



Mains Marathon
Compilation

July, 2023

Mains Marathon Compilation for the Month of July, 2023

1. Analyze the impact of the criminalization of politics in India. Discuss its implications for democratic governance and suggest measures to address this issue.
2. Critically analyze the role of master plans as an instrument of governance for urban local bodies in India.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of warnings and disclaimers in curbing tobacco consumption. How can the government address broader triggers and influencers of tobacco use?
4. Analyze the importance of Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) in the context of essential antibiotics.
5. Critically evaluate India's engagement with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) since its full membership in 2017. How has this engagement influenced India's strategic autonomy and its position in regional security and economic matters?
6. Analyze the role of a collaborative model promoting the cultural economy in addressing the challenges faced by Indian artists and artisans. How can such a model contribute to the preservation of traditional art forms and the promotion of contemporary artists as brands?
7. Analyze the potential impact of the implementation of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) on the customary laws and practices of tribal communities in India. Discuss the concerns raised by tribal communities.
8. Discuss the short-term and medium-term measures proposed by the Inter-Departmental Group constituted by the Reserve Bank of India for boosting the Rupee's usage in international transactions. Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the internationalization of the Indian Rupee.
9. Evaluate the evolution of India's relations with Ukraine since 1992. How has India's relationship with Russia influenced its approach towards Ukraine?
10. Explain the role of reliable statistical data in effective economic policymaking. What could be the consequences of policymaking based on unreliable data?
11. Discuss the significance of the bilateral strategic partnership between India and France. How can this partnership serve as a platform for India's re-engagement with European security?
12. How do the new amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act, of 1980 address the industrial development and forest conservation in India?
13. The heavy rains in North India led to significant damage, including flooded homes, washed away roads and bridges, and disrupted communication networks. Analyze the impact of such extreme weather events on the socio-economic fabric of the region. How can India prepare better to mitigate these impacts?
14. Discuss the evolution of India-Philippines bilateral relations, with special emphasis on the maritime partnership. How can this partnership influence the geopolitical dynamics in the South China Sea region?

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15. Elaborate on the importance of encouraging social and political discussions in scientific institutions. Discuss how the participation of scientists in these discussions can contribute to society.
16. Discuss the significance of the Chandrayaan-3 mission for India's space ambitions. How does this mission contribute to ISRO's larger goals and objectives?
17. Discuss the impact of global and local warming on urban flooding in India. How can existing governance and infrastructure systems be adapted to effectively handle these extreme weather events, particularly in cities along the coast, rivers, and hills? Provide examples of successful climate adaptation and flood response measures implemented in Indian cities.
18. Discuss the historical relationship between Delhi and the Yamuna River. How have urban development and environmental changes impacted this relationship over time? Use specific examples from the article to support your answer.
19. Analyse the significance of the 25-year strategic partnership between India and France. Discuss the key areas of cooperation outlined in the "Horizon 2047" roadmap and their potential impact on both nations.
20. Analyze the implications of the growth strategies adopted by Indian conglomerates for the Indian economy.
21. The ED and the police have different roles and powers under the law. Compare and contrast the powers of the ED and the police, especially in the context of the PMLA and the Indian Penal Code.
22. Discuss the challenges and opportunities that India may face in its growth strategy in the post-COVID-19 and post-Russia-Ukraine War era. How can India achieve continuous growth for the next 25 years?
23. Assess the potential impact of a vacuum in official data on government policymaking. How might this affect the acknowledgment and addressal of ground realities that require intervention?
24. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) in regulating water courses between India and Pakistan. Discuss why it is often cited as an example of cooperation between the two nations despite their strained relations.
25. Critically analyze the role of the proposed Mediation Bill in reducing the judicial backlog in India. Discuss its potential benefits and drawbacks.
26. Explain the process of delimitation and its significance in the Indian electoral system. Discuss the implications of the freeze on delimitation until the first census is conducted after 2026.
27. Discuss the implications of the Indian government's decision to ban the export of non-basmati white rice.
28. Discuss the concept of sustainable agriculture and its importance for India. How can sustainable agriculture practices address the challenges faced by the Indian agricultural sector?

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29. Discuss the role of tax transparency in nurturing sustainable growth in the Indian economy. How can it act as a catalyst for sustainable growth?
30. 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?
31. 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.
32. Discuss the role and significance of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in shaping the strategic dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region.
33. 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.
34. 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?
35. 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.
36. Evaluate the role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in promoting regional peace, stability, and prosperity.
37. 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.
38. 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.
39. Discuss the economic and social implications of internet shutdowns in India. Use examples to illustrate your points.
40. 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. Analyze the impact of the criminalization of politics in India. Discuss its implications for democratic governance and suggest measures to address this issue.

Introduction: Briefly explain the criminalization of politics in India.

Body: What are its impact and measures to deal with the issue?

Conclusion: Way forward.

The criminalization of politics is a situation where there is a sizeable presence of criminals in the politics itself. The criminalization of politics leads to a large no of criminals participating in and contesting elections of parliament and state assemblies. When criminals turn into elected representatives and become lawmakers, they pose a serious threat to the functioning of a democratic system. According to data from the ADR, the number of candidates with criminal charges elected to Parliament in India has been on the rise since 2004. In 2004, **24% of parliamentarians had pending criminal cases**, which rose to **43% in 2019**. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, **159 MPs had declared serious criminal cases against them**, including those of rape, murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, and crimes against women.

Impact on the democratic structure of India:

- **Against free and fair election:** The growing nexus between criminals and politicians leads to intimidation of voters using fear and violence. Criminals resort to illegitimate expenditure to buy votes and promote a freebies culture.
- **Adverse impact on governance:** Criminal politicians use their influence in posting and transfer of bureaucrats and thereby impact the governance of the state.
- **Create division in society:** They take advantage of division in society based on caste, class, and religion and portray themselves as protector of their communities. Thus they harm the social fabric of the nation.
- **Frequent disruption of Parliament:** Criminals as politicians are not trained parliamentarians and often resort to unparliamentary practices to create disruption in the parliament and state assembly which impacts the functioning of the representative institution.
- **Huge pendency of cases:** Since politicians with criminal pasts become ministers, and lawmakers it becomes difficult for state agencies to prosecute them which leads to high pendency of criminal cases in the judiciary.

Suggestions to address this issue:

- **State funding of elections:** It would help curb money and muscle power and help serious candidates to contest in elections.
- **Election Commission:** It is time to strengthen the role of the EC in the regulation of the electoral process and to establish a framework to disqualify candidates with criminal records.
- **Responsible role of Parliament:** Parliament should establish a strong legal framework that mandates all political parties to revoke the membership of persons against whom charges were framed in heinous and grievous offenses and not to set up such persons in elections for Parliament as also State Assemblies.
- **Voter awareness:** Voters should be aware of the misuse of money and muscle power in elections. They should refrain from accepting gifts, inducements, and freebies and should utilize the option of NOTA to express resentment against the candidate.

Conclusion

To protect the integrity of democratic systems and advance moral and responsible political leadership, combating the criminalization of politics necessitates a multifaceted strategy encompassing legal, institutional, and societal measures.

2. Critically analyze the role of master plans as an instrument of governance for urban local bodies in India.

Introduction: What is the meaning of a Master Plan?

Body: What role does it play in the governance of ULB?

Conclusion: Way forward.

Recently, at the G20 meeting, there was a discussion around the role of master plans as an instrument of governance for urban local bodies in India. A master plan is an instrument of urban local bodies (ULBs) governance recommended by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs for the improved governance of cities.

Does the master plan play a crucial role in the governance of ULB?

- **The master plan is time specific:** Master plan as a concept originally came in the 1950s as the basis for town planning. While the plan served as providing a framework for urban development it neglected issues of environmental protection. Governments think of master plans as one-step solutions to urban problems while master plans regularly need improvements and upgradation.
- **Inconvenience:** Cities based on master plan development in India like Delhi suffer multiple difficulties like flooding, pollution, traffic, and so forth.
- **Absence of master plans:** A recent report by NITI Ayog titled *Reforms in Urban Planning Capability in India* claims that master plans are absent in 65 percent of the 7,933 recognized urban entities.
- **Spatial Plan:** Since master plans are spatial plans with excessive focus on maps, byelaws, and development control regulations the new project demands are being imposed on bureaucrats as there is a shortage of qualified urban planners.
- **The ideology of the ruling party:** Development in India is a long-term strategy that involves political continuity & is significantly influenced by the dominant political party. Each political party has its ideology and set of guiding ideas. Any time the government changes, the attitude, programs, policies, and plans for urban development also change.

Way Forward:

- **Qualified experts:** Highly professional urban planners and professionals with academics in urban planning must be hired to spot shortfalls in Urban Governance and suggest remedies.
- **National Spatial Planning Act:** India should be prepared to go for scientific land use planning particularly in Urban Settlements according to the new National Spatial Planning Act.
- **Cooperative federalism:** There is a need for cooperation between states and Central Government in policy-making related to urban governance and innovative new ideas according to practices prevailing in Indian cities. The Central Government must work with states on schemes like Gati Shakti and Model Rural Transformation Acts for reimagining the spatial planning framework in India.
- **NITI Aayog:** NITI Aayog should spearhead the mission of transforming urban governance with a special focus on the spatial (town) planning profession and education.

3. Evaluate the effectiveness of warnings and disclaimers in curbing tobacco consumption. How can the government address broader triggers and influencers of tobacco use?

Introduction: Briefly explain recent guidelines to curb tobacco use.

Body: How effective are these procedures and what more can government do to address this issue?

Conclusion: Way forward.

Recently Health Ministry issued advisories making it mandatory for OTT platforms to display tobacco-related health warnings at the beginning and in the middle of streamed content. The *Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply, and Distribution) Rules, 2004*, were amended to include the requirement. Since 2004, these Rules have been updated to include warning messages on cigarette packaging, limit tobacco product advertising, restrict tobacco retail near educational facilities, and require the display of anti-tobacco warnings in theatres and on television, mediums that have largely complied with the regulations.

How effective is this process to curb tobacco consumption?

- **Treating symptoms, not root cause:** Rather than going for a blanket ban on the production & sale of tobacco products Government has gone for piecemeal measures which are viewed as mere tokenism.
- **Vague guidelines:** The guidelines seem to be vague and difficult to implement due to the nature of the web series divided into episodes, multiple languages, and the discretion of consumers to skip the part or watch it later.
- **Compliance burden:** Review of a large amount of web content for use or representation of tobacco use would put immense pressure on finances and would be time-consuming.
- **International Report:** Lancet Global Health Research Review on Global Impact of Tobacco Control Policies on Smokeless Tobacco Use found India's efforts to curb smokeless tobacco use "exemplary". These measures align with the *WHO FCTC (Framework Convention on Tobacco Control)* and include taxation, regulation of contents, labelling and packaging, education campaigns, cessation services, restrictions on sale to and by minors, and a ban on the sale and manufacture of products such as gutkha.

How can government address triggers and influences of tobacco use?

- **Public Health campaigns:** The government in collaboration with WHO should launch health campaigns in colleges and schools to address issues of peer pressure and mental stress which are responsible for tobacco consumption.
- **Stringent measures:** The government has taken measures such as bans on advertisements, spitting in public places, prohibition of the use of plastic sachets for packaging, and tobacco use in public places to further discourage consumption.
- **Multidirectional approach:** The approach requires limiting the production of tobacco by encouraging tobacco farmers to shift to growing food crops that would provide them and their families with a better life, supporting national economies and ensuring food security.

Conclusion:

The government should work with all stakeholders especially industry in formulating a strategy to limit the production as well as consumption of tobacco. Health Minister has rightly suggested and mooted the idea to start a Lok Bhagidari campaign in mission mode

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through Jan Abhiyaan to create wide awareness among youth and the nation regarding the seriously debilitating and harmful effects of tobacco consumption.

4. Analyze the importance of Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) in the context of essential antibiotics.

Introduction: Briefly describe what is EUA process.

Body: What is its importance in the context of antibiotics?

Conclusion: Way forward

EUA or Emergency Use Authorisation as the name suggests is a regulatory mechanism used by many countries to allow the use of medical products or treatments during public health emergencies, such as pandemics or natural disasters, before they receive full approval. The traditional process to approve new drugs or vaccines is subject to a long clinical process which is very long and it takes years for such products to receive commercial approval. It's crucial to understand that EUA does not equate to full approval. It opens a door for the quick use of medical devices in times of need, but the maker must still submit further information and apply for full clearance later. Recent notable examples of EUA include approval of *AstraZeneca's COVISHIELD, Pfizer, and Moderna COVID vaccine.*

What is its importance in the context of essential antibiotics?

- **Access to Life-saving vaccines/drugs:** As seen during COVID and other life-threatening diseases like Cancer, EUA proved to be a life-saving intervention that made products easily accessible bypassing the lengthy process. Eg, AstraZeneca's COVISHIELD and antibiotic, cefepime/zidebactam to combat drug-resistant gram-negative pathogens including *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.
- **Efficacy and Safety not compromised:** Due diligence is maintained before granting EUA approval in terms of reviewing data and analysing the risks and benefits associated with the drugs. Scientific reports have suggested that the potential benefits of EUA outweigh the known potential risks.
- **Limiting the spread of pathogens:** Experience of COVID shows that the EUA process was responsible to limit or slow the spread of the virus particularly in developing nations. This led to a reduced fatality in the later stage when vaccines were available.
- **Medical Ethics:** EUA helps to bring a framework where regulatory agencies have to establish a balance between the need for timely access to interventions during public health emergencies with the imperative of protecting public health and safety by way of giving quick approval to drugs.
- **Post-Authorization Monitoring:** There are proper safeguards regarding post-authorization monitoring and surveillance of programs receiving EUA approval. The data of authorized products are collected and used to improve the safety, and efficiency of the product and publish their findings to make people aware of the performance of such drugs/vaccines.

Conclusion:

India must frame a law dealing explicitly with EUA to deal with the use and regulation of drugs during public health emergencies. EUA process must follow regular scrutiny, issues of safety and efficacy adequately addressed, and complete transparency and accountability of regulatory agencies be maintained concerning the whole process.

5. Critically evaluate India's engagement with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) since its full membership in 2017. How has this engagement influenced India's strategic autonomy and its position in regional security and economic matters?

Introduction: What is SCO grouping?

Body: How has SCO engagement influenced India's position on security and economic issues?

Conclusion: Way forward

SCO is a **Eurasian political, economic, and military organization**. Having begun as the Shanghai Five in 1996 by the leaders of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, it was rechristened as the SCO in 2001. **The SCO entered into force on 19 September 2003**. The SCO has 8 members as of September 2022. These are India, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. **India and Pakistan joined in 2017**.

How has this engagement with SCO helped India?

- **Access to energy-rich areas:** India's engagement with SCO has given India access to resource-rich Central Asian countries and Russia. SCO framework could help in advancing projects like TAPI pipelines which are important to India's natural gas needs.
- **Connect Central Asia policy:** SCO membership will further deepen economic ties between India and Central Asia in areas like IT, telecommunications, banking, finance, and pharmaceutical industries.
- **Contain China's influence:** India's membership in SCO can help check the influence of China in Eurasia and India's extended neighborhood in Asia. India also aims to propose an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative by mobilizing support for the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).
- **Counter-terrorism:** Membership in SCO has helped India in gathering intelligence from RATS which has helped in curbing activities of terror outfits, drug trafficking, and cyber crimes in the region.

How has this engagement influenced India's strategic autonomy in security and economic issues?

- **The dominance of Russia & China:** SCO functioning is dominated by Russia and China as is seen during the Ukraine-Russia war. India is forced to play a minor role in the grouping and focus only on its South Asian region.
- **China-Pak Economic Corridor:** Despite raising objections regarding the CPEC corridor which passes through PoK, India didn't receive support from other nations of the SCO & BRI project continues violating India's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- **Counterterrorism strategy:** India's definition of terrorism differs from that of other SCO members which define terrorism as regime destabilization while for India it is state-sponsored or non-state actors-sponsored violence against a sovereign nation. Outfits like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Afghan Taliban, and Haqqani Network do not come under the ambit of the SCO anti-terror structure.
- **Economic Development Strategy 2030:** Government didn't endorse the strategy as it felt that the policy was heavily inclined to benefit China in terms of trade and investment. The government was also unable to receive support from major nations regarding making English a formal language of SCO.

Conclusion:

SCO is necessary for India to facilitate its relations with Central Asian countries to boost economic and connectivity ties with them. SCO also provides a rare platform to engage with Pakistan and prevent border conflicts. Geopolitics often comes with a price and India has to maintain its presence in the grouping even if it is incompatible with its global ambitions.

6. Analyze the role of a collaborative model promoting the cultural economy in addressing the challenges faced by Indian artists and artisans. How can such a model contribute to the preservation of traditional art forms and the promotion of contemporary artists as brands?

Introduction: Describe collaborative model promoting cultural economy.

Body: What are challenges faced by the artists and what are suggestions to resolve them?

Conclusion: Way forward

A collaborative cultural model is a model that helps in promoting culture by creating an ecosystem of innovative technology-based start-ups, providing guidance, technical support, infrastructure, access to investors, and networking opportunities. A collaborative culture model can help attain the goals set up during the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (MONDIACULT 2022) to leverage the transformative power of culture for sustainable development.

What are the challenges faced by artists?

- **Financial assistance:** The challenges for artisans in promoting the culture lies in the lack of access to finance. They must rely on government support, and cultural institutions to support their initiatives which sometimes is not enough to extend their market reach.
- **Lack of transparency:** The selection procedure for the selection of art form is not fully transparent and is found to be biased against the people of rural areas. Such traditional art forms are unable to find sponsors which limits their market reach and business facilitation.
- **Art Crimes:** Crimes related to art like art theft, copyright infringement, forgery, fraud, and illicit trafficking pose significant challenges to the artists and the government. The lack of institutional infrastructure, expertise, and technology to verify the original art form compounds the problem.
- **Lack of training programs:** Insufficient guidance and training from support groups, the government also affects the cultural heritage as artisans are often exploited through the dissemination of disinformation of cultural history through various sources without verifying the authenticity.

How can a collaborative model help to preserve traditional art forms?

- **Tackling art crimes:** Various art crimes need to be handled by addressing increased security measures, international cooperation, public awareness, and advanced technology for authentication and tracking of the artwork.
- **Capacity building:** Measures to develop capacity building of its artists should be the prime focus for the government and various cultural groups. This can be developed by taking help from the private sector and creating an ecosystem of innovative technology-based start-ups in the arts and crafts sector, providing guidance, technical support, infrastructure, access to investors, and networking opportunities.

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- **Institutional support:** Institutional support in terms of providing guidance, training, professional development, material support, and access to markets will help those living outside the city to ensure equal representation with those who live in metro cities.
- **Leverage modern technologies:** A facilitation centre supported by Government and industry efforts can help in knowledge sharing, economic empowerment, leveraging data and ICT to enhance their participation in the business ecosystem.

Conclusion:

The growth and development of artists and enhancing their sustainable livelihood depend on promoting a collaborative model promoting a cultural economy and building India's soft power by promoting the economic and cultural significance of art and culture of India.

7. Analyze the potential impact of the implementation of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) on the customary laws and practices of tribal communities in India. Discuss the concerns raised by tribal communities.

Introduction: Describe UCC.

Body: What is its impact on tribal social & cultural practices?

Conclusion: Way forward.

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC), envisioned by **Article 44 of the Indian Constitution**, proposes a common legal framework for personal laws for all Indian citizens, irrespective of religion. The goal is to achieve national integration, ensure gender equality, and uphold constitutional values. Common law is envisioned by the UCC for all country residents, regardless of faith. There is a good chance that a uniform code will cover personal laws as well as laws about marriage, inheritance, adoption, child custody, alimony, polygamy, and succession.

What could be the impact of UCC on the practices of tribals in India?

- **Polygamy:** Polygamy is practiced among Naga tribes, the Gonds, the Baiga, and the Lushai among others, while polyandry is prevalent in the Himalayan region stretching from Kashmir to Assam. These practices would be abrogated following the enactment of UCC.
- **Divorce and marriage ceremony:** Many tribal groups have objected to procedures of marriage and divorce under UCC. The tribals feel that their practices have allowed divorce and marriage ceremonies to be much simpler and do not require complex legal procedures which are cumbersome and inaccessible.
- **Protection under the Constitution:** Northeastern states fear that UCC enactment would withdraw the guarantee of protection of their socio, cultural religious practice as guaranteed under Articles 371A, 371B, 371C, 371G, 371H.

Concerns raised by tribals:

- **Minimum age of marriage:** The tribals are concerned about the change in the legal age for marriage. They fear that minimum age criteria will infringe on their cultural practices.
- **Customary dispute resolution practices:** Tribals of Northeast and Jharkhand fear that village bodies like *akhada*, (highest decision-making body) and empowered by the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996, for disputes related to land, family, and marriage, will be under threat if UCC is enacted.

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- **Inheritance & Succession:** Various Law Commission reports have pointed out that tribes in Assam, Jharkhand, and Odisha adhere to ancient customary laws of succession. States like Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram are concerned that UCC would come in conflict with safeguards regarding inheritance guaranteed under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

Conclusion:

There have been suggestions from parliamentarians to keep tribals out of the purview of UCC but this may be tantamount to defeat the purpose of UCC. There should be wide consultation involving all stakeholders, state government, tribal groups, and the common public before taking any major step to implement UCC.

8. Discuss the short-term and medium-term measures proposed by the Inter-Departmental Group constituted by the Reserve Bank of India for boosting the Rupee's usage in international transactions. Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the internationalization of the Indian Rupee.

Introduction: Describe the context of the internationalization of the Indian Rupee.

Body: What measures are proposed by the group and what are the benefits and challenges of the Internationalization of the rupee?

Conclusion: Way forward.

Recently, RBI constituted the Inter-Departmental Group to frame a road map for the internationalization of the Indian rupee. The need for the internationalization of the rupee comes in the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war, the subsequent imposition of sanctions, and the weaponization of the financial system which has led to apprehensions over excessive reliance on the dollar.

What measures are proposed by the group?

- **Uniform approach:** The group suggested that there should be a coherent and standardized approach to dealing with trade arrangements regarding invoicing, settlement, and payment in the rupee and local currencies. The group suggested incentives to exporters for rupee trade settlement.
- **Taxation reforms:** It also suggested reviewing tax on Masala bonds and harmonizing taxation issues in the financial markets of India with global its global counterparts. It suggested strengthening the financial market by fostering a global 24×5 rupee market and recalibration of the FPI (foreign portfolio investor) regime.
- **Banking reforms:** it suggested the need to provide seamless cross-border transactions, international use of RTGS for cross-border transactions, and allow banking services in rupees outside India through offshore branches of Indian banks.
- **IMF reforms:** The panel has also suggested that India should use its economic clout and diplomacy for currency's inclusion in International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Special Drawing Rights (SDR) basket. The Indian rupee can also be used as an additional settlement currency in institutions like Asian Clearing Union (ACU).

What are the benefits and challenges of the internationalization of the Indian Rupee?

- **Mitigates currency risk:** the biggest beneficiaries are the business sector as they are guarded against exchange rate risk and provide a cushion against currency volatility enabling business growth and expanding business globally.

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- **Reduce the need for FOREX:** Reserves have an impact on the economy even though they help control exchange rate volatility and project external stability. The requirement for maintaining foreign exchange reserves decreases with the internationalization of the rupee. India will be less susceptible to outside shocks if its reliance on foreign money is reduced.
- **Partial convertibility of Rupee:** A major challenge is the currency's partial convertibility. Advanced economies currencies are fully convertible and the exchange rate is left to market factors without any regulatory intervention which is not the case with India.
- **Share in global exports:** Various countries have expressed reservations about the use of Indian currency as India is still not considered a major exporter on the world stage with only a 2% global share of exports.
- **Global influence:** With the internationalization of the rupee there will be a significant uptick in Indian business with more presence of India's exports on the world stage and an increase in influence of India Inc. This will add to India's global status and respect.

Conclusion:

Recently, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar called for the promotion of “economic decentralization that is so essential to political decentralization”, which suggests that the time is ripe for RBI to take strong steps and conscious efforts for pushing internationalization of the rupee in the global economic system.

9. Evaluate the evolution of India's relations with Ukraine since 1992. How has India's relationship with Russia influenced its approach towards Ukraine?

Introduction: Give a brief context of India's relations with Ukraine.

Body: How has India's relationship with Russia influenced its approach towards Ukraine?

Conclusion: Way forward.

India and Ukraine have close bilateral ties that span many different areas of collaboration. One of the first nations to acknowledge Ukraine was India. India's government established diplomatic ties with the Republic of Ukraine in January 1992 after recognizing it as a sovereign nation in December 1991. India was the first country in Asia where Ukraine opened its Mission in Delhi in 1993 while India opened its Embassy in Kiev in 1992.

Evolution of India's Relations with Ukraine:

- **Defence Cooperation:** Both nations have defence cooperation with each other. Ukraine has been a major source of military technology and equipment to India like R-27 air-to-air missiles.
- **Trade relations:** In 2021, Ukraine exported \$2.51B to India. The main products that Ukraine exported to India are Seed Oils, Nitrogenous Fertilizers, and Sawn Wood. India's exports to Ukraine were to the tune of \$694M. The main products that India exported to Ukraine were Packaged Medicament, Refined Petroleum, and Broadcasting Equipment.
- **Cultural relations:** The cultural relations cover aspects related to dances, yoga, philosophy, Ayurveda and spirituality. Indian students are pursuing their education in Ukraine, with a strong focus on the field of medicine. The Indian business community is primarily engaged in various sectors such as pharmaceuticals, information technology, engineering, medicine, and education.

How has India's relationship with Russia influenced its approach towards Ukraine?

- **Historical reasons:** Since Ukraine was part of the USSR, India has maintained a close relationship with both Russia and Ukraine. India has respected Russia's view of Ukraine to treat it as its immediate neighbourhood and has avoided taking sides or intervening in any conflicts or tensions between Russia and Ukraine.
- **Reliance on Russia for defence items:** India's reliance on Russia for defence equipment has also made India cautious not to take any side and maintain a neutral stance on issues involving Russia- Ukraine.
- **Strategic autonomy:** During the Russia-Ukraine war, India refused to take a side between Ukraine and Russia and adopted a strategic autonomy approach to maximize its policy space. Instead, India pursued diplomatic activism to evacuate over 22,500 Indians and foreign nationals from 18 countries through its Operation Ganga.

Conclusion:

Various research scholars have argued that India should adopt a different policy to maintain its relations with Ukraine. They feel India relies too much on the Russo-centric view of Europe. India should be firm about the UN principle of territorial integrity, and the sovereignty of member states. India as chair of G20 can raise issues of war-torn Ukraine and help in the rebuilding of Ukraine. India should work with nations like Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Brazil to help raise the voice of the Global South in an international system dominated by the West and Sino-Russia alliance

10. Explain the role of reliable statistical data in effective economic policymaking. What could be the consequences of policymaking based on unreliable data?

Introduction: Why is statistical data crucial?

Body: How does data help in effective policymaking and what are the challenges associated with it?

Conclusion: Way forward

The role of statistical data is very crucial for effective economic policymaking. Data-based policy-making makes vital use of data obtained from various sources and collaborates it with basic principles set out by the planners which helps policymakers fine-tune policies, adapt strategies, and improve overall economic performance.

How does reliable data help in effective policymaking?

- **Transparency:** Data collection and its utilisation helps in maintaining transparency between the citizens and the government. Citizens can view the outcomes based on data published in various periodicals, reports like Economic Survey.
- **Targeted allocation:** Reliable and timely data helps in targeted interventions where it is easy for planners to allocate a targeted amount which is best beneficial for the economy. Eg, COVID data on food insecurity and lack of employment, forced the government to allocate money to schemes offering food grains and employment allowance.
- **Accountability:** Statistical data helps in ensuring the accountability of public officials as data helps in comparing current data with historical trends & evaluating the performance of officials according to the desired outcome.
- **Decision making:** Policymaking based on reliable data is grounded on solid evidence rather than personal preferences. Statistical analysis helps analyse past trends and project future performance based on logical assumptions. It helps policymakers

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evaluate different policy options and choose the ones that are most likely to achieve desired outcomes.

Challenges of policymaking based on unreliable data:

- **Irregularity in conducting surveys:** Past few years there has been a shortfall in data collection owing to the pandemic and administrative difficulties. There is a delay even in important data like Census.
- **Economic data:** Important data related to the economy like monthly inflation & GDP data are not published periodically which creates uncertainty in the minds of consumers as well as corporates. It can lead to scepticism among investors, hamper economic growth, and deter both domestic and foreign investment.
- **Legitimacy:** Members of data collection agencies are selected based on political preference and to portray the ruling government in good light. This erodes the confidence of the public and creates a legitimisation crisis.

Conclusion:

The urgent need is to strengthen the National Statistical Commission by ensuring that its members are picked from the committee of Parliamentarians and not the government. It is also essential to make NSC a statutory body as it was intended in 2006 to maintain its financial independence. There should be a policy of decentralisation of data with states building their databases for subjects in States List and the Centre can invest in capacity building and creating human and technical infrastructure.

11. Discuss the significance of the bilateral strategic partnership between India and France. How can this partnership serve as a platform for India's re-engagement with European security?

Introduction: Give a brief context of the relationship.

Body: What is the significance of the relationship for European security?

Conclusion: Way forward.

The relationship between India and France is based upon shared values of rule of law, democracy, individual liberty and respect for human rights. India and France have entered into strategic partnership since 1998 when India conducted nuclear tests and France stood by us. From January to December 2021, the India-France bilateral trade in goods (excluding military equipment) stood at US\$ 12.14 billion.

Significance of bilateral strategic partnership between India and France:

- **Ideas and Outlook:** Both India and France favour multilateralism, non-military deterrence policy and resolving issues through peaceful cooperation.
- **Defence Partnership:** India looks forward to France purchasing critical military technologies as seen during the purchase of Rafale jets, submarines, and helicopters. The cooperation is further deepened by conducting joint naval exercises in the form of the Varuna exercise. France is a preferred partner in the Indo-Pacific as highlighted in Joint Strategic Vision for Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region concluded by both countries.
- **Space Cooperation:** Space has always been central to the strategic partnership between both countries. Joint Vision for Space Cooperation in 2018 document talks of bringing societal benefits of space technology, situational awareness in the space domain and cooperation in satellite navigation and related technologies.

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- **New areas of cooperation:** Both nations have agreed to cooperate on connectivity, climate change, cyber-security and science and technology. The two nations are working on joint construction of the world's largest nuclear park in Jaitapur, Maharashtra.

How can this partnership serve as a platform for India's re-engagement with European security?

- **Ukraine crisis:** The two nations can cooperate and deal with the Ukraine crisis as both have good relations with both Ukraine and Russia. Leaders of both nations can play the role of peace interlocutor and make efforts to end the war.
- **Asian security:** India's partnership with France should interconnect the concept of Europe security with Asia security. The big question of dealing with China can make cooperation between the two countries inevitable.
- **Defence modernisation:** France can play a crucial role in modernising India's defence industrial base through co-development and co-production of weapons. This will boost India's national power and help maintain the balance of power in Asia.
- **Recalibrate Europe strategy:** India should try to evolve a new European policy which should include Russia and see the continent as a collective whole and not through Russia's view of Europe.
- **Institutional cooperation:** The partnership can be beneficial for India as it gives India a chance to engage with NATO, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) on defence issues among the members of the European Union, the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (INTCEN), and the intelligence-sharing forum among the EU's national spy agencies, Club de Berne.

Conclusion:

The moment to redefine the partnership amidst the 25th-anniversary celebrations of the bilateral strategic partnership is good for both nations to pursue intense and wide-ranging cooperation that would contribute to world security.

12. How do the new amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act, of 1980 address the industrial development and forest conservation in India?

Introduction: Give a brief introduction about Forest Act 1980.

Body: State the new amendments proposed and their effect on industrial development and forest conservation.

Conclusion: Way forward.

Forest (Conservation) Act 1980 was enacted for providing a higher level of protection to forests and to regulate the diversion of forest lands for non-forestry purposes. Recently, the government introduced The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023 to make changes to The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

How do proposed amendments address industrial development and forest conservation in India?

- **Unrecorded forests:** The proposed amendments seek to restrict the scope of the Act to only "recorded forest". This will have the effect of removing the protection of the Act from millions of hectares of land that have the characteristics of forests but are not notified as such.

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- **Develop Carbon stock through plantations:** The new amendments allow developers to raise plantations on land which is not classified as forest. These plantations can be used to incentivize private agro-forestry, and tree plantation activities and streamline the forest clearance process.
- **Diversion of forest land:** The proposed amendments seek to make “unrecorded” land available for developers to meet their legal obligation towards compensatory afforestation in place of forest land diverted for development projects.
- **Excess power to Central Government:** The changed bill authorises the central government to list activities exempted from forest clearance. Eg, all strategic linear projects of “national importance and concerning national security” within 100 km of international borders. The amendments also seek to exempt “security-related infrastructure” requiring up to 10 hectares, without defining its scope. The Bill adds silvicultural operations, construction of zoos and wildlife safaris, eco-tourism facilities, and any other activities which “the Central Government may, by order, specify to be exempted from the provisions of Forest Conservation Act.
- **Increased carbon stock:** As compared to stable natural forests, fast-growing plantations score faster carbon growth which will help raise the carbon stock. From various forest surveys, it is learnt that growth in natural forest in India is slow or stagnant and it is tree cover in orchards, plantations and village homesteads that has been responsible for increasing India’s carbon sink.

Conclusion:

Environment activists have raised concerns regarding the diversion of forest land which will lead to corporate ownership and the disappearance of large tracts of forests. The government should ensure to engage all stakeholders whether tribals, activists, industry leaders and most importantly state government to come up with suggestions to address the concerns raised by the proposed bill to harmonise the issue of industrial development with forest conservation in India.

13. **The heavy rains in North India led to significant damage, including flooded homes, washed away roads and bridges, and disrupted communication networks. Analyze the impact of such extreme weather events on the socio-economic fabric of the region. How can India prepare better to mitigate these impacts?**

Introduction: Describe the causes leading to heavy rain.

Body: What is its impact on socio-economic factors and how can India be prepared to mitigate these impacts?

Conclusion: Way forward

Recently, North India witnesses heavy rains causing flash floods which led to the destruction of property, infrastructure, and communication networks. Such intense downpours in the region and the Himalayas can be caused by three main sources. First, a strong monsoon is active and carries moisture from the Arabian Sea or the Bay of Bengal into the area. Secondly, there is a significant atmospheric forcing on a huge scale that manifests as outflows in the upper atmosphere that move through mid-latitude troughs and go eastward. Third, the Himalayan mountains' steep terrain paired with orographic uplift causes deep convection.

What is the impact of such heavy rain on the socio-economic fabric of the region?

- **Loss of life:** Heavy rain and resulting floods can cause the displacement of people from their homes. It often results in the loss of life and poses significant challenges for governments in providing relief and rehabilitation.

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- **Infrastructure:** Heavy rainfall can cause significant damage to infrastructure, including roads, bridges, buildings, and public utilities leading to the disruption of transportation networks, communication systems, and power supply which affects the daily lives of people but also hampers trade, commerce, and industrial activities, leading to economic losses.
- **Agriculture:** Heavy rain and flash floods adversely affect agriculture as it leads to crop damage, soil erosion, and waterlogging.
- **Public Health:** Heavy rain is responsible for the outbreak of waterborne diseases like cholera, typhoid, and diarrhoea. This puts strain on public resources, reduces the disposable income of citizens, and has long-term socio-economic effects.

How can India prepare better to mitigate these impacts?

- **Early warning system:** It can alert people about the weather update, giving real-time information about possible flash floods.
- **Monitoring of rainfall/river level patterns:** The use of Doppler weather radar (DWR) and a high-resolution numerical weather prediction model can help monitor and forecast data.
- **Mapping of various factors:** Flood risk mapping should take into account factors such as topography, historical flood data, and hydrological modeling to assess vulnerability.
- **Planned Infrastructure:** Improved and climate-resilient infrastructure like drainage systems, channels & proper implementation of land use planning, and zoning regulations can help prevent waterlogging.
- **Conservation of the ecosystem:** Conservation of forests and wetlands acts as a natural buffer, absorbing rainfall and reducing runoff which reduces the intensity of flash floods.

Conclusion:

The focus of the government should be to help citizens on issues ranging from providing first aid, arranging evacuation, and providing information regarding the latest weather information. These proactive efforts would go a long way in providing relief to the affected people.

14. Discuss the evolution of India-Philippines bilateral relations, with special emphasis on the maritime partnership. How can this partnership influence the geopolitical dynamics in the South China Sea region?

Introduction: Context of India-Philippines bilateral relationship.

Body: Describe briefly the evolution of bilateral relations and how has it impacted dynamics in the South China Sea.

Conclusion: Way forward.

Recently, Foreign Ministers of India and the Philippines met on the sidelines of the Philippines-India Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation, in New Delhi outlining the path for a strengthened bilateral partnership between Manila and Delhi in the 21st century after completing 75 years of diplomatic history.

Evolution of India-Philippines bilateral relations:

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- Political relations: India and the Philippines formally established diplomatic relations on **26 November 1949**, with both nations strengthening their relationship following the Act East Policy.
- **Economic relations:** Bilateral trade has increased from 1.89 billion USD in 2015-16 to 2.84 billion USD in 2021-22. Both nations are expanding economic relations to cover collaboration between the Philippine Space Agency and the ISRO.
- **Maritime relations:** Both nations are committed to the stability and security of a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific. India and the Philippines also participate in ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise.
- **Defense relations:** Both nations have a growing defense and security partnership with the signing of a \$374-million contract for the procurement by the Philippines' defense forces of India's BrahMos Shore-based Anti-Ship Missile System & taking part in maritime RIMPAC exercise.

How does this relationship influence geopolitical dynamics in South China Sea region?

- **Strengthen Defence relationship:** India has decided to open a resident defense attaché office in Manila, cooperation between the Coast Guards of the two countries; acquisition of naval assets by Manila under a concessional line of credit from Delhi; expansion of training and joint exercises on maritime security and disaster responses, and commencing a maritime dialogue are some of the noted steps taken recently.
- **Securing Sea Lines of Communication:** South China Sea is a crucial maritime gateway and junction for shipping between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. India and the Philippines both have a vital interest in safeguarding the shipping lanes in terms of geopolitics, economy, and global security.
- **Peaceful resolution of disputes:** Both nations are committed to peaceful conflict resolution based on the principles of international law, as reflected notably in the UNCLOS involving disputed islands in the South China Sea claimed both by China & Philippines.

Conclusion:

The geopolitical dynamics in South China region can be resolved only through dialogue involving all stakeholders, especially ASEAN nations by working towards the creation of a "political framework" and progress towards a legally binding "code of conduct". More intense regional cooperation is necessary to fully utilize the Indo-Pacific as a growth engine. To support the region's position as a global economic powerhouse, stronger economic integration, better connectivity, and increased innovation are essential. The Philippines and India play significant roles in this regard as leaders in the promotion of inclusive multilateralism and the rule of law.

15. Elaborate on the importance of encouraging social and political discussions in scientific institutions. Discuss how the participation of scientists in these discussions can contribute to society.

Introduction: What is the issue?

Body: What is the importance of encouraging social and political discussions in scientific institutions for society?

Conclusion: Way forward.

Recently, authorities of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) sought to ban a discussion on the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) by a student collective on the campus raising

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the important issue regarding the importance of social and political discussions in scientific institutions.

What is the importance of social and political discussions in scientific institutions?

- **Constitutional right:** Scientific institutions are also part of Indian society and as such their members too have a fundamental right to express their views and took part in socio-political discussions.
- **Critical inquiry:** Social and political discussions widen the perspectives on multiple issues and helps in pursuing a critical inquiry into a variety of subjects. Further, critical analysis of discussions can help academicians in their responsibility to educate and express themselves on matters of public interest.
- **An argumentative tradition of India:** Indian scientists have a long and distinguished history of taking an active interest in social issues. Eg, physicist Meghnad Saha, the mathematician D.D. Kosambi, and the chemist Amulya Reddy. Another famous example is Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad, which has made a significant contribution to the dissemination of scientific ideals throughout the State and All India Peoples Science Network has advocated that science should be applied for societal good rather than for personal gain.
- **Ethical consideration:** Science often involves ethical dilemmas related to implications of future technology or potential research as seen in AI and CRISPR Gene editing technology. Encouraging discussions can help in understanding the implications and consequences of research.

How the participation of scientists in these discussions can contribute to society?

- **Policy development:** These discussions can help bridge the knowledge gap between the scientific community and the common citizenry and ensures that policy decisions address societal challenges effectively.
- **Foster a culture of transparency:** These discussions foster a culture of accountability and transparency in the institutions and help scientists to demonstrate their findings to the masses.
- **Inclusivity and diversity:** Social and political discussions in scientific institutes and scientific discussions in art institutes provide a platform for diverse voices to be heard & valued. It fosters creativity and encourages new ideas within the community.

Conclusion:

There is an urgent need to relook at the issue of self-censorship which has restricted academic freedom in our universities. It is rightful for the authorities to abide by various orders of High Courts invoking that Civil Service (Conduct) Rules are ill-suited for academic scientists and “have no application to a Central University”.

16. Discuss the significance of the Chandrayaan-3 mission for India's space ambitions. How does this mission contribute to ISRO's larger goals and objectives?

Introduction: What is Chandrayaan-3's mission?

Body: What is its significance and how does it contribute to ISRO's larger goals and objectives?

Conclusion: Way forward.

Chandrayaan-3 is the second attempt of the ISRO is set to land the spacecraft on the surface of the moon. Earlier in 2019, due to problems that had emerged during the last stage of the descent, Chandrayaan-2's lander and rover crashed on the moon's surface. If Chandrayaan-3 makes a successful safe landing on the moon India will become only the fourth country – after the United States, Russia, and China – to do so.

Why this mission is significant for India's space ambitions?

- **SHAPE-** Chandrayaan-3 is different from its predecessor as its propulsion module has a payload -- SHAPE (Spectro- polarimetry of HAbitable Planet Earth) to study Earth from lunar orbit.
- **Lander payloads:** The lander module's payloads include RAMBHA-LP, which will measure the near-surface plasma ions and electrons density and its variations, ChaSTE Chandra's Surface Thermo Physical Experiment, which will measure the thermal characteristics of the lunar surface near-polar region, and ILSA (Instrument for Lunar Seismic Activity), will measure seismicity in the area of the landing site and delineate the lunar crust's structure.
- **Rover payloads:** The rover payload includes APXS - Alpha Particle X-Ray Spectrometer - to derive the chemical composition and infer mineralogical composition to further enhance understanding of the lunar surface. Another payload Laser Induced Breakdown Spectroscope (LIBS) will determine the elemental composition of lunar soil and rocks around the lunar landing site.

How does this mission contribute to ISRO's larger goals and objectives?

- **Open new ventures:** The controlled and safe landing on the moon opens new vistas in space exploration and space-based science and research.
- **Increases confidence:** The success of Chandrayaan-3 will be crucial and help ISRO to deliver on its upcoming missions Gaganyaan (India's first manned mission to space), Aditya L-1 (a mission to study the Sun), Shukrayaan (mission to Venus).
- **Joint Missions:** Chandrayaan-3 has the potential to reaffirm ISRO's position as one of the front-ranking space-faring nations & also allow it to get actively involved in more collaborative missions with other space agencies. Eg, ISRO, and NASA are realizing a joint satellite mission called NISAR (NASA ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar) for earth science studies. As part of the Indo-French cooperation, ISRO and CNES have completed the feasibility study on realizing an earth observation satellite mission with a thermal infrared imager, named TRISHNA. ISRO and JAXA scientists are conducting a feasibility study to realize a joint satellite mission to explore the moon's polar region (Lunar Polar Exploration Mission (LUPEX), also as Chandrayaan-4)

Conclusion

The moon is the closest cosmic neighbor of Earth and can be used as a potential site for testing futuristic technologies for deep space missions. The success of the mission would further help “stimulate the advancement of technology, promote global alliances, and inspire a future generation of explorers and scientists”.

17. Discuss the impact of global and local warming on urban flooding in India. How can existing governance and infrastructure systems be adapted to effectively handle these extreme weather events, particularly in cities along the coast, rivers, and hills? Provide examples of successful climate adaptation and flood response measures implemented in Indian cities.

Introduction: Give context to urban flooding.

Body: How does global warming impact flooding and what are measures taken to deal with this?

Conclusion: Way forward.

The recent deluge in north-western India and Delhi has raised concerns regarding the effects of urban flooding in India.

How does global and local warming impact urban flooding?

- **Urban Heat Island effect:** Urban areas tend to be hotter as compared to rural areas because of the greater absorption of heat by buildings, roads, and infrastructure which naturally raises the temperature. Such high temperatures intensify evaporation from water bodies leading to flood risk.
- **Sea level rise:** Due to global warming there is melting of ice caps and glaciers which leads to a rise in sea level. This results in low-lying coastal cities experiencing heavy rainfall and sea level rise which finally leads to urban floods.
- **High rainfall intensity:** Global warming increases temperature which often leads to high-intensity rainfall in a few hours. This intense shower overwhelms the city's drainage system and causes flooding.

How can the existing governance structure be revamped to handle such events?

- **Ensuring drainage system works:** A monsoon audit is undertaken by urban civic bodies like *in Mumbai* to ensure that storm water drains, tanks, and lakes exist and work, and they are not choked by construction debris, silt, garbage, or blocked encroachments. This can reduce the impact of flooding, and help recharge groundwater and surface storage.
- **Recycle wastewater:** The integration of drainage, water supply, and wastewater systems to store brief, heavy downpours while also treating and recycling wastewater to maintain clean water and sanitary conditions for the remainder of the year.
- **Improving roads infrastructure:** The road infrastructure has expanded faster than our drainage infrastructure. Effective infrastructure planning and coordination by all concerned agencies is the need of the hour as seen in *Chennai*.
- **Sponge Cities:** The main goal of Sponge Cities is to lessen reliance on "grey infrastructure" such as levees, pipes, dams, and channels. Instead, green infrastructures—strategic natural, semi-natural, and engineered systems—will be developed to enable water absorption and storage during the monsoon and supply that water during the dry season. Permeable roads and sidewalks are being built with this objective in mind. Eg, *Kochi & Bangalore*.
- **Improve warning services:** There has considerable progress in mapping cities most prone to flooding and using satellite and topographical data to identify them. Eg, *IFLOWS* is a monitoring and flood warning system being operationalized in Mumbai.

Conclusion:

India needs to be prepared for more such events in the future on account of climate change. The priority of government should be to ensure that all urban residents have access to basic services and the focus of urban bodies should be on improving public health and reducing

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our collective vulnerability, and re-imagine our cities to have more forests, parks, wetlands, and lakes.

18. Discuss the historical relationship between Delhi and the Yamuna River. How have urban development and environmental changes impacted this relationship over time? Use specific examples from the article to support your answer.

Introduction: Briefly describe the geographical origin of Yamuna.

Body: Describe its historical relationship with Delhi and how has urban development impacted this relationship.

Conclusion: Way forward.

The Yamuna River originates from the Yamunotri Glacier & is the largest tributary of the Ganga River. The stretch of the river from its origin to Okhla in Delhi is called “Upper Yamuna”. It covers parts of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh. Its water is used for farming and irrigation, making it one of the highest food-yielding river basins in the country benefiting Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, NCT of Delhi, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand. It is also the main source of raw water for the national capital and is a breeding ground for aquatic organisms. Today, Yamuna is one of the most polluted rivers in the country.

What is the historical relationship between Delhi and Yamuna?

- **Important monuments:** The two most important forts of Delhi, Salimgarh Fort built by Salim Shah Sur, in 1546 & Red Fort built by Shah Jahan in 1648, are connected by a bridge as the river Yamuna flows between the two forts.
- **Water entrance:** Shah Jahan's original city of Delhi had 14 gates with a water gate', Khizri Darwaza, that opened directly to the river through which the Emperor used to enter the fort.
- **Strategic use:** The river location was instrumental in the construction of the fort as it provided a barrier against enemy forces, its water was used to feed the population.
- **Baolis:** It is a reservoir in which water can be stored and can be used for drinking and bathing purpose. It was also source of groundwater. Some important baolis in Delhi are Purana Qila Baoli, Feroz Shah Kotla Baoli, Agrasen ki Baoli, & Nizamuddin Baoli. These baolis are important was rainwater conservation.

How have urban development and environmental changes impacted this relationship over time?

- **Change of course:** The river has changed its course over the decades. Scientists have believed this is due northward movement of the Indian Tectonic Plate.
- **Dead River:** Sewage and domestic and industrial effluents have made its water toxic and unfit for consumption. Studies have called it a “glorified drain” and a “**dead river**”, unable to sustain any life. According to a *2020 report by Yamuna Monitoring Committee (YMC)*, the 22-kilometer stretch of the Yamuna which traverses Delhi is only two percent of the length of the river but accounts for over 75 percent of the total pollution load in the river, which comes from untreated domestic sewage, industrial and solid waste.
- **Encroachment on floodplains:** A report by Centre for Science and Environment has shown that 63% of wetlands and waterbodies in the Yamuna floodplain are dry. The loss of waterbodies makes the city more prone to floods.

Conclusion:

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There is an urgent need to implement natural solutions like creating green areas along the river, timely de-silting of drains, making pavements porous, and ensuring accountability of officials to mitigate the situation of urban flooding in Delhi.

19. Analyse the significance of the 25-year strategic partnership between India and France. Discuss the key areas of cooperation outlined in the “Horizon 2047” roadmap and their potential impact on both nations.

Introduction: Give the context of the visit of the PM to France.

Body: Significance of the bilateral relationship between the two nations.

Conclusion: Way forward.

Recently, PM Modi's visit to France signified the importance of 25 years of the India-France strategic partnership. PM Modi described the two countries' ties as *“being in excellent shape”, and that they are “strong, trusted, consistent.”* Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the Guest of Honour at France's Bastille Day parade in Paris.

What is the significance of the relationship and key areas of cooperation outlined in the “Horizon 2047” roadmap?

- **Strategic autonomy:** The partnership with France is India's most important strategic partnership in Europe. France stood by India during the 1998 nuclear tests when almost all Western nations condemned the tests. Former diplomats have described India and France as “mirror images of each other” in their common quest for strategic autonomy.
- **Horizon 2047:** Horizon 2047 sets the course for the France-India bilateral relationship in all areas till 2047, the year that will mark 100 years of India's Independence, 100 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, and 50 years of the Indo-French strategic partnership. The vision document has been established to strengthen cooperation in the areas of defence, space, civil nuclear, renewables, cyberspace, digital technology, counter-terrorism, maritime security, regular defence exercises, and the blue economy.
- **Defence Cooperation:** France has emerged as the second largest exporter of defence equipment to India in the last ten years. Agreements involving the purchase of Rafale fighter jets, Scorpene submarines & an agreement between Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and Safran for helicopter engines are being negotiated and finalized.
- **Indo-Pacific:** Cooperation in Indo-Pacific is marked by convergence in security and economic interests. France is crucial for India for building maritime domain awareness and keeping an eye on China's presence in the region, augmenting New Delhi's participation in the Quad.
- **Space cooperation:** Numerous agreements between France's CNES and India's ISRO are strengthening their scientific and commercial cooperation, particularly in the areas of reusable launchers, the completion of the joint Earth observation satellite TRISHNA, the first phase of the constellation of maritime surveillance satellites in the Indian Ocean, and the defense of Indo-French satellites in orbit against the possibility of collision.
- **Energy cooperation:** Both nations are part of the International Solar Alliance to focus on renewable energy. The two sides have signed a Road Map on Green Hydrogen, which aims to establish a reliable and sustainable value chain for a global supply of decarbonized hydrogen.

Conclusion:

The roadmap for bilateral relations as outlined in Horizon 2047 has three pillars: partnership for security and sovereignty; partnership for the planet; partnership for the people. Both nations value their strategic autonomy, and independence in world affairs and seek a multipolar world within the framework of international law.

20. Analyze the implications of the growth strategies adopted by Indian conglomerates for the Indian economy.

Introduction: Give the context regarding Indian conglomerates.

Body: What growth strategies are adopted by corporates and what are its implications?

Conclusion: Way forward.

Indian conglomerates are large, diversified business entities that operate in multiple industries and sectors. These conglomerates play a significant role in the Indian economy, contributing to employment generation, innovation, and economic growth. They often have a long history and legacy, with some conglomerates tracing their origins back to the pre-independence era.

What are growth strategies adopted by conglomerates?

- **Diversification:** The Indian conglomerates pursue the strategy of diversification to expand their business. The big business houses in India have diversified their assets in sectors ranging from telecommunications, retail trade, media, and entertainment businesses.
- **Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A):** the big business houses pursue M&A to expand their business, gain access to new technologies, and increase their market share. Some of the popular M&A in India are: Adani Group acquired NDTV, Ambuja Cement.
- **Marketing:** Companies nowadays spend a large part of their fortune on marketing and branding to maintain their presence in markets. This enhances brand visibility and creates customer loyalty.
- **Global ventures:** Corporates pursue global expansion to tap into the international market base, establish subsidiaries, diversify revenue sources, and promote research and development (R&D).

What are the implications of such growth strategies?

- **Increased concentration of wealth:** Various reports have cited that the share of assets in the non-financial sectors owned by the Big-5 business groups has risen from 10% in 1991 to nearly 18% in 2021, whereas the share of the next five has fallen from 18% to less than 9%.
- **Reduce competition:** Such growth strategies are used to stifle competition as only big corporate houses can deal with shocks related to demand and supply. It results in profiteering, through the manipulation of costs and prices thereby fostering extreme asset and income inequality.
- **Unethical nexus between state and corporate:** Corporates try to influence democratic institutions through media manipulation, and pressure groups leading to influence in policy formulation and political process.
- **Risk of Overextension:** Diversification into multiple industries can pose risks if the conglomerate lacks the necessary expertise or resources to effectively manage all its businesses. Poor management or inadequate oversight can lead to financial instability and underperformance in certain sectors.

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- **Social and Environmental Impact:** While many conglomerates have CSR initiatives, there can still be negative social and environmental impacts associated with their operations. For example, conglomerates in industries such as mining, energy, or manufacturing may contribute to environmental degradation or social inequalities if not managed responsibly.

Conclusion:

The government should act as a facilitator and support the MSMEs which are a major source of employment creation, contribution to GDP, and revenue generation. The government should strengthen its regulatory framework toward mitigating risks and ensuring responsible business practices.

21. The ED and the police have different roles and powers under the law. Compare and contrast the powers of the ED and the police, especially in the context of the PMLA and the Indian Penal Code.

Introduction: Give a brief explanation about ED.

Body: Compare the powers of both the ED and State Police.

Conclusion: Way forward.

The history of ED goes back to May 1, 1956, when *an 'Enforcement Unit'* was formed in the Department of Economic Affairs, for handling Exchange Control Laws violations under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA). Today it is a multi-dimensional organisation investigating economic offences under *the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, Foreign Exchange Management Act, and FERA*. Police force on the other hand are responsible for law enforcement in states and UT's. *The Police Act of 1861* established the principles of organization for police forces in India and continues to date with minor modifications.

Compare and contrast the powers of ED and state police:

- **Jurisdiction:** ED is a specialized law enforcement agency that operates under the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India. State police on the other hand functioned under the administrative control of the state government.
- **Function:** ED's primary mandate is the enforcement of economic laws and regulations, focusing on cases related to money laundering and foreign exchange violations under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). State police must maintain law and order, prevent and detect crimes, and ensure public safety. Police and Public Order are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India.
- **Investigation:** The ED examines cases involving economic crimes, financial scams, money laundering, and foreign exchange infractions. Its main goal is to locate, identify, confiscate, and track down the proceeds of crime that are produced by the illicit activity. The State Police investigate a variety of crimes, including but not limited to theft, robbery, assault, murder, kidnapping, drug trafficking, and other infractions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and applicable state legislation.
- **Registration of case:** ED authorities begin with search procedures and begin their investigation to gather materials and trace the "proceeds of crime" by issuing summonses, whereas the police are required to register a First Information Report (FIR) for a cognizable offense before investigating. The enforcement directorate cannot register a case on its own, it is required by agencies such as CBI or state police to register an offense based on which the ED Case Information Report is filed by the

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Enforcement Directorate. State police are authorised to start an investigation into a cognizable case on their own and they do not require any orders from the court to do so.

- **Admissibility of statement:** The PMLA's provisions practically make the ED far more powerful than the police as it is the only Act in the country where a statement recorded before an investigating officer is admissible in a court as evidence while any statement made by an accused to the police is inadmissible as evidence in court of law.

Conclusion:

The focus of the government should be to strengthen the functioning of the ED by filling the vacancies in the ED and setting up separate buildings for detention and questioning. The focus of ED should be to improve its conviction rate rather than being used by politicians to target opposition leaders.

22. Discuss the challenges and opportunities that India may face in its growth strategy in the post-COVID-19 and post-Russia-Ukraine War era. How can India achieve continuous growth for the next 25 years?

Introduction: Give a brief view of the situation.

Body: What challenges are faced by India and how can it achieve growth for the next 25 years?

Conclusion: Way forward.

The twin shocks of COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine War have posed challenges and opportunities for India which are crucial to chalk out a future growth roadmap for the next 25 years. This growth strategy can enable people to have a higher standard of living, raise their per capita income and eliminate poverty.

What are the challenges India may face in its growth strategy?

- **Consistent growth:** RBI reports have suggested that India needs a continuous growth of 7 percent for the next 25 years to become a developed nation. India's per capita income is currently estimated at \$2,500, while it must be more than \$21,664 by 2047, as per World Bank standards, to be classified as a high-income country.
- **Investment:** India will require a Gross Fixed Capital Formation rate in the range of 30-32 percent of GDP. It is important to emphasize that public investment has increased post-COVID and Russia Ukraine war but there is a lack of investment from the private sector. The nature of investment should also be channelled into sectors that involve growth and are labour-intensive.
- **Supply chain disruptions:** India needs to plan its strategy for securing supply of critical imports whether in the form of pharma, semiconductor chips, or oil supply. The supply chain was adversely affected during the pandemic and Russia-Ukrainian crisis.
- **Global Trade Rules:** The policy of protectionism followed by some developed nations has raised concerns regarding the future of free trade and the relevance of WTO.

How can India achieve growth for the next 25 years?

- **Multi-dimensional strategy:** Since India did not follow the export-led growth strategy which was followed by East Asian nations, India needs to adopt a diverse strategy that caters to agriculture and manufacturing, implementing Atmanirbhar Bharat and policies like PLI schemes.

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- **Digitalization:** Progress in digitalization efforts would reap benefits in fields of governance, and financial inclusion and help private players in creating new products & services.
- **Entrepreneurship:** The speedy growth in start-ups in India has enabled India to be the third largest ecosystem for startups. These startups can fuel growth in sectors like FMCG, agriculture, Fintech, and health.
- **Universal Basic Income:** The idea behind UBI is to ensure that everyone has a minimum level of income to meet their basic needs, such as food, shelter, and healthcare. The concept of UBI should be complemented with efforts to minimize the subsidy burden.

Conclusion:

India must rebalance its economy by bolstering its manufacturing sector, which has significant backward and forward linkages, to sustain growth over the next 25 years. A larger industrial sector would enable India to satisfy rising domestic demand from the expanding population in addition to creating job opportunities.

23. Assess the potential impact of a vacuum in official data on government policymaking. How might this affect the acknowledgment and addressal of ground realities that require intervention?

Introduction: Why data is crucial in policymaking?

Body: What is the impact of a vacuum in data on policymaking?

Conclusion: Way forward

Data plays a very significant role in government policymaking in India as it helps policymakers understand various aspects of the economy, society, and governance, enabling them to make informed decisions. A vacuum in official data has negative implications for government policymaking.

What is the impact of a vacuum in official data on policymaking?

- **Lack of informed decision making:** In the absence of official data, policymakers make decisions based on inaccurate or incomplete data resulting in policies that do not align with the goals intended to be achieved.
- **Lack of transparency & accountability:** In the absence of reliable official data, it becomes difficult for citizens and civil society to hold government officials accountable for their performance. Without data, there is less transparency regarding government efforts and actions.
- **Risk of policy failure:** Policies and programs based on assumptions rather than on data are more prone to failure. The power of such data was seen early in the evidence-based response and decision-making in countries like South Korea during COVID-19.
- **Inability to meet international targets:** Without data, it becomes increasingly difficult to achieve international commitments. India has also set targets to achieve in fields related to environmental pollution, SDG, and human development.
- **Misallocation of resources:** In the absence of data there may be misallocation of resources where funds may be diverted from areas, which may be crucial in achieving the desired goals for the government.

How might this official data collection be improved to affect policymaking?

- **Timely update of methodologies:** There is an urgent need to update the methodologies used in the surveys. For e.g., economists have suggested that major

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surveys conducted post-2011 and using the Census 2011 for the sampling frame have overestimated the proportion of the rural population significantly. These surveys use outdated sampling frames and hence, are not representative.

- **Regular periodic surveys:** Economists and statisticians have suggested that it is imperative that data related to poverty, growth, employment, and unemployment should be conducted at regular intervals in a predetermined timely manner and should be of the highest quality to narrow the gap between ground realities and survey estimates.
- **Technical guidance from statisticians:** Statisticians and economists can examine the administrative statistics that are relevant to surveys and statistics & provide input for researching data gaps and any additional data requirements. They can also offer technical advice to the federal and state entities responsible for conducting the surveys.

Conclusion:

There should be concerted efforts from the government to establish the National Statistical Commission (NSC), as the **nodal, autonomous, and statutory body** for **all core statistical activities**.

24. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) in regulating water courses between India and Pakistan. Discuss why it is often cited as an example of cooperation between the two nations despite their strained relations.

Introduction: Give brief context of IWT.

Body: Evaluate the effectiveness of the treaty.

Conclusion: Way forward.

The Indus Water Treaty or IWT is a treaty signed in 1960 between India & Pakistan with the mediation of the World Bank which acted as a third party. Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) was signed by former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and then President of Pakistan, Ayub Khan. The treaty prescribed how water from the six rivers would be shared between India and Pakistan.

How effective has IWT been in regulating water courses between two nations?

- **Water sharing:** Treaty allocated the three western rivers—Indus, Chenab, and Jhelum—to Pakistan for unrestricted use, barring certain non-consumptive, agricultural, and domestic uses by India, and the three Eastern rivers—Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej—were allocated to India for unrestricted usage.
- **Dispute resolution:** The PIC is an established mechanism under the IWT, which mandates it to establish and maintain cooperative arrangements for the implementation of the water distribution pact and to promote cooperation between India and Pakistan in the development of the Indus water systems. The meeting of the PIC is held alternately in India and Pakistan at least once every year as mandated by the treaty.
- **Uneasiness in Pakistan:** There is uneasiness in the minds of Pakistan's leadership regarding the terms of IWT. It is sceptical about the terms of the treaty and fears whether the Indian projects on the western rivers, in particular Jhelum and Chenab conform to the technical stipulations. Being a lower riparian state, the scepticism has led Pakistan to maintain high troop levels and alertness around the canals on the eastern front, fearing that India will try to take control of the western rivers.

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- **Continuity:** The treaty has remained 'uninterrupted' because India respects its signatory and values transboundary rivers as an important connector in the region in terms of both diplomacy and economic prosperity.

What are the concerns regarding the treaty?

- **Renegotiation:** India feels that the treaty be modified as India is being too generous on water sharing. The treaty also prevents India from building any storage systems on the western rivers.
- **Pakistan objections:** Pakistan has raised concerns regarding the Kishanganga dam project, Ratle hydroelectric power project alleging that these projects violate a provision of IWT.
- **Food and energy needs:** IWT is unlikely to address the growing industrial needs related to food and energy of 2 countries. The modified version of IWT should incorporate mechanisms that allow flexibility to change in the quantity of water available for allocation among the parties.
- **Climate Change:** The Indus Basin's size and volume are getting altered by climate change, instances of more high-intensity rainfall, long stretches of scanty rainfall & high influx of water due to glacial melt. A change in the flow conditions may be classified as a 'change of circumstances' that can justify renegotiation or termination in the future.

Conclusion:

Both nations should hold timely meetings of PIC which serve as a forum for exchange of information on the rivers, for continued cooperation, and as a first step for resolution of conflict. IWT does not have a unilateral exit provision and is supposed to remain in force unless both countries ratify another mutually agreed pact.

25. Critically analyze the role of the proposed Mediation Bill in reducing the judicial backlog in India. Discuss its potential benefits and drawbacks.

Introduction: Define mediation.

Body: List out the potential benefits and drawbacks of the Mediation Bill.

Conclusion: Way forward

Mediation in litigation refers to a form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in which a neutral third party, known as the mediator, assists the disputing parties in reaching a mutually acceptable settlement to their legal dispute. Unlike a traditional court trial, where a judge or jury makes a final decision, mediation aims to facilitate communication and negotiation between the parties themselves. The Mediation Bill 2021 will be introduced in the Parliament which aims at institutionalising mediation and establishing the Mediation Council of India.

What are the potential benefits of the proposed bill?

- **Reduce backlog of cases:** The data available indicates that more than 4.1 crore cases are pending in district and taluka courts and approximately 59 lakh cases are pending in different high courts, 71,000 cases are pending before the Supreme Court. Given this backlog the ADR mechanism can be an important tool in increasing access to justice by providing redress and settlement of disputes in a non-adversarial manner, free from the formalistic procedural practices of the law.

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- **International commitments:** The proposed bill indicates India's strong commitment to ADR by becoming one of the first group of signatories to the Singapore Convention on Mediation.
- **Safeguards citizen rights:** The mediation process is non-adversarial and based on consent. It safeguards the rights of litigants to approach competent adjudicatory forums/courts for urgent relief. The process is confidential and provides immunity against disclosure of cases.
- **Mandatory pre-litigation:** The proposed bill proposes mandatory pre-litigation of at least 2 sessions in civil and commercial disputes. The outcome of the mediation process in the form of a Mediation Settlement Agreement (MSA) will be legally enforceable and can be registered with the State/district/taluk legal authorities.

What are the drawbacks of the proposed bill?

- **Coercive nature of bill:** The feature of mandatory pre-litigation can be used by one party to coerce another party even if they are unwilling to opt for ADR. The feature can be seen to violate Article 21 of the Constitution, access to justice is a constitutional right, which cannot be fettered or restricted.
- **Excludes Government:** The proposed bill attempts to exclude government, one of the biggest litigants, from the scope of mediation is disappointing.
- **International Mediation:** The fact that an international mediation will only be taken into consideration if it is held in India is another significant problem. However, the Bill makes no mention of settlements or agreements reached through external international mediation. The Bill makes no mention of whether or not such agreements will be upheld or challenged.
- **Qualifications:** There is ambiguity regarding the qualifications and experience required to be a member of the Mediation Council of India.

Conclusion:

The Bill ought to be enacted following consultation with stakeholders to facilitate a quicker resolution of disputes. The proposed feature of community mediation is a welcoming step in the process of ADR.

26. Explain the process of delimitation and its significance in the Indian electoral system. Discuss the implications of the freeze on delimitation until the first census is conducted after 2026.

Introduction: Define Delimitation.

Body: What is the significance of the delimitation exercise?

Conclusion: Way forward.

Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and state Assembly seats to represent changes in population. According to **Article 82** of the Constitution, Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after Census that is held every 10 years. The main objective of delimitation is to provide equal representation to equal segments of a population. Delimitation is carried out by an independent Delimitation Commission, appointed by the Government of India under provisions of the Delimitation Commission Act. The Delimitation Commission is appointed by the President of India and works in collaboration with the Election Commission of India. It is composed of the following: a retired Supreme Court judge, the Chief Election Commissioner of India and respective State Election Commissioners. The last delimitation exercise took place in 1976.

What is the significance of delimitation in the Indian electoral system?

- **Population Equality:** One of the main objectives of delimitation is to achieve population equality among different constituencies. It thus promotes the principle of "one person, one vote."
- **Equitable representation:** Delimitation aids in giving each group in society fair and equitable representation.
- **Electoral Rolls:** Delimitation exercise helps in updating the electoral rolls by including new voters. It helps in maintaining integrity and accuracy of voter list.

What are the implications of freeze on delimitation?

- **Political Representation:** The freeze on delimitation until the first census after 2026 meant that there was no change in Lok Sabha seats which took account of change in population or demographic change for that period.
- **Imbalance among states:** The southern states, which not only had more success in population management but also had progressed economically to the point that they produced far more per capita money than the northern states, were particularly fearful of losing meaningful political participation.
- **Role of Presiding Officer:** The Presiding Officers of the Houses/Legislatures must figure out how to deal with the high number of members vying for the Speaker's attention in order to raise matters in the House. The Speaker finds it extremely difficult to run the House's business, even with the current strength of 543 members. The Speaker's pleas are not often heeded by the members, which makes it challenging to run the House with efficiency. The disrespect for the Speaker's instructions and decisions is made worse by interruptions of the proceedings. The Speaker's job will become more challenging and burdensome due to the rapid increase in numbers.
- **Parliament Proceedings:** Zero Hour, Question Hour, and the raising matters of urgent public importance will be subjected to severe strain because the 60-odd minutes which are available in the morning before the normal legislative business of the House begins will require our Parliament and Legislatures to sit for a longer duration each day during the session as well as have more number of sittings in a year than at present.

Conclusion:

The upcoming delimitation exercise should take into account the concerns of tribal areas, southern states in matter of allocation of seats.

27. Discuss the implications of the Indian government's decision to ban the export of non-basmati white rice.

Introduction: Provide a brief introduction on the Indian government's decision to ban the export of non-basmati white rice.

Body: Write 5-6 points on the implications of the Indian government's decision to ban the export of non-basmati white rice.

Conclusion: Provide a conclusion on the Indian government's decision to ban the export of non-basmati white rice.

Introduction

In 2022-23, India exported 22.3 million tones (mt) of rice worth over \$11.1 billion. The Indian government, under the leadership of Narendra Modi, decided to ban all non-basmati white

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rice shipments. This decision will remove around 9.9 mt of rice from the world market, allowing only basmati and parboiled non-basmati rice for exports.

What are the Implications of the Indian government's decision to ban the export of non-basmati white rice?

- **Reduced Supply in the Global Market:** The ban will remove almost 10 million tones of non-basmati white rice from the world market, leading to a decrease in overall rice supply. India, with a share of over 40% in the world's total rice exports, plays a significant role as a global supplier.
- **Impact on World Prices:** The reduction in supply due to the ban is likely to create a surge in world rice prices. Other rice-exporting countries like Thailand, Vietnam, Pakistan, US, and Myanmar cannot fill the gap left by India's absence, leading to a supply-demand imbalance.
- **Domestic Supply Concerns:** The ban is a response to domestic supply concerns caused by subnormal monsoon rainfall in major growing states. The government is worried about the current rice crop and delayed plantings' potential impact on yields.
- **Questionable Credibility and Image:** The ban raises questions about the credibility of official output estimates, especially when India recorded all-time-high production of both wheat and rice in 2022-23. India's image as a reliable global supplier, especially to countries in Africa and West, South, and Southeast Asia, may suffer due to the abrupt export ban.
- **Hindrances to Market Building Efforts:** Building markets takes time and effort, and the sudden ban can undo the progress made in establishing India as a reliable rice supplier in various regions. The image of an unpredictable exporter can deter potential long-term trade partners.
- **Inflation Control Measures:** While imposing export curbs may be justified to contain domestic inflation, blanket export bans can have adverse effects. Alternatives such as imposing tariffs or setting minimum prices for exports could be considered to balance domestic needs and international trade.

Conclusion:

The ban on non-basmati white rice exports by the Indian government has significant global and domestic implications, potentially leading to higher rice prices and affecting India's reputation as a reliable supplier. Alternatives should be explored to balance domestic needs and international trade.

28. **Discuss the concept of sustainable agriculture and its importance for India. How can sustainable agriculture practices address the challenges faced by the Indian agricultural sector?**

Introduction: Provide a brief introduction on the sustainable agriculture and its importance for India

Body: Write 4-5 points on the concept of sustainable agriculture and its importance for India. Write 5-6 points on how sustainable agriculture practices can address the challenges faced by the Indian agricultural sector

Conclusion: Provide a conclusion on sustainable agriculture and its importance for India, challenges faced by the Indian agricultural sector.

Introduction

Unsustainable agricultural practices in India have negative effects on the environment and human health. Embracing sustainable agriculture is crucial for ensuring the long-term viability of agriculture in the country. Adoption of advanced technologies can aid farmers in developing sustainable farming systems.

Discuss the concept of sustainable agriculture and its importance for India:

- **Well-being:** Sustainable agriculture prioritizes the well-being of soil, environment, and local communities in the long run.
- **Primary goal:** Its primary goal is to meet increasing food demand without compromising natural resources for future generations.
- **Aim:** Sustainable agriculture ensures food, fiber, and agricultural product production while safeguarding the environment, public health, communities, and animal welfare.
- **Conservation:** Emphasizes conservation and regeneration of essential resources like soil, water, and air for the benefit of future generations.
- **Importance:** Vital for India as declining soil fertility due to excessive chemical use poses a significant challenge to farmers.
- **Long Term:** Crucial for long-term sustainability of the agriculture sector, considering its importance in providing employment and livelihoods.

How can sustainable agriculture practices address the challenges faced by the Indian agricultural sector?

- **Preserving Soil Fertility:** Embracing sustainable practices like organic farming and reduced chemical use can preserve soil health and fertility, leading to higher yields in the long term.
- **Water Management:** Precision farming and drip irrigation optimize water usage, making agriculture more resilient to water scarcity.
- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Agroforestry combines trees, crops, and livestock, providing benefits like soil conservation, biodiversity conservation, and carbon sequestration.

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- **Climate Change Mitigation:** Sustainable practices help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, making agriculture more climate resilient.
- **Reduced Production Costs:** Precision farming and optimized resource use lead to cost savings for farmers.
- **Improved Market Access:** Sustainable practices can produce higher-quality crops, enabling farmers to access direct markets and command better prices.
- **Enhanced Food Security:** Sustainable agriculture practices can increase productivity, contributing to food security for the growing population.
- **Employment Opportunities:** Implementing sustainable technologies can create new job opportunities in the agri-tech sector.
- **Renewable Energy Integration:** Utilizing solar and wind power in farming reduces emissions and dependence on fossil fuels.
- **Automation and Robotics:** Advanced technologies reduce labor costs, improve crop yields, and minimize the use of fertilizers and pesticides.

Conclusion:

By embracing sustainable agriculture practices, India can boost agricultural productivity, reduce production costs, and produce healthier and safer foods, benefiting both farmers and consumers. Sustainable agriculture is not just a necessity but an opportunity to create a more resilient and prosperous agricultural sector for the future.

29. 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.

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- **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.

30. 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-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

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inequality. The need is to maintain a balance between economic development & inclusive growth to benefit all sections of society.

- **Infrastructure and Governance 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.
- **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.

31. 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 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.

32. 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 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.

33. 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 life 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.
- **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.

34. 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 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

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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.

35. 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 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

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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.

36. 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 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.

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- **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.

37. 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, 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.

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- **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.

38. 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.
- **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.

39. 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.
- **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:

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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.*

40. 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.
- **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.

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- **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.

