



Mains Marathon
Compilation

13th to 18th Nov, 2023

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Discuss the role of the Rajya Sabha in representing state interests and propose reforms that could enhance federalism in India's political system.

Introduction: Give brief context to the question

Body: Role of Rajya Sabha and reforms to improve political system

Conclusion: Way forward

The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha are the two houses of the Indian Parliament. The Rajya Sabha is intended to serve as the states' and Union territories' representative, whereas the Lok Sabha represents the people of India. India's federal system of government heavily relies on the Rajya Sabha's ability to reflect state interests.

Role of Rajya Sabha in Representing State Interests

- **Representation of States:** Members of the Rajya Sabha are elected by the elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of States and Union territories. This ensures that states have a direct say in the composition of the Rajya Sabha. Hence, Rajya Sabha maintains the federal equilibrium by protecting the interests of the states against the undue interference of the Centre.
- **Special Powers:** The Rajya Sabha possesses specific powers that are indicative of its function in safeguarding the interests of the state. It can propose changes and postpone payment bills for a maximum of 14 days. If a resolution is approved by a two-thirds majority, the Rajya Sabha can also start legislation on topics included in the State List.
- **Diverse representation:** The Rajya Sabha has been more like a diverse mix of minds from different streams as writers, economists or even poets political leaders, etc. The second chamber enables a second and reflective expression of representative opinion.

Reforms that could enhance federalism

- **Delimitation:** The delimitation exercise should be responsible and not biased towards northern states as it would disturb the balance of federalism. To minimize these effects it is essential that the number of seats in Parliament increase significantly (at least around 848 seats to avoid any State losing seats), which can help to enhance democratic representation ratios. Delimitation should not be driven only by factors based on population. Geographical determinism, economic productivity, linguistic history, and a sense of fairness should also play a part in the exercise.
- **Better representation:** Federalism needs to be promoted and states be given a better voice and a platform to represent their interests. To ensure that every state has an equal number of Rajya Sabha MPs, constitutional reform can be sought. Simultaneously, it is important to encourage direct elections for Rajya Sabha MPs while making sure that a residence requirement is included and strictly followed.
- **State reorganization:** A New State Reorganisation Commission may be set up to evaluate the socio-economic and administrative viability of carving out new states to enhance administrative efficiency and democratic accountability.

Conclusion

A more successful and balanced federal system in India could be achieved by changing the role and makeup of the Rajya Sabha in addition to other changes, guaranteeing that the interests of the union and the states are fairly represented.

Analyze the challenges in balancing economic development with forest conservation in India, considering the recent amendments and their potential environmental and social impacts.

Introduction: Describe the purpose of the Forest Conservation Act 2023.

Body: What are the challenges in balancing economic development with forest conservation?

Conclusion: Way forward

The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, of 2023 was introduced to make changes to The Forest (Conservation) Act, of 1980. The proposed amendments focus on building carbon stocks in plantations and providing land for compensatory afforestation instead of diverted forest land. The Forest Conservation Amendment Act of 2023 aims to determine how forests can be utilized for economic gain, and how it seeks to achieve this goal is outlined in the legislation.

Challenges in balancing economic development with forest conservation

- **Restricting the definition of forest:** The Bill will impose significant limitations on the application of the landmark Godavarman judgment of 1996, which broadened the scope of the FCA 1980. The proposed amendment now narrows the Act's coverage to only legally notified forests and forests recorded in government records on or after October 25, 1980. States may now be free to allow the destruction of unclassified forests for construction and development.
- **Exclusion of fragile ecosystems:** The Bill leaves out some of India's most vulnerable ecosystems by eliminating the need for forest permits for security-related projects within 100 kilometers of international borders. These include the high-altitude Himalayan forests and meadows, as well as the forests of northeastern India, which are acknowledged as worldwide hotspots for biodiversity.
- **Rights of forest dwellers:** The Bill does not mention the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest-dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. Consequently, the exclusion of certain forest areas and the simplified diversion process might lead to the removal of the requirement to consult gram sabhas.

Potential environmental and social impacts

- **Easing of the Environmental Clearance Process:** While expediting economic activity, amendments that simplify the environmental clearance procedures for development projects run the risk of undermining thorough environmental assessments.
- **Promotion of Plantation Forestry:** While encouraging plantation forestry may boost the economy, it might not be able to completely replace the ecosystem services and biodiversity that come from natural forests.
- **Neglect on forest governance:** The principle of afforestation as mentioned in the new bill violates the concept of forest governance as it infringes on the rights of forest-dwelling communities. The amendment contradicts the concept of decentralized forest governance as forests in the country fall under the concurrent list and also fails to address the issue of human-animal conflicts in forest areas.

Conclusion

The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill of 2023 jeopardizes forest conservation by prioritizing plantations, restricting the Act's scope, and broadening exemptions. It is crucial to maintain a balance and uphold indigenous rights to safeguard forests and biodiversity.

Analyze how India's implementation of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) has contributed to its socio-economic development. Discuss the role of DPI in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the context of India's diverse population.

Introduction: Describe DPI briefly

Body: Highlight role of DPI in India's socio-economic development and in achieving SDG

Conclusion: Way forward

Digital public infrastructure (DPI) refers to blocks or platforms such as digital identification, payment infrastructure, and data exchange solutions that help countries deliver essential services. It provides necessary technical and organizational frameworks to ensure that digital services are secure, reliable, and accessible to everyone.

How DPI has contributed to India's socio-economic development?

- **Digital inclusion:** Inclusive Digital Public Infrastructures (DPIs) ensure that all segments of society, particularly underserved and marginalized populations, have access to essential digital services, thereby promoting digital inclusion and empowerment. Enabling people to participate in the digital economy, obtain knowledge, and make use of a variety of online services, promotes digital inclusion.
- **Better Agricultural Practices:** Farmers can receive up-to-date information on weather, market prices, and optimal agricultural techniques from inclusive DPIs. Their ability to make wiser decisions is enhanced, which raises agricultural productivity.
- **Social development:** By filling in the gaps in the delivery of traditional education, digital infrastructure can support online learning and skill development initiatives. Through the use of electronic health records, telemedicine, and online consultations, digital infrastructure can enhance healthcare services in remote locations with limited access to healthcare services.

Role of DPI in achieving SDG in India'

- **Quality education:** DPI can support quality education through online learning platforms and improved access to educational resources which help in achieving SDG Goal 4. Eg, the National Knowledge Network (NKN) is a high-speed network that connects universities, research institutions, libraries, and other knowledge hubs across India & enables the sharing of knowledge and resources, facilitating collaborative research and innovation.
- **No Poverty:** DPI can contribute to poverty reduction by enabling financial inclusion and providing access to government welfare programs. Initiatives like UPI, Digital India, Aadhar & UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance) have certainly led to poverty reduction and helped in achieving SDG Goal 1.
- **Health & well-being:** DPI has supported health services through telemedicine, health information systems, and online consultations, improving healthcare accessibility, especially in remote areas. Eg, National Health Stack is a proposed digital infrastructure for the healthcare sector in India, which aims to provide a common platform for health data exchange and interoperability.

Conclusion

To achieve the aim of a \$5 trillion economy, the adoption of DPI will depend on several elements, including infrastructure development, digital literacy, and resolving potential privacy and security concerns.

Analyze the role of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations in the context of the Qatar death row case. How can India leverage international legal frameworks to address such situations?

Introduction: Describe Vienna Convention briefly

Body: Highlight role of Vienna convention in Qatar death row case

Conclusion: Way forward

The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations or VCCR provides the framework for consular relations between sovereign states. The convention has codified the privileges of 'diplomatic immunity'. This has allowed diplomats to carry out their duties without fear of coercion or harassment.

Role of the Vienna convention in the context of Qatar case

- **Consular Access:** The right of detained individuals to get consular assistance is guaranteed by the VCCR. India may use the VCCR's provisions to request an explanation and guarantee that consular access be allowed if there are claims that this right has been infringed.
- **Diplomatic Channels:** A framework for diplomatic communication is provided by the VCCR. India could communicate with Qatari authorities through diplomatic channels to learn more about the case, make sure the person is properly represented by counsel, and resolve any issues with the trial or circumstances of incarceration.
- **ICJ compulsory jurisdiction:** The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations' Article 36, which addresses correspondence and interactions with sending state citizens, is crucial to this case. The ICJ has mandatory jurisdiction over disputes arising from the interpretation or application of the Convention thanks to the Optional Protocol.

How can India leverage the international legal framework to address such situations?

- **Human Rights Frameworks:** To address issues with the death sentence, requirements for fair trials, and prisoner care, India should make use of more general human rights frameworks and treaties in addition to the VCCR. This could entail utilizing international platforms to present the case and interacting with global human rights organizations like Amnesty International.
- **Bilateral Agreements:** International legal frameworks can be strengthened via diplomatic discussions and bilateral agreements. Certain agreements or understandings between Qatar and India might be used to settle consular disputes and defend the rights of their respective nationals. For instance, an agreement about the transfer of inmates serving sentences was made in 2015 between Qatar and India.
- **International Legal Recourse:** India may take the case to international legal forums if consular rights are consistently denied. This could entail taking the matter to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and claiming that the VCCR's guarantees of rights have been infringed.

Conclusion

The Qatar death row case is a difficult diplomatic situation that needs to be carefully considered and handled strategically. International precedents, the larger background of India-Qatar relations, and the ramifications of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations should all be considered in India's response. India can pursue a settlement through diplomatic discussions, political actions, court cases, or a combination of these approaches.

Analyze the arguments for and against the abolition of the death penalty in the context of the Indian judicial system. Discuss the implications of retaining the death penalty in the proposed Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Introduction: Describe briefly the controversy around the death penalty.

Body: Highlight arguments in favour abolishing of the death penalty.

Conclusion: Way forward

The newly proposed Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) which will replace the IPC, has not made a recommendation to abolish the death penalty & instead will continue with the punishment as it falls under “rarest of rare” cases despite strong opposition from social scientists who contend that the penalty has no deterrent effect and that global opinion was in favour of its abolition.

Arguments in favour of the death penalty

- **Maintaining Deterrence:** The fundamental justification offered for the death sentence is the degree of deterrence it maintains in society as people are more likely to refrain from perpetrating the crime from fear of punishment.
- **National Security:** The integrity of our system of national security is undermined by certain actions, such as terrorism and fighting the war against the State. Such actions put the nation and its citizens' very survival in jeopardy.
- **Safety of Citizens:** Advocates of the death penalty contend that some criminals—such as those charged with the most heinous crimes are beyond reformation. They don't express regret or contrition and the person deserves to be executed for the protection of the public.

Arguments in favour of the abolition of the death penalty

- **Mental Stress:** Before being put to death, prisoners frequently serve lengthy prison sentences. According to Project 39A's "Deathworthy" report, mental illness is a result of the isolated, alienated, and stigmatized experiences of spending more time on death row.
- **Irreversible in Nature:** Courts frequently award compensation to people who have been wrongfully convicted and have served a significant amount of time in prison as a result of a State error. But no amount of money can make up for the mistake and bring back a person who has been wrongfully hanged.

Implications of Retaining the Death Penalty in Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita

- **Stringent safeguards:** The recently suggested Bhartiya Dand Samhita needs to provide strong protections against erroneous convictions, enhance the effectiveness of the legal system, and take into account substitute punishments that are consistent with human rights ideals.
- **Transparency:** Transparency, equity, and uniformity in the execution of death penalty cases should be the goals of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Concerns about the death

penalty's arbitrary or discriminatory application can be allayed with clear guidelines about when it can be applied and with a comprehensive review mechanism.

Conclusion

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita must carefully weigh the needs of society for punishment with the principles of justice and human rights before deciding whether to abolish or keep the death sentence.

Analyze the dichotomy in Indian public policy towards alcohol consumption, focusing on the balance between individual choice, public health, and revenue generation.

Introduction: Give context to the question

Body: Highlight the dichotomy in public policy towards alcohol consumption

Conclusion: Way forward

Recent record sale of alcohol during the festive season exposes hypocrisy around liquor and ambivalence around public policy to ban or use liquor as a source of revenue.

Dichotomy in public policy toward alcohol consumption

- **Individual choice:** Encouraging people to make their own decisions, including whether or not to drink, is regarded as a crucial component of personal autonomy. Strong alcohol laws are opposed because adults should be free to make life decisions for themselves and excessive government control over human preferences is inappropriate.
- **Cultural significance:** Alcohol use has religious or traditional significance and is firmly ingrained in certain cultural contexts. Limiting alcohol use may be perceived as a violation of personal liberties and cultural customs, raising questions about diversity and cultural autonomy.
- **Social issues:** Domestic violence, family strife, and unstable economies are just a few of the socioeconomic problems that underlie alcohol dependence. With an emphasis on harm reduction and public benefit, policymakers may enact rules to address the effects of alcohol misuse on society.
- **Health risks:** Abuse of alcohol presents serious health hazards, such as addiction, liver problems, and a higher chance of aggression and accidents. Policymakers are taking steps to lower general alcohol use because they are worried about the public health burden associated with alcohol-related illnesses and injuries.
- **Revenue generation:** Through taxes, licensing, and other fees, the alcohol sector provides the government with a sizable amount of income. Because of the possible financial losses as well as the effects on associated businesses and jobs, policymakers might be reluctant to impose restrictive restrictions.

Conclusion

Debates over liquor policy should address the fallacious dichotomy between traditionalism and modernism, the purported importance of religion, and the trade-offs between income generating and mitigating health effects. Limiting access (licensing and age bars on sale), increasing taxes, banning marketing, and increasing knowledge are all important steps in a public health strategy to reduce alcohol consumption. The Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) in the Constitution,

which state that "the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption of intoxicating drinks and drugs which are injurious to health," should also guide public policy.

Evaluate the effectiveness of India's legal framework in protecting domestic violence survivors. Discuss the challenges faced by these survivors when seeking justice.

Introduction: Give brief context to the problem of domestic abuse

Body: Highlight the effectiveness of the legal framework to address this and the challenges faced.

Conclusion: Way forward

India has made efforts to address the issue of domestic violence through legislative measures, with the most significant being the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) enacted in 2005. According to the latest National Family Health Survey 5 (2019-20), 30 percent of women between the ages of 18 and 49 experienced physical violence from the age of 15, while six percent experienced sexual violence in their lifetime.

Effectiveness of India's legal framework in protecting domestic violence survivors:

- **Criminal offense:** In 1983, section 498-A was added to the Indian Penal Code, designating domestic abuse as a distinct criminal offense. The abuse of a married woman by a husband or his family is covered in this section.
- **Dowry Prohibition Act 1961:** The Act forbids the payment or receipt of dowries. This is to guarantee a shift in India's dowry culture and related violence.
- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:** The 2005 Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act mandates that incidents of domestic abuse against women be reported to a Protection Officer. The purpose of the Act was to provide access to justice for women who might not always want to pursue criminal charges and would rather maintain the possibility of reconciliation.

Challenges faced by survivors when seeking justice

- **Lack of Police Sensitization:** Law enforcement officials frequently show hostility to survivors, possibly due to insufficient training on how to handle cases involving domestic abuse. Police staff must participate in sensitization sessions to guarantee a more encouraging response.
- **Judicial Delays:** The backlog of cases in the Indian legal system causes delays in the administration of justice. It is crucial to resolve cases quickly to provide survivors with timely assistance.
- **Lack of Shelter houses:** Survivors' ability to leave abusive circumstances is hampered by the lack of shelter houses and rehabilitation centres.
- **Underreporting:** Due to societal stigma, fear of reprisals, economic dependence, and ignorance of legal remedies, domestic violence instances are often underreported, which presents a serious difficulty.
- **Inadequate Implementation:** The PWDVA has been inconsistently implemented, despite its existence. Due to insufficient knowledge and bureaucratic delays, certain survivors encounter difficulties obtaining protection orders and other forms of assistance.

Conclusion

The protection of Article 21, which guarantees women the right to live with dignity, requires a concerted effort on the part of society and the government. To raise awareness, increase law enforcement's sensitivity, shorten courtroom delays, and offer survivors complete support services, ongoing efforts are required. Monitoring and addressing these issues is crucial if we are to improve the efficacy of India's legislative protections for victims of domestic abuse.

Examine the challenges in ensuring the quality of generic medicines in India. How does this impact public health?

Introduction: What is a generic drug?

Body: Highlight challenges in ensuring the quality of generic medicines and their impact on public health.

Conclusion: Way forward

A generic drug is a pharmaceutical drug that is equivalent to a brand-name product in dosage, strength, route of administration, quality, performance, and intended use. Recently, the National Medical Council (NMC) directed all doctors to prescribe only generic names and not brand names to improve access to affordable medicines as part of their ethical commitment to patients.

Challenges in ensuring the quality of generic medicines

- **Weak Enforcement:** Failure to consistently enforce quality standards and regulations can result in gaps in the oversight and management of generic medicine manufacture and distribution. This is particularly valid for small, unregistered manufacturers.
- **Lack of Infrastructure:** It's possible that some pharmaceutical production facilities, especially the smaller ones, do not have the technology and infrastructure required for quality control. The quality of generic medications may vary as a result of this.
- **Problems with the Supply Chain:** The pharmaceutical supply chain is frequently complicated, involving several middlemen. Subpar or counterfeit medications may find their way onto the market as a result of inadequate monitoring at every level.
- **Restricted Resources:** Some smaller pharmaceutical companies may lack the funding necessary to devote to R&D or to upholding standards for high-quality manufacturing. This can have an impact on their items' quality.

Impacts on Public Health

- **Ineffectiveness of Treatment:** Medicines that are subpar or counterfeit may not have the right amount of active components, which makes treatment ineffective. Drug-resistant disease strains may spread as a result, and illness may last longer and cost more to treat.
- **Deteriorating Health diseases:** If patients are using generic medications for long-term illnesses, their diseases could get worse if the medications are of poor quality or don't adhere to regulations.
- **Loss of Faith in the Healthcare System:** Events involving subpar medications have the potential to reduce public confidence in the healthcare system, which may discourage people from seeking medical attention or from following the recommended course of treatment.

- **High expenditure on health:** Ineffective therapies might result in the need for further medical procedures, hospital stays, and higher healthcare expenses for both the patient and the healthcare system.

Conclusion

Over 90% of all necessary medications must be readily available. Free diagnostics and medications are acceptable policies to guarantee accessible, inexpensive medications for all under Universal Health Care, but their execution must be closely watched. Expanding the Janaushadhi Kendra network is necessary to guarantee the availability of less expensive medications.

Analyze the potential economic impacts of the proposed India-UK Free Trade Agreement on India's economy. Discuss the sectors that are likely to benefit and those that might face challenges.

Introduction: Give context to the question

Body: Impact of FTA and challenges that might arise from it.

Conclusion: Way forward

Recently there has been a discussion between India's External Affairs Minister and the UK's Foreign Secretary about signing India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Potential Economic Impact of FTA

- **Trade Expansion:** By removing or lowering tariffs and other trade barriers, a free trade agreement between India and the UK may result in a rise in bilateral trade. This might accelerate economic growth and provide Indian exporters with new markets. A study by the UK's Department of International Trade said that the India-UK FTA could increase India's bilateral exports to the UK by £10.6 bn, and that of the UK by £16.7 bn.
- **Investment Flows:** Because there are fewer regulatory barriers for enterprises in both India and the UK to invest in each other's markets, FTA may lead to a rise in foreign direct investment (FDI) between the two nations.
- **Employment Creation:** Trade and investment growth have the potential to create jobs across several industries, particularly those that see a spike in demand as a result of higher exports.

Sectors which are likely to benefit

- **Information technology and services:** India has a robust IT industry, and more IT services could be exported to the UK as a result of an FTA.
- **Textiles and clothing:** Lower tariffs could help India's labour intensive sectors like the textile and clothing sector get better access to the UK market.
- **Automobiles and Engineering:** Lower trade barriers could result in more Indian engineering and automobile exports to the UK.
- **Pharmaceuticals:** A significant participant in the pharmaceutical sector in India. Increased shipments of generic medications to the UK could result from an FTA.

Challenges that might be faced by these sectors

- **Carbon Tax:** Similar to the European Union, the United Kingdom is considering implementing a carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM) on metal imports, tying

them to carbon emissions. The adoption of such a mechanism by the UK, akin to the EU's approach, could adversely impact India's exports to the UK, even if India secures substantial tariff reductions.

- **Non-Tariff barriers:** NTBs, which commonly manifest as regulations, standards, testing, certification, or pre-shipment inspections, are a significant concern in the ongoing negotiations. Vegetable and fruit exporters, for instance, frequently encounter stringent limitations imposed by European economies concerning pesticides and other contaminants in agricultural imports.

Conclusion

Before proceeding with the negotiations, India should weigh the economic advantages and disadvantages of the India-UK Free Trade Agreement, paying particular attention to the sections about digital trade, labour, the environment, and intellectual property rights.

Assess the socio-economic challenges faced by opium farmers in India, especially in the context of the government's policy changes allowing private players in opium production and processing.

Introduction: Briefly describe opium production in India.

Body: Highlight socio-economic challenges faced by opium farmers

Conclusion: Way forward

Opium is an addictive substance that can cause mental clouding and hallucinations, its production is highly regulated in India across 22 districts in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. Mandasaur, Neemuch, and Chittorgarh districts produce 80% of India's opium. However, in the 2021-22 crop year, the Union government changed its opium policy, allowing private players to produce concentrate of poppy straw (CPS) from the opium poppy to boost the yield of alkaloids.

Socio-economic challenges faced by farmers

- **New CPS method:** CPS is a mechanized system under which the entire harvest will be cut by machine and transferred to government factories. This will help in increasing the yield of the crop but the method is less labour intensive and farmers fear the loss of income from the new method.
- **Dependency on Global Prices:** Conditions in the global market have an impact on the price of opium. Changes in the availability and demand of opium worldwide may affect opium farmers' earnings.
- **Health Risks:** Growing opium exposes growers to health hazards from handling and processing opium poppy seeds. The well-being of farmers may be impacted by a lack of safety precautions.
- **Restricted Crop Options:** In some areas, growing opium is a customary practice, therefore farmers have few options when it comes to income crops. Diversification is frequently difficult in these 22 districts where production is concentrated.

Impact of policy changes

- **Less transparency:** Farmers contend that the new CPS mechanism is less transparent and more favourable to big private companies as they will try to maximize profits.

- **Smuggling:** Farmer unions believe that the entry of private players will lead to an increase in the smuggling of opium as middlemen, private players will target poor farmers often in distress situations which will lead to law enforcement issues for poor farmers.
- **Safety and security:** The production of alkaloids by the private sector will make opium production costly leading to a surge in prices of medicines used for treatment. It will indirectly impact farmers' health and safety. It can also lead to the illegal production of opium and the smuggling of drugs into the Indian market.
- **Income Inequality:** There is a risk of increased income inequality between large-scale, commercially oriented opium producers and small-scale, traditional farmers who might struggle to adapt to market-oriented changes.

Conclusion

While the entry of private players brings benefits like enhanced market access, competition & technology adoption it also brings multifaceted challenges all of which require support from the government in the form of support to farmers to diversify crop production, with community development programs that can address broader socio-economic challenges, providing holistic support to opium-dependent communities.