

ForumIAS

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*HISTORY
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FORUMIAS

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Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight economic and agricultural implications of rice & wheat as separate entities

Conclusion: Way forward

Treating rice and wheat as distinct entities in policymaking rather than lumping them together under the "cereal surplus" category is essential for addressing the unique challenges faced by each crop.

Economic & Agricultural Implications

- **Targeted Interventions:** De-hyphenation makes it possible to implement more focused policy measures that are suited to the unique requirements of wheat and rice. This can involve research projects, pricing support systems, and targeted subsidies.
- **Risk management and diversification:** Handling rice and wheat differently might promote agricultural sector diversity and lessen farmers' exposure to price swings and other hazards related to a single crop.
- **Climate Change Adaptation:** While both wheat and rice are vulnerable to climate change, their reactions to these changes may vary. De-hyphenation enables more specialized approaches to deal with climate-related problems like pests, heat stress, and drought.
- **Better Crop Management:** Using de-hyphenation can result in better crop management techniques. For rice and wheat, for instance, various farming practices, input needs, and harvesting strategies can be ideal.

Addressing Current Challenges

- **Targeted Support and Subsidies:** Offer programs and subsidies that are specially created to meet the particular requirements of every crop. This could involve market price support measures, credit facilities, and input subsidies.
- **Investments in Research and Development:** Invest more in R&D to create climate-resilient technologies, better farming methods, and better crop varieties.
- **Infrastructure Development:** To enable the effective production and marketing of both rice and wheat, invest in infrastructure, such as irrigation systems, storage facilities, and transportation networks.
- **Trade Regulations:** Put into effect trade laws that safeguard homegrown manufacturers and encourage fair competition. Tariffs, quotas, or subsidies to encourage domestic production may be used in this situation.

Conclusion

Policymakers may develop focused plans that not only address the current issues but also guarantee the long-term sustainability and security of India's food system by recognizing rice and wheat as distinct entities.

Discuss the implications of the Supreme Court's stance on the rights of the accused under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). How does it balance the need for stringent measures against money laundering with the protection of individual rights? (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Implications of Courts's stance on rights of accused under PMLA & balance between money laundering and individual rights

Conclusion: Way forward

The Supreme Court's series of decisions on the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) reflects a nuanced approach to balancing stringent measures against money laundering with the protection of individual rights.

Key Implications of Supreme Court's Stance

- **Presumption of Innocence:** The Court has consistently upheld the principle of presumption of innocence, emphasizing that an accused is innocent until proven guilty. This principle is a cornerstone of the Indian criminal justice system. For eg, in **Manish Sisodia's case (2024) & K Kavitha's case (2024)**, the court has relaxed bail conditions as listed under PMLA.
- **Right to Fair Trial:** The Court has reinforced the accused's right to a fair trial, including the right to legal representation, the right to confront witnesses, and the right to be informed of the charges against them.
- **Role of Enforcement Agencies:** The Court has closely monitored the actions of enforcement agencies like the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to prevent any abuse of power or violations of individual rights. It has emphasized the need for these agencies to act within the bounds of the law.
- **Enforcement of Arrest and Detention Provisions:** The Court has scrutinized the PMLA's provisions related to arrest and detention, ensuring that they are not used arbitrarily or excessively as stated in **Pankaj Bansal v. Union of India (2023)**, It has emphasized the importance of adherence to due process and the need for clear and cogent reasons for arrest or detention.

Balancing Act: Stringent Measures vs. Individual Rights

- **Nature of the crime:** The severity of the money laundering offense can influence the extent to which individual rights can be limited.
- **Strength of the evidence:** The Court has emphasized the need for a strong prima facie case before resorting to stringent measures like attachment or detention. in **Prem Prakash v. Union of India (2024)**, the Court ruled that confessions made by an individual in custody, especially under coercive conditions, could not be considered voluntary and would violate the right against self-incrimination.
- **Proportionality:** The Court has ensured that any restrictions on individual rights are proportionate to the nature of the offense and the threat posed to the public interest.
- **Due process:** The Court has consistently upheld the principles of due process, ensuring that the accused are treated fairly throughout the proceedings.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's interventions in the application of the PMLA underscore the delicate balance between stringent anti-money laundering measures and the protection of individual rights as can be seen when the Supreme Court reversed many of its stances which it had earlier drawn in **Vijay Madanlal Choudhary**, case related to arrest powers, bail provisions for undertrials recording of statement from accused during investigation.

Discuss how technology, such as e-filing systems and online dispute resolution platforms, can be integrated into the judicial process to enhance efficiency and reduce delays. What challenges might arise in the implementation of such technologies? (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: What are efforts to address judicial delays and challenges that arise in its implementation?

Conclusion: Way forward

Judicial delays have long plagued the Indian judicial system, undermining the public's faith in its ability to deliver timely justice. The recent remarks by President Droupadi Murmu at the National Conference of the

District Judiciary have spotlighted the systemic issues leading to prolonged litigation, often referred to as the "culture of adjournments" or "Black Coat Syndrome."

Efforts to Address Judicial Delays

- **E-filing Systems:** The introduction of e-filing systems has streamlined the submission and management of legal documents, reducing delays caused by manual processes.
- **Online Dispute Resolution (ODR):** ODR platforms offer an alternative to traditional court proceedings, enabling faster and cost-effective resolution of disputes.
- **Addition of Courtrooms:** Increasing the number of courtrooms is an immediate measure to alleviate the burden on existing courts.
- **Pre-Litigation Dispute Resolution:** Strategies like Lok Adalats and mediation centers aim to resolve disputes before they reach the courts, thus reducing the caseload.
- **Comprehensive Reform Strategy:** The CJI's plan outlines a multi-stage approach to addressing judicial delays, focusing on infrastructure improvement, human resource augmentation, and procedural reforms to ensure both speed and fairness in the justice delivery system.

Challenges

- **Shortfall in Judges:** India has just 15 judges per 10 lakh people, far below the recommended 50 judges per 10 lakh by the Law Commission in 1987. This shortage exacerbates the caseload burden, leading to delays in hearings and case resolutions.
- **Lack of Support Staff:** Courts are also hampered by insufficient support staff, essential for efficient case management and timely processing of legal documents.
- **Frequent Adjournments:** The practice of frequent adjournments delays proceedings and leads to cases dragging on for years. This "adjournment culture" often stems from overburdened courts, but it significantly impacts the lives of litigants, particularly the poor and vulnerable.
- **Over Five Crore Pending Cases:** According to the National Judicial Data Grid, over five crore cases are pending across various levels of the judiciary. This backlog is a result of both the rising number of cases filed each year and the system's inability to resolve them promptly.

Conclusion

Judicial delays undermine the rule of law and erode public confidence in the justice system. While technological interventions and structural reforms have been initiated, a long-term, comprehensive plan is essential to balance the demand for speedy justice with the need to uphold due process and fairness. Only then can the judiciary fulfill its role as the guardian of justice in a democratic society.

Critically examine the challenges faced by states in accessing disaster relief funds from the central government. What measures can be introduced to ensure timely and adequate financial support during disasters? (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight challenges faced by states in accessing funds and measures to ensure their timely utilization

Conclusion: Way forward

The Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, introduced on August 1, 2024, in the Lok Sabha, has reignited concerns over the centralization of disaster management in India. While the Bill seeks to strengthen the functioning of various disaster management authorities, it also introduces significant challenges, particularly in the context of accessing disaster relief funds.

Challenges Faced by States in Accessing Disaster Relief Funds

- **Excessive Central Control:** The amendment Bill furthers the centralization of disaster management by providing statutory status to pre-existing central committees, thereby complicating the chain of action during disasters.
- **Dilution of the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF):** The Bill dilutes the purpose of the NDRF by removing specific guidelines for its utilization, making it more challenging for states to access these funds promptly during severe disasters.
- **Lack of Financial Devolution:** While the Bill proposes the creation of Urban Disaster Management Authorities, it does not ensure the necessary financial devolution to empower these authorities.
- **Regional Variability and Gradation:** The Act fails to consider the regional variability of disasters. For instance, a temperature that is normal in one region might constitute a heatwave in another, yet the Act's rigid classification does not account for such local differences.

Measures to Ensure Timely and Adequate Financial Support

- **Empowering State Governments:** To address the challenges posed by centralization, states should be given greater autonomy in accessing and utilizing disaster relief funds. This can be achieved by creating state-level disaster response funds with fewer central approvals required for their disbursement.
- **Adaptive and Flexible Criteria:** The criteria for disaster classification and fund allocation should be made more adaptive, considering regional variations and the specific impact of disasters on different geographical areas.
- **Simplified and Transparent Procedures:** The process of accessing disaster relief funds should be streamlined by reducing bureaucratic layers and making the procedures more transparent.
- **Regular Consultations and Feedback Mechanisms:** Regular consultations between the central and state governments, along with feedback mechanisms, can help address the concerns of states and improve the overall disaster management framework.

Conclusion

These measures would not only enhance disaster preparedness but also strengthen the overall resilience of the nation to future disasters.

Inequality is a significant challenge in ensuring inclusive development. Examine how progressive taxation, fair labour laws, and investment in infrastructure can address income inequality in India. (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: How various methods can address income inequality in India?

Conclusion: Way forward

Income inequality, a persistent issue in India, hampers inclusive development by creating a disparity in opportunities, access to essential services, and overall quality of life.

Progressive Taxation

- **Redistribution of Wealth:** Progressive taxation is vital for redistributing wealth from the affluent to the marginalized. This strategy is not about "stealing from the rich" but rather about utilizing tax revenues to improve essential public services like health, education, skill development, and environmental sustainability. By focusing on these areas, the government can create a more inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to prosper.
- **Strategic Use of Tax Revenues:** The funds generated through progressive taxation should be channeled into job creation initiatives and social infrastructure projects, which can uplift the economically disadvantaged. This approach ensures that the benefits of economic growth are shared more broadly across society.

Fair Labour Laws

- **Worker Protection:** Enforcing fair labor laws is crucial for ensuring that workers benefit equitably from economic growth. This includes upholding labor rights, guaranteeing minimum wages, ensuring safety and security in the workplace, eliminating child labor, and protecting workers from exploitation. Collective bargaining rights also play a significant role in empowering workers to negotiate better wages and working conditions.
- **Equitable Economic Growth:** Fair labor laws help ensure that economic growth benefits all segments of society, not just the wealthy or those in positions of power. This approach contributes to reducing income disparities and promoting social justice.

Investment in Infrastructure

- **Reducing Regional Disparities:** Investing in infrastructure, particularly in underserved regions, can help reduce regional disparities and promote inclusion. Key areas for investment include environmental sustainability, water and sanitation, forest management, energy, climate resilience, housing, and transportation.
- **Sustainable Development:** Infrastructure investments should focus on sustainability to ensure that economic development does not come at the expense of future generations. This involves building infrastructure that supports both economic growth and environmental conservation.

Conclusion

These strategies collectively provide a comprehensive framework for addressing income inequality in India, ensuring that economic growth benefits all sections of society while promoting sustainability and social justice.

With the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), discuss the importance of a collaborative, multi-stakeholder framework in AI governance. How can India ensure that AI development aligns with its national priorities and the interests of the Global South? (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Importance of collaborative, multi-stakeholder framework in AI governance.

Conclusion: Way forward

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has profound implications for global governance, necessitating a collaborative, multi-stakeholder framework that can address both the opportunities and challenges posed by this transformative technology.

Importance of a Collaborative, Multi-Stakeholder Framework in AI Governance

- **Ethical Considerations:** A multi-stakeholder approach can help address ethical concerns such as bias, privacy, and transparency in AI systems. By involving diverse perspectives, it is possible to develop guidelines that promote fairness, accountability, and human rights.
- **Global Cooperation:** As AI has global implications, international collaboration is crucial. A multi-stakeholder framework can facilitate dialogue and cooperation among different countries, ensuring that AI development is aligned with shared values and avoids harmful outcomes.
- **Trust and Confidence:** A collaborative approach can help build trust and confidence in AI technologies. By involving stakeholders from various sectors, it is possible to address concerns and ensure that AI is developed and deployed responsibly.

Aligning AI Development with India's National Priorities

- **National AI Strategy:** India should develop a comprehensive national AI strategy that outlines its priorities, goals, and ethical principles. This strategy should be informed by consultations with various stakeholders, including government agencies, industry, academia, and civil society.
- **Ethical Guidelines:** The Indian government should establish clear ethical guidelines for AI development and deployment. These guidelines should address issues such as bias, privacy, accountability, and transparency.
- **Research and Development:** India should invest in research and development to build its capabilities in AI. This includes supporting academic research, fostering innovation in the private sector, and developing talent in AI-related fields.
- **International Cooperation:** India should actively participate in international forums and initiatives related to AI governance. This includes collaborating with other countries in the Global South to address their specific needs and concerns.
- **Capacity Building:** India should provide capacity-building support to other countries in the Global South to help them develop their own AI capabilities and adopt responsible AI practices.

Conclusion

As AI continues to shape the global landscape, India must play an active role in shaping international AI governance. Furthermore, India's leadership in the Global South enables it to push for AI governance frameworks that are fair, inclusive, and reflective of the unique challenges faced by developing countries.

The concept of the "Right to Disconnect" advocates for the right to disconnect from work outside of official hours. In the context of India's competitive economic structure, critically analyze the potential impact of such legislation on economic development and work culture. (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight the positive impact of "right to disconnect" and its potential drawbacks

Conclusion: Way forward

The **Right to Disconnect** law, which allows employees to disengage from work-related communication outside of official hours, has sparked significant debate in competitive economies like India. While such legislation aims to address burnout and promote work-life balance, its potential impact on economic development and work culture is multifaceted.

Positive Impacts

- **Improved Work-Life Balance:** Proponents argue that disconnecting from work outside office hours enhances employee well-being, which can lead to higher productivity and job satisfaction. Studies suggest that rest and mental rejuvenation make workers more creative and motivated.
- **Healthier Workforce:** Reducing overwork could lessen burnout, promoting a healthier and more sustainable work environment. This is particularly relevant in industries with high attrition rates due to stress, such as IT.

Potential Drawbacks

- **Impact on Competitiveness:** India's economy thrives on innovation and rapid growth, in sectors where longer hours and flexibility are often crucial. The editorial emphasizes that countries like Iceland, with reduced work hours, are not comparable to India, which has a large private sector and a growing youth population. Reduced work hours in India could slow down medium performers and undermine the country's ability to compete in global markets.
- **Hustle Culture:** In India, work is seen as a source of identity and ambition, with continuous striving celebrated. Hustle culture, although criticized for overwork, also drives many of the nation's breakthrough innovations. As the editorial points out, high-performance environments

have historically been linked to significant advancements, and curbing this drive through legislated disengagement could impede progress.

- **Slow Economic Growth:** The article highlights that a right to disconnect might dull the edge required for economic breakthroughs, especially in industries that need to respond quickly to market demands. For a developing country like India, where economic growth is crucial, such a policy could slow national progress and widen the gap with more developed economies.

Conclusion:

While the Right to Disconnect has clear benefits for employee well-being, its broader application in India's competitive economy could limit growth and reduce the innovation required for development. A balanced approach is needed—one that values both hard work and employee well-being, ensuring sustainable productivity without compromising economic momentum.

Examine the factors that contribute to the gap between budgetary allocations for the health sector and the actual outcomes at the State level in India. Discuss how fiscal space and operational frameworks at the State level impact the efficacy of health schemes. (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight the factors that contribute to the gap and how fiscal space and operational frameworks impact the efficacy of health schemes.

Conclusion: Way forward

The realization of the full potential of budgetary allocations in the health sector depends significantly on State-level factors, especially as many health initiatives are implemented through Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS), where States share the cost and responsibility for execution.

Factors

- **Low fund utilization:** For instance, under the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM), the actual expenditure has consistently been much lower than the budgeted allocation. This is due to delays in execution, complex structures in grant disbursement, and challenges in integrating health initiatives with existing programs at the State level.
- **Financial Management:** Similarly, in the Human Resources for Health and Medical Education (HRHME) initiative, the funds utilized have been significantly lower than allocated, indicating inefficiencies in deploying capital expenditure. These challenges highlight the need for improved public financial management at the State level, better planning, and coordination to ensure timely disbursement and execution of funds.
- **Shortage of Human Resources:** A significant shortage of health professionals, especially in newly established medical colleges and rural healthcare centers, undermines the full potential of health sector investments. For example, there are substantial vacancies in teaching faculty positions in medical colleges and specialist doctors in healthcare institutions, particularly in States with weaker health systems like Uttar Pradesh and Empowered Action Group States.

Impact

- **Fiscal Space in States:** States are constrained by limited fiscal **space** to maintain the physical infrastructure created under central schemes. While central funding supports initial capital investments, States are required to bear recurring costs, such as salaries, maintenance, and supplies, after the project duration (e.g., after 2025-26 for PM-ABHIM). Moreover, State governments have competing demands on their budgets, with health often receiving a lower priority compared to sectors like infrastructure or education.

- **Operational Complexities:** The execution of health schemes is complicated by overlapping funding sources, bureaucratic procedures, and the need for extensive reorganization of public health institutions. For example, in the case of Integrated District Public Health Laboratories (IDPHLs), States need to integrate various vertical health programs, which involve complex planning and restructuring. Delays in such restructuring often lead to underperformance in health outcomes.

Conclusion

The gap between budgetary allocations and health outcomes in India is a complex issue influenced by a range of factors. To address this gap, it is essential to strengthen fiscal space, improve operational frameworks, and address underlying social, economic, and demographic challenges.

Evaluate the role of semiconductor supply chains in the current global geo-economic and geopolitical scenario. How can India's efforts to develop its semiconductor industry help reduce dependency on existing global players? (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Role of semiconductor supply chain & India's efforts to develop semiconductor industry

Conclusion: Way forward

Semiconductor chips are indispensable to modern technological systems, driving industries from automobiles to defense. The global semiconductor supply chain is dominated by a few countries, particularly Taiwan, South Korea, and the U.S., which hold a strategic position in the manufacturing of advanced chips.

Role of Semiconductor Supply Chains

- **Enhance Technological Sovereignty:** India will reduce its reliance on imports for critical technologies and components, particularly in defense and telecommunications. This will bolster India's autonomy in decision-making during geopolitical crises.
- **Strengthen Economic Resilience:** Diversifying the supply chain helps mitigate the risks associated with supply disruptions, as seen during the pandemic. A strong semiconductor industry can shield India's manufacturing sectors, such as automotive and electronics, from future global shortages.
- **Foster Regional Partnerships:** The semiconductor agreement with Singapore is a vital component of India's Act East Policy and its broader Indo-Pacific vision. By collaborating with regional partners, India strengthens its influence in Southeast Asia, positioning itself as a key player in the global semiconductor race.

India's Efforts to Develop Its Semiconductor Industry and Reduce Dependency

- **Indigenous efforts:** India, recognizing the strategic importance of semiconductors, launched the India Semiconductor Mission in 2021 with an investment of ₹76,000 crore (\$10 billion) in incentives to develop the semiconductor ecosystem.
- **Partnerships with Global Firms:** The government has announced partnerships, such as the Tata Group's collaboration with Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation (PSMC) to set up a fabrication plant in India.
- **Attracting Foreign Investment:** India's land and labor costs, which are more competitive than those of countries like Singapore, offer a significant advantage in attracting semiconductor companies looking to diversify their operations.
- **Learning from Singapore's Model:** Singapore's success as a semiconductor hub stems from its early investments, strong infrastructure, and skilled workforce. India can learn from Singapore's

model by setting up specialized Wafer Fab Parks with state-of-the-art infrastructure and talent development programs.

Conclusion

India's partnership with Singapore in the semiconductor sector holds significant promise for reducing its dependence on established global players and enhancing its role in the global supply chain. This collaboration is critical for India's long-term geo-economic resilience and technological sovereignty in a world increasingly defined by digital and technological competition.

The demand for an increase in tax devolution from the Union to the States has gained momentum. Examine the implications of raising the share of net proceeds to 50% as a means to eliminate vertical fiscal imbalance in India. (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Implications of raising share of net proceeds to eliminate VFI

Conclusion: Way forward

Vertical Fiscal Imbalance (VFI) refers to the mismatch between the revenue-raising capabilities and expenditure responsibilities of different levels of government. In the context of India, the Union government collects a greater share of total revenue, while the States bear a larger share of the expenditure burden. This imbalance, as noted by the 15th Finance Commission, is particularly pronounced in India, with States incurring 61% of the total expenditure but only collecting 38% of the revenue.

Implications

- **Enhancing Cooperative Fiscal Federalism:** Reducing VFI aligns with the principles of cooperative federalism, where States and the Union work together to promote balanced economic development. This promotes a healthier fiscal relationship and reduces friction between the two levels of government, fostering a collaborative approach to governance.
- **Addressing Crisis-Driven Imbalances:** As noted during the COVID-19 pandemic, crises tend to exacerbate VFIs by driving a wedge between States' revenue and expenditure responsibilities. A reduced VFI would make States more financially resilient in the face of such emergencies, reducing the need for constant bailout support from the Union government.
- **Efficiency in Expenditure:** States, being closer to the people, are better positioned to understand the specific needs of their populations. The ability to plan and allocate resources without heavy dependence on central grants can also encourage better governance and accountability at the sub-national level.
- **Increased Flexibility for States:** The devolution of taxes from the Union to the States provides unconditional or untied funds, which allow States to allocate resources based on their own priorities and jurisdictional needs. This increases fiscal autonomy, enhancing the ability of States to respond effectively to local development challenges.
- **Constitutional Efficiency:** The Constitution of India mandates a division of financial duties between the Union and the States. Revenue collection is centralized with the Union for efficiency, while expenditure responsibilities are decentralized to the States to maximize the efficiency of spending on public goods and services. This decentralized expenditure approach is meant to bring governance closer to the people.

Conclusion

Increasing tax devolution to around 49%, as suggested by empirical analysis, would strengthen India's fiscal system by enabling States to more effectively meet their responsibilities. This adjustment would foster a more balanced and efficient federal structure, improving governance and optimizing resource allocation at the State level.

Critically analyze India's trade policy in Southeast Asia, with reference to its withdrawal from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). How is India attempting to mitigate the impact of its decision on regional trade dynamics? (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Impact of India's withdrawal from RCEP & measures to mitigate the impact.

Conclusion: Way forward

India's trade policy in Southeast Asia, particularly in the context of its withdrawal from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), remains a subject of critical importance in shaping its economic and strategic engagements in the region.

India's Withdrawal from RCEP: Economic and Strategic Concerns

- **Trade Deficits:** One of India's primary reasons for exiting RCEP was its fear of worsening trade deficits, particularly with China. India's trade imbalance with China, exacerbated by RCEP's trade liberalization provisions, could have undermined its domestic manufacturing and industrial sectors.
- **Agricultural Sector:** India was also concerned about protecting its agricultural sector from competition with other RCEP members, particularly those with more efficient farming sectors, which could harm Indian farmers.
- **Lack of Protection for Domestic Industry:** Indian industries were wary of increased competition from more advanced manufacturing economies like Vietnam and China. The perceived inability of RCEP to offer sufficient safeguards for domestic sectors, especially textiles, electronics, and manufacturing, was another concern.

India's Post-RCEP Strategy in Southeast Asia

- **Strengthening Bilateral Agreements:** India is strengthening bilateral trade and investment ties in Southeast Asia, focusing on Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam. Collaborations in sectors like digitalization, health, and advanced manufacturing aim to address trade imbalances by leveraging India's competitive advantages.
- **Exploring New Economic Areas:** India is also pursuing semiconductor diplomacy with Malaysia and Singapore, both of which have significant semiconductor production capabilities. This move is part of a broader strategy to explore new sectors like space technology and digitalization to diversify its economic engagements.
- **Reaffirming the Indo-Pacific Vision:** India's Indo-Pacific strategy aligns with its geopolitical goals. Recent visits by the President to Fiji and New Zealand, along with diplomatic engagements by the External Affairs Minister, reflect India's commitment to shaping the region's economic and security landscape.
- **Bilateral Trade with ASEAN:** India continues to prioritize trade with ASEAN, working to improve existing agreements and hosting leaders from Malaysia and Vietnam. It aims to enhance ties outside RCEP, particularly by revitalizing the ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement for better market access.

Conclusion

Prime Minister Modi's recent visits to Southeast Asia, including Singapore and Brunei, highlight India's efforts to mitigate the impact of its RCEP exit by strengthening alternative trade and investment frameworks.

Examine the strategic challenges posed by China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its increasing influence in South Asia. How can India balance economic vulnerabilities while maintaining strategic autonomy in the region? (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight challenges posed by BRI & measures to address these issues.

Conclusion: Way forward

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has significantly expanded its influence across South Asia, creating strategic challenges for India. The initiative aims to develop infrastructure, enhance trade routes, and foster economic dependence, which has the potential to undermine India's position in its neighborhood.

Challenges

- **Geopolitical Encirclement:** China's BRI has strengthened its presence in South Asia through investments in countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal, and Bangladesh. This "String of Pearls" strategy threatens India's influence and creates potential military footholds, such as the Hambantota and Gwadar ports, challenging India's maritime security and dominance in the Indian Ocean.
- **Economic Leverage and Debt Diplomacy:** Heavy Chinese investments have led to economic dependence in countries like Sri Lanka and the Maldives, exposing them to debt traps and influencing their foreign policies. Sri Lanka's Hambantota port lease and the Maldives' "India Out" campaign reflect China's growing economic leverage at India's expense.
- **Territorial Concerns – China-Pakistan Nexus:** The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) runs through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, challenging India's sovereignty and deepening Sino-Pakistani military cooperation. This heightens India's security concerns, especially regarding a potential two-front conflict.
- **Strategic Infrastructure in the Indian Ocean:** Chinese investments in key ports in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Myanmar under the Maritime Silk Road give China strategic advantages in the Indian Ocean Region, posing a direct challenge to India's maritime strategy and security.

How India Can Balance Economic Vulnerabilities While Maintaining Strategic Autonomy?

- **Diversifying Economic Dependencies:** India must reduce its \$85 billion trade deficit with China by decreasing reliance on Chinese imports and boosting domestic manufacturing. Diversifying trade with countries like Japan, South Korea, and Western nations will help mitigate economic vulnerabilities.
- **Reducing Dependence on Defense Imports:** India should cut reliance on defense imports from conflict-prone countries like Russia, Ukraine, and Israel. Boosting domestic production and forging partnerships with France, the U.S., and Israel for defense technology and joint ventures will secure reliable supply chains and enhance military readiness.
- **Strengthening Regional Connectivity:** India should enhance regional projects like the India-Myanmar-Thailand Highway and Chabahar Port to counter China's BRI and strengthen its influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean.
- **Building Strategic Alliances:** Forming alliances through the Quad and other partnerships will provide strategic balance against China. India should also explore new diplomatic partnerships to reinforce its security and economic interests.
- **Enhancing Technological and Industrial Capabilities:** To boost strategic autonomy, India should invest in electronics, semiconductors, and AI. Initiatives like the PLI scheme support domestic production, while collaborations with advanced economies and global research institutions can drive innovation. Partnerships in 5G, AI, and cyber defense will strengthen India's tech base and global standing.

Conclusion

These strategies will help India address the challenges posed by China's BRI, maintain its strategic autonomy, and support regional stability and development.

Discuss the challenges faced by India in reducing dependency on Chinese smartphone manufacturers while promoting indigenous production under the 'Make in India' initiative. How can India balance domestic capacity building with foreign investments?

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Challenges faced by India & how to balance capacity building with foreign investments

Conclusion: Way forward

India's ambition to become a global manufacturing hub under the 'Make in India' initiative is marked by both opportunities and challenges, particularly when it comes to reducing its reliance on Chinese smartphone manufacturers.

Challenges Faced by India

- **Market Dominance of Chinese Smartphone Brands:** Chinese brands like Xiaomi and Vivo dominate India's smartphone market due to affordable phones, strong distribution, and aggressive marketing, making them tough competition for Indian companies.
- **Lack of a Robust Domestic Supply Chain:** India's smartphone manufacturing ecosystem is underdeveloped, with critical components like semiconductors and batteries still being imported.
- **Dependence on Chinese Technology and Investment:** Chinese smartphone companies leverage their well-established supply chains and R&D in China. Despite India's push for 'Indianisation,' Chinese firms are reluctant to share technology, especially without clarity on equity participation.
- **Challenges in Creating a Skilled Workforce and Infrastructure:** India faces a shortage of skilled labor and lacks the necessary infrastructure for advanced manufacturing. Setting up plants requires technical expertise, reliable utilities, and improved working conditions, none of which are currently available at scale.

Balancing Domestic Capacity Building with Foreign Investments

- **Leveraging Foreign Investments for Technology Transfer:** India's strategy of involving foreign players like Apple and Samsung while pushing Chinese companies to localize mirrors China's model for capability building. Collaborating with Taiwanese firms, such as Tata Electronics' acquisitions, can foster local expertise and strengthen the domestic manufacturing ecosystem.
- **Strengthening PLI and Ancillary Industry Development:** The increased budget for the PLI scheme highlights India's commitment to local manufacturing. However, to maximize its impact, India must also build a strong ancillary industry for key components and enhance R&D investments in areas like semiconductors and component design.
- **Creating Incentives for Domestic Manufacturers:** To reduce reliance on Chinese brands, the government can provide extra incentives for Indian manufacturers to meet production and export targets.
- **Strategic Visa and Investment Policies:** Easing visa norms for Chinese technicians and promoting Chinese FDI, while supporting local manufacturers, shows India's balanced approach.

Conclusion

A balanced approach that combines domestic capacity building with strategic foreign investments is crucial for achieving self-reliance in the smartphone industry.

Analyze the importance of interoperability and inclusivity in Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). How can countries avoid monopolistic tendencies while fostering both public and private innovation in the digital sector?

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Importance of interoperability & inclusivity in DPI & how to avoid monopolistic tendencies

Conclusion: Way forward

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) plays a crucial role in enabling digital transformation and promoting economic growth. It refers to the underlying digital infrastructure and services that support various sectors of society, such as healthcare, education, and governance.

Importance of Interoperability and Inclusivity in Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

- **Interoperability:** Interoperability allows different digital systems to work together smoothly, facilitating the exchange of data and services across platforms. This ensures that no individual or institution is confined to using a specific technology provider, thus preventing lock-in by monopolistic companies. A good DPI must promote interoperability, enabling users to interact with different systems without being restricted by competing monopolies. This fosters healthy competition and innovation while ensuring that citizens can freely move between service providers, as exemplified by India's Citizen Stack.
- **Inclusivity:** Inclusivity guarantees that digital infrastructure serves everyone, including marginalized and underserved populations. In India, over 80% of financial inclusion was achieved by creating digital platforms that cater to diverse social and economic groups. Inclusivity also ensures that digital services are accessible in terms of language, affordability, and user experience. DPIs, like those promoted under Citizen Stack, need to safeguard citizen empowerment, ensuring that individuals have control over their data through consent-based systems while maintaining privacy and security.

Avoiding Monopolistic Tendencies

- **Open Standards:** Encouraging the application of open standards guarantees system interoperability and keeps a single player from controlling the whole market.
- **Data sharing:** Promoting data sharing amongst entities in the public and private sectors can boost competition and innovation. Nonetheless, user security and privacy must be safeguarded.
- **Anti-Monopoly Regulations:** Put in place strict anti-monopoly laws to stop big businesses from gaining undue market dominance and inhibiting innovation.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Working with businesses in the private sector can provide resources and experience, but it's crucial to make sure that the interests of the public are safeguarded.
- **Assistance for New Businesses:** In the digital industry, offering assistance to startups and small enterprises can stimulate competition and innovation.

Conclusion

Interoperability and inclusivity are vital for the success of DPIs, ensuring broad access and preventing monopolies. Countries must balance public and private innovation with strong regulations to create secure, scalable digital systems. India's Citizen Stack offers a model for achieving this through open, secure, and inclusive digital infrastructure.

The UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) has been termed a game-changer in bilateral trade. Discuss the key areas of cooperation under CEPA and its potential impact on both economies." (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: What are key areas of cooperation under CEPA & impact of CEPA on both nations?

Conclusion: Way forward

The UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) has been termed a "game-changer" for bilateral trade, highlighting the deep-rooted ties and mutual respect between the two nations. The recent visit of Sheikh Khaled, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, to Delhi, reinforces this relationship, emphasizing both historical connections and modern collaboration.

Key Areas of Cooperation Under CEPA

- **Trade and Investment:** CEPA has significantly boosted bilateral trade, with over a 15% increase in the first year alone. Key sectors include energy, renewable energy, and infrastructure, with billions in additional investment deals already signed.

- **Technological and Educational Collaboration:** The UAE and India are forging deeper ties in education and technology, symbolized by the establishment of the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi Abu Dhabi. This partnership paves the way for advancements in critical areas such as health innovation, nuclear technology, and digital infrastructure.
- **People-to-People Connections:** One of the strongest aspects of UAE-India relations is the presence of 3.5 million Indians in the UAE, the largest expatriate community in the country. This reflects not only the historical ties but also the current strength of cooperation.
- **Civil Nuclear Cooperation:** The partnership between the UAE and India extends into civil nuclear technology, a domestic success story for the UAE rooted in international cooperation.

Potential Impact on Both Economies

- **Increased Bilateral Trade:** CEPA is projected to push bilateral trade towards \$100 billion, leveraging India's strengths in agriculture, manufacturing, and IT, alongside the UAE's prowess in energy and finance.
- **Advances in Green Energy and Technology:** The UAE and India's cooperation in renewable energy and nuclear technology will enable both nations to tackle global challenges like climate change.
- **Cultural and Educational Exchange:** The establishment of IIT Delhi Abu Dhabi underscores a future of increased cultural and educational exchange. This collaboration in academia and research will help both nations build knowledge economies, preparing them for the future through skills development and technological innovation.
- **Strengthening Strategic Partnership:** The UAE-India relationship, founded on respect, trust, and shared values, continues to deepen through CEPA. This partnership will not only boost economic growth but also enhance regional stability, with both nations emerging as influential players in the global economy.

Conclusion

The UAE-India CEPA is more than just a trade agreement & has the potential to reshape the economic landscape of both countries, ensuring continued prosperity and strategic alignment in the years to come.

In the context of the Ukraine crisis, critically analyze the limitations and opportunities for India's peace diplomacy. How can India contribute to a multilateral approach involving the Global South?" (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight limitations & opportunities of India's peace diplomacy & its multilateral approach.

Conclusion: Way forward

India's role in peace diplomacy concerning the Ukraine crisis is shaped by its strategic interests, historical ties, and evolving geopolitical landscape. The new momentum for peace efforts, with calls for diplomacy from multiple fronts, presents both opportunities and constraints for India as it considers a more active peacemaking role.

Limitations of India's Role

- **Limited Direct Influence Over Conflict Parties:** While India maintains strategic autonomy and is respected by both Russia and the West, its ability to directly influence the course of the war remains constrained.
- **Dependence on US and Russian Relations:** India's geopolitical strategy is heavily tied to its relationships with both Russia (defense and energy) and the West (economic and security partnerships).

Opportunities for India's Peace Diplomacy

- **Advocating for Dialogue and Diplomacy:** Since the start of the invasion in 2022, India has consistently advocated for dialogue and peaceful resolution. Prime Minister Modi's recent

consultations align with the broader global push for renewed peace efforts, echoing sentiments from leaders like Brazil's Lula da Silva, China's Xi Jinping, and Hungary's Viktor Orban.

- **Opportunity to Shape a New Global Order:** India could play a pivotal role in the rearrangement of global geopolitics post-Ukraine war. Given the growing fatigue in Europe over supporting Ukraine unconditionally, India's neutral diplomacy may contribute to a new security architecture that balances the interests of Russia and the West.

India's Contribution to a Multilateral Approach Involving the Global South

- **Geopolitical Leverage in the Global South:** India's position as a leading voice of the Global South gives it a unique advantage in representing the interests of developing nations, many of which are grappling with the economic fallout of the Ukraine war, including energy and food security challenges. By amplifying these concerns, India can play a constructive role in ensuring that any peace framework addresses the broader impacts on the Global South.
- **Leveraging BRICS and G20 Platforms:** India can use its influence in multilateral organizations like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and the G20 to propose peace initiatives that reflect the Global South's priorities.

Conclusion

India has an opportunity to leverage its diplomatic weight in the Ukraine peace process by advocating for dialogue and diplomacy that involves the Global South while maintaining its strategic neutrality.

What steps can the Indian government take to transform India into a "start-up nation" and make entrepreneurship more accessible and sustainable? Analyze the role of educational institutions in fostering entrepreneurship.

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: What are several steps to make India a start-up nation & role of HEI in this program?

Conclusion: Way forward

India has witnessed a surge in start-up activity in recent years, but to truly become a "start-up nation," the government needs to implement comprehensive strategies.

Several strategic steps

- **Expansion of Internet Access:** With over 80 crore internet users and 120 crore cell phone users, expanding digital access to rural areas will drive economic inclusion. Connecting farmers, students, and rural citizens to digital platforms offers vast potential for innovation and startups in agri-tech, e-learning, and financial inclusion.
- **Leveraging the Unified Payments Interface (UPI):** Expanding the reach of UPI-based services to include more micro-enterprises and small businesses will enhance financial inclusion and foster entrepreneurship in remote regions.
- **Sustained Capital Expenditure:** The government's push towards increased capital expenditure has enabled the growth of physical and digital infrastructure. Continued investment in sectors like green energy, healthcare, and technology will encourage new startups and boost job creation.
- **Incentivizing Risk-Taking:** Providing financial support, tax incentives, and simplified regulatory frameworks for startups, especially in emerging sectors such as AI, robotics, and clean energy, will spur entrepreneurial ventures that have the potential to drive exponential growth.

Role of educational institutions in fostering entrepreneurship

- **Increasing Student Entrepreneurship:** A significant opportunity lies in encouraging more students to pursue entrepreneurship post-graduation. This could create nearly 5.5 lakh direct jobs and 55 lakh indirect jobs each year, significantly contributing to employment generation and economic growth.
- **Rethinking Higher Education Metrics:** Higher education institutions (HEIs) should be measured not just by job placements but by the number of entrepreneurial ventures they generate.

Encouraging student-led startups, especially in collaboration with industry, would accelerate the innovation ecosystem and lead to sustained economic growth.

- **Entrepreneurial Ecosystems in Tier-II/III Cities:** Promoting entrepreneurship beyond the major urban centers by building innovation hubs and incubators in Tier-II and Tier-III cities will lead to a more geographically inclusive startup ecosystem. This can also address the challenge of rising job-seekers in these areas by providing alternative career opportunities.

Conclusion

India must integrate **education, entrepreneurship, and employment (3E)** to achieve exponential growth by 2047. Encouraging graduate entrepreneurship, strengthening industry-academia ties, expanding infrastructure, and fostering innovation are key to sustaining momentum and becoming a global leader.

Analyze the decentralization model in China and its role in the country's economic growth. How does it compare to the Indian federal structure in terms of governance and fiscal responsibilities?

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Impact of decentralization model in China's economic growth & comparison with India's federal structure.

Conclusion: Way forward

China's decentralized governance model played a crucial role in its economic miracle, especially during the period of rapid industrialization and export-led growth. Local governments were given broad fiscal and administrative powers, enabling them to compete for investment and promote regional growth.

Economic Growth through Decentralization

- **Local Autonomy and Growth:** Local governments had a mandate to spur economic growth, using tools like land rights to attract investors. Offering industrial land at low costs, they prioritized industrial output, aiming for increased regional growth and future tax revenues.
- **Structural Overcapacity:** Local governments, focused on short-term growth, overinvested in industrial projects, resulting in wasteful investments, excess production, and loss-making entities.
- **Centralized Corrections:** Under Xi Jinping, the central government sought to address the excesses of decentralization by strengthening central control and directing investments more strategically, especially in sectors like semiconductors. However, this led to inefficiencies as local governments continued indiscriminate investments, resulting in numerous firms being unproductive, with around 30% of industrial firms making losses by mid-2024.
- **International Perceptions:** China's international image, particularly its behavior in the global economy and geopolitical arena, has further complicated its decentralization model. Overcapacity in industries like telecom and electric vehicles is now seen as a national security threat by other countries, while initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have not succeeded in creating sustainable demand in participating countries.

Comparison of China and India

- **Central Control:** China's decentralization model is more centrally controlled than India's federal structure. The central government in China retains significant authority over local governments.
- **Fiscal Federalism:** Both countries have adopted fiscal federalism, but the division of revenue and expenditure responsibilities differs. China's local governments have more autonomy in revenue generation and expenditure.
- **Economic Decentralization:** China has been more aggressive in promoting economic decentralization through SEZs and other special zones. India has also implemented regional development policies, but its approach has been less centralized.

Conclusion

China's decentralized model, which once fueled its rapid economic growth, has now reached a point of diminishing returns due to overcapacity, inefficiency, and excessive competition among local governments. India, with its federal structure, can avoid the pitfalls of extreme decentralization by ensuring that state-level competition for investment is fiscally responsible and strategically aligned with long-term national goals.

Discuss the significance of expanding the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) to senior citizens in the context of India's increasing aging population. Analyze the challenges in ensuring quality healthcare for the elderly in the framework of this scheme.

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Significance of AB-PMJAY for senior citizens & challenges in this new program.

Conclusion: Way forward

The government's decision to extend the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) to senior citizens above the age of 70 marks a significant step toward universalizing healthcare in India.

Significance of Expanding AB-PMJAY to Senior Citizens

- **Enhanced Healthcare Coverage:** Currently, only 20% of the elderly are covered by existing safety nets like the CGHS, Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana, and employer-funded schemes. The extension of AB-PMJAY will address this gap by covering a large number of senior citizens who are not otherwise insured, promoting financial security and access to medical care for this vulnerable age group.
- **Addressing Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE):** India's high OOPE on health, which constitutes 50% of all health expenses, is a key driver of poverty, particularly among senior citizens who often face chronic health conditions. By reducing their financial burden, AB-PMJAY can protect elderly individuals and their families from the economic shock associated with healthcare costs, thereby contributing to poverty alleviation.
- **Longevity and Growing Healthcare Needs:** With rising lifespans, the elderly population will demand more healthcare services in the future. Expanding AB-PMJAY offers a foundation for long-term healthcare planning for an aging population, particularly for age-related diseases like diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular issues.

Challenges in Ensuring Quality Healthcare for the Elderly

- **Access and Infrastructure Gaps:** Ease of access and quality of care are critical for senior citizens, but a shortage of healthcare facilities and geriatric specialists hampers effective service delivery.
- **Misuse and Inefficiency:** Reports have shown instances of doctor malpractice and misinformation of patients, where hospitals bypass AB-PMJAY benefits or make it difficult for patients to claim them. There is also evidence that overburdened hospital staff often fail to facilitate the insurance process, causing delays and frustration for already stressed families.
- **Doctor-Patient Asymmetry:** The asymmetry in doctor-patient relations adds complexity to the smooth implementation of AB-PMJAY. Many patients and families are misinformed about the scheme, which exacerbates delays in accessing benefits. While some hospitals employ arogyamitras to counsel patients, their role is often limited to registering claims.

Conclusion

The expansion of AB-PMJAY to senior citizens is a crucial step in providing universal healthcare in India. However, to address the challenges of a rapidly aging population, the government must focus not only on financial coverage but also on improving healthcare infrastructure, ensuring accountability, and empowering support staff to better assist elderly patients.

Analyze the ethical and privacy concerns in the deployment of AI-powered healthcare systems in India. What safeguards are necessary to protect patient data and ensure trust in AI-driven health services?

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: What are ethical, privacy concerns regarding AI & safeguards necessary in health services?

Conclusion: Way forward

The possibility of a "free AI-powered primary-care physician for every Indian, available 24/7" raises significant questions about the feasibility, sustainability, and readiness of India's healthcare system to adopt such technology.

Ethical and privacy concerns

- **Data Privacy:** AI systems require access to sensitive patient data, including medical records, genetic information, and personal details. There is a risk of data breaches, unauthorized access, and misuse of this information.
- **Algorithmic Bias:** AI algorithms can perpetuate existing biases present in the data they are trained on. This can lead to discriminatory outcomes, particularly for marginalized populations.
- **Lack of Transparency:** AI systems often operate as black boxes, making it difficult to understand how they arrive at their decisions. This lack of transparency can hinder accountability and trust.
- **Autonomy and Agency:** Overreliance on AI systems can erode patient autonomy and agency. Patients may feel pressured to accept AI-generated recommendations without fully understanding the risks and benefits.

Safeguards and Steps for Effective AI Deployment

- **Comprehensive Regulation and Governance:** India must develop a comprehensive regulatory framework, similar to the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act, to govern the use of AI in healthcare. This should address issues like data protection, algorithmic transparency, and accountability.
- **Ensuring Patient Autonomy and Informed Consent:** Patients must be fully informed about how AI-powered systems will use their data, and their consent should be obtained before any data is collected or used.
- **Addressing Bias and Inequity:** AI models should be trained on diverse datasets that reflect India's socio-economic, regional, and cultural diversity to avoid biases that may lead to discriminatory outcomes. Regular audits should be conducted to ensure fairness and inclusivity in AI-generated health recommendations.
- **Investment in Infrastructure and Workforce Training:** Significant investments in data infrastructure are necessary to create systems that can securely capture, store, and process patient data. Data standardization across healthcare systems will be essential to ensuring that AI models can work effectively on a national scale.

Conclusion

India must ensure that AI systems are transparent, inclusive, and human-centric to enhance the healthcare system without undermining the critical role of human empathy and judgement in medicine.

Assess the role of the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan in addressing India's infrastructure challenges, especially in overcoming project delays and cost overruns." (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Role of PM Gati Shakti in addressing India's infrastructure challenges.

Conclusion: Way forward

The PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan (NMP) addresses India's infrastructure challenges by integrating modern project management techniques and facilitating real-time, data-driven monitoring of projects.

Key Challenges in Infrastructure Development

- **Time Delays and Cost Overruns:** According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 431 infrastructure projects suffered a cost overrun of ₹4.82 lakh crore by December 2023, with many projects delayed by several years. Such delays not only inflate costs but also hinder economic growth. Delays are often attributed to fragmented decision-making, bureaucratic hurdles, and inadequate planning, particularly in urban infrastructure projects.
- **Lack of Comprehensive Project Management:** Many infrastructure projects in India lack proper project planning, especially at the urban local body level, resulting in poor execution and increased costs. Traditional project management practices are outdated and fail to incorporate real-time data and modern tools.
- **Quality Control Issues:** The frequent collapse of under-construction infrastructure, such as bridges, highlights the lack of quality assurance during implementation. These failures point to the need for better oversight, stricter adherence to construction standards, and accountability.

Role of PM Gati Shakti in Addressing These Challenges

- **Integrated Planning and Execution:** The NMP aims to break the silos between government ministries and departments by creating a unified platform. This allows for better coordination, resource allocation, and real-time monitoring of projects. The GIS-based ERP portal introduced under PM Gati Shakti ensures that project progress is tracked, reducing the risk of delays and cost escalations.
- **Focus on Real-Time Data and Transparency:** By utilizing geospatial data and real-time progress tracking, the NMP fosters greater transparency in project implementation. This helps in identifying bottlenecks early, ensuring timely interventions, and preventing cost overruns.
- **Holistic Programme Management Approach:** The emphasis is on the need for a “Program Management Approach” to coordinate complex, resource-intensive projects. This was successfully applied in projects like the Shendra-Bidkin industrial corridor, where multiple projects were integrated and executed simultaneously.

Conclusion

The PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan addresses India’s infrastructure challenges through integrated planning, transparency, and real-time project management. However, to maximize its impact, India must adopt a program management approach, enhance workforce skills, and enforce strict quality control. This will help prevent delays and cost overruns, driving infrastructure development towards the nation’s goal of becoming a developed economy by 2047.

Critically examine the challenges faced by the Indian judiciary in ensuring independence while dealing with politically sensitive cases. How do judgments like those in Arvind Kejriwal’s case and Bilkis Bano’s case reflect on judicial integrity?

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight challenges in ensuring judicial independence and how politically sensitive cases reflect on judicial integrity.

Conclusion: Way forward

The Indian judiciary is tasked with upholding independence, especially in politically sensitive cases, but it faces multiple challenges. Recent judgments, such as in the Arvind Kejriwal excise policy case and the Bilkis Bano case, highlight these tensions.

Challenges in Ensuring Judicial Independence

- **Executive Influence:** In politically charged cases, the judiciary often faces subtle or overt pressure from the executive. This can manifest in the form of controversial judicial appointments, transfers, or political backlash when rulings go against government interests.

- **Use of Procedure as Punishment:** Investigating agencies often weaponize legal procedures to punish individuals without securing a conviction. The practice of prolonging detention for "non-cooperation" during interrogation is often employed as a pretext for incarceration, even when substantive evidence may be lacking. This practice undermines the right against self-incrimination enshrined in Article 20(3) of the Constitution.
- **Bail Denials and Personal Liberty:** There is an increasing trend of lower courts automatically denying bail in politically sensitive cases, regardless of whether the legal grounds justify such denials. Both Justice Bhuyan and Justice B.R. Gavai have highlighted this issue, noting that trial courts and High Courts often fail to safeguard personal liberty, particularly in high-profile cases.

Judicial Integrity in Politically Sensitive Cases

- **Arvind Kejriwal Case:** Justice Bhuyan's critique of Kejriwal's arrest reflects a refusal to accept vague justifications such as "evasive replies" or "lack of cooperation" as grounds for prolonged detention. His judgment called out the CBI for using procedural delays to deny liberty, stressing that such actions violate the spirit of constitutional protections. This stands in contrast to the view of Justice Surya Kant, who accepted the CBI's rationale without deep scrutiny. Bhuyan's detailed examination underscores the need for vigilance in upholding personal freedoms.
- **Bilkis Bano Case:** The release of the convicts in the Bilkis Bano case, despite their convictions for heinous crimes, similarly raises concerns about political influence on judicial outcomes. This case exemplifies how post-conviction relief can be manipulated through remission laws, often at the cost of justice for victims of politically motivated violence.

Conclusion

While the judiciary strives to maintain independence, politically sensitive cases expose cracks in its armor. The Arvind Kejriwal and Bilkis Bano cases underscore the challenges of judicial integrity, particularly when confronted with executive pressure and procedural manipulation. To safeguard its independence, the judiciary must resist external pressures and uphold its duty to protect personal liberty, especially in the face of politically charged circumstances.

The traditional dichotomy between rural and urban areas is increasingly blurred in India. Discuss how integrating a rural-urban continuum in governance and infrastructure planning can foster balanced development. Provide relevant examples from current schemes and challenges. (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight challenges in policy framework and how to integrate the rural-urban continuum.

Conclusion: Way forward

India is transitioning from a rural to an increasingly urban nation, especially in Tier II and Tier III cities and the peripheries of urban centers.

Challenges in Current Policy Framework:

- **Over-centralization of Finances:** Financial decentralization has weakened, with tied grants limiting local autonomy. The absence of a link between property tax and State Goods and Services Tax (SGST) risks towns losing vital funds, stalling development in the rural-urban continuum.
- **Compartmentalization of Flagship Schemes:** Programs like Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) and AMRUT often overlook peri-urban areas. For instance, AMRUT focuses on statutory towns, leaving census towns and urban villages without critical infrastructure.
- **Fragmented Waste Management:** Separate rural and urban waste management under SBM-Rural and SBM-Urban leads to inefficiency.

Integrating a Rural-Urban Continuum:

- **Strengthening District Planning Committees:** The 73rd and 74th Amendments provide a framework for coordination between rural and urban areas, but District Planning Committees (DPCs) need to be strengthened to plan more effectively across regions.
- **Kerala's Governance Model:** Kerala's unified governance model, where rural and urban local bodies fall under the same ministry, enables faster decision-making and better collaboration, as seen in its waste management approach.
- **Collaborative Infrastructure Planning:** Designing infrastructure like sewage treatment and solid waste management at the district level can optimize resource use across both urban and rural areas, reducing duplication and inefficiency.

Way Forward

- **Integrated Funding Mechanisms:** Restructuring funding to reflect the rural-urban continuum can ensure coordinated infrastructure development across contiguous areas, particularly in peri-urban regions.
- **Decentralized and Flexible Governance:** Local bodies need more autonomy, with a shift towards untied grants and greater local revenue generation, enabling them to address unique regional needs.
- **Reimagining Governance Models:** Updated governance structures, including regional authorities for peri-urban areas, will better address the infrastructure and governance needs along the rural-urban continuum.

Conclusion:

India's rural-urban divide is increasingly blurred, necessitating integrated governance and infrastructure planning. Strengthening local governance, creating integrated funding, and designing collaborative solutions are key to fostering balanced development across the nation.

District Mineral Foundations (DMFs) have transformed the landscape of mineral-affected areas through decentralized, community-centric development. Critically evaluate the role of DMFs in promoting inclusive and sustainable development. (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Role of DMFs in promoting inclusive & sustainable development.

Conclusion: Way forward

District Mineral Foundations (DMFs) were instituted under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2015 to work toward the benefit of communities affected by mining operations. DMFs aim to promote inclusive and sustainable development by addressing the social, economic, and environmental impacts of mining.

Role of DMFs in Promoting Inclusive and Sustainable Development

- **Decentralized, Community-Centric Approach:** DMFs enable decentralized planning by involving local communities in decision-making processes. The funds are directed towards improving infrastructure, healthcare, education, and livelihood opportunities for mining-affected populations.
- **Focus on Welfare and Livelihoods:** DMF funds are often allocated to sectors such as healthcare, sanitation, education, and livelihood generation, ensuring that basic needs are met in mining-affected areas.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Mining activities significantly disrupt local ecosystems. DMFs are intended to mitigate environmental degradation through afforestation, soil conservation, and water management projects.
- **Flexibility in Fund Utilization:** DMFs have the flexibility to address region-specific challenges, such as building healthcare infrastructure in areas with high disease prevalence due to mining activities.

Challenges in Implementation

- **Poor Fund Utilization:** A significant challenge has been the underutilization of funds. Many districts have accumulated large unspent balances, delaying critical development projects. This inefficiency undermines the potential of DMFs to drive rapid, tangible change.
- **Lack of Transparency and Accountability:** The management of DMF funds is often marred by a lack of transparency, with minimal public participation in planning. Instances of misallocation and diversion of funds have been reported, reducing the effectiveness of community-led development efforts.
- **Top-Down Governance:** Despite their decentralized framework, DMFs often function under a top-down approach, with local bureaucracies exerting more control than communities. This limits the empowerment of marginalized groups, making it difficult to address their specific needs effectively.
- **Neglect of Environmental Concerns:** While DMFs are expected to address the environmental degradation caused by mining, the focus on long-term ecological restoration has often been insufficient. Environmental projects, such as reforestation and water conservation, tend to receive less priority compared to social infrastructure, delaying efforts toward sustainable environmental management.

Conclusion

DMFs have the potential to drive inclusive and sustainable development in mineral-affected areas by decentralizing decision-making and focusing on community welfare. Strengthening local participation, improving governance, and ensuring efficient use of resources is essential to realize the full potential of DMFs in promoting holistic development.

Discuss the concept of intergenerational equity in climate justice. How does the recognition of future generations' rights shape current environmental policies and debates? (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight the concept of intergenerational equity & how future generation rights shape policies & debates.

Conclusion: Way forward

Intergenerational equity is a core principle of climate justice, which emphasizes the responsibility of present generations to ensure that future generations inherit a healthy and sustainable planet.

Concept of Intergenerational Equity in Climate Justice

- **Fairness across generations:** It ensures that future generations have access to the same environmental resources and opportunities as the present generation.
- **Sustainability of natural resources:** It mandates the responsible management of natural resources to prevent depletion and environmental degradation that could harm future **generations**.

How Future Generations' Rights Shape Environmental Policies?

- **Climate Change Jurisprudence:** Courts worldwide have increasingly acknowledged the rights of future generations in their rulings on environmental matters. Some notable cases include:
 - **Colombia:** A landmark ruling required the government to create an intergenerational pact to protect the Amazon rainforest, ensuring its preservation for future generations.
 - **India:** The National Green Tribunal (NGT) upheld the principle of intergenerational equity, affirming the right to a healthy environment for both present and future generations.
- **Maastricht Principles:** The Maastricht Principles link climate justice and sustainable development with the rights of future generations. These principles obligate public and private actors to avoid actions that pose significant risks to future generations.

- **Influence on Global Environmental Governance:** Intergenerational equity is a central theme in multilateral discussions, such as the Summit of the Future (2024), which aims to address major global threats like climate change, pandemics, and inequality.
- **Balancing Short-term Development vs. Long-term Sustainability:** The debate on intergenerational equity contrasts critics like Stephen Humphreys, who argue it diverts focus from present needs, with proponents like Wawerinke-Singh, who see it as fostering justice and honoring Indigenous traditions of protecting future generations.
- **Planetary Overshoot and Urgency for Action:** The planetary overshoot day—the point when humanity exceeds Earth’s capacity to renew its resources—has moved from December 30 1970 to August 1, 2024. This demonstrates the environmental crisis that threatens future generations and stresses the need for immediate, effective climate policies.

Conclusion

The recognition of future generations' rights is essential for achieving climate justice. By incorporating intergenerational equity into environmental policies and debates, we can ensure that our actions today contribute to a sustainable and equitable future for all.

Examine the ethical and legal dimensions of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021, with a focus on the issue of compensation for surrogate mothers. Should surrogates be entitled to financial compensation for their services? (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight ethical dimensions and legal dimensions of the Act & should surrogates be entitled to financial compensation.

Conclusion: Way forward

The Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021 prohibits commercial surrogacy and allows only altruistic surrogacy, limiting compensation to medical expenses and insurance for surrogate mothers.

Ethical Dimensions & Legal Dimensions

- **Fair Compensation:** Surrogacy involves physical and emotional labor for nine months, yet under the Act, surrogates receive only medical expenses and insurance. Ethically, this is unfair as all other stakeholders are compensated except the surrogate.
- **Exploitation Concerns:** The Act aims to prevent the exploitation of poor women. However, banning compensation entirely may push surrogacy underground, risking further exploitation rather than addressing it.
- **Constitutional Challenges:** The Act’s provisions, including the ban on commercial surrogacy, face legal challenges for violating surrogate rights. Intending parents also struggle to find willing surrogates.
- **Parliamentary Recommendations:** The 102nd Parliamentary Committee recommended “reasonable compensation,” including covering lost wages, medical care, and post-delivery support, to ensure fair treatment.

Should Surrogates Be Entitled to Financial Compensation?

- **Recognition of Labour:** Pregnancy is a form of labor, and surrogates should be fairly compensated for their time, effort, and the physical risks involved. Denying them financial compensation perpetuates the notion that their work is not valued, which contradicts basic labor rights principles. Compensation, if regulated properly, ensures that surrogates are not exploited but are adequately rewarded for their services.
- **Regulated Compensation as a Middle Ground:** A fully altruistic model may not be realistic or fair in many cases. A regulated compensation framework, as suggested by the ART Bills, which proposed a payment schedule during pregnancy, could ensure that surrogates are paid for their

labor while safeguarding against exploitation. This middle ground acknowledges the service they provide without commodifying the child or the surrogates.

Conclusion

The Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021 addresses concerns about the exploitation of surrogate mothers by banning commercial surrogacy but leaves critical ethical and legal questions unresolved. Denying surrogates compensation for their labor overlooks the physical and emotional toll of pregnancy. A regulated compensation model could strike a balance between protecting surrogates from exploitation and ensuring fair recognition of their labor. The Supreme Court's future rulings on these constitutional challenges may determine whether the current altruistic model stands or if compensation will be deemed necessary.

How can India balance its aspirations of becoming a major defence exporter with its obligations under international humanitarian law? Discuss the normative and legal aspects that need to be considered. (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: India's balancing strategy and normative and legal aspects as a major defence exporter.

Conclusion: Way forward

India's aspiration to become a major defense exporter presents complex challenges, particularly when it comes to balancing these ambitions with its obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL).

International Obligations and Arms Trade Regulation

- **Customary International Law:** Although India is not bound by the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), some provisions of the treaty, such as Article 6(3), reflect customary international law. This article prohibits arms exports when the exporting state knows that the arms may be used to commit war crimes. Even without signing the ATT, India must ensure compliance with these customary norms to avoid legal and ethical pitfalls in its defense exports.
- **Geneva Conventions:** India is obligated under the Geneva Conventions to prevent the use of its defense exports in violations of IHL. This obligation is significant in situations where there is a clear risk of misuse, such as conflicts involving Israel in Gaza. Strengthening domestic laws to reflect these international obligations would align India's defense export policies with the legal norms governing the arms trade.

Normative Considerations

- **India's Ethical Responsibility:** India has long held the stance of being a responsible global actor, promoting peace and non-alignment. Exporting defense equipment to countries accused of war crimes, like Israel in the Gaza conflict, would potentially harm India's ethical standing.
- **Regional and Global Stability:** India must ensure that its defense exports do not contribute to regional instability or exacerbate conflicts, particularly in geopolitically sensitive areas. Upholding norms of peace, stability, and responsible trade is essential for maintaining its position as a global leader in defense while preventing the misuse of arms in conflicts that violate IHL.

Legal Considerations

- **Absence of Domestic Legal Provisions on IHL Compliance:** Unlike the United Kingdom or the European Union, India's domestic laws lack explicit provisions requiring the government to assess the IHL compliance of countries importing Indian defense equipment.
- **Need for Legal Reforms:** To avoid relying solely on international law, India should consider amending the Foreign Trade Act (FTA) of 1992 and the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act (WMDA) of 2005 to explicitly include provisions for assessing the IHL compliance of countries importing Indian defense equipment.

Conclusion

A responsible approach to defence exports can contribute to global peace and security while safeguarding India's reputation as a responsible international actor.

“Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is key to improving urban mobility and enhancing economic productivity in Indian cities.” Analyze the significance of TOD in the context of urban planning and employment generation. (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Significance of TOD in urban planning and employment generation.

Conclusion: Way forward

Indian cities are at the cusp of a transportation revolution, with substantial investments projected for metro rail projects between 2022 and 2027. These investments, amounting to ₹3 trillion, are set to enhance urban mobility and unlock significant economic potential. This initiative is underpinned by the National Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Policy and the Metro Rail Policy, both approved in 2017.

Significance of TOD in Urban Planning

- **Land Use and Transportation Integration:** TOD focuses on compact, mixed-use development near transit stations, promoting land use–transport integration. This approach effectively decouples density from congestion and economic growth from resource use and carbon emissions.
- **Reduction of Commute Times:** As urban areas expand outward, public transport systems often lag behind, resulting in longer commute times and increased private vehicle use. This exacerbates congestion and reduces access to job markets. With TOD, urban design can prioritize proximity to transit, minimizing commute times and enhancing overall productivity.
- **Boosting Economic Activity:** By clustering jobs near transit stations, TOD creates agglomeration effects that drive innovation and productivity. Businesses benefit from increased access to a diverse labor pool and customer base, fostering local economic development.

Impact of TOD on Employment Generation

- **Job Proximity and Density:** According to WRI India's study, the current job density in Bengaluru is highest near operational and under-construction metro networks. Once the ongoing metro phases are completed, a substantial percentage of jobs will be within close proximity to transit stations—28% within 500 meters, 59% within 1 kilometer, and 85% within 2 kilometers. This accessibility is crucial for enhancing workforce participation and productivity.
- **Catalyzing Local Business Growth:** The clustering of enterprises near metro stations enhances local business opportunities, particularly for service enterprises. Large businesses often anchor smaller ones, creating a vibrant local economy.
- **Barriers to Business Location Choices:** Many large enterprises cite barriers such as unsuitable properties, unfavorable development regulations, and high property prices near metro stations. Addressing these challenges through supportive policies and infrastructure upgrades can enhance the viability of TOD.

Conclusion

A coordinated approach involving strategic urban planning, supportive policies, and public-private collaboration will be essential for realizing the full potential of TOD in addressing urban challenges and driving sustainable development in India.

Examine the significance of the National Credit Framework (NCrF) in transforming India's higher education system under the National Education Policy 2020.

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Significance of NCrF in transforming India's higher education system.

Conclusion: Way forward

The National Credit Framework (NCrF) plays a transformative role in reshaping India's higher education system under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, by creating a flexible and dynamic educational structure.

Significance

- **Flexibility in Education:** One of the core principles of the NCrF is the flexibility it offers to students in choosing courses and activities. Through classroom learning, research projects, sports, internships, or even performing arts, students can earn credits based on assessments. This flexibility reflects a move towards a learner-centric model, giving students autonomy over their educational journey and enabling them to pursue diverse interests.
- **Fostering Skills and Employability:** The NCrF is essential in addressing the skills gap in India's workforce. The traditional higher education system focused predominantly on theoretical knowledge, leaving a significant gap in practical, employable skills. Higher education institutions (HEIs), through the NCrF, are now encouraged to provide a balanced education that includes vocational training and fundamental research.
- **Democratizing Education and Promoting Social Equity:** The adoption of the NCrF is also crucial in the democratization of education. Flexibility in learning, interdisciplinary courses, and practical skills ensure that education becomes more inclusive, addressing the needs of all sections of society. This is key to ensuring that students from marginalized backgrounds have access to opportunities that can uplift them socially and economically.
- **Adapting to Economic and Technological Changes:** In a world where the economy and technology are changing at breakneck speed, educational institutions need to continuously adapt. The NCrF enables continuous adaptation by offering flexibility to revise curricula based on evolving job requirements.
- **Overcoming Resistance to Change:** As the NEP 2020 outlines, the time has come to reimagine education and move away from fossilized pedagogical practices. The NCrF challenges institutions to break free from these outdated views, offering students the chance to shape their education according to their interests, future career goals, and societal needs.

Conclusion

The National Credit Framework (NCrF) is crucial in realizing the transformative vision of the National Education Policy 2020. The NCrF's focus on skill development, multidisciplinary learning, and inclusivity will ultimately shape the future of India's education system, ensuring that it is equipped to meet the demands of the 21st century.

Critically analyze the role of cross-border insolvency laws in international trade and assess India's current approach to these legal frameworks.

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: What is the role of cross-border insolvency laws in international trade and India's current approach?

Conclusion: Way forward

Cross-border insolvency laws play a crucial role in facilitating international trade and ensuring the smooth resolution of insolvency cases involving assets and creditors in multiple jurisdictions. These laws provide legal certainty, improve the health of multinational trading entities, and encourage foreign investments.

Role of Cross-Border Insolvency Laws in International Trade

- **Legal Certainty:** In a globalized economy, businesses engage in cross-border trade and investments, often dealing with foreign creditors and debtors. Cross-border insolvency laws provide a predictable and uniform framework for the resolution of insolvency cases across borders, thus reducing the risks associated with international trade.
- **Health of Trading Entities:** Insolvency laws help maintain the financial health of multinational companies by offering structured procedures for asset distribution and debt resolution across jurisdictions. This facilitates the survival or orderly liquidation of firms, thereby preserving value for creditors and maintaining economic stability.
- **Encouraging Investment:** The presence of robust cross-border insolvency laws boosts investor confidence as it ensures that their claims will be treated equitably, even in foreign jurisdictions. This leads to greater international capital flow and trade.
- **Harmonization:** The adoption of harmonized insolvency laws, such as the UNCITRAL Model Law, reduces the legal conflicts arising from different national insolvency regimes, making cross-border cooperation smoother. It allows countries to cooperate more effectively in cases of multinational insolvency, which is vital for global trade.

India's current approach to legal frameworks

- **UNCITRAL Model Law:** India has not yet adopted the UNCITRAL Model Law, although the Bankruptcy Law Reform Committee and the Economic Survey 2022 have recommended its implementation. Currently, India relies on limited provisions under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) 2016, which allows for bilateral agreements on cross-border insolvency cases. The lack of a comprehensive cross-border insolvency framework reduces the predictability and efficiency of insolvency proceedings involving international creditors, affecting India's attractiveness as an investment destination.
- **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs):** India has signed Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreements (CECAs), and Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPAs) with over 54 countries. While CECAs and CEPAs are more ambitious and aim to cover deeper regulatory aspects of trade, they still mostly ignore the insolvency dimensions, focusing instead on disputes, intellectual property rights (IPRs), and sustainability. This omission is a significant gap, as insolvency laws are a vital ingredient of international trade, helping trading entities manage the risks of financial distress.

Conclusion

The adoption of cross-border insolvency laws is vital for promoting legal certainty, facilitating investment, and improving the health of trading entities with international operations. The integration of these dimensions into FTAs, alongside the potential adoption of the UNCITRAL Model Law, would significantly strengthen India's legal and trade frameworks, positioning the country to better manage the complexities of cross-border insolvency and enhance its global trade competitiveness.

“In recent years, concerns about national security have increasingly influenced India's approach to foreign direct investment (FDI) policies.” Discuss the strategic and economic challenges India faces in balancing FDI with national security concerns.

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight strategic and economic challenges India faces in balancing FDI with security

Conclusion: Way forward

India's approach to foreign direct investment (FDI) has evolved significantly, especially in the context of national security concerns. However, as highlighted, despite high-decibel debates on the issue, India lacks

a comprehensive legislative framework to address FDI and international trade on grounds of national security.

Strategic Challenges in the Absence of a Comprehensive Framework

- **Legal Ambiguity:** India's FDI regulations, particularly the adoption of Press Note 3 (PN3) in April 2020, sought to control FDI from countries sharing land borders, most notably China, by requiring government approval. The lack of explicit national security provisions in FEMA makes India's FDI screening mechanism legally ambiguous.
- **Security Concerns Not Explicitly Addressed:** Unlike other countries, India's current FDI framework does not explicitly mention "national security" as a criterion. This creates challenges in justifying restrictive measures in case of international arbitration or diplomatic pressure.
- **Challenges from International Courts:** India's lack of a specific FDI law grounded in national security considerations poses risks to international courts or tribunals. This pattern underscores India's vulnerability to legal challenges at the World Trade Organization (WTO) or other tribunals, as these actions could be seen as economic measures rather than national security-driven interventions.

Economic Challenges in Balancing FDI and National Security

- **Impact on Investments:** While national security is crucial, over-restrictive FDI measures could stifle investments, particularly from countries like China that have significant capital reserves.
- **Lack of Investor Confidence:** The absence of a well-defined, transparent, and predictable national security framework creates uncertainty for foreign investors. India's reliance on broad, often discretionary laws like FEMA or the Customs Tariff Act without clear provisions for national security diminishes investor confidence and may lead to capital flight or hesitation from new investors.
- **Missed Opportunities in High-Growth Sectors:** India's technology and telecommunications sectors, critical for the country's economic future, depend heavily on foreign investment and innovation. Without a proper legal framework that balances security with economic interests, India risks losing out on investments that are crucial for technological growth and job creation.

Conclusion

A well-crafted national security law would not only enhance India's capacity to safeguard its interests but also provide greater transparency and predictability to foreign investors, ensuring a balanced approach to FDI.

“International sanctions on Russia have disrupted the flow of dividends to Indian oil companies.” Examine the impact of sanctions on India's energy security and suggest alternative financial and investment strategies to safeguard critical interests in such situations.

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight the impact of sanctions on India's energy security and strategies to safeguard interests.

Conclusion: Way forward

The imposition of international sanctions on Russia, following its invasion of Ukraine, has created significant challenges for Indian oil companies like ONGC Videsh (OVL), Oil India (OIL), and Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) that have invested billions in Russian energy projects.

Impact of Sanctions on India's Energy Security

- **Stranded Dividend Income:** Due to sanctions, dividend payments, worth around \$900 million, are stuck in accounts at the Commercial Indo Bank (CIBL) in Russia, affecting the financial liquidity of

these companies. This limits their ability to reinvest or repatriate funds, creating long-term cash flow issues and impacting their profitability.

- **Inability to Repurpose Funds:** Although Indian companies could theoretically use these stranded funds to finance additional investments or operational expenses in Russia, the projects are past their major capital expenditure cycles. This further exacerbates India's dependence on oil imports and affects its ability to ensure energy security.
- **Challenges in Using Dividends for Oil Payments:** India imports significant volumes of Russian oil, yet using these dividends to pay for oil purchases is complicated by jurisdictional issues.
- **Geopolitical Risks:** Dependence on Russian oil has exposed India to global financial instability, and the situation underscores the need for diversifying energy sources and rethinking overseas investments in politically volatile regions.

Alternative Financial and Investment Strategies

- **Strengthening Bilateral Payment Mechanisms:** India should explore enhancing bilateral payment arrangements, such as expanding the rupee-ruble exchange mechanism, allowing Indian companies to settle oil payments and receive dividends in local currencies.
- **Investment in Renewable Energy:** Accelerating the development of renewable energy infrastructure in India would lessen its reliance on imported oil.
- **Use of Sovereign Wealth Funds:** India could partner with sovereign wealth funds (SWFs) from oil-rich nations to co-invest in global energy projects, spreading the risk and reducing exposure to individual markets.
- **Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR):** Expanding India's Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) can buffer against short-term supply disruptions, ensuring energy security even in the event of sanctions or supply chain disruptions.
- **Diplomatic Negotiations:** Effective diplomatic efforts with Russia and other key global stakeholders are essential to resolving the dividend issue.

Conclusion

Such strategies will ensure that India is better equipped to handle similar situations in the future, preserving its energy security in an increasingly uncertain global landscape.

Analyze the impact of the Self-Respect Movement on caste-based discrimination and women's rights in Tamil Nadu. How has the movement evolved to address contemporary challenges like cultural homogenization and intersectionality?

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Impact of movement and how has it evolved to address contemporary challenges.

Conclusion: Way forward

The Self-Respect Movement, launched by Periyar E.V. Ramasamy in 1925, was a radical initiative aimed at dismantling caste hierarchies and patriarchal norms in Tamil society.

Impact of the Self-Respect Movement on Caste-Based Discrimination & Women's Rights

- **Critique of Brahminism:** The movement strongly opposed Brahminical dominance, which was viewed as the ideological underpinning of caste hierarchy.
- **Self-Respect Marriages:** By removing Brahmin priests from marriage ceremonies and promoting egalitarian unions, the movement sought to eliminate caste distinctions in personal and social life.
- **Gender Equality:** The movement focused on elevating women's status by advocating for equal property rights, the right to divorce, and widow remarriage, directly challenging patriarchal control over women's lives.

- **Control Over Reproductive Rights:** By promoting contraception and the right to abortion, Periyar empowered women to take control of their reproductive health, challenging traditional notions of female subservience.
- **Critique of Ancient Texts:** The movement openly criticized religious texts that demeaned women, advocating for a rational and equitable society where women were not relegated to inferior roles.
- **Political Representation:** Through the Justice Party and later the Dravidian parties, the Self-Respect Movement facilitated the rise of non-Brahmin leadership, ensuring better representation for marginalized castes in government and administration.

Evolution to Address Contemporary Challenges like Cultural Homogenization and Intersectionality

- **Cultural Homogenization:** The rise of Hindutva poses a major challenge to the pluralistic identity that the Self-Respect Movement espoused. The movement must now counter the growing narrative of cultural homogenization, which seeks to erase distinct regional and caste identities in favor of a unified Hindu identity.
- **Intersectionality:** The movement is now grappling with the complexity of intersectional identities, where caste intersects with class, gender, religion, and sexuality. Addressing new social issues such as LGBTQIA+ rights, gender fluidity, and economic inequality requires the movement to expand its scope beyond traditional caste and gender concerns.

Conclusion

As the Self-Respect Movement enters its second century, its core mission of fighting caste-based discrimination and advocating women's rights remains more critical than ever. Its continued relevance in Tamil Nadu's politics and society will depend on its ability to redefine its role to address these emerging issues, thereby ensuring that its ideals endure for future generations.

Discuss the implications of "China Shock 2.0" on global trade, with a focus on its effects on India's manufacturing sector and trade balance. What policy measures should India adopt, to mitigate the negative impacts of this shock?

Introduction: What is China Shock 2.0?

Body: Implications of this on India & measures to mitigate its negative impacts.

Conclusion: Way forward

"China Shock 2.0" refers to the renewed wave of Chinese exports that are disrupting global markets, driven by China's ambition to move up the export value chain amid a domestic demand slump.

Implications of "China Shock 2.0" on Global Trade, Trade Balance & Manufacturing Sector

- **Increased Protectionism:** The US has responded to China's export surge by imposing steep tariffs, including 100% duties on EVs and 50% on solar cells, steel, and aluminum. Similar measures are being adopted by India and other countries to safeguard domestic industries.
- **Competition in High-Tech Sectors:** China's renewed export push, particularly in high-tech sectors such as EVs, solar cells, and semiconductors, threatens India's efforts to boost its manufacturing capabilities.
- **Global Supply Chain Shifts:** China's dominance in sectors such as solar equipment & electronics has made many countries heavily reliant on its exports. This, combined with China's ongoing industrial policies to stimulate exports amid weak domestic demand, is causing disruptions in global supply chains, particularly in renewable energy & steel industries.
- **Decline in Domestic Steel Industry:** India's steel industry has been particularly vulnerable to the influx of cheap Chinese steel. Despite government interventions, such as anti-dumping investigations, domestic steel producers continue to face intense competition.

- **Widening Trade Deficit:** India's trade deficit with China has grown significantly, with imports from China rising by nearly 60% from \$70 billion in FY19 to \$101 billion in FY24.

Policy Measures India Should Adopt

- **Promote Domestic Manufacturing and Supply Chain Independence:** Expanding the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to include more high-tech sectors like EVs, solar cells, and semiconductors can help reduce reliance on Chinese imports.
- **Diversification of Import Sources:** India should reduce its over-dependence on Chinese imports by strengthening trade relations with other countries such as Japan, South Korea, and ASEAN members.
- **Boosting Renewable Energy Self-Reliance:** India must prioritize building domestic manufacturing capabilities in the renewable energy sector. Strategic investments in domestic solar cell and module production, along with incentives for clean energy startups, can help India achieve its 2030 targets while reducing reliance on Chinese imports.
- **Support for the Steel Industry:** To protect the domestic steel sector, India should impose stricter anti-dumping duties on Chinese steel imports while promoting value-added steel production domestically.

Conclusion

Focusing on long-term industrial policies and fostering self-reliance will enable India to tackle the challenges arising from China's renewed export push while strengthening its position in global trade.

Discuss the challenges faced by Indian migrant workers in Southeast Asia, particularly in the context of reports of cyber slavery. What steps should the government take to ensure their safety and secure their return?

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight challenges faced by migrant workers and steps to overcome those challenges.

Conclusion: Way forward

Indian migrant workers in Southeast Asia often face a myriad of challenges, ranging from exploitation to human trafficking. One particularly disturbing trend is the rise of "cyber slavery," where workers are forced to engage in online scams or other illicit activities.

Challenges Faced by Indian Migrant Workers in Southeast Asia

- **Recruitment Fraud and Trafficking:** Indian workers are lured to Southeast Asia with promises of well-paying jobs like data entry, only to be trapped in illegal cyber operations. Many victims fall prey to unscrupulous agents who charge exorbitant fees for securing jobs abroad, adding to the debt burden on workers and increasing their vulnerability to exploitation.
- **Forced Labor in Cybercrime:** Migrants are coerced into engaging in illegal activities, particularly online scams & frauds involving cryptocurrency & fraudulent investment schemes. They create fake social media accounts & lure individuals into investing in fake schemes.
- **Lack of Legal and Social Protections:** Southeast Asian countries, particularly regions like parts of Myanmar and Cambodia, are often beyond the reach of effective law enforcement, making it difficult to protect migrant workers.

Steps the Government Should Take to Ensure the Safety and Secure the Return of Migrant Workers

- **Strengthen Legal Frameworks:** Implement and enforce laws that protect the rights of migrant workers, including those related to labor standards, wages, and working conditions.
- **Enhance Pre-Departure Orientation:** Provide comprehensive pre-departure training to workers, covering their rights, potential risks, and strategies for seeking help.

- **Establish Bilateral Agreements:** Negotiate bilateral agreements with Southeast Asian countries to ensure the protection of Indian workers' rights and facilitate their return if necessary.
- **Promote Ethical Recruitment:** Encourage ethical recruitment practices and discourage the use of unscrupulous agents who exploit workers.
- **Expand Support Services:** Establish or strengthen support services for Indian workers in Southeast Asia, including shelters, legal aid, and counseling.
- **Invest in Technology:** Utilize technology to track the movement of workers and identify potential cases of exploitation or trafficking.
- **Strengthen Diplomatic Relations:** Maintain strong diplomatic relations with Southeast Asian countries to advocate for the rights of Indian workers and address concerns promptly.

Conclusion

The issue of Indian migrant workers being trapped in cyber slavery in Southeast Asia is a complex challenge that requires a multi-faceted response from the government. By strengthening regulatory frameworks, enhancing diplomatic engagement, providing consular support, and addressing loopholes in immigration and financial systems, the government can ensure the safety and security of its workers and bring them back home safely.

Examine the role of agroforestry in carbon finance initiatives in India. How can policies and financial incentives be aligned to ensure participation by small and marginal farmers in carbon finance projects?

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight the role of agroforestry in India & how policies and financial incentives are aligned to ensure participation by small and marginal farmers in carbon finance projects.

Conclusion: Way forward

India's agroforestry sector presents a significant opportunity to integrate with carbon finance projects, especially through Afforestation, Reforestation, and Revegetation (ARR) initiatives.

Role of Agroforestry in Carbon Finance Initiatives in India

- **Carbon Sequestration through ARR Projects:** Agroforestry's ability to sequester carbon makes it a central component of carbon finance initiatives. ARR projects involve planting trees or enhancing tree cover in agricultural landscapes, thereby enabling farmers to earn carbon credits through carbon sequestration activities.
- **Potential Expansion and Income Generation:** Expanding the agroforestry sector to 53 million hectares by 2050 presents an opportunity for large-scale carbon sequestration and participation in global carbon markets. ARR initiatives also offer the potential for income diversification, particularly for small and marginal farmers.
- **Environmental and Economic Co-Benefits:** Beyond carbon sequestration, agroforestry under ARR enhances soil fertility, improves water retention, and mitigates erosion, thereby boosting agricultural productivity. In addition, it promotes environmental sustainability by restoring degraded land and providing a buffer against climate-related risks.

Aligning Policies and Financial Incentives to Ensure Participation by Small and Marginal Farmers

- **Government Policies Supporting Agroforestry:** The National Agroforestry Policy (NAP), 2014 provides a framework for expanding agroforestry in India. To further integrate with carbon finance, this policy must be revised to explicitly support ARR initiatives and facilitate access to carbon markets.

- **Subsidies and Financial Support for Carbon Sequestration:** Financial incentives, such as subsidies for planting trees or maintaining forest cover, can encourage small farmers to adopt agroforestry systematically.
- **Capacity Building and Awareness Campaigns:** Training programs to educate farmers on the benefits of agroforestry and carbon finance are essential. Extension services and NGOs can play a crucial role in disseminating information and providing technical assistance, enabling small and marginal farmers to participate in carbon finance initiatives.
- **Private Sector and International Collaboration:** Encouraging private sector involvement through public-private partnerships (PPPs) and aligning with international carbon finance platforms will be crucial for scaling up agroforestry-based carbon finance projects. Global platforms like Verra and Gold Standard need to recognize the need for India-centric standards that account for the unique challenges of smallholder agriculture.

Conclusion

Agroforestry in India has vast potential to contribute to carbon sequestration, environmental sustainability, and rural economic development.