Link:** April 6 was chosen to commemorate the day the first modern Olympic Games opened in 1896.

#### 2. THEME FOR 2026

**"Sport: Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers"**

This theme emphasizes fostering social cohesion and eliminating racial, religious, and class-based discrimination through sports.

#### 3. SPORT AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT

Sports are not just for entertainment; they are powerful instruments for achieving global peace and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**:

- **Social Cohesion:** 'Sports Diplomacy' plays a vital role in resolving conflicts by increasing understanding between diverse cultures.
- **Human Rights:** Promoting equality, respect, and discipline in sports raises awareness regarding human rights.
- **Health and Education:** Beyond physical fitness, sports cultivate leadership qualities and teamwork skills.

#### 4. UNITED NATIONS AND SPORT

- The United Nations recognizes sport as a "low-cost, high-impact tool for peace and development."
- **SDG 2030 Agenda:** The UN has declared sport as an important '**Enabler**' in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### QUICK FACTS:

- **When is IDSDP?** – April 6.
- **Who proclaimed it?** – United Nations (UN).
- **Objective:** To promote social change, development, and peace.

#### UPSC Value Addition:

"In international relations, sports serve as a significant form of **Soft Power**. It allows nations to build a positive global image and engage in 'Track II Diplomacy' where traditional political channels might be strained."

#### CENSUS 2027: DIGITAL REVOLUTION AND BRAND AMBASSADOR

##### 1. WHY IN THE NEWS? (CONTEXT)

The Government of India has appointed internationally acclaimed sand artist **Sudarsan Pattnaik** as the Brand Ambassador for '**Census 2027**'.

- **Sudarsan Pattnaik:** A Padma Shri recipient (2014) and Guinness World Record holder, he is an expert in creating social awareness through his art.
- **Objective:** To visually explain the importance of the census through sand sculptures and to increase public participation.

##### 2. KEY FEATURES OF CENSUS 2027

This is the first-ever **Digital Census** in the history of India.

- **Data Collection:** Moving away from the traditional paper-based method, data will be collected through mobile apps and online portals.

- **Self-Enumeration:** For the first time, citizens have been provided the facility to register their details themselves through a government-designated portal.

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### 3. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (ROADMAP)

The census process will be conducted in two main phases:

- **Phase 1 (April – September 2026):** House Listing operations and Housing Census.
- **Phase 2 (February 2027):** Population Enumeration.

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### 4. SIGNIFICANCE FOR POLICY MAKING

From a UPSC Mains perspective, census data is critical for the following:

- **Resource Allocation:** Distribution of central and state funds occurs based on population ratios.
- **Delimitation:** This data gains immense importance for determining the boundaries of Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies in the future.
- **Government Scheme Formulation:** Welfare schemes can be designed based on the socio-economic status of SC, ST, and other backward classes.

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### 5. UPSC PERSPECTIVE

- **Legal Background:** The census in India is conducted under the '**Census Act, 1948**'. It is an entry in the **Union List** (Seventh Schedule).
- **Nodal Agency:** Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner (under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**).
- **Mains Point:** While a digital census accelerates data analysis, the government must also address challenges regarding '**Data Privacy**'.

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### QUICK FACTS:

- **Brand Ambassador:** Sudarsan Pattnaik.
- **Edition:** 16th Census (First in digital format).
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs.

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### UPSC Value Addition:

"The transition to a digital census marks a shift toward 'Data-driven Governance'. However, bridging the digital divide is essential to ensure that no citizen is left uncouncted in the self-enumeration process."

## RONGALI BIHU: ASSAMESE NEW YEAR AND SPRING FESTIVAL

### 1. CONTEXT

'Rongali Bihu' celebrations commenced on **April 5, 2026**, marking the Assamese New Year and the arrival of the spring season.

- **Alternative Name:** It is also known as '**Bohag Bihu**'.
- **Meaning:** The term 'Rongali' is derived from '**Rong**' (joy). It symbolizes the beginning of the sowing season, renewal, and prosperity.

### 2. TYPES OF BIHU

Assam celebrates three types of Bihu festivals based on the agricultural cycle:

1. **Rongali / Bohag Bihu (April):** The seeding time (Spring season). It marks the Assamese New Year.
2. **Kongali / Kati Bihu (October):** Observed by lighting lamps during the crop-growing stage. It is a more somber and modest celebration.
3. **Bhogali / Magh Bihu (January):** The post-harvest festival (similar to Sankranti). It is famous for its grand feasts.

### 3. CULTURAL AND AGRICULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

- **Agricultural Link:** This festival marks the onset of spring and the time for sowing paddy seeds.
- **Traditional Attire:** Women wear '**Mekhela Chador**' made of Muga silk or cotton. Men wear the traditional Dhoti and Kurta.
- **Gamocho:** The exchange of the 'Gamocho' (a traditional hand-woven towel) is the most vital custom during Bihu. It is a symbol of respect and Assamese culture. In **2022**, it was awarded the **GI Tag**.

### 4. ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS

- **Bihu Dance:** This folk dance, characterized by rapid hand movements and rhythmic steps, is world-renowned.
- **Musical Instruments:** Instruments such as the **Dhol** (drum), **Pepa** (made of buffalo horn), **Gogona** (jaw harp), and **Tal** (cymbals) are used.
- **Bihu Geet:** Folk songs that describe nature, love, and agricultural life.

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## 5. UPSC PERSPECTIVE

- **Cultural Heritage:** Bihu holds a unique position in the culture of Northeast India. It is a testament to the bond between nature and humans.
- **Arts and Festivals:** In UPSC Prelims and Mains, questions are often asked about regional New Year festivals (e.g., Ugadi, Vishu, Puthandu, Navreh). Rongali Bihu is a key entry in that list.

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## QUICK FACTS:

- **State:** Assam.
- **Significance:** Assamese New Year.
- **Symbols:** Gamocha and Bihu Dance.
- **Timing:** Mid-April (Commenced on April 5 in 2026).

## UPSC Value Addition:

"The Bihu festival exemplifies the 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' of India. It integrates the secular nature of agricultural labor with the spiritual joy of a new beginning, fostering regional identity and social harmony."

## ELECTORAL REFORMS: ECINET AND 'KNOW YOUR CANDIDATE' (KYC)

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### 1. CONTEXT

In the backdrop of the **2026 Assembly elections** (Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Puducherry), the Election Commission of India (ECI) has urged voters to utilize the **KYC (Know Your Candidate)** module on the **ECINet** platform to verify the background of contesting candidates.

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## 2. KEY FEATURES OF THE KYC MODULE

The platform provides voters with the following critical information about candidates:

- **Criminal Antecedents:** Details regarding any pending criminal cases or past convictions against the candidate.
- **Financial Disclosures:** Comprehensive data on the assets and liabilities of the candidate and their family members.
- **Educational Qualifications:** Verified information regarding the candidate's highest level of education.
- **Form 26 (Affidavit):** Facility to directly download the complete legal affidavit filed by the candidate.
- **Social Media Identity:** Links to verified social media accounts to prevent the spread of misinformation.

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## 3. ECINET: THE WORLD'S LARGEST ELECTORAL SERVICE PLATFORM

ECINet is a unified digital interface that integrates over 40 applications and portals:

- **Voter Services:** Voter registration, searching names in the electoral roll, and grievance redressal.
- **Digital ID (e-EPIC):** Facility to download the Electronic Electoral Photo Identity Card.
- **cVIGIL Integration:** Real-time reporting of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) violations.
- **Saksham:** A tool designed to facilitate accessible electoral services for Persons with Disabilities (PwD).

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## 4. SIGNIFICANCE AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES

From a UPSC Mains perspective, these reforms hold great importance:

- **Transparency:** Accountability increases as the complete information of candidates is made available to the voter.
- **Criminalization of Politics:** Disclosing the criminal history of candidates helps voters make informed decisions, contributing to the reduction of criminal elements in politics.
- **Right to Information:** These measures align with past Supreme Court judgments (e.g., *ADR vs. Union of India*) affirming the voter's right to know about candidates.

## 5. UPSC PERSPECTIVE

- **Constitutional Body:** The Election Commission of India operates under **Article 324**.
- **Electoral Reforms:** Enhancing the efficiency of election management through digitalization (**e-Governance in Elections**).
- **Voter Empowerment:** Enabling voters to make an **"Informed Choice"** is vital for strengthening democracy.

### QUICK FACTS:

- **Platform:** ECINet (Unified Digital Interface).
- **Feature:** KYC (Know Your Candidate).
- **Key Document:** Form 26 (Affidavit).
- **Objective:** Transparency and curbing the criminalization of politics.

### UPSC Value Addition:

"The KYC module transforms the voter from a passive participant into an informed stakeholder. By leveraging technology to bypass information asymmetry, the ECI is fostering a more robust and ethically grounded electoral process."

## MICROSOFT SKILL CENTER: A NEW CHAPTER IN DIGITAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

### 1. CONTEXT

Microsoft has collaborated with **Chandigarh University (CU)** to establish a state-of-the-art 'Skill Center'. Its primary objective is to enhance digital skills among students and prepare them for global-standard employment.

- **Key Purpose:** To provide international certifications in high-demand fields such as **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and **Cloud Computing**.
- **Target Audience:** Prioritizing engineering students initially and gradually expanding to all other departments.

### 2. CURRICULUM & RESOURCES

Students will gain the following benefits through this center:

- **AI for All:** Making AI courses accessible not just to B.Tech students but to students across all university programs.
- **Global Content:** Students get access to official Microsoft content comprising over **4,400+ modules**.
- **Key Certifications:**
  - Azure Fundamentals
  - Power BI Data Analyst
  - GitHub Foundation
  - Azure AI Fundamentals
- **Virtual Labs:** Hands-on practical training via virtual labs running on **Microsoft Azure**.

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### 3. CAREER AND INDUSTRY READINESS (CAREER IMPACT)

- **Industry-Aligned:** Transforming students into '**Industry Ready**' professionals by the time they graduate.
- **Support for Online Degrees:** Microsoft will also provide technical support for **MCA** online degree courses.
- **Premium Employment:** Globally recognized certifications enable students to secure high-package jobs in **top-tier tech firms**.

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### 4. UPSC PERSPECTIVE

These points can be quoted in UPSC Mains and other competitive exams when writing about '**Skill India**' or '**Digital India**':

- **Industry-Academia Collaboration:** Partnership between educational institutions and corporate firms helps bridge the existing '**Skill Gap**' in the education sector.
- **Knowledge Hub:** Creating skilled professionals at the regional level can transform the area into a '**Digital Economy Hub**'.
- **e-Governance & Education:** Utilizing technology in education (**EdTech**) ensures the delivery of quality education to all.

## QUICK FACTS:

- **Partnership:** Microsoft and Chandigarh University.
- **Sectors:** AI, Cloud Computing, Data Analytics.
- **Objective:** To increase the **Employability** rate.

## UPSC Value Addition:

"The establishment of the Microsoft Skill Center is a quintessential example of how 'Private Sector Participation' can augment the government's efforts in human capital formation, turning India's demographic dividend into a global competitive advantage."

