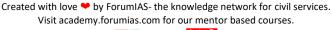# Mains Marathon

Compilation

24th to 29th July, 2023

1. Discuss the role of tax transparency in nurturing sustainable growth in the Indian economy. How can it act as a catalyst for sustainable growth?
2. Discuss the dilemmas faced by India in its aspirations to become a global power. How do domestic challenges and international expectations shape India's approach?

3. Discuss the role of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in mitigating the impact of climate change-induced disasters. Evaluate its effectiveness with relevant examples.
4. Discuss the role and significance of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in shaping the strategic dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region.

5. Analyse the role of anthropogenic factors in exacerbating the effects of climate change, using the example of recent floods in Himachal Pradesh. Discuss the interplay between climate change and human-induced factors, and how they contributed to the disaster.
6. Discuss the concept of resource efficiency and circular economy as strategies to minimize dependence on natural resources, reduce waste, and promote sustainable design practices. How can these strategies help in achieving Sustainable Development Goals?

7. Discuss the economic geography of Delhi-NCR and its implications for urban planning and development. Also, evaluate the potential of a region-specific economic development corporation and a multi-stakeholder platform in addressing these challenges.
8. Evaluate the role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in promoting regional peace, stability, and prosperity.

9. Analyze the key changes proposed in the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023. How does it deviate from the spirit of the original Forest Conservation Act of 1980? Discuss the potential implications of these changes on India's forest cover and biodiversity.
10. Analyze the role of incentives in the implementation of PMJAY. How do the current incentive structures impact the behavior of medical personnel and the overall effectiveness of the scheme? Use examples from the article to support your answer.

11. Discuss the economic and social implications of internet shutdowns in India. Use examples to illustrate your points.
12. Discuss the evolution of the semiconductor industry in India. What were the key missed opportunities and how have they shaped the current state of the industry?

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1. **Discuss the role of tax transparency in nurturing sustainable growth in the Indian economy. How can it act as a catalyst for sustainable growth?**

> **Introduction:** What is tax transparency?
> **Body:** How can tax transparency act as a catalyst for sustainable growth?
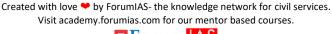> **Conclusion:** Way forward

The practice of making tax-related data, information, and processes available to the general public, interested parties, and appropriate authorities is known as tax transparency. It entails giving precise and thorough information regarding a business or person's tax obligations, payments, deductions, and other related financial data.

How can tax transparency act as a catalyst for sustainable growth?

- **Accountability:** Individuals and corporations are held responsible for their tax commitments by transparent tax processes. It assists in making sure that they appropriately declare their revenue and financial operations following tax laws and regulations.
- **Investment**: The tax transparency framework leads to tax disclosures of the corporates which help attract more investment from foreign players who value transparency and responsible tax behaviour over the single-minded pursuit of profits.
- **Economic Growth**: Tax transparency creates an enabling situation for influx of capital which can be used to create job opportunities for citizens, enhance economic growth, and contribute to the country's overall GDP.
- **Push to green energy and infrastructure**: Foreign investors take note of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) indicators to invest in domestic companies. Increased capital inflows will benefit India from its advocacy of tax transparency, especially in fields like infrastructure and renewable energy.
- **Align tax policies with environmental objectives**: The Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) Core, which aims to increase the dependability of ESG disclosures by the top listed businesses, was introduced by the Securities Exchange Board of India in response to the growing acknowledgment of the significance of ESG-related disclosures. Companies may, for instance, disclose environmental charges on carbon emissions, plastic use, garbage disposal, and water use. By doing this, firms can be encouraged to adopt greener practices, balancing environmental goals with economic growth.
- **Corporate Governance**: Under governance disclosures, tax transparency might encourage businesses to connect their ESG policies with tax behavior. The social dimension of tax transparency reporting could reveal insight into a company's commitment to social insurance, healthcare, and pension premiums. Companies can achieve this by improving tax reporting and stepping up stakeholder communication to promote strong corporate governance procedures, accountability, and transparency.

Conclusion:

While tax reforms and schemes from Government like the *"Transparent Taxation — Honouring the Honest" platform,* have aimed to ease the compliance burden and reward honest taxpayers but the country also needs a voluntary tax transparency framework for companies to solidify India's economic foundations and cultivate a business environment centred around integrity. Such a framework can drive India's economic growth to a $ 5 trillion milestone, raise per capita income & facilitate ease of doing business.

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2. **Discuss the dilemmas faced by India in its aspirations to become a global power. How do domestic challenges and international expectations shape India's approach?**

> **Introduction:** Give a brief context of India's current situation.
> **Body:** Key dilemmas faced by India.
> **Conclusion:** Way forward

India with its vast area, large population, diverse culture, and growing economy aspires to be a global power. India's progress can be gauged from the fact that its foreign exchange reserve has grown to around $600 billion, good relations with its neighbours and major countries barring China and Pakistan, & a stable government.

Some of the key dilemmas faced by India in its aspirations to become a global power are:

- **Low per capita income**: Despite being the fifth largest economy in the world, India's GDP per capita was $1,947 in 2021 whereas that of Bangladesh, at $2,227 shows that well well-being of the population is not completely dependent on GDP or military strength.
- **Poverty**: With 228 million, India continues to have the biggest proportion of the world's poor. Despite impressive growth in recent years, India suffers from income inequality. The need is to maintain a balance between economic development & inclusive growth to benefit all sections of society.
- **Infrastructure and Govenance issues**: Despite being a good performer in the Ease of Doing Business Index, India continues to have poor infrastructure with governance marked by issues of red-tapism and corruption.
- **Local factors**: Factors as Regional, caste, ethnic, and religious divisions run deep in Indian society. The faultlines created by these factors continue to distract the attention of its political leaders from attending to global problems.
- **Soft Power vs. Hard Power**: India has a rich cultural heritage and a growing soft power influence through its Bollywood, yoga, cuisine, and ancient traditions. However, translating soft power into concrete geopolitical gains while maintaining a strong defense posture is a challenge.

What should be India's approach to dealing with these issues?

- **Economic Growth**: India should focus on sustainable economic development that addresses poverty and inequality while promoting inclusive growth. Investments in infrastructure, education, and healthcare can boost human capital and foster economic progress.
- **Pro-active Diplomacy:** India must engage in proactive diplomacy to deal with issues with global ramifications. It must continue to act as the voice of the Global South. That means its diplomatic, strategic, and political investments in its neighborhood and Asia, Africa, and Latin America must increase. India's attention to the ASEAN and Indian Ocean neighborhoods must grow.
- **Moralism**: India has traditionally supported moralism in world politics. The Indian side is turning to conventional wisdom in climate negotiations as well to further the common good. India must include that moral component in future technology advancements like AI, Machine Learning, and Data Analytics.
- **Responsible Nuclear power**: India should continue to pursue a responsible nuclear strategy, actively engage in international non-proliferation initiatives, and move toward disarmament while maintaining a credible deterrent.

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- **Strategic autonomy**: Since independence India has successfully maintained its strategic autonomy in dealing with major global issues and upholding its national interest. Whether it is USA vs. USSR, North vs. South Korea, and lately Ukraine vs. Russia, India has acted as a successful mediator in global crises and is a bridge between the North and South and East and West, indirectly indicating that it is a major 'pole' in world politics.

Conclusion:

As G20 chair, India has the opportunity to set a new agenda before the world's most powerful block of nations. India can play a proactive role in world politics and be a global voice for developing and aspiring nations.

3. **Discuss the role of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in mitigating the impact of climate change-induced disasters. Evaluate its effectiveness with relevant examples.**

Introduction: What is the Sendai framework?
Body: What role can framework play in mitigating climate change?
Conclusion: Way forward.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction is a landmark 2015 agreement to reduce damage, losses, and deaths from natural and man-made hazards by the end of the decade. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 was the first major agreement of the post-2015 development agenda and provides member states with concrete actions to protect development gains from the risk of disaster.

Role of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in mitigating the impact of climate change-induced disasters:

- **Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies**: The Sendai Framework encourages nations to incorporate disaster risk reduction methods into their plans for coping with climate change by taking into account how climate change will affect natural hazards and vulnerable groups. For example: India has established the first G20 Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group. The group aims to consider the potential impact of economic decisions on disaster risks & also how to leverage economic tools to reduce existing risks and prevent new ones.
- **Building resilient infrastructure**: The Sendai Framework promotes investments in resilient infrastructure and urban design. Countries may lower greenhouse gas emissions and lessen the impact of infrastructure on climate change by designing buildings, transportation infrastructure, and energy facilities with climate resilience in mind. E.g.: **Early Warnings for All initiative of the** World Meteorological Organisation(WMO) programme to set up early warning systems across the world to save lives and minimize destruction from the growing number of climate disasters. India launched the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, to spur policy development and capacity support for disaster resilient infrastructure, especially in developing countries.
- **Financing disaster risk reduction plans**: The framework provides an approach to finance disaster risk reduction plans in collaboration with the private sector and local governments. For example, India and Indonesia have prepared various indicators to allocate resources at provincial and local government levels.
- **Awareness and education**: The Sendai Framework encourages risk reduction knowledge and instruction at all societal levels. Communities can become more

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climate-conscious and take more activities that support mitigation efforts if they are informed about climate change, its effects, and how to lessen their risk. For example, the Odisha Government's use of space technology in disaster management helps in giving more timely information in the dissemination of data through GIS-based platforms.

- **Use of Big Data**: Data can be used to pursue 'risk-informed development', help identify the gaps, and make recommendations on where to allocate resources to mitigate risks from disasters. India has recently embarked on an initiative to establish a comprehensive disaster database system.

Conclusion:

The responsibility to integrate efforts of disaster risk reduction with climate change rests with national governments and groups like G20 to ensure continuity in achieving the goals and visions of the Sendai framework.

4. **Discuss the role and significance of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in shaping the strategic dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region.**

> **Introduction:** Give a brief introduction to ASEAN.
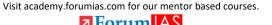> **Body:** Discuss the role of ASEAN in shaping the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific.
> **Conclusion:** Way forward for the India-ASEAN alliance.

"ASEAN" is a 10-member regional, intergovernmental organization aiming to promote economic, political, security, military, educational, and socio-cultural integration between its members and other countries in Asia. It was established in 1967 in Bangkok(Thailand), with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by its Founding members. Its 5 founding members are Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Later 5 more members were added including Brunei Darussalam(1984); Vietnam(1995); Lao PDR and Myanmar(1997); and Cambodia(1999), making up what is today the ten Member States of ASEAN. They have an anthem, a flag, and biannual summits with rotating chairmanship. Its official motto is "One Vision, One Identity, One Community".

Role of ASEAN in shaping the strategic dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region:

- **ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP):** It aims at enhancing the ASEAN community-building process and strengthening existing mechanisms like the East Asia Summit (EAS) to face challenges and seize opportunities arising from the current and future regional and global environments.
- **Maritime Cooperation:** ASEAN is committed to universally recognised principles of international law including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to deal with issues like maritime disputes, unsustainable exploitation of maritime resources, and maritime pollution.
- **Connectivity:** The Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 should be supported and supplemented by current and upcoming connectivity initiatives in the Indo-Pacific region. The goal of the ASEAN connectivity vision is to create an interconnected, seamless, and competitive region that will foster inclusivity and a stronger feeling of community.
- **Economic Cooperation:** ASEAN is a major driver of economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. The bloc actively engages with major external powers, including the United States, China, Japan, and India, & promotes trade and investment by supporting the implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025 and other free trade agreements including the Regional Comprehensive Economic

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Partnership (RCEP) & Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

- **ASEAN centrality in Indo-Pacific**: As the Indo-Pacific region sees power competition and changes in geopolitical dynamics, ASEAN helps to preserve balance and prevent excessive domination by any one large power. This ensures that the bloc remains central to the geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific.

Conclusion:

A "strong and unified" ASEAN in Indo-Pacific, is important for the convergence between the AOIP and India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative. India and ASEAN should collaborate in "newer areas like the cyber, financial, and maritime security domains" to strengthen their entire strategic alliance.

5. **Analyse the role of anthropogenic factors in exacerbating the effects of climate change, using the example of recent floods in Himachal Pradesh. Discuss the interplay between climate change and human-induced factors, and how they contributed to the disaster.**

> **Introduction:** Give the context of flash floods.
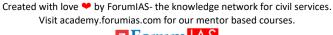> **Body:** What role do anthropogenic factors play especially for flash floods?
> **Conclusion:** Way forward.

Flash floods are sudden and intense floods that occur within a short period, usually within minutes or hours, and are localized to specific areas. Flash floods in Himachal Pradesh have caused unprecedented damage to live and property in the state. According to the _State's 2015 Landslide Hazard Risk Assessment_, the hilly areas of Himachal Pradesh are vulnerable to landslides due to geological, meteorological, and anthropogenic factors. The hydro-meteorological conditions and fragile structural fabric of the geological strata of Himachal Pradesh increase the possibility of landslides.

Role of anthropogenic factors in exacerbating the effects of climate change, particularly floods:

- **Removal of vegetation cover**: The natural capacity of trees to absorb precipitation is decreased by large-scale deforestation and the removal of forests for agriculture, infrastructure construction, and human settlements.
- **Hydropower projects**: The uncontrolled construction of hydropower projects has essentially transformed mountain rivers into mere streams. This leads to the diversion of water through tunnels inside the mountains and the material excavated is deposited alongside riverbeds.
- **Development activities**: Various development activities like road widening, hotel construction, and cement plant expansion leading to changing patterns of land use, and a change in agriculture techniques to cash crop economies have affected the environment and river systems.
- **Exploitation of natural resources**: The exploitation of natural resources, including forests, water, tourism, and cement production has played a major role in exacerbating the effects of climate change which has significantly contributed to the disaster.
- **Tourism**: The purpose of the development-driven road extension is to promote tourism and draw in a lot of tourists with frequent road widening projects. These PPP projects are undertaken by bypassing fundamental geological knowledge and mountain engineering expertise.

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- **Soil Erosion**: _Himachal Pradesh's State of the Environment Report_, released in 2022 by the Department of Environment, Science and Technology, points out that mountain areas are highly vulnerable to natural disasters. According to one estimate, about 58.36% of the land is subjected to intense soil erosion, most of which is located in the Himalayas, and Himachal Pradesh, which forms part of the Western Himalayas, is environmentally fragile and ecologically vulnerable.
- **Cropping pattern**: A significant change in both landholdings and produce has occurred on account of farmers moving towards cash crops instead of cereals. For eg, owing to their perishable nature these crops require modern transportation infrastructure involving the expansion of roads.

Conclusion:

There should be extensive consultations with local communities regarding infrastructure projects and their ownership. The economic loss suffered by locals should be compensated. Addressing these anthropogenic factors requires measures such as afforestation, proper urban planning, maintaining natural drainage systems, and improving water management that can help reduce the vulnerability of areas to flooding.

6. **Discuss the concept of resource efficiency and circular economy as strategies to minimize dependence on natural resources, reduce waste, and promote sustainable design practices. How can these strategies help in achieving Sustainable Development Goals?**

> **Introduction:** What is resource efficiency and circular economy?
> **Body**: How can these strategies help achieve SDG?
> **Conclusion:** Give successful examples of India in this regard.

Resource efficiency and circular economy are linked ideas that emphasize resource management in a way that minimizes waste, has a minimal negative impact on the environment, and fosters long-term economic and ecological advantages. Both these concepts have emerged as viable alternatives to minimize dependence on natural resources, curtail waste, and encourage sustainable design practices.

How can these strategies help achieve SDG?

- **Reduce GHG**: Resource efficiency ensures the percentage of recycled items is increased. For eg, G20 nations have presented a blueprint for a circular economy for the steel sector to commit to net zero emissions from the sector. It will ensure reducing resource utilization and minimizing wastage. This will help achieve SDG Goal 7 of clean and affordable energy.
- **Recycling**: Effective implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) plays a pivotal role in promoting the growth of the recycling infrastructure and establishing a streamlined waste collection system. This is directly aligned with SDG 12, which aims to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. A circular economy approach will help reduce biowaste like municipal and industrial waste and agricultural residue and relieve pressure from the land for extracting resources.
- **Innovation & sustainable practices**: Resource efficiency and circular economy encourage innovation and sustainable practices like eco-friendly infrastructure development and sustainable manufacturing practices, aligning with SDG 9's objective of building resilient infrastructure.
- **Protect natural species**: Resource management techniques and the circular economy encourage the wise use of natural resources while lowering pollution and preventing

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habitat damage. These support SDGs 14 and 15, respectively, which are concerned with the preservation and sustainable use of life on land and in the water.

- **Zero hunger**: Circular economy activities can make positive contributions to SDG 2 by reducing food losses and food waste, and building circular, regenerative food systems. Reducing waste and food losses is also important in the agricultural sector.
- **Sustainable Cities**: Cities may encourage resource efficiency, sustainable waste management, and environmentally friendly urban development by using circular economy ideas. The creation of inclusive, secure, and sustainable cities and communities is one of SDG 11's goals.

Conclusion:

India can play a key role in groups like G20 & advance the concepts of resource efficiency and circular economy practices by forming an industry coalition that aims to achieve enhanced technological collaboration, build advanced capabilities across sectors, mobilize de-risked finance, and facilitate a proactive private sector engagement. Union Government could highlight its popular initiatives like Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana for bio-ethanol projects, Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources (GOBAR) Dhan scheme to convert cattle dung and other organic waste into compost, biogas, and biofuels to promote sustainable agriculture and reduce pollution & finally Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) Scheme to promote the use of Compressed BioGas (CBG) as an alternative green transportation fuel.

7. **Discuss the economic geography of Delhi-NCR and its implications for urban planning and development. Also, evaluate the potential of a region-specific economic development corporation and a multi-stakeholder platform in addressing these challenges.**

> **Introduction:** Give the brief context of Delhi-NCR.
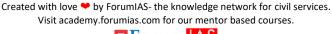> **Body:** Describe the economic geography of Delhi-NCR and its implications for urban planning.
> **Conclusion**: Steps to address the challenges of Delhi-NCR.

India's national capital Delhi is on the way to become the world's most populous urban agglomeration overtaking Tokyo by 2028. The urban agglomeration of Delhi-NCR extends to Faridabad, Ghaziabad, Gurugram, and Noida and has seen rapid infrastructure development with metro, and RRTS projects accompanied by rapidly developing suburbs and investments in infrastructure.

The economic geography of Delhi-NCR and its implications for urban planning:

- **Economic diversity**: Delhi-NCR is home to numerous MNCs, government institutions, and service sector firms. The region's economy has been known for IT, Finance, Telecommunication, manufacturing, and tourism. Delhi-NCR has the highest concentration of jobs and people in the country and generated a GDP of $370 billion in 2015.
- **Developing suburbs**: The region has witnessed a large influx of people from neighbouring states and rural areas which has resulted in unplanned growth, congestion, and increased pressure on resources like land, water, and transportation.
- **Transportation**: Delhi NCR region has witnessed significant improvements in infrastructure and transport development. There has been an efficient metro network spanning the NCR region with the newly proposed Rapid Metro connecting Delhi with

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Western UP. Traffic congestion, inadequate public transport, and air pollution are common issues faced by commuters.

- **Informal Sector**: The region is characterized by a sizeable presence of the informal sector involving street vendors, MSMEs, & informal services like platform-based jobs like Swiggy, Zomato, Ola, and Uber. The shift in the gig economy is not accompanied by the formalisation of the work workforce and high wages but still, unemployment rates have increased, and women's participation in the workforce remains low.
- **Core-periphery region**: The periphery region around Delhi like Western Up, Haryana has witnessed urbanisation & development owing to proximity with Delhi. Many industries have moved out from Delhi and set up their offices in these periphery regions owing to the low cost of labor and land.

Way forward:

- **Region-Specific Economic Development Corporation**: In Delhi-NCR a regional corporation can be created to leverage existing interstate frameworks and create place-specific development strategies in issues related to urbanisation, transportation, & energy.
- **Inter-State corporation**: Region-specific corporations could also foster healthy competition between participating cities and States to attract investment.
- **Multi-stakeholder Cooperation**: A multi-stakeholder platform can be built to bring together the government, private sector, industrial bodies, academia, and civil society representatives, to address development and infrastructural needs.
- **Socio-economic assessments**: Such investments help in framing policies related to work culture, safe travel, child and elder care facilities, women participation and to improve access to education, healthcare, basic services, and jobs for marginalised groups.

8. **Evaluate the role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in promoting regional peace, stability, and prosperity.**

Introduction: Give a brief description of SCO.
Body: Role of SCO in promoting peace, stability, and prosperity.
Conclusion: Way forward

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (**SCO**) was formed in June 2001. It had its origins in **Shanghai Five** that was established in 1996. Shanghai Five, having China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan as members, had emerged from a series of border demarcation and demilitarization talks which the four former Soviet republics held with China to ensure stability along the borders. In 2001, Uzbekistan also joined and the group was rechristened as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Currently, SCO _has 9 members_ with India, Pakistan & Iran as new members. SCO covers approximately 60% of the area of Eurasia, 40% of the world population. As of 2021, its combined GDP was around 20% of global GDP.

Role of SCO in promoting peace, stability, and prosperity:

- **Non-interference**: SCO member states abide by policy of non interfering in internal affairs of other nations. Member states believe that dialogue and diplomacy offer the best hope to address international disputes by peaceful means.
- **Cooperation with Global South**: In order to promote global peace, security, and prosperity China, India, South Africa, and other partners from the South are

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collaborating to implement the Global Security Initiative, Global Development Initiative, and Global Civilization Initiative.

- **Multilateralism:** SCO nation-states believe in the principle of multilateralism. Nations engage with observer states, dialogue partners and other regional and international organisations such as the United Nations, to uphold the UN-centered international system based on international law in promoting world peace, driving global development and safeguarding the international order.
- **Economic Development:** All SCO states are committed to prosperity and collaborate in trade, investment, technology, climate actions, infrastructure and people-to-people engagement. There is talk of pursuing efforts scale up local currency settlement between SCO members, expand cooperation on sovereign digital currency, and promote the establishment of an SCO development bank.
- **Security**: SCO member states are against the bloc politics of the Cold War era. One of the primary focuses of the SCO is to combat terrorism, separatism, and extremism, transnational organised crime. Efforts are being undertaken to improve cooperation in digital, biological and outer space security.
- **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief**: SCO collaborates on disaster management and humanitarian assistance during natural calamities and emergencies. Such joint efforts promote solidarity and cooperation among member states and contribute to regional stability.

Conclusion:

Recently, India hosted 23rd Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of SCO where Iran was given full membership, and *New Delhi declaration was signed which is considered a "SCO moment" with focus on countering radicalisation and exploring cooperation in digital transformation.*

9. **Analyze the key changes proposed in the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023. How does it deviate from the spirit of the original Forest Conservation Act of 1980? Discuss the potential implications of these changes on India's forest cover and biodiversity.**

Introduction: Give a brief context of the Forest Conservation Act.
Body: Highlight key features of the bill and its implications on forest cover and biodiversity.
Conclusion: Way forward

The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023 was introduced in Lok Sabha to make changes to The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. The proposed amendments focus on building carbon stocks in plantations and providing land for compensatory afforestation in place of diverted forest land. The Bill aims to achieve net zero emissions by 2070, creating a carbon sink, increasing forest cover, and improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities.

Key Changes Proposed In The Bill:

- **Restrict the scope of the Forest Conservation Act of 1980:** The current Amendment limits the application of the Forest Conservation Act 1980 to only lawfully notified forests and forests listed in official records as of October 25, 1980, or later. Nearly 2,00,000 square kilometers, or about 28%, of India's forest cover, could be affected by this transformation.
- **Exclude Biodiversity Hotspots**: As the bill eliminates the requirement for forest approvals for security-related infrastructure up to 100 km from international borders,

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it excludes some of India's most vulnerable ecosystems like forests in northeastern India and the high-altitude forests and meadows of the Himalayas.

- **Exemption provisions**: The proposed amendment introduces exemptions for construction projects such as zoos, safari parks, and eco-tourism facilities. This trade-off between natural forests and artificially created green areas weakens the conservation goals of the legislation.

Key implications of these changes on India's forest cover and biodiversity:

- **Destruction of forest cover**: The amendment could impact forest cover of states like Nagaland which are unclassified and protected by clans. The amendment will allow freedom of construction and development in areas around Aravalli Hills in the Delhi National Capital Region impacting water security and ecology of the region.
- **Exclusion of Tribals**: The exclusion and diversion of forests will negatively impact tribals. There is complete ambiguity in the proposed amendment effect on Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest-dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.
- **Unrestricted power to Centre**: The amendment grants unrestricted powers to the Union government to designate "exempted areas" which raise legitimate concerns about the potential exploitation of forest resources without adequate environmental scrutiny.

Conclusion:

By giving preference to plantations, restricting the Act's scope, and extending exclusions, the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023 weakens forest conservation. To preserve forests and wildlife, a balance must be struck and indigenous rights must be preserved. There should be checks and balances to assess the impact of projects that change land use and to mitigate the impacts resulting from environmental destruction.

10. **Analyze the role of incentives in the implementation of PMJAY. How do the current incentive structures impact the behavior of medical personnel and the overall effectiveness of the scheme? Use examples from the article to support your answer.**
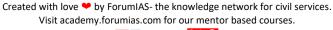
> **Introduction:** Describe PMJAY.
> **Body:** What role do incentives play in the overall effectiveness of the scheme?
> **Conclusion:** Way forward.

Ayushman Bharat, a flagship scheme of the Government of India, was launched to achieve the vision of _Universal Health Coverage (UHC)._ The second component under Ayushman Bharat is the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana or PM-JAY. It is the largest health assurance scheme in the world which aims at providing a health cover _of Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care_ hospitalization to over 12 crores of poor and vulnerable families that form the bottom 40% of the Indian population. The households included are based on the deprivation and occupational criteria _of Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011)_ for rural and urban areas respectively. PM-JAY is fully funded by the Government and the cost of implementation is shared between the Central and State Governments.

What role do incentives play in the overall effectiveness of the scheme?

- **Staff incentives:** It is seen that incentives play a key role in doctors' decisions to decide the type of medical package needed for patients. In some cases, financial incentives of private players outweigh the gains for the doctor resulting in poor implementation of the scheme.

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- **Lack of active interest of employees:** Studies found that there was a lack of active interest in the scheme by the medical team in public facilities. This was on account of providing the required documents within a stipulated time or public personnel did not take interest in follow-up of queries (if any) raised by the state-level agency on the submitted claims.
- **Modest physical infrastructure: With inadequate** infrastructure and human resources the medical team of public facility are often overstretched resulting in poor execution of the scheme. For example, Aarogyamitra who has the responsibility to register the patient and his salary is linked to no of cases he registers has little incentive to follow up the claims with the required documentation at subsequent stages and ensure settlement.
- **Lack of services in facilities:** The incentives for hospital staff are also linked to the claim settlement which gives additional income to the facility. But lack of services available in these facilities limits the scale of potential revenues that can be generated.

Conclusion:

There is a need to address operational challenges related to the scheme. The additional revenues could be generated by participating in the scheme which can be utilised for infrastructure development. This in turn could raise the potential for the public facility to cater to more health packages & achieve the vision of UHC. There is a need to establish a framework where state government can fulfill their constitutional obligation of taking responsible control over "Health" as a subject listed in the 7 schedules by providing adequate manpower and enforcing accountability to ensure a higher volume of services in public facilities.

11. **Discuss the economic and social implications of internet shutdowns in India. Use examples to illustrate your points.**

> **Introduction:** Give a brief context of the Internet shutdown.
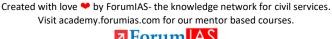> **Body:** Discuss the economic and social implications of the shutdown in India.
> **Conclusion:** Way forward.

Recently, the administration ordered an internet shutdown in the state of Manipur amid ongoing ethnic violence in the state. Data compiled by global digital rights group Access Now and the #KeepItOn coalition reveals that India implemented at least 84 shutdowns in 2022, the most of any country for a year.

What are the economic and social implications of internet shutdowns in India?

- **Huge economic costs:** Studies reveal that internet shutdowns have contributed to economic loss and unemployment. For example, the six-month communication shutdown in Kashmir in 2019 caused more than five lakh people to lose their jobs, and shutdowns in Rajasthan during one month in 2021 cost the state Rs 800 crore. According to one estimate, internet outages cost the nation as a whole more than Rs 1,500 crore in 2022, and so far in the first half of 2023, they have cost an estimated Rs 2,091 crore. According to Brookings' research in 2016 it is estimated that India lost Rs 7,932 crores as a result of closures between July 2015 and June 2016.
- **Effect on vulnerable groups**: Internet shutdowns impose huge social and economic costs disproportionately on particular sections of society that engage more with the informal sector, including women, and old people.
- **Less accountability:** The flow of information from and to the state is hampered by a lack of access to an open and secure internet and social media, which also makes it more difficult to report the violence and hold those responsible accountable.

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- **Effect of digital public infrastructure:** Internet shutdowns affect the ability of millions of people who access online services, avail the benefits of government schemes, and make digital payments regularly. This hurts those sections of society who are heavily dependent on government services and have few resources leading to the deepening of the digital divide. It slows down the pace of the Government's flagship Digital India program.
- **Effect on the social sector:** The Internet shutdown imposes high costs on social sectors like health and education. It undermines the teaching process and disrupts communication between teachers and students. The effect on health infrastructure is significant as it disrupts the emergency services, and delivery of medicines and equipment leading to limited exchange between medical personnel and patients.
- **Freedom of Speech:** It affects the most basic human right of freedom of expression and access to information which is indispensable for the growth of nation and individual.

Conclusion:

The government should follow the basic directions given by SC in Anuradha Bhasin's judgment that shutdown be imposed only when *it is proportional, reasonable, necessary, and is the least restrictive measure, which can never be indefinite.*

12. **Discuss the evolution of the semiconductor industry in India. What were the key missed opportunities and how have they shaped the current state of the industry?**

> **Introduction:** Briefly describe the evolution of the semiconductor industry in India.
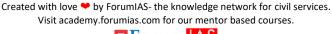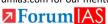> **Body:** What are the key hurdles in the mission
> **Way forward:** Features highlighting renewed focus and efforts to shape the current state of the industry.

The semiconductor industry in India has seen significant growth since its early stages in the 1960s with the establishment of public sector units like Semiconductor Complex Limited (SCL) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) With economic liberalization in the 1990s, the focus shifted to semiconductor design and R&D, attracting global players to set up design centers. The *"Make in India"* campaign further boosted electronics manufacturing, and *the National Electronics Policy (NEP) aimed to create a $400 billion industry by 2025, with a focus on semiconductor manufacturing.*

What are the hurdles in the semiconductor manufacturing industry?

- **Regulatory and bureaucratic hurdles:** Although the Indian government has taken steps to encourage the semiconductor industry, such as the National Electronics Policy (NEP), ongoing policy changes, red-tapism in bureaucracy, and unpredictability in the regulatory environment might hinder the industry's expansion.
- **Global competition**: India is up against fierce competition from other well-known semiconductor hubs including the United States, Taiwan, South Korea, and China. It is difficult for India to capture a sizable portion of the market because these nations have well-developed ecosystems and infrastructure.
- **Infrastructure and Technology Constraints:** Despite the early good start of PSU in semiconductor manufacturing, BEL & other companies were not able to achieve the desired result due to a lack of competitive spirit, nor did they have the state-of-the-art technology to be a leader in the industry.
- **Lack of strategic vision**: From missing out on the Fairchild Semiconductor fab manufacturing plant to shutting down Semiconductor Complex Limited in Chandigarh there was a lack of strategic vision & policy failure which prevented India from keeping up with the leading semiconductor nation.

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- **Lack of Semiconductor Manufacturing:** India remains heavily dependent on imports for semiconductor and electronic products. This has hampered India's ability to become self-reliant and increased dependency on other nations.

Way forward:

- **Strategic vision:** The present government has recognized the economic and geopolitical significance of this industry and is determined to make remarkable progress in Indian semiconductor design and manufacturing through changes forced by rapidly advancing technologies, evolving supply chains, and a shifting geopolitical landscape.
- **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM):** The Indian government's recognition of the need for a strong domestic semiconductor ecosystem for supporting economic growth, protecting domestic industry from external disturbances, and maintaining national security is reflected in the ISM.
- **Support from Private industry:** The support from India Inc. can be seen in the Vedanta group announcement to set up a semiconductor fabrication unit, a display fabrication unit, and a semiconductor assembling-cum-testing facility in Ahmedabad.
- **Global Cooperation:** To cooperate on semiconductor development, production, research, design, and talent development, the government has also struck agreements with the US and Japan. An important first step in a series of several international investments in India will be the acceptance of Micron's proposal to establish semiconductor packaging and testing facilities there.

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