



Mains Marathon
Compilation

October, 2023

Mains Marathon Compilation for the Month of October, 2023

1. What are the potential consequences of focusing solely on visible mega-infrastructure as symbols of development? How can the environmental and fiscal implications of such projects be addressed effectively?
2. How has the economic compulsion behind the formation of BRICS influenced its trajectory and objectives? How does BRICS differentiate itself from other global alliances like NATO in terms of its goals and functions?
3. Elaborate on the significance of mRNA research conducted by Katalin Kariko and Drew Weissman. How does their work challenge the conventional understanding of mRNA's role in medicine?
4. Define circular migration and differentiate it from other forms of migration. Discuss its historical evolution and the factors that have contributed to its rise in India.
5. Analyze the significance of academic freedom in the context of India's higher education system. How does it impact the quality of education and research?
6. Analyze the challenges faced by states that have effectively controlled their population in terms of political representation and fiscal transfers. How can the federal system ensure equitable representation and financial allocation for such states?
7. Evaluate the challenges and opportunities for India in maintaining its strategic ties with the Maldives, especially in light of the "India Out" campaign.
8. Compare the measures taken by countries like South Africa, Norway, and Mexico in regulating the food industry with the steps taken by India. Suggest measures that the Indian government can adopt to ensure the health and well-being of its citizens.
9. Critically analyze the feasibility and environmental implications of hydropower projects in the seismologically vulnerable Himalayan region.
10. Analyze the implications of Russia's potential decision to revoke the ratification of the global nuclear test ban. How might this impact global nuclear disarmament efforts?
11. Analyze the factors contributing to the recent surge in food inflation in India, especially in the context of cereals and pulses. Discuss the implications of such inflationary trends on the economy and the common man.
12. Critically analyze the objectives and key provisions of the proposed Digital India Act 2023 (DIA). How does it aim to address the challenges posed by the evolving digital landscape in India?
13. Discuss the implications of the increase in the age of consent from 16 to 18 years with the enactment of the POCSO Act, 2012. How has it affected marginalized populations in India?
14. Critically evaluate the challenges and prospects for achieving a two-state solution in the context of the recent terror attacks by Hamas. What measures can be taken to build trust and pave the way for a peaceful coexistence between Israel and Palestine?
15. How has Professor Goldin's research shed light on the historical trends and patterns of women's participation in the labour market?
16. How can India strengthen its diplomatic and developmental ties with the Maldives in the coming years?

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17. Examine the implications of the continuing gridlock in the Security Council, especially in light of recent conflicts like the Ukraine crisis.
18. Considering the Bombay High Court's observations, discuss the potential challenges and implications of the IT Rules amendment for editorial content online.
19. Evaluate the role of strategic minerals in the development and proliferation of electric vehicles (EVs) in India. How can the recent policy changes influence the EV ecosystem in the country?
20. Discuss the implications of the increasing participation of women in the rural workforce. To what extent can this trend be attributed to economic distress in rural areas?
21. Analyze the challenges faced by India in achieving a doctor-patient ratio as recommended by WHO. Suggest measures to overcome these challenges.
22. Elucidate on the abiding principles that have shaped India's foreign policy towards the Middle East. Analyze the relevance of these principles in the contemporary geopolitical scenario.
23. Discuss the significance of Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) in sustainable development. Illustrate with examples the need for a distinct EIA for the Indian Himalayan Region.
24. Discuss the significance of enhancing maritime connectivity between India and Sri Lanka. Analyze the potential impact on trade, cultural exchange, and geopolitical relations.
25. Elucidate the importance of the directives given by the Supreme Court to the Centre for sensitizing people regarding the rights of queer individuals and establishing a hotline for the queer community. How can these directives contribute to fostering a more inclusive society?
26. The Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Act, 2022, has significantly expanded the list of species under its protection, often without clear criteria for inclusion. Critically analyze the potential ecological, administrative, and socio-economic implications of this expanded protection.
27. Discuss the impact of unpaid work on the Indian economy. How does the undervaluation of such work affect the economic participation and empowerment of women? Suggest measures to ensure that women's contributions are recognized and supported to boost overall economic growth.
28. Discuss the immediate and long-term socio-economic impacts of environmental catastrophes like the Amazon drought on indigenous communities. How do these events highlight the need for sustainable living and resource management?
29. Critically examine the role and impact of Special and Local Laws (SLLs) within the Indian criminal justice system. How do they complement or conflict with the broader framework established by the IPC and CrPC?
30. Critically analyze India's current challenges in achieving food security. How do these challenges extend beyond mere food production to encompass broader socio-economic and environmental concerns?

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31. Discuss the recommendations of the Justice Malimath Committee and the Law Commission of India concerning the reforms needed in the criminal justice system. Evaluate the extent to which these recommendations have been implemented by various states and the challenges encountered in this process.
32. Examine the significance of private sector funding in achieving climate finance goals. Discuss the potential strategies to mobilize private investments for climate action and sustainable development, highlighting any existing global initiatives or pacts.
33. Critically analyze the concept of 'carrying capacity' in the context of sustainable development. How does it apply to the environmental challenges faced by the Indian Himalayan Region, and what measures should be taken to ensure that development activities do not exceed this capacity?
34. Discuss the implications of the Supreme Court's assertion that there is no fundamental right to marriage under the Indian Constitution. How does this position impact the interpretation of personal liberty and individual rights?
35. Critically assess India's preparedness in terms of infrastructure and logistics to host large-scale international sporting events like the Olympics.
36. Assess the challenges that eSIM technology might pose for individuals with low digital literacy. Suggest ways to overcome these challenges.
37. Critically analyze the state of health infrastructure in India's urban areas. What are the multi-scalar health risks that urban inhabitants face, and what policy measures can be taken to mitigate them?
38. Discuss the role of ESG frameworks in shaping geopolitical alliances. How do national interests influence the adoption of ESG principles?
39. Discuss the 3-Step Roadmap initiated by China and Bhutan for border resolution. What are its implications for Bhutan's sovereignty and India's strategic interests?
40. Critically evaluate the current governance mechanisms for the Arctic. How can India contribute to reforming Arctic governance for better climate protection?

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1. What are the potential consequences of focusing solely on visible mega-infrastructure as symbols of development? How can the environmental and fiscal implications of such projects be addressed effectively?

Introduction: Give brief context to the question.

Body: Consequences of such big projects & fiscal, and environmental implications.

Conclusion: Way forward

Political parties usually focus on visible mega-infrastructure as symbols of development as it offers long-term benefits in comparison to populist schemes which have short-term benefits and pose financial stress on the economy.

Potential consequences of such mega infrastructure projects:

- **Environmental Impact:** Mega-infrastructure projects often lead to significant environmental damage, including deforestation, habitat destruction, and pollution. Addressing these impacts requires careful planning, mitigation measures, and adherence to environmental regulations. E.g., the Char Dham Yatra project in Uttarakhand.
- **Fiscal Burden:** Large infrastructure projects can be financially burdensome, potentially leading to budget overruns and debt accumulation.
- **Economic Growth:** High-profile infrastructure projects can stimulate economic growth by creating jobs and increasing investment in the region.
- **Improved Connectivity:** Mega infrastructure can enhance transportation networks, reduce congestion, and improve access to markets, benefiting businesses and individuals.
- **Prestige and Image:** These projects can enhance a nation's prestige and image on the global stage, attracting foreign investment and tourists. Iconic projects like the Delhi Metro or the Mumbai-Pune Expressway have already garnered international attention.

How to address the environmental & fiscal implications of such projects?

- **Comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA):** Before project commencement, the need is to conduct a thorough EIA to assess potential environmental impacts. The focus should be on implementing measures to mitigate these impacts and ensure adherence to environmental regulations.
- **Green Infrastructure:** Invest in sustainable and green infrastructure designs that minimize environmental harm, such as using renewable energy sources, eco-friendly construction materials, and preserving natural ecosystems.
- **Financial Planning:** Implement robust financial planning and risk management practices to prevent budget overruns and unsustainable debt.
- **Inclusive Development:** Design policies that prioritize inclusive development, targeting marginalized communities to ensure they benefit from infrastructure investments.
- **Public Consultation and Participation:** Involve local communities and stakeholders in the decision-making process to ensure that infrastructure projects address their needs and concerns.
- **Inclusive Development:** Design policies that prioritize inclusive development, targeting marginalized communities to ensure they benefit from infrastructure investments.
- **Multi-Modal Approach:** Consider a multi-modal transportation approach that includes public transportation, cycling, and pedestrian infrastructure alongside large-scale projects to reduce congestion and pollution.

Conclusion:

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India's pursuit of mega-infrastructure projects as symbols of development should be accompanied by a comprehensive and balanced approach. This approach should prioritize environmental sustainability, fiscal responsibility, inclusive development, and social services to ensure that the benefits of infrastructure development are widespread and long-lasting.

2. How has the economic compulsion behind the formation of BRICS influenced its trajectory and objectives? How does BRICS differentiate itself from other global alliances like NATO in terms of its goals and functions?

Introduction: Give a brief idea of BRICS.

Body: How economics affects BRICS formation & its comparison with NATO.

Conclusion: Way forward

Recently, six new members Argentina, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, and Egypt were inducted into BRICS in August in South Africa. The recent expansion of BRICS's membership collectively wields significant economic influence within the enlarged organization. With the proposed expansion, BRICS will represent 46% of the world's population. Its share of global GDP will rise from 31.5% in PPP terms to 37%.

How has economic compulsion affected the formation of BRICS?

- **Counterbalance Western dominance:** The goal to balance out the economic hegemony of Western nations, especially the United States and the European Union, is one of the primary economic drivers behind BRICS. With combined GDP projected to be 36% of the global GDP and the population of its members projected to be 47% of the world population by 2050, BRICS could pose a serious challenge to the dominance of the G7 comprising Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the U.K., and the U.S.
- **Reduce dependency on the dollar:** India and China both are trying to reduce their dependency on the dollar & are pushing for more trade, investment, and business in their currencies and together, through BRICS, so they can push their currencies as alternative currencies to the dollar.
- **New Cold War:** Many nations have been concerned about ongoing issues between the US & China that obstruct their economic development & so are eyeing India, Brazil & South Africa to provide a counterweight to China's dominance.
- **Reform of Global Financial Institutions:** BRICS has called for reforms in international financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank to give emerging economies greater representation and decision-making power.

How is BRICS different from NATO?

- **Focus on economic development:** BRICS primarily focuses on economic cooperation and development rather than military or security concerns which is the core mandate of NATO highlighted in its principle of collective defense.
- **Diverse Membership:** BRICS includes countries from different continents and regions with diverse political systems, making it distinct from alliances like NATO, which are often region-specific and focused on security.
- **Soft Power and Economic Leverage:** BRICS countries often use their economic clout and soft power to influence global affairs, while NATO relies on military strength and security deterrence.
- **Multilateral Approach:** BRICS generally takes a more multilateral approach to global issues, advocating for a multipolar world order and greater inclusivity in international

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decision-making. NATO, on the other hand, is a Western-led alliance with a specific focus on transatlantic security.

Conclusion:

BRICS-Plus should be based on rule-based order and the forum should not leave any room for 'economic hegemony' and 'anti-West agenda'. India must find creative ways of blunting Chinese strategy in BRICS-Plus to ensure equitable distribution of power in the group.

3. Elaborate on the significance of mRNA research conducted by Katalin Kariko and Drew Weissman. How does their work challenge the conventional understanding of mRNA's role in medicine?

Introduction: Give brief context to the question.

Body: Significance of their research and how is it different from conventional research.

Conclusion: Way forward

Katalin Karikó and Drew Weissman have been honoured with the 2023 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their pioneering work in the development of mRNA vaccine technology, which served as the cornerstone for the rapid creation of vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic, marking one of the swiftest vaccine development efforts in history.

What is the significance of their research on mRNA?

- **Vaccine development:** The groundbreaking work of both scientists centred on the modification of mRNA paved the way for a novel approach to vaccine development during Covid 19. This approach dramatically sped up vaccine development, as seen with the COVID-19 vaccines.
- **Future research:** Their work will further inspire scientists to research & innovate in the field of mRNA therapeutics and vaccines. This opens up immense possibilities for personalized medicine and targeted therapies for pharmaceutical companies.
- **Reduce logistics challenge:** The stability of mRNA vaccines eliminates the need for ultra-cold storage conditions, a logistical hurdle commonly faced by traditional vaccines. This feature enhances accessibility in the distribution and administration of mRNA vaccines, particularly in resource-limited environments.

How is their work different from the conventional understanding of mRNA?

- **Boost immunogenicity:** The adjustments pioneered by Karikó and Weissman not only boost mRNA stability but also amplify its immunogenicity, thereby rendering it more efficient in triggering the immune system. This breakthrough holds particular significance in situations where conventional vaccines may struggle to elicit a robust immune response.
- **Medical Applications:** Although their research garnered global recognition during the pandemic, the scope of mRNA technology extends far beyond this health crisis. It holds the potential for developing vaccines against various infectious diseases, such as influenza, HIV, and malaria. Furthermore, beyond the realm of vaccines, mRNA technology is under exploration for treatments targeting cancer, genetic disorders, and autoimmune ailments. This adaptability challenges the conventional perception of mRNA as solely a courier for protein synthesis.
- **Fast & flexible process:** The conventional process of developing vaccines is known for its sluggish pace, often spanning several years for research and testing. Karikó and Weissman's work, in contrast, greatly accelerated this timeline. When the COVID-

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19 pandemic emerged, scientists were able to promptly conceptualize and produce mRNA vaccines targeting the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The flexibility of mRNA technology allows for swift adaptations in the event of new virus variants, a critical capability, especially during rapidly evolving pandemics.

Conclusion

Katalin Karikó and Drew Weissman's research on mRNA has transformed the landscape of medicine and vaccine development. It has not only played a pivotal role in the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic but also holds promise for addressing a wide range of health challenges in the future.

4. Define circular migration and differentiate it from other forms of migration. Discuss its historical evolution and the factors that have contributed to its rise in India.

Introduction: Describe circular migration.

Body: How does it differ from other forms of migration. What factors contributed to its rise?

Conclusion: Way forward

Circular migration is temporary & usually repetitive movement of migrant workers between home & host areas, mainly for employment. Unlike permanent migration, where individuals or families move to a new location to settle there permanently, circular migration involves returning to the place of origin after a period of work or other activities at the destination. It is a phenomenon mostly among low-income groups who migrate to avail of seasonally available jobs in another country, city, place, etc.

How does it differ from other forms of migration?

- **Permanent migration:** In the case of permanent migration, individuals or families relocate to a new destination with the firm intention of making it their permanent place of residence. Their reasons for this move could include pursuing employment opportunities, educational pursuits, or seeking an improved quality of life.
- **Seasonal migration:** It exhibits resemblances to circular migration, yet it is typically constrained to particular seasons or time frames. Seasonal migrants temporarily relocate to a destination for work that corresponds with specific seasons, such as engaging in agricultural labour during planting or harvest periods, and subsequently return to their original place of residence upon completion of the work.
- **Rural-Urban Migration:** Rural-urban migration entails a unidirectional shift from rural regions to urban centres, where individuals or families make a permanent move in pursuit of improved economic prospects and enhanced living standards. This type of migration does not typically include a cyclical return to the original place of origin.

Evolution & Factors contributing to the rise of circular migration in India

- **Historical reasons:** Circular migration in India has a deep-rooted historical background that stretches back to ancient times when it was common practice for laborers and skilled artisans to traverse various regions in pursuit of diverse work prospects, including seasonal agricultural labour, trade activities, or craftsmanship. Under the dominion of British colonial rule, circular migration patterns assumed a more organized and institutionalized character. Laborers were frequently enlisted to work in mines, plantations, and various industries located in far-flung regions within the Indian subcontinent.

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- **Economic disparity:** In India, the uneven development post-liberalization, has led to a lot of circular migration, with States like West Bengal, Odisha, and Bihar having some of the highest rates of out-migration to Delhi, Mumbai & southern States.
- **Seasonal nature of jobs:** India's labour-intensive industries, including agriculture, construction, and brick-making, often exhibit seasonality in their operations. This phenomenon acts as a catalyst for both seasonal and circular migration, as workers migrate to locations where job opportunities are present during particular seasons.
- **Lack of permanent housing:** Certain circular migrants may find themselves lacking the necessary resources or legal status needed for permanent settlement in urban areas. Consequently, they return to their place of origin, primarily due to their restricted access to housing, social services, or formal employment opportunities.

Conclusion

There is an urgent need to formulate policy to ensure migrant rights are protected & their issues are addressed to integrate them physically, socially, culturally, and politically in destination states.

5. Analyze the significance of academic freedom in the context of India's higher education system. How does it impact the quality of education and research?

Introduction: Define academic freedom.

Body: What is the significance of academic freedom & its impact on quality and research?

Conclusion: Way forward

Academic freedom encompasses the liberty to explore, teach, and investigate a wide range of perspectives. It safeguards the rights of both students and educators to delve into, impart, and pursue knowledge and research without undue interference, legal limitations, institutional constraints, or peer influence. India's poor score on the Academic Freedom Index reflects the issues troubling the country's education system with a score of 0.352, which is closely followed by Saudi Arabia (0.278) and Libya (0.238).

Significance of Academic Freedom in higher education system

- **Promotes critical thinking:** Academic freedom empowers students and scholars to delve into a broad array of ideas and perspectives, fostering critical thinking and intellectual growth by inspiring individuals to question, scrutinize, and potentially contest established knowledge.
- **Scientific temper:** The advancement of scientific research hinges on the principles of academic freedom. Researchers must possess the liberty to interrogate existing theories, venture into unexplored domains, and introduce innovations without facing limitations. This unrestricted environment is vital for fostering scientific progress and promoting innovation.
- **Cultural and Academic Diversity:** India is a diverse nation with a rich cultural heritage. Academic freedom ensures that the country's educational institutions can explore and celebrate this diversity, providing a platform for the study of different languages, cultures, and traditions.

How does it impact the quality of education & research?

- **Global competitiveness:** In an era of growing globalization, academic freedom stands as a pivotal factor in India's ability to compete on the international platform. It serves

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as a magnet for highly skilled faculty and students from across the globe, fostering collaborations and forging partnerships with prestigious institutions worldwide.

- **Quality Research:** Academic freedom ensures that researchers can pursue rigorous and unbiased investigations. When researchers are free from external pressures or constraints, they can produce high-quality research that is not influenced by political, ideological, or commercial interests.
- **Attracting Talent:** Institutions that uphold academic freedom tend to attract talented educators and researchers. Scholars are more likely to work in environments where they can freely explore their areas of interest. This talent pool contributes to the overall quality of education and research.

Conclusion:

Academic freedom plays a vital role in enhancing the quality of education and research in India by promoting critical thinking, innovation, diversity, and ethical conduct. It is a cornerstone of a vibrant and dynamic educational ecosystem.

6. Analyze the challenges faced by states that have effectively controlled their population in terms of political representation and fiscal transfers. How can the federal system ensure equitable representation and financial allocation for such states?

Introduction: Give brief context of the question.

Body: Highlight challenges faced by southern states in terms of political representation & fiscal transfers.

Conclusion: Way forward

The southern states have made notable progress in various areas of social development & economic growth, thanks to their strong linguistic identities and regional resurgence in politics and society. Within the federal political system, shifts in population distribution have enduring effects on both the political landscape and economic geography.

Challenges faced by states in terms of political representation & fiscal transfers:

- **Reduced political representation:** In India's parliamentary system, the seats in the Lok Sabha are allocated based on population size. As a result, southern states with controlled populations might experience a relative underrepresentation in the Lok Sabha, which could translate to reduced political influence at the national level.
- **Fiscal transfer:** In India, fiscal transfers like revenue-sharing and grants often hinge on criteria linked to population & suggested by the Finance Commission. As a consequence, southern states that have managed to control their populations may receive comparatively fewer financial resources, potentially affecting their capacity to deliver essential services and pursue development initiatives. The high per capita of southern states also acts as a determining factor for less share of the state from Union tax revenue.
- **Allocation of Resources:** These states may also face challenges in securing a fair share of national resources, including infrastructure development, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and other central government-funded projects.

How can the federal system ensure equitable representation and financial allocation for each state?

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- **Periodic revision of seats:** Periodic revision & review of Lok Sabha seats under the framework of the Constitution taking into account factors beyond population, such as land area, economic contributions, or development indicators can help balance political representation.
- **Decentralization of functions:** The need is to promote decentralization by granting states greater control over their revenue generation and expenditure. Empower states to raise funds through local taxes and allocate resources based on their specific priorities and needs.
- **Cooperative federalism:** Encourage cooperative federalism, where states work together on projects and initiatives that benefit the entire nation. This can facilitate resource sharing and cooperation among states, regardless of their population.
- **Special Grants and Assistance:** Introduce special grants and financial assistance programs for states that have successfully controlled their population. These grants can support development initiatives and compensate for reduced fiscal transfers.

Conclusion

Any step towards changing political representation in Lok Sabha must be based on National Consensus and the fears of the southern states must be addressed. The finance commission must evolve a formula to reward the states that have controlled their population financially.

7. Evaluate the challenges and opportunities for India in maintaining its strategic ties with the Maldives, especially in light of the “India Out” campaign.

Introduction: Give recent context to the question.

Body: Challenges and opportunities for India in dealing with Maldives

Conclusion: Way forward

Recently, President-elect Mohamed Muizzu spearheaded the “India Out” campaign & is perceived to be too close to the Chinese administration which could raise concern in India as both nations share geographical proximity, convergent security interests, and cultural affinities

Challenges for India in maintaining its strategic ties with Maldives

- **Increase Chinese influence:** China has been increasing its engagement in the Indian Ocean region, including in the Maldives, by undertaking infrastructure projects and making significant economic investments. India encounters competition in preserving its influence in the face of China's expanding presence. Maldives administration has endorsed China's Belt & Road Initiative raising concern in India about Maldives' role as an important strategic partner of India.
- **"India Out" Campaign:** The "India Out" campaign, which advocates for a reduction in Indian influence in the Maldives, presents a significant challenge. It reflects the sentiments of some sections of the Maldivian population that are concerned about perceived Indian interference in domestic affairs.
- **Protecting India's investments:** The “India out” campaign poses a challenge for India to secure its investments in infrastructure like the Greater Male connectivity project, development assistance in education & health & finally concern for expatriate workers working in Maldives.

Opportunities for India to maintain its strategic ties with Maldives

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- **Respect Maldives sovereignty:** India should be sensitive to Maldivian concerns about sovereignty and interference, emphasizing its commitment to respecting the Maldives' independence and supporting its development goals.
- **Strategic partnership:** Maldives' proximity to the west coast of India and its position at the hub of commercial sea lanes running through the Indian Ocean imbues it with strategic importance for India.
- **Neighbourhood First policy:** Under the Neighbourhood First policy and Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), security cooperation between the two countries has grown. India has reinforced its credentials to be the first responder for Maldives during times of crisis like COVID-19, tsunami crisis, and water scarcity.
- **Increase development assistance:** India needs to increase its development assistance in Maldives which estimates suggest was over 1100 crore during 2018-22. India has invested heavily in projects like water and sanitation, an Addu development project, a cancer hospital, a port project, a cricket stadium, two airport development projects, the Greater Male connectivity project with bridges, causeways, and roads, social housing projects, renovation of a mosque, building the national college for police, among others.

Conclusion:

The India-Maldives relationship is built on a strong foundation, marked by India's historical support during various crises and people-to-people ties. India needs to actively strengthen its ties with the Maldives while remaining sensitive to the Maldivian perspective and concerns.

8. Compare the measures taken by countries like South Africa, Norway, and Mexico in regulating the food industry with the steps taken by India. Suggest measures that the Indian government can adopt to ensure the health and well-being of its citizens.

Introduction: Give brief context of the question

Body: Highlight measures taken by different countries to regulate food industry.

Conclusion: Way forward

The regulation of the food industry is a critical aspect of public health & various nations employ various measures to ensure the safety and well-being of their citizens. As per a recent study by the Madras Diabetes Research Foundation, it is revealed that 11.4% of India's population or 10.13 crore people are living with diabetes and 15.3% of the population, or an additional 13.6 crore people are pre-diabetic.

Measures taken by different countries to regulate food industry

- **South Africa:** Comprehensive food labelling is required in South Africa, and this includes information on ingredients, allergens, nutritional value, and place of origin. In order to fight obesity and encourage healthier beverage options, the nation imposed a sugar tax on sugar-sweetened beverages. For several food categories, South Africa adopted salt reduction targets to reduce the amount of salt in processed foods.
- **Norway:** To help people choose healthier products, Norway uses a traffic light system on food labels to show the nutritional quality of products. Norway has outlawed the use of trans fats from industrial production in food goods. The Norwegian government encourages a healthy diet in schools by limiting the kinds of food and drink that are available to children.
- **Mexico:** To combat the obesity problem, Mexico imposed a charge on sugar-sweetened beverages. Front-of-pack warning labels were implemented in the nation to identify

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unhealthy food items with a high sugar, salt, or saturated fat content. Mexico limits the promotion of unhealthy meals in schools and during children's programming.

- **India:** India has established FSSAI to regulate and monitor food safety and standards. FSSAI sets food safety standards and regulations. India has implemented mandatory food labelling regulations, including allergen information and nutritional labelling. The Indian government has taken steps to limit trans fats in food products.

Measures taken by India to regulate food industry

- **Reducing consumption of ultra-processed foods:** Scientific evidence shows that diets heavy with ultra-processed food and beverages or high in sugar, fat, and salt are risky and can lead to diabetes & cardiovascular disease.
- **Advertising restrictions:** Government needs to protect people's choice of a healthy diet by regulating manipulative strategies of the food industry-defining 'healthy food', a warning label on unhealthy food, and restrictions on the promotion and marketing tactics of unhealthy food and beverages.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Launch public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about the importance of a balanced diet and the risks associated with excessive consumption of unhealthy foods.

Conclusion

Effectively regulating the food industry necessitates a comprehensive approach that engages the government, the industry, and consumers. India can benefit from the experiences of other nations while customizing its strategies to align with its distinctive socio-economic and cultural landscape, all to safeguard the health and welfare of its populace.

9. Critically analyze the feasibility and environmental implications of hydropower projects in the seismologically vulnerable Himalayan region.

Introduction: Give brief context to the question

Body: Analyse the feasibility and environmental impact of hydropower projects in the Himalayan region.

Conclusion: Way forward

The Glacial Lake Outburst Flood in Sikkim has once again raised questions regarding the impact of hydropower projects in the seismologically vulnerable Himalayan region. The incident happened as heavy precipitation led to the bursting of South Lhonak Lake a glacial lake that caused the rise of water levels in Teesta River that flooded at least four districts.

Feasibility of hydropower projects in the Himalayan region

- **Hydropower potential:** The Himalayan region's abundance of water resources presents a promising opportunity for the generation of hydroelectric power, owing to its steep slopes and a multitude of rivers that provide substantial hydroelectric potential.
- **Energy Demand:** The region's economic development must meet its rising energy needs. Projects utilizing hydropower can contribute to this objective while lowering reliance on fossil fuels.
- **Economic benefits:** Hydropower projects have the potential to boost local economies and create jobs. Through the sale of electricity, they can also help generate income.

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- **Technological Advances:** Even in seismically active places, safer dams and hydropower infrastructure can now be designed and constructed thanks to modern engineering techniques and technologies.

Environmental Implications of hydropower projects in the Himalayan region

- **Climate Change:** In the Himalayas, climate change has caused glacial melt and erratic rainfall patterns. These modifications may have an impact on the long-term viability of hydropower projects.
- **Habitat Disruption:** Building dams and building reservoirs can destabilize local ecosystems, displacing wildlife and reducing biodiversity. This is a problem in the biologically diverse Himalayan region.
- **Deforestation:** Land clearing for transmission lines and reservoirs can lead to deforestation, which not only has an impact on the local flora and wildlife but also increases carbon emissions.
- **Sedimentation:** Himalayan rivers contain a huge amount of silt as a result of mountain erosion. Dams can collect sediment, causing erosion downstream and lowering the quality of the water.
- **Seismic Risks:** The Himalayan region is prone to earthquakes, and building large dams and infrastructure in seismically active areas raises concerns about the safety and integrity of these structures.

Conclusion

The dangerous pro-glacial lakes like Lhonak need careful observation & to siphon water from these lakes in a controlled manner as done in Peru & Nepal. India could set up high-elevation meteorological stations for better forecast & capacity building in the field of glaciology & remote sensing. Careful planning is required to set up an early warning system to raise alarms and help in the evacuation of communities living downstream in nearby villages/towns. The government should allow new projects in the Himalayan region only after careful assessment of its impact on the environment.

10. Analyze the implications of Russia's potential decision to revoke the ratification of the global nuclear test ban. How might this impact global nuclear disarmament efforts?

Introduction: Give brief context to the question.

Body: Impact of Russia's decision on nuclear disarmament efforts.

Conclusion: Way forward

Russia's potential decision to revoke the ratification of the global nuclear test ban, which refers to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), could have significant implications for global nuclear disarmament efforts.

Impact of such decision on nuclear disarmament efforts

- **Undermine norms of nuclear ban on testing:** Russia's exit from the CTBT would make the international prohibition against nuclear testing more vulnerable. This would lead other nations to think about starting up their testing again, possibly starting a new arms race and raising concerns about global security.
- **Erosion of confidence:** Such an action by Russia would undermine confidence between nuclear-armed and non-nuclear-armed governments, increasing the

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difficulty of upcoming negotiations on arms control and disarmament. Measures to foster confidence would be compromised.

- **Escalation of Arms Race:** The United governments, China, and other nuclear-armed governments may respond similarly to Russia's decision to resume nuclear testing. This might lead to a new period of nuclear rivalry, which would undermine international security.
- **Impact on Non-Proliferation Efforts:** If the CTBT were to become weaker, the overall nuclear non-proliferation regime would be put at risk, making it more difficult to stop the spread of nuclear weapons to new nations or non-state actors.
- **Weakening of Verification:** The CTBT has a global surveillance system that can detect covert nuclear tests. The efficiency of this system may be hampered and it may become more difficult to confirm treaty compliance if Russia withdraws.
- **Diplomatic Backlash:** The international community may criticize Russia's departure and experience diplomatic backlash. Increased isolation and sanctions against Russia could occur, further putting strain on relations with other nations.
- **Effect on Current Arms Control Arrangements:** Russia's decision to leave the CTBT may raise questions about the viability of other arms control arrangements, such as New START, which would make attempts to reduce nuclear arsenals much more difficult.
- **Environmental Concerns:** Nuclear testing has significant environmental consequences, including radioactive contamination. Resuming tests can have long-lasting and far-reaching ecological impacts.

Conclusion

The prospective decision by Russia to withdraw its ratification of the CTBT would have significant repercussions for international efforts to reduce nuclear weapons. It might start a domino effect of unfavourable outcomes, such as more nuclear testing, a fresh arms race, and heightened international unrest. The CTBT must continue to be supported and strengthened to maintain international peace and security.

11. Analyze the factors contributing to the recent surge in food inflation in India, especially in the context of cereals and pulses. Discuss the implications of such inflationary trends on the economy and the common man.

Introduction: Give a context to the question

Body: Factors contributing to inflation & its implications

Conclusion: Way forward

The recent surge in food inflation especially in the context of cereals and pulses is a worrying sign both for the economy and the politics of the nation.

Some of the factors which have contributed to this trend

- **Variable weather conditions:** Crop production can be greatly impacted by unfavourable weather conditions like droughts, excessive heat, and unseasonal rain. These circumstances may result in decreased output of cereals and pulses, a consequent decrease in supply, and a price increase.
- **High input costs:** An increase in the cost of inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and labour can raise production costs for farmers. This, in turn, can lead to higher prices for cereals and pulses.

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- **Global factors:** Global commodity price fluctuations can have an impact on domestic prices, especially for goods like edible oils and pulses. Since India is a net importer of edible oils, any increase in global pricing has the potential to affect the domestic market.
- **Government policies:** The government occasionally uses measures to control domestic pricing, such as setting export prohibitions and stock limits on specific food goods. These actions may cause inflation by upsetting the balance between supply and demand.

What are the implications of such trends on the economy & individuals?

- **Inflationary Pressure:** Food inflation contributes to overall inflation in the economy, making it challenging for the RBI to maintain price stability.
- **Financial Burden:** As a large portion of the average person's salary is spent on food, rising food prices can put a burden on household finances, especially for those with lower incomes.
- **Impact on nutrition:** People may choose not to eat grains and pulses due to their high price, which could result in a drop in food quality overall.
- **Policy dilemma:** The government faces a delicate balance between supporting farmers' incomes through MSPs and ensuring affordable food for consumers. Government may have to take a more nuanced approach to food inflation balancing both consumer and producer interests.

Conclusion

Several supply-side, demand-side, and policy variables have contributed to the recent spike in food inflation in India, especially for cereals and pulses. Maintaining food security while balancing the interests of consumers and farmers continues to be a serious concern for Indian politicians. To lessen the negative consequences on the economy and the average person, it will be crucial to address the underlying causes of these inflationary trends, such as investing in agricultural infrastructure and technology and increasing supply chain efficiency.

12. Critically analyze the objectives and key provisions of the proposed Digital India Act 2023 (DIA). How does it aim to address the challenges posed by the evolving digital landscape in India?

Introduction: Give brief description of DIA 2023.

Body: Analyse objectives, and provisions of the act. What are the challenges posed by the act for digital ecosystem?

Conclusion: Way forward

The necessity to modernize their legal systems to accommodate the changing digital landscape has become a challenge for all nations including India. This can be seen in the recent announcement of the Digital India Act 2023 (DIA) which represents a significant step towards establishing a future-ready legal framework for the country's growing digital ecosystem.

What are the objectives and key provisions of the act?

- **Objective:** The DIA, which will soon replace the Information Technology Act of 2000 (IT Act), is intended to meet the opportunities and challenges brought on by the rapid development of the internet and new technologies in the 21st Century.

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- **Online Safety:** The upcoming DIA 2023 places a strong focus on online safety and trust with a commitment to protect netizens' rights in the digital ecosystem within the framework of market dynamics and international laws.
- **Focus on responsible AI:** With new-age tech like AI, Blockchain, and the use of platforms like ChatGPT the need is to provide for their responsible utilization. DIA aims to ensure responsible and ethical use of these technologies within a regulatory framework. This will ensure a balance between fostering innovation and safeguarding against potential harms like breaches of data and privacy issues.
- **Open Internet:** The open Internet enables an environment of social and economic growth and empowerment because it creates a level playing field in which everyone enjoys the same opportunity to participate. DIA upholds this concept and strikes a balance between accessibility and necessary regulations to maintain order and protect users.
- **Accountability:** The new act may make amendments to the “safe harbour” principle, which presently shields online platforms from liability related to user-generated content, indicating a potential shift in online accountability standards.

Challenges posed by the act for digital ecosystem in India

- **Impact on innovation:** The new act with stricter guidelines could impact innovation and ease of doing business in emerging technologies thereby harming entrepreneurial initiatives and deterring foreign investments.
- **Freedom of speech:** A review of the safe harbour principle can lead to a more cautious approach for platforms to publish content thereby impinging on freedom of expression.
- **Additional fiscal challenge:** The success of the new act depends on substantial resources available for expertise, infrastructure, and establishing a secure digital ecosystem

Conclusion

DIA represents a significant move by MEITY's proactive approach to regulating and shaping the digital future of the nation. It represents a significant milestone towards ensuring a secure, accountable, and innovative digital future for India.

13. Discuss the implications of the increase in the age of consent from 16 to 18 years with the enactment of the POCSO Act, 2012. How has it affected marginalized populations in India?

Introduction: Give brief description of POCSO Act

Body: What are implications of increasing age of consent and its effect on marginalized population in India?

Conclusion: Way forward

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was enacted in June 2012 and came into force in November 2012. It has completed 10 years now. The Act has played an instrumental role in addressing sexual offenses against children. One of the key provisions of the Act was raising the age of consent from 16 to 18 years.

Implications of increase in age of consent from 16-18 years

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- **Enhanced Protection for Minors:** Raising the consent age to 18 years old shows a commitment to safeguarding children from sexual exploitation. It tries to give teenagers legal protections while acknowledging their fragility.
- **Deterrence effect:** The greater age of consent serves as a deterrent to adults having sex with kids because they are now more likely to suffer harsh legal repercussions for doing so.
- **Awareness and Education:** The change has led to increased awareness about child sexual abuse and consent. Schools, parents, and communities have become more proactive in educating children about their rights and the importance of giving informed consent.

Implications of this increase in age on marginalized population

- **Criminalization of Adolescent Interactions:** One major worry is that the increased age of consent may unintentionally criminalize consensual sexual interactions between adolescents who are of similar ages. When both parties are under the age of 18, they may be charged under the POCSO Act, which could have an effect on their futures and result in legal repercussions.
- **Uneven Enforcement:** The POCSO Act's enforcement can be uneven, and underprivileged groups may be unfairly burdened. Those targeted and prosecuted under the law may vary depending on socioeconomic inequalities, caste, religion, or gender, which may result in prejudice.
- **Access to Justice:** People from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and other marginalized groups may encounter difficulties getting justice. They can be unaware of their rights, have little access to legal counsel, or be underequipped to deal with the legal system.
- **Stigmatization:** People from marginalized groups, particularly those with little access to healthcare and education, may experience stigmatization if they are associated with incidences of child sexual abuse. This might have long-term social and psychological repercussions.

Conclusion

It is essential to strike a balance between safeguarding minors and respecting the rights of adolescents, addressing any unintended consequences through education, legal reforms, and community engagement. Additionally, efforts must be made to ensure equal access to justice for all, regardless of their background or circumstances.

14. Critically evaluate the challenges and prospects for achieving a two-state solution in the context of the recent terror attacks by Hamas. What measures can be taken to build trust and pave the way for a peaceful coexistence between Israel and Palestine?

Introduction: What is two state solution?

Body: What are challenges in achieving the solution and measures that can be taken to build trust between Israel & Palestine?

Conclusion: Way forward

The "two-state solution" refers to a proposed resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that envisions the establishment of two separate and independent states, one for Israelis (Israel) and the other for Palestinians (Palestine), living side by side in peace and security.

Challenges in achieving the solution

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- **Security Concerns:** Terror attacks, particularly those by Hamas, have caused significant security concerns for Israel. These attacks erode trust and make it difficult for Israelis to support concessions or a two-state solution that they perceive as compromising their security.
- **Internal Political Division:** The Palestinian territories are divided between the West Bank, governed by the Palestinian Authority (Fatah), and Gaza, controlled by Hamas. This political division has hindered the ability of Palestinians to negotiate and implement a unified peace agreement.
- **Settlements:** Israel's continued construction of settlements in the West Bank is a major point of contention. Palestinians view these settlements as a violation of their territorial rights and a threat to the viability of a future Palestinian state.

Prospects for achieving the solution

- **International Pressure:** The international community, including the United States, the United Nations, and the European Union, continues to advocate for a two-state solution. Diplomatic efforts may intensify to push both parties toward negotiations.
- **Public Opinion:** Both Israelis and Palestinians overwhelmingly support a two-state solution. Grassroots efforts to advance peace and discussion are crucial because the public can have an impact on political decisions.

Measures that can be taken to achieve the solution

- **Halt settlements expansion:** Israel should halt settlement expansion in the West Bank as a confidence-building measure. Addressing this issue is crucial to demonstrating a genuine commitment to peace.
- **Engage Regional Powers:** Regional powers, such as Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, can play a role in supporting peace negotiations and normalizing relations between Israel and Arab states.
- **Ceasefire and Confidence-Building Measures:** Both sides must commit to and enforce a long-term ceasefire to halt violence. Confidence-building measures could include prisoner releases, humanitarian aid, and joint economic initiatives.
- **People-to-People Initiatives:** Encourage civil society organizations, cultural exchanges, and educational programs that bring Israelis and Palestinians together to foster understanding and build bridges.

Conclusion

The world stands at a critical juncture following the impacts of COVID-19 and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine-Russia. Preventing another conflict that could disrupt global supply chains is imperative. It is incumbent upon the international community to actively pursue peace between the two states. Any effective peace initiative must address the longstanding obstacles that have hindered the peace process, namely, the issues surrounding West Bank borders and settlements, Israeli security concerns, the Palestinian refugee crisis, and the status of Jerusalem.

15. How has Professor Goldin's research shed light on the historical trends and patterns of women's participation in the labour market?

Introduction: Describe Goldin's research in brief.

Body: Highlight key points of her research.

Conclusion: Way forward

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The Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences 2023 has been awarded to Claudia Goldin **“for having advanced our understanding of women’s labour market outcomes.”** Her work is credited to be the **“first comprehensive account of women’s earning and labour market participation through the centuries”**. Her most significant observation was that female participation in the labour market did not exhibit an upward trend over the entire period, but rather a U-shaped curve.

Key points in which her research has been influential

- **Human Capital Theory:** The study of gender differences in the labour market has been approached through the application of human capital theory by Professor Goldin. She has demonstrated how women's growing investments in education and skill-building have been crucial to their evolving engagement in the work sector over time.
- **The Gender Pay Gap:** Goldin has examined the gender pay gap's historical development in her work. She has investigated the causes of the disparity and how it differs between industries and professions. Her research has brought attention to the need to comprehend not only the pay gap but also the career development gap, which is frequently associated with workplace flexibility and family obligations.
- **The Impact of Technological Change:** Goldin's research has explored how technological advancements, particularly the rise of information technology, have affected women's labour market participation. She has demonstrated that the ability to work remotely and flexibly has made it easier for women to balance work and family responsibilities.
- **Marriage & contraceptive pill:** These two factors played a crucial role in women’s access to higher education and employment. Her work shows that various “marriage laws” prevented women from continuing their employment & so married women were excluded from labour market. The use of contraceptive pills gave women more control over childbirth which helped them to plan their careers & motherhood.
- **The transition from factory work to white-collar jobs:** Her work has shown that beyond a certain level of economic growth, women’s participation rose as their educational level increased and more women were participating in formal salaried jobs. This is relevant for India to create more formal jobs for women to draw them into labour market.

Conclusion

Despite her significant work, there are several shortcomings as her work is primarily focussed on the USA and high-income countries which cannot be applied to the global South. It also does not take into account how to value household work which forms a major component of work done by women in India. Goldin’s work also does not take into account factors like caste, and class which play crucial roles in women’s access to jobs & their bargaining power.

16. How can India strengthen its diplomatic and developmental ties with the Maldives in the coming years?

Introduction: Give context of the question

Body: How can India strengthen its ties with Maldives

Conclusion: Way forward

India can strengthen its diplomatic and developmental ties with the Maldives by employing a multifaceted approach that encompasses political, economic, cultural, and security

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cooperation. The Maldives holds strategic importance for India, and fostering strong ties with the island nation is vital.

Some of the ways to strengthen ties with Maldives

- **Economic cooperation:** The Indian government could Encourage Indian businesses to invest in key sectors in the Maldives, such as tourism, fisheries, renewable energy, and infrastructure. Maldives has emerged as a major tourist destination for some Indians and a job destination for others. Eg, Greater Male Connectivity Project will add dynamism to the Maldivian transport and economic activities.
- **Security cooperation:** Both nations can cooperate to Strengthen maritime security cooperation to combat piracy, illegal fishing, and other transnational threats in the Indian Ocean. India provides the largest number of training opportunities for the Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF), to enhance their capacity for maritime surveillance and border control.
- **Infrastructure development:** India needs to increase its development assistance in Maldives which estimates suggest was over 1100 crore during 2018-22. India has invested heavily in projects like water and sanitation, an Addu development project, a cancer hospital, a port project, a cricket stadium, two airport development projects, causeways, and roads, social housing projects, renovation of a mosque, building the national college for police, among others.
- **People-to-people ties:** Both nations can foster cultural exchange programs, such as art exhibitions, music festivals, and educational exchanges which can be used to promote tourism and encourage Maldivians to visit India for medical treatment, tourism, and education. India has reinforced its credentials to be the first responder for Maldives during times of crisis like COVID-19, tsunami crisis, and water scarcity.
- **Strengthen regional diplomacy:** The Colombo Security Conclave comprising India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Mauritius, Bangladesh, and the Seychelles should be strengthened showing tangible outcomes in maritime security and the development of the Blue Economy.
- **Respect Maldives sovereignty:** India should be sensitive to Maldivian concerns about sovereignty and interference, emphasizing its commitment to respecting the Maldives' independence and supporting its development goals.

Conclusion

India should continue its development work and numerous small community projects such as building community centres, children's parks, and student ferries between islands to build a positive mindset in the minds of Maldives citizens towards India. India should maintain its traditional commitment to fostering a multipolar and rule-based global order by adopting an accommodating approach in its relations with neighbouring countries.

17. Examine the implications of the continuing gridlock in the Security Council, especially in light of recent conflicts like the Ukraine crisis.

Introduction: Give context to the question

Body: List key implications of ongoing gridlock in UNSC due to the Ukraine crisis.

Conclusion: Way forward

International peace, security, and the efficacy of the UN as a whole are significantly impacted by the ongoing impasse in the UN Security Council (UNSC), especially in light of recent crises like the Ukraine crisis.

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Some of the key implications of this continuing gridlock in the UNSC are

- **Ineffectiveness in Resolving Conflicts:** Upholding global peace and security is the UNSC's core duty. It is unable to carry out this function efficiently when it is immobilized by an impasse, as the situation in Ukraine demonstrates. This may result in protracted disputes, human suffering, and an inability to deal with the underlying reasons for disputes.
- **Undermining Credibility:** The UNSC's legitimacy and credibility as a global body tasked with handling security-related matters are threatened by its incapacity to act decisively. This may cause people to lose faith in the UN system and motivate governments to look for other ways to resolve disputes.
- **Suppressing International Law and Norms:** The United Nations Security Council is tasked with maintaining international law and norms. Inaction on the part of states that violate international law can lead to a dangerous precedent and possibly increasing disdain for established norms.
- **Encouraging Unilateral Actions:** The UNSC may encourage states to act unilaterally in situations where it is unable to come to a decision or take decisive action. Without the UNSC's consent, Western nations imposed sanctions on Russia on the issue of Ukraine. Ad hoc reactions and a disjointed approach to global challenges may result from this.
- **Prolonged Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises:** Prolonged gridlock can lead to prolonged conflicts, displacement, and humanitarian crises. In the case of Ukraine, this has resulted in a significant toll on civilians and displacement of populations.
- **Strain on Multilateral Diplomacy:** Continued gridlock undermines the principles of multilateral diplomacy and negotiation. Diplomatic efforts may be hampered as parties to a conflict lose faith in the ability of the international community to broker a peaceful solution.
- **Impact on the P5's Role and Influence:** Prolonged gridlock may reduce the P5's influence as global leaders. It can diminish their ability to shape international events and promote their vision for global order.
- **Potential for Escalation:** In situations like the Ukraine crisis, where there is no UNSC consensus, there is a risk of escalation as parties to the conflict may perceive a lack of international resolve to prevent further aggression.

Conclusion

The ongoing gridlock underscores the need for reform in the UNSC's structure and decision-making process. Countries like Germany, Japan, & India are advocating for expanding the UNSC's permanent membership to reflect contemporary global power dynamics and enhance its representativeness.

18. Considering the Bombay High Court's observations, discuss the potential challenges and implications of the IT Rules amendment for editorial content online.

Introduction: Give context to the hearing in Bombay HC.

Body: Key challenges and implications related to IT Rules

Conclusion: Way forward

Bombay HC is hearing multiple petitions regarding the constitutionality of the Fact Check Unit (FCU) set up by the Union Government as per Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023 (IT Rules). The proposed

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Fact Check Unit will ask social media platforms to take down content that they see as fake or misleading.

Some challenges related to new IT Rules

- **Censorship and Content Removal:** If any content is found to be illegal, the government is authorized to force its removal raising concern about possible speech restriction and censorship. It puts a great deal of pressure on content platforms and editors to swiftly detect and remove stuff, even when it's unclear if it violates the law.
- **Privacy Issues:** The regulations force platforms to track the source of specific messages, which may jeopardize the privacy of users. Editors may find it more difficult to obtain news and information from these sources since anonymity may no longer be guaranteed.
- **Definitional Ambiguity:** The regulations provide ambiguous definitions for terms like "fake, false, and misleading." Content producers and editors may become confused about what is and is not acceptable as a result of this ambiguity, which might give rise to subjective interpretations.
- **Placing barriers on the marketplace:** The new rules increase operational costs for social media companies. They are required to have Indian resident nodal officers, compliance officers, and physical offices in India. This will increase their operational costs significantly. Also, it will hamper the progress of multinational corporations and start-up intermediary enterprises in India.

Implications of IT Rules

- **Against Right to privacy:** The new rules curtail free speech on digital platforms. The Supreme Court in its famous Puttuswamy case judgment mentioned that any law that impacts the fundamental right is void. Implementing the new IT Rules for social media will violate the judgment and its provisions.
- **Possibility of Abuse:** Political or competitive motivations could lead to the abuse of the regulations. Takedown requests may be directed towards editors and content providers as a form of harassment.
- **Takedown Without Due Process:** The rules don't specify a clear due process for content takedowns. This could result in legitimate editorial content being removed without proper investigation or recourse for appeal.
- **Violation of natural justice:** there is no provision in the Rules that provides an opportunity for an aggrieved intermediary to justify or defend the flagged content. This violates the principles of natural justice.

Conclusion

Government should frame clear guidelines regarding the new IT Rules 2023 which does not offer any ambiguity and also establish an appeal mechanism against the order of FCU. The courts would do well to reinforce the right to privacy and preserve the immunity offered to companies under the "safe-harbour" principle.

19. Evaluate the role of strategic minerals in the development and proliferation of electric vehicles (EVs) in India. How can the recent policy changes influence the EV ecosystem in the country?

Introduction: Give brief context to the question

Body: What is the role of such minerals in the EV industry and how does government policy influence the EV ecosystem?

Conclusion: Way forward

Critical minerals play a vital role in advancing and expanding the electric vehicle (EV) industry in India. EVs are reliant on a variety of minerals and metals that are essential for their battery systems, electric motors, and other crucial components. These minerals are fundamental for manufacturing lithium-ion batteries and permanent magnets used in electric motors.

Role of such minerals in EVs

- **Lithium:** Lithium is a key component in EV batteries. India lacks significant lithium reserves, which makes it dependent on imports. Jammu and Kashmir has the largest deposit of lithium in India.
- **Cobalt and Nickel:** These metals are equally essential in the manufacturing of batteries. India is actively working to diminish its dependence on these resources by exploring alternative chemical formulations and promoting recycling practices.
- **Niobium:** It is used in electric vehicles for battery improvement, lightweight, enhancing motor efficiency, emissions reduction, and durability.
- **Rare earth elements:** Rare earth elements are used in electric vehicles for powerful motor magnets, catalytic converters, battery technologies, and lighting systems.

How have recent policy changes influenced the EV industry?

- **FAME II (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles) Scheme:** The FAME II scheme provides financial incentives and subsidies to promote the adoption of EVs in India. These incentives can help reduce the upfront cost of EVs and stimulate demand.
- **Encourage domestic mining:** The Centre has specified new royalty rates by amending the Second Schedule of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957. The lowering of the royalty rates effectively aligns India's royalty rates with global benchmarks and paves the way for commercial exploitation of strategic minerals through auctions, which can be conducted by the Centre or states.
- **Exemption from tax:** EV car owners are exempted from the registration fee and road tax as per new rules of the Government and the government is committed to gradually phasing out the sale of internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles.
- **Charging Infrastructure:** The government is investing in charging infrastructure to address range anxiety and promote EV adoption. The government is also promoting the recycling and reuse of EV batteries to extend their lifespan and reduce the need for raw materials.

Conclusion

The availability and access to strategic minerals are vital for the development and proliferation of electric vehicles in India. Addressing the mineral supply chain remains a crucial aspect of ensuring long-term sustainability and competitiveness in the EV market.

20. Discuss the implications of the increasing participation of women in the rural workforce. To what extent can this trend be attributed to economic distress in rural areas?

Introduction: Give recent context to the question

Body: What are the implications of increasing the participation rate of women and the factors contributing to it?

Conclusion: Way forward

The latest periodic labour force survey for 2022-23 indicates that the national labor force participation rate has been steadily rising & unemployment rate has also been declining concurrently. On the surface, this should be a sign that the labor market is becoming better. Nonetheless, the study also shows an increase in self-employment and a decrease in the percentage of traditional wage/salaried work.

What are the implications of increasing the participation of women in rural India?

- **Economic Empowerment:** As more women enter the workforce, they become more economically empowered, enabling them to contribute to the family income and lessen their reliance on outside assistance.
- **Poverty Alleviation:** By increasing household incomes and giving families more money for necessities, education, and healthcare, the trend can help reduce poverty in rural areas.
- **Development of Skills:** As more women enter the workforce, they acquire important knowledge and expertise that could enhance their employability and long-term financial prospects.
- **Gender Equality:** Women's participation in the workforce challenges gender norms and advances gender equality, which creates a more inclusive society.
- **Agricultural Sector:** Rural women often participate in agriculture, and their involvement can lead to increased agricultural productivity and innovation.

How has economic distress affected this trend?

- **Restricted Economic prospects:** Women who are experiencing financial hardship may decide to join the workforce to support their families in areas where there are few economic prospects.
- **Agricultural Challenges:** Low crop yields, debt, and climate-related concerns can all contribute to economic misery in rural regions and force women to participate in the workforce.
- **Government Initiatives:** Government plans and initiatives that seek to give women in rural areas access to jobs can help motivate women to enter the workforce. Eg, There has been an increase in MGNREGA enrolment among the female labour force in rural areas which has been witnessed since COVID.
- **Social and Cultural Norms:** As a result of evolving social and cultural norms that support increased female participation, women may occasionally join the workforce.
- **Education:** One important factor is the educational attainment of rural women. Increased workforce involvement may result from improved educational access.

Conclusion

While the participation rate in rural areas has risen from 24.6 percent in 2017-18 to 41.5 percent in 2022-23 this increase is on account of an increase in the share of the self-employed while the share of regular wage/salaried employed has fallen which reinforces concerns that

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the economy is unable to generate sufficient productive and remunerative forms of employment to absorb the millions entering the labour force each year.

21. Analyze the challenges faced by India in achieving a doctor-patient ratio as recommended by WHO. Suggest measures to overcome these challenges.

Introduction: Give recent context to the question

Body: Highlight challenges in achieving recommended doctor-patient ratio and measures to overcome this.

Conclusion: Way forward

As per recent data given by the government to Parliament India's doctor-patient ratio currently stands at 1:834 which is better than the WHO-prescribed norm of one doctor per 1,000 people. Still, the demand for doctors & medical education exceeds the supply in large parts of India particularly rural India.

Challenges faced by India in achieving this ratio

- **Shortage of Healthcare professionals:** India is currently experiencing a serious scarcity of physicians and other healthcare workers. The country's large population has healthcare needs that cannot be met by the infrastructure already in place.
- **Urban-Rural Disparities:** A large number of healthcare workers are based in cities, which causes a dire shortage in rural areas. For rural populations, this means that access to healthcare services is insufficient.
- **Unequal Distribution:** The distribution of medical professionals is not uniform among the states and areas. Healthcare inequities are exacerbated in certain regions, such as the South, where the doctor-to-patient ratio is higher than in North Indian states.
- **Medical Education Quality:** The quality of medical education in India is a matter of concern. Many medical schools are understaffed and lack the faculty and resources needed to produce quality physicians.
- **Overburdened Healthcare System:** The existing healthcare system is overburdened, leading to long waiting times and suboptimal care quality. This discourages doctors from working in the public sector.

Measures to Overcome Challenges:

- **Increase Medical College Capacity:** India needs to invest in expanding the capacity of medical colleges to produce more doctors and healthcare professionals. This includes improving the infrastructure and faculty quality of existing institutions and establishing new ones. Despite the rapid expansion of medical colleges, the number of medical graduates per lakh population was 4.1, well below 6.2 in China, 6.9 in Israel, 8.5 in the US, and 13.1 in the UK.
- **Encourage Rural Service:** Implement policies to incentivize healthcare professionals to work in rural areas. This can include offering loan forgiveness programs, higher salaries, and better living conditions in rural regions.
- **Telemedicine and Technology:** Promote telemedicine and the use of technology to extend healthcare services to remote and underserved areas. This can help address the shortage of doctors in these regions.
- **Community Health Workers:** Invest in training and deploying community health workers to provide preventive and primary care services in rural and underserved areas.

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- **Health Insurance Coverage:** Expand health insurance coverage to ensure that patients can access healthcare services without financial barriers, thereby increasing the demand for healthcare services.

Conclusion

Achieving the recommended doctor-patient ratio in India is a complex and long-term process, but by addressing these challenges and implementing these measures, the country can work toward providing better healthcare access to its population.

22. Elucidate on the abiding principles that have shaped India's foreign policy towards the Middle East. Analyze the relevance of these principles in the contemporary geopolitical scenario.

Introduction: Give brief context to the question

Body: What are key principles that have shaped foreign policy in Middle East.

Conclusion: Way forward

Over the years, India's foreign policy in the Middle East has been influenced by several guiding concepts that represent its strategic, economic, and historical interests. These tenets have changed throughout time to reflect the shifting geopolitical environment.

Key principles that have guided India's foreign policy towards the Middle East

- **Non-Alignment:** India has long followed a non-alignment strategy to stay out of military alliances and conflicts. This idea has made it possible for India to keep diplomatic ties with countries in the Middle East even if such countries support powerful countries like Russia or the United States.
- **Economic Engagement:** India's Middle East policy has always been based on strong economic relations. India derives substantial energy resources from this region, and the Middle East is an important market for Indian products and services. India has made an effort to expand economic ties, diversify its energy supplies, and encourage investments in the Middle East.
- **Diaspora and Cultural Ties:** India has a substantial diaspora in the Middle East that is integral to the region's social and economic fabric. India's involvement with the Middle East has consistently emphasized the development of cultural and people-to-people relations.
- **Counterterrorism and Security:** India is keenly interested in preserving regional security, particularly in light of the Middle East's high rate of terrorism. India has shared intelligence and worked together with nations in the Middle East to combat terrorism. An additional security worry is the well-being of Indian nationals employed in the area.

Relevance in the Contemporary Geopolitical Scenario

- **Soft Power and Diplomacy:** The use of soft power and cultural diplomacy continues to be effective in building goodwill and trust with Middle Eastern nations. Diplomatic engagement remains a central tool for advancing India's foreign policy objectives in the region.
- **Economic Engagement:** The Middle East continues to be a growing market for Indian exports and a destination for Indian labor. India's economic interests in the region are set to expand, making economic engagement a continued priority.

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- **Balancing Act:** Balancing relationships with multiple Middle Eastern nations becomes more challenging as regional rivalries and conflicts persist. India's ability to manage its relationships and interests in the region remains crucial.
- **Energy Security:** India's dependence on Middle Eastern oil and gas remains significant. Ensuring a stable and diversified energy supply from the region is essential for India's economic growth and energy security.

Conclusion

India's actions in the Middle East remain guided by its foreign policy fundamentals, which are of utmost significance. The aforementioned concepts have demonstrated flexibility and evolution in response to the dynamic and ever-changing geopolitical possibilities and challenges in the Middle East.

23. Discuss the significance of Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) in sustainable development. Illustrate with examples the need for a distinct EIA for the Indian Himalayan Region.

Introduction: What is EIA?

Body: Significance of EIA in India and its need for in Himalayan region.

Conclusion: Way forward

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a tool used to identify the environmental, social, and economic impacts of a project before decision-making. It aims to predict environmental impacts at an early stage in project planning and design, find ways and means to reduce adverse impacts, shape projects to suit the local environment, and present the predictions and options to decision-makers.

Significance of EIA in sustainable development

- **Balancing Development and Environmental Conservation:** EIA helps strike a balance between development and environmental preservation by considering the potential impacts of projects or policies on the environment. It aids in identifying ways to reduce or mitigate these impacts, thereby promoting sustainable development.
- **Informed Decision-Making:** EIA provides decision-makers with comprehensive information about the environmental consequences of proposed actions. This information helps in making well-informed decisions, taking into account the long-term sustainability of a region.
- **Transparency and Public Participation:** EIA processes often involve public participation and consultations. This ensures that the views and concerns of local communities and stakeholders are considered, promoting transparency and inclusiveness in decision-making.
- **Adaptive Management:** EIA promotes adaptive management by continuously monitoring and assessing the environmental impacts of projects. This allows for necessary adjustments to be made to mitigate emerging issues and improve sustainability.

Why there is a need for distinct EIA for the Himalayan Region?

- **Biodiversity Hotspot:** The IHR particularly Sikkim & Arunachal Pradesh is a biodiversity hotspot with unique and fragile ecosystems, including alpine meadows, high-altitude forests, and diverse wildlife. A generic EIA might not capture the specific ecological concerns of this region.

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- **Geological Sensitivity:** The Himalayas in states like Uttarakhand, Sikkim & Himachal Pradesh are subject to landslides, earthquakes, and floods caused by glacial lake outbursts due to their active geology. The region's susceptibility to these kinds of natural disasters can be addressed and mitigation strategies can be included in a distinct EIA.
- **Climate Change:** With its quickly melting glaciers and changing weather patterns, the Himalayan region particularly states like Sikkim & Uttarakhand is especially sensitive to climate change. Specialized EIAs are capable of taking these particular climate-related issues and adaptation plans into account.
- **Water Resources:** The Himalayas are the source of major rivers in India like Teesta, making water resources management a critical issue. A specialized EIA can assess the potential impacts on water availability, quality, and downstream regions.

Conclusion

A specialized EIA for the Indian Himalayan Region is essential to account for its unique environmental, cultural, and geographical characteristics. This distinct approach helps ensure that development in the region is not only sustainable but also considers the conservation of its fragile ecosystems and the well-being of its diverse communities.

24. Discuss the significance of enhancing maritime connectivity between India and Sri Lanka. Analyze the potential impact on trade, cultural exchange, and geopolitical relations.

Introduction: Give brief outlay of relationship between both nations

Body: Significance of relationship in various areas.

Conclusion: Way forward

Over 2,500 years have passed since the beginning of India and Sri Lanka's relationship. Intellectual, cultural, religious, and linguistic exchanges have left a legacy in both nations. Close interactions at all levels have characterized the partnership. In addition to increased trade and investment, there is collaboration in the areas of infrastructure development, culture, education, and defense. Recently, a passenger ferry service from Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu to Kankesanthurai in Jaffna, Northern Sri Lanka has been started between both countries.

Significance of enhanced maritime connectivity between both nations

- **Economic cooperation:** Due to its advantageous location in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka is a perfect transshipment hub. By improving maritime connectivity, Sri Lanka can become a major entry point for India's trade with other nations, spurring employment growth and economic development there. It is expected to benefit local traders on both shores.
- **Tourism:** The ferry can boost religious tourism in both countries' coastal regions by offering a mode of transit. An increase in Sri Lankan visitors is anticipated in Indian pilgrimage sites like Nagapattinam, Nagore, Velankanni, Thirunallar, and temple towns like Thanjavur, Madurai, and Tiruchi.
- **Subregional cooperation:** Improved maritime connection can be incorporated into subregional programs like BIMSTEC in addition to bilateral relationships. It can encourage cooperation and economic integration on a regional scale between adjacent countries.

Impact on trade, culture & geopolitical relations

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- **Trade:** Increased bilateral trade, more cost-effective shipping routes, and lower transportation expenses can all result from improved marine connectivity. An effective and well-connected maritime infrastructure can draw in foreign investment by increasing Sri Lanka's appeal to companies looking to expand into the region.
- **Cultural Exchanges:** Strong historical, cultural, and religious ties exist between India and Sri Lanka. Improved marine connectivity can make it easier for people to travel, which will promote cross-cultural interaction. Increased connectivity can make it easier for scholars and students to pursue opportunities at each other's universities and promote academic and educational interactions encouraging academic collaboration and the exchange of knowledge.
- **Geopolitical relations:** Increased marine connection may pave the way for stronger strategic cooperation between Sri Lanka and India, including cooperative efforts in disaster relief, maritime security, and stability in the region. With enhanced connectivity, India and Sri Lanka can fortify their positions in the Indian Ocean region and offset the influence of other powerful nations, including China especially when considering the Indo-Pacific area.

Conclusion

Improving the marine link between India and Sri Lanka can have several advantages, including geopolitical collaboration, cultural interaction, and economic expansion. Both nations may benefit from it since it might promote regional stability and enable them to take a more significant part in the Indian Ocean and the larger Indo-Pacific area. But these initiatives must take into account environmental sustainability, openness, and the interests of both countries.

25. Elucidate the importance of the directives given by the Supreme Court to the Centre for sensitizing people regarding the rights of queer individuals and establishing a hotline for the queer community. How can these directives contribute to fostering a more inclusive society?

Introduction: Give brief context to the judgement.

Body: Highlight the importance of the guidelines issued & how they are helpful for an inclusive society.

Conclusion: Way forward

Recently, a five-judge Constitution Bench of the apex court headed by the Chief Justice of India ruled in a 3:2 verdict against giving constitutional validity to same-sex marriages & held that only the legislature can recognize or regulate same-sex marriage. The verdict called upon the Centre, States, and Union Territories to ensure that the queer community is not discriminated against because of gender identity or sexual orientation.

Importance of directives issued by SC regarding queer community

- **Social Acceptance:** The direction issued are aimed at addressing the issue of discrimination towards same-sex couples including the creation of Garima Grehs or safe houses in all districts to provide shelter to members of the queer community who are facing violence or discrimination.
- **Promote equal rights:** The top court has asked the Government to ensure that "treatments" offered by doctors or other persons, that aim to change gender identity or sexual orientation, are completely prohibited from contributing to a just and equitable society.

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- **Mental health support:** The establishment of a hotline specifically for the queer community provides a safe and confidential space for individuals to seek support, counseling, and guidance. This can be a lifeline for those facing discrimination, harassment, or struggling with their identity.

How do these directives contribute to a more inclusive society?

- **Enhanced Education and Awareness:** Sensitization campaigns can aid in increasing public knowledge of the rights and difficulties experienced by LGBT people. By dispelling myths and preconceptions about the LGBTQ+ population, educational programs can increase compassion and understanding.
- **Lessening Stigma and Discrimination:** Sensitization can assist in lessening the stigma and discrimination that LGBTQ+ people face in society. This is essential for their emotional and mental health as well as for their ability to fully engage in society.
- **Reducing Hate Crimes and Violence:** Greater awareness and support for the LGBTQ+ community can contribute to a decrease in hate crimes and violence. A hotline can provide an avenue for reporting such incidents, ensuring that they are addressed promptly.

Conclusion

The directives of the top court address not only the legal rights of LGBTQ+ individuals but also the cultural, social, and emotional aspects of their lives. These efforts are pivotal in creating a society where everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, can live with dignity, respect, and equality.

26. The Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Act, 2022, has significantly expanded the list of species under its protection, often without clear criteria for inclusion. Critically analyze the potential ecological, administrative, and socio-economic implications of this expanded protection.

Introduction: Give a brief outlay of the new Bill.

Body: Highlight potential ecological, administrative, and socio-economic implications of the new Bill.

Conclusion: Way forward

Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2022 seeks to conserve and protect wildlife through better management of protected areas and rationalize schedules that list out species under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Act, 2022, expands the list of species under its protection, & is a commendable step in conserving biodiversity and addressing the global concern of species extinction.

Ecological implications

- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Since the new amendment seeks to increase the species protected under the law and implement the CITES it has expanded the scope of biodiversity conservation while providing no clear connection between endangerment and conservation.
- **Preventing Extinction:** The legislation may help save species from becoming extinct and support the recovery of vulnerable populations by incorporating a greater number of species, particularly those that are severely endangered or risk habitat degradation.

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- **Ecosystem Services:** Many species offer services that are essential to agriculture and human well-being, such as seed distribution, pest management, and pollination. People gain inadvertently from the protection of these creatures.

Administrative implications

- **Administrative Burden:** The new listing will involve prioritizing species for biodiversity conservation as resources will have to be prioritized according to the degree of protection available to each species. Such prioritizing will impose an additional burden on the administration. Expanding the list without adequate resources, personnel, and infrastructure may strain the capacity of wildlife authorities.
- **Species Identification and Monitoring:** Identifying and monitoring a larger number of species can be challenging. It requires skilled personnel, technology, and a comprehensive database to track changes in population sizes and distribution.

Socio-Economic implications

- **Livelihood of farmers:** Since wild pigs and nilgai are now classified as Schedule 1 under the new Act, the few States that still permit the restricted killing of problematic animals may not be able to maintain that policy. This demonstrates complete disregard for the predicament of farmers. Various Schedule 1 species like crocodiles, elephants, and leopards pose enormous physical, mental, and economic harm to people.
- **Conflict with Human Activities:** Developing infrastructure, mining, and other human activities could clash with the expansion of protection. Economic ramifications of these disputes may include lost revenue and employment.
- **Awareness & Education:** Raising the number of protected species can help spread knowledge and encourage ecotourism, which may lead to the creation of job opportunities and local support for conservation.

Conclusion

The expansion of the Wildlife Protection Act to include more species is a significant step toward conserving India's rich biodiversity. However, it must be accompanied by careful planning, adequate resources, and community engagement to mitigate potential negative ecological, administrative, and socio-economic implications. Striking a balance between conservation and sustainable development is essential to ensure the long-term well-being of both wildlife and people.

27. Discuss the impact of unpaid work on the Indian economy. How does the undervaluation of such work affect the economic participation and empowerment of women? Suggest measures to ensure that women's contributions are recognized and supported to boost overall economic growth.

The Indian economy is greatly impacted by unpaid labour, which includes childcare, housework, and other domestic duties. Women are disproportionately affected by the undervaluation of this type of labour. India's first national Time Use Survey released in 2020 by the National Statistical Office, finds that 81.2% of all women are engaged in unpaid domestic services, compared with 26.1% of men.

Impact of Unpaid Work on the Indian Economy

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- **Reduced Labour Force Participation:** Unpaid work, which predominantly falls on women, often prevents them from participating in paid employment. This results in a lower percentage of women in the formal labour force, which can limit economic growth potential. Women's labour force participation rate (FLFPR) in India is 32.8% according to government sources and 24% according to the World Bank, compared to China's 61%, Bangladesh's 38%, Nepal's 29% and Pakistan's 25%.
- **Loss of Productive Time:** The time spent on unpaid work, such as cooking, cleaning, and caregiving, could otherwise be used for income-generating activities. This leads to an opportunity cost for women who could be engaged in more productive work.
- **Gender Pay Gap:** Unpaid work reinforces the gender pay gap as women's labor in the household is not recognized or remunerated. This leads to economic disparities and a lack of financial independence for many women.

Undervaluation of Unpaid Work and Women's Economic Participation

- **Invisible Economic Contribution:** Unpaid labour is frequently seen as a social norm rather than an economic activity. Eg, caring and home duties. Because of this, women's contributions are not taken into account by conventional economic criteria, contributing to their economic invisibility. According to an SBI report women's unpaid work plays a vital role in the economy & is responsible for 7.5% of GDP.
- **Lack of Economic Empowerment:** By excluding women from the respect and privileges that come with official employment, the undervaluation of unpaid labor restricts women's ability to achieve economic empowerment. This makes gender disparities in wealth and income even worse.

Measures to Recognize and Support Women's Contributions:

- **Childcare and Eldercare Services:** Investing in affordable and accessible childcare and eldercare services can reduce the burden of unpaid care work, allowing women to participate more fully in the labour force. Eg, National Creche Scheme provides child care services.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Promote women's financial inclusion through access to bank accounts, microfinance, and entrepreneurship opportunities, enabling them to generate income from their skills and talents.

Conclusion

By recognizing and supporting the contributions of women, both in unpaid and paid work, & developing a robust health and education system India can unlock the economic potential of its female population, reduce gender inequalities, and drive more inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

28. Discuss the immediate and long-term socio-economic impacts of environmental catastrophes like the Amazon drought on indigenous communities. How do these events highlight the need for sustainable living and resource management?

Introduction: Give brief context to the question

Body: Impact of such disaster on indigenous communities

Conclusion: Way forward

Amazon rainforest is facing intense drought with numerous rivers passing through the forest having dried up. As a result, there is no water, food, or medicine in villages of Indigenous

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communities living in the area which can have profound immediate and long-term socio-economic impacts on indigenous communities.

Immediate & long- term Socio-Economic Impacts

- **Scarcity of Food and Water:** Droughts can result in a lack of food & water, which can have an impact on the health and nutrition of native communities. These communities frequently rely on the resources in the area to survive.
- **Displacement:** Certain populations may have to move to get food and water, upsetting their traditional way of life. Ancestral lands and cultural customs may be lost as a result.
- **Loss of Biodiversity:** Environmental catastrophes can contribute to the loss of biodiversity, impacting indigenous economies, as many rely on forest products for subsistence and trade. Eg, a drop in water level has left water contaminated with the carcass of fish and river dolphins, known as boto.
- **Increased Vulnerability:** The lack of water has also stalled the operations of a major hydropower dam in the region and left tens of thousands of people stranded in remote jungle villages, with limited access to food, and other supplies. The extreme dry conditions have made the rainforest more vulnerable to wildfires too.

Highlighting the Need for Sustainable Living and Resource Management

- **Economic Diversification:** By lowering their reliance on a single resource and increasing their resilience to economic shocks, sustainable practices can assist indigenous communities in diversifying their sources of income.
- **Acknowledgment of Indigenous Rights:** The socioeconomic well-being and sustainable management of Indigenous people depend on granting them legal rights over their ancestral lands and resources.
- **Climate Mitigation:** Reducing deforestation and conserving forests are examples of sustainable living practices that help to mitigate climate change, which benefits not just indigenous populations but the entire world community.
- **Preserving Biodiversity:** Sustainable resource management ensures the preservation of biodiversity, which is crucial for indigenous communities' food security, cultural practices, and economic well-being.

Conclusion

Amazon forests which are known as the “lungs of the planet” absorb vast amounts of carbon dioxide, helping to regulate the planet's climate. Protecting the Amazon is essential for mitigating climate change, preserving biodiversity, and ensuring the well-being of countless human communities.

29. Critically examine the role and impact of Special and Local Laws (SLLs) within the Indian criminal justice system. How do they complement or conflict with the broader framework established by the IPC and CrPC?

Introduction: Give brief context to the question

Body: Role & Impact of SLLs within the criminal justice system

Conclusion: Way forward

Within the Indian criminal justice system, Special and Local Laws (SLLs) have distinct functions and play a significant yet intricate role. In certain situations, these rules can add to and complicate the larger framework set forth by the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Code

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of Criminal Procedure (CrPC); in other situations, however, they may function in opposition to it.

Role & Impact of SLLs within the criminal justice system

- **Handling Specialized Difficulties:** SLLs are passed to address local or specialized difficulties that the IPC and CrPC do not sufficiently cover. This group includes, for instance, rules about taxes, excise, customs, wildlife protection, and environmental restrictions.
- **Enforcement and Deterrence:** SLLs frequently include more detailed rules and punishments for particular crimes, which can serve as an enforcement mechanism. For instance, pollution and the preservation of natural resources are specifically punished under environmental protection legislation.
- **Vague definition:** SLLs like the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act, 1999 (MCOCA) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA) have to be reformed because they have glaringly inadequate, ambiguous, and vague definitions of terms like "terrorist act," "unlawful activity," "organized crime," "organized crime syndicate," and so on.
- **Divergent Penalties and Procedures:** SLLs can introduce divergent penalties and legal procedures for offenses, making it challenging to ensure consistency and fairness in the criminal justice system. This can lead to disparities in sentencing and treatment of offenders. Eg, POCSO Act 2012.
- **Potential for Abuse:** The existence of numerous SLLs can potentially be misused by authorities, leading to selective enforcement or harassment, particularly if local interests or political considerations come into play. Eg, PMLA & UAPA Act.

Conclusion

By addressing specific difficulties that the IPC and CrPC may not sufficiently cover, SLLs serve as a complement to these more general rules. For instance, the IPC does not fully cover pollution-related offenses; environmental laws offer particular guidelines and sanctions. However, when SLLs adopt different procedures, fines, or definitions for offenses that are already covered by the IPC and CrPC, problems may occur. This may result in misunderstandings, disagreements over the law, and arguments over which one should apply first.

30. Critically analyze India's current challenges in achieving food security. How do these challenges extend beyond mere food production to encompass broader socio-economic and environmental concerns?

Introduction: Give brief context to the question

Body: Highlight challenges in achieving food security

Conclusion: Way forward

India faces several critical challenges in achieving food security, and these challenges extend far beyond mere food production as shown in the recent National Family Health Survey, 2019-21, 35% of children are stunted, and 57% of women and 25% of men are anaemic. On the other end, due to imbalanced diets and sedentary lifestyles, 24% of adult women and 23% of adult men are now obese.

Challenges in achieving food security

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- **Food Loss & Wastage:** From manufacturing to consumption, a large proportion of food is lost or wasted at several points throughout the supply chain. This waste has an impact on the environment in addition to the availability of food.
- **Inadequate Food Production:** India continues to have difficulties with food production despite significant advancements. Insufficient food production is the outcome of low agricultural productivity brought on by antiquated farming methods, restricted access to contemporary technologies, and inadequate irrigation infrastructure.
- **Unequal Distribution:** Accessibility to food and unequal distribution are serious problems. There are parts of India where there is food excess, but there are also places where there is starvation and malnutrition. Poor planning, insufficient infrastructure, and socioeconomic differences are frequently the causes of this inequality.

Challenges that encompass broader socio-economic and environmental concerns

- **Land Fragmentation:** Smaller landholdings result from land fragmentation brought on by population increase and land inheritance, which reduces the economic viability of agriculture and may jeopardize food security.
- **Poverty and Affordability:** A significant portion of India's population lives in poverty, making access to nutritious food a challenge. High food prices, coupled with inadequate incomes, result in food insecurity for many.
- **Depleting natural resources:** The food production of India is becoming increasingly vulnerable due to the depletion of natural resources and climate change. Nearly half of India's arable land is now lacking in organic carbon, a crucial sign of healthy soil, as reported in the 2023 soil health survey. The main source of irrigation, groundwater, is running out quickly as in Punjab.

Conclusion

There should be a focus on shifting healthy and sustainable diets with the help of civil society, the health community, and social media influencers. National Mission on Natural Farming can support farmers' transition towards remunerative and regenerative agricultural practices ensuring an increase in income for farmers. Agriculture support should move from input subsidies to direct cash support to farmers promoting efficient use of inputs. Finally, the need is to strengthen Farmer Producer Organisations FPO to procure directly from farmers and use agri-tech startups to enhance the value addition of agricultural produce in rural areas. Food security is not solely about producing enough food but also about ensuring equitable access, nutritional quality, and long-term sustainability.

31. Discuss the recommendations of the Justice Malimath Committee and the Law Commission of India concerning the reforms needed in the criminal justice system. Evaluate the extent to which these recommendations have been implemented by various states and the challenges encountered in this process.

Introduction: Purpose of Malimath Committee

Body: Key recommendations and challenges in its implementation

Conclusion: Way forward

The Justice Malimath Committee, officially known as the Committee on Reforms of the Criminal Justice System, was established in 2000 to review the criminal justice system and suggest reforms.

Key recommendations of the committee

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- **Police Reforms:** The committee made recommendations for changes to the police force, highlighting the necessity of improved training, depoliticization, and greater accountability. Although a few states have made modifications to the composition and operations of their police forces, many have not yet fully embraced these changes.
- **Legal Aid and Access to Justice:** The committee recommended changes to guarantee that impoverished defendants obtain sufficient legal representation.
- **Dying declaration:** The committee favoured dying declarations, confessions, and audio/video recorded statements of witnesses to be authorized by law.
- **Police investigation:** The Committee suggested hiving off the investigation wing from Law and Order. It also recommended the setting up of a National Security Commission and a State Security Commission.
- **Periodic review:** The Committee has recommended providing for a Presidential Commission for a periodical review of the functioning of the Criminal Justice System.
- **Right to silence:** The committee recommended modification to Article 20 (3) of the Constitution that protects the accused from being compelled to be a witness against himself/herself. It suggested that the court be given the freedom to question the accused to elicit information and draw an adverse inference against the accused in case the latter refuses to answer.

Challenges encountered in the implementation of recommendations

- **Lack of Uniformity:** One of the main issues is that different states are not adopting these guidelines in the same way. While some governments have embraced reforms quickly, others have taken longer.
- **Resource Limitations:** A lot of states have resource limitations, which make it difficult for them to successfully execute reforms. It may require a lot of resources, for example, to increase the number of judges, upgrade the infrastructure, and strengthen the police force.
- **Opposition to Change:** One major obstacle to implementation in the criminal justice system is the opposition to change. Reforms that go against long-standing procedures may encounter resistance from the legal and police sectors.
- **Political Influence:** It is still difficult to prevent politics from interfering with how the courts and police operate. It has been challenging to guarantee the police force's autonomy and depoliticize it.

Conclusion

The Law Commission of India and the Justice Malimath Committee's recommendations have offered insightful information on several aspects of criminal justice reform. The dedication of state governments, the court, and other criminal justice system stakeholders will ultimately determine the effectiveness of these reforms.

32. Examine the significance of private sector funding in achieving climate finance goals. Discuss the potential strategies to mobilize private investments for climate action and sustainable development, highlighting any existing global initiatives or pacts.

Introduction: Describe the context of the question

Body: What is the significance of private funding and how can we mobilize this funding?

Conclusion: Way forward

Private sector funding plays a crucial role in achieving climate finance goals in India and addressing the challenges posed by climate change. The Paris Pact for People and Planet aims at scaling up private capital flows to transform emerging and developing economies in achieving climate finance goals.

Significance of private sector funding in achieving climate finance goals

- **Scale of Investment:** The scale of financing required to combat climate change and transition to a low-carbon economy is enormous. Government resources alone are often insufficient to meet these demands. Private sector funding, including investments from domestic and international companies, can provide the necessary financial resources to support climate mitigation and adaptation projects.
- **Innovation and Technology:** Private sector investments bring innovation and advanced technologies to climate action. Companies engaged in sectors such as renewable energy, electric vehicles, energy-efficient technologies, and sustainable agriculture can drive technological advancements and help India achieve its climate goals.
- **Employment generation:** The generation of jobs is a key component of climate-related projects and is essential to sustainable development. Investments made by the private sector in renewable energy, for example, can boost India's economy by generating jobs.
- **Risk Mitigation:** In climate financing, the private sector can contribute to risk sharing and risk mitigation. By applying their knowledge, they can evaluate and control the risks connected to climate projects, increasing their appeal to investors.

Strategies to mobilize private investments

- **Optimal use of resources:** Countries should engage in a review of the global climate fund to optimize the use of resources and increase partnerships between private finance and the rest of the climate finance architecture.
- **Optimal conditions for investment:** Mobilization of private investment depends on a stable and transparent environment & simplicity and consistency in the rulebook to lower risk and risk perception for global investors who fund sustainable projects in developing countries.
- **Involve credit rating agencies:** Rating agencies should take into account the viability of investment so that there is complete transparency in the working of multilateral development banks (MDBs) to make the project effective and less prone to default.
- **Green Finance:** Enabling a green finance framework ensures harnessing the full trust of private finance to support low-carbon and resilient pathways around the globe & to align the financial sector with the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

Conclusion

Finally, the success of private investments also rests on the efforts of the government to restructure their economy and address debt vulnerabilities. Private sector funding is

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indispensable for achieving climate finance goals in India & promoting sustainable development.

33. Critically analyze the concept of 'carrying capacity' in the context of sustainable development. How does it apply to the environmental challenges faced by the Indian Himalayan Region, and what measures should be taken to ensure that development activities do not exceed this capacity?

Introduction: Describe the concept of carrying capacity

Body: Relationship between carrying capacity and sustainable development and measures taken to ensure sustainable development.

Conclusion: Way forward

Recent environmental disasters in the state of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Sikkim have reignited debate on the "carrying capacity" of the Himalayan region. Carrying capacity of a region is based on the maximum population size that an ecosystem or environment can sustainably support over a specific period without causing significant degradation or harm to its natural resources and overall health. It is crucial to understand and manage the balance between human activities and the preservation of natural ecosystems to ensure long-term sustainability.

Carrying capacity and its relation to sustainable development and the Indian Himalayan Region

- **Sustainable Development:** Carrying capacity emphasizes the need to balance human activities with ecosystems' long-term ability to support them, making it an important idea in the context of sustainable development.
- **Indian Himalayan Region:** The Himalayas are vital to the preservation of the natural equilibrium and the provision of basic resources to millions of people. However, because of their distinct topography and climate, they are extremely sensitive to environmental degradation. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize this region's carrying capacity.

Measures to Ensure Sustainable Development:

- **Ecosystem-Based Management:** Use methods for managing resources that take into account the region's ecological systems, making development plans and actions well-informed by this knowledge.
- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Protect and restore habitats and promote biodiversity conservation. Establish and enforce stringent regulations to prevent deforestation and habitat destruction.
- **Infrastructure Planning:** Develop infrastructure with minimal environmental impact. The need is to adapt eco-friendly construction methods and prioritize the use of renewable energy sources.
- **Waste Management:** Implement effective waste management practices to reduce pollution and waste generation. Encourage recycling and responsible disposal of waste.
- **Community Involvement:** Engage local communities in decision-making and sustainable practices. Indigenous knowledge can be valuable in understanding the region's ecological nuances.
- **Education and Awareness:** Raise awareness among the public, policymakers, and businesses about the importance of sustainable development and respecting the region's carrying capacity.

Conclusion

Ensuring sustainable development in the Indian Himalayan Region is a complex task that requires a deep understanding of carrying capacity and the region's unique ecological dynamics.

34. Discuss the implications of the Supreme Court's assertion that there is no fundamental right to marriage under the Indian Constitution. How does this position impact the interpretation of personal liberty and individual rights?

Introduction: Give context to the SC verdict

Body: What are implications and impact of verdict on liberty and individual rights?

Conclusion: Way forward

Recently, SC asserted in its famous judgment *Supriya Chakraborty v Union of India* that there is no fundamental right to marriage under the Indian Constitution. The court was hearing a petition filed by the LGBTQIA+ community to grant legal recognition to their marriages.

Implication of SC verdict

- **Legal Recognition:** The absence of legal recognition for same-sex marriage means that same-sex couples in India cannot enjoy the legal rights and benefits associated with marriage, such as inheritance, property rights, and spousal support.
- **Social Stigma:** The lack of legal recognition contributes to the continued social stigma and discrimination faced by the LGBTQ+ community. This can lead to various forms of social exclusion and discrimination.
- **Property and Inheritance:** Same-sex partners may face difficulties in cases of property ownership, inheritance, and tax benefits available to married couples.
- **Psychological and Emotional Well-being:** The absence of legal recognition can contribute to the psychological and emotional stress experienced by same-sex couples who wish to have their relationships legally recognized.

Impact on personal liberty and individual rights

- **Right to Privacy:** The right to privacy was highlighted as a fundamental right under the Indian Constitution in the Supreme Court's 2018 ruling in the *Navtej Singh Johar* case. Denying same-sex marriage rights can be seen as an infringement on the privacy and personal choices of LGBTQ+ people, which can affect their capacity to build family ties and maintain their privacy.
- **Non-discrimination:** Discrimination on any basis, including sex, is forbidden by the Indian Constitution. Denying same-sex couples the opportunity to be married could be interpreted as a sexual orientation-based form of discrimination. This begs the question of whether the prohibition against marital rights is in line with the non-discrimination clause of the Constitution.
- **Personal Autonomy:** A key component of individual autonomy is personal liberty, which includes the freedom to get married. Denying same-sex couples the opportunity to marry limits their freedom to make decisions about their relationships and lives.
- **Parental Rights:** Same-sex couples may face challenges when it comes to adoption and parental rights. While adoption is allowed by single LGBTQ+ individuals, the recognition of both partners as legal parents may not be straightforward.

Conclusion

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The interpretation of the court should be based on constitutional morality” rather than ethos of majoritarian morality. Courts should take a liberal interpretation of the right to life and liberty under Article 21 as it did by recognizing the right to self-determination of gender, right to information, rights to privacy, dignity, shelter, right to livelihood, and the right to be forgotten.

35. Critically assess India’s preparedness in terms of infrastructure and logistics to host large-scale international sporting events like the Olympics.

Introduction: Give brief context to the question

Body: Assess India’s preparedness in terms of infrastructure and logistics

Conclusion: Way forward

Recently, PM Modi declared India’s intention to host the Olympic Games, preferably in 2036, & Youth Olympics in 2029 which will make India part of an elite club of nations like China, South Korea, and Japan to have hosted the games in Asia. India's preparedness to host large-scale international sporting events like the Olympics involves a critical assessment of its infrastructure and logistics.

Preparedness in terms of infrastructure and logistics

- **Sports Facilities:** India has made investments in several sports facilities, especially for cricket. But more work needs to be done on improving the infrastructure for Olympic sports like gymnastics, swimming, and athletics.
- **Accommodations:** Good lodging close to athletic arenas is severely lacking throughout the nation. Major cities offer a limited selection of more affordable hotels despite the presence of luxury hotels.
- **Transportation:** The infrastructure for transportation in India is frequently overworked and clogged. There are large regional differences in the state of the roads and public transit. While smaller cities might not have the required infrastructure, major cities often have airports with worldwide access.
- **Visa and Immigration:** It is imperative to streamline India's complex visa and immigration procedures for foreign attendees and participants.
- **Customs and Import Rules:** To prevent delays and issues, it is imperative to streamline customs and import rules for sports items and equipment.
- **Medical Services:** During athletic events, adequate emergency response systems and medical facilities are crucial. India's healthcare industry is expanding, but there's a chance that rural areas lack the facilities they need.

Challenges

- **Bureaucracy:** The slow and onerous bureaucracy in India might make it difficult to arrange and carry out such events effectively.
- **Finances:** It takes a lot of money to host international events, which puts pressure on public coffers and resources.
- **Political and Social Issues:** Political conditions in India can be unstable, and social issues might cause problems with planning or running an event.
- **Environmental Issues:** Pollution is one of India's environmental problems, which can affect athletes' health and tourists' overall experiences.
- **Legacy Planning:** It is crucial to make sure that the infrastructure built for the event is properly utilized and maintained following it.

Conclusion

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Given its size, culture, and sports history, India has the potential to host major international sporting events like the Olympics. However, this will require significant financial outlays, effective planning, and the collaboration of multiple stakeholders. To be a competitive host for major sporting events, India must also focus on developing grassroots sports, increasing athlete friendliness, and enhancing the country's overall sports culture.

36. Assess the challenges that eSIM technology might pose for individuals with low digital literacy. Suggest ways to overcome these challenges.

Introduction: What is eSIM

Body: Highlight challenges associated with eSIM and measures to overcome it.

Conclusion: Way forward

An embedded Subscriber Identity Module, or eSIM, is a digital SIM card that is integrated into a gadget like a tablet, smartwatch, or smartphone. eSIMs are integrated into devices during production and cannot be taken out or replaced, in contrast to conventional physical SIM cards, which are removable and must be put into a device.

Challenges associated with eSIMs technology

- **Emergency:** eSIMs bring your communication to a total halt if your phone breaks down, runs out of battery, or just falls and cracks the screen. Conventional SIMs, on the other hand, can be easily removed from the compromised phone and placed into a different backup or secondary phone.
- **Unusable in some nations:** An eSIM phone cannot be used in a nation where the telecom providers have not yet adopted the technology. This is a problem with phones like the US-version iPhone 14, which will only use eSIM. It is not a problem if your phone supports both standard SIMs and eSIM.
- **Compatibility:** The more costly smartphones, such as the Apple iPhones, Google Pixel phones, Samsung Galaxy S-series phones, and Samsung Galaxy Z series, are currently available in India with eSIM compatibility. These devices can be costly for the typical user. Users who choose to convert to an eSIM will also be limited to selecting from a considerably smaller range of devices that are compatible with the technology.
- **Privacy issues:** In many nations, such as the United States, users have the ability to program their own eSIMs. Additionally, eSIMs enable network operators to monitor subscribers' data, including data contained within applications on the device, particularly in the absence of data privacy legislation that raise privacy issues.

How to overcome these challenges?

- **Information on device compatibility:** Telecoms should instruct users on how to verify their device's compatibility with eSIMs and which devices are compatible with them. They can also provide instructions on how to migrate to devices that support eSIM, if necessary.
- **Security:** Companies can inform users of frequent frauds and security risks about eSIMs. Before proceeding, they can advise users to confirm the legitimacy of any sources and eSIM setup instructions.
- **Transitional Period:** Consider maintaining support for physical SIM cards alongside eSIMs during a transitional period to cater to users who are more comfortable with traditional technology.
- **Simplified activation process:** Telecoms can provide user-friendly, comprehensive setup instructions that lead customers through the eSIM activation procedure.

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Innovation can be done to provide eSIM setup and management tools that are easy to use, such as applications or interfaces.

Conclusion

eSIM technology is increasingly used in various devices, as it offers advantages like environmentally friendlier, security, convenience & compactness over physical SIM. However, it is essential that the transition to eSIMs is smooth and inclusive to allow a broader range of individuals to benefit from this technology without feeling excluded.

37. Critically analyze the state of health infrastructure in India's urban areas. What are the multi-scalar health risks that urban inhabitants face, and what policy measures can be taken to mitigate them?

Introduction: Give brief context to the question

Body: Highlight the state of health infrastructure and its challenges and measures to overcome them.

Conclusion: Way forward

India's urban population is estimated to reach 675 million in 2035, the second highest in the world raising a complex issue regarding the state of health infrastructure in urban areas.

Strength of health infrastructure in urban areas

- **Access to Specialised Care:** In India, urban regions typically offer easier access to multispecialty hospitals, diagnostic centres, and specialist physicians, among other specialized healthcare facilities.
- **Skilled Workforce:** The concentration of medical professionals in urban regions, such as physicians, nurses, and technicians, results in higher-quality healthcare services.
- **Technological Advancements:** Modern medical equipment and technologies are frequently available in urban healthcare institutions, enhancing the quality of diagnosis and therapy.

Weakness of health infrastructure:

- **Overcrowding:** A lot of metropolitan healthcare institutions are over capacity, which results in lower-quality care and longer wait times.
- **Inequity:** Rich and impoverished urban populations differ significantly in the standard and availability of healthcare treatments. Basic healthcare facilities are typically absent from impoverished neighbourhoods and slums.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** There are several issues with urban regions' infrastructure, such as old buildings, a lack of hospital beds, and generally bad sanitation.
- **Air pollution:** Many urban areas have poor air quality, which increases the risk of respiratory infections and other health issues.

Multi-scalar health risks

- **Infectious Diseases:** Because of their dense population, poor sanitation, and restricted access to clean water, urban areas are particularly vulnerable to the rapid spread of infectious diseases.
- **Non-Communicable Diseases:** Due to dietary changes and sedentary lifestyles, the prevalence of lifestyle-related diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and heart disease is higher in urban regions.

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- **Mental Health Problems:** Stress from the workplace, social isolation, and the fast-paced metropolitan lifestyle can all lead to a rise in mental health problems.
- **Air Pollution:** Living in an urban environment exposes people to high levels of air pollution, which can cause cardiovascular issues, respiratory illnesses, and shortened life spans.

Policy measures to mitigate risks

- **Air Quality Improvement:** To lower air pollution levels, enact stringent air quality laws and encourage the use of cleaner transportation options like electric cars and walking paths, bicycle lanes.
- **Urban design:** Create inclusive, sustainable urban design that lowers the risk of infectious diseases by providing access to clean water, green areas, and sanitary facilities.
- **Healthy diet:** Policies should encourage intake of fresh fruits and vegetables and limit sugars and salt in beverages lowering risk of diabetes.

Conclusion

A comprehensive strategy that includes legislative changes to enhance healthcare service accessibility, equity, and quality is essential to reducing multi-scalar health hazards. Protecting the health of urban residents will also require tackling environmental issues and encouraging healthy urban life.

38. Discuss the role of ESG frameworks in shaping geopolitical alliances. How do national interests influence the adoption of ESG principles?

Introduction: Define the ESG framework

Body: Role of ESG in geopolitical alliances and how national security influences them

Conclusion: Way forward

ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) frameworks are playing an increasingly important role in shaping geopolitical alliances and international relations. ESG principles encompass a set of non-financial factors that are used to evaluate the sustainability and ethical impact of investments or business practices.

Role of ESG framework in shaping geopolitical alliances

- **Soft Power:** ESG criteria are often seen as a form of "soft power" in international relations. Countries that promote ESG principles can use them to influence and shape diplomatic and economic relationships with other nations. This can further be used to forge diplomatic alliances, trade agreements, and direct foreign investment.
- **Geopolitical Influence:** ESG issues, especially those related to the environment and climate change, can significantly impact a country's geopolitical standing. Nations that are leaders in addressing climate change and other ESG concerns can gain influence and attract allies.

How does national interest influence ESG adoption

- **Economic Interests:** If a country sees financial benefits from sustainable practices, like the development of green technology or access to investments with an ESG focus, it may be more likely to embrace ESG principles.

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- **Security Interests:** National security may be impacted by ESG issues. For example, resource scarcity and conflict are two outcomes of climate change that many countries find concerning.
- **International Reputation:** A nation's standing abroad can affect its domestic policies. Adoption of ESG principles may be influenced by upholding a favourable reputation and acting responsibly on a global scale.
- **Market Access:** ESG compliance may be a requirement for capital and market access abroad. It is in a country's best interest to follow ESG principles because a lot of investors and trading partners now take them into account.
- **Domestic Politics:** The political landscape within a country can influence the adoption of ESG principles. Public pressure, advocacy groups, and political ideology can all sway national interests.

Conclusion

Robust ESG framework and responsible ESG investing are very important for an emerging economy like India as they provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to build an economy that is financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable

39. Discuss the 3-Step Roadmap initiated by China and Bhutan for border resolution. What are its implications for Bhutan's sovereignty and India's strategic interests?

Introduction: Give brief context to the question

Body: What is 3 step roadmap and its implications on India and Bhutan

Conclusion: Way forward

The joint technical team (JTT) on the delimitation and demarcation of the Bhutan-China boundary signed a cooperation agreement at the 25th round of boundary negotiations between China and Bhutan in Beijing which is a significant step in the 3-Step Roadmap for border resolution, which was started in 2021 between both nations.

What is 3-step roadmap for border resolution?

- **Diplomatic engagement:** The roadmap is anticipated to have a significant impact on expediting the demarcation negotiations and advancing the process of forging diplomatic relations between Bhutan and China.
- **Mutual understanding:** The boundary talks will successfully conclude with a solution that is acceptable to both China and Bhutan if the roadmap is implemented in an atmosphere of goodwill, understanding, and accommodation.
- **Territorial swap:** China proposed a "swap arrangement", where China conceded its northern claims for Bhutan accepting western claims, including Doklam which would be of concern to India.

Implications for Bhutan's sovereignty and India's strategic interest

- **Bhutan's security:** Historically, Bhutan has depended on India for security and assistance during international negotiations, such as those concerning the China border conflict. Bhutan's sovereignty may be somewhat threatened by any measure that circumvents or restricts India's influence over security or foreign policy choices in Bhutan.
- **Strategic ramifications:** India will face severe security difficulties if Bhutan concedes to China's claim over the Doklam territory. Adjacent to India's "Chicken Neck," or

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Siliguri Corridor, is the Doklam area. The northeastern part of India and the Indian mainland are connected by this corridor.

- **Commercial ramifications:** India's trade and commercial interests in the region may be impacted by China's increasing economic sway over Bhutan. China may then be able to access Bhutan's natural resources, such as hydroelectricity, endangering India's energy security.
- **Diplomatic ramifications:** Bhutan's long-standing pro-Indian foreign policy may be impacted by China's increasing influence in the country. As a result, Bhutan might turn away from India and ally more with China, which might have negative diplomatic repercussions for India in the area.

Conclusion

Bhutan should factor in India's national security interests when concluding any border settlement agreement with China. It is possible to reach a border deal that addresses Bhutan's concerns in the northern region while respecting India's strategic boundaries in the western sector, without necessarily compromising India's interests.

40. Critically evaluate the current governance mechanisms for the Arctic. How can India contribute to reforming Arctic governance for better climate protection?

Introduction: What is Arctic Council?

Body: Highlight India's role in reforming Arctic governance.

Conclusion: Way forward

The governance mechanisms for the Arctic are primarily based on international agreements and cooperation among the Arctic states. The primary forum for Arctic governance is the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental organization established in 1996. The Arctic Council consists of eight Arctic states: Canada, Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States.

Critical Evaluation of Governance Mechanism in the Arctic

- **Security challenges:** As certain major nations, notably Russia and the United States, strengthen their military presence in the Arctic, the region is becoming more militarized. This gives governance issues a security component.
- **Limited Representation:** Despite their concerns about global climate change, non-Arctic states like India are not full members of the Arctic Council and have little influence over the region's governance rules.
- **Cooperative Framework:** The Arctic Council provides a platform for Arctic states to engage in diplomatic cooperation and dialogue on various issues, including climate change and environmental protection.
- **Inclusion of Indigenous Peoples:** The inclusion of indigenous organizations ensures that the voices and concerns of indigenous communities in the Arctic are heard.

Role of India in reforming Arctic governance for climate protection

- **Observer status:** India can take part in debates, influence policy decisions, and offer knowledge on mitigating and adapting to climate change because of its observer status in the Arctic Council. The active involvement of India as a member of the Arctic Council to voice the concerns of the Global South could help push for an end to further exploitation.

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- **Research Cooperation:** India can work with Arctic states and organizations to conduct scientific studies about climate change and the Arctic. Through collaboration, the effects of climate change in the area can be better understood and addressed.
- **Environmental Protection:** India might push for more stringent regulations in the Arctic region to safeguard the ecosystem. To reduce environmental harm, this can entail advocating for stronger laws governing shipping, resource extraction, and pollution control.
- **Global Leadership:** By highlighting the interdependence of climate-related issues and the significance of tackling climate change on a global scale, India can assume a leading role in promoting a global climate change agenda.

Conclusion

Given its increasing influence in international geopolitics, India ought to advocate for a consensus-building strategy underpinned by sustainability principles to develop an all-encompassing framework for Arctic governance.