



Mains Marathon
Compilation

5th Week January, 2024

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Discuss the challenges faced in implementing the Jal Jeevan Mission across diverse terrains and geographical regions in India. How have these challenges been addressed?

Introduction: Describe Jal Jeevan Mission.

Body: Address challenges & measures associated with the scheme.

Conclusion: Way forward.

Jal Jeevan Mission was launched in 2019 to provide safe and adequate drinking water through individual household tap connections by 2024 to all households in rural India. The goal of the mission is to have 'Har Ghar Jal' - every house in the village is to be provided with a Functional tap connection. According to the latest data the Jal Jeevan Mission has already provided tap water to 73% of rural households. This means that more than 14 crore rural households have tap connections compared to only 3.23 crore in August 2019.

Challenges in implementing the mission

- **Inadequate infrastructure:** One of the main issues is the rural areas' poor water supply infrastructure. The pipelines, storage tanks, and treatment facilities that are required are absent from many villages.
- **Bad water quality:** States with contaminated water, such as Bengal and Kerala, make it difficult to guarantee that people have access to clean drinking water. The long-term sustainability of water sources may be threatened by contamination, over-extraction, and climate change.
- **Geographical Diversity:** The varied topography and topography of India's rural areas can pose difficulties for the implementation of consistent water supply solutions. For example, Mahoba in Uttar Pradesh depends on lakes and ponds for irrigation, but the area's rocky subsurface means that there aren't many permanent groundwater sources, which makes the plan poorly executed.
- **COVID Pandemic:** The pandemic caused a slowdown in the scheme's progress, which in turn caused delays in the availability of construction resources and other essential materials like pipes.

Measures to address these challenges

- **Transparency:** The Jal Jeevan Mission has a dashboard that gives real-time updates, progress reports, and so on, ensuring transparency and efficiency in water resource management. It also ensures continuous monitoring and surveillance of water quality parameters through advanced technologies.
- **Accountability:** The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation maintains a proactive Water Quality Management Information System. This helps detect contamination or deterioration in water quality, thereby enabling prompt corrective action and grievance redress.
- **Decentralized Planning:** Recognizing the diversity, the mission emphasizes decentralized planning, allowing local communities to have a say in the design and implementation of water supply schemes. Over 5.29 lakh village water and sanitation committees/ Pani Samitis have been constituted under the Jal Jeevan Mission and 5.17 lakh village action plans have been developed.
- **Capacity Building:** Training and capacity-building programs are conducted to enhance the skills of local communities and officials involved in the operation and maintenance of water supply infrastructure. Eg, The Nal Jal Mitra initiative, for instance, is a specialized program that equips villagers with a comprehensive set of skills so that they can carry out minor repairs and maintenance of the piped water supply scheme in their village.

Conclusion

The Jal Jeevan Mission aims to strengthen rural communities by recognizing that true development involves more than just infrastructure. It emphasizes empowering women in decision-making, skill development for youth, and creating local water enterprises as integral steps toward community enhancement.

An independent judiciary is a cornerstone of a vibrant democracy.” Critically analyze this statement in the context of recent judicial interventions in legislative and executive decisions in India.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight positive aspects of the Independent judiciary and challenges associated with it.

Conclusion: Way forward

The statement "*An independent judiciary is a cornerstone of a vibrant democracy*" underscores the crucial role that an impartial and autonomous judiciary plays in upholding the principles of democracy.

Positive aspect of an independent judiciary

- **Protection of Fundamental Rights:** Citizens' fundamental rights are protected by an impartial judiciary. It guarantees that laws and policies adhere to the constitutional framework and defend individual liberty. Examples include the Aadhaar judgment and the scrapping of Section 377.
- **Balances and checks:** The independence of the judiciary is an essential safeguard against possible abuses of power by the legislative and executive branches. The judiciary upholds individual rights and guarantees that the government abides by the Constitution by closely examining legislation and government acts. Eg, the judiciary has intervened in various executive decisions, including environmental matters, economic policies, and even electoral processes leading to debates of judicial activism and judicial overreach.
- **Guardian of the Constitution:** The judiciary is responsible for interpreting the Constitution in various democracies, including India. By ensuring that legislative and executive actions are consistent with constitutional principles, judicial review serves to uphold the supremacy of the Constitution.
- **Public trust and accountability:** An independent judiciary fosters public trust in the legal system and the democratic process as a whole. It holds governments accountable, upholding the rule of law and deterring abuse of power.

Challenges

- **Resource Allocation:** Frequent interventions in legislative and executive matters may divert judicial resources from addressing core issues related to access to justice, especially for marginalized populations.
- **Judicial overreach:** Critics argue that some judicial interventions may go beyond the purview of the judiciary, undermining the separation of powers and potentially impacting legislative and executive effectiveness.
- **Politicization of the judiciary:** Concerns exist about the potential politicization of judicial appointments and judgments, which could weaken public trust and legitimacy.
- **Delay in Justice:** The Indian judiciary faces challenges of backlog and delays, which impact its effectiveness. Prolonged legal processes can result in delayed justice, hindering citizens' ability to seek timely redressal.

Conclusion

While an independent judiciary remains vital for a vibrant democracy, its role must be nuanced and balanced. Striking the right balance between upholding the rule of law and respecting the separation of powers is crucial. Open dialogue, transparency, and robust public discourse are essential to navigate these challenges and ensure that the judiciary continues to play its vital role in India's democracy

Analyze the impact of the military coup in Myanmar on the country's internal political stability and its relations with neighboring countries, particularly India.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight the implications of the coup on India and Myanmar.

Conclusion: Way forward

Three years have passed since the army seized power in Myanmar, overthrowing a democratically elected government headed by Aung San Suu Kyi. The coup prompted a massive civil disobedience movement. The deposed members of parliament formed a National Unity Government that constituted the People's Defence

Forces (PDFs) and called for an armed uprising. This has led to instability in internal political stability in Myanmar and impacted relations with border countries, particularly India.

Impact of military coup on internal political stability

- **Political Unrest and Repression:** Military takeovers frequently result in political unrest and instability across the nation. When the armed forces take over, civil freedoms are usually suppressed, political figures are arrested, and democratic institutions as a whole suffer.
- **Protests and Resistance:** As seen by earlier revolutions, the people of Myanmar have a history of resisting the military government. A coup would probably spark large-scale demonstrations and campaigns of civil disobedience, which might put the military's hold on power in jeopardy and cause internal conflict.
- **Ethnic Tensions:** Due to the country's heterogeneous ethnic makeup, historical conflicts between various ethnic groups and the central authority have frequently arisen. These tensions could be raised by a military coup, which might result in further fighting in different areas.

Impact on Relations with Neighbouring Countries, Particularly India

- **Security and Refugee Concerns:** Political unrest in Myanmar may lead to a cross-border refugee crisis that affects neighbouring nations including India.
- **Regional Stability:** A military coup in Myanmar can have implications for regional stability, as neighbouring countries may be concerned about the spillover effects of political turmoil. Stability in Myanmar is crucial for the overall security and economic well-being of the region.
- **Bilateral Relations with India:** India shares a long border with Myanmar and has strategic interests in maintaining stability in the region. A military coup may affect India's diplomatic relations with Myanmar, as New Delhi may have to reassess its engagement with the Myanmar government based on principles of democracy and stability.

Conclusion

Union Government is also considering a proposal to fence the 1,643 km border between India and Myanmar, and will consider ending its free movement regime (FMR) agreement with the neighbouring country to stop the unauthorized entry of people into India, a major concern for the northeastern States. The response of the international community and regional actors like ASEAN will also play a crucial role in shaping Myanmar's future.

Evaluate the effectiveness of current government initiatives like Anaemia Mukt Bharat and the Mid-day Meal Scheme in tackling malnutrition, particularly among women and children.

Introduction: Define malnutrition and the schemes mentioned above in brief.

Body: Highlight the effectiveness of government initiatives in tackling malnutrition.

Conclusion: Way forward

Malnutrition refers to deficiencies or excesses in nutrient intake, imbalance of essential nutrients, or impaired nutrient utilization. Anaemia Mukt Bharat aims to reduce the prevalence of anaemia in the country, particularly among vulnerable populations such as pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children. Mid-day Meal Scheme aims to address both malnutrition and encourage school attendance by providing free, nutritious meals to schoolchildren.

Effectiveness of government initiatives in tackling malnutrition

- **Implementation Challenges:** The success of these initiatives relies on effective implementation at the grassroots level, which can be challenging given India's vast and diverse population.
- **Quality of Interventions:** The quality of services provided, including the nutritional content of meals and the distribution of supplements, is crucial for the success of these programs.
- **Community Participation:** Involving communities in the planning and monitoring of these initiatives is essential for ensuring local relevance and sustainability.

- **Implementation challenges:** Irregular distribution of Iron & Folic Acid (IFA) tablets, inadequate monitoring, and lack of follow-up mechanisms affect program effectiveness.
- **Dietary diversity and access:** IFA supplementation alone may not be sufficient without addressing broader issues of food insecurity and dietary diversity.
- **Leakages and corruption:** Diversion of food grains and funds can hinder program reach and effectiveness.
- **Limited reach:** Excludes preschool children and those out of school, leaving vulnerable populations at risk.
- **Data Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular and accurate monitoring and evaluation are critical to assess the impact of these programs, identify gaps, and make necessary improvements.
- **Multi-Sectoral Approach:** Addressing malnutrition requires a multi-sectoral approach, involving health, education, and other relevant departments. Coordination among these sectors is vital for success.

Conclusion

According to The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2023, around 74 percent of India's population could not afford a healthy diet, and 39 percent fell short of a nutrient-adequate one. The burden of malnutrition is complex and needs to be addressed through multiple interventions involving a healthy and nutritious diet. Consuming fruits, seeds, nuts, and dairy options has historically been regarded as an effective means of maintaining a balanced diet. Government initiatives like food fortification, micronutrient supplementation programs, diet diversity promotion, and measures to induce behavioural change have immense potential to improve the efficacy of existing initiatives.

How do populist health policies impact long-term public health initiatives in India, particularly in the context of disease prevention and sanitation?

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight the potential impact of populist health policies on long-term health initiatives.

Conclusion: Way forward

Long-term public health initiatives may be significantly impacted by populist health policies in India, which are defined by actions that put political popularity and short-term advantages ahead of evidence-based, long-term solutions, particularly in the areas of disease prevention and sanitation.

Potential impact of such policies

- **Resource Allocation:** Populist health policies may place more emphasis on immediate and visible projects than on long-term public health initiatives. This could lead to a lack of funding for immunization campaigns, disease prevention programs, and sanitation infrastructure.
- **Focus on Treatment over Prevention:** Instead of investing in preventive measures, populist health policies may place more emphasis on curative healthcare services, such as expanding the number of hospitals and offering immediate medical attention. This approach may deal with symptoms of health issues but may not address the underlying causes, creating a vicious cycle of recurrent health issues.
- **Political Influence on Public Health Decisions:** Rather than depending on scientific data, populist leaders may sway public health decisions based on political factors. This may result in the adoption of policies that are well-liked but may not be very successful in reducing illness or enhancing hygiene.
- **Neglect of Rural and Vulnerable Groups:** Populist policies tend to disregard rural and vulnerable groups in favour of metropolitan areas, where the effects are more obvious. In places that most need it, attempts to enhance sanitation and disease prevention may be hampered by this unequal distribution of resources.
- **Undermining Public Health Institutions:** By using their political clout, populist leaders have the potential to compromise the independence and efficacy of public health organizations. This may

weaken these organizations' ability to create and carry out long-term, evidence-based plans for hygienic practices and disease prevention.

- **Absence of Community Engagement:** Community involvement and engagement are frequently necessary for public health projects to be successful. A lack of sustainability and local ownership may result from populist policies' disregard for the significance of incorporating communities in decision-making and putting health treatments into practice.

Conclusion

The key to addressing the challenges requires a behavioural change approach, which can be supplemented with solutions encompassing preventive measures, policy formulation, community health, and environmental health, among others. The need is to provide autonomy to the Health Ministry which would not only provide a degree of autonomy but also ensure that health policies are aligned with the people's immediate and practical needs, striking a balance between expert-driven decisions and public aspirations.

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of holding simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies in India.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight the advantages and disadvantages of simultaneous elections.

Conclusion: Way forward

Recently, a High-Level Committee (HLC) headed by Ramnath Kovind, former President of India, was constituted in September 2023 to examine the issue of holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and local bodies of all States.

Advantages of holding simultaneous elections

- **Cost factor:** The Central government spends approximately ₹4,000 crore on conducting general elections to the Lok Sabha, and each State assembly election incurs significant costs based on the state's size. Additionally, political parties and candidates spend much more. Simultaneous elections would lead to a reduction in these expenditures.
- **Improve Governance:** Elections in states lead to the imposition of a Model Code of Conduct (MCC) puts on hold the entire development program and activities. Further, the Model Code of Conduct that is enforced during the election process ranges usually from 45-60 days where no new schemes or projects can be announced by the Centre and concerned State governments.
- **Administrative efficiency:** During the election period, the administrative machinery in districts experiences a slowdown as the primary focus shifts to the conduct of elections. Paramilitary forces are relocated from their assigned locations to the respective states to ensure the seamless execution of the electoral process.
- **Polarising campaign:** High-stakes election campaigns result in polarising campaigns by all parties to win the elections. This trend has exacerbated in the last decade with the advent of social media thereby creating and deepening the fissures in our multi-religious and multilingual country. Simultaneous elections will reduce the frequency of such campaigns.

Disadvantages of holding simultaneous elections

- **Anti-federal:** Assembly elections centre on local issues, evaluating parties based on state-level performance. Merging them with general elections may drown regional stories in the national narrative, risking a setback to the federal character of the polity, something best avoided.
- **Building consensus among parties:** The primary hurdle for simultaneous polls is securing consensus among political parties to amend the law. Attaining unanimous agreement among all parties is a challenging task.
- **Shortage of manpower:** Insufficient personnel poses a challenge, as there is a shortage of security and administrative officials to conduct nationwide simultaneous elections. The endeavour also demands a larger workforce on a single day to guarantee the integrity of the electoral process.

- **Against pluralist democracy:** In India's multi-party democracy, separate elections for State Assemblies and the Lok Sabha enable voters to express distinct preferences for different governments. However, when simultaneous voting for both governments occurs on the same day at the same polling booth, evidence suggests a tendency among voters to consistently support the same party for both State and Central governments, making it more of a rule than an exception.

Conclusion

The best possible solution to make simultaneous elections work is to conduct the Lok Sabha election in one cycle and all State assembly elections in another cycle after two and a half years. Further recommendations as suggested in reports of the Law Commission (1999), and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice (2015) may be adopted through suitable amendments. This will ensure that the major benefits of simultaneous polls are achieved without compromising on democratic and federal principles.

Evaluate the implications of prioritizing economic size over addressing inequality and the potential effects on various segments of Indian society.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight implications of prioritizing economic size over inequality

Conclusion: Way forward

Focusing solely on economic size while neglecting inequality in India can have significant, sometimes paradoxical, implications for different segments of society.

Implications of prioritizing economic size over inequality

- **Widening income gap:** Prioritizing economic growth without addressing inequality can exacerbate existing disparities. The benefits of rapid growth may primarily accrue to the wealthy, while the poor and marginalized remain excluded from the prosperity, increasing the wealth gap.
- **Social unrest and instability:** High levels of inequality can breed social discontent, leading to protests, civil unrest, and political instability. This can negatively impact economic growth and overall societal well-being.
- **Resource depletion and environmental degradation:** Unsustainable economic growth often comes at the cost of environmental damage and resource depletion. This can disproportionately impact marginalized communities living in fragile ecosystems.
- **Overall growth and development:** Faster economic growth can potentially translate into increased resources for government programs addressing poverty, education, and healthcare. This could benefit all segments of society, especially the most vulnerable.
- **Job creation and income generation:** A buoyant economy can create more jobs, leading to higher wages and improved living standards for some sections of society.
- **Increased tax revenue:** A larger economy generally generates more tax revenue, which the government can invest in infrastructure, social safety nets, and other public services benefiting everyone.
- **Impact on Vulnerable Groups:** Marginalized groups, including Dalits, Adivasis, and other minorities, may bear the brunt of economic policies that do not prioritize addressing inequality. This can perpetuate historical disadvantages and hinder the social and economic progress of these groups

Conclusion

Historically, India has not adequately addressed the profound disparity in economic opportunities among its population in its economic policies. When political parties focus on maximizing the size of the economy during a period of already unequal income distribution, it becomes unlikely that the existing gap will ever be bridged.

Evaluate the role of the judiciary in ensuring the protection of fundamental rights in the digital era, with reference to the Supreme Court's decision on internet access as a fundamental right under the Indian Constitution.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight the role of the judiciary in ensuring the protection of fundamental rights in the digital era.

Conclusion: Way forward

Recently, SC questioned the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir about the non-publication of orders for the suspension of Internet services in the UT raising concern regarding access to information via the Internet. India's Internet restrictions also accounted for more than 70% of the total loss to the global economy in 2020, and India remains infamous as the Internet shutdown capital of the world.

Role of the Judiciary in ensuring the protection of fundamental rights in the digital era

- **Interpretation of Fundamental Rights:** The interpretation of SC in Anuradha Bhasin vs Union of India, where the top court ruled that access to information via the Internet is a fundamental right under the Indian Constitution is of historic importance. The expectation was that this decision would limit the instances of Internet suspension to only those exceptional situations where there is a public emergency or a threat to public safety — the legislatively mandated prerequisites for restricting Internet access.
- **Erodes trust in the judiciary:** The non-publication of the orders of the top court undermines public confidence in the judiciary. The Internet is a necessity in this day and age, and restrictions without publicly disclosed reasons create a trust deficit.
- **Oversight and Accountability:** Courts can hold governments and private entities accountable for violating fundamental rights online through judicial review and enforcement mechanisms.
- **Freedom of Expression:** People's means of expressing themselves have changed significantly in the digital age. Courts must strike a compromise between the need to control hate speech, dangerous content, and false information on the internet and the right to freedom of expression. For the courts, finding a balance between protecting free expression and averting harm is a difficult undertaking.
- **Cybersecurity and Judicial Oversight:** As the digital landscape introduces new challenges, such as cyber threats and online crimes, the judiciary plays a role in ensuring that measures taken to address these challenges do not infringe upon fundamental rights. Judicial oversight is crucial to strike a balance between national security concerns and the protection of individual rights.

Conclusion

The recent case highlights the need for faithful compliance with the Supreme Court guidelines on the part of the executive government to rid ourselves of the tag of the "internet shutdown capital" of the world and fulfill Digital India's potential. Striking a balance between individual rights and legitimate state interests remains a complex task requiring careful judicial consideration.

Evaluate the constitutional role of Governors in India with reference to recent controversies, including the interpretation of historical events by Governors. Discuss how such actions impact the apolitical nature of the gubernatorial office.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight the role of the Governor & impact of such actions on the office of the Governor

Conclusion: Way forward

Recently, the Tamil Nadu Governor aired his views on India's Independence which opened different interpretations of his views raising a controversy about the role of Governor. The governor is the constitutional head of the state under Article 153. Governor is directly appointed by the President for a term of 5 years. The role, powers, and discretion of the Office of Governor have been the subject of Constitutional, Political, and Legal debate for decades. The relationship between the Office of Governor and the elected Government has been strained and tense in multiple States in recent times.

Constitutional role of the Governor

- **Executive Powers:** The Governor exercises executive powers, including the appointment of the Chief Minister, the summoning and proroguing of the state legislature, and the assent to bills. The Governor also plays a role in the administration of tribal areas and matters related to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- **Representative of the Centre:** They act as a link between the Union and the state, transmitting concerns and ensuring compliance with national policies.
- **Discretionary Powers:** While most of the Governor's powers are exercised on the advice of the Council of Ministers, there are certain discretionary powers, especially in situations where there is a constitutional crisis or no clear majority in the assembly.

Impact of such actions on the office of Governor

- **Eroding Neutrality:** Public pronouncements on sensitive historical issues can be seen as politically motivated, undermining the Governor's impartiality.
- **Politicization of Office:** Clashes with State Governments can create partisan perceptions, diminishing the Governor's role as a neutral arbiter.
- **Public Trust:** Controversies can erode public trust in the office, raising concerns about its ability to effectively fulfill its constitutional duties.
- **Historical Interpretations:** If Governors make public statements or take actions based on a controversial interpretation of historical events, it can be seen as injecting personal or political biases into their role. This undermines the apolitical nature of the office, as Governors are expected to act in a manner that is impartial and above party politics.
- **Impact on Federal Structure:** Governors are expected to uphold the federal structure of the Constitution, maintaining a balance between the centre and the states. Any actions that suggest a bias towards the central government or undermine the autonomy of the states can be controversial and impact the perceived apolitical nature of the gubernatorial office.
- **Interference in State Politics:** Controversies may arise when Governors become involved in state politics beyond their constitutional role. This could include interference in the functioning of the state government or taking positions on political matters that are not within the purview of the gubernatorial office.

Conclusion

Navigating the complexities of the Governor's role requires a delicate balance between fulfilling constitutional duties and maintaining an apolitical stance. Recent controversies highlight the need for careful consideration of public pronouncements, adherence to established procedures, and fostering mutual respect between Governors and State Governments. Moving forward, ensuring the Governor's neutrality is crucial for preserving the integrity of the office and its vital role in India's federal structure.

Assess the strategic significance of India's increased budgetary allocations to neighboring countries, with a focus on Maldives, Bhutan, and Nepal. How do these financial commitments align with India's foreign policy objectives in the region? (250 words, 15 marks)

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Significance of increased budgetary allocation to neighbouring nations

Conclusion: Way forward

India's recent increase in budgetary allocations to Maldives, Bhutan, and Nepal carries significant strategic implications, aligning closely with its foreign policy objectives in the region.

Significance

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- **Enhancing regional influence:** India aims to build goodwill and counter the growing Chinese presence in South Asia. Increased aid strengthens ties, promoting regional stability and deterring external actors.
- **Securing strategic interests:** Investments in infrastructure projects like the Chabahar port in Iran and the Greater Malé Connectivity Project in Maldives bolster India's economic and security interests.
- **Promoting soft power:** Cultural and development projects foster positive perceptions of India, contributing to a more favourable regional environment.

Alignment with Foreign Policy

- **Neighbourhood First Policy:** Prioritizes regional cooperation and development, reflected in increased aid.
- **Act East Policy:** Aims to deepen ties with Southeast Asia; support for Maldives strategically connects India to the region.
- **Balancing China:** Countering China's Belt and Road Initiative through Alternative Development Partnerships.
- **Maldives:** Increased allocation reflects India's strategic interest in the Indian Ocean and countering Chinese influence. Infrastructure projects like GMCP strengthen connectivity and economic ties.
- **Bhutan:** Strong historical and cultural ties; aid facilitates hydropower development, benefiting both countries.
- **Nepal:** Continued support aims to address development challenges and maintain cordial relations, crucial for border security.

Conclusion

India's increased budgetary allocations to Maldives, Bhutan, and Nepal serve as strategic tools to reinforce regional stability, counterbalance external influences, and strengthen diplomatic ties. These financial commitments align with India's foreign policy objectives of securing its maritime interests, maintaining regional balance, and fostering economic and security cooperation in its immediate neighbourhood.

Critically analyze the Union Budget's approach to the social sector, particularly in terms of allocations for education, health, and social welfare. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight and critically analyze the approach to the social sector

Conclusion: Way forward

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented her sixth Budget on February 1 where she focused on the government's broad achievements over the last 10 years. Since this is an election year the budget was not complete but rather a vote on account and did not include major announcements on the revenue or expenditure accounts.

Approach to the social sector

- **Education:** Both higher and school education received an increased allocation in the budget and schemes like PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) got almost 50% more allocation than the last budget. The total allocation for the School Education Dept is 73,008.10 crore which is more than the previous allocation. Critics argue that a major share has gone to fund the PM-SHRI project which is to upgrade existing government schools in the country and not allocating funds for increasing government schools.
- **Health:** A major announcement in the Budget pertains to health cover extension to ASHA & Anganwadi workers under PM-Jan Arogya Yojna. The allocation of the health sector has been increased from 89,155 crore to 90,658.63 crore. Experts in the sector argue Government to focus on Non-communicable diseases, increasing tax exemption for preventive healthcare & improving and upgrading the quality of subsidized treatments.

- **Social Sector:** The Budget allocations for most social sector schemes and departments remain more or less the same as last year. The allocations for school and higher education as well as the health and family welfare departments show some nominal increases compared to last year's BE, about 6-8%. While there was no new announcement of major schemes in the budget the Finance Minister highlighted that 25 crore people have been brought out of multidimensional poverty (MPI) in the last 10 years. Experts argue that MPI does not tell us about the trends in income poverty, a useful indicator of economic well-being. The further claim that the "average real income of the people has increased by 50%", does not tell us much about how the lives of the poor changed as what matters is the distribution of the national income. Experts also argue that average rural worker income has increased marginally which is also reflected in the poor growth in private final consumption expenditure. There is a noticeable reversal in the structural shift of employment, marked by an increase in the share of agriculture in total employment. This suggests a scarcity of job opportunities beyond agriculture. The recent rise in women's labor force participation rates over the past 4-5 years appears to be driven by distress, as a significant number of women are engaged in unpaid family labor rather than gainful employment.

Conclusion

The government needs to take into account comprehensive reform of health, education, and social sectors rather than focusing on big mega schemes. While these are important schemes for the poor, it doesn't take away from the fact that health, education, and social security budgets remain woefully inadequate even as these services suffer from poor infrastructure, huge vacancies, and inadequate resources.

Examine the evolution of piracy off the coast of Somalia and evaluate the strategic measures taken by the Indian Navy in combating these threats. Discuss the implications of these measures on India's maritime security and international relations.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Elaborate on the evolution of piracy, measures by the Navy to deal with it, and implications on security.

Conclusion: Way forward

The piracy off the coast of Somalia has been a significant maritime security challenge for several years. The evolution of piracy in the region can be traced back to the early 2000s when political instability, economic hardship, and the absence of a functioning central government in Somalia created a conducive environment for criminal activities, including piracy.

Evolution of Piracy

- **Root Causes:** Piracy in Somalia results from poverty, governance issues, and the depletion of local fish stocks due to illegal foreign fishing.
- **Modus Operandi:** Somali pirates began by hijacking commercial vessels for ransom, using small skiffs and "mother ships." They later adapted sophisticated weaponry to counter international naval patrols.
- **International Response:** The global community reacted with naval patrols, like Combined Task Force 150 and EU's Operation Atalanta, aimed at securing waters and protecting shipping lanes.

Indian Navy's Strategic Measures

- **Anti-piracy patrol:** The Indian Navy has been among the most proactive forces deployed in the troubled area off the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Aden. Its anti-piracy patrol that started in 2008 continues to this day and the Navy has never shied away from intervening in any developing situation and has foiled several attempts by pirates at hijacking merchant ships.
- **Coordination with Other Navies:** India collaborated with other navies, including those from the United States, European Union, Sri Lanka, and Seychelles, to share intelligence and coordinate efforts in the fight against piracy. The rescue of Iranian and Pakistani crew by the Offshore Patrol

Vessel INS Sumitra is testimony to the continuing professionalism and effectiveness of the Indian Navy in these waters.

Implications on India's Maritime Security and International Relations

- **Strengthened Maritime Security:** India's active participation in international anti-piracy operations demonstrates its commitment to safeguarding global maritime trade and securing its maritime interests, contributing to an overall enhancement of maritime security.
- **Soft Power Projection:** India's involvement in counter-piracy operations serves as a demonstration of its naval capabilities and commitment to global security. This contributes to India's soft power projection and helps build a positive image on the international stage.
- **Diplomatic Engagement:** India's involvement in diplomatic efforts to tackle piracy underscores a comprehensive approach to maritime security. By addressing piracy's root causes, India seeks to foster regional stability, thereby advancing its security interests.

Conclusion

A long-term solution to the problem of piracy lies in rooting out misgovernance and unemployment in nations ashore, which feed maritime criminal activities. The ongoing commitment to addressing the root causes of piracy reflects a long-term strategy aimed at creating a stable and secure maritime environment in the region.

Critically examine the concept of water markets as a solution to water scarcity. Discuss the potential benefits and drawbacks of implementing such a system in India, considering the socio-economic and environmental implications.

Introduction: Define the water market

Body: Benefits and drawbacks of water markets in India

Conclusion: Way forward

The concept of water markets, where water rights are bought and sold, is presented as a potential solution to address water scarcity in India. However, this solution requires careful consideration due to its complex socio-economic and environmental implications.

Potential benefits

- **Increased Efficiency:** Water markets can incentivize efficient water use, as water-scarce users with high economic value crops would bid higher, leading those with lower value crops to potentially sell their water rights and invest in alternative income sources.
- **Improved Investment:** Market mechanisms could attract private investment in water infrastructure and conservation initiatives, potentially improving overall water management.
- **Economic Growth:** Efficient water allocation could boost agricultural productivity and industrial output, contributing to economic growth.

Drawbacks

- **Equity and Affordability:** Water markets risk exacerbating existing inequalities. Poorer farmers or communities may be priced out of acquiring water, jeopardizing their livelihoods and food security.
- **Environmental Impact:** Overexploitation of water resources for short-term economic gains could lead to environmental degradation and depletion of aquifers.
- **Regulation and Governance:** Implementing a fair and transparent water market system requires robust regulations and strong governance to prevent manipulation and ensure equitable access.
- **Social Impact:** Water markets could disrupt traditional water-sharing practices and social cohesion within communities, particularly in rural areas.

Implementation in India

- **Socio-economic Implications:** In a diverse and populous country like India, implementing water markets requires careful consideration of social equity to avoid exacerbating existing disparities.
- **Agriculture Dominance:** Given the substantial water use in agriculture, transitioning to water markets may face resistance, especially when impacting traditional farming practices.
- **Regulatory Challenges:** Effective governance and robust regulatory frameworks are essential to prevent market failures, ensure fair practices, and address environmental concerns.

Conclusion

Water markets offer a potential tool for managing water scarcity, but their implementation in India requires careful planning and consideration of potential drawbacks. Ensuring equity, environmental sustainability, and social justice should be paramount alongside economic efficiency. A nuanced approach, considering local contexts and involving all stakeholders, is crucial for a successful and sustainable water market system in India.