

ForumIAS

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## Mains Marathon

3<sup>rd</sup> Week March, 2025

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HISTORY  
ECONOMICS  
POLITY  
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT

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**A comprehensive nutrition agenda, rather than targeted interventions, is necessary to address malnutrition in India. Discuss.**

**Introduction:** Contextual Introduction

**Body:** Why comprehensive nutrition is necessary rather than targeted interventions to address malnutrition?

**Conclusion:** Way forward

Malnutrition in India is not just about food insecurity but also about dietary habits shaped by culture, caste, and gender relations. While government initiatives like Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 focus on targeted interventions for women and children, a broader nutrition agenda must consider the entire population, including men, senior citizens, and those suffering from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes and hypertension.

**Limitations of Targeted Interventions**

- **Narrow Focus:** Most nutrition programs cater primarily to pregnant women, lactating mothers, and young children, neglecting the broader population.
- **Regional and Societal Gaps:** Policies reinforce the notion that malnutrition is limited to specific districts or marginalized groups, ignoring its widespread nature.
- **Limited Scope of Solutions:** Current interventions rely heavily on supplementary nutrition (e.g., iron-folic acid tablets, take-home rations) but do not emphasize dietary diversity and long-term behavioral change.
- **Insufficient Institutional Support:** Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs), which could play a crucial role, have uneven distribution and lack specialized nutrition personnel.

**Need for a Comprehensive Nutrition Agenda**

- **Expanding Nutrition Services Beyond Maternal and Child Health:** Addressing malnutrition in men, senior citizens, and people with NCDs. Systematically integrating nutrition services in Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) with a focus on community-based solutions.
- **Local Food-Based Solutions:** Promoting low-cost, nutrient-rich local foods instead of relying on ultra-processed packaged goods. Integrating nutrition education with local cuisines and community food habits to ensure better acceptability.
- **Strengthening Institutional Implementation:** Ensuring every HWC has a dedicated nutrition workforce and standardized services covering all population groups. Expanding coverage of HWCs in urban areas, where nutrition-related NCDs are rising.
- **Engaging Local Elites for Social Acceptance:** Research shows that successful public health interventions, such as smallpox vaccination, gained traction when local influencers championed them. Local leaders, religious institutions, and community organizations should be engaged to promote nutrition awareness and behavioral change.

**Way Forward**

- Strengthening HWCs with dedicated nutrition professionals.
- Expanding the scope of nutrition programs to include all age groups.
- Encouraging local food-based solutions and behavioral change campaigns.
- Involving local elites to improve social acceptance and adoption of better nutrition practices.

**Conclusion**

A locally owned, inclusive, and sustainable nutrition strategy is the key to tackling India's malnutrition crisis effectively.

**Examine the challenges faced by public health education in India and suggest measures to address the mismatch between supply and demand in the public health job market.**

**Introduction:** Contextual Introduction

**Body:** What are the challenges faced by public health education in India and suggest measures to address the mismatch between supply and demand in the public health job market?

**Conclusion:** Way forward

Public health plays a crucial role in ensuring national well-being, as emphasized in Article 47 of the Indian Constitution. However, India's public health education system faces significant challenges, primarily due to a mismatch between the increasing number of public health graduates and the limited availability of employment opportunities.

**Challenges in Public Health Education and Employment**

- **Mismatch Between Supply and Demand** – While over 100 institutions now offer Master of Public Health (MPH) courses, public sector job opportunities have stagnated, leading to intense competition for limited positions.
- **Lack of Standardization** – The absence of a regulatory framework under the National Medical Commission (NMC) or University Grants Commission (UGC) has led to variations in curricula, impacting the quality of graduates.
- **Dominance of the Private Sector** – The growing privatization of healthcare prioritizes hospital management over public health professionals, restricting employment opportunities.
- **Funding Constraints** – The reduction in international aid, such as the U.S. withdrawal from WHO and USAID cuts, has further diminished public health research and development funding.
- **Uneven Institutional Distribution** – Many populous states like Bihar and Jharkhand lack sufficient public health education facilities, affecting access to training.

**Way Forward**

- **Creation of Public Health Cadres** – State governments should establish dedicated public health management cadres to enhance employment and service delivery.
- **Regulatory Oversight** – A dedicated public health education division within the NMC or UGC should standardize curricula and ensure minimum training requirements.
- **Integration with Practical Learning** – Stronger linkages between academic institutions and government health programs can enhance graduates' employability.
- **Strengthening Domestic Funding** – Increased national investment in public health research can reduce dependence on foreign grants.
- **Equitable Expansion of Institutions** – Establishing public health training centers in underserved states can promote regional balance in workforce distribution.

**Conclusion**

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach involving regulatory reforms, job creation, and enhanced funding. A robust public health education system, aligned with employment opportunities, is vital for strengthening India's healthcare system and achieving universal health coverage.

**The rising prevalence of obesity in India necessitates a multi-pronged approach that includes policy interventions, public awareness, and structural changes in food and lifestyle choices. Discuss the key strategies that can be adopted to create an enabling environment for healthy behavior.**

**Introduction:** Contextual Introduction

**Body:** Key strategies that can be adopted to create an enabling environment for healthy behavior.

**Conclusion:** Way forward

The growing obesity crisis in India is a significant public health concern, driven by dietary shifts, sedentary lifestyles, and structural factors limiting access to healthy food.

## **Key Strategies for Creating an Enabling Environment for Healthy Behavior**

### **1. Policy and Regulatory Interventions**

- **Food Regulation:** Strict limits on sugar, salt, and trans fats in processed foods, coupled with mandatory front-of-pack warning labels to inform consumers.
- **Advertisement Restrictions:** Banning misleading health claims and celebrity endorsements of unhealthy foods, especially targeting children.
- **Taxation and Subsidies:** Imposing higher taxes on ultra-processed foods (UPF) and sugar-sweetened beverages, while subsidizing nutrient-rich crops like millet.

### **2. Promoting Healthy Diets through Agricultural and Food Policies**

- **Crop Diversification:** Encouraging millets and fibre-rich crops over starchy cereals to improve dietary diversity.
- **Reduction in Processing:** Policies should promote less processing of foods to retain natural nutrients.
- **Affordable Healthy Foods:** Government procurement and public distribution systems (PDS) should focus on nutritious foods for schools, anganwadis, and other public institutions.

### **3. Encouraging Physical Activity**

- **Urban Infrastructure:** Creating safe pedestrian paths, cycling lanes, and recreational green spaces to promote active living.
- **Workplace Wellness:** Encouraging standing desks, structured exercise breaks, and corporate wellness programs to reduce sedentary behavior.
- **Physical Education in Schools:** Integrating dynamic exercises and resistance training into school curricula to counteract childhood obesity.

### **4. Public Awareness and Behavioral Change**

- **Nutrition Literacy Campaigns:** Strengthening initiatives like Eat Right India and Fit India Movement to educate people about balanced diets.
- **Community-Based Health Promotion:** Involving schools, workplaces, and local communities in creating environments that naturally encourage healthier choices.
- **Digital Outreach:** Using social media and technology-driven interventions to promote personalized nutrition and fitness guidance.

## **Conclusion**

A comprehensive strategy tackling obesity requires coordinated efforts across public policy, agriculture, urban planning, and healthcare. By making healthy choices affordable, accessible, and integrated into daily life, India can curb the obesity epidemic and promote long-term well-being for its population.



**The growing geopolitical rivalry between the United States and China is often described as a new Cold War, representing a contest between two models of capitalism—authoritarian and democratic. Analyze the key ideological, economic, and strategic dimensions of this competition and its implications for the global order.**

**Introduction:** Contextual Introduction

**Body:** Key ideological, economic, strategic dimensions of this competition and implications for global order.

**Conclusion:** Way forward

The growing geopolitical competition between the United States and China is often described as a new Cold War, reflecting a contest between two models of capitalism—authoritarian and democratic.

### Ideological Dimensions

- **China's Model:** China promotes a form of State-led authoritarian capitalism, which prioritizes centralized economic planning, mass surveillance, and political control. It exports this model through economic aid, technology partnerships, and strategic investments.
- **US Model:** The US, on the other hand, champions liberal democracy and free-market capitalism, advocating for human rights, democratic governance, and open economies.

### Economic Dimensions

- **Globalization vs. Protectionism:** China has deeply integrated itself into global supply chains, challenging the US-led liberal economic order. The US, in response, has pursued policies of de-risking and selective decoupling, trying to shift critical supply chains away from China.
- **Technology Wars:** The two powers are locked in competition over semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity, with the US imposing export restrictions on China's access to advanced technology.
- **Competing Trade Blocs:** The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) reflect rival economic visions, with China focusing on infrastructure diplomacy and the US promoting regional economic cooperation.

### Strategic and Geopolitical Dimensions

- **Military Posturing:** The Indo-Pacific region has become the main theater of contestation, with the US strengthening military alliances (e.g., QUAD, AUKUS) to counter China's assertiveness in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait.
- **Influence in the Global South:** While China has gained traction in Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia through economic investments and strategic partnerships, the US is attempting to regain influence by promoting democratic governance and development initiatives.
- **Fragmentation of the West:** The internal ideological divide within Western democracies, as seen in the rise of far-right populism, weakens the coherence of the US-led alliance against China.

### Implications for the Global Order

- **Erosion of Liberal Hegemony:** The post-Cold War liberal order is under stress due to the dual forces of China's rise and growing far-right populism in the West.
- **Multipolarity vs. Bipolarity:** Unlike the Cold War, today's world is not strictly bipolar. Other actors like India, the EU, and regional powers seek strategic autonomy rather than strict alignment with either the US or China.

### Conclusion

The long-term trajectory of this competition will depend on both the internal political dynamics of the US and China and the choices made by rising powers in the Global South.

**India must act as a unifier in the Indian Ocean Region. Apart from its “soft power” and humanitarian aspects, maritime diplomacy can help contain, resolve, and prevent conflict. Discuss.**

**Introduction:** Contextual Introduction

**Body:** Highlight how maritime diplomacy can as a conflict-prevention and resolution tool.

**Conclusion:** Way forward

K.M. Panikkar, a noted Indian diplomat and strategist, emphasized that while the Indian Ocean may be just another maritime region for other nations, it is a “vital sea” for India. However, despite its geographical centrality, India has historically struggled to forge a cohesive Indian Ocean identity.

### Maritime Diplomacy as a Conflict-Prevention and Resolution Tool

- **Naval Diplomacy and Capacity Building:** India has enhanced Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) through partnerships with Seychelles, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, and Maldives. Indian Navy assists in EEZ surveillance and anti-smuggling operations for island nations.
- **Multilateral Naval Exercises and Cooperation:** Exercises like MALABAR, VARUNA, and MILAN foster interoperability and trust among regional navies. Participation in Quad’s Indo-Pacific initiatives strengthens deterrence against unilateral assertions in the region.
- **Countering Emerging Security Threats:** India has played a leading role in anti-piracy operations off the Somali coast and in countering drug trafficking. The Houthi threat to international shipping underscores the need for collective maritime security mechanisms.

### Challenges in India’s Maritime Diplomacy

- **Lack of Institutional Coordination:** Bureaucratic hurdles between the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) hinder rapid security and HADR responses.
- **China’s Expanding Influence in the IOR:** The String of Pearls strategy and China’s increasing presence in ports like Hambantota and Gwadar challenge India’s maritime influence.
- **Fragmented Regional Architecture:** Acronym-heavy organizations like IORA, SAARC, BIMSTEC, and IONS suffer from a lack of coherence and strategic alignment.

### Way Forward: Strengthening India’s Maritime Diplomacy

- **Institutionalizing a “Whole-of-Government” Approach:** Improved coordination between the Navy, diplomats, and bureaucracies is needed to craft a comprehensive maritime security strategy.
- **Investing in Maritime Infrastructure and Capabilities:** Building amphibious heavy-lift capability and a hospital ship will enhance India’s ability to act as a first responder.
- **Enhancing Multilateral Engagements:** India must take a leadership role in reforming IORA and BIMSTEC to make them more effective in crisis response. Strengthening the IOC as a regional security dialogue akin to ASEAN’s Shangri-La Dialogue.

### Conclusion

India’s aspirations of being a regional leader in the Indian Ocean must be backed by a cohesive maritime strategy that goes beyond soft power. While HADR and naval exercises have solidified India’s position, there remains a gap in institutional coordination and regional security mechanisms. By strengthening its maritime diplomacy through a whole-of-government approach, India can emerge as the unifying force in the Indian Ocean Region, ensuring stability, security, and shared prosperity.

**Discuss the role of women in India's transition to green energy. How can skill development programs like Skill India be leveraged to enhance women's participation in the green workforce?**

**Introduction:** Contextual Introduction

**Body:** How skill programs can be leveraged to enhance women's participation in the green workforce?

**Conclusion:** Way forward

India is expanding its renewable energy sector rapidly, with new capacity expected to surpass that of many major economies by 2026. However, a key challenge remains: the shortage of skilled manpower. Women can play a crucial role in bridging this gap, ensuring both workforce expansion and gender inclusion. Currently, women make up only 11% of India's clean energy workforce, significantly lower than the global average of 32%.

### **Role of Women in India's Green Energy Transition**

- **Workforce Expansion & Economic Inclusion:** Women's participation in green jobs will help meet the estimated demand of 3.5 million skilled workers in renewable energy by 2030 while also reducing gender disparity in employment.
- **Grassroots-Level Impact:** Women are already engaged in resource management and local sustainability efforts. Initiatives like vidyut sakhis in Uttar Pradesh, who support electricity bill collection, demonstrate their potential in integrating green energy solutions with community engagement.
- **Innovation & Leadership:** Studies suggest that women in leadership roles drive more sustainable solutions. Entrepreneurs like Nidhi Pant, who developed a solar dryer-based food processing startup, showcase how women's innovations can aid both environmental sustainability and rural livelihoods.

### **Challenges in Green Energy Employment:**

- **Lack of education & technical skills:** Many women lack the required education for solar equipment installation and maintenance.
- **Inadequate workplace facilities:** Remote locations, unsafe transportation, and lack of infrastructure deter women from joining green jobs.
- **Gender Sensitivity Issues:** Workplaces in green industries often lack gender-friendly policies and support systems.

### **Leveraging Skill India to Enhance Women's Participation**

- **Targeted Skill Development:** Introduce specialized training in solar panel installation, wind energy maintenance, and EV servicing for women. Promote entrepreneurial skill-building programs to support women-led renewable energy startups.
- **Policy & Infrastructure Support:** Ensure safe transportation and housing for women in remote job locations. Implement gender-sensitive policies in workplaces to encourage retention.
- **Data Collection & Awareness:** Establish reliable databases to track women's participation in green jobs. Conduct awareness programs to increase women's interest in renewable energy careers.
- **Community-Based Workforce Model:** Develop a women-centric green workforce similar to ASHA workers in healthcare. Expand community-led initiatives like Powering Livelihoods, which has successfully engaged women in decentralized renewable energy solutions.

### **Conclusion**

Women's active participation in the green energy sector is not just a matter of inclusion but a necessity for India's renewable energy ambitions. By integrating gender-responsive skill development into Skill India,



and creating enabling conditions at training centers and workplaces, India can ensure a just and sustainable energy transition.

**Discuss the role of trade liberalization, including tariff and non-tariff barrier reduction, in attracting foreign investment to India. How can these measures strengthen the 'Make in India' initiative?**

**Introduction:** Contextual Introduction

**Body:** Role of trade liberalization, including tariff and non-tariff barrier reduction, in attracting foreign investment to India.

**Conclusion:** Way forward

Trade liberalization, through the reduction of tariffs and non-tariff barriers, is a key strategy to attract foreign investment and boost India's manufacturing sector. In a competitive global investment environment, India must undertake targeted reforms to enhance its appeal to foreign businesses and strengthen the 'Make in India' initiative.

### Role of Trade Liberalization in Attracting Foreign Investment

- **Cost Competitiveness:** High tariffs on manufacturing inputs increase production costs, making Indian goods less competitive. Reducing such barriers can attract companies seeking cost-effective production hubs.
- **Supply Chain Integration:** Manufacturing today relies on cross-border supply chains. Lower import duties on critical inputs, as seen in the lithium-ion battery sector, can enhance India's participation in global value chains.
- **Regulatory Streamlining:** Reducing bureaucratic hurdles in land acquisition, dispute resolution, and taxation can improve investor confidence and encourage reinvestment rather than profit repatriation.
- **Competing with Emerging Markets:** Countries like Vietnam have made greater strides in attracting export-oriented manufacturing. A liberalized trade regime can help India regain its competitive edge.

### Strengthening the 'Make in India' Initiative

- **Boosting Manufacturing Exports:** Encouraging imports of high-quality raw materials and machinery enables domestic firms to produce world-class goods for global markets.
- **Job Creation and Upskilling:** Increased FDI in manufacturing will generate employment and lead to skill development, addressing India's job deficit.
- **Encouraging MSME Growth:** Simplified taxation and regulatory frameworks will help small and medium enterprises integrate into larger industrial supply chains.
- **Building a Global Hub:** With a supportive policy environment, India can emerge as an alternative to China for global manufacturers seeking to diversify their production bases.

### Conclusion

India must implement decisive trade liberalization measures to reduce input costs, ease regulatory burdens, and attract greater FDI. These reforms will enhance the 'Make in India' initiative, positioning India as a global manufacturing leader and driving economic growth.

**Discuss the need for reforms in the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) in light of evolving data protection concerns. How can these reforms strengthen India's digital governance framework?**

**Introduction:** Contextual Introduction

**Body:** Highlight the need for reforms in the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT).

**Conclusion:** Way forward

The Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) plays a key role in resolving disputes in the telecom, broadcasting, and information technology sectors. With the enactment of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, TDSAT has been designated as the appellate authority for decisions made by the Data Protection Board (DPB).

**Need for Reforms in TDSAT**

- **Appointment of a Technical Member with Data Protection Expertise**
  - The TDSAT currently lacks a specialized member with expertise in data protection and privacy laws. Under Section 14C of the TRAI Act, 1997, members are required to have experience in technology, telecom, industry, commerce, or administration.
  - To address this gap, an amendment to the TRAI Act is necessary to ensure that at least one member has expertise in data protection and digital rights.
- **Addressing the Caseload and Expanding Tribunal Capacity**
  - TDSAT is already overburdened with 3,448 pending cases between 2020 and 2025. The newly enacted Telecommunications Act, of 2023 will further increase its workload, making it unrealistic to dispose of data protection appeals within six months, as mandated by the DPDP Act.
  - The absence of a judicial member is also a significant concern, as the Supreme Court has emphasized the need for judicial members in tribunals to uphold fairness in adjudication.
  - Proposed reforms:
    - Increased budget allocation for establishing new TDSAT benches to handle data protection cases separately.
    - Appointment of additional judicial members to ensure fair and legally sound decision-making.
- **Upgrading Digital Infrastructure for Efficient Appeals Processing**
  - The draft DPDP Rules mandate that all appeals be filed digitally, but TDSAT's current digital infrastructure is inadequate for smooth online case management.
  - The TRAI Annual Report 2023 mentions a "legal case management system," but its implementation status is unclear.
  - Proposed reforms:
    - Implement a robust case management system for seamless digital filings, tracking of appeals, and real-time case updates.
    - Improve public access to case records and tribunal decisions to enhance transparency and accountability.

**Strengthening India's Digital Governance Framework**

- **Ensuring Consumer Protection** – A well-functioning tribunal will provide timely redressal for individuals facing data privacy violations.
- **Strengthening Legal Enforcement** – Faster adjudication will ensure compliance with data protection laws and create a deterrent effect against violations.
- **Boosting Investor Confidence** – A specialized and efficient appellate system will encourage digital businesses to invest in India, knowing there is a strong dispute resolution mechanism.

- **Alignment with Global Standards** – Strengthening TDSAT's data protection capacity will bring India's regulatory framework in line with international best practices like GDPR.

### Conclusion

TDSAT requires urgent institutional reforms to effectively handle data protection appeals. These changes will enhance India's digital governance, protect individual privacy rights, and ensure effective enforcement of the DPDP Act, of 2023.

**The declaration of the World Day for Glaciers on May 21 is a recognition of their critical role in Earth's water system. Discuss the significance of glaciers for global ecology and human sustenance. Also, examine the threats they face and suggest measures for their conservation.**

**Introduction:** Contextual Introduction

**Body:** Significance of Glaciers, threats they face and suggest measures for their conservation.

**Conclusion:** Way forward

The declaration of World Day for Glaciers on May 21 by the United Nations recognizes the indispensable role glaciers play in sustaining life on Earth.

### Significance of Glaciers for Global Ecology and Human Sustenance

- **Freshwater Reservoirs** – Glaciers act as natural storage units, gradually releasing water to sustain rivers that provide drinking water, support agriculture, and generate hydroelectric power. Major rivers like the Ganges, Yangtze, and Amazon rely on glacial melt.
- **Climate Regulation** – Glaciers influence weather patterns by reflecting solar radiation and stabilizing temperatures. Their loss disrupts regional and global climate systems.
- **Ecosystem Stability** – Many fragile ecosystems, such as those in the Hindu Kush Himalayas, depend on glacial meltwater. Their retreat endangers unique flora and fauna, leading to biodiversity loss.
- **Economic and Social Dependence** – Glacier-fed water sources support millions of people, particularly in high-altitude regions. Cities like Lima, La Paz, and Kathmandu rely heavily on glaciers for water supply.

### Threats to Glaciers

- **Global Warming** – Rising temperatures have accelerated glacial melt, with the IPCC reporting a loss of approximately 273 billion tonnes of ice annually since 2000. In 2023, glaciers experienced their highest water loss in 50 years.
- **Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)** – Retreating glaciers leave behind unstable lakes, which can burst and cause catastrophic floods. The 2023 South Lhonak Lake flood in Sikkim exemplifies this growing threat.
- **Sea-Level Rise** – Melting glaciers contribute significantly to rising sea levels, threatening coastal communities and increasing the frequency of extreme weather events.
- **Impact on Indigenous Communities** – Communities dependent on glacial ecosystems face disruptions in water supply, agriculture, and cultural practices. The loss of glaciers threatens traditional ways of life.

### Measures for Glacial Conservation

- **Climate Change Mitigation** – Governments must implement stringent policies to curb greenhouse gas emissions, transition to renewable energy, and promote sustainable practices.
- **Glacier Monitoring and Early Warning Systems** – Investing in satellite and ground-based monitoring can help track glacial changes and predict GLOFs, minimizing disaster risks.

- **Sustainable Water Management** – Adaptation strategies, such as artificial reservoirs and improved irrigation techniques, can help manage declining water availability.
- **Climate Literacy and Awareness** – UNESCO-led initiatives like the Climate Science Literacy exhibition aim to bridge knowledge gaps and empower individuals to advocate for climate action.

### Conclusion

Glaciers are not just frozen landscapes but lifelines for billions. Their rapid decline signals an urgent crisis that demands coordinated global efforts. On the World Day for Glaciers, the world must commit to preserving these vital resources—because safeguarding glaciers means safeguarding our future.

**Discuss the role of private schools in transforming education in India. Examine the challenges they face and suggest measures to ensure their contribution aligns with equity and quality in the education sector.**

**Introduction:** Contextual Introduction

**Body:** Role of private schools in transforming education in India & challenges they face in the education sector

**Conclusion:** Way forward

India's education system is a blend of public and private institutions, with private schools accounting for nearly 40% of total student enrollment.

### Role of Private Schools in Educational Transformation

- **Expanding Access & Innovation** – With the state gradually stepping back, private institutions now educate over 50% of students in several states. Many private schools have introduced multilingual education, international curricula, and global exposure, preparing students for an interconnected world.
- **Technology Integration** – Collaborations with EdTech companies have revolutionized classrooms, making learning personalized, engaging, and AI-driven. Such innovations can help scale quality education nationwide.
- **Data-Driven Assessments** – Unlike government schools, some private institutions adopt competency-based learning and AI-driven assessments to improve learning outcomes.
- **Catalysts for Systemic Change** – Private schools, despite being social enterprises, have the resources and flexibility to drive systemic reform, shaping the broader ecosystem rather than just improving individual institutions.

### Challenges Faced by Private Schools

- **Unequal Access & Affordability** – The high cost of private education makes quality schooling inaccessible to a vast majority, deepening social inequalities.
- **Regulatory Constraints** – Strict fee regulations and operational guidelines often stifle innovation and scalability. A trust deficit exists between private schools and policymakers.
- **Fragmentation of Innovation** – Unlike global education models, successful private schools in India operate in silos, limiting widespread adoption of best practices.
- **Over-commercialization** – Private schools are often perceived as profit-driven entities, leading to skepticism and reluctance in policy collaboration.

### Measures to Align Private Education with Equity & Quality

- **Defining a Higher Purpose & Responsibility** – Private schools must see themselves as partners in nation-building, taking responsibility beyond individual institutions to drive systemic reform.



- **Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)** – The state should facilitate structured data-driven collaboration between government schools, private institutions, and EdTech firms, promoting shared accountability.
- **Encouraging AI & Adaptive Learning** – Private schools should scale AI-driven assessments and personalized learning to bridge learning gaps across economic backgrounds.
- **Transparent & Balanced Regulation** – Policies should ensure quality without excessive control, fostering an enabling environment rather than a restrictive one.

## Conclusion

The role of private schools must evolve beyond commercial institutions to hubs of innovation, trust, and data-driven transformation. For India to achieve the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision, school education must be reimagined, with private schools playing a transformative role in shaping the future of learning.

**India's budgetary process has increasingly diminished the role of elected representatives, thereby undermining democratic accountability. Critically analyze.**

**Introduction:** Contextual Introduction

**Body:** How has role of Parliament declined in budgetary process and ways to strengthen this?

**Conclusion:** Way forward

The Budget is more than just a financial statement; it is a reflection of a nation's economic vision, governance philosophy, and fiscal priorities.

## How Parliamentary Influence Has Declined in Budgetary Matters

- **Executive Monopoly Over Budget Formulation:** The Finance Ministry solely crafts the Budget with minimal consultation, often keeping even Cabinet Ministers uninformed until its presentation.
- **Lack of Pre-Budget Consultations:** India lacks mechanism like, pre-Budget discussions, preventing legislators from proactively influencing budgetary decisions. Indian MPs lack institutional support for budgetary research and economic forecasts.
- **Declining Quality of Parliamentary Scrutiny:** Parliamentary debates on the Budget are often fragmented and superficial, with many demands for grants passed without discussion.
- **Ineffectiveness of Parliamentary Committees:** The Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSCs) review budgetary allocations, but their recommendations are not binding.
- **Absence of Budgetary Bicameralism:** The Rajya Sabha, despite being a house of senior statesmen, has no substantive role in Budget discussions.

## Impact on Democratic Accountability

- **Weakening of Representative Democracy** – By sidelining elected representatives, the budgetary process becomes an executive-driven exercise rather than a collective decision-making process.
- **Reduced Fiscal Transparency** – Off-budget borrowings and discretionary fund allocations escape proper parliamentary scrutiny.
- **Inequitable Resource Allocation** – Without pre-Budget deliberations, budgetary priorities may not adequately reflect public needs.
- **Undermining Federalism** – The lack of Rajya Sabha involvement sidelines state interests in financial matters.

## Way Forward: Strengthening Parliamentary Oversight

- **Institutionalizing Pre-Budget Discussions:** A dedicated 5-7 day discussion period during the Monsoon Session to assess fiscal priorities and enable legislators to provide inputs.
- **Establishing a Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO):** Modeled on international best practices, a PBO would offer independent fiscal analysis, revenue projections, and economic impact



assessments to MPs. It would enhance informed decision-making and strengthen legislative oversight.

- **Enhancing Committee Effectiveness:** Strengthening DRSCs by making their recommendations more binding and ensuring they review all budgetary allocations before approval.
- **Revisiting Budgetary Bicameralism:** Allowing the Rajya Sabha to have a consultative role in budget discussions would ensure broader representation in financial decision-making.

## Conclusion

Strengthening legislative engagement in budgetary matters would not only enhance democratic accountability but also ensure that financial governance is more transparent, equitable, and responsive to public needs.

**As the chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), India has an opportunity to enhance regional cooperation and governance. Critically analyze how India can strengthen the foundation for meaningful and ground-level governance in the IORA region.**

**Introduction:** Contextual Introduction

**Body:** How India can strengthen the foundation for meaningful governance in the IORA region?

**Conclusion:** Way forward

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is an apex regional organization that promotes open regionalism among Asian, African, and Australian nations connected by the Indian Ocean.

## Significance of IORA and India's Strategic Interests

- **Economic Importance** – The Indian Ocean facilitates 75% of global trade and 50% of daily oil transport, with intra-IORA trade reaching \$800 billion in 2023. The blue economy generates over \$1 trillion annually.
- **Maritime Security** – Threats like piracy, terrorism, and illegal fishing endanger regional stability. India's SAGAR vision aligns with IORA's goal of ensuring secure sea lanes.
- **Climate Resilience** – Rising sea levels and cyclones threaten coastal regions. IORA plays a key role in disaster preparedness and mitigation.
- **Geopolitical Significance** – While free from major power rivalry, China's growing presence makes India's leadership crucial for balancing external influences and strengthening cooperation.

## Challenges Faced by IORA

- **Financial Constraints** – IORA's budget depends on member contributions and remains inadequate for its expanding role, especially compared to the \$1.3 billion budget of the smaller Indian Ocean Commission.
- **Institutional Weaknesses** – The understaffed Secretariat in Mauritius struggles with governance and implementation, while slow decision-making and the lack of an enforcement mechanism limit policy effectiveness.
- **Technological Gaps** – Inefficient data management and outdated systems hamper evidence-based policymaking, leading to delays and inaccuracies in governance.
- **Limited Private Sector Involvement** – Key maritime industries like shipping and marine tourism are not integrated into policymaking, missing opportunities for funding and expertise in sustainable development.

## India's Strategy to Strengthen IORA's Governance

- **Enhancing Financial Resources** – Establishing an IORA Fund with contributions from member states, private players, and global institutions while encouraging private-sector involvement in maritime policymaking.
- **Institutional Strengthening** – Expanding the IORA Secretariat's capacity, digitizing processes, and integrating advanced marine technologies with support from Australia, France, and Singapore.
- **Capacity Building** – Developing marine-ready courses, interdisciplinary programs like marine accounting, and fostering scholar-practitioner collaborations to strengthen the blue economy.
- **Disaster Management and Climate Resilience** – Creating a Disaster Response Fund, improving early warning systems, and utilizing traditional knowledge from coastal nations for sustainable governance.

### Conclusion

India's IORA chairship is an opportunity to address financial, institutional, and technological gaps while fostering regional cooperation. Success will depend on securing funding, leveraging technology, strengthening disaster resilience, and balancing geopolitical interests for a more effective and inclusive IORA.