



Mains Marathon
Compilation

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Evaluate the need for India and Korea to transcend bilateral cooperation and embrace a global strategic approach in defence. How can this shift impact the regional power dynamics in the Indo-Pacific?

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight factors to transcend the bilateral relationship in global strategic approach in defence.

Conclusion: Way forward

The need for India and Korea to transcend bilateral cooperation and embrace a global strategic approach in defence is influenced by various geopolitical and security factors.

Some key factors that warrant both countries to transcend cooperation

- **Indo-Pacific's Changing Geopolitical Landscape:** With China emerging as a key actor, the Indo-Pacific area is seeing notable changes in power relations. Maintaining a balance of power in the region is a concern shared by Korea and India, which is why they must work together more broadly.
- **Economic and Trade Interests:** India and Korea have expanded their economic connections with nations outside of their borders. Given the significance of the Indo-Pacific region for international trade, bolstering defense cooperation on a worldwide scale can safeguard shared economic interests and guarantee essential sea lanes for trade.
- **Security Issues:** Terrorism, maritime conflicts, and non-traditional security threats are just a few of the security issues that the Indo-Pacific region must deal with. By working together on defense matters, India and Korea will be better able to handle these issues jointly and promote stability in the area.

How does this shift impact regional power dynamics in the Indo-Pacific?

- **Balancing Power:** Collaborative efforts on a global scale can contribute to balancing power in the region, countering any potential dominance by a single nation. India and South Korea, drawing on their UN peacekeeping expertise, can collaborate to enhance regional stability. Sharing insights into peacekeeping and best practices in disaster relief showcases their joint commitment to global peace and security.
- **Regional security:** Both India & Korea could cooperate on matters of regional security by strengthening the alliance structure AUKUS (the U.S., the United Kingdom, Australia), the Quad (India, Japan, Australia, the U.S.), or CHIP 4 Alliance (the U.S., Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea).
- **Technological collaborations:** India and South Korea plan a defense tech collaboration, leveraging their technological strengths. Focused on innovation and self-reliance, the partnership addresses future conflicts, including space and information warfare. Korea's digital capabilities offer security measures against emerging threats. Coordinated efforts to counter terrorism and joint maritime security initiatives in the Indian Ocean align with shared concerns for efficiency and common interests.

Conclusion

A strategic, balanced approach, coupled with adaptability to the evolving geopolitical landscape is key to unlocking a robust and enduring defence collaboration, in turn creating a partnership that fosters peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

Evaluate the transformative impact of radiocarbon dating technology on various fields of science. How has it changed our understanding of the natural universe and human history?

Introduction: Define radiocarbon dating technology.

Body: Impact of technology on various field of science and how it changed our understanding of universe and history.

Conclusion: Way forward

Radiocarbon dating is a method for determining the age of an object containing organic material by using the properties of radiocarbon, a radioactive isotope of carbon. Radiocarbon dating technology has had a

transformative impact on various fields of science, significantly altering our understanding of the natural universe and human history.

Impact of dating technology on various fields of Science

- **Earth Sciences:** Radiocarbon dating is a useful tool for dating ancient organic materials like tree rings and ice cores in geology and paleoclimatology. Understanding Earth's geological past, researching historical climate variations, and honing models of environmental changes over millennia have all benefited from this.
- **Paleontology:** The dating of fossils and ancient remains, made possible by radiocarbon dating, has been essential in helping paleontologists reconstruct the evolutionary timelines of different species. It has aided in establishing the historical background of extinct species and clarifying how they relate to living things today.
- **Astrophysics:** To date celestial objects and comprehend cosmic processes, astrophysics has used radiocarbon dating. It is not useful for very far-off celestial bodies, but it has proven useful for dating some kinds of meteorites and cosmic dust.

How has it changed our knowledge about the natural universe and human history?

- **Archaeology and Anthropology:** By offering a trustworthy way to ascertain the age of organic materials, radiocarbon dating has completely transformed study in these fields. Through the establishment of chronological sequences, reconstruction of ancient cultures, and refinement of timelines, scholars have been able to augment our comprehension of human evolution and migration patterns.
- **Earth Sciences:** Radiocarbon dating is a useful tool for dating ancient organic materials like tree rings and ice cores in geology and paleoclimatology. Understanding Earth's geological past, researching historical climate variations, and honing models of environmental changes over millennia have all benefited from this.
- **History and Art History:** Historical documents, artwork, and artifacts have all been dated using radiocarbon dating in historical studies. This technique helps to create a more accurate historical narrative by enabling a more precise chronological understanding of historical events and the dating of culturally significant objects.
- **Study on Climate Change:** By assisting scientists in reconstructing historical climate fluctuations, radiocarbon dating offers useful data for climate change studies. Understanding the effects of human activity on the environment and projecting future climatic patterns are made easier with the help of this historical viewpoint.

Conclusion

The use of radiocarbon dating technologies has revolutionized a number of scientific fields. It is a vital instrument in scientific research because of its accuracy in dating organic materials, which has greatly increased our understanding of Earth's natural processes, human history, and the wider universe.

Examine the implications of the Maldives' decision to revoke the agreement with India for joint hydrographic surveys, in the context of India's regional security and strategic interests.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight the impact of the response on regional security and strategic interests of India

Conclusion: Way forward

The Maldives' recent move to annul the agreement with India for collaborative hydrographic surveys in Maldivian waters has stirred disappointment within Indian media and strategic circles. Signed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2019 visit to the islands, the accord was viewed as a significant symbol of the robust defence ties between India and the Maldives.

Implications for regional security and strategic interests

- **Geopolitical Implications:** The choice could affect the balance of power in the Indian Ocean region and have wider geopolitical ramifications. It might have an impact on India's capacity to sustain stability and security as well as its strategic outreach, especially in light of conflicting influences from other regional and international actors.
- **Strategic Importance of Hydrographic Surveys:** The growth of blue economies, navigation, and maritime security all depend on hydrographic surveys. The revocation might make it more difficult for India to compile in-depth information about the maritime environment in the area, which could impair its capacity for strategic planning and response.
- **Effect on Defence Ties:** The agreement's annulment suggests that India and the Maldives' defence ties may be put under stress. Joint hydrographic surveys were seen as a cooperative endeavour, and the decision would erode confidence and coordination in defence cooperation.
- **Effect on Regional Security Architecture:** There may be a wider regional security architecture affected by the revocation. India is crucial to the upkeep of maritime security in the Indian Ocean, and any pressure on its relations with its neighbours might have an impact on international efforts to tackle shared security issues.
- **Economic and Development collaboration:** India and the Maldives' collaboration in several areas may be affected by the decision. Hydrographic survey collaboration is frequently linked to larger programs for sustainable development and resource management in marine areas.
- **Concerns about Navigational Safety:** Hydrographic surveys help ensure safe navigation, particularly in areas vulnerable to natural disasters. Joint surveys are lacking, which could affect both domestic and foreign marine traffic by raising questions about the safety of navigation in Maldivian seas.

Conclusion

The best option for the Maldives is to enhance maritime awareness and security in partnership with India. The new administration must recognize that it is not India but China that seeks to weaponize ocean surveys. India would need to carefully navigate these challenges to safeguard its strategic interests and maintain stability in the Indian Ocean region.

Analyze the factors that have contributed to the strain in the global nuclear order since the Cold War, with a focus on the changing geopolitical landscape and the role of major powers.

Introduction: What is the global nuclear order?

Body: Highlight factors that have led to a strain on the global nuclear order

Conclusion: Way forward

The Global Nuclear Order was created in the shadow of the Cold War, with the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., leading the Western and the Socialist blocs, respectively. The need to create a new order was felt as two nuclear superpowers needed bilateral mechanisms to prevent tensions from escalating to the nuclear level & as nuclear weapons are dangerous their spread should be curbed.

Factors that have contributed to strain in nuclear order

- **Power Shifts and Multipolarity:** The post-Cold War era saw the emergence of several power centres, which resulted in the world becoming multipolar as opposed to bipolar. Establishing standards and conventions have been challenged by the comeback of Russia as a significant role and the rise of new nuclear-armed states like North Korea, complicating the global nuclear picture.
- **Arms Control Agreement Erosion:** The tension has been exacerbated by the deterioration of important weapons control accords, including the Open Skies Treaty and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Fears that the nuclear arms control system may fall apart have increased as a result of key powers, particularly the US, pulling out of these accords.
- **Modernization and Technological Advancements:** To improve their nuclear arsenals, major nations like the United States, Russia, China, and others have conducted modernization programs.

Concerns about an arms race and the possibility of upending the international nuclear order have been raised by the development of new and more advanced nuclear technology.

- **Regional conflicts and challenges to proliferation:** The global nuclear order has been stressed by ongoing regional wars and the proliferation of nuclear weapons in some regions, most notably North Korea and Iran. The inability to effectively handle these issues has raised international tensions and created a sense of unease.
- **Geopolitical Rivalries and Strategic Competition:** The possibility of nuclear weapons being used in regional conflicts has become more pressing due to geopolitical rivalries and strategic competition among major powers, especially the United States, Russia, and China. The efforts to promote international collaboration on nuclear disarmament have been hampered by the return of great power competition.
- **Changes in US Nuclear Policy:** Other nuclear-armed governments are becoming concerned about changes in US nuclear policy, which include a greater focus on low-yield nuclear weapons and a more accommodating attitude to nuclear deterrence. The stability and perceived credibility of the international nuclear order are affected by this change.
- **Diplomatic deadlocks and trust deficits:** The advancement of nuclear disarmament measures has been hampered by diplomatic deadlocks and trust deficits among major states. Tensions are increased by a lack of communication and collaboration, which makes it more difficult to reach an agreement on non-proliferation and arms control measures.

Conclusion

The fundamental shift in US domestic policy with a focus towards “inwards” rather than acting as a security guarantor to its allies has raised questions in the minds of its allies about its ‘extended deterrence’ guarantees, especially in East Asian nations like Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Addressing these factors requires renewed diplomatic efforts, commitment to arms control agreements, and a multilateral approach to foster a more stable and secure global nuclear order.

Analyze the implications of the International Monetary Fund’s observations on India’s debt sustainability and its exchange rate regime. Discuss the challenges and strategies for India in managing its long-term debt sustainability in the context of global economic trends.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight implications, challenges, and strategies on debt sustainability and exchange rate regime.

Conclusion: Way forward

IMF in its latest report has raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of India’s debts that could be 100% of GDP under adverse circumstances by fiscal 2028.

Implications of such observations

- **Creditworthiness:** India's creditworthiness in the international financial markets may be greatly impacted by the IMF's observations on the sustainability of its debt. Unfavourable evaluations could result in increased borrowing expenses for the nation.
- **Investor Confidence:** Investor confidence may be impacted by the IMF's analysis. While unfavourable assessments can cause capital withdrawals, favourable ones might draw in foreign investment.
- **Competitiveness:** The exchange rate regime affects the competitiveness of India's exports. A flexible regime allows for adjustments to changing economic conditions, but it can also lead to volatility.
- **Inflation Management:** The exchange rate is crucial in managing inflation, especially in an import-dependent economy like India. Fluctuations can impact the cost of imported goods and services.

Challenges for India in managing its long-term debt sustainability

- **High Fiscal Imbalance:** Historically, India has struggled to control its fiscal imbalance. An ongoing budget deficit is a result of high government spending and subsidies, which may make debt sustainability difficult.
- **External Debt:** Foreign currencies make up a sizable amount of India's debt. Variations in exchange rates may raise the cost of debt payments.
- **Volatility:** A floating exchange rate can lead to short-term volatility, impacting businesses and complicating long-term planning.
- **External Shocks:** Sudden external shocks, such as global economic downturns or geopolitical events, can lead to currency depreciation, affecting the overall economic stability.

Strategies for India in managing its long-term debt sustainability

- **Sustainable Development:** Debt sustainability can be achieved by coordinating debt with sustainable development objectives and concentrating on long-term economic benefits investments.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** Trust is developed with creditors and investors when public finances are transparent and accountable debt management policies are upheld.
- **Examining Global Economic Trends:** It is easier to adjust policy to reduce external risks and take advantage of opportunities when one is aware of and sensitive to global economic trends.
- **Debt Restructuring:** If a prudent debt restructuring plan is in line with the nation's long-term economic goals, it may be explored in the face of difficulties.

Conclusion

The management of India's long-term debt sustainability is reliant on prudent fiscal management, effective policy initiatives, and tactical reactions to international economic developments. To guarantee sustainable and inclusive development, India must strike a balance between the requirement for economic growth and responsible debt management in compliance with the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBMA).

Suggest policy reforms for the selection and training of top-level officers in CAPFs. How can these reforms contribute to the operational efficiency and effectiveness of these forces?

Introduction: Describe the role of CAPF in India.

Body: Highlight reforms in CAPF to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of these forces

Conclusion: Way forward

The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) play a crucial role in maintaining internal security in India. Policy reforms in the selection and training of top-level officers in CAPFs can significantly enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness. The administration has not given several important issues enough attention, such as the ad hocism in the appointment of chiefs of central armed police forces, which is negatively affecting their battle readiness, discipline, and morale.

Reforms that can be considered

- **Selection Process:** The government ought to establish regulations for the promotion of officials to the position of CAPF Director General. Thus, it might be established that an officer should not be considered for elevation to the position of Director General in any CAPF unless he has held charge of the armed police formation in the state for at least two years or served as DIG/IG in the field for at least two years in any of the CAPFs.
- **Delay in the posting of the head of CAPF:** A major concern is the delay in posting a successor to the top post after the retirement of an incumbent. Considering the vital role of these forces the position of the top post should not remain vacant & it requires planning and timely decisions at the highest level.
- **Personnel Reforms:** Regular stress management workshops should be held, and yoga and meditation should be incorporated into the daily workout regimen for CAPF staff members. In

addition, it may be investigated to provide housing close to the force's deployment point so that employees can visit their families.

How can these reforms increase the efficiency and effectiveness of these forces?

- **Increase State's capacity:** States should establish armed police units and supplement them with sufficient equipment and training to lessen the workload on the CAPF. The federal government need to support state governments in their endeavours by offering financial support and other forms of aid required by the states to strengthen their armed forces.
- **Modernization of CAPFs:** The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) must identify and address bottlenecks in the procurement process. Additionally, considering the evolution of hybrid warfare, training content should encompass a blend of traditional aspects and cutting-edge technologies like Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and cybersecurity.

Conclusion

Finally, the Centre must appoint a commission to look into multiple issues faced by personnel of CAPF and suggest short-term and long-term measures to maintain their performance at a high level.

Evaluate the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in shaping India's socio-political landscape, especially in the context of secularism and citizen well-being. How has the recent state approach towards NGOs influenced this role?

Introduction: What are NGOs?

Body: Highlight the role of NGOs in shaping India's socio-political landscape and recent state approach towards NGOs.

Conclusion: Way forward

NGOs are voluntary organizations, that work toward a social cause and social justice. They have assumed a significant space in civil society. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a significant role in shaping India's socio-political landscape, particularly in the realms of secularism and citizen well-being.

Role of NGO in the context of secularism and citizen well being

- **Minority Rights Advocacy:** In India, a large number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) strive to safeguard the rights of ethnic and religious minorities. Their promotion of tolerance, understanding, and equal rights for all citizens, regardless of their religious or cultural roots, is a vital part of their advocacy for secularism.
- **Religious Harmony and Dialogue:** To promote religious harmony and understanding, many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) organize interfaith dialogues and community-building events.
- **Social Welfare Programs:** Through the implementation of social welfare programs in areas like women's empowerment, healthcare, education, and poverty alleviation, NGOs actively contribute to the well-being of citizens. Their community-based efforts frequently close the gaps left by government measures, particularly in isolated and underprivileged areas.
- **Human Rights Advocacy:** In India, NGOs are essential for keeping an eye on and promoting human rights. They strive to guarantee that people may access the legal system, are shielded from prejudice, and are protected from violations by both state and non-state entities.

Recent State approach towards NGOs

- **Increased Monitoring and Regulation:** Citing worries about NGOs' funding sources, transparency, and suspected meddling in domestic issues, the Indian government has been monitoring and regulating them more closely in recent years. There are now more restrictions on foreign funding for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), which makes their operations more difficult.
- **Effect on Allocation:** Tighter restrictions on foreign funding have affected many NGOs' ability to maintain a stable financial position, which has limited their ability to implement programs and

operations. This has primarily impacted institutions that get a large portion of their money from foreign donors.

- **Strict laws:** Recently amendments have been made to laws like the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA) which has made it difficult for NGOs & political parties to access foreign funds. Domestic funding is also affected through amendments to the Income-Tax Act making renewals certificates mandatory.

Conclusion

The balance between necessary regulation and preserving the autonomy of NGOs is crucial for fostering a vibrant civil society that contributes positively to India's socio-political landscape.

Examine how advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) are redefining the concept of sovereignty in the global context. Discuss the implications for international law and governance.

Introduction: Describe AI technology briefly.

Body: Implication of AI for international law and governance.

Conclusion: Way forward

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines. These are programmed to think like humans and mimic their actions. Advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have significant implications for the concept of sovereignty in the global context, challenging traditional notions and necessitating a redefinition of international law and governance.

How AI is redefining sovereignty and its implications?

- **Data Sovereignty and Ownership:** AI's training and decision-making processes mostly rely on enormous volumes of data. Data ownership and control become essential components of sovereignty. The idea of "data sovereignty" emerged as a result of countries claiming more and more of their right to manage and control the flow of data inside their borders. The ability of states to regulate data within their borders and cross-border data flows is affected by this.
- **AI-Driven Self-Sustaining Systems:** The creation and application of autonomous systems challenge established ideas of territorial sovereignty. One example of this is the military's use of AI. The application of AI in cyberwarfare, drones, and autonomous vehicles raises concerns about states' abilities to regulate and control technologies that can function outside of national borders.
- **Cyberthreats and Security:** Artificial intelligence (AI) presents security hazards in addition to being a useful instrument for progress. The distinction between accountability and responsibility is muddled by the use of AI in cyberattacks and by the possibility of AI acting offensively on its own. To build rules and regulations that prevent misuse, worldwide cooperation is necessary to address these security concerns.

Implications for international law and governance

- **Ethical and Legal Challenges:** Conventional legal frameworks are put to the test when AI is used in decision-making processes, particularly those with important social and ethical ramifications. AI systems that make decisions that affect people or societies raise issues of transparency, accountability, and responsibility. It becomes imperative to modify legislative frameworks to tackle these obstacles to maintain the values of equity and justice.
- **AI in International Relations:** AI is being utilized more and more in international negotiations, policy analysis, and diplomatic endeavours. Massive volumes of data may be analyzed by automated systems to support decision-making, which could have an impact on diplomatic tactics. Within the context of established diplomatic procedures, new dynamics brought about by the application of AI to international relations must be taken into account.
- **International Cooperation and Standards:** International cooperation between academics, businesses, and governments is frequently necessary for AI progress. The idea of sovereignty is put to the test by the global character of AI research and development, which calls for international

collaboration to set norms, standards, and ethical principles that will govern AI technologies. Different standards and regulatory problems could result from the absence of a consistent global approach.

Conclusion

The prevalence of disinformation, misleading content, and hate speech is a pressing concern. The key challenge is finding effective measures to prevent these negative influences in governance and development, ensuring truthfulness and accountability in the process.

Evaluate the economic benefits of removing lead from petrol, as seen in the United States. How can such environmental policies contribute to the overall economic growth of a nation?

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: What are the benefits of unleaded petrol?

Conclusion: Way forward

The removal of lead from petrol in the United States has been associated with several economic benefits, as well as positive environmental and public health outcomes.

Benefits of removing lead from petrol

- **Healthcare Cost Savings:** The removal of lead from petrol has resulted in a notable drop in the general public's lead exposure, particularly among youngsters. A lower incidence of lead poisoning and related health problems has been associated with this decrease in lead exposure. Lower incidences of lead-related health problems result in reduced healthcare costs for treating conditions such as developmental delays, learning disabilities, and behavioural issues.
- **Enhanced Workforce Productivity:** It is well established that exposure to lead can harm children's cognitive development. People are more likely to reach their full cognitive potential when lead exposure is reduced, which creates a workforce that is more talented and productive. Improved overall economic performance, greater productivity, and enhanced innovation are all influenced by a workforce that is healthier and more capable.
- **Benefit to Property Values:** Communities with reduced lead contamination levels are probably worth more money. Lower levels of lead exposure make communities safer and healthier, which increases their appeal as locations to live and invest. Rising property values can boost the economy by bringing in more tax money for local governments and encouraging real estate development.

How can such policies contribute to overall economic growth?

- **Regulatory Compliance and Global Trade:** Putting rules in place to lower lead emissions shows a dedication to safeguarding the environment and the general public's health. This can improve a nation's standing abroad and compliance with international environmental requirements. By removing trade barriers relating to environmental concerns, meeting or exceeding environmental rules can have a favourable impact on international trade partnerships.
- **Jobs in Alternative Industries:** Developing and implementing alternative technologies, including electric cars and unleaded fuels, is a common step in the process of moving away from petrol. This shift may lead to the creation of new jobs in the sustainable transportation and clean energy sectors. Long-term economic growth can be facilitated by investing in environmentally friendly technologies, which can also position the nation as a leader in developing markets and encourage innovation.
- **Environmental Cleanup and Restoration:** By keeping lead out of the air, soil, and water, the extraction of lead from petrol helps to protect the environment. In doing so, natural resources, wildlife, and ecosystems are all protected. Through the preservation of biodiversity, the guarantee of sustainable resource use, and the reduction of expenses related to environmental deterioration, environmental conservation initiatives can result in long-term economic advantages.

Conclusion

India's fuel quality standards have been gradually tightened since the mid-1990s & in 2000 unleaded gasoline was mandated nationwide to protect the health of our citizens.

Evaluate the role of healthcare professionals in exacerbating or controlling the spread of antimicrobial resistance. What measures can be taken to ensure rational prescription of antibiotics?

Introduction: Describe Antimicrobial resistance.

Body: Highlight the role of healthcare professionals in limiting or exacerbating the spread of antibiotics & measures to limit the overprescription of antibiotics.

Conclusion: Way forward

Antimicrobial resistance occurs when microbes (bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites) become resistant to antimicrobial drugs (such as antibiotics, antifungals, antivirals, antimalarials, and anthelmintics). Healthcare professionals play a crucial role in either exacerbating or controlling the spread of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Role of healthcare professionals in controlling or exacerbating the spread of AMR

- **Overprescription of Antibiotics:** In cases where antibiotics are ineffective, medical practitioners may give antibiotics for viral infections unnecessarily or inappropriately. Antibiotic resistance develops as a result of this behaviour.
- **Inadequate Diagnostic Procedures:** Before administering antibiotics, medical professionals occasionally neglect to carry out comprehensive diagnostic testing to pinpoint the precise source of an infection. This can result in the prescription of broad-spectrum antibiotics when more appropriate treatment is focused.
- **Incomplete Treatment Courses:** Patients may not finish the entire course of antibiotics that are given, which could expose bacteria to medicines in part. Resistant strains may survive as a result of this insufficient treatment.
- **Lack of Surveillance and Monitoring:** There may be inadequate monitoring of antibiotic use and resistance patterns in healthcare settings, making it challenging to identify and address emerging resistance issues promptly.

Measures to ensure rational prescription of antibiotics

- **Better Diagnostics:** Promoting the use of quick diagnostic tests can assist medical practitioners in more precisely determining the exact source of infections. This decreases the need for needless antibiotic prescriptions and enables targeted treatment.
- **Incentives for Responsible Prescribing:** Healthcare systems can put in place incentive programs that pay medical practitioners for administering antibiotics appropriately and responsibly. This could be awards, cash incentives, or chances for career advancement.
- **International Cooperation:** As AMR is a worldwide concern, international cooperation is crucial. To effectively address antibiotic resistance, healthcare professionals and policymakers should collaborate to exchange information, best practices, and resources.
- **Regulatory Measures:** Governments and regulatory bodies can enforce policies that regulate the sale and distribution of antibiotics. This may include requiring prescriptions for antibiotic medications, limiting over-the-counter availability, and monitoring antibiotic usage in healthcare facilities.

Conclusion

The recent report of the Health Ministry '*First Multicentric Point Prevalence Survey of Antibiotic Use at 20 NAC-NET Sites India 2021-22*' conducted by the National Centre for Disease Control has made startling observations regarding overprescription of antibiotics in India. It is essential that doctors, government &

WHO establish systems that strictly regulate the use of antimicrobials and promote and fund research on newer antibiotics to curb misuse and overuse of antimicrobials.

Discuss the reasons behind the significant gap between cereal production and consumption in India. What implications does this gap have on food security and agricultural policies?

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight reasons behind gap between cereal production and consumption and implications of this gap.

Conclusion: Way forward

India produces about 300 million tonnes of cereals every year, but people's consumption requirements are barely 200 million tonnes highlighting the significant gap between cereal production and consumption in India. The significant gap between cereal production and consumption in India can be attributed to various factors, and understanding these reasons is crucial for addressing food security challenges and formulating effective agricultural policies.

Reasons behind this gap between cereal production and consumption

- **Population expansion:** The need for food has expanded in tandem with India's rapid population expansion. There is a disparity between supply and demand because population growth has exceeded cereal output increase.
- **Unequal output Distribution:** The output of cereals varies among Indian areas. While certain states or regions can be experiencing surpluses, others might be experiencing deficits. Cereal distribution issues can arise in the areas of distribution, storage, and transportation.
- **Challenges to Agricultural Productivity:** Cereal yields can be impacted by variations in agricultural productivity brought on by things like unpredictable weather patterns, insufficient irrigation systems, and restricted access to contemporary farming techniques.
- **Land Fragmentation:** In some areas, small and dispersed landholdings may restrict production's ability to achieve economies of scale. This could lead to less-than-ideal crop yields when combined with conventional farming methods.

Implications on Food Security and Agricultural Policies

- **Challenges to Food Security:** Food security is directly impacted by the production-consumption mismatch, which creates uncertainty about cereal availability. Food shortages and price increases can arise from insufficient production, especially for vulnerable populations.
- **Volatility of Price Risk:** Volatility in prices might be attributed to irregular cereal production. Prices that fluctuate can have an impact on revenues and purchasing power for both producers and consumers.
- **Dependency on Imports:** To meet the demand-supply gap, India may become dependent on imported cereals. This can have implications for the country's trade balance and make it vulnerable to global market fluctuations.
- **Importance of Diversification:** The gap highlights the need to diversify agricultural production beyond cereals. Promoting the cultivation of a diverse range of crops can enhance overall food security and reduce dependency on a few staples.

Conclusion

The production and consumption of cereals differ, and closing this gap will require a multifaceted strategy that includes infrastructural development, regulatory changes, technology advancements, and support for sustainable agricultural methods. A resilient agricultural sector and the achievement of food security goals depend on the balance between production and consumption.

Discuss the challenges faced by higher education institutions in India in implementing guidelines like Mulya Pravah 2.0. What measures can be taken to overcome these challenges?

Introduction: Give a brief context of the Mission

Body: Highlight challenges faced and measures to overcome these challenges

Conclusion: Way forward

Education provides a foundation for development, the groundwork on which much of our economic and social well-being is built. It is the key to increasing economic efficiency and social consistency. India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world. However, there is still a lot of potential for further development in the education system. Mulya Pravah 2.0, a modified version of Mulya Pravah, which was notified in 2019 seeks to inculcate human values and professional ethics in higher education institutions.

Challenges faced by HEI in implementing Guidelines like Mulya Pravah

- **Resistance to Change:** Abrupt changes may encounter resistance from established institutional cultures and practices. It will need courage to overcome faculty and administrative resistance to new policies.
- **Faculty Development:** To successfully include human values and ethics into the curriculum, faculty members may need training and development. It is essential to make sure instructors are prepared to teach these ideals.
- **Differences in Culture and Geography:** Students in India come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. Customizing the implementation of values and ethics rules may be necessary to account for the cultural and regional differences among pupils.
- **Social and Political Influences:** These factors may have an impact on how guidelines are put into practice. The focus on particular values or ethical considerations may change as a result of changes in cultural norms or governmental regulations.

Measures to overcome these challenges

- **Cultural sensitivity:** Cultural and regional sensitivities should be considered when implementing guidelines, ensuring that values and ethics are presented in a way that resonates with diverse student populations. Feedback from stakeholders, including parents, alumni, and local communities should be taken during implementation.
- **Curriculum Review and Redesign:** Conduct a thorough review of existing curricula and redesign courses to seamlessly integrate values and ethics, ensuring that the changes align with academic goals.
- **Transparency:** The guidelines must make it compulsory for HEI to voluntarily disclose all critical information and subject themselves to public scrutiny.
- **Accountability:** It would be advisable for the guidelines to strongly advise HEI to upload the agendas, minutes, and proceedings of their standing committees, subcommittees, and decision-making bodies as soon as possible. Their audited financial statements and yearly reports have to be made available to the public. This will serve as a strong deterrent to misconduct and help rebuild public trust in the institution's ability to function.

Conclusion

The noble intention behind the mission to build value-based institutions by orienting individuals and institutions towards developing a deep respect for fundamental duties and constitutional values and bonding with the country should be supplemented by sincere efforts of UGC, the government, and all stakeholders including staff and student unions.

Critically examine the impact of Project Tiger on the conservation of biodiversity in India, particularly focusing on the balance between tiger conservation and the rights of forest dwellers.

Introduction: Describe Project Tiger briefly

Body: Highlight the impact of the project on conservation of biodiversity in India

Conclusion: Way forward

Project Tiger, launched in 1973 in India, was a pioneering conservation initiative aimed at protecting the endangered Bengal tiger and its habitat. It came at a time when the population of tigers in India was rapidly dwindling, due to unfettered hunting and habitat loss.

Impact of Project Tiger

- **Tiger Population Recovery:** The resurgence of the tiger population is one of Project Tiger's main achievements. The Indian tiger population has demonstrated a growing tendency from a dangerously low level, proving the efficacy of conservation initiatives. As per the latest data, there are 3,682 tigers now in India, up from 2,967 in 2018 — a rise of almost 24% in four years.
- **Habitat Protection:** The project has led to the creation of tiger reserves, which act as protected areas for not only tigers but also a diverse range of flora and fauna. This has indirectly contributed to the conservation of biodiversity by preserving crucial ecosystems. As per the latest data, there were nine tiger reserves in 1973 over 9,115 sq. km; today there are 54 in 18 States, occupying 78,135.956 sq. km.

Challenges and Criticisms

- **Resource Conflicts:** The establishment of tiger reserves has occasionally given rise to disputes about the exploitation of natural resources between residents and conservationists. It has always been difficult to strike a balance between the demands of local livelihoods and conservation.
- **Displacement of Forest Dwellers:** The relocation of local and indigenous communities residing in or close to tiger reserves is a primary point of contention for Project Tiger. Communities were frequently forcibly relocated as a result of the establishment of these reserves, which caused socioeconomic problems and conflict between the rights of people and the objectives of conservation.

Balance between Tiger Conservation and Rights of Forest-dwellers

- **Inclusive Conservation:** Adopting more inclusive conservation tactics is necessary to strike a balance. Aligning conservation objectives with the rights of forest inhabitants can be facilitated by including local communities in decision-making processes, guaranteeing their participation, and honouring their traditional knowledge.
- **Community-Based Conservation:** Using community-based conservation strategies can be a more socially just and sustainable way to manage and maintain natural resources because local communities are actively involved in the process.

Conclusion

The rights of forest residents and tiger conservation must coexist peacefully, and this can only be accomplished through a flexible, inclusive, and nuanced strategy that takes into account social and ecological factors.

Discuss the challenges and limitations of international law in enforcing compliance among nations, with reference to the recent violations of international treaties and agreements.

Introduction: Define international law briefly.

Body: Highlight key challenges and limitations in its compliance among nations

Conclusion: Way forward

International law is the set of rules governing the conduct of global countries and other actors in the international arena. It is a body of law that is created and enforced by countries. Nations face various challenges in enforcing compliance with international laws which can be seen during the Israel-Gaza war, Ukraine- the Ukraine-Russia war which has led to scholars calling “death of international law” due to massive devastation to life and property.

Key challenges and limitations

- **Sovereignty Concerns:** Nations often prioritize their sovereignty and may be reluctant to cede authority to international bodies. This can hinder the enforcement of international law, as countries may resist external interference in their domestic affairs.
- **Weak International Institutions:** One major drawback is the absence of a strong international enforcement framework. International organizations like the United Nations may lack the power or funding necessary to successfully enforce adherence to international law.
- **Emerging Threats:** Conventional legal frameworks face difficulties from issues like cyberwarfare, environmental degradation, and global health catastrophes like COVID-19, as they may not have fully foreseen or addressed these quickly changing issues.
- **Power dynamics:** Stronger countries, especially the P5, might be able to influence or sidestep international legal repercussions, which would lead to an imbalance in enforcement. This has the potential to erode the legitimacy and efficacy of international law.
- **Security Council Dynamics:** The veto power possessed by its permanent members presents difficulties for the United Nations Security Council, the principal international organization in charge of preserving peace and security. This frequently results in political considerations impacting enforcement operations.
- **Absence of Universal Ratification:** Certain countries may not be bound by certain accords since not all countries have the authority to ratify or accede to international treaties. This results in a fragmented legal landscape. Eg, many nations have not ratified crucial treaties like the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Kyoto Protocol, or Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

Conclusion

International law and the institutions that support it are not perfect. However, in their absence, the world would be a terrible place. International law, particularly international humanitarian law, is not universally followed, although there is a universal desire to do so. To become a tool that keeps the powerful in international relations accountable, international law needs to be shaped and highlighted. Improving international collaboration, bolstering international institutions, encouraging a compliance culture, and resolving power disparities are essential steps in tackling these issues and advancing the implementation of international law.

Examine the role of civil society organizations and people's movements in influencing policy-making in India. How effective are these movements in bringing about tangible policy changes, especially in the context of the Vikalp Sangam initiative?

Introduction: Describe Civil society organizations briefly.

Body: Highlight the important role played by such organizations in policymaking.

Conclusion: Way forward

People's movements and civil society organizations (CSOs) are major players in shaping Indian policy. These organizations act as a bridge between the public and the government, promoting a range of social, environmental, and economic causes. CSOs and people's movements play a significant role in influencing public opinion, increasing public awareness, and inspiring citizens to interact with policymakers in India's diverse and democratic environment. Vikalp Sangam acts as a collective platform for 85 different people's movements and civil society organizations which aims to search for grounded alternatives to the current model of 'development' that is built on ecological destruction and rising inequalities.

Role of CSO and people's movements in influencing policy-making in India

- **Advocacy and Awareness:** CSOs often engage in advocacy work to promote specific policy changes. They conduct research, create awareness campaigns, and lobby policymakers to address issues related to human rights, the environment, social justice, and more. Eg, Vikalp Sangam has prepared the "People's Manifesto for a Just, Equitable and Sustainable India" manifesto which emphasizes citizen vigilance and proactive demands for implementation of alternative policies related to development.
- **Public Participation and Mobilization:** People's movements mobilize citizens to actively participate in democratic processes. Mass protests, demonstrations, and social media campaigns amplify public voices, compelling policymakers to take notice and respond. Vikalp Sangam has convened over 30 physical assemblies over the past decade & published 1,500 stories of positive change and advocating policy changes.
- **Capacity Building and Empowerment:** Civil society organizations often work towards building the capacity of local communities, empowering them to articulate their concerns effectively. This grassroots approach strengthens the impact of movements. Vikalp Sangam website, www.vikalpsangam.org, has stories of rural revival, leading to reduced outmigration, and, in many cases, even reverse migration back from cities and large industries to villages and small manufacturing or crafts.
- **Policy Research and Analysis:** Many CSOs specialize in policy research and analysis, providing evidence-based recommendations to policymakers. This research helps bridge the gap between public sentiment and informed policy decisions. This helps to address complex issues like inter-faith harmony, food security & environmental issues.

Conclusion

The success of such movements depends on factors like the political climate, government responsiveness, public support, and the strategic approach of the movements. Such movements address people's issues and work towards direct and accountable democracy, economic self-reliance, ecological responsibility, and socio-cultural equality.

Analyze the recent developments in India-Maldives relations, especially in the context of the changing political landscape in the Maldives. How do these developments impact the strategic and diplomatic ties between the two nations?

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: How do recent developments in the bilateral relations impact strategic and diplomatic ties between the two nations?

Conclusion: Way forward

The rapid decline in ties between India and the Maldives following PM Modi's visit to Lakshadweep, and Maldives ministers engaging in negative comments about India and the Prime Minister has sparked numerous celebrities encouraging people to consider exploring domestic tourist destinations rather than traveling to the Maldives.

Recent developments in relations

- **India Out campaign:** The 'India Out' campaign is a political movement to mobilize people in the Maldives against India. The campaign is against the presence of the Indian military on Maldivian soil.
- **Tourism issue:** The Indian PM's visit to Lakshadweep was seen in Maldives as a challenge to Maldivian tourism, which is well-known for its renowned beachside amenities. The comments about PM were followed by many Indians canceling their holiday bookings in Maldives. The incident underscores the dangers of hypernationalism in the region.
- **Revocation of Hydrographic Survey Agreement:** The Maldives has expressed reservations regarding India's hydrographic activities, viewing them as a potential means of intelligence gathering. The recent move by the Maldives to annul the agreement with India for collaborative hydrographic surveys in its waters has raised concerns within Indian strategic circles.
- **China issue in Indian Ocean Region:** Maldives is crucial to China's "String of Pearls" strategy, with major investments and Belt and Road participation. Tensions with India rose after Maldives' Free-Trade Agreement with China in 2017. Concerns persist over a possible Chinese naval base in the Maldives, impacting regional dynamics, especially in the Indian Ocean.

How do these developments impact ties between nations?

- **India's strategic role:** India has emerged as a Net Security Provider: as Maldives is part of the Indian government's priorities under the 'Neighbourhood First Policy. Both nations are key players in maintaining the safety and security of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), thus contributing to India-led Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) vision.
- **Tourism Economy:** India ranks as one of the primary contributors to the tourist influx in the Maldives, a country heavily reliant on tourism to sustain its economy. The recent developments could impact Indian investment in key sectors in the Maldives, such as tourism, fisheries, renewable energy, and infrastructure.
- **Geo-strategic relations:** Maldives has been a partner of India in many regional groupings. Maldives is a member of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC), Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), SAARC, SASEC, and SAGAR initiative of India. The recent development could adversely impact this relationship and move the Maldives closer to China.
- **People-to-people ties:** There is a sizeable Indian Diaspora in Maldives. Numerous Indians are employed in Maldives' education, medical care systems, tourism, and hospitality sectors. The ongoing tussle between the nations could impact the cultural and social linkages between the people of both nations.

Conclusion

Regardless of any controversy, the lasting regional and geopolitical significance of India emphasizes the Maldives' commitment to prioritizing relations with New Delhi. The key lies in aligning India's

'Neighbourhood First' policy with the Maldives' 'India First' approach, fostering a synergistic and mutually beneficial partnership.

Evaluate the effectiveness of existing guidelines and policies in India regarding antibiotic prescription and their implementation in healthcare settings.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight the effectiveness of existing guidelines related to antibiotic prescription in India

Conclusion: Way forward

National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) recently found in a survey that over half of the nearly 10,000 hospital patients surveyed for a study were given antibiotics to prevent, rather than treat, infection. This is a worrying sign as India carries one of the largest burden of drug-resistant pathogens worldwide leading to large cases of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). India has taken a major step in addressing the issue of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which is becoming an increasing worldwide concern, by implementing the National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (NAP-AMR) introduced in 2017.

Effectiveness of existing programs and guidelines related to antibiotic prescription

- **Promoting awareness and education:** This is a key component of India's National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (NAP-AMR). This strategy emphasizes the importance of educating healthcare workers, the general public, as well as stakeholders in the veterinary and agricultural industries. This educational initiative is crucial in fostering responsible behaviour and reducing the misuse of antibiotics.
- **Multi-sectoral approach:** The plan recognizes that antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is not solely a challenge for human health; it is also a consequence of antibiotic misuse in veterinary and environmental settings. As a result, various ministries are involved, including those responsible for Health, Animal Husbandry, Agriculture, and Environment. This collaborative, multi-sectoral approach enhances the effectiveness of efforts to address AMR
- **Data collection & reporting:** The National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (NAP-AMR) underscores the importance of robust data collection and surveillance. This involves closely monitoring the utilization of antibiotics in agriculture, human health, and veterinary domains. India has the opportunity to adopt successful approaches observed in the surveillance programs implemented in Indonesia.
- **Regulatory Framework:** There should be a robust regulatory framework in place to monitor and enforce compliance with antibiotic prescription guidelines. This includes mechanisms to penalize non-compliance and incentivize adherence.
- **Antibiotic Resistance Surveillance:** Regular monitoring of antibiotic resistance patterns is crucial. The effectiveness of guidelines can be assessed by the ability to track changes in resistance patterns over time and take corrective actions.

Conclusion

Restricting access to reserve antibiotics is vital for reducing resistance. Countries with high per capita antibiotic use, often linked to privatized healthcare, highlight the need to strengthen public health systems and sanitation to combat AMR. Regions with robust public health systems show lower AMR rates. The solution lies in targeted spending, streamlined service delivery, and enhanced accountability in public health.

Critically examine the effectiveness of India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy in the context of its diplomatic relations with Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Importance of Bangladesh for India especially as part of Neighbourhood First Policy.

Conclusion: Way forward

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was sworn in for a fifth term after a landslide victory in recent elections held in Bangladesh. Her party Awami League won nearly three-quarters of elected seats in parliament, with allied parties and friendly independent candidates making up nearly all the remainder. The win is significant for India as she is seen as one of India's closest friends and allies, over the years & fostered a friendly and mutually beneficial relationship between the two countries.

Effectiveness of India's "Neighbourhood First" Policy regarding Bangladesh

- **National Security:** PM Hasina is seen as a very cooperative leader who has eased India's security on its very long eastern border. Her crackdown on anti-India elements and counter-terrorism cooperation with India has single-handedly improved India's overall security situation over the last decade or so.
- **Economic cooperation:** Bangladesh has replaced Pakistan as the second-largest economy in the South Asian region with a GDP of Bangladesh \$460 billion in 2022, more than Pakistan's \$375 billion. As per recent estimates, Bangladesh was the fifth largest export destination for Indian goods & accounted for more than 2.7 percent of all Indian exports, worth \$12.2 billion.
- **Regional cooperation:** India hopes that Bangladesh will serve as a pivot for regional cooperation in the Bay of Bengal littoral, which connects South and South East Asia, extending beyond the subcontinent. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), which links the eastern subcontinent with Myanmar and Thailand, has its secretariat in Dhaka.
- **Connectivity:** India's 'neighbourhood policy' has focussed on Bangladesh, which has emerged as a key interlocutor in India's 'Act East Policy' and sub-regional groupings like BIMSTEC and the BBIN Initiative. The Padma multipurpose bridge and the Akhaura-Agartala rail link will dramatically change connectivity within Bangladesh and with India. Bangladesh is facilitating efficient connectivity to India's Northeast through overland transit and inland waterways.
- **Water resource management:** Significant progress has been made in the field of water resources management especially related to the Teesta water-sharing agreement. The two nations have successfully signed a MoU about the equitable distribution of the Feni River's waters.
- **Energy cooperation:** The India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline connecting Siliguri in West Bengal and Parbatipur in the Dinajpur district of Bangladesh, will transport one million Metric Tonnes Per Annum (MMTPA) of High-Speed Diesel to Bangladesh.
- **Defence cooperation:** Bangladesh & India share 4096.7 km. of the border; the longest land boundary that India shares with any of its neighbours. The two nations also conduct Joint Exercises like Exercise Sampriti and Exercise Bongosagar.

Conclusion

Bangladesh is integral to India's Neighbourhood Policy, especially in the wake of recent disturbances in the region between India and Maldives. India needs to strengthen regional groups like SAARC, BIMSTEC, etc that will give full impetus to India's Neighbourhood First policy and elevate India-Bangladesh relations to another level.

Discuss the role of the Finance Commission in promoting forest conservation in India. How has its approach evolved over the years, and what impact does this have on fiscal federalism?

Introduction: Describe the Finance Commission briefly.

Body: Role of Finance Commission & its impact.

Conclusion: Way forward

The Finance Commission is a constitutional body established under Art 280 of the Indian constitution. Its primary function is to recommend the distribution of financial resources between the central government and the state governments. The Finance Commission (FC) responsible for fiscal federalism in the country, has in the past provided incentives to states to maintain and improve their forest cover.

Role of FC in promoting forest conservation in India

- **Allocation of Funds:** FC allocates funds to states based on various criteria such as population, area, and socio-economic indicators. States with larger forest cover or those actively engaged in conservation efforts may receive additional funds.
- **Incentivizing Conservation:** FC can incentivize states to prioritize forest conservation by linking financial grants to the implementation of conservation measures. This could encourage states to allocate resources for afforestation, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable forest management.
- **Impact on Fiscal Federalism:** FC plays a crucial role in maintaining fiscal federalism by ensuring a fair distribution of resources. If the commission recognizes and rewards states for effective forest conservation, it reinforces the idea that environmental sustainability is a shared responsibility and an integral part of overall development.

How has the approach evolved over years and impact on fiscal federalism

- **Past allocation:** The 12th FC dedicated Rs 1,000 crore for forest conservation, and the 13th FC enhanced this allocation to Rs 5,000 crore. The 14th FC replaced the grants with a more prominent placement for the forestry sector — it dedicated 7.5 percent of the divisible central tax pool to ecology and forests.
- **New parameters:** 16 FC can make climate vulnerability and emission intensity of states a key parameter of the tax devolution formula that can nudge action towards achieving India's NDCs under the Paris Pact.
- **Performance-based grants:** 16 FC can recommend sector-specific grants based on the performance of states towards achieving the objectives of India's NDCs and SDG goals. E.g., such sectors are decarbonise energy & transport, air pollution management & sustainable land and forest management.
- **Deal with new challenges:** FC can help tackle issues of crop burning, mangrove restoration, and forest fires in several states. The 16th FC can be pivotal in creating a basis for a National Carbon Market and a National Green Credit Market.

Conclusion

FC is best suited to be the institutional mechanism to combat ecological challenges and bring scientific understanding into how to ascertain both the vulnerability of states and how they are doing to mitigate them.

Critically analyze the reasons behind the persistently low public trust in the Indian police force. What measures can be taken to improve the police's image and effectiveness in serving the community?

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight reasons behind low public trust in police and measures that can improve it.

Conclusion: Way forward

The persistently low public trust in the Indian police force can be attributed to a combination of historical, structural, and cultural factors.

Key reasons behind the issue are

- **Police Brutality and Corruption:** The public's trust has been damaged by numerous reports of incidents involving police brutality and corruption. Unfavourable opinions of the police are influenced by incidents involving bribery, excessive force, and deaths in custody.
- **Lack of Accountability:** It can give rise to a sense of impunity when people believe that police officers are never held responsible for their actions, even when they commit misconduct or abuse. The public is more likely to mistrust this absence of accountability.
- **Political Interference:** The impartiality and efficiency of law enforcement may be jeopardized when politicians meddle in police affairs. Public trust is weakened by political pressure to act in a particular way, regardless of moral or legal implications.
- **Inadequate Training and Resources:** Insufficient training and resources for police officers can lead to a lack of professionalism. This may result in poor handling of situations, further contributing to negative perceptions.
- **Discord between Centre and States:** A growing mistrust between the Union and states has developed over the role of Central agencies like ED, and CBI in opposition-ruled States. This led to state executives not trusting senior IPS officers and instead demanding complete loyalty from the state police cadre.

Measures to improve police image and effectiveness

- **Enhanced Training Programs:** Implement comprehensive and ongoing training programs that focus on professionalism, ethical behavior, and community engagement.
- **Accountability Mechanisms:** Establish independent oversight mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency in police actions. Swift and fair investigations into misconduct allegations can help restore public trust.
- **Community Policing Initiatives:** Foster a community-oriented approach, encouraging police officers to work collaboratively with local communities to address issues and build positive relationships.
- **Political Independence:** Ensure the independence of the police force from political interference to maintain professionalism and unbiased law enforcement.
- **Technological Integration:** Invest in modern technologies for better law enforcement, including the use of body cameras, data analytics, and other tools that enhance transparency and accountability.

Conclusion

The need is to motivate youth and women to join the police force not only because of job prospects but also because of allowing them to display their talent. Any effort to significantly raise the standard of policing could benefit from a significant reorganization that closes the gap between the higher and lower ranks. If the perception of India's police force is to improve, then knowledge, integrity, and true compassion for the average person must coexist.

Evaluate the trade-offs between economic development and environmental preservation in the context of air pollution control in India. How can these trade-offs be managed to achieve sustainable development?

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: What are the trade-offs between economic development and environmental preservation and how can these trade-offs be managed?

Conclusion: Way forward

The problem of air pollution, anywhere in India, especially in NCR has now become a perennial problem & addressing it requires making difficult choices and tough decisions, both at the societal and governmental levels. Any future solution to the problem will involve multiple trade-offs between development and environmental preservation.

Trade-offs between Economic Development and Environmental Preservation in Air Pollution Control

- **Industrial Growth vs. Emission Reduction:** Rapid industrialization is often accompanied by increased emissions. Industries contribute significantly to air pollution, and imposing strict regulations may impact economic growth.
- **Energy Generation vs. Air Quality:** Meeting growing energy demands can lead to increased use of fossil fuels, contributing to air pollution.
- **Urbanization vs. Air Quality:** Urban expansion and increased vehicular traffic in cities contribute significantly to air pollution.
- **Agricultural Practices vs. Air Quality:** Agricultural activities, such as stubble burning, can release pollutants into the air. Eg, the Delhi NCR region is known for poor air quality during winter months especially due to Stubble burning.

Managing Trade-offs for Sustainable Development

- **Integrated Policies:** Create and put into action integrated policies that take environmental sustainability and economic development into account. Green habits should be promoted by policy, while actions that hurt the environment should be punished.
- **Rewards for Eco-Friendly Technologies:** Offer monetary rewards and financial assistance to sectors implementing eco-friendly technology. This can lessen its negative effects on the environment while fostering economic growth.
- **Public Knowledge and Involvement:** Publicize the significance of air quality and involve local people in the decision-making process. The people, armed with knowledge, may press businesses and legislators to adopt sustainable practices.
- **Technological Innovation:** Make investments in the study and creation of cutting-edge pollution-reducing technology. This may result in the creation of affordable solutions that have positive effects on the environment and the economy.
- **International Collaboration:** Collaborate with international organizations to share knowledge, technology, and best practices. Learning from global experiences can help India adopt effective strategies for balancing economic growth and environmental preservation.
- **Green Finance:** Encourage the financial sector to prioritize environmentally sustainable projects. Green finance mechanisms can channel funds into initiatives that promote both economic development and environmental conservation.

Conclusion

Sustainable development can be achieved by adopting a holistic strategy that considers the interconnectedness of economic, social, and environmental factors, fostering a balanced and resilient system for the benefit of current and future generations.

Evaluate the effectiveness of the anti-defection law in maintaining political stability and party discipline in India, with reference to the recent political developments in Maharashtra.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight effectiveness of the law in maintaining political stability and party discipline.

Conclusion: Way forward

The Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, commonly known as the Anti-Defection Law, was introduced in 1985 by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment. The anti-defection law was enacted to ensure that a party member does not violate the mandate of the party. In case he does so, he will lose his membership of the House. The law applies to both Parliament and State Assemblies. It provides for the Presiding Officer of the legislature to disqualify any defector on a petition by another member.

Effectiveness of anti-defection law in maintaining political stability and party discipline

- **Political Stability:** By forbidding lawmakers from joining other parties, the law seeks to improve political stability by preventing frequent changes in administration.
- **Party Discipline:** By punishing members who cross party lines, anti-defection clauses aim to uphold party discipline. Maintaining party unity and a cogent policy approach depend on this.
- **Protecting Mandate:** By prohibiting elected officials from switching allegiance without facing repercussions, the law serves to preserve the mandate that voters granted to a specific party or coalition.
- **Decrease in Horse-Trading:** Because lawmakers risk losing their seats if they defect, the rule serves as a deterrent to horse-trading and other unethical behaviour.

Steps to Strengthen anti-defection law

- **Proactive role of Election Commission:** Concerns regarding prejudice and political interference are raised by the Speakers of the House's present defection case decision-making process. Impartiality could be improved by transferring decision-making authority to an unbiased entity like the Election Commission. The 2nd ARC recommended that the issue of disqualification of members on the grounds of defection should be decided by the President/Governor on the advice of the Election Commission.
- **Internal Democracy:** Enacting laws to protect internal party democracy and openness may lessen lawmakers' sense of disappointment and maybe stop desertion brought on by party dissatisfaction.
- **Time-bound Decisions:** To avoid protracted uncertainty and political manipulation, a rigorous timeline for deciding defection cases should be established.
- **Judicial Recourse:** Under some circumstances, allowing direct appeals to the Supreme Court or High Courts may offer more protection against arbitrary rulings.

Conclusion

The Indian Constitution's Anti-Defection Law attempts to prevent political defections to promote democratic stability. Notwithstanding its significance, obstacles include limitations on the independence of lawmakers and procedural problems highlighting the need for changes.

Analyze the current challenges India faces regarding cross-border security. Discuss the role of the Indian Army and other security forces in mitigating these challenges.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight key challenges regarding cross-border security and the role of the Army in mitigating them.

Conclusion: Way forward

India faces several cross-border security challenges that require the active involvement of the Indian Army and other security forces. These challenges are dynamic and can evolve.

Some of the key challenges

- **Terrorism:** India contends with the ongoing threat of terrorism emerging from across its borders, mainly from groups operating in Pakistan. The use of asymmetric tactics, including infiltration and attacks on military and civilian targets, poses a significant challenge.
- **Insurgency and Infiltration:** There is ongoing concern about the infiltration of militants and insurgents across porous borders, especially in areas like Jammu & Kashmir and the Northeast. The fact that insurgent groups frequently receive outside assistance makes them a difficult security problem.
- **Cross-border tensions and border disputes:** India has long-standing border conflicts with China and Pakistan, among other bordering nations. Periodically, tensions across borders rise, resulting in military confrontations and the deployment of troops along border disputes.
- **Transnational Crime:** The drug trade, human trafficking, and cross-border smuggling provide security risks. Permeable borders are a common tool used by criminal networks to carry out illegal activities.

Role of security forces in mitigating these challenges

- **Counter-terrorism operations:** The Indian Army is an essential component of counterterrorism efforts, as are paramilitary groups and intelligence services. They monitor borders, stop infiltration, carry out surgical strikes when needed, and keep a visible presence in areas where conflicts are likely to occur.
- **Protect border:** The Indian Army bears the responsibility of protecting the nation's boundaries. It is essential for controlling and reducing border tensions through diplomatic channels and, when necessary, for upholding a strong defensive stance.
- **Cyberthreats:** The Indian Army strives to strengthen the nation's cyber defenses in conjunction with specialized cyber security units. To stop cyber threats and effectively counteract cyberattacks, they take proactive steps.
- **Transnational Crime Mitigation:** The Border Security Force (BSF) and other security forces are essential in preventing and combating transnational crime. To stop unlawful activity, they set up checkpoints, carry out routine patrols, and work with other agencies.

Conclusion

A comprehensive strategy involving diplomatic efforts, intelligence collection, technology breakthroughs, and well-coordinated military and paramilitary activities is needed to mitigate these challenges. The Indian Army and other security forces are essential to defending the nation's borders, upholding internal security, and effectively countering cross-border threats. To address the dynamic nature of security threats, continuous efforts to modernize and improve the capabilities of these forces are vital.

Discuss the role of the Universal Immunisation Programme in combating HPV infections. How can it be expanded or improved to better address cervical cancer in India?

Introduction: Give a brief description of UIP

Body: Highlight role of UIP in combating HPV infections and efforts to address cervical cancer.

Conclusion: Way forward

The Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) in India plays a critical role in preventing various infectious diseases through the provision of vaccines to children. The government is planning to include cervical cancer vaccine in the programme; an inoculation campaign targeted at girls in the nine to 14 age group. The main cause is the presence of persistent high-risk type of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) infection along with co-factors like low socioeconomic conditions, low immunity status, other genital infections, smoking etc, that facilitate initiation and progression to cancer.

Role of UIP in combating HPV infections

- **Target Age Group:** The proposed targets are 90 per cent girls fully vaccinated by 15 years of age with two doses of HPV vaccine; 70 per cent women screened with a high-performance test at 35 and 45 years of age; and 90 per cent of women with cervical pre-cancer and cancer receiving treatment, including palliative care, to achieve a goal of less than four cases per 1,00,000 women.
- **Improved detection:** The Government of India has implemented cancer screening by trained nurses even in primary health centres under the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke — the NPCDCS programme. Screening tools like visual screening tests and HPV tests are simple and easily available.
- **Help to achieve SDG:** Cervical cancer is the only non-communicable disease that can be eliminated, with the potential to make significant contributions to Sustainable Development Goal 3.4 of reducing premature deaths by one third by 2030.

Measures to improve the program

- **Public awareness:** Urgent actions are needed to raise awareness about cervical cancer, promote HPV vaccination, address vaccine hesitancy, encourage age-appropriate screening (especially with HPV testing), and enhance capacity for pre-cancer treatment and quality cancer care. Strengthening health systems is crucial to provide comprehensive services for cervical cancer prevention and treatment.
- **Strengthen Health infrastructure:** Consistent screening with advanced diagnostics, strengthened cancer registries, improved referrals, and financial support mechanisms are essential. Building partnerships across healthcare levels and with NGOs, innovators, and public health professionals is crucial for effective cervical cancer prevention and care.
- **Indigenous development:** Indigenous HPV kits and vaccines are crucial for resource-scarce areas. Innovations like single-dose vaccination, self-sampling, and AI diagnosis promise rapid progress in eliminating cervical cancer in low and middle-income countries.

Conclusion

Cervical cancer is the second-most common cancer among women in India, mostly affecting the middle-aged. With 1,23,907 new cases and 77,348 deaths in the year 2022, India contributed to one-fifth of the global burden. In order to progress toward the eradication of cervical cancer, it is equally important that we form alliances and collaborate on the most recent research as well as implement effective models for community outreach and care pathways.

Analyze the impact of large infrastructure projects like the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link on urban ecology and local climate. Discuss the balance between development and ecological sustainability in the context of urban planning.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight the impact of such a project on ecology and climate and how to maintain a balance between development and environment.

Conclusion: Way forward

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link bridge, the Atal Setu which is being seen as a symbol of the city and the country's development. These projects often bring about changes in land use, biodiversity, air quality, water systems, and overall environmental balance.

Impact of such project on urban ecology and local climate

- **Land Use and Biodiversity:** Large-scale land use is frequently necessary for infrastructure projects, which results in the disruption of natural ecosystems and habitats. Regarding the MTHL, there's a chance that development operations upset the surrounding flora and fauna.
- **Air and Water Quality:** Infrastructure projects can lead to air and water pollution due to construction activities and increased vehicle traffic. The quality of the local air and water may be lowered by emissions from construction-related vehicles and equipment as well as runoff from construction sites.
- **Impacts of climatic Change:** Local climatic patterns can be influenced by extensive infrastructure. Local temperatures can rise as a result of changes in land use, such as an increase in impermeable surfaces. This phenomenon is known as the urban heat island effect.

How to balance development and ecological sustainability in urban planning

- **Ecological Sustainability in Urban Planning:** An integrated approach to urban planning is necessary to strike a balance between development and ecological sustainability. This entails taking the environment into account throughout the entire planning and building process. Urban development plans ought to incorporate sustainable design principles, like the preservation of green spaces, the promotion of public transit, and the integration of green infrastructure.
- **Long-term Planning and Adaptive Tactics:** Long-term thinking and adaptive tactics are necessary for sustainable urban planning. Infrastructure projects may be made viable and sustainable over time by anticipating and including resilient design concepts in addition to anticipating future environmental concerns like the effects of climate change.
- **Enforcement and Regulatory Frameworks:** Strict enforcement and efficient regulatory frameworks are necessary to preserve ecological sustainability in urban growth. Tight environmental impact assessments, oversight procedures, and sanctions for non-adherence might incentivize developers to implement eco-friendly measures.

Conclusion

A holistic approach to urban planning that considers environmental, social, and economic factors is essential for creating resilient and sustainable cities in the face of rapid urbanization and development.

Evaluate the effectiveness of the Tenth Schedule of the Indian Constitution in curbing political defections. How has it impacted the stability of governments and the quality of democracy in India?

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: How effective is the Tenth Schedule in curbing political defection and its impact on government stability and quality of democracy?

Conclusion: Way forward

The 10th Schedule of the Indian Constitution which talks about the anti-defection law is designed to prevent political defections prompted by the lure of office or material benefits or other like considerations. The Anti-defection law was passed by Parliament in 1985 and reinforced in 2002. Recently, the Maharashtra Assembly Speaker has refused to disqualify 40 MLAs of the Eknath Shinde faction after recognising it as the real Shiv Sena raising the effectiveness of the Tenth Schedule.

- **Effectiveness in Curbing Defections:** The Tenth Schedule has been somewhat effective in curbing defections by setting clear guidelines and consequences for elected representatives who switch parties. It disqualifies members of Parliament and state legislatures if they voluntarily give up their membership of a political party or disobey the party's whip on crucial votes. The law also applies to splits within parties, aiming to prevent engineered defections. However, loopholes and challenges in its enforcement have limited its effectiveness. The law did not apply to defections in the Rajya Sabha (Upper House of Parliament) before 2003, and the disqualification process is often subject to delays, allowing defectors to enjoy the benefits of their actions for an extended period.
- **Impact on Political Stability:** The Anti-Defection Law has affected India's political stability in a variety of ways. On the one hand, the possibility of being disqualified has discouraged some members from moving parties. However, political maneuvering has been used to get around the law, particularly through planned splits and mergers. Political instability has occasionally resulted from this since defections can lead to the formation or overthrow of administrations. The degree to which the law's provisions are followed, the degree of political ethics, and the readiness of political parties to put stability ahead of immediate advantages all influence how effective the law is at maintaining political stability.
- **Quality of Democracy:** The Anti-Defection Law has come under fire for restricting the independence of elected officials, even if its goal is to bolster democracy by prohibiting opportunistic political defections. Because lawmakers can fear losing their jobs if they deviate from the party line, critics claim that the rule restricts their ability to express themselves freely and to dissent inside political parties. Furthermore, the legislation does not address matters of lobbying, horse-trading, or other immoral activities that could potentially have an impact on political outcomes. The Anti-Defection Law may not directly address several other elements that influence India's democracy, such as the predominance of dynastic politics and corruption.
- **Suggested reform:** In the case of *Sadiq Ali versus the Election Commission of India (1971)*, the Supreme Court established a three-test formula to determine the legitimate faction to be recognized as the original political party by the Election Commission. These criteria include assessing the aims and objectives of the party, examining its internal democratic processes as reflected in the party's constitution, and considering the majority in both the legislative and organizational wings of the party.

Conclusion

While legal reforms are necessary the real reform required is institutionalizing internal democracy through regular inner-party elections in our political parties with strict monitoring by the Election Commission.

Considering the high smartphone usage among youth, as reported by ASER, discuss the potential of digital literacy in enhancing educational outcomes. How can digital tools be effectively integrated into the learning process to improve foundational skills?

Introduction: Give a brief context to the ASER report

Body: Highlight the benefits of digital tools in enhancing educational outcomes

Conclusion: Way forward

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023 surveyed 14-18-year-olds nationwide, revealing that approximately 89% of youths in this age group reported having a smartphone at home. An even greater proportion, specifically 92%, indicated that they possess the ability to use a smartphone.

Potential of digital literacy in enhancing educational outcomes

- **Information Access:** Students can use digital tools to access a wide range of instructional materials, such as websites, e-books, and online courses. This information availability can be used to augment more conventional course materials, giving students access to a wider variety of resources.
- **Interactive Learning:** Educational apps, computer programs, and multimedia presentations are examples of interactive and interesting content that may be accessed using digital technologies. Engaging students in interactive learning environments helps improve their comprehension of difficult subjects.
- **Platforms for Adaptive Learning:** Digital tools are capable of accommodating different learning styles and rates, resulting in customized learning experiences. Attending to their requirements and difficulties aids pupils in solidifying their fundamental abilities.

Use of digital tools to improve foundational skills

- **Digital Literacy Skills:** Information literacy, media literacy, and technological proficiency are among the critical skills that students acquire when digital resources are incorporated into their education. In the modern digital world, these abilities are becoming more and more crucial.
- **Digital Skills for Future Careers:** Integrating digital tools into education helps prepare students for the demands of the modern workplace, where digital literacy is often a prerequisite. This can enhance their employability and future career prospects. Eg, AI-based tutoring programs are growing, and as technology advances, making such programs in local languages will be easily possible.
- **Decentralized education:** Digital literacy tools further aid in open school and open university processes. Digital technology will bring a great opportunity to formally train our youth in advanced skills and knowledge of agriculture, fisheries, and forestry. This will further develop linkages between issues of environment and climate with knowledge and public awareness.

Conclusion

To successfully integrate digital tools into the teaching and learning process while keeping a focus on fundamental skills and educational justice, educators and legislators should collaborate. Additionally, teacher training is essential to ensure educators can effectively leverage digital tools for improved educational outcomes.

Discuss the role of policy interventions in addressing the representation of tribal communities in India, with a focus on the recommendations of the First Backward Classes Commission and the Lokur Commission regarding the Scheduled Tribes in Manipur.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the situation

Body: Role of policy interventions in addressing representation of tribal communities.

Conclusion: Way forward

The suggestion that the Union government could review the Scheduled Tribes' status of Kukis and include Meiteis in the list has drawn strong reactions from the Kuki-Zomi organizations in the state, prompting the CM of the state to form a special committee that will look into the issue. The Lokur Committee (1965) was set up to look into criteria for defining Schedule Tribes. The Committee recommended 5 criteria for identification, namely, primitive traits, distinct culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, and backwardness. The First Backward Classes Commission 1955 under the chairmanship of Kaka Kelkar was set up to identify SC, ST, and OBC at the national level.

Role of Policy Interventions in Tribal Representation

- **Constitutional Recognition:** The Indian Constitution recognizes Scheduled Tribes (STs) and grants them special provisions, including reserved seats in legislatures and educational institutions, affirmative action in government jobs, and protection of their land rights. These provisions aim to provide equal opportunities and a political voice.
- **Tribal Sub-Plan Scheme:** Introduced in the 1970s, this scheme allocates a percentage of the national plan budget to tribal development. While it has led to investments in tribal areas, criticisms like inadequate allocation, bureaucratic hurdles, and lack of community involvement hinder its effectiveness.
- **Panchayati Raj Extension Act (1996):** This act extended the Panchayati Raj system to tribal areas, reserving seats for STs in village and district councils. This aimed to decentralize power and give tribes a greater say in local governance. However, challenges like lack of awareness, funds, and capacity building make its implementation uneven.

Challenges and Limitations of Policy Interventions:

- **Top-down approach:** Many policies lack meaningful tribal participation in decision-making and often fail to address the specific needs and aspirations of diverse tribal communities.
- **Inadequate implementation:** Corruption, bureaucratic delays, and lack of awareness about entitlements limit the reach and impact of policies.
- **Internal divisions:** Tribal communities are not homogenous, and different tribes within Manipur may have competing interests, further hindering collective representation.
- **Socio-economic factors:** Poverty, illiteracy, and limited access to resources continue to disadvantage tribal communities in political participation.

Way forward

- **Bottom-up participatory processes:** Policies should actively involve tribal communities in planning, implementation, and monitoring.
- **Capacity building:** Empowering tribal communities through education, training, and awareness programs is crucial for effective participation.
- **Context-specific policies:** Recognizing the diversity of tribal communities and tailoring policies to their specific needs and contexts is essential.
- **Strengthening accountability and enforcement:** Robust mechanisms to ensure transparent implementation and address grievances are necessary.

Conclusion

The recommendations of the BC Commission and Lokur Commission serve as important starting points for Manipur, but their true impact will depend on the state's commitment to participatory, inclusive, and accountable governance.

Examine the significance of the recent developments in India-U.K. defence ties in the context of global strategic shifts.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Significance of the bilateral ties between both nations

Conclusion: Way forward

India's defence minister recently visited London which marks the first visit by an Indian Defence Minister to the U.K. in over two decades.

Significance of relationship particularly in defence

- **Geopolitical Realignment:** New developments in the defence relationship between the United Kingdom and India can be understood in light of shifting geopolitical forces. Both nations may be looking to fortify their alliances to better manage the shifting global landscape, which presents difficulties like terrorism, threats to regional security, and the emergence of new power centres.
- **Maritime Security:** Given that both India and the UK have maritime interests, collaboration in naval capabilities, cooperative drills, and sea lanes protection may be important. Given the significance of the Indian Ocean and the shifting dynamics in the South China Sea, this becomes even more important. For eg, there are already preliminary engagements between the Indian and U.K. governments regarding the Indian Navy securing electric propulsion technology.
- **Research and Development:** Both nations have signed an MoU on an international cadet exchange program and defence collaboration in research and development. It will boost people-to-people exchanges, especially among the youth, and expand the scope of defence research collaboration between the two nations.
- **Joint Military Exercises:** The military forces of India and the United Kingdom benefit greatly from these cooperative drills since they promote military-to-military collaboration confidence and understanding. They address common security problems and advance regional and international stability, which further strengthens the strategic partnership as a whole. Eg, Exercise Ajeya Warrior.
- **Cooperation in Counterterrorism:** Global terrorism poses a threat to both countries. Counterterrorism operations are strengthened through technology collaboration, cooperative training exercises, and intelligence sharing. Defying extremist narratives, combating radicalization, and exchanging best practices in counterterrorism are examples of collaborative activities.
- **Multilateral Engagement:** India and the U.K. may be working together in various multilateral forums and organizations to address global challenges. A strong defence partnership can enhance their influence in international discussions and contribute to shaping global security architectures.

Conclusion

Legacy concerns, particularly in managing ties with Pakistan and India, pose obstacles to the UK-India defence partnership. However, with China emerging as a major naval power in the Indian Ocean, there's a compelling need for deeper defence collaboration between the UK and India.

Analyze the challenges faced by CCI in regulating the digital economy and ensuring fair competition.

Introduction: Give a brief description of CCI

Body: Highlight the challenges faced by CCI in regulating the digital economy.

Conclusion: Way forward

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) is a statutory body of the Government of India responsible for enforcing the Competition Act, of 2002, it was duly constituted in March 2009. CCI's main function is to eliminate practices having adverse effects on competition, protect the interests of consumers, and ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.

Challenges faced by CCI in regulating the digital economy

- **Safeguarding consumer interests:** As market dynamics evolve, especially with technological advancements and globalization, CCI's role becomes increasingly significant in steering the Indian market towards sustainable and inclusive growth. This involves ensuring that consumers benefit from fair prices, quality products, and a variety of choices in the market.
- **Streamlining the regulatory process:** CCI may face challenges due to the complexity of the investigation and decision-making process. Streamlining the process will not only enhance market efficiency but will also contribute to fostering an environment conducive to innovation and growth, benefiting the economy at large.
- **Dominance of a few tech giants:** Tech companies can hinder competition and innovation due to their massive resources and control over data. Making sure that this supremacy doesn't stifle innovation and hurt consumer interests should be CCI's main priority. To ensure fair competition, CCI is dedicated to closely examining practices such as exclusive agreements, exploitative pricing, and data monopolization.
- **Lack of Traditional Market Structures:** The digital economy often operates in non-traditional market structures, making it challenging for traditional competition regulations to adapt. Digital platforms may have network effects and economies of scale that are not easily addressed by existing frameworks.
- **Data Privacy and Antitrust Concerns:** Balancing the concerns of data privacy with antitrust considerations is a delicate task. CCI needs to address issues where practices that might harm competition also impact user privacy, striking a balance between the two.
- **New age practices:** Practices like predatory pricing, denial of market access, exclusive agreements, cartelization, price-fixing, bid-rigging, etc. harm the competitive landscape which requires transparent scrutiny from CCI to ensure that the conduct of dominant companies does not abuse their position.

Conclusion

The challenges of the digital economy require a concerted effort involving collaboration with other regulatory bodies, government agencies, and international organizations to create a holistic regulatory environment. This collaborative approach helps in sharing knowledge, harmonizing regulations, and ensuring effective enforcement. CCI should keep pace with the rapid changes in technology and market structures, & ensure that its regulatory framework remains robust and effective in promoting fair competition and protecting consumer interests in the digital age. CCI is committed to playing a pivotal role in shaping a market environment where competition thrives, innovation is encouraged, and consumer welfare is safeguarded.

Critically analyze the current state of science administration in India. What are the key challenges in optimizing the efficiency and resilience of Indian science, and how can they be addressed?

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight key challenges of science administration and measures to deal with them.

Conclusion: Way forward

India boasts a vibrant scientific landscape, with significant contributions in various fields. However, recent attempts by the Government which include setting up the new National Research Foundation (NRF) and restructuring the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) reflect the intention to overhaul the current state of science administration in India.

Key challenges in optimizing efficiency and resilience of science

- **Bureaucratic bottlenecks:** Hiring, project execution, and funding approvals are all delayed by intricate, multi-layered administrative structures with overlapping jurisdictions and onerous procedures. This hinders the advancement of research and stifles creativity.
- **Talent Management:** Inadequate training for current administrators in scientific topics combined with a lack of focused career paths for scientists in administrative positions results in less-than-ideal management of grants and research resources.
- **Finance Inefficiencies:** Inter-professional cooperation can be discouraged and research efforts can be fragmented by disparate funding mechanisms with different priorities and evaluation criteria. Furthermore, long-term research projects are hampered by the dependence on short-term funding cycles.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Outdated labs, restricted access to high-performance computing, and a lack of library resources are examples of inadequate research infrastructure that lowers research productivity and quality.

Measures to address the challenges

- **Rationalizing Funding Mechanisms:** To foster innovation and tackle difficult problems, agencies should coordinate their funding priorities, create long-term funding plans, and promote interdisciplinary cooperation.
- **Modernising Infrastructure:** To improve research quality and draw in talent, it is essential to make investments in state-of-the-art research facilities, modernize labs, and grant access to cutting-edge computing resources.
- **Increasing Oversight Mechanism:** To foster trust and protect the integrity of scientific endeavours, strong ethical standards should be put into place, independent oversight committees should be established, and research procedures should be made transparent.
- **Stopping Brain Drain:** Scientists can be encouraged to remain in India and advance the country's scientific endeavours by creating a more conducive research environment, providing competitive pay and benefits, and creating avenues for professional advancement.

Conclusion

India's low overall expenditure on research and development (around 0.7% of GDP, compared to 3.5% for the United States and 2.4% for China) is but one aspect constraining its scientific outcomes. Considering such low expenditure, it is pivotal to allocate money wisely and focus on high-impact projects. India could adopt best practices from other countries and frame a mechanism where scientists are selected and trained in an all-India pool of a science administration central service which will establish some form of separation between administrators and scientists.

Evaluate the need for region-specific plans to improve climate resilience in India. How can the government prioritize regional forecasts and resource allocation to address climate change effectively?

Introduction: Give a brief context of the question

Body: What is the importance of region-specific strategies in addressing climate change and measures to address this?

Conclusion: Way forward

India's vast and diverse landscape makes a one-size-fits-all approach to climate resilience ineffective. The varied geographies, ecosystems, and socio-economic realities across the country demand region-specific plans to effectively address the unique challenges and opportunities presented by climate change.

Importance of region-specific strategies in addressing climate change

- **Varied Climate Vulnerabilities:** Coastal regions face sea-level rise and cyclones, while mountainous areas struggle with glacial melt and landslides. Arid zones contend with droughts, while the central plains grapple with erratic rainfall patterns. Region-specific plans prioritize interventions based on specific vulnerabilities.
- **Livelihood and Resource Dependence:** Agricultural practices, water availability, and economic activities differ significantly across regions. Tailoring resilience strategies to local livelihoods and resource dependence ensures effectiveness and minimizes disruption.
- **Community Knowledge and Practices:** Indigenous communities often possess valuable knowledge about local ecosystems and traditional adaptation practices. Regional plans can incorporate this knowledge into resilience strategies, fostering ownership and sustainability.
- **Differing Infrastructure Needs:** Urban centres require flood-resistant infrastructure and early warning systems, while rural areas might prioritize drought-resistant crops and irrigation systems. Region-specific plans allocate resources efficiently to address the most pressing needs.

Prioritizing Regional Forecasts and Resource Allocation

- **Strengthen Regional Climate Observatories:** Invest in high-resolution, localized climate models and data collection networks to accurately predict climate impacts in specific regions.
- **Participatory Planning:** Involve local communities, NGOs, and scientists in developing and implementing regional resilience plans, ensuring that solutions are culturally relevant and address community needs.
- **Flexible Funding Mechanisms:** Implementing funding mechanisms that are flexible and adaptable to the unique requirements of each region ensures that resources are allocated where they are most needed. This includes prioritizing regions that are particularly vulnerable or facing immediate climate-related threats.
- **Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:** Facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing among different regions, communities, and stakeholders can promote the exchange of best practices and lessons learned. This can contribute to a more comprehensive and holistic approach to climate resilience.

Conclusion

The centralization of entire climate and weather data by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) was the need of the hour during British times guided by the sole purpose of revenue the present demands put forward by climate change and natural disasters necessitate the formation of region-specific plans to improve climate resilience and channel necessary funds and resource to address issues of global warming.

Analyze the recent initiative by the Uttar Pradesh and Haryana governments to recruit workers for Israel. Discuss the implications of such moves on labour migration policies and the protection of workers in conflict zones.

Introduction: Give a brief context of the question

Body: Highlight the implications of the policy

Conclusion: Way forward

The Uttar Pradesh and Haryana governments, with the help of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), have started the process of recruiting about 10,000 workers to go to Israel, primarily for construction activities.

Positive implications of such a decision

- **Economic benefits:** With claimed earnings considerably higher than domestic rates, this endeavour may present skilled and semi-skilled people from UP and Haryana with appealing employment prospects. This may result in more remittances, a decline in poverty, and better living conditions for families back home.
- **Talent development:** The hiring procedure may call for skill evaluations and instruction, which could upskill applicants and improve their employability in India and Israel.
- **Building bilateral relations:** This agreement may facilitate future opportunities for diplomatic and commercial cooperation between Israel and India.

Negative implications of such a decision

- **Employee susceptibility:** There are worries over the safety and security of Indian labourers when a sizable labour force is dispatched to an area where violence is still raging. Israel and Palestine are vulnerable to possible violence and unrest due to their unstable political situations.
- **Exploitation and unfair labour practices:** Vulnerable workers, particularly those with inadequate language skills and awareness of Israeli labour rules, may be taken advantage of by dishonest middlemen or employers. It is necessary to handle the possibility of low living conditions, salary disputes, and discrimination.
- **Ethical issues:** Some contend that there are ethical issues when aiding migration to a nation that is embroiled in a conflict. There is controversy around the morality of hiring people to perform work that might obliquely fund operations in areas of conflict.

Implications for labour migration policies and worker protection

- **Transparency and communication:** Both governments must provide open and honest communication with prospective migrants, elucidating the advantages and disadvantages of working in Israel and offering sufficient pre-departure training and assistance.
- **Metrics for oversight and implementation:** To safeguard migrant workers from exploitation and abuse, it is essential to have efficient systems in place to monitor working conditions, enforce labour laws, and immediately handle grievances.
- **Need for comprehensive safeguards:** This initiative underscores the need for robust government and international cooperation to establish a framework for safe and ethical labour migration. This would involve clear agreements on working conditions, wages, dispute resolution mechanisms, and social security provisions for migrant workers.

Conclusion

Careful planning, robust safeguards, and international cooperation are necessary to ensure safe and ethical labour migration and maximize the positive outcomes for both migrant workers and their home countries.

Discuss the need for procedural safeguards in legislation granting interception powers to government authorities. How can such safeguards prevent the misuse of power and protect citizens' rights, particularly in the context of the new Post Office Act?

Introduction: Briefly describe the new Post Office Act.

Body: Highlight the need for safeguards to prevent misuse of power and protect citizens' rights.

Conclusion: Way forward

The Parliament has recently approved the Post Office Bill of 2023, aiming to replace the outdated Indian Post Office Act of 1898. This legislative initiative is geared towards enhancing the operational efficiency of the Postal Department, both as a messenger service and as a provider of banking services. However, the Opposition expressed fears about the provision of unchecked powers of interception of any item by the post office authorities, including the conditions of such interception, i.e., (occurrence of any) 'emergency' which is not defined under the Act.

Need for procedural safeguards in legislation

- **Privacy Infringement:** When personal communication is intercepted, it may reveal confidential information, stifle free expression, and encourage self-censorship. Without protections, people would feel like they are always being watched, which would impede free speech and open communication.
- **Power Abuse:** Unrestricted interception powers encourage discriminatory and arbitrary targeting, which goes against due process and equality norms. By fostering responsibility and restricting discretion, safeguards reduce these dangers.
- **Chilling Effect on Dissent:** People's fear of being watched can prevent them from speaking out against injustice or expressing dissent, which could undermine democratic principles and accountability. Citizens can feel secure knowing that their lawful actions won't be the target of arbitrary surveillance thanks to safeguards.

Safeguards in the Post Office Act

- **Judicial Authorization:** Prior authorization from a designated independent judicial authority should be required before intercepting communications, preventing unilateral executive action. The new legislation should incorporate directives as put up by SC in People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) vs Union of India (1996) to prevent misuse of interception powers.
- **Grounds for Interception:** Specific and serious offenses like terrorism or threats to national security should justify interception, not minor or vague suspicions. The new Bill must draw inference from rule 419A of the Telegraph Rules or the IT Rules which clarify what constitutes the 'emergent' cases.
- **Penal provisions for unauthorized interception:** There should be separate penal provisions like section 26 of the Telegraph Act, to punish unauthorized interception. Independent review committees should recommend disciplinary action for misuse of powers by the competent authority.

Conclusion

Strong procedural safeguards in the Post Office Act are not just formalities; they prevent misuse of powers, protecting citizens' privacy and free communication rights. Prioritizing these safeguards maintains a crucial balance between national security and democratic values.

Analyze the significance of including tax contribution by states as a measure of efficiency in the distribution formula recommended by the Finance Commission. How does this relate to the principles of equity and efficiency in tax revenue transfers?

Introduction: Give a brief description of the Finance Commission

Body: What is the significance of including tax contribution as an efficiency measure in the distribution formula?

Conclusion: Way forward

The Finance Commission is constituted by the President under Article 280 of the Constitution, mainly to give its recommendations on the distribution of tax revenues between the Union and the States and amongst the States themselves. The Finance Commission's important job is to recommend a distribution formula specifying each State's share in the part of the Union tax revenue assigned to States.

Significance of Including Tax Contribution as an Efficiency Measure:

- **Rewards fiscally responsible states:** It incentivizes states to improve their tax administration, broaden their tax base, and minimize leakages. This promotes efficient resource allocation and fiscal management within states.
- **Promotes economic dynamism:** Higher tax contribution could indicate a state's economic potential and dynamism, suggesting its ability to generate resources and contribute to the national pool.
- **Reduces dependence on central transfers:** Increased state tax contribution can potentially decrease their reliance on central grants, leading to a more fiscally balanced federal system.

How does tax contribution relate to principles of equity and efficiency in revenue transfer?

- **Encouraging Cooperative Federalism:** By encouraging shared responsibility, cooperative federalism is consistent with the ideals of efficiency and equity. A more cooperative and equitable fiscal environment is created when states that actively contribute to tax revenue are recognized for their role in national growth.
- **Resolving Regional Disparities:** The distribution formula promotes efficiency and equity by taking into account regional differences. To promote a fair and balanced distribution, it guarantees that states who are experiencing financial difficulties receive assistance while also honouring and rewarding those that make substantial contributions to the federal budget.
- **Encouraging Revenue Mobilization:** This promotes states' increased revenue self-sufficiency, which is consistent with the efficiency principle. Incentives for states that actively contribute to overall tax income are provided, which encourages accountability and responsibility and advances equity.

Conclusion

Including tax contribution as a measure of efficiency in the Finance Commission's formula can incentivize fiscal responsibility and promote economic dynamism. However, it is crucial to implement it cautiously, ensuring it doesn't exacerbate existing inequalities and undermine the principle of equity. Careful consideration of weightage, special category status, and capacity building can help achieve a balanced and just distribution formula that fosters both efficiency and equity in tax revenue transfers.

Discuss the role of energy storage capabilities and the flexibility of the existing coal fleet in India's energy transition. How do these factors contribute to maintaining energy security while pursuing decarbonization?

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: What is the role of energy storage capabilities in India's energy transition?

Conclusion: Way forward

The role of energy storage capabilities and the flexibility of the existing coal fleet in India's energy transition is crucial for achieving a balance between energy security and decarbonization.

Role of energy storage capabilities in India's energy transition

- **Bridging the gap between variable renewables and demand:** Solar and wind power are intermittent, creating imbalances between generation and demand. Energy storage, through technologies like batteries and pumped hydro, can capture excess renewable energy during peak generation and release it during peak demand, ensuring grid stability and reliable power supply.
- **Smoothing out fluctuations and ramping up/down renewables:** Storage can quickly respond to sudden changes in demand or generation, mitigating fluctuations and reducing reliance on polluting peak power plants. This allows for higher penetration of renewables without compromising grid stability.
- **Facilitating grid modernization and integration:** Storage can act as a buffer, enabling efficient transmission and distribution of renewable energy across vast distances, supporting grid expansion and integration of geographically dispersed renewable resources.

Contributions to Energy Security and Decarbonization:

- **Enhanced grid resilience:** Both energy storage and coal fleet flexibility contribute to a more resilient grid, able to withstand fluctuations and shocks, ensuring a reliable power supply for homes and businesses. This is vital for maintaining energy security while integrating larger shares of renewables.
- **Accelerated decarbonization:** By facilitating higher penetration of renewables and reducing reliance on fossil fuels, both factors contribute to reducing carbon emissions and advancing India's decarbonization goals.
- **Balanced energy mix:** A balanced mix of renewables, energy storage, and flexible coal generation can provide a safe and secure path toward transitioning to a low-carbon energy future

Energy storage capabilities and the flexibility of the existing coal fleet play crucial roles in balancing India's energy security and decarbonization goals. Investing in storage, modernizing coal plants, and implementing a well-planned phase-out strategy is key to navigating this transition successfully. By finding the right mix of these elements, India can create a sustainable and resilient energy future while ensuring reliable power for its growing population. Continuous monitoring, policy adjustments, and collaboration between all stakeholders are crucial for India to harness the full potential of these tools and achieve its ambitious energy transition goals.

Analyze the strategic significance of the India-France partnership in the current global geopolitical context. Also, discuss the challenges and opportunities in this bilateral relationship.

Introduction: Give a brief context of the question

Body: Highlight the strategic significance of the relationship and the challenges, and opportunities associated with the relationship.

Conclusion: Way forward

French President Emmanuel Macron will be the Chief Guest for the Republic Day this year and the visit will strengthen the relationship between the two nations. The visit is likely to give a fillip to the ongoing talks for a comprehensive trade agreement between India and the EU.

Strategic significance of the relationship

- **Indo-Pacific:** France has military outposts and a significant presence as a resident power in the Indo-Pacific region. The utilization of French military bases by Indian forces, cooperative exercises between the two nations, and attaining real-time marine domain awareness in the Indian Ocean are all crucial to India.
- **Defence Cooperation:** France is one of India's key defence partners, supplying Rafale fighter jets, Scorpene submarines, and other advanced weaponry. This military cooperation bolsters India's regional security capabilities and strengthens its defence partnership with Europe.
- **Space and Nuclear Collaboration:** Both nations collaborate on space exploration and civil nuclear development, showcasing their shared commitment to cutting-edge technology and peaceful applications of nuclear energy.

Challenges

- **Differing strategic priorities:** While converging on key issues, India and France may have different approaches to specific concerns, like engagement with Iran or Pakistan and the Ukraine-Russia war.
- **Trade imbalances:** France's GDP is almost equal to that of India's, but bilateral trade remains far below potential. Trade with France constitutes only 1.41% of India's total international trade.
- **France as a strategic partner:** France possesses considerable capabilities in the diplomatic, military, space, and nuclear sectors, allowing it to provide substantial contributions to India. However, its strength is not sufficient to independently influence global order, norms, or rules, nor is it capable of effectively countering China in the event of escalating tensions.

Opportunities

- **Cultural and Educational Ties:** Strengthening cultural and educational ties can enhance people-to-people connections. Increased student exchanges, cultural events, and academic collaborations can deepen the understanding and appreciation of each other's societies.
- **Infrastructure and connectivity:** Working together to improve connections and undertake infrastructure projects can support regional growth. Collaborative investments in energy, telecommunications, and transportation infrastructure can improve economic relations.
- **Innovation and Technology Exchange:** Both countries have strengths in innovation and technology. Opportunities for joint research, development, and technology exchange can foster mutual benefits, particularly in sectors like space exploration, artificial intelligence, and advanced manufacturing.

Conclusion

The India-France strategic partnership offers both nations a multitude of strategic benefits in the current global context. Overcoming challenges and capitalizing on opportunities will be crucial to ensuring the continued growth and relevance of this crucial bilateral relationship in the years to come.

Critically examine the role of the Basic Structure Doctrine in safeguarding Indian democracy. Discuss its implications on the balance of power between the Judiciary and the Legislature.

Introduction: Give a brief description of the doctrine.

Body: Highlight the role of the Basic Structure Doctrine in safeguarding Indian democracy and its implications on the balance of power between the Judiciary and Legislature.

Conclusion: Way forward

The "Basic Structure" concept is a product of Indian-specific judicial innovation. According to the idea, the Parliament's ability to modify the constitution cannot change certain aspects of it. The Indian Constitution does not refer to "Basic Structure."

Role of "Basic Structure Doctrine" in safeguarding Indian democracy

- **Preservation of Fundamental Rights:** The protection of the fundamental rights entrenched in the Constitution is guaranteed by the Basic Structure Doctrine. It thwarts any effort to weaken or jeopardize citizens' fundamental rights by designating some fundamental concepts as immutable.
- **Constitutional Supremacy:** This theory maintains that the Constitution is supreme. It states that the Constitution is the ultimate rule of the land and that any legislation that deviates from its fundamental framework may be overturned. This upholds the fundamentals of the rule of law and constitutionalism.
- **Protection of Federal Structure:** The theory maintains the balance of power between the federal and state levels, hence protecting the federal structure of the Indian Constitution. Any attempt to change this federal balance in a way that isn't compliant with the fundamental framework is subject to judicial review.

Implications on the Balance of Power

- **Possibility of Judicial Activism:** Detractors argue that the Basic Structure Doctrine could lead to judicial activism, in which judges freely interpret the Constitution and heavily meddle in public policy decisions. This may give rise to worries over the division of powers.
- **Judicial Supremacy vs. Parliamentary Sovereignty:** The Basic Structure Doctrine has led to debates regarding the appropriate balance between judicial supremacy and parliamentary sovereignty. Critics argue that it may unduly empower the judiciary at the expense of elected representatives.
- **Limitation on Democratic Decision-Making:** The doctrine limits the power of elected representatives to amend the Constitution freely. While it safeguards fundamental rights, it also raises questions about whether unelected judges should have the authority to curtail the decisions of elected representatives.

Conclusion

The Basic Structure Doctrine remains a debated concept in Indian democracy. While it arguably safeguards core democratic principles, its implications for the balance of power and its potential to hinder progress cannot be ignored. Finding a workable compromise that respects both democratic legitimacy and constitutional integrity is crucial for India's future.

Analyze the case of South Africa vs. Israel at the International Court of Justice in the context of the International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Discuss the challenges in proving genocide in international law.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question
Body: Highlight challenges in proving genocide in International Law.
Conclusion: Way forward

Recently, South Africa approached the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to seek an immediate order affirming that Israel had violated its commitments under the 1948 Genocide Convention. South Africa accuses Israel of committing genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip through military operations. They argue that Israel's actions meet the specific criteria outlined in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This treaty defines genocide as acts committed "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such."

Challenges in Proving Genocide

- **High Threshold:** The legal bar for demonstrating genocidal intent is extremely high, requiring concrete evidence of a specific plan or policy aimed at destroying a group.
- **Contextual Complexity:** Understanding the political and historical context is crucial, as situations often involve complex conflicts with intricate dynamics beyond simplistic "victim-perpetrator" narratives.
- **Evidence Gathering:** Obtaining reliable and admissible evidence in situations of ongoing conflict is challenging, particularly regarding intent and motivation.
- **Political Considerations:** Geopolitical realities and alliances can influence judicial proceedings and decision-making. Political interests may influence the willingness of states to support investigations or bring a case to an international court, impacting the legal process.
- **State Responsibility:** Genocide can be committed by state actors, non-state actors, or a combination of both. Proving the involvement and responsibility of a state in committing or allowing genocide poses legal challenges, especially when addressing non-state actors.
- **Legal Definitions and Interpretations:** Different legal systems and jurisdictions may interpret and define genocide differently. Harmonizing these interpretations and ensuring consistency in applying legal definitions can be challenging.

Conclusion

This case underscores the crucial role of the ICJ in upholding international law and addressing human rights violations. Closely observing the legal arguments, appreciating the evidentiary challenges, and understanding the wider political context will be crucial as this intricate and sensitive case unfolds. Cases brought to the International Court of Justice demand a rigorous examination of evidence, legal arguments, and adherence to the definitions outlined in the Genocide Convention.

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

Mains Marathon Compilation for the Month of January, 2024

- **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.

Analyze the implications of affirmative action policies in academic institutions, citing the case of Claudine Gay's appointment and resignation as Harvard University's President. Discuss how such policies impact the dynamics of leadership in higher education.

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight arguments for and against affirmative action in leadership.

Conclusion: Way forward

The appointment and subsequent resignation of Claudine Gay as the first Black woman president of Harvard University ignited a complex debate about the role of affirmative action in leadership positions within higher education. While some saw it as a landmark victory for diversity and inclusion, others questioned whether it undermined meritocratic principles and perpetuated racialized power structures.

Arguments for Affirmative Action in Leadership

- **Encourages diversity and inclusion:** By bringing fresh viewpoints and experiences to the table, affirmative action can contribute to the development of a more varied and inclusive leadership scene. Better decision-making and a more equal learning environment for all students may result from this.
- **Addresses historical underrepresentation:** In academia, leadership roles have been routinely denied to historically marginalized groups. Leveling the playing field and guaranteeing that eligible members of these groups have an equal opportunity to vie for leadership positions are two benefits of affirmative action.
- **Challenges of unconscious bias:** The underrepresentation of some groups in leadership positions can be significantly exacerbated by unconscious bias. Affirmative action can assist in bringing these prejudices to light and motivate organizations to make more impartial decisions.

Arguments against Affirmative Action in Leadership

- **Reverse discrimination:** According to critics, affirmative action policies may result in the selection of less competent applicants from non-minority groups over more qualified individuals. This might be interpreted as a sort of discrimination in reverse and erode public confidence in organizations.
- **Prioritises identity above merit:** According to some, affirmative action gives preference to a person's race or gender over their education and work history. This may cause animosity and damage the credibility of leaders selected by such initiatives.
- **Maintains a "quota system" mentality:** Some worry that affirmative action can be seen as a quota system in which organizations hire members of particular groups to occupy leadership roles at a set rate, regardless of the individual's qualifications. Both the reputation of the institution and the people chosen may suffer as a result of this.

Conclusion

The recent case highlights that it is important to have a nuanced conversation about affirmative action in leadership positions. We need to acknowledge both the potential benefits and drawbacks of such policies and work to develop solutions that are fair, effective, and sustainable.

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

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.

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Challenges in implementing the mission

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Conclusion

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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 Mukht 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 Mukht 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

- **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.