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Major Ports of India: All 12 Major Ports and Mundra

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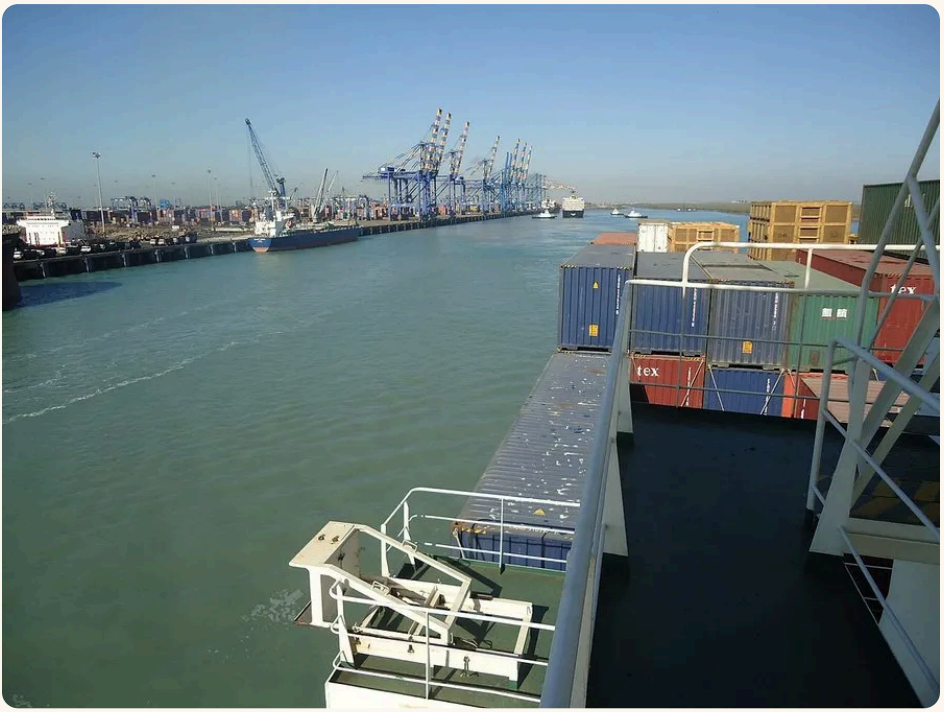
Practice: 6 MCQs



Mundra Port in Gujarat, run by Adani Ports. Photo by Felix Dance, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0.

India has twelve working major ports, and each one carries a title that exams love to swap. This article ties each title to the right port, with fresh FY 2024-25 numbers. It also tours the other major ports, from Kolkata to Cochin.

- **Mundra:** largest private port, 200.7 MT in FY 2024-25.
- **Kamarajar:** only corporatised major port.

- **JNPA:** 7.3 million TEUs in FY 2024-25.
- **Paradip:** 150.41 MT, top major port.
- **Ports:** 14 notified, 12 working.
- **Exam link:** UPSC CSP 2023.

Contents

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1. Why do port titles confuse?

Four ports carry four different titles. Candidates swap them. UPSC knows this and builds questions on it.

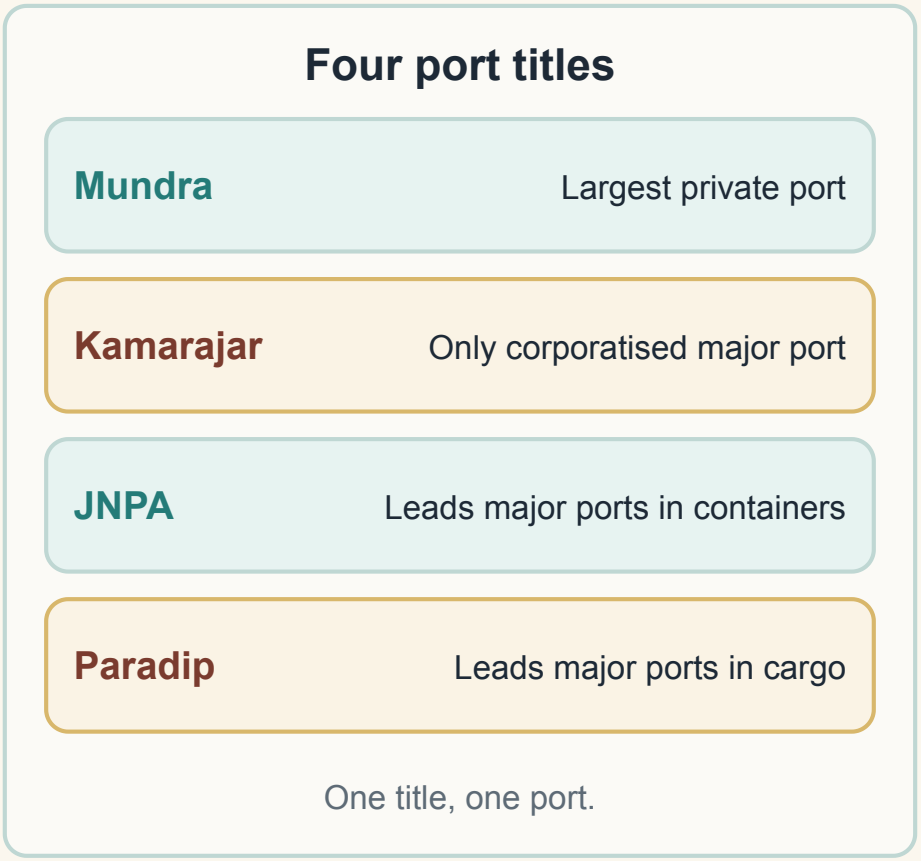
1.1 What does the 2023 question ask?

UPSC CSP 2023, GS Paper I, asked about three port pairs. Kamarajar was “first major port in India registered as a company”. Mundra was “largest privately owned port in India”. Visakhapatnam was “largest container port in India”.

The first two pairs are right. The third is wrong. So the answer is “only two pairs”, option (b).

1.2 Why is each title a trap?

Each title names one thing. “Largest” may mean cargo tonnes or containers. “Private” is not the same as “company”. Keep each title with its own port.



Each title with its port. Original explanatory diagram.

Sources:

- UPSC CSP 2023 question paper
- Wikipedia, Kamarajar Port
- Wikipedia, Mundra Port

- NCERT Geography Class XII, Transport and Communication

Visakhapatnam is India's largest container port.
Think it through: why can the word 'largest' mislead you?

A port can lead in total cargo tonnes. Another can lead in containers. A third can be the largest private port. Check which measure the question uses.

2. How many major ports exist?

2.1 Why 12 and also 14?

India has 14 notified major ports. Twelve are in operation. Two more are not yet working. About 200 non-major ports sit beside them.

The Ministry of Ports controls the major ports. State maritime boards or state governments control the non-major ports.



The port count in four lines. Original explanatory diagram.

2.2 Who are the twelve?

The twelve working ports are Chennai, Cochin, Deendayal, Jawaharlal Nehru, Kamarajar, Mormugao, Mumbai, New Mangalore, Paradip, Syama Prasad Mookerjee, V.O. Chidambaranar and Visakhapatnam.

2.3 What is special about Kolkata?

Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port stands on the Hugli river at Kolkata. The government calls it the first major port and the only riverine one. NCERT says it lies 128 km inland from the Bay of Bengal.

A port trust took charge of it on 17 October 1870. The Cabinet renamed it from Kolkata Port Trust on 3 June 2020.

Silt in the Hugli is its old problem. Haldia port, 105 km downstream, was built to ease the crowding at Kolkata. It handles bulk cargo such as coal, iron ore and petroleum.

2.4 Why is Chennai called artificial?

Chennai has no natural bay to shelter ships. So engineers made the harbour by hand. NCERT calls it an artificial harbour.

NCERT also calls it one of the oldest ports on the east coast. Its shallow waters do not suit very large ships.

Two newer ports were built to share its load. Kamarajar lies about 25 km to the north. V.O. Chidambaranar was also developed to relieve Chennai.

2.5 Why is Mumbai a natural harbour?

Mumbai has a deep, sheltered bay, so nobody had to build the harbour. NCERT calls it a natural harbour and “the biggest port of the country”. By cargo today, Mundra is larger.

NCERT describes the harbour as 20 km long and 6 to 10 km wide. It has 54 berths and the country’s largest oil terminal.

Mumbai Port was set up in 1873, when the Bombay Port Trust began. Jawaharlal Nehru Port was later built to relieve it.

2.6 What do Mormugao and New Mangalore export?

Both ports are known for iron ore exports. Mormugao sits at the mouth of the Zuari river in Goa. NCERT calls it a natural harbour.

It grew important after a 1961 remodelling, which let it export iron ore to Japan. The Konkan Railway later widened its reach.

New Mangalore is in Karnataka. NCERT says it exports iron ore and iron concentrates. It also handles fertilisers and petroleum products.

The port was declared a major port on 4 May 1974. Its formal opening came on 11 January 1975.

2.7 What makes Cochin different?

Cochin is a major port in Kerala. NCERT says it lies at the head of Vembanad Lake, called the “Queen of the Arabian Sea”. It is a natural harbour.

The port sits close to the Suez-Colombo shipping route. Part of it is on Willingdon Island, which is man-made.

The Vallarpadam container terminal opened its first part on 11 February 2011. It is India’s first transshipment terminal in a special economic zone.

Six more major ports

Kolkata	River port on the Hugli
Chennai	Artificial harbour
Mumbai	Natural harbour
Mormugao	Natural, Zuari mouth, iron ore
New Mangalore	Iron ore exports
Cochin	Natural harbour, Kerala

Source: NCERT Class XII.

How six more ports differ. Original explanatory diagram.

Sources:

- Ministry of Ports, Ports Wing

- PIB, Ownership of ports, 21 July 2026
- PIB, renaming of Kolkata Port, 3 June 2020
- NCERT Geography Class XII, Transport and Communication (section 2)
- Mumbai Port Authority, history
- New Mangalore Port Authority, milestones
- Cochin Port Authority, overview
- Ernakulam district, Vallarpadam terminal

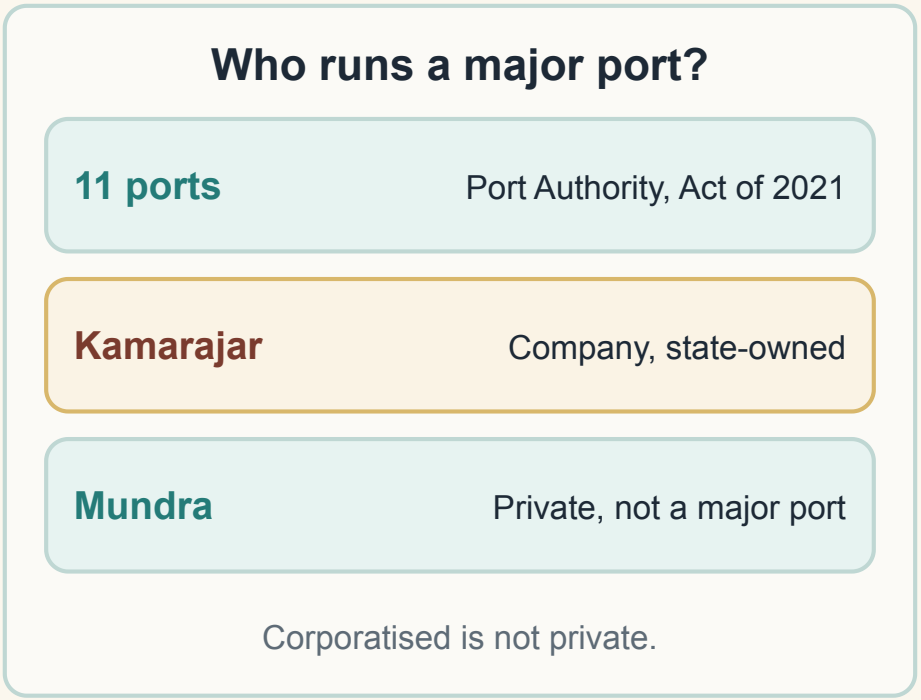
India has 14 notified major ports, and 12 of them are in operation.

3. What makes Kamarajar special?

3.1 Why is it called corporatised?

Eleven major ports are governed by the Major Port Authorities Act, 2021. Kamarajar is the exception. It is a company under the Companies Act.

The company is a wholly owned subsidiary of Chennai Port Authority. So the government still owns it. Corporatised does not mean private.



Three kinds of port. Original explanatory diagram.

3.2 Why was Kamarajar built?

Kamarajar was once called Ennore Port. NCERT says it lies about 25 km north of Chennai. Other sources give 18 km. Both agree it is north of Chennai.

It was built to relieve pressure on Chennai port. It is an artificial port.

Sources:

- PIB, Ownership of ports, 21 July 2026 (section 3)
- Wikipedia, Kamarajar Port (section 3)
- NCERT Geography Class XII, Transport and Communication (section 3)

Kamarajar is a privately owned port.

Try it yourself: how is a corporatised port different from a private one?

A corporatised port is a company, but the government can still own it. Kamarajar is wholly owned by Chennai Port Authority. Say it in your own words.

4. Which port is the biggest?

4.1 Why is Mundra called private?

Mundra is run by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited. Adani's annual report calls it India's largest commercial port. It is a private port, not a major port.

Mundra handled 200.7 million tonnes in FY 2024-25. That was 11.5% more than the year before. It was the first Indian port to pass 200 million tonnes.

4.2 Which port leads in containers?

JNPA, at Nhava Sheva near Mumbai, handled 7,301,509 containers in FY 2024-25. These are counted in TEUs, which means twenty-foot equivalent units. That was 13.55% more than the year before.

NCERT calls Jawaharlal Nehru Port the largest container port in India. It was built as a satellite port to relieve Mumbai. Visakhapatnam does not hold this title.



Harbour cranes and trucks at Jawaharlal Nehru Port, Navi Mumbai. Photo by Jaxer (talk)., Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 3.0.

4.3 Which major port moves the most cargo?

Paradip handled 150.41 million tonnes in FY 2024-25. It is India’s top major port by cargo. It also led all ports on the east coast, major and non-major.

Visakhapatnam used to be called the largest east-coast port. Paradip now holds that place. Quote the year when you use cargo rankings.

Cargo or containers?

Paradip	150.41 MT cargo, FY25
JNPA	7.3 million TEUs, FY25
Mundra	200.7 MT cargo, FY25

Mundra is private, not a major port.

Three numbers from FY 2024-25. Original explanatory diagram.



Paradip Port in Odisha, India's top major port by cargo. Photo by Md. Rabiul Islam, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 3.0.

Sources:

- Adani Ports Integrated Annual Report 2024-25
- Economic Times Infra, Mundra 200 million tonnes
- Wikipedia, Mundra Port (section 4)
- JNPA, FY 2024-25 performance
- NCERT Geography Class XII, Transport and Communication (section 4)
- Paradip Port Authority, FY 2024-25 ranking
- PIB, Paradip Port, 13 Feb 2026
- Wikipedia, Visakhapatnam Port

Paradip handled the most cargo among major ports in FY 2024-25.

5. How were these ports made?

5.1 Why is Kandla a tidal port?

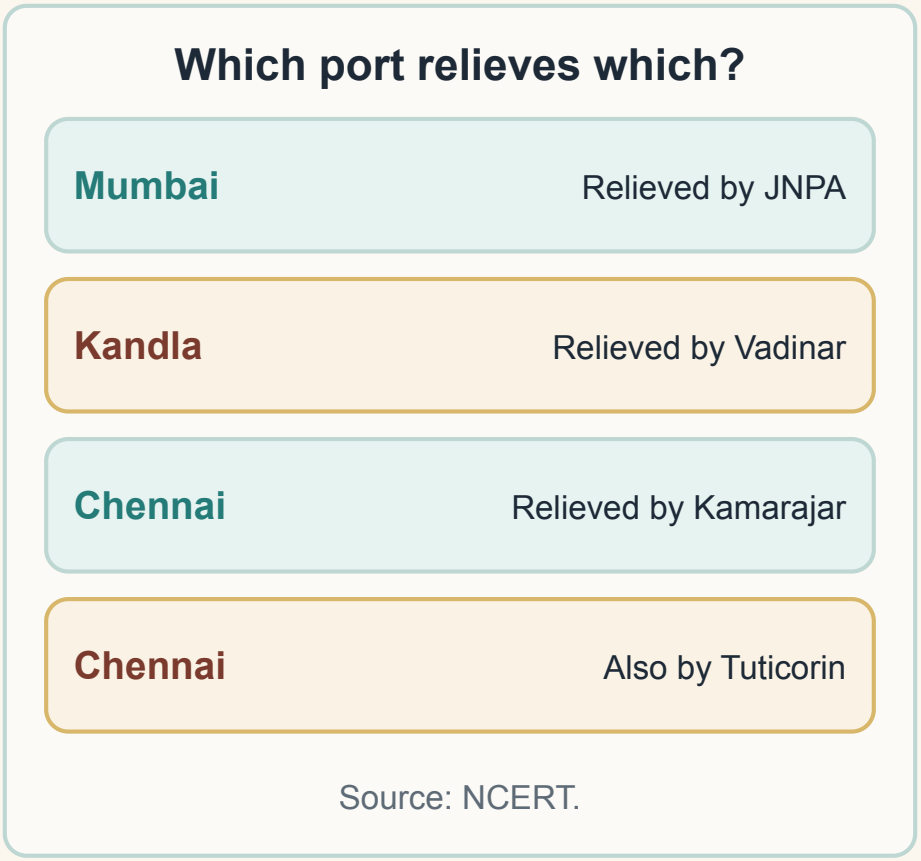
Deendayal Port is the old Kandla Port, in Kutch, Gujarat. It opened in 1952. India built it as the chief seaport of the west after Independence.

Its channel depth depends on the tide, so it is a tidal port. NCERT says it was developed to reduce pressure on Mumbai port.

5.2 What does Vadinar do?

Vadinar is an offshore oil terminal on the Gulf of Kutch. It has single-buoy moorings of Deendayal Port. NCERT says it was developed to reduce pressure at Kandla.

So Vadinar supports Kandla. It does not replace it.



Relief ports in four lines. Original explanatory diagram.

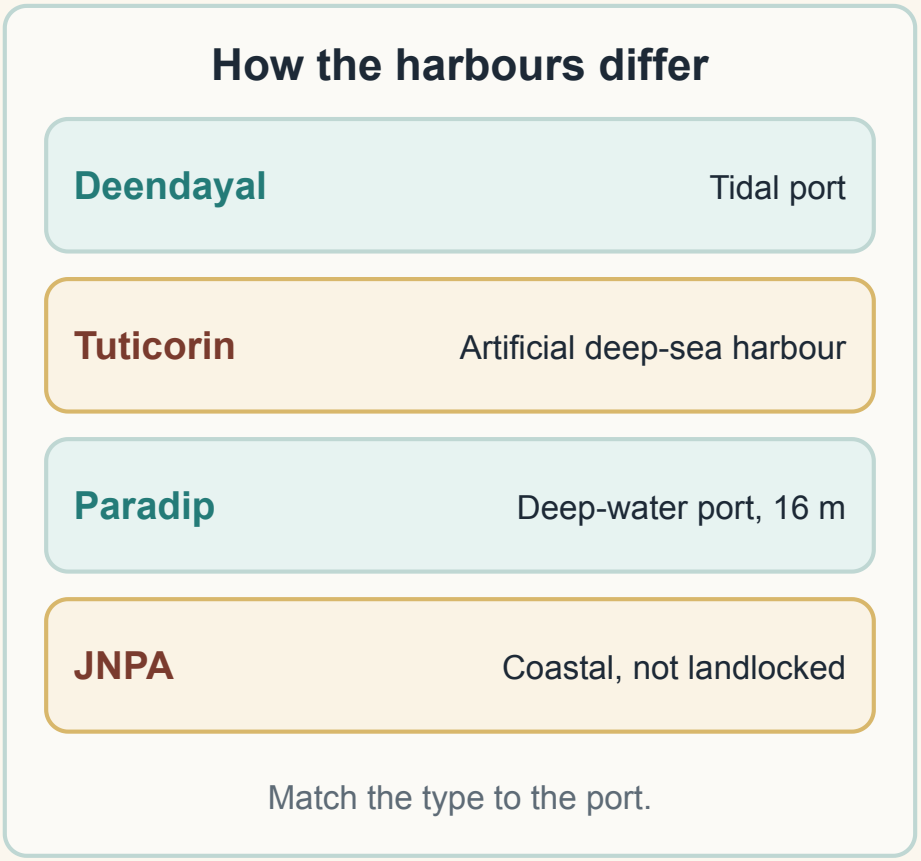
5.3 Why is Tuticorin artificial?

V.O. Chidambaranar Port is at Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu. It is an artificial deep-sea harbour. Two long breakwaters of rubble reach up to 4 km into the sea. It became a major port on 11 July 1974.

NCERT says it was developed to relieve pressure on Chennai.

5.4 What about Paradip and JNPA?

Paradip is a deep-water port in Odisha. Its draft is 16 m. So “shallow water” is wrong. JNPA is a coastal port in Navi Mumbai. So “landlocked” is wrong.



Four harbour types. Original explanatory diagram.

Sources:

- Wikipedia, Deendayal Port
- NCERT Geography Class XII, Transport and Communication (section 5)

- Wikipedia, Vadinar
- Wikipedia, V.O. Chidambaranar Port
- Wikipedia, Paradip Port
- JNPA, FY 2024-25 performance (section 5)

The Vadinar terminal was built to replace Kandla port.

Remember this: which port relieves which?

JNPA relieves Mumbai. Vadinar relieves Kandla. Kamarajar and Tuticorin relieve Chennai.

6. What does Sagarmala do?

6.1 When did it start?

Sagarmala is the Ministry of Ports programme for port-led development. The Union Cabinet approved it on 25 March 2015. The programme was set up in July 2015.

Its aim is to promote port-led development along India's coast.

Sources:

- PIB, Cabinet note of 25 March 2015
- PIB, Ministry of Shipping, 28 July 2016
- Wikipedia, Sagarmala Project

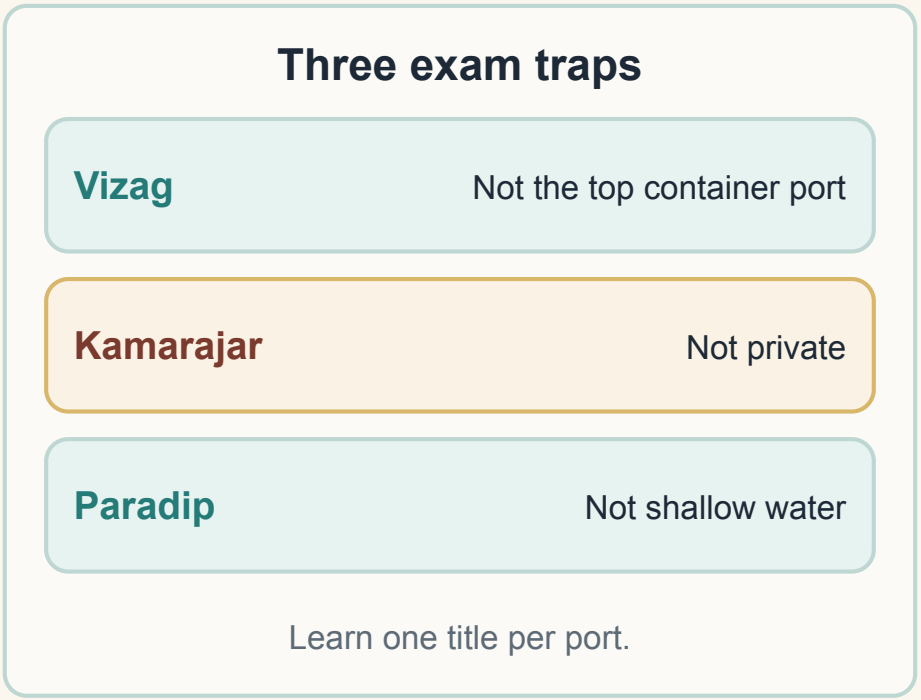
7. What traps should you avoid?

7.1 Which pairs get mixed up?

Keep the five titles apart:

- Mundra is the largest private port.
- Kamarajar is the only corporatised major port.

- JNPA leads major ports in containers.
- Paradip leads major ports in cargo.
- Deendayal is tidal, and Tuticorin is artificial.



Common exam mistakes. Original explanatory diagram.

Sources:

- UPSC CSP 2023 question paper (section 7)
- PIB, Ownership of ports, 21 July 2026 (section 7)
- JNPA, FY 2024-25 performance (section 7)
- Paradip Port Authority, FY 2024-25 ranking (section 7)
- Wikipedia, Deendayal Port (section 7)

Explain it back: why is the 2023 answer 'only two pairs'?

Kamarajar and Mundra match their titles. Visakhapatnam is not the largest container port. So exactly two pairs are right.

Your understanding checks

Your 5 quick checks Answered 0 of 5 · Correct 0
This score resets when the page reloads.

Practice: 6 MCQs

Practice MCQs

1. Which Indian port is the country's only corporatised major port, registered as a public company rather than run as a Port Authority?

A. Kamarajar Port

B. Visakhapatnam Port

C. Jawaharlal Nehru Port

D. Mundra Port

See answer ↓

2. The Sagarmala Programme, coordinating India's port-led development, was launched in which year?

A. 2010

B. 2019

C. 2015

D. 2021

See answer ↓

3. Mundra Port, India's largest privately owned port, is operated by which company?

A. JSW Infrastructure

B. Larsen & Toubro

C. Adani Ports and SEZ Limited

D. Tata Projects

See answer ↓

4. How many major ports does India currently have, directly or indirectly under the Union government?

A. 12

B. 20

C. 15

D. 9

See answer ↓

5. Which of the following pairs of major sea ports of India and their characteristics are correctly matched?
1. Deendayal Port : Tidal Port
2. Jawaharlal Nehru Port : Landlocked Port
3. V.O. Chidambaranar Port : Artificial Deep-Sea Harbour
4. Paradip Port : Natural Shallow Water Port.

Select the answer using the code given below:

A. 1 and 3 only

B. 2 and 4 only

C. 1, 2 and 3 only

D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

See answer ↓

6. Consider the following statements with respect to ports in India:

1. There are 12 major ports in operation in the country.

2. The major ports are under the control of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. The non-major ports are under the respective State Maritime Boards or State Governments.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? [CAPF (ACs) 2026]

A. 1 only

B. 2 only

C. Both 1 and 2

D. Neither 1 nor 2

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **A.**
   Kamarajar Port, once called Ennore Port, is India's only corporatised major port. It is a company under the Companies Act. It is wholly owned by Chennai Port Authority. The other eleven operating major ports follow the Major Port Authorities Act, 2021.
   ↑ Q1
2. **C.**
   Sagarmala is the port-led development programme of the Ministry of Ports. The Union Cabinet approved its concept and framework on 25 March 2015. The programme was set up in 2015.
   ↑ Q2
3. **C.**
   Mundra Port in Gujarat is run by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited. Adani's annual report calls it India's largest commercial port. It is a private port, not a major port.
   ↑ Q3
4. **A.**
   India has 12 major ports in operation. The Ministry of Ports lists 14 notified major ports, so two are not yet working. About 200 non-major ports are run by states.
   ↑ Q4
5. **A.**
   The answer is (a), 1 and 3 only. Deendayal Port is a tidal port. V.O. Chidambaranar Port is an artificial deep-sea harbour behind long breakwaters. Jawaharlal Nehru Port is a coastal port at Navi Mumbai, so it is not landlocked. Paradip is a deep-water port with a 16 m draft, so it is not a shallow-water port.
   ↑ Q5
6. **C.**
   Both statements are correct. India has 12 major ports in operation, out of 14 notified. The Ministry of Ports controls the major ports. State maritime boards or state governments control the non-major ports.
   ↑ Q6

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