PLUTUS IAS

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Argasia Education PVT. Ltd. (GST NO.-09AAPCAI478E1ZH)
Address: Basement C59 Noida, opposite to Priyagold Building gate, Sector 02,
Pocket I, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, 201301, CONTACT NO:-8448440231

Date –23-April 2025

CORE SECTOR POSTS 3.8% GROWTH IN MARCH AMID STABILIZING ECONOMIC INDICATORS

WHY IN THE NEWS?

India's infrastructure output, represented by the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI), recorded a growth of 3.8% in March 2025 on a year-on-year basis, according to provisional data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. These eight core industries — cement, coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, and electricity — together account for 40.27% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). The growth in March was primarily driven by a strong performance in six sectors: cement production rose by 11.6%, fertilisers by 8.8%, steel by 7.1%, electricity by 6.2%, coal by 1.6%, and refinery products by 0.2%. However, the output of natural gas and crude oil declined by 12.7% and 1.9%, respectively. On a cumulative basis, the core sector registered a 4.4% growth rate during the financial year 2024–25 compared to the corresponding period of the previous year.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE 8 CORE SECTORS IN THE INDIAN ECONOMY

1. Backbone of Industrial Output: The Eight Core Industries—coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement, and electricity—constitute 40.27% of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), making them a reliable indicator of overall industrial performance.

2. Recent Growth Performance: According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, core sector output grew by 3.8% in March 2025, showing a stable pace of economic activity across essential infrastructure sectors.

3. Cement and Steel – Indicators of Infrastructure Development: Cement and steel, key indicators of infrastructure growth, grew by 11.6% and 7.1% respectively in March 2025, signalling increased construction and development activity in both public and private sectors.

4. Electricity – Powering Industries and Households: Electricity generation, a crucial input across all sectors, increased by 6.2%, reflecting robust energy demand and improved power supply infrastructure.

5. Fertilisers – Supporting Agricultural Growth: Fertiliser production grew by 8.8%, aiding agricultural productivity and ensuring food security, especially critical as India remains largely agrarian.

6. Coal – Key Energy Source: Coal production, which fuels over 70% of India's power generation, grew by 1.6%, supporting the thermal power sector and base-load energy supply.

7. Refinery Products – Boosting Energy Self-sufficiency: Petroleum refinery production rose slightly by 0.2%, contributing to domestic energy availability and reducing reliance on imported finished fuels.

8. Crude Oil and Natural Gas – Mixed Performance: Crude oil and natural gas witnessed a decline of 1.9% and 12.7%, respectively, highlighting ongoing challenges in upstream energy exploration and production.

9. Infrastructure Investment Driver: These core sectors attract significant public and private investment, especially under initiatives like PM Gati Shakti, National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP), and Make in India, driving long-term economic growth.

10. Economic Indicator for Policy Planning: The performance of the eight core sectors serves as a leading economic indicator for policymakers and investors, influencing fiscal planning, monetary policy, and industrial strategy.

GOVT. SCHEME TO PROMOTE THE CORE SECTOR IN INDIA

1. PM Gati Shakti – National Master Plan for Multimodal Connectivity: Launched in 2021, this scheme integrates infrastructure development across 16 ministries to boost connectivity, reduce logistics costs, and ensure coordinated growth in sectors like steel, cement, and electricity.

2. National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP): With an investment target of over ₹100 lakh crore, NIP supports large-scale infrastructure projects across core sectors like energy, roads, ports, and steel, enhancing industrial capacity and employment.

3. Ujjwala and Saubhagya Schemes: These schemes promote energy access by providing LPG connections to rural households and ensuring universal electricity access, thereby increasing demand and output in the refinery, natural gas, and electricity sectors.

4. Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme: Applied to steel and other manufacturing sectors, PLI incentivises increased domestic production and global competitiveness, especially in speciality steel, thereby strengthening core industries.

5. Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS): Aims to improve the operational efficiency and financial sustainability of power distribution companies, ultimately boosting electricity generation and transmission capacity in the country.

6. Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan: Supports self-reliance in core sectors, including coal, fertilisers, steel, and crude oil, through reforms, investment incentives, and liberalised FDI policies to reduce dependence on imports.

7. New National Steel Policy, 2017: Targets a steel production capacity of 300 million tonnes by 2030, promoting investment, innovation, and sustainability in the steel sector, which is critical for infrastructure and manufacturing.

8. National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) and FAME Scheme: While focused on transport electrification, these indirectly stimulate growth in electricity generation, coal, and refinery sectors through increased energy demand and grid development.

ISSUES FACED BY THE CORE SECTOR IN INDIA

1. Supply Chain Bottlenecks: Inefficient logistics, delays in transportation, and poor multimodal connectivity often disrupt the smooth supply of raw materials and finished goods, especially in the cement, coal, and steel sectors.

2. Dependence on Imports for Energy Needs: Despite being energy-rich, India imports a large share of its crude oil and natural gas, exposing the sector to global price volatility and geopolitical risks.

3. Infrastructure Deficiencies: Inadequate storage facilities, outdated machinery, and poor last-mile connectivity hamper production and distribution, particularly in the electricity and fertiliser sectors.

4. Environmental and Regulatory Challenges: Stringent environmental clearances, land acquisition issues, and frequent changes in regulations often delay core sector projects, especially mining, power, and refinery ventures.

5. Underperformance of DISCOMs: Financially stressed power distribution companies (DISCOMs) fail to clear dues to electricity generators, impacting the liquidity and performance of the entire power sector value chain.

6. Lack of Private Investment: Many core sectors, such as steel and crude oil exploration, suffer from limited private sector participation due to high capital intensity, policy uncertainty, and long gestation periods.

7. Technological Gaps and Low R&D: Several industries still rely on obsolete technologies, and there is a lack of innovation and research, which lowers efficiency and increases production costs.

8. Skilled Manpower Shortage: There is a mismatch in skill availability, particularly in sectors like petrochemicals, steel, and energy management, limiting productivity and modernisation efforts.

9. Fluctuating Demand Cycles: Many core industries are highly cyclical and sensitive to global and domestic demand variations, impacting stability and investment confidence.

WAY FORWARD

1. Accelerate Infrastructure Development through Gati Shakti: Strengthen implementation of the PM Gati Shakti Master Plan to improve logistics, reduce transport costs, and ensure time-bound execution of large-scale projects across core sectors.

2. Boost Domestic Energy Production: Encourage exploration and investment in crude oil and natural gas through liberalised FDI norms and improved ease of doing business, reducing dependence on imports.

3. Modernise and Digitise Core Industries: Promote adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies like automation, IoT, and AI to improve efficiency, reduce wastage, and increase competitiveness in sectors like steel, cement, and power.

4. Focus on Renewable Integration: Enhance renewable energy adoption and reduce over-reliance on coal by supporting solar, wind, and green hydrogen initiatives alongside existing power infrastructure.

5. Revive Power Sector Reforms: Improve the financial health of DISCOMs through schemes like RDSS, smart metering, and rational tariff structures to ensure a sustainable electricity ecosystem.

6. Encourage Private Investment and PPPs: Attract private capital through public-private partnerships, transparent bidding processes, and viability gap funding, especially in steel, fertilisers, and refinery infrastructure.

7. Ensure Environmental and Regulatory Stability: Streamline environmental clearance norms and create a single-window approval system to reduce project delays while ensuring ecological balance.
8. Develop a Skilled Workforce: Launch sector-specific skilling programs aligned with the National Skill Development Mission to meet the growing demands of high-tech and energy-intensive industries.

CONCLUSION

The Eight Core Sectors form the foundation of India's industrial and infrastructural framework, driving economic growth, employment, and national development. The recent 3.8% growth in March 2025 underscores their resilience amid global uncertainties and domestic challenges. Government initiatives such as PM Gati Shakti, the National Infrastructure Pipeline, and Production Linked Incentive schemes are significantly contributing to their expansion and modernisation. However, persistent issues like regulatory delays, energy import dependency, underperformance in certain segments, and technological lag need urgent redressal. Going forward, a holistic and coordinated strategy focusing on infrastructure upgrades, energy diversification, skilling, and investment promotion will be crucial. By modernising the core sectors and ensuring policy stability, India can not only strengthen its industrial base but also achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the coming decades.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q. With reference to the Eight Core Industries of India, consider the following statements:
1. The Eight Core Industries account for more than 50% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
2. Electricity, steel, and cement are part of the Eight Core Industries.
3. The performance of the Eight Core Industries is published by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
Which of the above statements is/are correct?
A. 1 and 2 only
B. 2 only
C. 2 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3
Answer: B

MAINS QUESTIONS

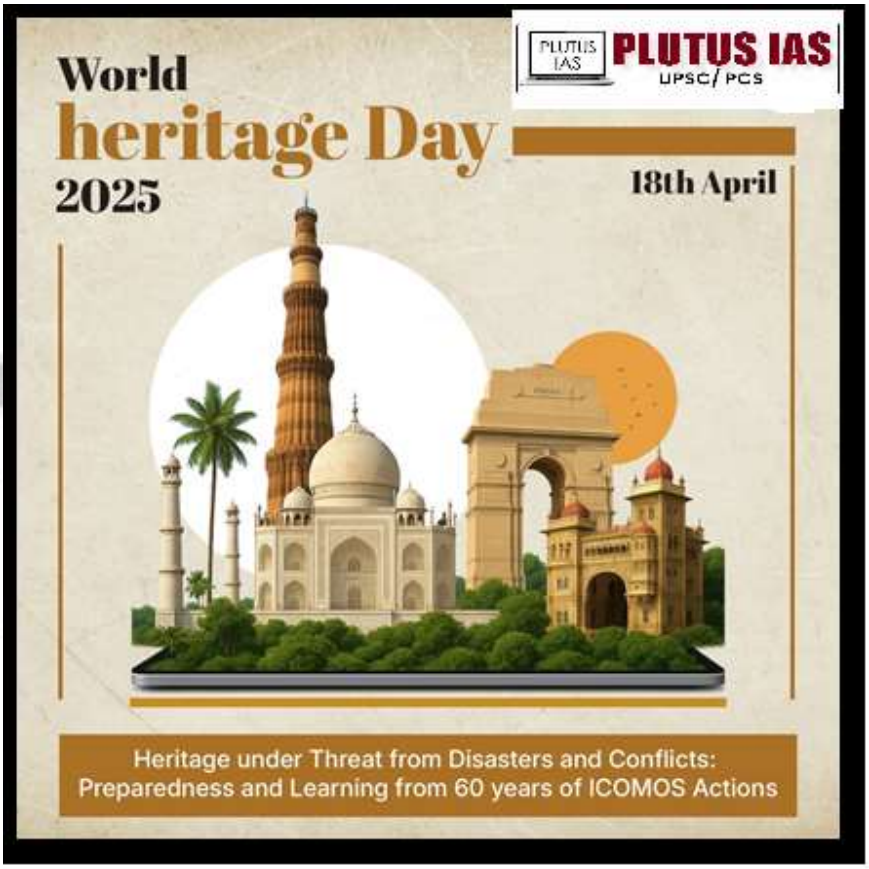
Q. Discuss the significance of the core sectors in India's economic development. Also, highlight key government initiatives taken to promote them and suggest a suitable way forward.
(250 words, 15 marks)

INDIA'S JOURNEY OF HERITAGE PRESERVATION

WHY IN THE NEWS?

World Heritage Day, also known as the International Day for Monuments and Sites, was celebrated on 18th April 2025 with the theme "Heritage under Threat from Disasters and Conflicts: Preparedness and Learning from 60 years of ICOMOS Actions." The day highlights the importance of preserving cultural and natural heritage worldwide, especially in the face of increasing risks from climate change, natural disasters, and conflicts. The World Heritage Convention, adopted by UNESCO in 1972, aims to safeguard such sites. As of

October 2024, there are 1,223 World Heritage Sites across 196 countries, including 43 in India. Iconic Indian sites such as the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, and Ajanta and Ellora Caves were among the first to be listed in 1983, reflecting India's rich cultural legacy and global commitment to heritage conservation.



THE STORY BEHIND WORLD HERITAGE DAY

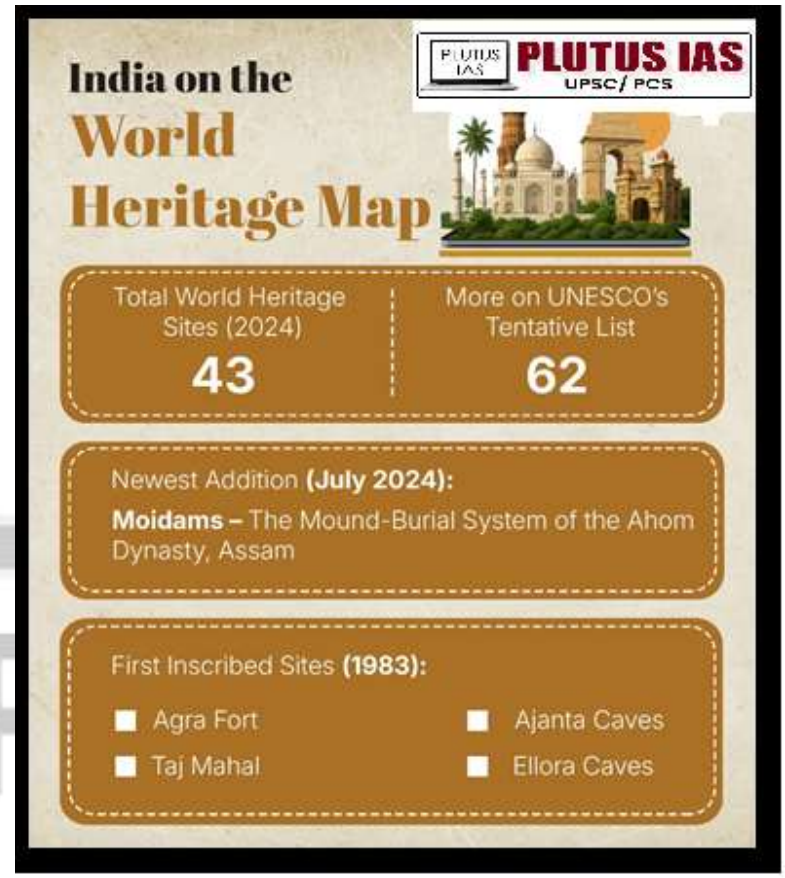
World Heritage Day is celebrated every year on 18th April. It is also called the International Day for Monuments and Sites. The day is meant to honour and protect human heritage. It also appreciates the people and groups who work to preserve it. The day was started in 1982 by ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites). Later, in 1983, UNESCO officially adopted it. Every year, ICOMOS gives a special theme for the day. Based on this theme, people and groups hold events and activities around the world to celebrate and protect heritage.

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION

UNESCO, which stands for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, works to protect and preserve important cultural and natural heritage around the world. To help with this, UNESCO's member countries adopted the World Heritage Convention in 1972. This agreement explains what countries need to do to find and take care of special sites that can be added to the World Heritage List. India became part of this Convention in November 1977. Today, the World Heritage List includes 1,223 sites that are considered valuable to all of humanity. These include 952 cultural sites, 231 natural sites, and 40 sites that have both cultural and natural importance. As of October 2024, 196 countries have joined the World Heritage Convention.

WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN INDIA

World Heritage Sites are special places on Earth that have great value for all of humanity. These can be cultural, natural, or a mix of both. They are protected under an international agreement led by UNESCO. UNESCO gives the World Heritage title to places that are culturally, historically or scientifically important. Over the years, India has steadily expanded its presence on the World Heritage List. In July 2024, a proud addition was made with the inscription of "Moidams: The Mound-Burial System of the Ahom Dynasty" from Assam as a cultural property. With this, India now has 43 sites on the World Heritage List and 62 more on UNESCO's Tentative List. The country's journey began in 1983 with the listing of Agra Fort, followed by the Taj Mahal, Ajanta Caves and Ellora Caves. These sites are preserved not only as symbols of history but also as learning spaces for generations to come.



GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE INDIA'S RICH CULTURAL HERITAGE

1. Retrieval of Antiquities: The Archaeological Survey of India is committed to the protection of cultural property. The government has retrieved 655 antiquities from foreign countries from the year 1976 to 2024, of which 642 antiquities have been retrieved since 2014.

2. Adopt a Heritage' Scheme: The "Adopt A Heritage" programme was launched in 2017 and revamped as "Adopt A Heritage 2.0" in 2023. It allows private and public groups to help develop facilities at protected monuments using their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds.

3. 46th Session of the World Heritage Committee: Archaeological Survey of India, Ministry of Culture, successfully hosted the 46th Session of the World Heritage Committee in Delhi from 21st to 31st July 2024. The meeting was inaugurated by the Prime Minister and attended by nearly 2900 international and national delegates from more than 140 countries.

4. Building Monuments of National Importance: India has 3,697 ancient monuments and archaeological sites declared of national importance. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is responsible for their conservation and maintenance.

5. Revival and Redevelopment of Heritage Sites: India has revived key heritage sites through conservation and development projects. The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi, Mahakaal Lok in Ujjain, and Ma Kamakhya Corridor in Guwahati enhance pilgrim experiences and boost tourism.

6. Must-See Portal: The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has created a portal to showcase "Must-See Monuments and Archaeological Sites of India." It highlights nearly a hundred prominent sites, including World Heritage properties and UNESCO Tentative List

7. Digitisation of Cultural Heritage in India: The National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities (NMMA), set up in 2007, works to digitise and document India's heritage and antiquities. So far, over 12.3 lakh antiquities and 11,406 heritage sites have been recorded. For 2024–25, ₹20 lakh was allocated to the mission.

8. Status of Classical Languages: On October 3, 2024, the Government granted classical language status to Assamese, Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, and Bengali, raising the total to 11 classical Indian languages. This move reflects India's strong commitment to preserving its diverse and ancient linguistic heritage.

9. India's first Archaeological Experiential Museum: Union Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the Archaeological Experiential Museum in Vadnagar on 16th January 2025. Built at a cost of ₹298 crore, the museum covers 12,500 square meters. It showcases Vadnagar's 2,500-year-old history with over 5,000 artefacts, including ceramics, coins, tools and skeletal remains.

10. Humayun's Tomb World Heritage Site Museum: On 29th July 2024, a state-of-the-art museum spanning 100,000 square feet was inaugurated at Humayun's Tomb, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in New Delhi. The museum showcases the site's rich history, architecture, and conservation journey, offering visitors an immersive cultural experience.

11. India's Literary Milestone on the MOWCAP Register: In a historic achievement, three of India's literary treasures- Ramcharitmanas, Panchatantra, and Sahrdayāloka-Locana- were inscribed into the 2024 Memory of the World Committee for Asia and the Pacific (MOWCAP) Regional Register.

CHALLENGES

1. Natural Disasters & Climate Change: Earthquakes, floods, and rising sea levels threaten structural integrity and ecosystems.
2. Conflict & Vandalism: Wars, insurgencies, and theft damage or destroy heritage sites and artefacts.
3. Urbanisation & Encroachment: Rapid development near sites leads to pollution, illegal construction, and visual degradation.
4. Pollution: Air, water, and noise pollution erode monuments and disturb natural heritage areas (e.g., Taj Mahal).
5. Unregulated Tourism: Overcrowding causes wear and tear, especially at fragile heritage spots like Ajanta-Ellora.
6. Funding & Skill Shortage: Many sites lack adequate financial support and trained conservation professionals.
7. Poor Documentation: Incomplete or outdated records hinder effective conservation and international recognition.
8. Lack of Coordination: Multiple agencies working in silos weaken heritage protection efforts and delay responses.

WAY FORWARD

1. Disaster-Resilient Planning: Integrate climate adaptation and disaster risk management into site conservation.
2. Stronger Legal Protection: Enforce stricter laws against encroachment, vandalism, and illegal construction.
3. Sustainable Tourism: Promote eco-friendly tourism with visitor limits, local guides, and awareness campaigns.
4. Increased Funding: Boost public and CSR-based investments for heritage maintenance and infrastructure.
5. Skilled Manpower Development: Train more heritage conservationists, archaeologists, and local caretakers.
6. Technology Use: Employ GIS, 3D mapping, drones, and AI for monitoring, restoration, and documentation.
7. Community Involvement: Engage local communities as stakeholders to ensure long-term protection and pride.
8. Global Collaboration: Strengthen ties with UNESCO, ICOMOS, and other countries to adopt global best practices.

CONCLUSION

Preserving World Heritage Sites is not just about protecting monuments; it is about safeguarding human history, cultural identity, and natural legacy for future generations. In the face of rising threats from disasters and conflicts, India must adopt inclusive, technology-driven, and community-led conservation models. Strengthening legal frameworks, global cooperation, and public awareness will ensure that heritage continues to educate, inspire, and unite humanity.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q. Which of the following statements about the World Heritage Convention is/are correct?
1. It was adopted by UNESCO in 1982.
2. It covers both cultural and natural heritage
3. India became a signatory to the Convention in 1977.

Select the correct answer using the code below:
A. 1 and 2 only
B. 2 and 3 only
C. 1 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: B

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q. "World Heritage Sites are global treasures, but they face increasing threats from disasters, conflicts, and urban pressures." Discuss the major challenges in conserving World Heritage Sites in India and suggest a roadmap for their effective protection and promotion.

(250 words, 15 marks)