INTERVIEW GUIDANCE PROGRAM 2023

IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS ISSUES ANALYSIS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION

Index

POLITY

STATE FUNDING OF ELECTIONS: STEP TOWARDS TRANSPARENCY IN ELECTORAL PROCESS

Questionnaire

1. *Why is state funding of elections in the news?*
2. *What does state funding mean?*
3. *Why should there be state funding in the election and its benefits?*
4. *What are some of the challenges associated with state funding in the elections?*
5. *How to overcome the challenges associated with state funding?*
6. *Do you think that state funding will be a waste of taxpayers' money?*

Context: Constitution Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India, D.Y. Chandrachud, recently reserved its judgment **on petitions challenging the validity of the electoral bonds scheme**. The proceedings focused on arguments pertaining to the voters' right to information vis-a-vis the right to confidentiality of donors. Transparency in election funding has become the central issue here.

Should elections be state funded instead?
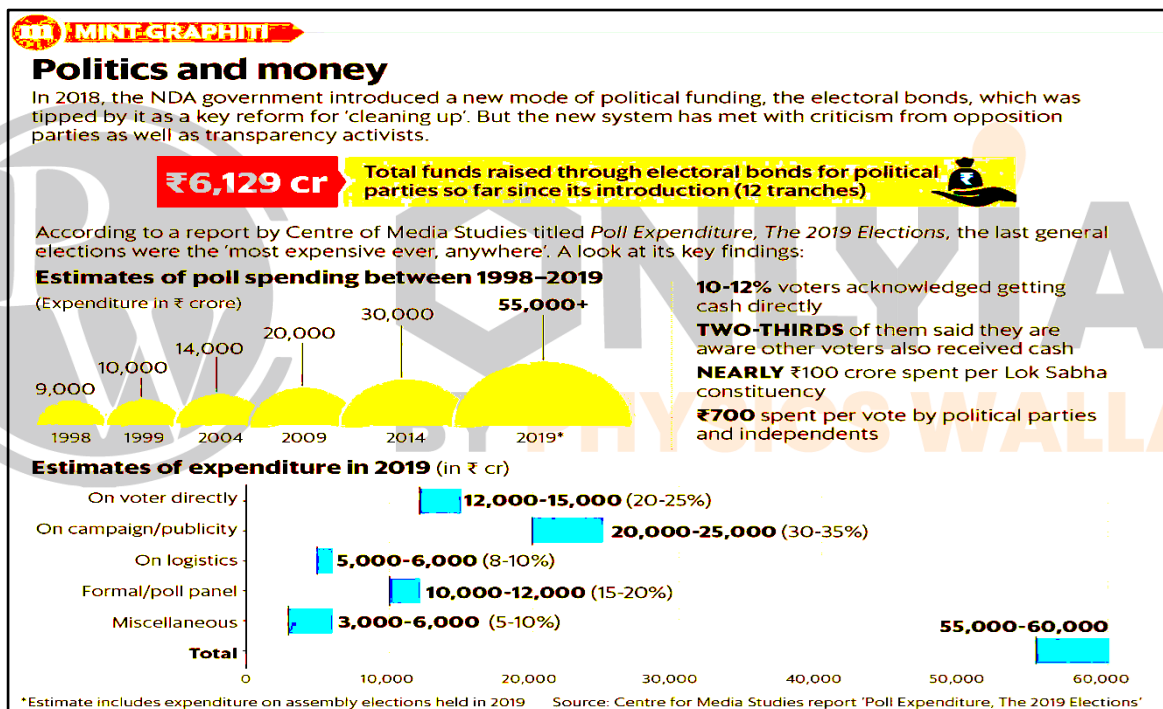
What does state funding of elections mean?

State funding of elections means that the government provides funding to political parties or candidates to participate in elections. It is also known as public funding of elections because the state uses public money for election expenses.

What are the various models of state funding?

There are different models of state funding in elections.

- ❖ In some countries, only parties get the funds and candidates do not. In some, it is the other way round. There are some 34 countries where state funding of elections is available in some form or the other.
- ❖ The highest proportion of state funding is in **Norway**, which is about 74% of the total expenses on the elections.
- ❖ **Germany** provides public funding to political parties based on their performance in elections. Additionally, citizens can voluntarily contribute a percentage of their income tax to a political party of their choice. Other countries where such a practice is prevalent are **Canada, France, and Brazil**

❖ In the **USA** there is a rule that if the presidential candidate raises X amount of money, they are eligible to receive an equal amount of money from the state.

Existing Status of State Funding in India:

1. **Free broadcasting**: Allocating free airtime on the public broadcasts for national and state parties during general elections and state legislature elections respectively.
2. **Income Tax exemptions**: Registered parties are exempted from paying income tax, under Section 13A of the IT Act.
3. **Other benefits**: National Parties receive security, office space etc. for the elections.

Recommendations from various committees:

1. The **Indrajit Gupta Committee** (1998) endorsed state funding of elections, in order to establish a fair playing field for parties with less money.
2. "Ethics in Governance", a report of the **Second Administrative Reforms Commission** (2008) also recommended partial state funding of elections for the purpose of reducing "illegitimate and unnecessary funding" of elections expenses.
3. The **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution**, 2001, did not endorse state funding of elections but concurred with the **1999 Law Commission report** that the appropriate framework for regulation of political parties would need to be implemented before state funding is considered.

Need for state funding in elections:

1. **To bring transparency and reduce corruption:** Currently, the funding lacks transparency because a significant portion of the money is coming from undisclosed sources, including **electoral bonds**, in which the details of donors are not provided.

66% OF PARTY FUNDING 'UNKNOWN'

Total income of 8 national parties in 2021-22: ₹3,289cr

Known Sources	Other Known Sources*	Unknown Sources**
781cr	336cr	2,172cr

(*Other known sources include sale of assets, membership fees, bank interest, sale of publications, party levy etc)

** Unknown sources include electoral bonds (EBs) & anonymous donors who gave below ₹20,000. Currently, mostly EBs

Party	Total Income (₹cr)	Unknown Sources (%)
BJP	1,917	61
TMC	546	97
Cong	541	72
CPM	162	48

Source: ADR | **Related Report: P 9**

Total Income From EBs From 2017-18 to 2021-22 (₹cr)
- BJP: 5,272
- Cong: 952
- BJD: 622
- YSRCP: 330
- TDP: 113
- S Sena: 101
- NCP: 64
- AAP: 50

(Data collated from EC website by senior advocate Vijay Hansaria)

2. **Level playing field:** Many large political parties have access to more funds and it results in an uneven playing field for many new parties and independent candidates.
3. **To avoid crony capitalism:** It can break up the connection between the corporate players and politicians that develops from the need for funding to win elections.
4. **Financial stability to political parties:** Public funding can contribute to the financial stability of political parties, allowing them to focus on long-term goals and policy development rather than short-term fundraising for each election cycle.
5. **Internal Democracy:** It will ensure internal democracy in the political parties as candidates won't be dependent on the party for funding, and parties will become more democratic internally.

Limitations and challenges in state funding:

1. **Fiscal issues and burden on taxpayers' money**: India has limited financial resources, and allocating funds for state-funded elections may divert resources from other essential public services and put a burden on taxpayers.

2. **Implementational challenges**: such as determining eligibility criteria, distributing funds equitably, and establishing effective monitoring mechanisms.

3. **The issue in consensus building**: What would be the benchmark for distribution? How much money needs to be given to the parties and candidates and how will it be distributed?

4. **Misuse of funds:** There are chances that frivolous political parties might emerge solely to receive state subsidies, diverting funds from political office and development work.

5. The EC "suspects state funding will become one more additional tool, one more additional source of funds without reduction of the use of illegal money in election campaigns and this in a way can restrict the participation of right-thinking citizens (in the polls process in the country)."

Suggestions to overcome limitations of state funding in elections:

1. **The Indrajit Gupta Committee (1998):** The Committee recommended two limitations to state funding. Firstly, state funds should be given only to national and state parties allotted a symbol and not to independent candidates.

   Secondly, in the short-term state funding should only be given in kind, in the form of certain facilities to the recognised political parties and their candidates. The Committee noted that at the time of the report, the economic situation of the country only suited partial and not full state funding of elections.

2. **The 1999 Law Commission of India report** concluded that total state funding of elections is "desirable" so long as political parties are prohibited from taking funds from other sources. It also stated that only partial state funding was possible given the economic conditions of the country at that time.

3. Additionally, it strongly recommended that the appropriate regulatory framework be put in place with regard to political parties (provisions ensuring internal democracy, internal structures and maintenance of accounts, their auditing and submission to Election Commission) before state funding of elections is attempted.

4. **Venkatachaliah Committee's (2002)** recommendations for strict regulatory frameworks in auditing and disclosing party income and expenditure to curb undisclosed funding.

5. The CEC (**Nasim Zaidi**) shared a proposal he received from an industry sector that a "democracy cess" should be levied upon the citizens so that elections in India can be made state funded.

6. According to the Election Commission of India (EC), **Nasim Zaidi,** the time is not ripe to go for state funding of elections in the country unless "radical reforms" like decriminalization of politics and enactment of strong financial transparency laws for candidates and political parties are undertaken.

   This is high time that reform proposals on electoral finance moved by the EC and the Law Commission are processed for holistic legislative sanction on the fast track. All political parties take the lead to lay down a regulatory regime for themselves. This will set a good example for people and strengthen democracy.

Do you think that state funding is a waste of taxpayers' money?

The question of whether state funding of elections is a waste of taxpayers' money is subjective and can be viewed from different perspectives.

❖ Critics argue that limited public resources should be directed toward essential services such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure rather than financing political campaigns. Some believe that a market-based approach, where political parties and candidates raise funds from private sources, promotes efficiency and competition. They argue that parties should be responsible for their own financing.

❖ But in a country like India, there is a need ensure transparency in the elections process and for that there's need to have a proper procedure and mechanism for election financing, proper debate and discussion over this issue and a consensus must be reached among the stakeholders to have a better understanding on the state funding of elections or any other mechanism to ensure level playing field for all candidates taking part in the elections.

❖ State funding has its benefits but it's important to acknowledge that the effectiveness of such systems can depend on the specific policies in place, the political context, and the level of public trust in the electoral system. Additionally, critics may argue that state funding could still be a potential waste of resources and that alternative funding models, such as private donations or a combination of public and private funding, may be more efficient.

Ultimately, the debate over state funding involves weighing the benefits of promoting fairness and democracy against concerns about the use of public funds.

Some Additional Pointers

Electoral bonds: These are bearer instruments in the form of promissory notes, they are interest free banking instruments.

Sold four times a year in January, April, July and October in the multiples of 1000, 10,000, 1 Lakh, 10 lakh and 1 crore.

Who can sell them?

SBI is the sole authority. Other banks can also purchase by different channels.

Which parties can receive funds through electoral bonds?

A political party must have at least 1% of vote share in the last general election or assembly elections.

Electoral Bonds Scheme Notified
To help cleanse the political funding system in the country

Nature
- Bearer instrument in the nature of a Promissory Note
- Interest free banking instrument

Eligibility
- A citizen of India or a body incorporated in India
- On fulfillment of all the extant KYC norms
- By making payment from a bank account

Value
- Issued/ Purchased in multiples of Rs.1,000, Rs.10,000, Rs.1,00,000, Rs.10,00,000 and Rs.1,00,00,000
- Available from the Specified Branches of the State Bank of India (SBI)

Lifespan
- Shelf life of only 15 days
- Can be used for making donation only to the political parties registered u/s 29A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951

Period of Purchase
- Available for purchase for a period of 10 days each in the months of January, April, July and October, as may be specified by the Government

Benefits of Electoral Bonds

WILL BRING substantial transparency in political donations against the present system of contributions in the election funding mechanism

HOW MUCH funding comes, what kind of funding it is, the source of funding and where it will be spent will be known clearly

NON DISCLOSURE of recipients will ensure people are free to donate to any political party of their choice

WILL REINFORCE the idea of moving away from a cash system towards clean money which cheque system could not achieve

15 DAYS between buying and selling will ensure they don't turn into a parallel economy

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ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION: REFORM FOR ENHANCED DEMOCRACY OR ELECTORAL CONVENIENCE

Questionnaire:

1. *What is the concept of one nation, one election?*
2. *Why do you think the need for simultaneous elections has arisen?*
3. *Do you think that India must go for one nation one election? What are its implications?*
4. *Discuss the implementation and legal issues involved in the issue?*

Context: recently, the central government set up a panel headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind to explore the feasibility of the 'one nation, one election' (ONOE) plan.

What is the concept of One Nation, One Election?

❖ The idea of ONOE centers around the concept of synchronizing the **timing of Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections across all States** to reduce the frequency of polls throughout the country. After the enforcement of the Constitution on January 26, 1950, the first-ever general elections to Lok Sabha and all State Assemblies were conducted simultaneously in 1951-1952.

❖ The practice continued into the three subsequent Lok Sabha elections until 1967, after which it was disrupted. Subsequently, due to defections and counter-defections between parties, several Legislative Assemblies dissolved post-1960, which eventually led to separate polls for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.

Why do you think the need for Simultaneous elections has arisen?

❖ India, as the world's largest democracy, witnesses a dynamic and complex electoral process. With a **federal structure and multi-tiered governance system, India experiences a perpetual cycle of elections at different levels,** including the Lok Sabha, state assemblies, and local bodies. However, the frequent occurrence of elections poses various challenges, such as an enormous financial burden on the exchequer, policy disruptions during election periods, and administrative overload.

❖ The fundamental idea behind it is to **reduce the frequency of elections and establish a synchronized electoral cycle**, aiming to reap several benefits for Indian democracy and governance.

Discuss the implementation and legal issues involved?

❖ **Implementation issues**: There can be five significant hindrances including the requirement of constitutional amendments, consensus among political parties and state governments, additional cost of election equipment, the huge replacement cost of electronic voting machines, and the requirement of additional polling and security forces.

❖ **Legal issues:** ONOE would require constitutional amendments, primarily to Articles 83, 85, 172, 174, and 356.This would alter the federal provisions of the Constitution and require the ratification of more than 50% of the states. The union government would also be required to amend the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and the Rules of Procedures of Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies. If the implementation of simultaneous elections seeks to amend the federal nature of the Constitution and thus affect the basic structure, it may lead to a judicial intervention as well.

View of governmental institutions

❖ **Election Commission:** ECI initially mooted the idea of simultaneous elections in 1982. It recognised the potential benefits of aligning the electoral cycles of the Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

❖ **Law Commission:** In 1999, the Law Commission of India also proposed the idea of simultaneous elections in its 170th report titled "Reform of the Electoral Laws."

❖ **2018 report**: The Law Commission issued a report on simultaneous elections in 2018, further highlighting the advantages of synchronized elections. The report stressed the need to consider constitutional amendments and legal reforms to make simultaneous elections a reality, with a focus on the principle of "one person, one vote" and the integrity of the electoral process.

Do you think that India must go for One Nation One Election? What are its implications?

India can go for ONOE but there is need to look into both benefits and drawbacks associated with it and try to come on a balanced ground based on the requirement of the time.

There are some benefits:

❖ **Cost contraction**: The primary benefit of **ONOE** is the **reduction in the cost** of conducting elections as each separate election requires a huge amount of financial resources.

❖ **More focus on governance:** Elections have reduced the **political executive** including PM and others ministers to a mere electioneering machine by pulling national leaders to the states as "**star campaigners,**" thus seriously

denting focused governance. It is also **contended that reducing the frequency of elections** would lead to a corresponding decrease in the fiscally irresponsible practices of **freebies.**

❖ **Model code of conduct (MCC):** It is said that the enforcement of the model code of conduct (MCC) during these frequent elections **impedes development, prevents the introduction of new schemes, and obstructs the advancement of ongoing projects.** This subsequently leads to administrative and policy paralysis from the grassroots to the national level.

❖ **Reduced burden on Security forces:** Staggered elections are also considered to be a burden on law enforcement, security, and paramilitary agencies. The implementation of simultaneous elections is projected to alleviate the strain on these entities and eliminate the need for the constant redeployment of paramilitary forces during elections.

❖ **Increased voter turnout:** Simultaneous elections, according to the Law Commission, will increase voter turnout because it will be easier for people to cast many ballots at once.

Drawbacks:

❖ **Implications for Democracy and Governance:** Frequent elections hold politicians more accountable, generate grassroots job opportunities, and separate local, regional, and national issues.

❖ **Overshadowing of local issues:** ONOE could enable political parties to influence elections by crafting campaign strategies centered around a particular **leader's persona,** compelling the people to vote for the leader (by voting for his political party without noticing the candidate) rather than choosing representatives based on local demands and issues.

❖ **Impact on the Federal structure:** The potential for regional and local agendas to be eclipsed by national rhetoric could undermine democracy at the grassroots, reinforce unitary biases in governance, and weaken the quality of cooperative federalism in the country.

❖ **Threat of Instability:** Constitution stipulates that the tenure of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies respectively will last for 5 years unless dissolved earlier and there can be circumstances, as in Article 356, wherein assemblies can be dissolved earlier. Therefore, the ONOE plan raises serious questions — **what would happen if the Central or State government collapses mid-tenure? Would elections be held again in every State, or will the President's rule be imposed?**

A prudent approach would be to carefully navigate the implementation of simultaneous elections by considering several key steps. Engaging relevant parties through open consultations (political parties, civil society organizations, regional and local parties, and voters) is essential. Public awareness and education campaigns should be conducted to familiarize citizens with the concept of simultaneous elections, its potential benefits, and the trade-offs involved.

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WOMEN RESERVATION: A LAW ON PAPER, BUT A REALITY FAR AWAY?

Questionnaire:

1. *What is meant by reservation, especially women reservation?*
2. *What is the historical background of women's reservation?*
3. *What are major features of the women reservation act?*
4. *What is the significance of the women reservation act?*
5. *What are the pros of women reservation at panchayat level?*
6. *We have seen the concept of sarpanch pati in panchayats. Can the same issue be repeated at parliament level?*
7. *Why are we providing reservation specifically to women?*
8. *Why did it take so long for the women reservation bill to become an act when reservation in panchayats was already there?*
9. *What are the arguments against the women reservation act, 2023?*

> 10. *Today we have given reservation to women in the legislature, tomorrow they might start asking for reservation in government jobs or other things. How long will this all continue? What should be done to bring women empowerment in a true sense?*

Context: The **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam,** also known as the **Women's Reservation Bill 2023** (128th Constitutional Amendment Bill), was recently passed by both the Rajya Sabha (RS) and the Lok Sabha (LS). **One-third of the seats** in the Delhi assembly, State legislatures, and the Lok Sabha are reserved by the bill. This will also hold true for the seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislatures set aside for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

What is meant by reservation, especially women reservation?

- ❖ Reservation refers to a system of **affirmative action or positive discrimination** implemented by the government to address historical and social injustices, particularly in the context of caste-based discrimination.
- ❖ The reservation system aims to provide opportunities for marginalized and underprivileged groups who have historically faced social and economic disadvantages. The primary focus of reservation in India has been on Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs).
- ❖ Women Reservation refers to the policy of reserving a certain percentage of seats for women in elected bodies, such as local government bodies (Panchayats and Municipalities), state legislatures, and the national Parliament. This policy is a form of affirmative action aimed at addressing the historical underrepresentation of women in political decision-making and leadership roles.

What is the historical background of women's reservation?

- ❖ **Pre-Independence Era:** The struggle for women's rights in India has roots in the pre-independence era when social reformers like **Raja Ram Mohan Roy** and **Ishwar Chandra** Vidyasagar advocated for women's education and social upliftment. In 1931, **three women's bodies sent a letter to the British Prime Minister requesting** a political reservation for women during the National Movement.
- ❖ **Post-Independence Period:** After gaining independence in 1947, India adopted a democratic form of governance. While the Indian Constitution guaranteed equal rights to men and women, there was a recognition of the need for affirmative action to address historical and social inequalities.
- ❖ **Milestones in the 1990s:** The push for women's reservation gained momentum in the 1990s. One of the key milestones was the passage of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1992. These amendments mandated the reservation of seats for women in Panchayats (local self-governance bodies) and Municipalities.
- ❖ **Women's Reservation Bill:** The **Women's Reservation Bill** was introduced in Parliament in 1996, seeking to reserve one-third of the seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. The bill has faced debates and occasional opposition, leading to periodic delays in its passage.

What are the major features of the Women Reservation Act?

	Details
Reservation	Reserves one third of Lok Sabha (Article 330 A) and State Assembly (Article 332 A) seats for women through direct election.
For SC/ STs	Reserves one-third of seats for women within SCs and STs in Lok Sabha and STate Legislature.
For NCT, Delhi	Reserves seats for women in the legislative assembly of NCT, Delhi (Article 239AA) and reserves one third of SC and ST seats for women in the Delhi Assembly.
Duration	Reservation to be provided for 15 years (can be extended)
Enforcement	The implementation of reservation begins after the completion of the delimitation process based on the first Census conducted after the Bill's passage.
Rotation	Rotation of Seats Reserved will be done after each delimitation.

What is the significance of the Women Reservation Act?

❖ The **Women's Reservation Act** in India is a legislative initiative designed to increase women's representation in political spheres. By reserving one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies, the Act seeks to address historical gender disparities, empower women politically, and bring diverse perspectives to decision-making.

❖ Beyond its immediate impact on political representation, the Act plays a role in challenging **gender-based discrimination and stereotypes**. Its enactment would signal a commitment to **gender equality, encouraging greater women's participation** in politics and contributing to broader societal changes regarding gender roles. The Act also aligns with international efforts to promote **inclusive governance and women's empowerment,** enhancing India's standing on the global stage.

What are the pros of Women Reservation at Panchayat Level?

❖ The reservation of seats for women at the Panchayat level in India has brought several advantages. It has empowered women by providing direct political participation, ensured inclusive decision-making, and focused on addressing women-centric issues.

❖ This approach contributes to **reducing gender disparities,** improving services for women, and fostering social cohesion. Women in leadership positions **serve as role models,** inspiring greater female participation in public life. Their presence enhances accountability, as they are likely to understand local issues better and work towards effective, community-specific solutions. Overall, women's reservation at the Panchayat level is a significant step toward gender equality and community development.

We have seen the concept of Sarpanch Pati in Panchayats. Can the same issue be repeated at parliament level?

❖ The concept like **Sarpanch Pati** is not directly comparable to the national parliament level, there are broader discussions about the role of family members in politics, including at higher levels of government. The concept of family members, particularly spouses, playing a significant role in politics is not unique to Panchayats. In many places, there have been instances where family members of politicians, including spouses, enter politics and are perceived to wield influence.

❖ Members of Parliament (MPs) are individually elected, and their spouses do not hold an official or recognized position in the parliamentary structure. It's essential to note that the dynamics and challenges at the grassroots level may differ from those at the national level. Efforts to address such issues typically involve promoting the empowerment of elected individuals, irrespective of gender, and emphasizing individual merit and qualifications for political positions.

> ### *Sarpanch Pati:*
>
> The concept of 'sarpanch pati', where men relatives (mostly husbands) of elected women run office in place of them, is now immortalized even on celluloid, like in the recent web series Panchayat.

Why are we providing reservation specifically to women?

Reservation policies are implemented for various groups based on historical disadvantages, discrimination, and underrepresentation. Women's reservation, specifically, is designed to address historical gender disparities and promote gender equality in political representation. Here are some reasons why reservation is provided specifically for women:

Historical Gender Discrimination	Empowerment and Inclusion	Diversity of Perspectives
Throughout history, women have faced systemic discrimination and have been underrepresented in various fields, including politics. Reservation is a targeted approach to address this historical imbalance.	Women's reservation aims to empower women by providing them with equal opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. It fosters gender inclusion in governance and challenges traditional gender roles.	Women bring unique perspectives and priorities to political discussions. Reservation ensures that policies and decisions benefit from a more diverse range of viewpoints, addressing issues that directly impact women and marginalized groups.

Why did it take so long for the Women Reservation Bill to become an Act when reservation in panchayats is already there?

❖ The Women's Reservation Bill, which aims to **reserve one-third of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies,** has faced delays in becoming law for various reasons. The complex legislative process, political opposition, changes in governments, and resistance to the idea of reserved seats for women have contributed to the extended timeline. Coalition politics, changing social attitudes, competing legislative priorities, ongoing debates, negotiations for amendments, and public discourse have all played roles in the bill's prolonged journey.

What are the arguments against the Women Reservation Act, 2023?

❖ Women are **not granted a reservation in the Rajya Sabha or State Legislative Councils** under the present Act. Women are currently underrepresented in the Rajya Sabha compared to the Lok Sabha. Some critics argue that reserving seats for women might lead to **tokenism,** where women elected to reserved seats may not have the same level of influence or impact as those elected on general seats. Opponents suggest that reservation based on gender may **compromise the principle of meritocracy,** as candidates may be selected based on gender rather than individual qualifications.

Today we have given reservation to women in the legislature, tomorrow they might start asking for reservation in government jobs or other things. How long will this all continue? What should be done to bring women empowerment in a true sense?

❖ To achieve true women empowerment, a comprehensive approach is essential, extending beyond legislative reservations. The key components include promoting education, economic opportunities, legal reforms, and political participation. Changing societal attitudes, fostering supportive workplace policies, engaging men as allies, and investing in healthcare contribute to empowerment. Continuous evaluation and adaptation of policies are crucial, recognizing that women's empowerment is a multifaceted and ongoing process requiring collaboration across sectors and a commitment to gender equality at societal levels.

DIGITAL PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION (DPDP) ACT 2023

Questionnaire:

1. *What is data protection and privacy?*
2. *How is data protection and privacy legislation implemented worldwide?*
3. *How has the data protection act evolved in India?*
4. *What is general data protection regulation?*

5. *Why is data protection necessary in India?*
6. *What are the features of the digital personal data protection (DPDP) act of 2023 in India?*
7. *What are the major concerns that arise in relation to the digital personal data protection (DPDP) act?*
8. *Do you think that the bill empowers the government to access private data and is likely to create a surveillance state?*
9. *Do you think that exemptions in the act are violating fundamental rights under the Indian constitution?*
10. *What is the right to be forgotten?*
11. *What is data localisation and how it is governed in India?*

Context: Recently, the Union Cabinet cleared the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill.

What is Data Protection and Privacy?

Data protection aims to safeguard personal data while finding a balance between individual privacy rights and data utilization. Data Privacy defines who has access to data, while data protection provides tools and policies to actually restrict access to the data.
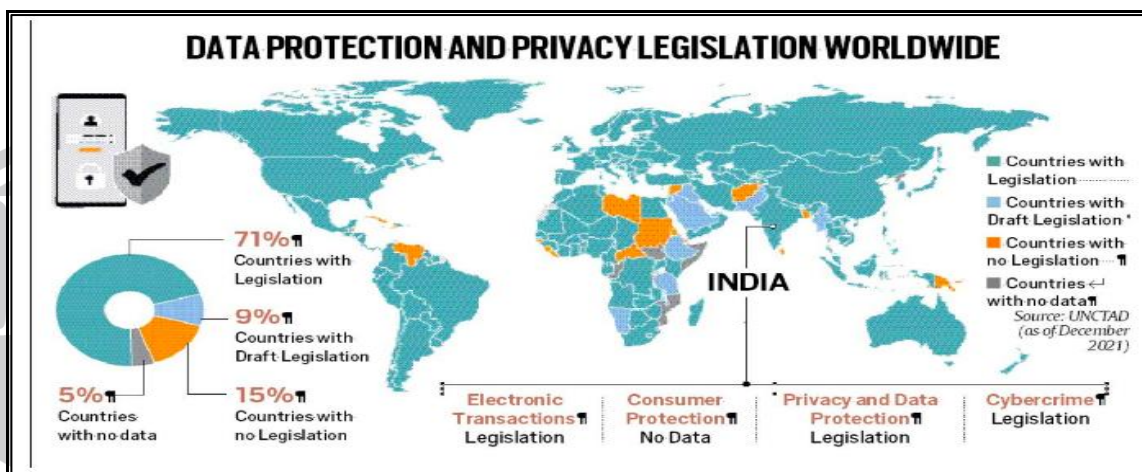
Image Source: The Indian Express

Data Protection laws in other countries:

❖ **The Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate:** It was founded in 1999, is a supervisory authority, empowered by the Data Protection Act, Public Information Act and Electronic Communication Act.

❖ **Japan:** Japan has the 'Act on Protection of Personal Information'(APPI) The APPI establishes a regulatory body known as the PPC (Personal Information Protection Commission) that can issue guidance on the application and interpretation of the Law and its requirements.

❖ **United Kingdom:** The Data Protection Act 1984 introduced the role of Information Commissioner (previously, the Data Protection Registrar) although the powers granted to the Information Commissioner increased in scope under the Data Protection Act 1998 and most recently, the Data Protection Act 2018.

❖ **China:** New Chinese laws on data privacy and security issued over the last 12 months include the Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL), which came into effect in November 2021. The new rules state that state-run and private companies handling personal information will be required to reduce data collection and obtain user consent.

❖ **European Union:** The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was adopted in 2018. The GDPR defines: Fundamental rights of individuals in the digital age, the obligations of those processing data, Methods for ensuring compliance, Sanctions for those in breach of the rule

How has the Data Protection Act evolved in India?

- ❖ **Lack of Dedicated Framework:** Previously, India did not have a specific legal framework for data protection.
- ❖ **Existing Acts:** Some existing acts provide limited data protection. **Information Technology Act 2000:** Section 43A protects user data from misuse by corporate entities but does not apply to government agencies.
- ❖ It covers sensitive personal data, such as medical history and biometric information.
- ❖ **Other Acts:** Acts like the Consumer Protection Act 2015 and Copyrights Act 1957 also offer some protection for personal information.

THE JOURNEY OF THE BILL

Aug 2017: Privacy as a fundamental right reaffirmed in Justice KS Puttaswamy vs Union of India by SC | Justice Srikrishna Committee constituted to examine data protection issues | **Jul 2018:** Committee releases draft of Personal Data Protection Bill (PDPB) and report

Dec 2021: JPC releases its report and a new version of law as the Data Protection Bill (DPB) | **Dec 2019:** Revised draft bill sent to joint parliamentary committee (JPC) for both Houses to review | **5 July 2023** Union Cabinet approves the draft DPDP Bill, 2023

Aug 2022: Draft DPB withdrawn | **Nov 2022:** Meity releases draft Digital Personal Data Protection Bill (DPDPB) for public consultation

- ❖ **Draft Bill:** In 2018, a draft version of the Personal Data Protection Bill was prepared by a committee led by retired Justice B N Srikrishna. The government, however, withdrew this bill, and in November 2022, published a fresh draft for public consultations—the draft Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022 (This bill was withdrawn later)
- ❖ **Landmark Legislation:** In early August 2023, the Indian Parliament passed the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023. The new law is the first cross-sectoral law on personal data protection in India and has been enacted after more than half a decade of deliberations.
- ❖ Above discussed drafts were preceded by a landmark 2017 judgment by India's Supreme Court in **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy and Anr. v. Union of India and Ors.** The judgment declared that the right to privacy is part of the fundamental right to life in India and that the right to informational privacy is part of this right.
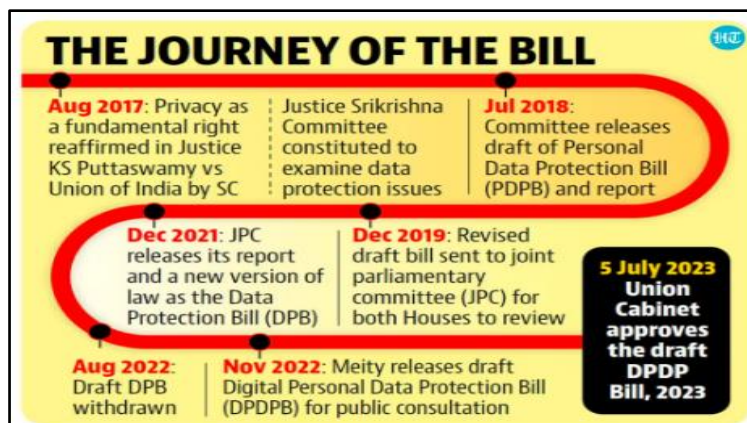
Why is Data Protection Crucial in India?

- ❖ **Invasion of Privacy:** India has approximately 400 million internet users and 250 million social media users who engage in substantial online activities. Data protection law is necessary to provide protection to the privacy rights of people and to hold cyber criminals responsible for their wrongful acts. It is to permit and facilitate the commercial and governmental use of personal data. Without effective data protection, there is a risk of heightened surveillance and profiling of individuals without their consent.
- ❖ **Economic Losses:** As per the Cost of a Data Breach report, the per capita cost per lost or stolen record in data breaches reached Rs 5,019 in 2018, representing a significant increase.
- ❖ **Increasing Sophistication of Cyber Crimes:** India is witnessing a shift in the nature of cyber crimes, which have become more organized and collaborative. The expanding volume of data on the internet and the emergence of technologies like artificial intelligence, internet of things, and big data pose a risk of data abuse and misuse.

India's Data Economy

- **1.2 bln** People enrolled in world's largest unique digital identity programme
- **24.27 bln** App downloads in 2020
- **1.17 bln** Mobile phone subscribers in India in 2020
- **4.6 hours** Time spent by individual Indians every day on their devices in 2020
- **> 600 bln** Internet users, as of January 2020
- **400 bln** Social media users, as of January 2020
- **21.3 hours** Time spent monthly by individual Indian users on WhatsApp in 2020
- **17 hours** Time spent monthly by individual Indian users on Facebook in 2020
- **9.8 hours** Time spent monthly by individual Indian users on Instagram in 2020

SOURCE: McKinsey Global Institute report, 2019; App Annie State of Mobile 2021 Report; DataReportal
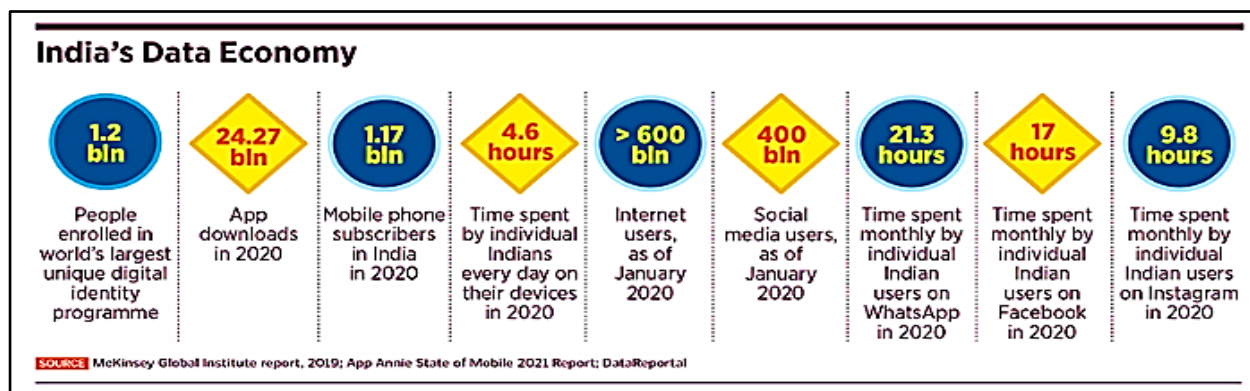
Image Source: McKinsey Global Institute Report

What are the Features of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill of 2023 in India?

- ❖ **Applicability:** The Bill applies to the processing of digital personal data within India where such data is: (i) collected online, or (ii) collected offline and is digitized. It will also apply to the processing of personal data outside India if it is for offering goods or services in India.

- ❖ **Defining Personal Data and its Processing:** Personal data is defined as "any data by which or in relation to which an individual can be identified." Processing refers to the entire cycle of operations carried out in respect of personal data, including collection and storage.

- ❖ **Consent:** Personal data may be processed only for a lawful purpose after obtaining the consent of the individual. A notice must be given before seeking consent. Consent may be withdrawn at any point in time.

- ❖ **Data Principal and Data Fiduciary:** The bill uses the term "Data Principal" to refer to the individual whose data is being collected. The term "Data Fiduciary" refers to the entity (such as an individual, company, firm, or state) that determines the purpose and means of processing the individual's personal data. For children, defined as users under the age of 18, their parents or lawful guardians are considered their Data Principals. A Data Principal shall have the right to correction, completion, updating and erasure of her personal data for the processing of which she has previously given consent, in accordance with any requirement or procedure under any law for the time being in force.

- ❖ **Cross-Border Data Flows:** The Centre will notify regions to which data of Indians can be transferred, based on data security landscape and the government's access to Indian data from those regions.

- ❖ **Data Protection Board:** The Bill proposes the establishment of a Data Protection Board to enforce compliance. The Data Protection Board will be "digital by design."

- ❖ **User Rights and Privacy:** Users have the right to correction and erasure of their personal data held by businesses. Companies of significant size must appoint a Data Protection Officer and an independent data auditor to evaluate compliance. The Bill prohibits processing of personal data that may cause harm to children and targeted advertising on children below 18 years of age.

- ❖ **Exemptions and National Security:** The Bill includes exemptions for national security reasons, allowing the government to exempt state agencies from adhering to provisions in the interest of sovereignty, integrity, and security of the state. Certain businesses, based on the number of users and volume of data processed, can also be exempted. This addresses concerns from the start-up ecosystem.

- ❖ **Penalties: For Users:** The Bill prescribes penalties for users who submit false documents during sign-up or file frivolous grievance complaints, with fines up to Rs 10,000.

- ❖ **For Entity:** Penalties for data breaches and non-compliance have been increased, ranging from Rs 50 crore to Rs 500 crore.

What are the Major Concerns That Arise in Relation to the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill?

- ❖ **Dilution of Right to Information (RTI) Act:** It seeks to amend Section 8(1)(j) to expand its scope and exempt all personal information from the purview of the RTI Act.

- ❖ **Inadequate protection of the Right to Privacy:** Bill grants wide discretionary powers to the Central government in drafting rules, raising concerns about the potential infringement on individuals' right to privacy.

- ❖ **Lack of Autonomy for the Data Protection Board:** The Appointment of the Board is under the Central government, which raises questions about its independence and the government's direct control over the institution.

- ❖ **Other Issues with the Bill:** The Bill does not regulate risks of harms arising from processing of personal data. The Bill does not grant the right to data portability and the right to be forgotten to the data principal. The Bill allows transfer of personal data outside India, except to countries notified by the central government. This mechanism may not ensure adequate evaluation of data protection standards in the countries where transfer of personal data is allowed.

Do you think that the bill empowers the government to access private data and is likely to create a surveillance state?

- ❖ The Bill empowers the central government to exempt processing by government agencies from any or all provisions, in the interest of aims such as the security of the state and maintenance of public order.
- ❖ None of the rights of data principles and obligations of data fiduciaries (except data security) will apply in certain cases such as processing for prevention, investigation, and prosecution of offenses.
- ❖ The Bill does not require government agencies to delete personal data, after the purpose for processing has been met. Using the above exemptions, on the ground of national security, a government agency may collect data about citizens to create a 360-degree profile for surveillance.

Do you think that exemptions in the act are violating fundamental rights under the Indian constitution?

- ❖ The Bill may enable unchecked data processing by the State, which may violate the right to privacy The Supreme Court (2017) has held that any infringement of the right to privacy should be proportionate to the need for such interference.
- ❖ Bill grants wide discretionary powers to the Central government in drafting rules, raising concerns about the potential infringement on individuals' right to privacy. This may not be proportionate and may violate the fundamental right to privacy.
- ❖ But these exemptions are given on the ground of national security and with increased issues of cyber warfare this is required and hence there is need to have more clarity over these provisions to make citizens aware about its benefits in long run.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

What Is Right to be Forgotten?

The 'Right to be Forgotten' is the right to remove or erase content so that it's not accessible to the public at large. It empowers an individual to have information in the form of news, videos, or photographs deleted from internet records, so it doesn't show up through search engines like Google. The concept has been discussed and put into practice in several jurisdictions, including Argentina, the European Union, and the Philippines.

In India, the 'Right to be Forgotten' is not directly included in the notification of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. It does, however, include processes for registering complaints with the appointed Grievance Officer to have content exposing personal information about the complainant removed from the internet without the complainant's consent. The right to be forgotten is a subset of the right to privacy, which is a basic right under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. However, it is unclear whether the right to be forgotten is a basic right in India.

Data Localisation:

Data localization laws are regulations that require data generated in a country to be stored on servers physically located inside the borders of that country.

The Key Data Localization Laws in India are Summarized Below:

The (Indian) Companies Act 2013 and the Companies (Accounts) Rules 2014: Section 94 of the Companies Act, read with Sections 88 and 92, require covered organizations to store financial information at the registered office of the company.

The Reserve Bank of India's Directive issued under the Payment and Settlement

Systems Act 2007: Paragraph 2(i) of the Directive requires covered organizations to store payment data within India.

India's localization laws do not expressly prohibit or permit cross-border transfers of locally stored data. However, certain localization laws allow for the storage of data outside of India under certain circumstances.

CEC & ECS BILL: ELECTION COMMISSION'S INDEPENDENCE

Questionnaire:

1. What is view of the supreme court in Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India?
2. Do you think that the supreme court has authority to make recommendations on the appointment process of ECI? Isn't it against the separation of power?
3. What is the process for the removal of election commissioners under the constitution of India?
4. What factors and considerations prompted the introduction of the bill?
5. What are the features of the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners bill, 2023?
6. What are the major concerns with the bill?
7. Does this bill override the supreme court directive?
8. Can the law made by the government of India bring the desired transparency in working ECI?
9. What are the challenges currently faced in the functioning of the election commission?
10. What measures should be taken to strengthen the functioning of the ECI?
11. What are the best practices around the world in designating election commissions?

Context: On August 10, 2023, The Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023, was introduced in **Rajya Sabha** in order to overturn the impact of the Supreme Court verdict in **Anoop Baranwal Case**.

What is View of the Supreme Court in Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India?

❖ Supreme Court Verdict in Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India (March 2023): A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that a high-power committee consisting of the Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, and the Chief Justice of India must select the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and (Election Commissioners ECs).

❖ The Court left the issue of funding the EC to the government. It recognised the urgent need to provide for a permanent Secretariat and to provide that the expenditure be charged on the Consolidated Fund of India. On the issue of whether the process of removal of Election Commissioners must be the same as it is for the CEC, the **Court ruled that it cannot be the same.**

Do you think that the Supreme Court has authority to make recommendations on the appointment process of ECI? Isn't it against the separation of power?

❖ **The Bench clarified that it was not inclined to issue a mandamus** to the Government to enact the law and that the order as it stands is an **interim measure which the State is bound to follow** till the time a law is brought by the parliament.

❖ **There have been instances in the pas**t where the courts have found **it appropriate to come in with stop gap measures,** one of the important ones being the **Vishakha Guidelines** for Sexual Harassment at the Workplace. **Example:** The Supreme Court had held that **sexual harassment is violative of the fundamental rights of the victim.**

❖ **The Court introduced a few guidelines** which were taken into consideration by the government while passing the **POSH Act. The Court in the Anoop Baranwal judgment** has referred to the **Constituent Assembly Debates** before concluding that the framers' clearly intended that the Parliament should make such a law.

❖ The judges mainly looked at the provision in its historical context by examining the **Constituent Assembly Debates as well as the wording of the provision** and concluded that the Constitution makers had intended t**o keep the ECI free from the interference of the executive.** The impact of the judgment cannot be accurately ascertained, with contrasting views being aired. Some people are of the opinion that the decision of the Supreme Court in this case violates the separation of powers principle whereas others recognise the importance of this decision to retain the independence of the ECI.

What is the Process for The Removal of Election Commissioners Under the Constitution of India?

❖ Presently, **the CEC and ECs** are appointed by the **President** as stated in **Article 324(2)** of the Constitution of India, subject to any law made by the Parliament.

❖ **Article 324 (5)** of the Constitution safeguards the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) from **arbitrary removal.**

  ➢ **The CEC can be removed from office** only by the order of the President, just like a judge of the Supreme Court.

❖ However, the same constitutional provision is **silent about the procedure for removal of the two Election Commissioners.**

❖ It only provides that they cannot be removed from office **except on the recommendation of the CEC.**

What Factors and Considerations Prompted The Introduction Of Bill?

❖ I**ndependence of Election Commission:** Demand for an independent system for the appointment of members of the Election Commission goes back nearly 50 years. It has been repeatedly recommended by: **Justice Tarkunde committee 1975; Dinesh Goswami committee, May 1990; Second administrative reforms commission, January 2007, Law Commission of India in its 255th report of March 2015**

❖ The Constitution does not provide specific qualifications as well as security of tenure for members of the EC. The tenure and post-retirement restrictions of EC members are also not clearly defined. Example: The recent arbitrary appointment of Arun Goel as an Election Commissioner, a day later after he took voluntary retirement as Secretary, Ministry of Heavy Industries. Since there was no law made by Parliament as prescribed by the Constitution for the appointment of CEC and EC, the Bill now seeks to address this vacuum and set up a legislative process to make appointments to the EC.

What are the Features of The Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Bill, 2023?

❖ **Selection and Search Committee:** The Bill seeks to establish a committee of the **Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and a cabinet minister nominated by the PM** for selecting members of the Election Commission of India (ECI). A Search Committee will prepare a panel of **five persons** for the consideration of the Selection Committee. Currently, the **Law Minister** suggests a pool of suitable candidates to the Prime Minister for consideration. **The President** makes the appointment on the **advice of the PM.**

❖ **Appointment Process:** Search committee will be headed by the **Cabinet Secretary and two officers** not below the rank of Secretary to Government of India would prepare **a panel of five names** for the committee headed by the Prime Minister to decide. Candidates should hold or have held **a post equivalent to Secretary** to Government of India

❖ **Role of LOP:** It also makes the **Leader of Opposition (LOP) in Lok Sabha** a member of the selection committee. If the LOP in the Lok Sabha has not been recognised as such, then the **leader of the largest party** in the Opposition shall be deemed the LOP.

❖ **Salary:** It says that the salary of **the CEC and ECs would be equivalent to the Cabinet Secretary**, **as opposed to a Supreme Court judge,** which is the case now. They will have an option to **draw pension and other retirement** benefits from the service that they belonged to previously.

❖ **Removal: The Bill retains** the method of removal of CEC and ECs as specified in the Constitution.

What are the Major Concerns with the Bill?

❖ **Composition of the Selection Committee** in the Bill raises questions on **whether the process is now independent** or **still rigged in favor of the Executive.**

- ❖ Introduction of this Bill will **override the Supreme Court Constitution Bench's judgment** regarding the appointment of the CEC and other Election Commissioners.
- ❖ Under the provisions of the bill the Selection Committe**e is not bound by the suggested panel of five individuals** and may opt for candidates outside this list.
- ❖ **Salary Determination in the Bill: Under the Provisions of the bill,** salaries of CEC and ECs are **decided by the government,** and it is made similar to the salary of cabinet secretaries, unlike judges of the Supreme Court. The Bill retains grounds for removal of Election Commission Members under the Constitution thus, there may be concerns about the **lack of parity** in the removal procedure of the CEC and the ECs.

Does this Bill Override the Supreme Court Directive?

- ❖ **In Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India** (**March 2023**), a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that a high-power committee consisting of the **Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, and the Chief Justice of India** must select the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and (Election Commissioners ECs).
- ❖ However, Introduction of this Bill will **override the Supreme Court Constitution Bench's judgment** regarding the appointment of the CEC and other Election Commissioners.
- ❖ **As this bill has excluded the Chief Justice of India from its Selection committee and introduced a cabinet minister in its place.**
- ❖ But **The Constitution itself specifies** that the President will appoint the **CEC and ECs, subject to the provisions of an Act of Parliament.** So, It may look like that within the power of parliament, **it has overridden the directives of the Supreme Court.**

Can the law made by the Government of India bring the desired transparency in working ECI?

- ❖ **Constitutional Makers** were keen on securing the electoral process through a **non-executive institution**, they surprisingly did not provide substantial protection from interference.
- ❖ The Constitution has provided neither a politically insulated nor a bipartisan appointment process for the institution's leadership. It left matters to be decided by **parliament by law.**
- ❖ The Supreme Court (2023) has also stated that any action of the ECI which treats political parties in an uneven or arbitrary manner could breach the right to equality. Following Provisions in the bill may affect the transparency in working of ECI and subject to greater control of ruling party over ECI.
- ❖ These new provisions in appointment procedure ensure that ECI is appointed transparently as it gives space for the leader of the opposition.

What are the Challenges in The Functioning of The Election Commission?

- ❖ **Non-transparent Selection Procedure**: The appointment process for the CEC and the ECs which is currently based on the discretion of the ruling government.
- ❖ **Lack of Legal backing for MCC** despite formulated based on consensus among political parties.
- ❖ **Limitations of Authority: The Election Commission lacks the authority** to disqualify candidates involved in electoral misconduct.
- ❖ **Electoral Integrity: Ensuring free and fair elections is a constant challenge**, particularly in the face of electoral malpractices, voter intimidation, the misuse of money and muscle power, claims of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) **malfunctioning**, **being hacked** and failing to record votes erode the general public's faith in ECI.
- ❖ **Voter Registration and Education:** Inaccurate voter registration, duplication of records can lead to disenfranchisement. **Educating voters particularly in remote areas** about the electoral process and their rights remains a significant challenge.
- ❖ **Technology and Security:** Keeping up with rapidly advancing technology is crucial for the integrity of the electoral process. **Ensuring the security** of electronic voting machines (EVMs) and **preventing cyber threats** is an ongoing challenge.

❖ **Media Management:** Controlling the influence of fake news and misinformation during elections to ensure fair representation and prevent biased reporting is a constant challenge.

What Measures Should be Taken to Strengthen the Functioning of the ECI?

❖ **ECI should be kept separated** from the executive, legislature, and judiciary. **No organ should interfere with the working of the ECI** because it leads to a reduction in the faith of the public.

❖ It should have the authority **to create regulations** within the overarching policy guidelines set by the government. These regulations may require **government approval** before notification, replacing the current method where the government directly formulates regulations for these entities.

❖ The ECI should take **strict measures against political criminalization.** They should **immediately disqualify** that participant of the political party. Employing Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) and utilizing Vote Totalizer machines serve the purpose of safeguarding voters from potential harassment by political entities.

❖ Concerns regarding **malfunctions and possible tampering of EVMs** can be effectively addressed by **establishing bipartisan committees** comprising representatives from all political parties, in conjunction with the insights of international experts. There must be **similar election and removal procedures for CEC and ECs,** and they must exercise the same powers unless specifically prescribed by law.

Best practices around the world:

❖ **South Africa:** Election Commissioners are designated by the President on the suggestions of the **National Assembly,** following assignments by a National Assembly between the party board of trustees, which gets a rundown of at any rate eight applicants.

❖ **Canada:** The Chief Electoral Officer is named by a House of Commons goal for a **non-inexhaustible ten-year term,** and to shield their freedom from the administration, **he/she reports straight to Parliament.**

❖ **US:** The six Federal Election Commissioners are delegated by the President with the counsel and assent of the Senate.

STATES IN SUPREME COURT AGAINST THEIR GOVERNORS – DELAY IN SIGNING CRUCIAL BILL

Questionnaire?

1. *What are the Recent Accusations of States Against the Governor in Passing of Bills?*
2. *What Prompts Supreme Court's Involvement in States' Grievances Against Governors' Delay in Bill Assent?*
3. *What is a Legal Dispute of Punjab in the Supreme Court?*
4. *How Governor's Exercises His Power Over State Bills?*
5. *What are the Legal Arguments Against Delaying Assent?*
6. *Can Governors Exercise His Discretion?*
7. *What is Constitutional Discretion and Situational Discretion of the Governor?*
8. *When should the Governor Return the Bill?*
9. *What Constitutional Protection is available to the Governor?*
10. *What Measures Do You Suggest to Well-Functioning of the Governor Office?*
11. *Do you think that the governor is just an agent of government in the state and lacks autonomy?*

Context: The Supreme Court (SC), said **State governors must not be oblivious** that they are not elected representatives of the people The Supreme Court in its latest judgment ruled that a "**Governor cannot be at liberty**" to keep a "**Bill pending indefinitely without any action whatsoever**"

.

What are the Recent Accusations of States Against the Governor in Passing of Bills?

- ❖ **Tamil Nadu** has accused **Governor R.N. Ravi of toying with the citizens**' mandate by sitting on the Bills by neither assenting nor returning them.
- ❖ **Kerala in its recent petition** said that **eight proposed laws** passed by its Legislative Assembly were **pending with the Governor,** not for months, but years. Of the eight, **three Bills were waiting for the Governor's** word for over two years.
- ❖ **Punjab** complained that **seven of its Bills were stuck** with the Governor since June, threatening to bring the administration to a "**grinding halt**".
- ❖ **The Supreme Court had to intervene in April for the Telangana Governor** to clear Bills pending since September 2022 asked advocate appearing for the State **to submit that legislatures in Opposition-ruled States** were at the mercy of the Governors, who had become a law unto themselves.

What Prompts Supreme Court's Involvement in States' Grievances Against Governors' Delay in Bill Assent?

The involvement of the Supreme Court in states' grievances against governors typically arises when there are disputes or **conflicts between the state executive (governor) and the legislative branch (state legislature).** Some common scenarios include:

- ❖ **Misuse of Power:** If the governor is **intentionally delaying the assent** for reasons unrelated to the content of the bill, the State Government may argue that the governor is abusing their constitutional powers.
- ❖ **Against the Separation of Powers:** The legislature may assert that the governor's delay infringes upon the independence of the legislative process which is interference in the legislative body by the executive branch.
- ❖ **Violation of Constitution:** States may allege that the **governor's delay in assenting to a bill violates constitutional provisions** related to the timeline for assent.
- ❖ **Contentious Bills: In some cases, the governor** is reluctant to assent to a bill **due to disagreements over its content.** The state legislature can approach the Supreme Court seeking a resolution.

The court's role is to interpret the law, resolve constitutional disputes, and ensure a proper balance of powers between different branches of government.

What are the Legal Arguments Against Delaying Assent?

- ❖ **States Constitutional Obligation:** The legislature reflects the **will of the people** and is the constitutionally designated body to make laws with respect to subjects mentioned in the 'State list'. However, sitting on a Bill passed by the Assembly is not an option given by the Constitution. By doing so, **a governor is acting against the constitutional direction.**
- ❖ **SC Ruling:** Recently, SC in The **State of Telangana Versus Governor** For The State Of Telangana & Anr held that the **first provision to 'Article 200'** states that the Governor may "as soon as possible after the presentation" of the Bill for **assent, return** the Bill if it is not a Money Bill together **with a message for reconsideration** to the House or Houses of the State Legislature. The expression "**as soon as possible**" has significant constitutional content and must be borne in mind by constitutional authorities.

> ### *Practice Followed in Other Countries:*
>
> ❖ **The refusal of assent** is a practice which is **not followed in other democratic countries.** In some contexts, it is **unconstitutional** or the **Constitution itself provides a remedy** so that the Bill passed by the legislature could become law even after the refusal of assent.
> ❖ **For Example:**
> ❖ **In the United Kingdom:** The royal assent is necessary for a Bill to be passed by Parliament to become law and the **crown has the power to withhold assent**. But it is **a dead letter**. By practice and usage there is **no power of veto exercised by the crown** in England now.
> ❖ Moreover, **refusal of royal assent** on the ground that the monarchy strongly disapproves of the Bill or that the Bill is very controversial is **treated as unconstitutional.**
> ❖ **In the United States:** The President is empowered by the Constitution to **refuse assent and return a Bill to the House** but if the Houses again pass it with **two-thirds** of each House the Bill becomes law.

Can Governors Exercise His Discretion?

❖ **Governors did have a discretion to return Bills** before the first provision under Article 200.
❖ According to **Dr. B. R. Ambedkar** said, "in a responsible government there can be no room for the Governor acting on discretion". It was thought that the Governor's exercise of discretion would act as a "**potential check on disruptive legislative tendencie**s" by States.
❖ **Mr. Krishnamachari** explained that if the Bill passed by the Legislative Assembly needs modification or has garnered adverse public opinion, the **government uses the Governor to return the Bill** to the Lower House as quickly as possible for re-legislation. The first provision to Article 200 is thus a "**saving clause**" and retains the discretion over the fate of the Bill solely in the hands of the State Cabinet.
❖ **The top court in the Shamsher Singh case** verdict has held that "Under the Constitution **the Governor exercises all his powers and functions** on the aid and advice of his Council of Ministers save in spheres where the Governor is required by or under the Constitution to exercise his functions in his discretion."
❖ **The assent or return of the Bill** does not involve the discretion of individuals occupying the Governor's post.

When should the Governor Return the Bill?

The first provision of Article 200 says it should be "as soon as possible" but the Constitution is silent on what exactly this phrase means.

❖ **The Supreme Court has interpreted "as soon as possible"** in the provision to mean "as early as practicable without avoidable delay" in its 1972 judgment in Durga Pada Ghosh versus State of West Bengal.
❖ The States have urged the **court to interpret the phrase in the provision and fix a time limit** by which Governors should assent or return a Bill.
❖ **The 1988 Sarkaria Commission report** on Centre-State relations had suggested consultation with the Governor while drafting the Bill and fixing a deadline for its disposal.
❖ What Constitutional Protection is Available to the Governor?
❖ **Article 361 of the Constitution** prohibits the court from initiating proceedings against a Governor or the President for any act done in the exercise of their powers.
❖ However, **this point has been settled by a Constitution bench** of the Supreme Court in **Rameshwar Prasad and Ors. vs Union of India and Anr.**

The Court held that "the immunity granted by Article 361(1) does not, however, take away the power of the Court to examine the validity of the action including on the ground of malafides".

Do You Think that the Governor is just an Agent of Government in the State and Lacks Autonomy?

❖ The powers of the Governor are defined in the Constitution and have been made clear in many Supreme Court rulings. The governor in India is the **constitutional head of the state** and plays a crucial role in the functioning of the state government. It's worth noting that **the perception of autonomy can vary**, and there have been instances where the role of governors in India has been a subject of political debate.
❖ **Constitutional Framework and Autonomy of Governor:** While the governor is appointed by the President of India, and their tenure and functions are subject to constitutional provisions, it is important to note that governors are **not meant to be mere agents of the central government. They have certain discretionary powers**, such

as the power to appoint the Chief Minister, dissolve the state legislative assembly, and recommend President's Rule in the state under certain circumstances. However, the exercise of these powers is expected to be **within the bounds of constitutional principles.**

Overall, the constitutional framework is designed to provide governors with **a degree of autonomy** while ensuring **they operate within the parameters of democratic governance.**

What Measures Do You Suggest to Well-Functioning of the Governor Office?

❖ **Clarification of Reasonable Time Limit:** The SC has observed that the Governor should not unduly delay in granting or withholding assent. A clear definition of a "**reasonable time limit**" would provide more transparency and predictability in the process. **Justice Rohinton F. Nariman**, in his 2020 judgment in the *Keisham Megha Chandra Singh* case, said a 'reasonable time' would mean three months.

❖ **Doctrine of Neutrality:** Through its various judgments, the Supreme Court has highlighted the need for authorities like the **Speaker and Governor to be faithful to the doctrine of neutrality** and **not vacillate** under "prevailing political pressures" thus maintaining Political Neutrality. Governor as impartia**l constitutional head of state** ensuring that the legislature functions effectively and that the Bills passed are in consonance with the Constitution.

❖ **Judicial Review:** The judiciary should continue to play an **active role in reviewing the Governor's actions** and ensuring that the **power to withhold assent is not misused.**

❖ **Cooperation and Consultations:** The Governor should a**ctively engage in consultation and dialogue with the Chief Minister and the legislature** before taking any decision regarding assent or reservation of Bills. This would foster **better understanding and cooperation** between the executive and the legislature. **The 1988 Sarkaria Commission** report on Centre-State relations had suggested consultation with the Governor while drafting the Bill and fixing a deadline for its disposal.

The SC needs to safeguard the **balance of power** between the state legislature and the Governors. All constitutional authorities are required **to act in a reasonable manner**. Unreasonable acts are unsustainable in law.

CASTE CENSUS: BOON OR BANE?

Questionnaire

1. *Was it done earlier?*
2. *What is the Mandal Formula?*
3. *Why is there a demand for the Caste Census in India?*
4. *Is there any reason behind not giving OBCs count in India's census?*
5. *What is the difference between census and caste census?*
6. *What is the significance of the caste census in India?*
7. *Are there any challenges in implementing a caste census in India?*
8. *Will the issue of caste census make caste a central point in Indian politics?*

Context: The **State Government of Bihar** has recently become the **first state of India** to release the **'Caste Census' Report** in the month of October. The **'Bihar Caste-based Survey 2022'** shows that **Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs)** and **Other Backward Classes (OBCs)** together add up to nearly 63% of the 13-crore population, making it the largest caste group in the State.

What is the Caste Census? Was it done earlier?

❖ A Caste Census is a **comprehensive survey of the caste-wise demography** of a particular country**,** with the objective of collecting information about various caste groups or communities, their distribution, socioeconomic status, education levels, and other relevant demographic details.

❖ The last caste census was conducted in **1931**. All caste data are projected on this basis. It became the basis for quota caps under the **Mandal formula**.

What is Mandal Formula?

The **Mandal Commission** or the **Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Commission (SEBC)**, was established in India in **1979** under **Prime Minister Morarji Desai** with a mandate **"to identify the socially or educationally backward classes" of India**. It was **headed by B. P. Mandal**.

The commission's report, **submitted in 1980,** recommended setting aside a certain percentage of government jobs and educational institution seats for SEBCs. One of the most contentious recommendations made by the Mandal Commission was the **reservation of 27% of government jobs for Other Backward Classes (OBCs)**, a category that included a significant portion of SEBCs.

Why is there a demand for the Caste Census in India?

❖ From **1951 to 2011**, every census in India has published the population of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, comprising the Dalits and the Adivasis, along with the gamut of data including religions, languages, socio-economic status, etc. It, however, has **never counted OBCs**, the **lower and intermediate castes** which **roughly constitute about 52% of the country's population**.

What is the overall conclusion from the Bihar Census?

❖ The survey says that the **Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs)** form 85% of Bihar's population.
❖ Among the four backward caste communities — **Yadavs, Khushwaha, Kurmi, and Bania** — Yadavs form the biggest chunk 14.26%.
❖ There are **12 communities that form the Extremely Backward Classes** category.
❖ In the unreserved (forward) category, there are four communities — **Brahmin, Rajput, Bhumihar, and Kayastha**.
❖ This is the **first time since 1931** that a Survey on caste has been conducted.

Has India ever counted its OBC population?

Not since independence. When the British conducted the Census, it **included data on castes till 1931**. In **1941**, the **caste count was excluded reportedly** because of administrative and financial issues with England involved in World War II. Thus, the **count of OBCs is, therefore, available for 1931**, when their share of the population was found to be about 52 percent.

Is there any reason behind not giving OBCs count in India's census?

❖ There is no particular reason behind it, but one of the main reasons behind this is that all castes other than Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are **marked in the general category.** As OBCs cover almost half of the population in India, but never get any recognition in the Census.

What are the differences between the Census and the Caste Census?

1. **Meaning: Census** is the population count of any country or region, while **Caste Census** is the beneficiary count of that country or region.

Objective: The **focus of a census** is to gather broad and comprehensive data that provides an overall snapshot of a country's population, whereas **the focus of a caste census** is to understand the social composition and dynamics within a country, particularly in societies where caste plays a significant role in shaping social structure.

2. **Coverage:** The **Census** covers the overall population of the country, while the **Caste Census** covers a particular caste and community of the country.

3. **Usage of Data:** The **Census** data is used for various purposes such as policymaking, resource allocation, urban planning, and more, while the **Caste Census** data is used for policies related to affirmative action, social welfare programs, addressing social inequalities, etc.

Is there any committee related to the Caste Census?

❖ **Rohini Committee:** The committee was formed in October 2017 to examine the sub-categorization of OBC, chaired by a retired Justice G. Rohini, under Article 340 of the Indian Constitution. **Article 340 of the Indian Constitution** states that the President may appoint a Commission consisting of such persons as he thinks fit to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes within the territory of India.

Are there any other states implementing a Caste Census?

After Bihar, Karnataka is on the way to publishing its Caste Census, but due to some political conflict or political division, it may be delayed. The decision to publish the Caste Census of Karnataka state is still pending.

What is the significance of the Caste Census in India?

1. **Understanding Social Composition:** It provides crucial data on the distribution, population size, and socio-economic status of various caste groups. It can help in grasping the social fabric and diversity within the population.
2. **Aid in Policy Formulation:** It can aid in formulating targeted policies and affirmative action measures; and assist governments in designing welfare programs, educational initiatives, and employment opportunities for historically marginalized communities.
3. **Addressing Inequality:** Caste-based data reveals disparities among castes in terms of education, healthcare, employment, and other resources that can help to identify and address social inequalities and work towards a more equitable society.
4. **Effective Allocation of Resources:** Understanding the socio-economic status of various caste groups helps in allocating resources efficiently. It enables governments and organizations to target specific communities that might require support.
5. **Empower Marginalized Communities:** By recognizing the existence and struggles of marginalized communities, a caste census can empower these groups. It aids in providing them with opportunities for advancement and inclusion in various sectors.
6. **Data-Driven Decision-Making:** Caste-based data provides a factual basis for decision-making. It allows policymakers and organizations to make informed choices regarding their welfare, rather than relying on assumptions or generalizations.

Are there any challenges in the implementation of the Caste Census in India?

1. **Complexity of Caste Identities:** In India, there is a diverse diversity of Castes, and categorizing and enumerating them can be challenging and might lead to disputes or inaccuracies in data collection.
2. **Concerns in disclosing Caste identity:** Caste has deep social and cultural roots in India. Some communities might have concerns about disclosing their caste identities, either due to historical discrimination or concerns about the data being misused.
3. **Caste Distinctions increase social division:** Emphasizing caste distinctions through a census could reinforce societal divisions. Highlighting caste identities might lead to social tensions or conflicts rather than fostering unity.
4. **Data misuse by political parties:** Political parties often use caste as a basis for forming alliances or targeting specific voter demographics. The release of caste-based census data might impact political equations and strategies.
5. **Caste Identities lead to exploitation:** There are concerns that having detailed information on caste identities might lead to discrimination or exploitation in various spheres of life.

Will the issue of caste-based census make caste a central point in Indian politics?

❖ Most observers believe it is too early to tell how the issue will pan out, but either way, caste identities will be "one of the major poles" in the 2024 general elections when India elects a new government, while the opposition parties seem keen to make a nationwide caste census their principal point of the campaign, their efforts on the ground will decide whether it strikes a chord with intended beneficiaries.

❖ "Political parties will have to build the momentum on the issue, create an awareness among voters about how such caste data could benefit them,". A data-driven conversation around caste will enable a rightful distribution of resources and opportunities to those who need it the most.

Can Caste Census impact reservations?

Absolutely, a caste census can significantly impact the issue of reservation. In many countries, including India, reservations or affirmative action policies are based on caste. A caste census provides detailed demographic data about the population's caste composition, which can influence the implementation and adjustment of reservation policies.

Positive Impact:

1. **Precise Data:** A caste census provides accurate information about the representation of various castes in society. It helps identify which castes are marginalized and need support.

2. **Policy Adjustments:** Data from a caste census can lead to modifications in existing reservation policies. It can initiate discussions on altering quotas or extending benefits to previously overlooked groups.

3. **Awareness and Dialogue:** A caste census generates discussions on social inequalities, bringing awareness to issues of caste-based discrimination and disparity.

Negative Impact:

1. **Controversies and Opposition**: Caste-based policies are often contentious. Some argue that such policies perpetuate caste divisions, while others believe they are necessary for addressing historical injustices.

2. **Implementation Challenges**: Implementing changes based on census data might face bureaucratic, political, or legal hurdles.

The implementation of a caste census carries profound implications for social policies, particularly regarding reservations and affirmative action. This comprehensive demographic exercise offers invaluable insights into the societal representation and status of various caste groups.

The data obtained could significantly influence policy formulation by identifying marginalized communities and potentially reshaping existing reservation systems to address historical injustices and disparities.

However, challenges such as controversy, opposition, and the complexities of implementation may hinder its seamless execution. Nevertheless, a meticulously conducted caste census holds promise in facilitating more informed, equitable, and inclusive social policies aimed at fostering a fairer and more harmonious society.

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GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI (AMENDMENT) BILL 2023,

Questionnaire:

1. *How the status and governance of Delhi evolved?*
2. *Why did the introduction of the GNCTD (amendment) bill 2023 become necessary?*
3. *What are the provisions of the GNCTD (amendment) bill, 2023?*
4. *What are changes introduced in the government of national capital territory of Delhi bill, 2023 over the GNCTD (amendment) ordinance, 2023?*
5. *What is view of the supreme court on the 2023 GNCTD vs union of India cases?*
6. *Why are concerns raised regarding GNCTD (amendment) bill, 2023?*
7. *How does the recent bill align with or contradict the judgment of the supreme court in 2018, will LG have overriding power?*
8. *How is Delhi governed currently?*
9. *Is there a need to give full-fledged status of state to UT of Delhi?*

Context: Recently, the **Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2023** was passed by Parliament. Once it becomes law, it will redefine the roles of the elected government, the Lieutenant Governor (L-G), and the state's administrative machinery.

Why did the introduction of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill 2023 become necessary?

- ❖ **Maintaining Democratic and Administrative Balance:** The need for the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill is stated as **maintaining democratic and administrative balance** in governing Delhi.
- ❖ **Ensuring Corruption-Free and Pro-People Governance:** The central government asserts that the aim is **to ensure corruption-free and pro-people governance.**
- ❖ **Preventing State Government Interference:** It seeks to prevent state government **interference in central powers.**
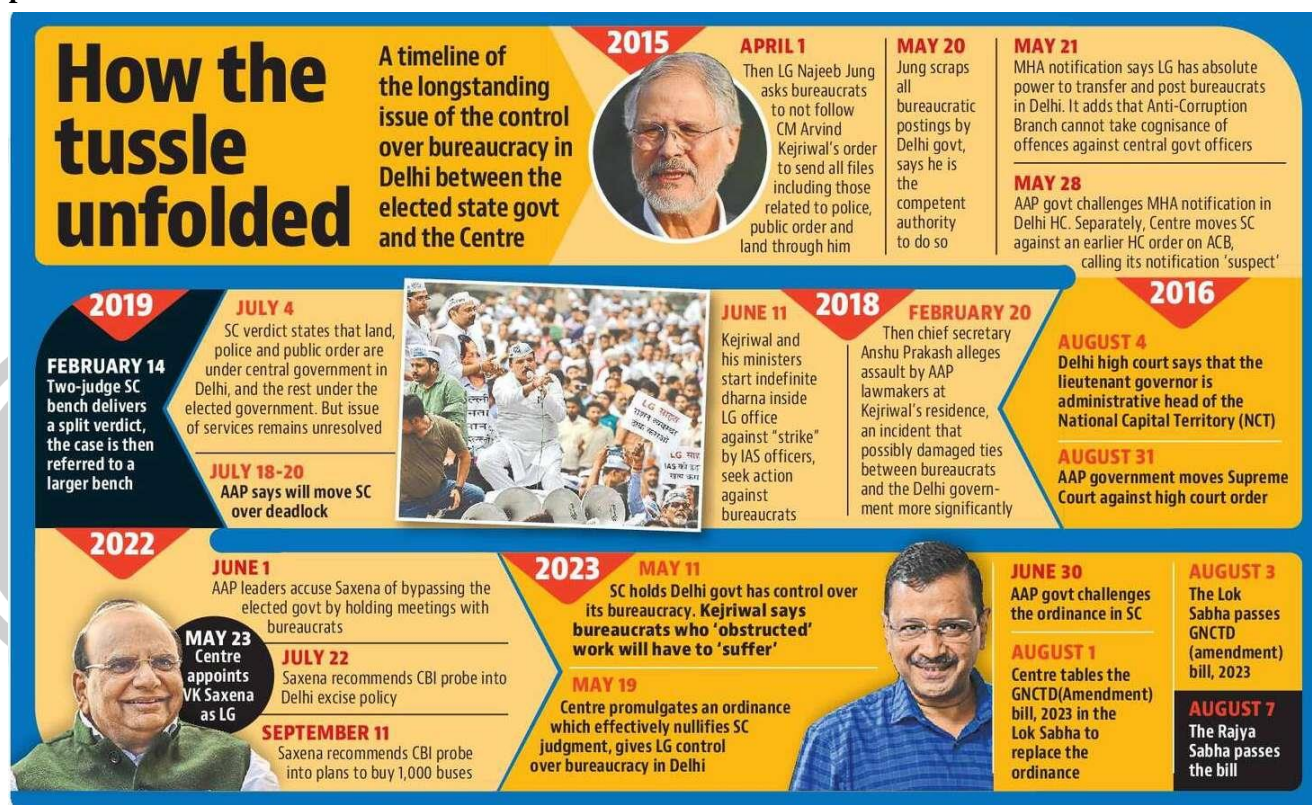
Image Courtesy: HT

What Are the Key Provisions of The Government Of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2023?

- ❖ **National Capital Civil Services Authority (NCCSA):** The Bill creates the **NCCSA to advise Delhi's Lieutenant Governor on specific service-related aspects**, such as transfers, vigilance, discipline, and prosecution for **Group A officers of All India Services** (excluding Indian Police Service) and **DANICS.**
- ❖ **Powers of the Lieutenant Governor:** The Bill empowers the **LG to exercise his sole discretion** on several matters including those recommended by the National Capital Civil Services Authority. And the summoning, prorogation and dissolution of the Delhi Legislative Assembly. If a **disagreement** arises between the LG and the Authority, the **LG's decision** will hold ultimate authority.
- ❖ **Duties of Secretaries:** It authorizes **department secretaries** to bring to the notice of the LG, the Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary any matter that may bring Delhi Government into **controversy with the Central Government.**

What is the View of the Supreme Court in the 2023 GNCTD vs Union of India Cases?

- ❖ **Power to the Elected Government:** Elected governments should **control administration**, including officers recruited regardless of their affiliations. Civil servants are impartial professionals **serving the public, not parties.** The National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCTD) would not have the power to legislate on **public order, police and land.**

- ❖ **Legislative and Executive Control over Civil Services:** Legislative and executive power over services such as Indian Administrative Services or Joint Cadre services, **shall lie with Delhi Government.**

- ❖ **Principle of Triple Chain of Collective Responsibility:** The Supreme Court said a principle of "**triple chain of collective responsibility**" existed in the governance of the capital. This three-cornered command included **civil service officers** being accountable to Ministers, who are in turn **accountable to the Parliament/Legislature**, which is ultimately **answerable to the electorate.**

- ❖ **Interpretation of Article 239AA:** The SC interpreted **Article 239AA**, the provision that deals with the **governance structure of Delhi**, as one that underlies the **principles of federalism, participatory democracy, and collective responsibility.**

Why Are Concerns Raised Regarding the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2023, Is this against Parliamentary Democracy?

- ❖ **Triple Chain of Accountability Concerns:** Conferring powers over the transfer and posting of officers to the Authority may **break the triple chain of accountability** that links the civil services, ministers, the legislature and citizens. This may violate the **principle of parliamentary democracy**, which is a part of the **basic structure doctrine.**

- ❖ **Discretion of LG:** The LG has been granted **sole discretion in several matters** including when the Legislative Assembly will convene. This implies that the **Chief Minister may be unable to convene a session** needed for essential government business.

- ❖ **Bypassing Ministerial Involvement: Department secretaries** will bring certain matters directly to the LG, Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary, **without consulting the concerned minister.** This may go **against the collective responsibility of the Cabinet**, as the concerned ministers cannot provide his inputs.

How do the recent Bill align with or contradict the judgment of the Supreme Court in 2018, Will LG have overriding power?

- ❖ In the **2018 Constitution Bench judgment,** it was held that NCTD is not similar to other Union Territories. It was held that the executive power of NCTD is co-extensive with its legislative power.

- ❖ The supreme court pronounced its judgment on 4 July 2018; it said the lieutenant governor of Delhi had no independent decision-making powers and was bound to follow the "aid and advice" of the Delhi chief-minister-headed council of ministers of the Government of Delhi on all matters except those pertaining to police, public and law.

- ❖ However, in view of Article 239-AA (3), Parliament has the power to make laws with respect to all subjects in List II and III for NCTD.

- ❖ **As per Article 239AA,** the LG has to act on **the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers**, except when exercising his functions in his discretion.

- ❖ **The Recent Bill expands the mentioned matters** to include the relations of the Delhi government **with the central government.** It also **expands the powers of the LG's opinion** to have sole discretionary power on these matters. If there is a difference of opinion between the LG and the Chief Minister, **the LG's opinion will take precedence.**

- ❖ **In Recent bill, Provision of The LG may not be bound to act** on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers **violating the principle -** LG acting on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers **They also contradict the 2018 judgment** of the Supreme Court which stated that the decision-making power lies with the elected government.

Is There Need to Give Full Fledged Status of State to UT of Delhi?

Arguments in Favor of Full Statehood for Delhi:

- ❖ **Democratic Representation:** Full statehood would provide the residents of Delhi with full democratic representation with more legislative powers.

- ❖ **Efficiency in Administration:** Full-fledged state status could enhance administrative efficiency by reducing bureaucratic hurdles. Elected government to have greater control over key areas such as law and order, land, and police.
- ❖ **More Autonomy to Local Government:** The local government will have more say in making decisions that are more tailored to the specific needs and demands of the people of Delhi.
- ❖ **More Control Over Financial Matters:** Statehood could give Delhi more control over its finances, it will empower the state to generate revenue and allocate funds based on its priorities.

Arguments Against Full Statehood for Delhi:

- ❖ **National Capital:** Delhi is a national capital of India and keeping it as a Union Territory will ensure better coordination between the central government and local administration, especially in matters of national importance.
- ❖ **Security Reasons:** Law and order in Delhi are closely tied to the national capital's unique status, and granting full statehood might **pose challenges** in coordinating security measures effectively.
- ❖ **Amendment to The Constitution:** Achieving full statehood for Delhi would require constitutional amendments, and the current arrangement provides a balance between local governance and central oversight.
- ❖ **Coordination with Central Government:** Maintaining Delhi as a Union Territory allows for closer coordination with the central government, facilitating smoother execution of policies and projects of national significance.
- ❖ **Special Status:** Delhi can have a special status within the existing framework, allowing it certain privileges without the need for full statehood.

Is Federalism Affected by Passing Such a Bill?

- ❖ Delhi has been conceptualized in the Constitution **neither as a state nor as a union territory**.
- ❖ The National Capital Territory of Delhi is **short of a state inasmuch as the executive and** legislative powers in relation to **land, public order and police rest** with the Centre and Parliament respectively.
- ❖ The powers in relation to all other fields of legislation remained with the Delhi Government.
- ❖ However, this came with a rider. **Article 239AA(3)(b)** confers power on Parliament "**to make laws with respect to any matter**" for Delhi as if it were a UT.
- ❖ Even though the Legislative Assembly for NCT of Delhi could legislate in relation t**o fields covered in State and Concurrent Lists**, such a law will have to make way for Parliament-made laws to the extent of repugnancy.
- ❖ Therefore, Delhi has essentially **one Union List and two Concurrent Lists**.
- ❖ This created an **asymmetric federal model** that is tilted heavily in favour of the Centre.
- ❖ **The Bill seeks to replace an ordinance** passed by the Centre earlier **taking over the Aam Aadmi Party-led Delhi government's powers regarding officials.**
- ❖ **The Opposition party** argued that the **Bill goes against federal principles** envisaged in the Constitution and questioned the legislative competence of Parliament to enact it.

According to Observer Research Foundation, The current bill by the Centre **not only betrays the concept of "cooperative federalism"** often espoused by the Union government, but will f**urther complicate governance in India's fastest growing mega-city.**

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SHOULD INTERNET SHUTDOWNS BE USED TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC ORDER

Questionnaire:

1. What is internet shutdown?
2. What is the recent status of internet shutdown in India?
3. What were Manipur clashes and internet shutdown?
4. Why did Manipur impose internet ban following the horrific assault on Kuki women?
5. What are the reasons behind internet shutdowns in India?"
6. What legal framework governs the right to access the internet in India?
7. Is access to the internet a fundamental right in India?
8. What are the rules and procedures governing internet shutdowns in India?"
9. What are the arguments in favour of internet shutdowns?
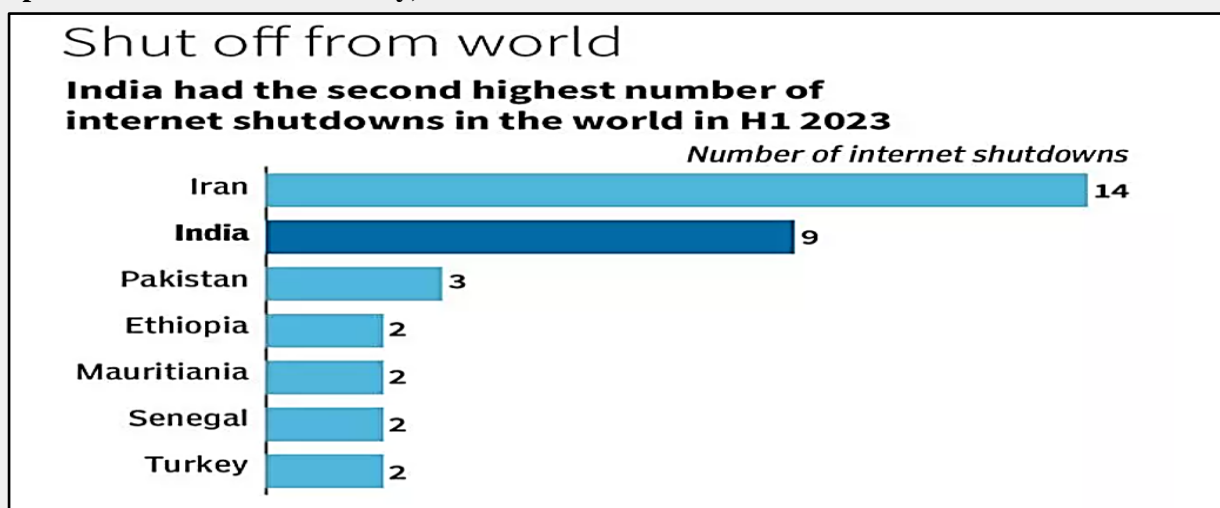10. What are the criticisms against internet shutdowns? Impacts of internet shutdown?

Context: According to SurfShark Data, India is **second in the world** in internet shutdowns in H1CY23, Of the 42 internet shutdown events that occurred worldwide, **nine were in India**, between January 1 and June 30, 2023.

What is Internet Shutdown?

It is an **intentional disruption** of internet or electronic communications, rendering them inaccessible or effectively unusable, **for a specific population or within a location**, to exert control over the flow of information.

What is the Recent Status of Internet Shutdown In India?

J&K tops, Manipur fourth: From 2012 to June 30, 2023, **Jammu and Kashmir** recorded the highest number of shutdowns in India (422), followed by **Rajasthan** and **Uttar Pradesh** with 97 and 32 cases respectively. **Manipur came fourth in the country,** with 25 events.

Shut off from world
India had the second highest number of internet shutdowns in the world in H1 2023

Number of internet shutdowns

Country	Number
Iran	14
India	9
Pakistan	3
Ethiopia	2
Mauritania	2
Senegal	2
Turkey	2

Why Did Manipur Impose Internet Ban Following the Horrific Assault on Kuki Women?

❖ On **May 4, 2023**, **two Kuki women were paraded naked** and **gang raped** by a group of men in Manipur. However, the incident came to the limelight much later, on July 19 when **a video of the same started surfacing online. N Biren Singh,** Chief Minister of Manipur said there are **hundreds of similar cases** and **that's the reason why the internet has been banned in the State** to ensure that the situation does not get worse.

❖ **The state government says** it did so **to curb rumours and disinformation and quell the violence.** But some people say **there is no evidence that turning the internet off** helped keep anyone safe—and that the move may have even fueled violence.

- **According to Mishi Choudhary** (US based Lawyer), "The **Manipur shutdown crippled the ability for information** to reach the rest of the world. If we had seen the videos hidden from us for almost 80 days back in May, we could have reacted to it sooner."

What are the Reasons Behind Internet Shutdowns in India?"

Reasons of Internet Shutdowns in India:
- **Situations of Social Unrest:** A lot of shutdowns are made to prevent **communal tensions, civil war, or riots** and situations of unrest. Some of them are imposed during **protests**, many to prevent **cheating during exams**, and many due to **religious processions**.
- **Preventive Shutdowns:** These are imposed before an event takes place. **Example:** Following the circulation of a **video of a tailor** getting beheaded in **Udaipur, there was a shutdown** in anticipation of a communal riot.
- **Reactive Shutdowns: These are imposed** after an event takes place and is generally the **easiest way to control** an escalating law and order situation.

What Legal Framework Governs the Right to Access the Internet in India?

Statutory Backing– Right to Access the Internet vs. Internet Shutdowns:
- **Article 19 of the Indian Constitution:** It mentions freedom of speech and freedom to practice any profession.
- **Article 21 of the Indian Constitution:** It protects the right to life and liberty, which also encompasses the right to education and the right to exercise one's freedom to access the Internet.
- **Article 19(2) of the Indian Constitution:** It says that reasonable restrictions ought to be imposed on the grounds of a **threat to the nation**, to **national sovereignty, integrity, and defence,** or to avoid incitement to, or commission of, **a cognisable offense**.
- **The Information Technology Act, 2000:** It maintains that **threats to national sovereignty** or integrity or defence call for website blocking.

Is Access to the Internet a Fundamental Right in India?

- **The Supreme Court Decisions:** In various cases, including in **Anuradha Bhasin and Faheema Shirin**, the Supreme Court has held that access to the Internet has to be preserved.
  - The **Supreme Court (December 2021)** said that **access to the Internet is a fundamental right under Article 19 of the Constitution** and asked the **Jammu and Kashmir** administration to review within a week all orders imposing curbs in the Union Territory.
  - A five-judge bench headed by **Justice NV Ramana** also asked the Jammu and Kashmir administration **to restore Internet services in institutions** providing essential services like hospitals and educational places.
  - The **three-judge bench** which also comprised justices **BR Gavai and R Subhash Reddy** said **Section 144 CrPC** (prohibitory orders) cannot be used indefinitely to suppress freedom of speech and expression and difference of opinion.
- **Exercisable Conditions:** Shutdowns should be exercised only in situations which require exceptional control and surveillance.
- **Limited Scope with Proportionality:** The Court has said a shutdown needs to be temporary, limited in scope, lawful and proportionate.

What are the Rules and Procedures Governing Internet Shutdowns in India?"

Rules Regarding Internet Shutdown: The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885: It stipulates that only the **Home Secretary of the Union or a state** can pass an order, and that the order must include the reasons for the decision.
- **In Unavoidable Circumstances:** The order can be issued by an officer of the **rank of Joint Secretary or above**, authorized by the Centre or the state Home Secretary.
- **Nodal Officers:** Telecom service providers must **designate nodal officers** to handle such requests.
- **Review Committee:** The order should be forwarded to a review committee the day after it is issued and must be reviewed by the committee **within five days** to assess its compliance with Section 5(2) of The Telegraph Act.

> ➢ **Composition in the Case of the Central Government:** The review committee comprises the **Cabinet Secretary and the Secretaries** of the Departments of Legal Affairs and Telecommunications.
> ➢ **Composition in the Case of the State Government:** The committee comprises the **Chief Secretary, Secretary, Law and a Secretary** to the state government (other than the Home Secretary).

What are the Arguments in Favor of Internet Shutdowns?

❖ **National Security:** Governments are faced with sometimes challenging situations that may threaten **public order** and **national security.**

❖ **Prevent hate speech, fake news etc:** Official rationales for shutdowns include **combating fake news, hate speech, and related violence**, securing public safety and national security, precautionary measures, and preventing cheating during exams etc.

❖ **Ensure Peace and Public Stability:** Internet shutdown acts as a **preventive measure** used by the law & order administration as a **last resort to address** mass protests, civil unrest, curbing the spread of misinformation so as to ensure peace and public safety.

❖ **Avoid Disruptive Role:** In certain extreme situations where **rumours through social media** start playing a disruptive role, it may become necessary to have internet shutdowns.

What are the Criticisms Against Internet Shutdowns? Impacts of Internet Shutdown?

❖ **Violate Human Rights:** Internet shutdowns attack on civil liberties and the constitutional rights of the citizens. They not only **curb dissent** but give the government **excessive control** over the dissemination of information and dominance over the narrative.

❖ **Economic Cost:** India lost over **$1.3 billion** in internet shutdowns across the country making it the **third-most economically affected country** after Iraq and Sudan.

❖ **Fails to achieve the objective:** There is **no conclusive evidence** showing that Internet shutdowns lead to maintenance or restoration of public order.

❖ **Social Cost:** Fundamental services such as **education, health care and other public services** are held back. **Internet banking** stops working. Agricultural extension services and emergency services may be unable to function.

The freedom of speech and expression is **not an absolute right**, but shutdowns cannot happen for frivolous reasons. Internet shutdowns have a **significant impact** on education, healthcare, and the economy. It is important to consider the **principle of proportionality and the socioeconomic impact** while enforcing law and order.

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REVAMP OF CRIMINAL LAWS

Questionnaire:

1. *What are these three new penal bills?*
2. *What is the primary legal framework that governs criminal justice in India??*
3. *How has the criminal justice system in India evolved?*
4. *Why is it necessary to reform the criminal justice system?*
5. *What are features of Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita bill, 2023?*
6. *What are features of Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita bill, 2023?*
7. *What are the features of Bharatiya Sakshya bill, 2023?*
8. *What are the criticisms against these bills?*

9. *What differentiates the old sedition law from the new Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (bill), 2023, and what potential loopholes are identified in the new legislation regarding sedition?"*

Context: Recently, the union home minister introduced three Bills in the Lok Sabha to replace, i.e. IPC 1860, Indian Evidence Act 1872, and CrPc 1898.

What are These Three New Penal Bills?

The title proclaims that this new law will focus on Nyaya- Justice as opposed to the earlier Penal code that focused on punishments.
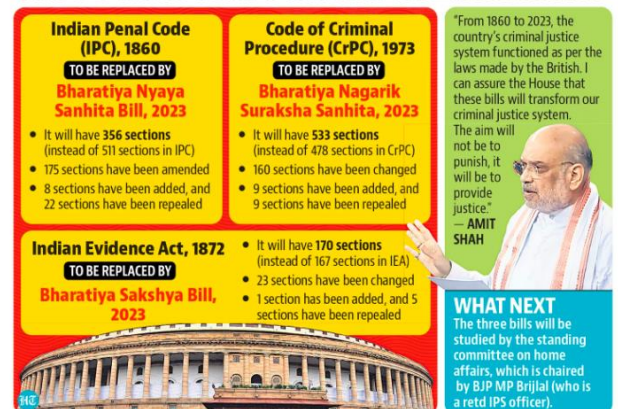
Compared to Colonial Masters, this law has been drafted by a **democratically elected Government purportedly with a focus on delivering justice to its people.**

What is the Primary Legal Framework that Governs Criminal Justice in India?

Criminal law in India is primarily governed by:

❖ **Indian Penal Code, 1860:** Defines criminal offenses and their punishments.

❖ **Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973:** Regulates the procedural aspects of criminal cases.

❖ **Indian Evidence Act, 1872:** Governs the rules for the admissibility of evidence in court.

Three bills introduced in Lok Sabha

Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860	Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973
TO BE REPLACED BY	**TO BE REPLACED BY**
Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, 2023	**Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023**
• It will have **356 sections** (instead of 511 sections in IPC)	• It will have **533 sections** (instead of 478 sections in CrPC)
• **175 sections** have been amended	• **160 sections** have been changed
• **8 sections** have been added, and **22 sections** have been repealed	• **9 sections** have been added, and **9 sections** have been repealed

Indian Evidence Act, 1872	
TO BE REPLACED BY	• It will have **170 sections** (instead of 167 sections in IEA)
Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, 2023	• **23 sections** have been changed
	• **1 section** has been added, and **5 sections** have been repealed

"From 1860 to 2023, the country's criminal justice system functioned as per the laws made by the British. I can assure the House that these bills will transform our criminal justice system. The aim will not be to punish, it will be to provide justice."
— **AMIT SHAH**

WHAT NEXT
The three bills will be studied by the standing committee on home affairs, which is chaired by BJP MP Brijlal (who is a retd IPS officer).

> ### How has the Criminal Justice System in India Evolved?
>
> ❖ **Ancient Period: Manusmriti and Arthashastra**, outlined principles of justice and punishment.
> ❖ **Medieval Period: Delhi Sultanate** and later the **Mughal Empire** introduced Islamic legal principles. **Qazi Courts:** Qazis administered justice based on **Islamic law, dealing with criminal and civil matters.**
> ❖ **Colonial Rule**: The British East India Company introduced **English common law**.
>   ➢ **Regulation System:** Regulations and codes were enacted to streamline justice, such as **the Regulation of 1772 in Bengal.**
>   ➢ **Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay** is often regarded as the **chief architect** of the codification of criminal laws in India.
> ❖ **Post-Independence Era:**
>   ➢ **Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and Indian Penal Code (IPC):** These codes were enacted to standardize criminal laws and procedures across the country.
>   ➢ **Police Reforms:** Efforts were made **to reform and to modernize the police system**, emphasizing accountability and efficiency.
>   ➢ **Special Legislation:** Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and UAPA Act.
> ❖ **Reforms and Amendments: PIL and Judicial Activism:** Indian courts, especially the **Supreme Court,** played a significant role in **expanding human rights and ensuring due process.**
>   ➢ **Amendments to Laws:** The criminal justice system has seen amendments to laws like **IPC, CrPC, and the Evidence Act** to address emerging challenges.
>   ➢ **Criminal Law Reforms Committee:**
>   ✓ **Headed by: Prof. (Dr.) Ranbir Singh**, former Vice Chancellor of National Law University (NLU), Delhi
>   ✓ **Mandate:** To assess and suggest changes to the **Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), and the Indian Evidence Act.**

Why is it Necessary to Reform the Criminal Justice System?

- ❖ **Pendency and Delay:** The existing **complex procedures** of IPC, CrPC, and Indian Evidence Act have contributed to substantial **court backlogs and delayed justice delivery.**
  - ➢ As on December 31, 2022, the **total pending cases in district and subordinate courts was pegged at over 4.32 crore.**
- ❖ **Low Conviction Rates: It** highlights the need for reforms to enhance the efficacy of criminal proceedings.
  - ➢ **According to the NCRB report 2022**, on an all- India basis, the **total conviction rate for IPC crimes stood at 57%.**
- ❖ **Overcrowded Prisons and Undertrials:** According to a report on **prison statistics for 2019 released by NCRB**, National Crime Records there were **4,78,600 inmates** lodged in different prisons in India while they had **capacity to 4,03,700 inmates.**
- ❖ **Introduction of New Offences:** Like **endangering sovereignty, organized crime, terrorism, mob lynching, and sexual intercourse** based on deceitful means or false promises of marriage.

What are Features of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, 2023?

Key Highlights of the Proposed Changes and Additions

- ❖ **Punishments for Gang Rape and Rape of Minors:** The Bill proposes that **all forms of gang rape be punishable by 20 years of imprisonment or life imprisonment.** Additionally, the **rape of a minor is punishable by the death penalty**, indicating a stringent stance on crimes against minors.
- ❖ **Capital Punishment for Mob Lynching:** For the first time, capital punishment has been introduced as a penalty for the offense of mob lynching.
- ❖ **Criminalization of Sexual Intercourse Under False Pretexts:** The Bill criminalizes sexual intercourse obtained through deceitful means, **false promises of marriage, or suppression of identity.**
- ❖ **Exclusion of Punishment for Unnatural Sexual Offenses:** The Bill does not include any punishment for '**unnatural sexual offenses against men,**' in accordance with the Supreme Court's reading down of **Section 377 in Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India.**
- ❖ **Retaining Marital Rape Exception:** The provision allowing exceptions for **non-consensual sexual acts** within a marital relationship has been retained, even though it remains a subject of ongoing legal and social debate.
- ❖ **Trial in Absentia:** The provision for trial in absentia is a significant change. **It allows for trials to take place even when the accused is not present in the country. Example:** Absconding criminals such as underworld don **Dawood Ibrahim will be tried in-absentia by court.**
- ❖ **Community Service and Solitary Confinement:** Introducing **new forms of punishment**, such as community service and solitary confinement. Offences including **small theft, defamation, and attempting to commit suicide.**

What are Features of Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita Bill, 2023?

- ❖ **FIR by Electronics communication:** It **allows** for filing of First Information Report to the police "by electronic communication". However, it requires the complainant **to sign the record within three days of filing it.**
- ❖ **FIR Accessibility:** A provision is introduced to ensure that copies of First Information Reports (FIRs) are made available **to the accused and the victim free of cost within fourteen days** from the date of production or appearance of the accused.
- ❖ **Zero FIR:** The Bill allows for the filing of a zero FIR from any part of the country. This enables a police station **to register an FIR for an offense that falls under another police station's jurisdiction** and then transfer it to the relevant station.
- ❖ **Greater Use of Technology: Trials, appeals, depositions, and accused statements** can be conducted electronically.
- ❖ **Communication Devices and Summons:** Electronic communication, including devices, added to the summons provision. Individuals must produce **digital evidence-containing documents or devices** as directed by **court or police.**
- ❖ **Mercy Petitions:** Framework for filing mercy petitions in death penalty cases. **Mercy petition to Governor within 30 days**; if rejected, petition **to President within 60 days.**
- ❖ **Samples Without Arrest:** Magistrate can order samples of **signature, handwriting, voice, or finger impressions for investigation without arrest.**

What are the Features of Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, 2023?

❖ **Admissibility of Electronic Records:** The Bill permits the admissibility of electronic or digital records as **evidence, recognizing technological advancements.**

❖ **Expansion of Secondary Evidence:** The scope of secondary evidence has been expanded to include various forms, such **as copies made from the original by mechanical processes, counterparts of documents, and oral accounts of document** contents given by a person who has seen it.

What are the Criticisms Against the Bill?

❖ **Addressing Long-standing Problems: Overcrowded prisons** and high proportions of **undertrials** persist as a crisis. **Reforms in bail adjudication** remain insufficient, failing to prioritize bail as the default option.

❖ **Forensics and Electronic Evidence:** Despite emphasizing their use, the Bills **lack clear guidelines for handling forensic evidence**, raising doubts about its reliability and admissibility.

❖ **Absence of Clarity on Cyber Crimes:** There is no provision to clarify as to which cyber crimes will be considered to have **severe consequences**.

❖ **Lack of Definition for 'Economic Offenses:** The phrase "economic offenses" also remains undefined, though an **inclusive explanation is provided.** Vague phrases such as "**financial scams", "Ponzi schemes" and "mass-marketing fraud**" have been used, **without defining** what these terms mean.

❖ **Uneven Legal Grounds:** With the lone exception of **Community service** that has been formally introduced as a type of punishment and in default, simple imprisonment may be given, **rest all punishments are the same.**

❖ **Gender-Specific Approach to Rape:** We continue **to retain rape as a gender specific crime** in Chapter offences against women and children.

➢ **The marital rape exemption** also continues.

➢ We have still not acknowledged that **intimacy between two persons requires consent** and not a socially sanctioned relation to justify all excesses.

What is the Significance of the Recent Proposal to Introduce Community Service as a Form of Punishment for Petty Crimes in India?

First, the government has proposed community service as a new form of punishment for petty crimes in India through the the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) Bill, 2023. If implemented, India will join the ranks of countries like the US, UK, Sweden and many other developed nations.

❖ **Transformative Justice:** The proposed law suggests community service in cases like attempt to suicide, public servants unlawfully engaged in trade, theft of property less than Rs 5,000, public intoxication and defamation,

❖ **Societal Reparation through Service:** Most prevalent examples of community service are cleaning roles, which include trash collection in public spaces, graffiti removal, or even maintaining public facilities. These manual services contribute tangibly to local communities, while rehabilitating offenders through perceived societal reparation.

❖ **Educational or Awareness Programs:** Another frequently handed out service is educational or awareness programs. Offenders are required to attend informational classes such as drug or alcohol education, anger management, or safe driving courses.

❖ **Charity Works:** Additional community service also includes charity work. This might range from **volunteering** at homeless shelters or food banks to assisting in hospitals or hospices**.**

❖ Overall, **Western courts**, especially in the USA, use community service **as a means of incorporating punishment**, rehabilitation, and constructive societal contribution into a unified sentence. It enables offenders to **give back to the communities they wronged**, while mitigating the detrimental effects of long-term incarceration.

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JUDICIAL VIGILANCE AND LEGISLATIVE REFORMS: ADDRESSING CRIMINALIZATION OF POLITICS IN INDIA

Questionnaire:

1. *What is this case about?*
2. *What did the court rule?*
3. *What is view of the supreme court on convicted representatives?*
4. *What are the guidelines of the supreme court for disposal of criminal cases against legislators?*
5. *What provisions available in India to disqualify sitting members in the assembly?*
6. *What do you mean by criminalization of politics?*
7. *Do you think there is criminalisation of politics in India?*
8. *What factors do you think behind the criminalization of politics in India?*
9. *What are the impacts of criminalisation of politics according to view?*
10. *What is view of the judiciary on criminalization of politics in India?*
11. *What measures do you suggest to reduce criminalisation of politics in India?*

Context: The Supreme Court recently issued guidelines **to monitor the speedy disposal of criminal cases**, addressing the alarming issue of the criminalization of politics **against Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs).**

What is this Case About?

- ❖ **Amicus curiae Vijay Hansaria submitted a report** (November 2022) to the top court pointing out that the number of cases against MPs and MLAs have continued to rise.
- ❖ **Increasing from 4,122** in December 2018 to the present figure of **5,097**(doesn't even include cases in Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, for which data is not available). **41% of these cases are more than five years old**, "despite the fact that this court is seized of the matter and has passed various interim orders from time to time to expedite the trial.

What did the Court Rule?

- ❖ The Supreme Court in its ruling addressed the first aspect of the plea seeking speedy disposal of cases against MPs and MLAs, **it kept open the issue of replacing the 6-year ban with a lifetime one.**
- ❖ The bench said that the "**confidence and trust of the constituency in their political representative**" is necessary for the effective functioning of a parliamentary democracy.
- ❖ Emphasizing the impact of such cases on our "**political democracy**", the court said that **every effort should be made to take them up on priority and decide them expeditiously.**

What are the Guidelines of the Supreme Court for Disposal of Criminal Cases Against Legislators?

Following this, the bench laid down guidelines for **monitoring the early disposal of cases against lawmakers.**

- ❖ **Special Bench:** The court called for **monitoring criminal cases against legislators** to address the issue of **Criminalization of Politics**. The special bench has the authority to seek assistance from the Advocate General (AG) or prosecutor.
- ❖ **Suo Motu Cases By Chief Justices:** The chief justices from high courts (HC) can now **initiate suo-motu cases for speedy resolution** of pending criminal cases involving lawmakers.
- ❖ **Guidelines For Trial Courts:** SC Stated that it would be **difficult to lay down uniform guidelines for trial courts** across the country to dispose of such cases, **the court left it to the high court** to devise measures to effectively monitor such cases.

- ❖ **Authority To High Courts:** The HCs can issue orders and instructions for the efficient resolution of such cases. They can call upon the **Principal District and Sessions Judge** to take on the responsibility of allocating "**subject cases**" to such courts.
- ❖ **Priority Cases:** The priority shall be given to **cases against lawmakers** that are punishable with death or life imprisonment, addressing the issue of Criminalization of Politics. c**ases with 5 years** imprisonment or more will also be prioritized.

Is Disqualification Mentioned in Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1951?

- ❖ RPA Act 1951 was introduced by **Dr BR Ambedkar** in the Parliament. **Section 8:** It deals with **disqualification of legislators** on conviction for offenses like promoting enmity between **two groups, bribery, and undue influence, along with hoarding, profiteering, or adulteration** of food or drugs. **Section 8 (3): I**t imposes a **six-year ban** on persons convicted of offenses with a minimum two-year sentence.

What are Other Grounds Where Members Could be Disqualified?

Disqualification On Ground of Defection: A member of a House belonging to any political

party shall be disqualified for being a member of the HouseI.

Article 102 and Article 191: **Disqualification for membership** for being a member of either House of **Parliament** and a member of the **Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council** of a State respectively.

- ❖ If he holds any **office of profi**t under the Government of India or the Government of any State specified in the First Schedule.
- ❖ If he is of **unsound mind and stands** so declared by a competent court.
- ❖ If he is an **undischarged insolvent**.
- ❖ If he is **not a citizen** of India or has voluntarily acquired the citizenship of a foreign State or is under any acknowledgment of allegiance or adherence to a foreign State.
- ❖ If he is so disqualified by or under any **law made by Parliament.**

Do You Think There is Criminalisation of Politics in India?

- ❖ **According to The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)** there is an alarming rate of pending criminal cases against elected representatives in India After the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, **43% of the newly elected MPs** had pending criminal cases against them, highlighting the issue of Criminalization of Politics.

What Factors Do You Think Behind the Criminalization of Politics in India?

- ❖ **Muscle And Money Power:** It involves the **free use of musclemen to influence** the attitude and conduct of the electorate. **A link between the politician and criminals** in a constituency provides a congenial climate to political crime.
- ❖ **Political Control of Police:** Transfers and postings are entirely controlled by elected politicians, a concerning aspect of the Criminalization of Politics.
- ❖ **Electoral System and Political Culture:** Candidates with **huge financial resources, backed by caste alliances and loyal political networks**, including those involving criminals, enjoy an edge in elections. Due to the uncertainties of the first-past-the-post system, **political parties are eager to attract 'strong' and 'potentially winning' candidates**, often at the expense of honourable and commendable public figures.
- ❖ **Failure Of Criminal Justice System: Massive delays of cases** of criminal candidates over the years has made the formal justice system stagnant and inefficient, failing to provide **credible and swift resolutions** to disputes or punishment for criminals.

What are the Impacts of Criminalisation Of Politics?

- ❖ **Undermining Democracy:** When politicians with criminal backgrounds hold public office, they can use **their power to subvert the justice system and create a culture of impunity.**
- ❖ **Governance Issues:** Politicians with criminal backgrounds are more **interested in serving their own interests** rather than those of the people.

- ❖ **Corruption:** Criminalization of politics often goes **hand in hand with corruption**. Politicians with criminal backgrounds use their power for **personal gain, which leads to widespread corruption.**
- ❖ **Criminalization of Political Parties:** Criminalization of politics leads to **criminalization of political parties,** with criminal elements gaining control of political parties and using them for their own benefit.
- ❖ **Public Trust:** It erodes public trust in the political system. It led to **apathy and disillusionment** among the public, with people **losing faith** in democratic institutions and the rule of law.
- ❖ **Other impacts:**
  - ➢ Betrays the **electoral mandate** of the voters and corrodes the **fundamental tenets** of the party system.
  - ➢ **Destabilised** elected governments.
  - ➢ **Reduces the value of politics** from a transformative tool for social change to serving individual interests.

What is View of the Judiciary on Criminalization of Politics in India?

- ❖ **Public Interest Foundation v. Union of India (2019):** The SC ordered political parties **to publish the criminal records of their candidates on their websites**, social media handles, and newspapers. The court also directed the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** to create a framework to ensure that the information on candidates' criminal records was disseminated effectively.
- ❖ **Lily Thomas v. Union of India (2013):** The SC declared that **any member** of parliament or state legislative assembly who is **convicted of a crime** and sentenced to a prison term of **two years or more** would be disqualified from holding office. The court also declared that a convicted lawmaker **could not contest an election or continue as a member** of the legislature while the appeal was pending.
- ❖ **Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India (2002):** T**he SC directed the ECI** to issue guidelines to ensure that **candidates with criminal records** were not given tickets to contest elections by political parties. The court ordered that candidates mus**t disclose their criminal records in their nomination papers.**
- ❖ **Manoj Narula v. Union of India (2014): The Delhi High Court** held that a person cannot be disqualified from contesting elections **merely because they have been charged with a criminal offence.** However, the court also held that **political parties must not field candidates** who have a criminal background.

What Measures Do You Suggest to Curb Criminalisation of Politics in India?

- ❖ **Checking the Nexus Between Crime, Money and Muscle Power:** The growing dependence of political parties on criminals for muscle power and **"electability" must be stopped**.
- ❖ **Strengthening of Legal Framework:** Candidates against whom charges have been framed in court **for serious offenses should be disallowed** from participating in elections by making an amendment to the RPA,1951. **The 244th Law commission** recommends disqualification **at the stage of framing of charges,** accompanied by other legal safeguards.
- ❖ **Fast Tracking Trials:** Expediting the judicial process through **a time-bound justice delivery system** is needed.
- ❖ **Electoral Reforms:** The electoral process should be reformed **to prevent criminal elements from getting elected.**
  - ➢ **Mandating the political parties** to disclose the criminal records of their candidates, **stricter election funding rules**, and increased monitoring of political campaigns.
  - ➢ It is necessary to **strengthen the ECI** by providing it the powers **to regulate the actions of the political parties** with specific emphasis on scrutiny of the candidate's application.
    - ✓ **Example:** This practice is prevalent in **Germany, Portugal and Spain** and needs to be studied and replicated to suit the Indian socio-political conditions.
  - ➢ **Providing Statutory Status to the Model Code of Conduct** will help in curbing criminalization of politics.
- ❖ **Internal Democracy in Political Parties:** Convicted politicians may continue to influence law-making by **controlling the party** and **fielding proxy candidates** in the legislature.
  - ➢ **Although the RPA 1951** disqualifies a **sitting legislator or a candidate** on certain grounds, there is **no regulation over the appointments to offices within the party.**

- ❖ **Public Awareness:** An awareness program for voters, **to make them aware of their right to know the criminal background** of the person to whom they are going to cast their votes.
  - ➢ This can be done through the **media, civil society organizations, and educational institutions.**

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INTER-STATE WATER DISPUTES

> *Questionnaire:*
>
> 1. *What are inter-state water disputes?*
> 2. *What are the reasons for water disputes between states?*
> 3. *What are the effects of inter-state water disputes?*
> 4. *What are the mechanisms available for handling inter-state water disputes?*
> 5. *Is it possible to solve inter-state water disputes through negotiations?*
> 6. *What are the inter-state water disputes tribunals?*
> 7. *What are the major inter-state water disputes in India?*
> 8. *What are the issues with the inter-state water disputes tribunal?*
> 9. *Should states have a bigger role in inter-state water disputes?*
> 10. *How do inter-state water disputes affect federalism in the country?*
> 11. *Why does it take so long to resolve water issues in India?*
> 12. *Do you think the Supreme Court's intervention is inevitable?*

Context: The inter-state water disputes between the states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have been simmering for many decades without reaching a **mutually acceptable conclusion**.

What is meant by Inter-state Water Disputes?

Inter-state water disputes refer to **disputes between two or more states** regarding the use, distribution and control of rivers flowing through them. When the water **demands of states increase**, they have to look at ways to harvest water available in the state. If such waters must be obtained from inter-state rivers, there are high chances that **downstream states** will have an objection. In such a situation, there will arise a situation for the **union government to step-in** and **ensure equitable distribution** of river waters.

What are the Reasons for Water Disputes between states?

- ❖ **Increase in Population:** Population of states is on the rise. As population rises, the **demand for potable water rises**, putting a burden on available water.
- ❖ **Agricultural Expansion:** Agricultural area is being rapidly expanded to **feed the rising population**.
  - ➢ In addition, cultivation of **commercial water-gushing agricultural crops** like sugarcane is also rising.
- ❖ **Industrial Demand:** The setting up of industries requires water for the manufacturing **process**. The demand for power to run industries uninterrupted has forced states to harness their available hydropower potential.
- ❖ **Shortage of Rainfall:** Due to climate change, **rainfall patterns have changed**. Lower rainfall has led to drying up of smaller water bodies such as lakes.
- ❖ **Regionalism Sentiments:** Sometimes **political compulsions create water disputes** between states. Rising regionalism sentiments will only increase such disputes.
- ❖ **Historical Reasons:** Water disputes may be a **continuation of historical disputes** between states. Such disputes are difficult to resolve amicably.
- ❖ Ex: Karnataka and Tamil Nadu's water dispute goes back centuries.

What are the Effects of Inter-state water disputes?

- ❖ **Vote Bank Politics:** Water is a **sensitive subject and regional parties** are likely to use it for vote bank politics.
- ❖ **Affects Nationalism:** The inter-state water disputes will **affect federalism**, as the states will try to give up national interests for their own.
- ❖ **Attack on Migrants:** Inter-state water disputes have previously led to **attacks on migrants** living in states party to the disputes.
- ❖ **Impasse on Development:** Disputes resolution **will take decades** and till then, all the projects related to river water harnessing will be stuck.

Is it Possible to solve Inter-state Water Disputes through negotiations?

Using **negotiations** to solve inter-state water disputes will ensure that mutual grounds can be reached. However, this is a **temporary solution** as change in political leadership will result in violation of the mutual agreement.

Should states have a bigger role in Inter-state Water Disputes?

Under the **Seventh Schedule** of the Indian Constitution, water is a state subject. The center has a limited role in that aspect. However, since both the **warring parties** have a mandate to exercise power, a **neutral entity** needs to exist in the form of the center.

How Does Inter-State Water Disputes Affect Federalism in the Country?

- ❖ Inter-state water disputes continue to affect federal water governance in the country. Some laws such as the **River Water Disputes Bill, 2019** and the **Dam Safety Authority Bill, 2019**, shifts the states' rights and authority over rivers to the Centre.
- ❖ **Jurisdictional Tensions:** Inter-state water disputes can lead to jurisdictional tensions between the central and state governments. Deciding on water allocation and management involves balancing the authority of states with the need for a centralized approach.
- ❖ **Impact on Cooperative Federalism:** Inter-state water disputes can strain the principle of cooperative federalism. States may perceive central interventions as an infringement on their rights, impacting cooperative decision-making.

What are the Mechanisms available for handling Inter-state water disputes?

- ❖ **Negotiation and Mutual Understanding:** This will ensure that mutual grounds can be reached.
  - ➢ However, this is a **temporary solution** as change in political leadership will result in violation of the mutual agreement.
- ❖ **Inter-State Water Disputes Tribunal:** The constitution, under **Article 262 provides** for adjudication of inter-state water disputes. Parliament has passed two laws: the **River Boards Act (1956) and the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956**.
  - ➢ **River Boards Act (1956):** It establishes a river board for **regulation and development** of Inter-state River and river valleys.
  - ➢ **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956:** This empowers the union government to set up an ad hoc tribunal for **adjudication of inter-state water disputes**.

What are the Inter-state Water Disputes Tribunals?

It is a **quasi-judicial body** with the mandate to decide on the sharing of **inter-state river waters** between the riparian states. The decision of the tribunal is **final and binding** on the parties involved. The **Supreme Court or any other court** should not have any jurisdiction over disputes that are referred to the tribunal.

Inter-State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2019
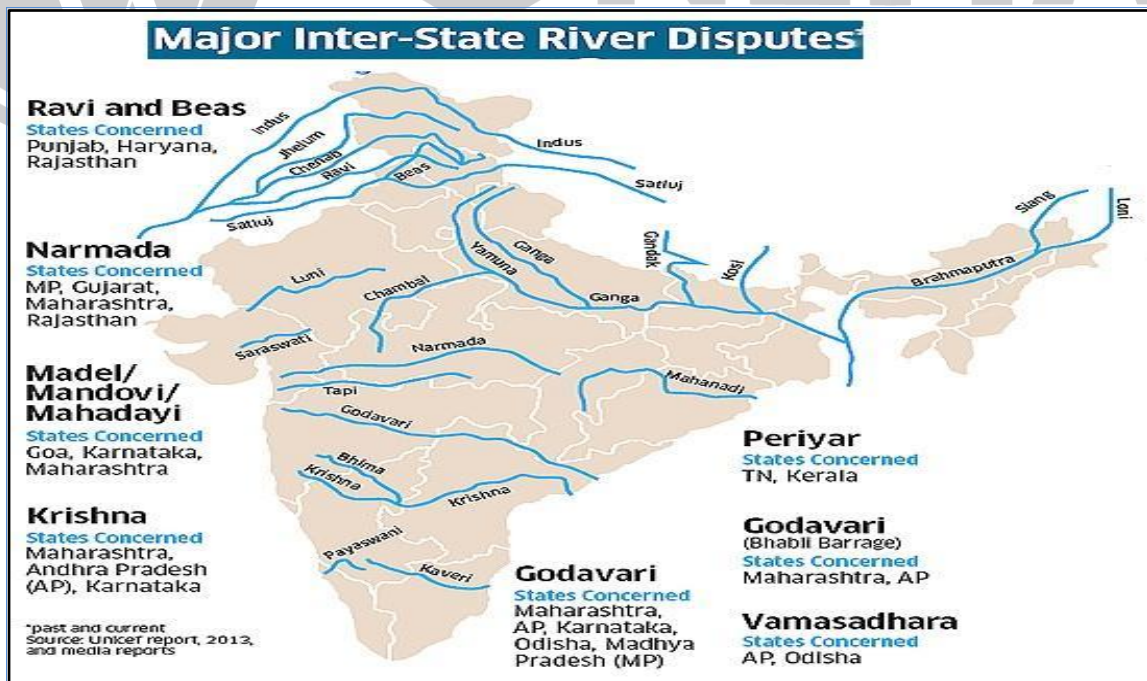
- ❖ **Forming a Data Bank:** The act empowers the Union Government to set up a **data bank** and information system at the national level for each river basin.
- ❖ **Establishing Tribunal:** The Union Government has powers to set up a permanent Inter-State River Water Disputes Tribunal, for the adjudication of water disputes. This Tribunal **can have multiple benches.**

> ➢ **Composition**: The Tribunal will be made up of a **Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, three judicial members, and three expert members**. They will be appointed by the Union Government based on the recommendation of a Selection Committee.
>
> ➢ All **existing Tribunals will be dissolved**, and the disputes before such existing Tribunals will be transferred to the new Tribunal.
>
> ➢ **Decision Time:** The Tribunal has to give its decision on the **dispute within two years**, which may be **extended by another year**. The previous limit was three years and was **extendable by another two years.**
>
> ➢ **State's Reference:** If the matter is referred again to the Tribunal by a State for further consideration, it is required to **submit its report to the Union Government** within a period of **one year**. This period can be extended **up to a maximum of 6 months.**
>
> ➢ **Decision of the Tribunal:** The decision made by the Bench of the Tribunal **shall be final and binding on the States.** There is no requirement for publishing the award in the **official gazette** by the Union Government**.**

What are the Issues with Inter-state water disputes Tribunal?

❖ **Opacity:** There is opacity in the **institutional framework** and guidelines that define working of the tribunals.

❖ **Members:** Majority of the members of the tribunal are drawn from **judiciary**, which has no expertise in understanding water management.

❖ **Protracted Proceedings:** The tribunal proceedings **take years to complete**. During this time, all the developments will be affected.

❖ **Political Interference:** The decision of the tribunal is **influenced by the political class**, who ensure that their electoral interests take precedence over national interests.

❖ **Non-compliance:** Despite the order of the tribunal **considered binding**, states have refused to abide by the decisions.

Major Inter-State River Disputes*

Ravi and Beas
States Concerned
Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan

Narmada
States Concerned
MP, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan

Madel/ Mandovi/ Mahadayi
States Concerned
Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra

Krishna
States Concerned
Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh (AP), Karnataka

*past and current
Source: Unicef report, 2013, and media reports

Periyar
States Concerned
TN, Kerala

Godavari
(Bhabli Barrage)
States Concerned
Maharashtra, AP

Godavari
States Concerned
Maharashtra, AP, Karnataka, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh (MP)

Vamasadhara
States Concerned
AP, Odisha

Why does it take so long to resolve water issues in India? Do you think the Supreme Court's intervention is inevitable?

❖ **Complex Inter-State Disputes:** Water issues in India often involve inter-state disputes over shared river resources. **For instance,** the **Cauvery River dispute** between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu has been ongoing for decades, leading to legal battles and administrative challenges.

- ❖ **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Insufficient infrastructure for water storage, distribution, and management exacerbates the problem. **For instance,** the delayed implementation of the Polavaram dam project in Andhra Pradesh has hindered effective water resource management.

- ❖ **Population Growth and Urbanization:** Rapid population growth and urbanization place increased stress on water resources. In cities like Chennai, mismanagement, pollution, and over-extraction of groundwater have led to severe water scarcity issues, requiring long-term, comprehensive solutions.

- ❖ **Climate Change Impact:** Changing climate patterns, including irregular rainfall and prolonged droughts, complicate water management. The recurring water crisis in regions like Marathwada in Maharashtra highlights the need for adaptive strategies to cope with climate-induced challenges.

Is the Supreme Court's Intervention inevitable?

Yes	No
❖ The Supreme Court's intervention is likely due to historical instances of complex and prolonged inter-state water disputes in India, where legal resolution becomes necessary.	❖ The Supreme Court's intervention is not inevitable, as alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as interstate water tribunals, exist to address conflicts without directly involving the highest court.

Inter-state water disputes in India involve intricate legal, political, and technical aspects, making resolution challenging. Many water disputes have historically reached the Supreme Court due to the inability of states to find amicable solutions. The Supreme Court holds the constitutional mandate to adjudicate disputes between states, including those related to water sharing. Water is a critical national resource, and disputes have far-reaching implications, necessitating the highest judicial intervention. Supreme Court intervention is seen as a means to prevent potential conflicts and ensure equitable resolution in the interest of all states.

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MARATHA RESERVATION: A LONG HISTORY OF POLITICAL TUG-OF-WAR AND LITIGATION

Questionnaire:

1. *Who are the Marathas?*

2. *Why are Marathas demanding reservation?*

3. *How has the political battle over the Maratha reservation movement evolved over the years?*

4. *What is the legal battle over Maratha reservation?*

5. *How is the state government planning to give reservation to Maratha as it was struck down earlier by SC?*

6. *What are your thoughts on the reservation policy?*

7. *Do you believe reservation effectively addresses historical disadvantages and promotes social equality, or do you think it creates new challenges and divisions in society?*

8. *Share your perspective and any ideas you have for improving or modifying the reservation system?*

9. *You must have heard about the concept of brain drain. How is it linked with reservation?*

10. *Recently there was discussion over reservation in the private sector. How is it going to impact India's growth trajectory to be a developed nation?*

Context: In June 2019, the Bombay High Court upheld the constitutional validity of the Maratha quota under the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act, 2018.

Who are the Marathas?

❖ **The Marathas are a group of castes** comprising **peasants and landowners** among others constituting nearly **33 per cent of state's population.** While most Marathas are **Marathi-speaking**, not all Marathi-speaking people belong to the Maratha community. This **politically dominant community** in the state comprises nearly one-third of the population of the state.

❖ Historically, they have been identified as a **'warrior' caste with large land holdings**. While division of land and agrarian problems over the years have led to a **decline of prosperity among middle class and lower middle-class Marathas**, the community still plays an important role in the rural economy.

Why are Marathas Demanding Reservations?

❖ The Marathas have been demanding reservation for decades, citing their social and educational backwardness due to agrarian distress and lack of opportunities.

The issue has sparked several mass movements and influenced state politics since 1981. While the Marathas in the past have demanded reservation for the community in government jobs and education,

❖ Recently they are demanding **Kunbi caste certificates f**or Marathas so that they can be included into the OBC groups. The Kunbi community in the state is associated with agriculture-related occupation and are grouped under the OBC category.

❖ Giving Marathas Kunbi caste certificates would mean that Marathas would be counted within the Kunbi community and given the OBC status, they would benefit with the reservation the OBC group gets.

How has the Political Battle over the Maratha Reservation Movement Evolved Over the Years?

❖ The Marathas have been demanding reservation in government jobs and educational institutions for a long time. The first protest was held 32 years ago by **Mathadi Labour Union leader Annasaheb Pati**l in Mumbai.

❖ **Since 1981**, Maratha reservation has become an integral part of politics in the state and a cause for mass protests.

❖ **In November 2018,** based on the findings of the Backward Class Commission headed by M G Gaikwad, the government gave its nod for reservation to Marathas under a special provision — Socially and Educationally Backward Class Act.

What is the Legal battle over Maratha Reservation?

❖ **High Court verdict in 2019:** In June 2019, the Bombay High Court upheld the constitutional validity of the Maratha quota under the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act, 2018. While ruling that the **16 per cent quota granted by the state was not 'justifiable**,' the HC reduced it to 12 per cent in education and 13 per cent in government jobs, as recommended by the Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission.

❖ **High Court Rely On:** The court heavily relied on the findings of the **11-member Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission (MSBCC) headed by Justice MG Gaikwad** (retd). The report said the **Maratha community is socially, economically and educationally backward.**

❖ **Supreme Court struck down Maratha quota in 2021:** In May 2021, a five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court headed by Justice **Ashok Bhushan struck down the provisions of Maharashtra law** providing reservation to the Maratha community, which took the total quota in the state **above the 50 per cent ceiling set by the court in its 1992 Indra Sawhney (Mandal) judgment.** In November 2022, after the **SC upheld the 10 per cent quota for the Economically Weaker Sections,** the state government said that until the issue of Maratha reservation is resolved, **economically weaker members of the community can benefit from the EWS quota.**

What is the View of OBC Leaders and Why Are They Opposing Maratha Reservation?

In view of the **protest by the OBC communities**, the Maharashtra government is **unlikely to opt for Maratha reservation within the OBC category** based on Kunbi certificates across the state.

According to the OBC leader, "**We do not oppose Maratha reservation**, but there should be no encroachment on the OBC quota,".

What are Your Thoughts on the Reservation Policy?

The goal of reservation in India has been to bring about an improvement in the welfare of people who, historically, have been economically and socially depressed. I believe that there should be reservation in the educational system of India. Due to which they can also get good and higher education, but at the time of the jobs/ public service there should be no reservation.

- ❖ **Role of Government:** If the government still wants to keep reservation policy then now it should not be based on caste or class. It should be based on the annual income of the person.
- ❖ **Role of Judiciary:** Judiciary has played a great role in the reservation policy. The great examples of this are N Nagrajan's case, Ashok Kumar Thakor, and Indira Shawnay's case. In these cases, the supreme court has given passing reference to the reservation on the SC & ST in jobs. But the Supreme court has said that reservation should not increase then 50% in any condition.
- ❖ **Role of Politicians:** Nowadays politicians are playing a major role in reservation policy.
- ❖ The reservation policy was only for 10 years after the independence, for upliftment of SC and ST but till now it is continuing and no one has taken any step to amend it or revise it or to change it. Recent agitation in Maharashtra for Maratha Reservation is also politicized historically.

Do you Believe Reservation Effectively Addresses Historical Disadvantages and Promotes Social Equality, or do You Think it Creates New Challenges and Divisions in Society?

The question of whether reservations effectively address historical disadvantages and promote social equality is a matter of ongoing debate and can vary based on different perspectives. Here are some common arguments on both sides:

- ❖ **Arguments in Favor of Reservations:**
  - ➢ Proponents argue that reservations are a **way to address historical injustices and systemic discrimination** faced by certain communities, providing them with opportunities that were denied in the past.
  - ➢ Reservations are seen as **a means to enhance social mobility** by providing marginalized groups with access to education, employment, and other opportunities, thereby **breaking the cycle of poverty and inequality.**
  - ➢ Reservations aim **to ensure adequate representation of diverse communities in various sectors,** fostering **inclusivity** and preventing the concentration of power and resources in a few privileged groups.
  - ➢ Having diverse perspectives and experiences in educational institutions and workplaces can contribute **to a richer and more inclusive environment,** leading to better decision-making and problem-solving.

- ❖ **Arguments Against Reservations:**
  - ➢ Critics argue that reservations can **compromise the principle of meritocracy** by prioritizing demographic factors over individual abilities and qualifications, potentially leading to **inefficiencies and reduced competitiveness.**
  - ➢ Reservations can **inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes** and stigmatize beneficiaries, as there may be assumptions that individuals from reserved categories are there due to quotas rather than their skills or abilities.
  - ➢ **This can create social divisions and hinder integration.** Reservation policies can lead to perceptions of inequity, especially among individuals who may feel that they are **unfairly disadvantaged due to the allocation of opportunities based** on demographic factors rather than merit or qualifications.
  - ➢ This perception can contribute to **social tensions and divisions.** Reservation policies can sometimes result in backlash and resentment from groups **that are not covered by these policies**.

Public opinion on reservations often varies, and the effectiveness of reservation policies can depend on the specific context and implementation. **Striking a balance between addressing historical disadvantages** and avoiding

unintended consequences is a complex challenge that societies grapple with when formulating and evaluating reservation policies. Continuous evaluation and adaptation of such policies are necessary to ensure they contribute positively to social equality without creating new challenges and divisions.

Share Your Perspective and Any Ideas You Have for Improving or Modifying the Reservation system?

Improving a reservation system involves careful consideration of its goals, fairness, and effectiveness. Following are some measures in which a reservation system could be enhanced:

❖ **Targeted and Need-Based Approach:** Implement a more targeted approach by focusing on those who genuinely face historical disadvantages and socio-economic challenges.

❖ **Transparency and Accountability:** Ensure transparency in the allocation of reserved seats or opportunities.

❖ **Holistic Development Programs: Invest in education, healthcare, and skill development** initiatives to uplift marginalized communities beyond just providing reservations.

❖ **Periodic Review of Representation: Make adjustments** to reservation policies based on the changing dynamics of representation.

❖ **Merit-Based Consideration:** Combine reservation policies with a merit-based approach, ensuring that candidates from reserved categories are selected based on **both their demographic background and individual qualifications.**

❖ **Public Awareness and Sensitization:** Conduct public awareness campaigns to educate the public about the **purpose and benefits of reservation policies**.

❖ **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Design reservation systems with flexibility to adapt to changing societal dynamics, ensuring that they remain effective in addressing emerging challenges.

Improving a reservation system requires a nuanced **understanding of the context and a commitment** to addressing historical disadvantages while minimizing unintended negative consequences. **It's an ongoing process** that should involve collaboration between policymakers, communities, and other stakeholders.

You Must have Heard About the Concept of Brain Drain. How is it Linked with Reservation?

Brain Drain

Brain drain is defined as the migration of human capital in search of a better standard of living and quality of life, higher salaries, access to advanced technology and more stable political conditions in different places worldwide.

Reservation is the cause of brain drain from India, an oft-repeated claim, **used to explain the success of Non-Resident Indians (NRI)** in US, UK, EU and other foreign nations.

Brain Drain is because of Reservation: While the various government programmes of **affirmative actions** have allowed for up to 50% reservation for SC/ST/OBC in public sector jobs, the programme is not properly implemented. Even if this is taken into account, **only 1-2% of the total jobs in India is reserved** for backward castes.

To blame this policy for brain drain is **absurd and dishonest.**

❖ Many successful NRI, like Satya Nadela and Sundar Pichai are educated from some of the top institutions in India.

❖ Many of the top graduates from IIT and IIM often migrate abroad.

❖ On the other hand, much of the **success of NRI in US, UK, and EU** is itself due to the **policy of affirmative action in these nations**, where **non-white people are hired** and promoted for diversity.

❖ Yet, in India, the **hegemony of the upper caste** is bent on driving the wrong lessons from these phenomena.

This is not to take anything from the hard work and success of Indians abroad. Such a trend is prevalent across the developing world. However, the **success of these people abroad should not be blamed on reservation in public sector jobs.**

Recently There was Discussion Over Reservation in the Private Sector. How is it Going to Impact India's Growth Trajectory to be a Developed Nation?

The Supreme Court has set aside (or lifted) a stay order that was placed by the Punjab and Haryana High Court on the law that reserved 75% of private jobs for the residents of Haryana.

❖ **Benefits of Private Reservation:**

➢ Reservation policies can contribute to **greater diversity in the workplace,** ensuring representation from various social groups.

➢ Reservation in the private sector could provide **economic opportunities to historically marginalized communities**, potentially contributing to their socio-economic upliftment.

➢ Proponents argue that diversity can enhance creativity and problem-solving, making companies more competitive.

➢ To meet reservation requirements, **companies may invest in training and development** programs for underrepresented groups.

➢ Demonstrating commitment to **social justice could enhance a company's reputation,** potentially attracting socially responsible investors.

❖ **Impact of Reservation in Private-sector Jobs**:

➢ **Violation Of Constitution:** At the surface level, it clearly violates **Article 14** of the Constitution, which talks about the **right to equal opportunity in matters of public employment.**

➢ **Impact on Economy:** To begin with, this Act would be a **direct attack on the fundamental idea** of the Indian economy as one unit.

➢ **Potential Socio-Economic Ramifications:** As a result, not only Haryana, but **the entire country would suffer**, because the National Capital Region (NCR) contributes significantly to the country's GDP, and Gurugram (Gurgaon) is an important city for both NCR Delhi and Haryana.

➢ **Anti-Industry:** There is no doubt that the reservation in private sectors is always anti-industry and would stifle the state's labour market and choke the state's growth engine.

Striking a balance between promoting **social justice and maintaining the efficiency** and competitiveness of private enterprises is a complex task. Public opinion, stakeholder engagement, and ongoing dialogue are essential in shaping effective and fair policies.

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PRIVILEGE MOTION

Questionnaire:

1. *What is privilege motion?*
2. *Are these parliamentary privileges defined under law?*
3. *What is the committee of privileges in the parliament?*
4. *How does the committee of privileges in parliament examine it?*
5. *What action can the privileges committee take?*
6. *Do you know any cases where privilege motion has been passed?*
7. *Do you think that privilege motion has been misused and there is lack of clarity in what constitutes the privileges? What reforms can be made in this regard?*
8. *What is the possible punishment for the offense of breach of privilege?*

Context: Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankar has referred complaints against two opposition MPs (Raghav Chaddha and Derek O'Brien) to the Privileges Committee.

What is Privilege Motion?

It is concerned with the breach of parliamentary privileges by a member. It is moved by a member when he feels that a minister/member has committed a breach of privilege of the House or one or more of its members by withholding facts of a case or by giving wrong or distorted. Its purpose is **to censure** the concerned member.

Constitutional Provisions:

- ❖ **Parliamentary privilege** is the sum of certain rights enjoyed by each House collectively and by members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions.
- ❖ **Eligibility:** Parliamentary privileges are available to individuals **who have the right to speak and participate in the discussions** of a Parliament House or any of its committees. **Example:** The Attorney General of India and Union ministers.
- ❖ **The two rules** (**Rule No 222** of the Lok Sabha Rule Book and **Rule 187** in of the Rajya Sabha rulebook) referred to here relate to the **concept of parliamentary privilege**, which are certain rights conferred to the Members of Parliament for conducting the business of the Parliament. It includes the **right of free expression in the course of Parliamentary debates** and Members of Parliament will not be liable for court proceedings for this.

Are These Parliamentary Privileges Defined Under Law?

According to the Constitution, the powers, privileges and immunities of Parliament and MPs are **to be defined by Parliament. No law has so far been enacted in this respect**. In the absence of any such law, it continues to be governed by British Parliamentary conventions. **The rules governing the privilege** are mentioned in the Rule No 222 of the Lok Sabha Rule Book and Rule 187 in the Rajya Sabha rulebook.

What is the Committee of Privileges in the Parliament?

The Committee of Privileges examines every question involving breach of privilege of the House or of the Members of any Committee therefore referred to it by the House or by the Speaker.

Lok Sabha: It consists of 15 Members nominated by the Speaker.

Rajya Sabha: It consists of 10 members and is nominated by the Chairman of Rajya Sabha. In the Rajya Sabha, the deputy chairperson heads the committee of privilege.

What Action can the Privileges Committee Take?

- ❖ The mandate of the committee is **to examine such cases** and "**make such recommendations as it may deem fit**".
- ❖ It can **call the relevant people** as part of its examination and look at related documents.
- ❖ It has to then **make a report** and if the Council has not fixed any time for its presentation, the report shall be **presented within one month of the date** on which reference to the Committee was made.
- ❖ **A motion has to be passed** for the consideration of the report and amendments can be suggested.
- ❖ The Chairman or any member of the Committee or **any other member can move** that the Council agrees, disagrees, or agrees with amendments, with the recommendations contained in the report.

Do You Know Any Instances Where Privilege Motion has been Passed?

- ❖ **A large number of notices are rejected**, with penal action recommended in only a few cases.
- ❖ **The most significant case** was in 1978 when **Indira Gandhi**, who had just won the Lok Sabha elections from Chikmagalur, was **expelled from the House.**
  - ➢ Then home minister **Charan Singh moved a resolution** of breach of privilege against her following observations made by the Justice Shah Commission, which probed excesses during the Emergency.
- ❖ **Another case was the expulsion of Subramanian Swamy** from the Rajya Sabha in 1976.
  - ➢ Swamy was charged with bringing **disrepute to Parliament** through his activities through interviews in foreign publications that were construed as "**anti- India propaganda**".

> ### *What is the difference between breach of privileges and contempt of the house?*
>
> Though these terms are **often used interchangeably,** they do not convey the same meaning. While breach of privileges is defined as **any disregard for power and immunities** granted to parliamentarians under **Article 105 and to state legislatures under Article 194,** contempt of house is **any action that is against the dignity and authority of parliamentarians or members of the legislative assembly.**

What is the Possible Punishment for the Offense of Breach of Privilege?

- ❖ **A house is authorized to sentence any member** or committee associated with the House to punishment for misconduct, disorderly behaviour, a proven breach of privilege, or contempt of the House. **Certain types of punishment** which are given upon breach of privilege are –
  - ➢ **Imprisonment,**
  - ➢ **Suspension,**
  - ➢ **Expulsion, and**
  - ➢ **Reprimand.**
- ❖ **Example:**
  - ➢ **In the 2007** case of breach of privilege against **Ambassador Ronen Sen**, the Lok Sabha Committee on privileges held that the phrase **"headless chicken"** was not used by Shri Sen in respect of MPs or politicians. No action was taken against him.
  - ➢ **In 2008, an editor of an Urdu weekly** referred to the deputy chairman of Rajya Sabha as a **"coward" attributing motive** to a decision taken by him. **The privileges committee held the editor guilty of breach of privilege**.

Do you think that privilege motion has been misused and there is lack of clarity in what constitutes the privileges? What reforms can be made in this regard?

Parliamentary privileges serve the purpose of **providing an authoritative position**, a sense of honour and dignified status to elected representatives. The privileges and powers mentioned thereunder are **to enable lawmakers to function Independently** without any interference or obstruction and not to place the elected members above the law of the land.

However, **over time these privileges have been used** to target any particular member of the House and **also to violate the fundamental rights** of the citizens by forbidding them to exercise their rights of freedom of speech and expression.

- ➢ **For instance, in 2021 Kerala legislative assembly** demanded the withdrawal of criminal charges for vandalism from 6 of its MLAs.
- ➢ They claimed that **it is a breach of privilege** to admit the case which happened inside the assembly as it can be construed as legislative proceedings.
- ❖ **Some measures that can be taken to curb misuse of privilege.**
  - ➢ Seeing the numerous privilege motions and misuse of immunity granted to parliamentarians, it is high time that the **law-making agency considers formulating legislation on this subject.**
  - ➢ We do not have a **codified system of law on parliamentary privileges**, though the Indian Constitution specifically mentions the power of the parliament to formulate the law in this regard. **We still rely on common law** principles for parliamentary privileges.
  - ➢ It is also the **duty of the members** to properly use these privileges and not misuse them and protect the general interest of the nation and the public at large.
  - ➢ **The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution,** in its 2002 report, recommended the definition and limitation of privileges.

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JUDICIAL ACTIVISM

Questionnaire:

1. *What is judicial activism?*
2. *How judicial activism evolved in India?*
3. *How are the dynamics of judicial activism evolving in India?*
4. *What are some landmark instances that illustrate the significance of judicial activism?*
5. *What is the underlying rationale and purpose behind judicial activism?*
6. *What is the relation between judicial review and judicial activism?*
7. *Is judicial activism violating the Constitution and is against the separation of power?*
8. *What are the challenges associated with judicial activism?*
9. *Difference between judicial activism and judicial overreach?*

What is Judicial Activism?

Judicial activism embodies the **judiciary's proactive stance in safeguarding citizens' rights and advancing social justice**. It signifies the **judiciary's assertive engagement** in compelling the legislature and executive to fulfil their constitutional obligations.

How Judicial Activism Evolved in India?

Introduction in the 1970s in India: The doctrine of judicial activism took root in India during the mid-1970s. Justices **V.R. Krishna Iyer, P.N. Bhagwati, O. Chinnappa Reddy, and D.A. Desai** pioneered its establishment within the nation's legal framework.

How are the Dynamics of Judicial Activism Evolving in India?

- ❖ **Kesavananda Bharati Case:** In a pivotal move before the emergency, the apex court proclaimed in the Kesavananda Bharati case that the constitution's basic structure was beyond executive alteration. Although the emergency occurred, this stance bolstered judicial activism.
- ❖ **Golaknath Case:** The Supreme Court asserted that Fundamental Rights in Part 3 were unamendable by legislative bodies. **This legal assertion** reinforced judicial activism's prominence.

What are some landmark instances that illustrate the significance of judicial activism?

- ❖ **Hussainara Khatoon (I) v. State of Bihar:** Highlighting dire conditions of undertrial prisoners, the court recognized **speedy trial as a fundamental right**, ensuring free legal aid and justice for inmates.
- ❖ **Sheela Barse v. State of Maharashtra**: Responding to the journalist's plea on **custodial violence**, the court treated the letter as a writ petition, issuing necessary guidelines for women prisoners' welfare.
- ❖ **Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan:** Lack of legislation addressing sexual harassment at the workplace. Thus, the Supreme Court laid down guidelines to combat sexual harassment, emphasizing the right to a safe workplace for women, setting a precedent for judicial intervention in policy gaps.

What is the underlying rationale and purpose behind judicial activism?

- ❖ **Crisis of Responsible Government:** When Legislature and Executive falter, trust in the Constitution diminishes, compelling judicial intervention.
- ❖ **Citizen Expectations**: Citizens rely on the judiciary for safeguarding rights, creating pressure for judicial aid.
- ❖ **Judicial Enthusiasm**: Judges engage in societal reforms, propelling Public Interest Litigation and broadening 'Locus Standi'.
- ❖ **Legislative Gaps**: Unlegislated areas prompt judicial legislation to fulfil evolving social needs.
- ❖ **Legislature Failures**: Weak legislature **leads the judiciary to intervene.**
- ❖ **Protecting Basic Rights**: Court intervention **safeguards citizens' rights**, addressing failures in administration.
- ❖ **Executive Misuse:** Executive misusing courts for **political motives** necessitate judicial involvement.

What is the Relation Between Judicial Review and Judicial Activism?

- **Closely Linked Concepts**: The notions of judicial review and judicial activism share proximity. Yet, they exhibit notable distinctions, outlined below.
- **Judicial Activism is Robust Judicial Review:** While lacking a standardized definition, it emphasizes the significance of robust judicial review for safeguarding core rights.
- **Expanded Scope of Judicial Review**: The broader application of locus standi, exemplified by **Public Interest Litigation (PIL),** has extended courts' **jurisdiction in judicial review**.
  - ➢ This broadened role has been termed "judicial activism" by critics **sceptical of the judiciary's expanded role.**

Is Judicial Activism Violating the Constitution and is against the Separation of Power?

- **Debatable Question:** The question of whether judicial activism violates the constitution is a complex and debated issue.
- The answer depends on one's perspective and interpretation of constitutional principles.
- **Favor:** Supporters argue that judicial activism is a legitimate tool for ensuring justice and protecting rights.
- **Against:** While critics contend that it can potentially overstep the bounds of the judiciary's role.
- **Challenge to Separation of Power:** Judicial activism, while often seen as a mechanism for social progress, can be perceived as a potential challenge to the separation of powers.
- **Encroachment:** This legal philosophy empowers judges to shape policies, sometimes encroaching on legislative and executive functions.
- **Blurred the Line:** By taking an active role in interpreting laws beyond their original intent, judges may inadvertently undermine the principle of separation of powers, blurring the distinct functions of each branch.
- **Unbalance Check and Balance:** Critics argue that this activism compromises the system's checks and balances, as judges may overstep their boundaries, infringing on the authority traditionally reserved for the legislative and executive branches.

Ultimately, the assessment of whether judicial activism violates the constitution often hinges on specific cases, the nature of the activism involved, and differing constitutional interpretations.

What are the Challenges Associated with Judicial Activism?

- **Undemocratic Act: According to many experts, Unelected judges should not overstep their role** in a democratic system, as judicial decisions may be seen as undemocratic.
- **Encroaching on Legislative Territory:** Judicial activism may **blur the line between the judiciary and the legislature**, as judges sometimes engage in **policymaking rather than strictly adjudicating legal matters.**
- **Subjectivity in Decisions:** Judicial activism often involves **interpreting constitutional provisions and statutes**, and this can lead to subjective **interpretations that may vary among judges.**
- **Judicial Overreach:** Judicial activism can sometimes result in overreach. Judges sometimes interpret laws in ways that **go beyond the intended scope** or by **interfering with the domain** of the legislative and executive branches.
- **Delayed Justice:** Use of Judicial activism to solve societal issues may lead to delays in resolving individual cases, **affecting the already burdened judiciary.**
- **Public Perception and Trust: Over reliance on judicial activism** may impact public perception of the judiciary, with some questioning the **impartiality and neutrality** of the judicial system.
- **Capacity and Expertise:** Judges may not always have the **expertise or resources** to effectively address complex policy issues, **raising concerns about the adequacy of their decisions in such matters.**

Difference between judicial activism and judicial overreach?

Aspect	Judicial Activism	Judicial Overreach
Definition	Judicial activism refers to judges interpreting the Constitution and laws in a way that advances societal goals, often involving a broader interpretation of legal texts.	Judicial overreach occurs when judges exceed their authority by making decisions or interpretations that go beyond the intended scope of the law, potentially encroaching on the powers of other branches of government.

Judicial Role	Activist judges are proactive in addressing societal issues and may shape policy through their decisions.	Overreaching judges go beyond the boundaries of their role, possibly legislating from the bench or making decisions outside the purview of the judiciary.
Intent	Judicial activism is driven by a desire to promote justice, equality, and social change through the judicial system.	Judicial overreach is often unintentional and may result from judges overstepping their constitutional role due to personal biases or a misinterpretation of their authority.
Public Perception	Activism is sometimes viewed positively when it aligns with popular values, but critics argue it can lead to judicial overreach.	Overreach is generally viewed negatively, as it implies a violation of the separation of powers and undermines the democratic process.

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ROLE OF SPEAKERS

Questionnaire:

1. *What is the constitutional status of the speaker?*
2. *What is the role of the speaker of the Lok Sabha in a parliamentary democracy?*
3. *What are the major concerns surrounding the office of the speaker?*
4. *What are the judicial observations regarding the office of the speaker?*
5. *What steps can be taken to make the office of the speaker more effective?*
6. *Have you heard about "once a speaker always a speaker"? Which country follows this principle?*
7. *Do you think India should also follow this provision and what t we can learn from these countries when it comes to the office of the speaker?*

Context: Recently there are many controversies linked with the office of speaker with respect to anti-defection law.

What is the constitutional status of the speaker?

The constitutional status of the Speaker is reflected in Articles 93 and 94 of the Indian Constitution.

Article 93 and 94: It states that the Speaker shall be chosen from among the members of the Lok Sabha and shall vacate his/her office when he/she ceases to be a member of the house.

What is the role of Speaker of the Lok Sabha in a Parliamentary democracy?

❖ **Presiding Officer:** Presiding over the proceedings of the Lok Sabha and ensuring orderly conduct of debates and discussions.

❖ **Enforce Rules:** The Speaker has the authority to enforce the rules of the parliament.

❖ **Acting as Spokesperson:** The Speaker represents the Lok Sabha and speaks on behalf of the Lok Sabha in public or at international events.

❖ **Equal treatment:** Maintaining the impartiality of the Lok Sabha and ensuring that all members of the Lok Sabha are treated fairly and equally.

❖ **Money bill:** Speaker certifying a Bill to be a Money Bill (over which the Rajya Sabha/Legislative Council have a limited role)

❖ **Disqualification:** Speaker decides on disqualification of members of the House under the Tenth Schedule for defection

What are the issues surrounding the office of the Speaker?

- **Misuse of Provisions:** Rules for suspending members have been misused often against the opposition. **Example:** Recently, the leader of the Congress party in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, was suspended for his remarks against the Prime Minister (which was later revoked), but no such action has been taken against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) member, Ramesh Bidhuri, for passing communal allegations against the Bahujan Samaj Party Member of Parliament, Danish Ali.
- **On non-referring of bills to Standing Committees:** The Speaker is the authority to refer Bills introduced to the Parliamentary Standing Committees. However, even significant Bills that require detailed scrutiny are not referred to such committees. **Example:** As against more than 60% of Bills referred to committees in the Lok Sabha during 2004-14, less than 25% have been referred during 2014-2023.
- **Circumvent on the Anti-Defection law:** The Speaker of the House is expected to perform this constitutional role in a neutral manner, however, by observing many past instances, it has been inferred that the Speakers favour the ruling regime.

What are the judicial observations regarding the office of speaker?

- **Kihoto Hollohan vs Zachillhu Case (1992):** The minority judges in this case were of the view that vesting the power to decide on defections with the Speaker violates the basic democratic principles.
- **Keisham Meghachandra Singh vs The Hon'ble Speaker Manipur (2020):** The Supreme Court in this case recommended that Parliament amend the Constitution to vest these powers in an independent tribunal to be headed by judges.

What steps can be taken to make the office of the Speaker more effective?

- **Follow British Practice:** Need to adopt the practices as in Britain to instill confidence in the office of the Speaker, who resigns from the associated political party to reflect his/her impartiality.
- **Constitutional and Moral Practice:** As the Presiding Officer of the Lok Sabha at the Centre and the Legislative Assembly in the States, the Speaker is required to act in an impartial manner.
- **An Independent Tribunal:** Need for an independent tribunal for resolving questions on disqualification of members on the basis of defection.

Have you heard about "once a speaker always a speaker"? Which country follows this principle?

- The phrase "once a speaker, always a speaker" is associated with the parliamentary system in the United Kingdom. "Once a speaker, always a speaker" is a principle in the UK's parliamentary system, notably the House of Commons.
- It signifies that once elected as the Speaker, the individual is **re-elected** by acclamation in subsequent elections, **emphasizing continuity and experience** in the role.
- **Ensure Impartiality:** This tradition underscores the Speaker's commitment to impartiality and dedicated service to the House.
- While specific to the UK, the concept highlights the importance of consistent and experienced leadership in **parliamentary proceedings, fostering stability and expertise** in the critical position of the Speaker, who presides over debates, maintains order, and upholds parliamentary rules.

Do you think India should also follow this provision and what other things that we can learn from these countries when it comes to the office of speaker?

- The Speaker could not be above the political relations and a particular set of political beliefs in India. In the UK, Speakers usually remain unopposed by the major political parties.
- In India, whether a member belonging to the ruling party is elected the Speaker or the ruling party nominates its candidate, he is not always elected unopposed.
- That means he is not above party-politics and needs backing, involvement, and support of the party, which might affect his extensive functions to perform in administrative, judicial and regulatory matters falling under his extended domain.

❖ **Thus, India can adopt** the principle of **"once a speaker, always a speaker"** due to its merits of promoting continuity, impartiality and experience.

Valuable Lessons from other Countries: Nevertheless, India could draw valuable lessons from these countries with effective Speakerships:

➢ **Impartiality:** Emphasizing and maintaining the Speaker's impartiality is crucial for upholding the dignity and fairness of parliamentary proceedings.

➢ **Commitment to Rules:** A strong commitment to parliamentary rules and procedures helps ensure smooth functioning, fostering respect for democratic norms.

➢ **Dialogue Facilitation:** Encouraging constructive dialogue and debate is essential for a vibrant parliamentary democracy, allowing diverse voices to be heard.

➢ **Public Communication:** Transparent communication with the public about parliamentary proceedings and decisions helps build trust in the democratic process.

Ultimately, each country tailors its parliamentary practices to its unique context, and India can consider international best practices while adapting them to its specific needs and traditions.

FREEBIES CULTURE

Questionnaire:

1. *What do you understand about freebies?*
2. *What is the rationale behind freebies?*
3. *What is the difference between freebies and welfare measures?*
4. *What are concerns associated with excessive use of freebies?*
5. *What are the challenges in curtailing freebie culture?*
6. *What are institutional safeguards against freebie culture?*
7. *What are suggestive measures?*
8. *Why is each and every party resorting to freebies?*
9. *Do not you think freebies result in further dividing the society on the basis of caste, gender etc? Like recent free rides for women in buses in many states?*

Context: Recently, a webinar titled 'Freebies Culture and its Impact on Indian Politics & Democracy' was organized by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) in view of a public interest litigation (PIL) challenging freebies.

What do you understand about Freebies?

❖ The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** in a bulletin in June 2022 defined 'freebies' as "a public welfare measure that is provided free of charge. It includes provisions like **free electricity, water, public transportation, the waiver of outstanding utility bills, and farm loan waivers.**

What is the Rationale behind Freebies?

❖ **Promotes Economic Growth:** Certain expenditures, like those on the Public Distribution System, employment guarantee schemes, and support for education and health, exhibit overall societal benefits, contributing to economic growth.

❖ **Supports Underdeveloped States:** In regions with lower levels of development and higher poverty rates, freebies become a necessity to uplift the population. Subsidies in areas such as education and healthcare are crucial for the well-being and progress of these states.

❖ **Meeting Public Expectations:** In countries like India, where states vary in their developmental levels, electoral promises of freebies align with public expectations. These commitments serve as a response to the demands and aspirations of the electorate.

❖ **Addressing Developmental Gaps:** For states lagging in development, freebies are essential to address the immediate needs of the population. These subsidies play a pivotal role in bridging developmental gaps and facilitating progress in less affluent regions.

What is the Difference between Freebies and Welfare measures?

❖ **Freebies:** Freebies refer to goods and services provided without charge to users, often with a short-term focus on benefiting the targeted population. They are sometimes viewed as tactics to attract voters through populist promises, such as the distribution of free laptops, TVs, bicycles, electricity, or water. Freebies may risk creating dependency or distortions in the long run.

❖ **Welfare Schemes:** Welfare schemes are well-thought-out plans designed to positively impact the target population, enhancing their standard of living and access to resources. These schemes align with constitutional obligations, specifically the Directive Principles of State Policy, emphasizing social justice, equity, and human development.

❖ **Examples** of welfare schemes include the **Public Distribution System (PDS), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)**, and the mid-day meal scheme. Welfare schemes are oriented towards sustainable, long-term benefits, differentiating them from the short-term nature and potential drawbacks associated with freebies.

What are concerns associated with excessive use of freebies:

❖ **Heavy Tax Burden on States**: Many states are burdened with substantial debts, limiting their capacity to invest in more significant welfare programs.

❖ **Against Constitutional Principles:** Making promises when the states lack money to guarantee fundamental rights and implement directive principles is against constitutional principles.

❖ **Shrinkage of Fiscal Space:** The subsidy burden needs to be to be funded through debt, which will result in mounting deficits.

❖ **Violation of the Principle of a Level-Playing field:** Freebies gives the political parties undue advantage by making promises to provide private goods for only a section of voters.

❖ **Opportunity Cost:** States offering loan waivers often have to cut spending on crucial infrastructure such as roadways development and skill development.

❖ **Social Impact:** Despite receiving more resources, the RBI's study reveals a decline in social sector spending by states, particularly in vital areas like health and education.

❖ **Environmental Concerns:** States offer free electricity to farmers, leading to overuse of groundwater and the continuation of traditional crop patterns.

What are the challenges in curtailing Freebie Culture?

❖ **Lack of Regulatory Powers with ECI:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) has stated that it lacks the authority to regulate or penalize political parties for making electoral promises.

❖ **No assessment of financial viability of populist policies:** Political parties often fail to clarify the funding sources for the promises made in the form of freebies.

❖ **Lack of Information to the Voters:** They don't delve into the financial aspects of freebies, prompting political parties to compete for promising freebies.

What are Institutional Safeguards Against Freebie Culture?

❖ **Role of Opposition:** The initial defence against the freebie culture resides in the legislature, with a crucial role played by the Opposition. It is the responsibility of the Opposition to act as a check and balance, ensuring that the government adheres to responsible fiscal practices and avoids excessive or unsustainable populist measures.

❖ **CAG Audit:** While the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) audit theoretically serves as a check, its effectiveness is limited in practice. Audit reports often suffer from a time lag, and by the time findings are

revealed, political attention may have shifted to other pressing issues, diminishing the impact of the audit in curbing freebie practices.

❖ **Market Forces:** Market dynamics play a role in signalling the fiscal health of state governments. Differing pricing of loans floated by various state governments can reflect their respective debt sustainability. This market-driven indicator serves as a potential deterrent against irresponsible fiscal policies associated with the freebie culture.

What are suggestive measures?

❖ **Responsibility of voters:** Voters need to be vigilant and inquire about the financial implications of the populist policies.

❖ **Empowering the ECI with greater authority:** Statutory provisions as a backup or warnings on the use of funds are needed.

❖ **Model Manifesto:** The ECI needs to prepare a Model Manifesto to be followed by all political parties.

❖ **Fixing limit of welfare schemes**: Fixing spending of 1% of GSDP or 1% of state own tax collections or state revenue expenditure would help to implement welfare schemes properly.

❖ **Tracking social sector budgetary allocations:** Prioritizing higher resource allocation to welfare schemes is needed.

❖ **Role of Finance Commission:** It should consider the state's debt burden during state allocations and assess whether the state's economy can sustain the financial impact of freebies over the long term.

Why is each and every party resorting to freebies?

❖ **Electoral Appeal:** Political parties often resort to offering freebies as a strategic tool to garner public support and win elections.

❖ **Short-Term Electoral Gains:** Freebies, such as welfare programs, subsidies, or direct benefits, appeal directly to voters' immediate needs, creating a favourable image for the party in power.

❖ **Building Voter Base:** This populist approach seeks to build a broad voter base by addressing pressing concerns.

❖ **Uncertain Long-Term Consequences:** Parties engage in this practice to gain a competitive edge, as voters are drawn to tangible, immediate benefits, even if the long-term economic feasibility or consequences are uncertain.

Do not you think freebies result in further dividing the society on the basis of caste, gender etc? Like recent free rides for women in buses in many states?

❖ **Caste and Gender Disparities:** While freebies, such as free rides for women on buses, may be intended to address gender disparities, they can inadvertently reinforce social divisions.
  ➢ Caste-based freebies, if implemented, may perpetuate existing inequalities rather than fostering true societal harmony.

❖ **Differential Access:** Targeted freebies create differential access to benefits based on specific criteria, potentially deepening divides.
  ➢ For instance, if free rides are limited to a particular gender, it may unintentionally accentuate gender differences rather than promoting equal opportunities for all.

❖ **Symbolic Gestures vs. Systemic Change:** While these initiatives may be symbolic gestures towards inclusivity, they might not address the root causes of social disparities.
  ➢ True societal transformation requires systemic changes that go beyond selective freebies to ensure comprehensive equality.

❖ **Public Perception and Backlash:** The implementation of selective freebies can lead to public perceptions of favouritism, sparking resentment among excluded groups and contributing to societal tension and division.

❖ **Need for Inclusive Policies:** To avoid exacerbating societal divisions, policymakers should focus on inclusive policies that uplift all sections of society, addressing root causes rather than providing temporary and selective benefits that may inadvertently deepen existing divides.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT - THE QUEST FOR A SOLUTION BETWEEN TWO STATES

Questionnaires

1. What is your take on the recent Israel-Hamas conflict?
2. Briefly tell me about Hamas. Can it be called a revolutionary group or terrorist organization?
3. Do you see any role of internal factors in Israel in igniting the conflict to this level?
4. Have you heard about the term two state solution?
5. A controversy popped up when the USA shifted its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. What is the religious and geopolitical significance of the place?
6. Do you think the present conflict will negatively impact the relations of the Arab world with Israel?
7. Elaborate on how India's take in the issue has evolved over the years?
8. What is the policy of de-hyphenation?
9. Jews are arguably the most persecuted community in the world. Do you think that has impacted the early solution of the Israel- Palestine conflict?
10. Do you see any light at the end of the tunnel? Is there any probable solution to this situation?

Context: Palestinian Islamist group Hamas launched the biggest attack on Israel in years on 7th October 2023. Hamas said the attack was driven by what it said were Israel's escalated attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank, Jerusalem and against Palestinians in Israeli prisons.
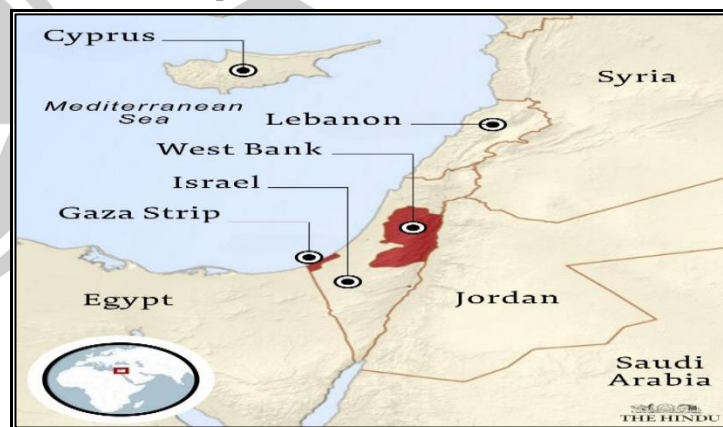
What is your take on the recent Israel-Hamas conflict?

❖ The Israel- Palestine conflict has a long history. Even though both sides share genuine concerns against each other, none can claim innocence on the issue.

❖ After its inception in 1948, Israel had been in constant conflict with Arab nations, specifically Egypt and Syria, most prominent being **Six Day War and Yom Kippur War or the October War.**

❖ The creation of Hamas which declined the existence of sovereign Israel in 1988 and its gaining electoral victory over Gaza in 2006 further complicated the matter since earlier organizations such as Palestine Liberation Organisation recognised Israeli sovereignty in 1993 during the **Oslo I accord**. Since 2014 Israel and Hamas have been in constant conflict, prominent being the skirmishes in 2018, 2021 and the ongoing war.

Who is responsible for the present conflict?

Hamas

❖ **Foundational Flaw:** The founding charter of Hamas mandates the killing of Jews, the destruction of the state of Israel, and advocates for the establishment of an Islamic state in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank

- ❖ **Reckless move:** It is explicit that Hamas does not carry any recognizable strength both in terms of economic and military power to face Israel. The move was uncalculated and only demeaned the Palestine cause and endangered the lives of innocent people.

Israel

- ❖ **Constant Military Raids:** Before the war Israel has been carrying out military raids in the occupied West Bank almost on a daily basis. **Al- Aqsa Mosque Raid:** In April, Israeli police raided Jerusalem's Al Aqsa Mosque compound, Islam's third holiest place of worship.
- ❖ **Israeli settlement in occupied territories:** More than 700,000 settlers – 10 per cent of Israel's nearly 7 million population – now live in 150 settlements and 128 outposts dotting the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Thus, it can be said that both sides are responsible for the ongoing war but terrorism and killing innocent people at such a large scale is not the solution. At the Same time Israel should have acted in a more mature manner, restricting the international humanitarian aid and alleged attack on the hospitals could have been avoided. War is fought between soldiers; **civilians should not be prosecuted for superficial wishes of a few irresponsible individuals.**

Briefly mention about Hamas? Can it be called a revolutionary group or terrorist organization?

- ❖ **Hamas:** It is an Islamist militant movement and one of the Palestinian territories' two major political parties. It governs more than two million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, but the group is best known for its armed resistance to Israel.
- ❖ **Terrorist or revolutionary?**
- ❖ **Internationally:** Dozens of countries have designated Hamas a terrorist organization, though some apply this label only to its military wing. Iran provides it with material and financial support, and Turkey reportedly harbors some of its top leaders.
- ❖ **Domestic Realm:** A June 2023 poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) showed that **one-third of Palestinians consider it the most damaging development for their people since the state of Israel's 1948 creation.**

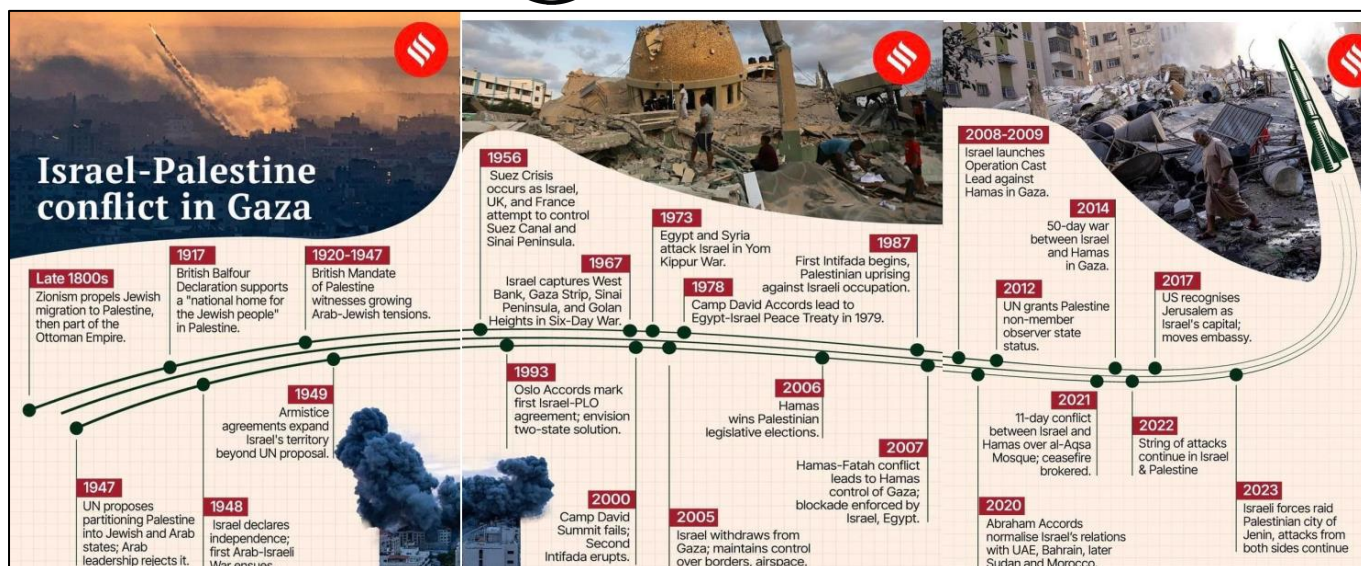## Do you see any role of internal factors in Israel in igniting the conflict to this level?

Some internal factors played a role in igniting the conflict:
- ❖ **Change In the separation of power:** Israel is currently ruled by a government which seeks to overhaul the structures of power so that the **elected government would be more powerful than other institutions.** The government has pushed for a legislative agenda which will l**ead to curtailing the powers of the judiciary which triggered massive protests.**
- ❖ **LGBTQ+ Protests:** The coalition government-endorsed discrimination (adoption rights) against LGBTQ+ people on religious grounds which further escalated the protests.

Do you think the present conflict will negatively impact the relations of the Arab world with Israel?

- ❖ **The Abraham Accords tried to normalize** the relationship between **Israel and UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan** marking a historic shift in diplomatic relations in the Middle East.
- ❖ These states, specifically UAE, are now challenged to maintain a delicate balance. UAE criticized Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on one hand along with showing concern for Israeli action in Gaza.
- ❖ The Hamas attack came when **Israel and Saudi Arabia were in an advanced stage of normalization talks.** If Saudi Arabia, who is the custodian of the two holiest mosques of Islam normalizes ties with Israel **it would not only reset West Asian geopolitical dynamics but also put Hamas at a further disadvantageous position. Saudi Arabia did not condemn the action of Hamas** which might impact the improving relations with Israel.

Elaborate on how India's take on the issue has evolved over the years?

Israel-Palestine conflict in Gaza

Late 1800s Zionism propels Jewish migration to Palestine, then part of the Ottoman Empire.

1917 British Balfour Declaration supports a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine.

1920-1947 British Mandate of Palestine witnesses growing Arab-Jewish tensions.

1947 UN proposes partitioning Palestine into Jewish and Arab states; Arab leadership rejects it.

1948 Israel declares independence; first Arab-Israeli War ensues.

1949 Armistice agreements expand Israel's territory beyond UN proposal.

1956 Suez Crisis occurs as Israel, UK, and France attempt to control Suez Canal and Sinai Peninsula.

1967 Israel captures West Bank, Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights in Six-Day War.

1973 Egypt and Syria attack Israel in Yom Kippur War.

1978 Camp David Accords lead to Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in 1979.

1987 First Intifada begins, Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation.

1993 Oslo Accords mark first Israel-PLO agreement; envision two-state solution.

2000 Camp David Summit fails; Second Intifada erupts.

2005 Israel withdraws from Gaza; maintains control over borders, airspace.

2006 Hamas wins Palestinian legislative elections.

2007 Hamas-Fatah conflict leads to Hamas control of Gaza; blockade enforced by Israel, Egypt.

2008-2009 Israel launches Operation Cast Lead against Hamas in Gaza.

2012 UN grants Palestine non-member observer state status.

2014 50-day war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

2017 US recognises Jerusalem as Israel's capital; moves embassy.

2020 Abraham Accords normalise Israel's relations with UAE, Bahrain, later Sudan and Morocco.

2021 11-day conflict between Israel and Hamas over al-Aqsa Mosque; ceasefire brokered.

2022 String of attacks continue in Israel & Palestine

2023 Israeli forces raid Palestinian city of Jenin, attacks from both sides continue

Have you Heard about the term Two state Solution?

The term two-state solution means **establishing two states for the people of two communities, that is, Israel for the Jewish people and Palestine for the Palestinian people.** The origin of the two-state solution was the **1978 Camp David Accords**, a peace accord inked by Egypt and Israel. Over the years Hamas has rejected the proposal.

What is the policy of De-Hyphenation?

In international politics, de-hyphenation means **dealing with two countries, having a hostile relationship between them, in an independent manner.** This would mean building a relationship with one, ignoring the complexities of its relations with the other. In the Israel- Palestine context **India's relationship with Israel would stand on its own merits, independent and separate from India's relationship with the Palestinians.**

What could it mean for India's economy and India's interest in West Asia?

❖ **Indian economy**: The biggest aspect to watch is the impact on oil prices. India meets 85% of its oil needs through imports. A **price spurt will leave the government little fiscal space for social welfare spending by inflating the import and fuel/fertilizer subsidy bills,** which will weaken the rupee by impacting the current account deficit. The overall impact can also hurt the GDP growth.

❖ **Geopolitical**: India right now is following the **policy of Strategic autonomy**. It expressed its solidarity with Israel after the attack, at the same time it reemphasized on the two-state solution and spoke in the interest of Palestine children and women.

Thus, in the short term the war does not seem to impact the Indian interest in West Asia.

Jews are arguably the most persecuted community in the world. Do you think that has impacted the early solution of the Israel- Palestine conflict?

❖ **Hostile Neighbours:** Israel has a massive geopolitical disadvantage due to it being surrounded by hostile nations, hostile cultures and having a terrorist group in the form of **Hamas control of the Gaza Strip** as well as the anti-Semitism that is predominant in the region. If Israel falls, its people will face another Holocaust and humanitarian disaster unprecedented in human history and added to all these issues.

❖ **Lack of Strategic Depth:** Israel **lacks strategic depth. It is a small country, and distances between the front lines or battle sectors** and the industrial core areas, capital cities, heartlands, and other key centers of population or military production are minimal. Thus, offense is its best defence.

❖ **The Israeli Insecurity:** A two-state solution, one where a Palestinian state will have its own Army and security will empower Palestinians to attack Israel even more effectively.

❖ **The Hamas Conundrum:** Hamas does **not accept Israel's right to exist in any shape**. It attacked Israel on its southern borders that will remain with Israel in any eventual peace deal, and killed and abducted innocent

civilians, not religious settlers occupying the West Bank. The attack was directed at the very existence of Israel as a Jewish state.

Do you see any light at the end of the tunnel? Is there any probable solution to this situation?

Probable solutions:

❖ **Revival of Fatah:** Hamas's indiscriminate violence against Israeli civilians is unacceptable **and is not going to help the Palestinian cause in any way.** There is a need for the revival of fatah in the matter since it has more international acceptance.

❖ **Need of People-to-People Conviction:** The central obstruction to a two-state solution has been the inability of the **Palestinians to convince Israeli voters that if given sovereignty in some part of the land, they would leave the Jews alone in the other.**

❖ **Israel's acknowledgement of Palestine concerns**: Israel has continued to **build settlements in the West Bank, raising security barriers and checkpoints, limiting Palestinian movements, and never hesitating to use force or collective punishment to keep organized Palestinians under check**. But the status quo cannot prevail without consequences.

➢ If Israel and other regional and international players want lasting peace and stability in the region, their focus must turn to finding a solution to the question of Palestine. The military operations without addressing the core issue would only be cosmetic interventions.

❖ **Need for Positive International Cooperation:** Instead of promoting factionalism, the international community, specifically the **West and USA along with alignment of the Global South, needs to formulate a positive solution along the Lines of the Oslo Accords and promote a two-state solution**. This will minimize the role of rough non-state actors such as Hamas and Hezbollah in the issue.

Additional Information:

❖ **Fatah**: Fatah in the late 1950s, it is a secular nationalist organization founded by Yasser Arafat and his fellow activists, including Mahmoud Abbas

❖ **Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO):** It was conceived in 1964, the organization is a coalition of Fatah and smaller Arab groups excluding Hamas.

❖ **Palestinian Authority (PA):** It was **founded in July 1994 by the Oslo Accords** as an interim body to govern parts of Gaza and the West Bank (except East Jerusalem) till an agreed solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.


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RUSSIA- UKRAINE WAR: THREAT TO SOVEREIGNTY AND PEACE

Questionnaire

1. *Why do you think Russia attacked Ukraine?*

2. *What are the reasons that Ukraine showed such strong resistance and managed to carry the war this long?*

3. *What are the global ramifications of the event?*

4. *What approach did India take and how do you see it?*

5. *Briefly tell about the impact of war on the economic and geopolitical interest of India.*

6. *Do you see any ethical implications for India buying oil from Russia?*

7. *Prime minister Modi during his meeting with President Putin asserted that the era of war is over. How much do you agree with the statement?*

8. *What are probable solutions to resolve the ongoing war?*

Context: The Russia- Ukraine war began in February 2022, and it's been more than one and half years but the war has reached a dead-end.

Source: Institute for the Study of War (21:00 GMT, 15 November)
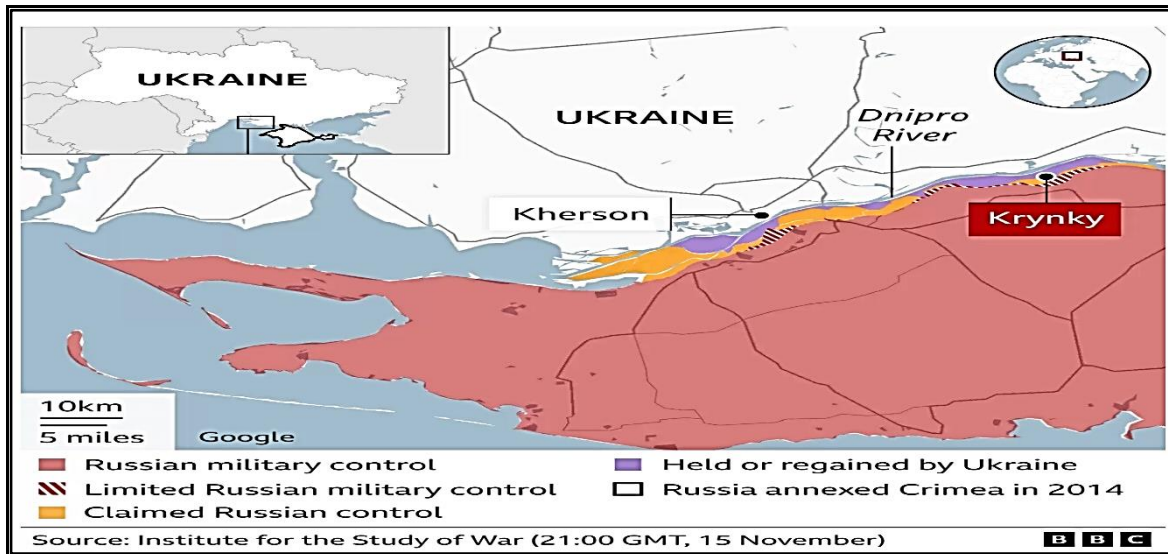
Why do you think Russia attacked Ukraine?

❖ **NATO Expansion:** Russia's 2022 invasion is seen as the culmination of the Kremlin's growing resentment toward NATO's post–Cold War expansion into the former Soviet sphere of influence. President Putin has alleged that the United States and NATO repeatedly violated pledges they made in the early 1990s to not expand the alliance into the former Soviet bloc.

❖ **Russian Interest in Ukraine:** Russia has deep cultural, economic, and political bonds with Ukraine, and in many ways, Ukraine is central to Russia's identity and vision for itself in the world.

❖ **Territorial Interest:** Russia had invaded Ukraine in 2014 when rebels backed by President Putin had seized large swathes of eastern Ukraine and have fought Ukraine's army since then. At that time, **Russia had annexed Crimea.**

❖ **Geography and resource angle:** After Russia, Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe too. It has major ports on the Black Sea and shares borders with four NATO countries. Europe depends on Russia for about one third of its natural gas – providing enormous leverage for Putin in any dispute with the West – and one of the main pipelines passes through Ukraine. Controlling this Ukrainian territory would enhance Russia's pipeline security.

❖ **Russian diaspora***:* Approximately eight million ethnic Russians were living in Ukraine as of 2001, according to a census taken that year, mostly in the south and east. Moscow claimed a duty to protect these people as a pretext for its actions in Crimea and the Donbas in 2014.

❖ **Superpower image**: Vladimir Lenin once quoted "For us, to lose Ukraine would be to lose our head."This has been the attitude of rulers in Moscow over the centuries, from the Tsar and the Bolsheviks to Putin.

What are the reasons that Ukraine showed such strong resistance and managed to carry the war this long?

❖ **Western Support:** The Western support has played a critical part in Ukraine's counter-offensive. The U.S. is Ukraine's biggest aid provider and among the EU countries, the U.K. and Germany top the list.

❖ **Local knowledge:** Russia, relying on Soviet-era familiarity with an area that Moscow controlled under the USSR, appears to have underestimated the Ukrainian forces' home-turf advantage. In **irregular warfare, weaker forces can maximize the advantages they have over their stronger opponents -- "advantages of terrain, local knowledge, and social connections.**

❖ **Strategic errors:** Military analysts say Russia made strategic errors in the early days of the invasion by sending in too few ground troops in the initial phase and failing to get ground and air forces working in tandem. It appears Moscow expected to achieve military success within days.

What are the global ramifications of the event?

- ❖ **Geopolitical:** It has challenged the post-Cold War order, which was trying to build a multipolar order through dialogue, cooperation and politico-economic ties among nations. The Ukraine war has thrown the world into chaos, uncertainty and unpredictability.
- ❖ **Economic:** It has eroded the trade frameworks and distorted supply chains. This has also led to levels of food and retail inflation. Additionally, the steep rise in oil prices has been affecting energy security worldwide. The sanctions against Russia have only further exacerbated the fragmentations. The world, especially the developing countries, face continuous oil price volatility, grain shortages, supply chain disruptions, and economic stagflation.

What approach did India take and how do you see it?

India has maintained a nuanced balance between not condemning Russia outright for the invasion and maintaining important relationships with the US and Europe.it has displayed strategic autonomy which has been the core policy aspect of its foreign policy.

Analysis of the stand

- ❖ **Realpolitik**: India has taken a **realpolitik** stand here, it has **refused to condemn Russia, maintained defense and trade ties**, as well as expressed its **uneasiness with the war** and called for respecting the territorial integrity of all nations.
- ❖ **International responsibility**: As the war drags on, this balancing act could be interpreted as inactiveness. India is the chair of the G-20 and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and will be pressed to do more to show global leadership and help end the war.
- ❖ **Neutrality should not become passiveness:** India's policy towards the conflict is rooted in its strategic neutrality. But neutrality does not mean that it should do nothing. It should empathize more vocally with the victim, raise the voice and interests of the Global South, and call for upholding international laws and sovereignty of all states, while at the same time pushing for a pragmatic and permanent solution to the conflict.

Briefly tell about the impact of war on the economic and geopolitical interests of India.

- ❖ **Geopolitical Interests:**
  - ➢ **Impact on relation with the USA:** The USA has expressed its displeasure over the purchase of Russian oil and development of innovative financial arrangements for trade. As for import of Russian oil, which was important for India's energy security, it was pointed out that Western Europe had imported more Russian oil "one afternoon" than what India imported in a whole month.
  - ➢ **Weak Russia is counterproductive:** Delhi is facing up to the inevitable economic decline of Russia. India needs Russia to remain an autonomous power in the Eurasian landmass, one that will **not accept Chinese geopolitical hegemony.** An economically collapsed Russia as a Chinese satellite is the last thing Delhi would want.
- ❖ **Economic Interests:**
  - ➢ **Domestic equity markets:** After Russia announced its military operations in Ukraine, BSE benchmark Sensex crashed 2,700 points, while NSE Nifty50 plunged 815 points. Sensex on February 24, 2022, witnessed its worst fall since March 2020, when the Covid pandemic broke out, while it was the index's fourth-worst fall ever.
  - ➢ **India's inflation and RBI's rate hike:** The Russia-Ukraine war has crippled the global supply chain, triggered a global food shortage and subsequently resulted in high inflation rates in countries. In India, inflation **touched a peak of 7.8 per cent in April 2022**. The average inflation during May-November 2022 period remained at 6.8 percent.

Do you see any ethical implications for India buying oil from Russia?

Amid West sanctions, Russia has been selling crude oil at a discounted price to Asian nations, and India is one of them. Indian refiners, who avoided Russian oil before due to costly logistics, have been now eagerly buying discounted crude from Moscow.

The debate got ignited when Ukraine's foreign minister called it "**morally inappropriate**" and further asserted that India is buying **Ukrainian blood** in the form of Russia Oil.

In ethical aspects, India should not be blamed for buying oil since conception of morality cannot be different for West and India. It is widely known and repeatedly argued by the Indian foreign minister that India buys less oil from Russia in a month than Europe does in an afternoon. The country has condemned the war and also sent humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

What are probable solutions to resolve the ongoing war?

Probable Solutions

- ❖ For any peace plan to succeed, two complex issues should be addressed — **Ukraine's territories and Russia's security concerns.**
- ❖ Right now, Russia controls swathes of Ukraine's land and **NATO keeps arming Kyiv, sharpening the existing contradictions.**
- ❖ Ukraine, given its dependence on the West, would require clearance from western capitals for any final settlement, which also means that for a lasting solution,
- ❖ **Washington and Moscow** should reach some kind of understanding.

Prime Minister Modi during his meeting with President Putin asserted that the era of war is over. How much do you agree with the statement?

It is true that the world and **conception of sovereignty are much safer now than it was till the end of the 20th century.** But it has seen dents in recent times in the form of the **Russian invasion of Ukraine and Hamas's attack on Israel.**

The surprising aspect here is that the international institutions that were formed after the end of World War 2 to protect the world from the scourge of war have not reacted in any strong manner, it took no major action and allowed the world to get divided into pieces instead of assuring peace through concrete actions.

Thus, **the statement has idealistic undertones as India has always promoted non-violence and peace instead of war. We as a state promote the principle of Yogakshema.** Prime minister reasserted the wisdom of Arthasastra with his statement that a state's power is more by the wisdom of political leadership and the productivity and happiness of the people, rather than military might.

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BRICS EXPANSION: A NEW ERA OF GLOBAL COOPERATION?

Questionnaire

1. *Briefly elaborate on the BRICS and the expansion process it recently undertook.*
2. *Critically analyze the journey of the organisation till now.*
3. *What does this inclusion mean to each of the new members?*
4. *Write the implication of the expansion India.*
5. *BRICS is already called motley cow by experts. Will this expansion further enhance the perception?*
6. *Do you think BRICS can replace the western-dominated global economic institutions?*

Context: The BRICS bloc of developing nations agreed to admit Saudi Arabia, Iran, Ethiopia, Egypt, Argentina and the United Arab Emirates in a move aimed at accelerating its push to reshuffle a world order it sees as outdated.

Briefly elaborate on the BRICS and the expansion process it recently undertook.

- ❖ **BRICS**: Although originally conceptualized in 2001 by Jim O'Neill, then chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management Company, the creation of BRICS can be traced to a meeting of Foreign Ministers of Brazil, Russia, India, and China in 2006.
- ❖ The venture gained traction through more periodic convenings beginning in 2009, resulting in the group's enlargement with the induction of South Africa in 2010, consequently converting BRIC into BRICS.
- ❖ **Expansion:** The 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, culminated with the group's member count having increased from five to eleven.
- ❖ The six new members include four nations from the Gulf and West Asia—Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Ethiopia and Argentina, from Africa and South America respectively, were also admitted.

Critically Analyze the Journey of the Organisation till now?

Success:
- ❖ **Significant Voice on Global Matters:** The BRICS has positioned itself decisively on numerous issues such as climate action targets, United Nations reform, and unilateral financial sanctions imposed by the West against Iran, Russia, and Venezuela.
- ❖ **Setting up the New Development Bank (NDB):** It was established in 2015 and has funded roughly 100 programmes till date, executing a **Contingent Reserve Arrangement,** and initiating different institutional architectures.

Underwhelming aspects:

The BRICS has not collectively accomplished anything noteworthy despite its yearly meetings.

Economic aspects:
- ❖ **Underperforming New Development Bank:** The **NDB** has sanctioned only US$ 33 billion worth of programmes since its creation. In contrast, the World Bank commits more than three times that amount in a single year. This is unsurprising since the BRICS is not a very strong bloc economically. It attempts to integrate an existing economic behemoth in China with an emerging power in India and three much smaller economies reliant on commodity exports.
- ❖ **Currency:** It is true that many developing nations would like to decouple their economies from the US dollar due to the volatility caused in their economies by the Federal Reserve's mood swings, they also desire alternate havens to park their foreign exchange assets after Russia's exclusion from the **SWIFT payments system.** But neither China nor India possesses a fully convertible currency, limiting the appeal of the RMB and the INR respectively.

Geo-Political
- ❖ **Sour Sino- India relations**: The geopolitical tension between China and India, which has manifested in periodic border flare-ups, is one cause for BRICS's underperformance. New Delhi views China as its most potent rival.
- ❖ **Anti-West Stand-** China is trying to propose **BRICS PLUS** as an anti-West Bloc but this might lead to intra-divisions with the group since this stand will make the likes of Saudi Arabia and India uncomfortable.

What does this Inclusion mean to each of the new members?

- ❖ **Iran**: For Iran, BRICS membership provides an excellent opportunity to obtain a conducive forum for expressing itself and defending its domestic maneuvers.
- ❖ **Saudi Arabia:** The accession of Saudi Arabia to the BRICS will accelerate the economic diversification and development of the country and reduce its dependence on Western blocs.
- ❖ **Argentina:** BRICS membership **provides cover for the adverse situation domestically.** Recent economic chaos has manifested in the ransacking and looting of supermarkets and retail outlets in Buenos Aires. With the nation in turmoil, the opportunity to partake in a global bloc including affluent countries could not be refused.
- ❖ **Egypt**: Egypt's accession to the BRICS will boost investment, provide new export opportunities, and increase foreign flows, as well as deepen economic cooperation and trade exchange between Egypt and the member states.

❖ **Ethiopia**: It will present an opportunity for the nation to shape its future in various spheres, including economic growth, infrastructure development, and political influence.

❖ **UAE**: The UAE considers becoming a member of the BRICS group a significant opportunity and a pivotal avenue to advance its interests. These interests **include boosting trade, investments, access to emerging markets, and improving its flexibility in building more international partnerships.**

Write the implication of the expansion India

Positive Implication: For India, the expanded BRICS has the potential to serve as a forum for introducing a fresh and fairer outlook on global collaboration and addressing challenges.

❖ **Boost to India as Voice of Global South:** India intends to strategically position itself as the voice of the Global South and the new growth engine of the world. The enlargement of the BRICS from a group of five nations to eleven could lead to increased influence for both India and the collective body.

❖ **Energy Diplomacy**: The expanded coalition encompasses a higher proportion of energy-producing countries which can possibly provide trade concession to India.

❖ **UN Reforms:** The member countries are likely to leverage the expansion to advocate for reforms within the United Nations and other global institutions.

Areas of concern:

❖ **Different perspective regarding aims of the organization:** While China wants BRICS to be an anti-western group, the Indian view is that it is a "non-western" group and should stay that way.

❖ **Threat of Chinese hegemony:** Among the new members, while India looks at all of them as partnerships worth developing, concerns have been raised that the group could become more pro-China and sideline New Delhi's voice and interests. **For example,** China, today, is an important partner of the Ayatollah-led Iran. Beijing has rejuvenated the Iranian regime and set up lines of credit using which the latter makes regular payments in terms of oil barrels.

BRICS is already called Motley Cow by experts. Will this expansion further enhance the perception?

Why is it called Motley cow?

The composition of the BRICS is indicative of the presence of members that have differences with one or more other members of this organization.

Before expansion, the India-China dispute was the prominent friction point in the BRICS.

After expansion, this phenomenon might exacerbate:

❖ Bilateral conflicts among new members: Among the new members, there is friction between Egypt and Ethiopia, Iran and the UAE, and Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

➢ **Ethiopia- Egypt**: The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) built by Ethiopia on the Nile River has been a cause of conflict between Ethiopia and Egypt.

➢ **Iran-UAE:** Iran and the UAE have been engaged in a territorial dispute since 1971. The UAE lays claim over three islands – Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb – which are under Iran's control. The two West Asian neighbours did restore diplomatic relations in August 2022 and are working towards upgrading their ties. However, the territorial dispute remains an irritant.

➢ **Saudi Arabia- UAE:** The two Gulf States have divergent interests in Yemen. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is maintaining distance from the UAE President, Saudi Arabia has also reportedly threatened the UAE with economic blockade.

➢ **Saudi Arabia- Iran:** The traditional rivals recently restored their diplomatic ties after China's efforts. It remains to be seen how long this will stay.

Do you think BRICS can replace the Western-dominated Global Economic Institutions?

❖ The five BRICS nations now have a **combined gross domestic product (GDP) larger than that of the G7** in purchasing power parity terms. In nominal terms, the BRICS countries are responsible for 26 percent of the global GDP. Despite this, **they get only 15 percent of the voting power at the International Monetary Fund (IMF).**

❖ **BRICS has its own National Development Bank and Contingency reserve mechanism. But much work has not been done in utilizing it to counter global economic institutions.**

❖ The clout of BRICS nations is likely to grow but the bloc is **much more likely to offer piecemeal economic and diplomatic alternatives to the US-led global order than to dramatically replace** it.

BRICS has a huge potential but there is need to have more engagement and focus on engaging with like minded countries, they must try to walk the talk when it comes to UN reforms to ensure that Global economic institutions reflect the balance between north and south.

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THE VIEW FROM INDIA - WHY THE G-20 MATTERS FOR INDIA

Questionnaire

1. *What is G-20? How much population does it represent?*
2. *How is the president chosen? How can the presidency of G-20 help in the economic development of India?*
3. *Why is the G-20 presidency significant to India?*
4. *How is it different from other groups?*
5. *What are the focus areas? Do countries have any commitments as part of G-20?*
6. *What is G-20 sherpa?*
7. *Why is the G-20 discussing war when it is not its mandate?*
8. *What was the motto of the G-20 summit held in India? How is India living up to the spirit of the motto of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam? (a brief about the logo of G-20, logo, design, and colour)*
9. *Does the formation of G-20, and G7 undermine the United Nations? Do these groupings harm the interests of weak countries?*
10. *Outcomes of recently held G-20 in India.*
11. *What is the connection between SDGS and G-20?*
12. *Significance of African union inclusion in G-20?*
13. *Is G-20 just a talk shop, or does it play a useful role?*
14. *Was India's G-20 joint statement a diplomatic success?*

Context: India's first **G-20 summit was held in Delhi from 9 – 10 September, 2023** and the **Delhi declaration** was announced at the end of the leadership summit. It univocally voiced a consensus on the common goal for the future and the challenges that they face. The document includes the pledge made by G-20 leaders, gives recommendations and highlights the key areas that were discussed throughout the year-long G-20 meetings.

What is G-20? How much population does it represent? Elaborate in detail.

❖ **Background of G-20:**

➤ The G-20 was established **in 1999** as a platform for finance ministers and central bank governors from the main developed and emerging economies to discuss global financial concerns, in the **wake of the Asian financial crisis.**

➤ It developed into the leaders' summit during the **2008 global financial crisis,** a venue for presidents and prime ministers to meet for two days in an attempt to resolve global economic issues.

➤ The G-20 is a forum made up of the **twenty biggest economies** in the world, and it convenes on a regular basis to talk about the most important problems confronting the world economy.

❖ G-20 now covers nearly **80 percent of the world's population, has 97 out of the UN's 193 countries, 88 per cent of GDP and 79 percent of trade share.**

❖ During the New Delhi Summit of 2023, **the African Union** was made a permanent member of G-20.

How is the president chosen? How can the presidency of G-20 help in the economic development of India?

The Presidency of the G-20 grouping **rotates among five groups of member countries.** Each country from a group becomes eligible for the Presidency when it is the turn of the group. The eligible countries negotiate and determine the group's Presidency. The G-20 Presidency organizes the summit and sets the annual agenda.

What is G-20 sherpa?

A G-20 Sherpa is a high-level official appointed by a G-20 leader to represent them in preparing and coordinating activities for G-20 summits. Sherpas play a key role in negotiating and reaching consensus on issues, connecting with leaders, coordinating with working groups, and ensuring follow-up on summit commitments. They act as a crucial link between leaders and the G-20 process and work to align national priorities with the broader agenda of the forum. The G-20 customarily issues a leaders' statement or communiqué following their summit as a matter of course. This statement is prepared by representatives of the finance track and sherpas from several countries.

Why is the G-20 presidency significant to India? How can the presidency of G-20 help in the economic development of India?

India's G-20 presidency offered it the chance to showcase its achievements to the globe and attract international enterprises to India. This includes building the **right environment** for attracting foreign direct investment, engaging in deeper and freer trade and global value chain integration, improving infrastructure (including digital) and a series of reforms in the banking and rapidly growing renewable energy sectors.

Significance for India:

❖ **Financial Stability:** The G-20 plays a crucial role in addressing financial issues and ensuring global financial stability. India, by participating in G-20 discussions, can contribute to the formulation of policies that promote stability in financial markets and prevent or mitigate financial crises.

- ❖ **Policy Coordination on Global Challenges:** The G-20 addresses a range of global challenges, including climate change, sustainable development, and public health. India, as a member, can participate in discussions and contribute to shaping policies that address these challenges, allowing it to have a voice in global decision-making.
- ❖ **Becoming the voice of the Global South:** By organizing the gathering of the Global South nations concurrently with the G-20 summits and advocating for the inclusion of the African Union (AU), India emerged as the voice of the formerly marginalized Global South.
- ❖ **India's expanding economic influence:** Given that India's economy is the fastest-growing in the world, this can help India in fortifying its economic relations with other G-20 members.

What was the outcome of the G-20 Summit held in India?

The major outcomes of G-20 summit held in India are as follows:
- ❖ **The African Union** became a permanent member of the G-20.
- ❖ To encourage the production and use of sustainable biofuels and to establish pertinent certification and standards, the **Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA)** was established.
- ❖ All agreed upon the **New Delhi Leaders Declaration.**
- ❖ A consortium of nations reached a consensus to construct the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor,** a rail and sea route that would connect India to the Middle East and Europe. India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Israel, and the European Union are the members of the group.

What will be the impact of adding African Union to G-20

The African Union is made up of 55 Member States representing all the countries on the African continent. The AU's G-20 participation presents a chance to transform international investment, commerce, and finance while also giving the Global South a stronger voice.

It makes it possible for African viewpoints and interests to be acknowledged inside the G-20. It will present the picture of the present multipolar world. These Member States are divided into five geographic regions.

AU aims to achieve greater unity, cohesion and solidarity among the African countries and African nations.The African Union is a key driving force for the continent's political and economic development, its primary purpose being African integration and increased cooperation among African countries, with a view to achieving peace, security, and prosperity for all the people of the continent.

How is G-20 different from other groupings?

Informal Nature	Flexibility	Representation
❖ The G-20 is an informal forum without a permanent secretariat or headquarters. ❖ It relies on annual summits and working group meetings to facilitate discussions and cooperation among its members.	❖ The G-20 is known for its flexibility and ability to address emerging issues quickly. ❖ It can adapt its agenda to respond to the changing global economic landscape.	❖ The G-20 represents a mix of developed and developing economies. ❖ providing a platform for a diverse range of voices in international economic discussions.

Why is the G-20 discussing war when it is not its mandate?

While the G-20 primarily focuses on economic issues, discussions on war or geopolitical tensions may occur because these conflicts can have significant economic consequences. Leaders within the G-20 recognize that global economic stability is closely linked to geopolitical stability.

Wars and conflicts can disrupt trade, increase financial market volatility, and pose risks to the overall economic outlook.

Additionally, the forum may address humanitarian concerns arising from conflicts, recognizing the interconnected nature of economic and humanitarian challenges. In essence, while not the primary mandate, the G-20 acknowledges

the broader impact of geopolitical events on the global economy and engages in discussions that reflect this interconnected reality.

What was the motto of the G-20 Summit held in India?

The motto of India's G-20 Presidency - "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or **"One Earth · One Family · One Future"** - is drawn from the ancient Sanskrit text of the **Maha Upanishad.** Essentially, the motto affirms the value of all life – human, animal, plant, and microorganisms – and their interconnectedness on the planet Earth and in the wider universe.

India strives to embody the spirit of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (the world is one family) through diplomatic relations, cultural inclusivity, humanitarian aid, global health initiatives, peacekeeping missions, and development cooperation. The nation actively engages with the global community, reflecting a commitment to unity, diversity, and shared well-being on a global scale.

Does the formation of G-20, and G7 undermine the United Nations? Do these groupings harm the interests of weak countries?

The formation of groups like the G-20 and G7 does not inherently undermine the United Nations (UN). These groups serve as complementary forums with specific focuses, primarily on economic and financial issues, while the UN has a broader mandate covering peace, security, development, and humanitarian affairs. Collaboration often occurs between the UN and these groups, which enhances the overall effectiveness of international efforts to address global challenges.

International groupings like the G-20 and G7 can have mixed effects on weaker or smaller countries. Concerns include potential domination of decision-making by major economies, limited representation for smaller nations, and challenges in shaping global economic policies.

Economic decisions within these forums can impact weaker countries, raising questions about fairness and inclusivity. However, there are also opportunities for engagement, development assistance, and collaborative efforts to address global challenges. The effectiveness of these forums in promoting inclusivity depends on the commitment of member countries to consider the interests of all nations, regardless of their economic strength.

Is G-20 just a talk shop, or does it play a useful role?

It is easy to find fault with the G-20, Initially hailed as a significant realignment in global governance in which the emerging world would at last be heard, it has often looked more like a talking shop. One criticism often made of the G-20 is that it **lacks teeth** — it has no secretariat and no way to implement its decisions, relying instead on its members to act individually or in cooperation. While this may leave it looking like a talking shop.

It plays a significant role in diplomacy and exchange of words. In the **Bali summit of G-20,** it provided an opportunity to leaders like US and China to hold talks, similarly India and China also had brief discussion over the border issue. It provides opportunities for discussing global issues. This way of **talking shop is better than exchanging cold vibes.**

Was India's G-20 joint communique a diplomatic success?

When the G-20 summit wrapped up on 10 September, India was able to notch a diplomatic victory as the world leaders gathered in **New Delhi reached consensus on a joint declaration,** despite previous concerns over addressing Russia's war in Ukraine.

Indian diplomats worked to find common ground on the wording regarding Ukraine, with Russia and China especially raising several objections. The **final joint declaration** touched on the war, but avoided specifically condemning Russia and categorized the 'human suffering and negative added impacts' of the war in an economic context, 'with regard to global food and energy security, supply chains, macro-financial stability, inflation and growth'. The declaration called on all states to **'uphold principles of international law including territorial integrity'.**

It also 'welcomed relevant and constructive initiatives' to 'support a durable peace' in Ukraine. India succeeded in several ways. It has been able to project its diplomatic abilities at the global level. However, the success can only be analyzed in the long term.

FORMER NAVY PERSONNEL SENTENCED TO DEATH IN QATAR

Questionnaire:

1. *What is the case about?*
2. *What was India's reaction?*
3. *What are the diplomatic implications of this case?*
4. *What is view international court of Justice (ICJ) on such incidences?*
5. *What are the options available for India to prevent these navy personnel?*
6. *What are some similar incidents that have occurred in the past?*
7. *Why does Qatar matter to India?*
8. *What are the challenges in India-Qatar relations?*
9. *What is the effect of this incident on India's look west policy?*
10. *What measures India can take to prevent such incidents in future?*

Context: Recently, eight former Navy personnel were working at the now defunct Al Dahra Global Technologies and Consultancy Services, a defence services provider company.

Although official charges were not made public by the Qatari authorities, according to media sources, they were arrested on undeclared charges of espionage. They were working in their private capacity with Al Dahara to oversee the induction of small Italian stealth missiles.

Case History

In August 2022, eight Indian nationals – all retired Indian Navy personnel – were arrested by Qatari intelligence

Capt **Navtej Singh Gill**, Capt **Birendra Kumar Verma**, Capt **Saurabh Vasisht**, Cdr **Amit Nagpal**, Cdr **Purnendu Tiwari**, Cdr **Sugunakar Pakala**, Cdr **Sanjeev Gupta**, Sailor **Ragesh** were working for Al Dahra company

Before taking up jobs at Al Dahra, all had retired from Indian Navy several years ago

Initially, they were kept in solitary confinement without clear charges

They were charged with spying in Qatar on behalf of Israel

Al Dahra was shut down after the arrests

Reports said the personnel were working on a project to develop small, stealth submarines for the Qatar Navy

India had secured consular access to the accused and provided legal assistance

Trial started in March this year

Qatari court of first instance has pronounced them guilty and awarded death sentence

India is '**deeply shocked**' at the verdict and 'exploring legal options'

What was India's Reaction?

India has conveyed **profound shock and concern** regarding the imposition of death sentences on its citizens and is actively **exploring all available legal avenues** to secure their release. **The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** has emphasized the significant importance attached to this case, reaffirming **its commitment to extending consular and legal assistance** to the individuals currently in detention.

What are the Diplomatic Implications of this Case?

❖ **Critical Impact on Economic and Diplomatic Ties:** The death sentence verdict raises concerns about the potential strain on the historically robust India-Qatar relations, which have been critical for economic and diplomatic cooperation. This case represents the first major crisis in the otherwise stable India-Qatar relationship, which has witnessed high-level engagements, including a visit by the **Indian Prime Minister to Doha in 2016 and meetings with the Emir of Qatar.**

- **Qatar's Crucial Role in India's Energy Security:** Qatar, a major supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to India, plays a crucial role in India's energy security, accounting for a significant portion of its LNG imports.
  - ✓ The outcome of this crisis may have implications for this vital aspect of the bilateral relationship.
- ❖ **Pressure on India to Act:** With a substantial Indian migrant population exceeding seven lakh in Qatar, there is mounting pressure on India to take decisive actions at the highest levels to secure the release of the detainees. Remittances from the Indian community to India stand at a substantial $750 million annually, underscoring the economic impact and significance of the issues surrounding the detainees.

What is View International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Such Incidences?

- ❖ The **International Court of Justice** (ICJ) does not have a specific stance on death sentences imposed by one country on the citizens of another country. The ICJ primarily **deals with legal disputes between states** and provides advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by the **United Nations General Assembly, the Security Council**, or other specialized agencies.
- ❖ Issues related to the imposition of death sentences on foreign nationals are generally handled through diplomatic channels and bilateral or multilateral agreements between the concerned countries.

What are the Options available for India to Save these Navy Personnels?

Diplomatic Strategies:

- ❖ **Direct Diplomatic Negotiations:** India can initiate direct diplomatic negotiations with the Qatari government to seek a resolution to the case. Utilizing diplomatic channels, the Indian government can exert pressure to discourage the imposition of the death penalty.
- ❖ **Appeal and Prisoner Transfer Agreement:** Exploring legal avenues, India may consider filing an appeal against the verdict. Additionally, the **2015 agreement** between India and Qatar for the transfer of convicted prisoners could be invoked to facilitate the completion of sentences in their home country.
- ❖ **International Advocacy by NGOs and Civil Society:** can raise the issue globally, drawing attention to potential human rights violations. Advocacy at the United Nations level can amplify pressure on Qatar.

Legal Recourse:

- ❖ **Appeals within Qatari Judicial System:** The individuals sentenced to death can initiate appeals within the Qatari legal system.
- ❖ **Legal Representation and Vigorous Appeal:** India can provide legal representation to the detainees, ensuring that their right to appeal is pursued vigorously within Qatar's legal framework.
- ❖ **Invocation of International Court of Justice (ICJ):** If due procedures are not followed or an appeal process is absent, India has the option to invoke the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). As a global court, the ICJ handles legal disputes between states and can ensure a fair examination of the case.

What are Some Similar Incidents that have Occurred in the Past?

Similar Incidents Involving Indian Nationals:

1. **Kulbhushan Jadhav's Case:** Sentenced to death in Pakistan in 2017 on charges of espionage and sabotage. India sought intervention from the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The ICJ ordered Pakistan to review Jadhav's trial and conviction, emphasizing the need for a fair process. Consular access was also granted to India.
2. **Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman's Case:** His aircraft was shot down by Pakistani fighter jets, leading to his capture on the Pakistani side of the Line of Control. Release was secured following intense back-channel communications between India and Pakistan. Diplomatic efforts contributed to de-escalation and the safe return of Wing Commander Varthaman.

Why does Qatar matter to India?

❖ **Economic Cooperation:** In 2021, India was one of Qatar's top three import sources and fourth largest export destinations.

❖ **India's Energy Security:** Qatar is a crucial supplier of **liquefied natural gas (LNG)** to India which makes up almost 50% of overall Indian imports (by value) from Qatar.

❖ **Defence Collaboration:** India offers training slots in its defence institutions Qatar, also India participates in Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference **(DIMDEX)** in Qatar.

❖ **People-to-People Ties:** There are over 800,000 Indian nationals residing in Qatar comprising the largest expatriate community in Qatar.

❖ **Investment Opportunities:** 50 wholly owned Indian companies are located in Qatar in these diverse fields and the 15,000 jointly owned companies are adding momentum to the India-Qatar economic partnership.

❖ **Covid cooperation:** Qatar sent Covid medical relief material to India for combating the second wave of Covid-19, Qatar Petroleum filled **Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO)** in cryogenic tankers which were shipped through various Indian Naval Ships to India.

What are the Challenges in India-Qatar Relations?

❖ **Cultural and Religious Challenges in India Qatar Relations:** Ensuring cultural integration, understanding, and addressing any challenges faced by the Indian community in Qatar or by the two countries can be challenging tasks.

❖ **For example,** Qatar demanded a public apology with reference to the controversy involving derogatory remarks about the Prophet on a TV show in India.

❖ **Labor and Migrant Workers' Issues:** While Qatar has made progress in labour reform, there have been concerns about the welfare of Indian migrant workers, including issues related to working conditions, wages, and access to legal protection.

❖ **Geopolitical Dynamics in the Region:** India's relations with other nations in the Middle East, which might not always align with **Qatar's alliances,** could potentially strain bilateral ties. For instance, in 2017, **Saudi Arabia-led bloc's** closure of sea, land and air borders with Qatar complicated India's relations with other Gulf Arab countries.

❖ India raised the issue of Indian fugitive **Zakir Naik** wanted by Indian authorities since 2016 for alleged money laundering and inciting extremism through hate speeches, traveling to Qatar for the FIFA World Cup.

What is the Effect of this Incident on India's Look West Policy?

The potential impact on India's Look West Policy would depend on several factors:

❖ **Diplomatic Relations:** The incident could strain diplomatic relations between India and Qatar, influencing the overall direction of India's Look West Policy.

❖ **Security and Defence Cooperation:** If military personnel are involved, it could impact security and defense cooperation agreements between India and Qatar, altering the strategic considerations within the Look West Policy.

❖ **Economic Ties:** Economic ties, especially in sectors like energy, trade, and investments, may be affected based on the severity of the incident, impacting the economic dimension of India's Look West Policy.

❖ **Global Perception:** How the international community perceives India's response and the incident itself could shape India's standing in the region and affect its Look West Policy.

❖ **Multilateral Engagement:** India's response might involve engaging with regional or international organizations and forums to seek support or intervention, influencing the multilateral dimension of its Look West Policy.

❖ **Crisis Management:** The incident would necessitate crisis management strategies, requiring India to navigate the situation carefully, potentially influencing the overall direction of its Look West Policy.

What Measures India can Take to Prevent Such Incidents in the Future?

- ❖ **Diplomatic Engagement:** Strengthen diplomatic ties and communication channels with other countries to address issues related to Indian citizens facing legal challenges abroad. Consular access and assistance should be actively pursued to ensure that Indian nationals facing legal issues receive appropriate support.
- ❖ **Bilateral Agreements:** Negotiate and establish bilateral agreements with countries to protect the rights and welfare of Indian citizens, especially in the context of legal proceedings, ensuring fair trials, and preventing arbitrary use of the death penalty.
- ❖ **Promotion of Legal Awareness:** Conduct awareness campaigns to educate Indian citizens about the legal systems of other countries, emphasizing adherence to local laws and regulations.
- ❖ **Consular Assistance:** Strengthen consular services to provide timely and effective assistance to Indian citizens facing legal challenges, including those who may be at risk of receiving death sentences.
- ❖ **Monitoring Human Rights:** Engage in international forums and organizations that focus on human rights to advocate for fair and just treatment of individuals, including advocating against the imposition of the death penalty.
- ❖ **Legal Cooperation:** Foster legal cooperation between India and other countries to address concerns related to the legal treatment of Indian citizens, emphasizing the principles of due process and fair trials.
- ❖ **International Advocacy:** Actively participate in international efforts to abolish the death penalty, contributing to global discussions and initiatives aimed at promoting human rights and the rule of law.
- ❖ **Crisis Response Plans:** Develop and implement crisis response plans to address urgent situations where Indian citizens face legal jeopardy, including coordination with relevant government agencies, legal experts, and international organizations.

> *Note:*
>
> Qatar court accepted India's appeal to study the death sentence handed down to eight-ex Indian Navy personnels it had arrested last year.

INDO PACIFIC REGION: A COMPLEX WEB OF INTERDEPENDENCIES

Questionnaire:

1. *What is the Indo pacific region?*
2. *Why did its name change from Asia pacific to Indo Pacific?*
3. *What is the significance of it in geopolitics?*
4. *What are the strategic challenges in the Indo-Pacific region?*
5. *How has the geopolitical landscape of the Indo-Pacific changed in recent years?*
6. *What are the roles of major groupings in the Indo pacific region?*
7. *What are the challenges for India in the Indo Pacific region?*
8. *What initiatives has India taken to shape the Indo pacific region?*
9. *How does India tackle both the United States and China in the Indo-pacific?*
10. *What is China's military strategy in the Indo-pacific region?*
11. *What steps can be taken to foster stability and prevent conflicts?*

> 12. *With the rise of China in the Indo-Pacific region, do you think that India can maintain its strategic autonomy?*

Context: Recently, the 13th Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs' Conference (IPACC), was held alongside the 47th Indo-Pacific Armies Management Seminar and the Senior Enlisted Leaders Forum in New Delhi.

What is the Indo Pacific Region?

The term **"Indo Pacific region"** gained prominence recently and refers to a geopolitical concept that **surrounds a vast maritime area in the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean.**
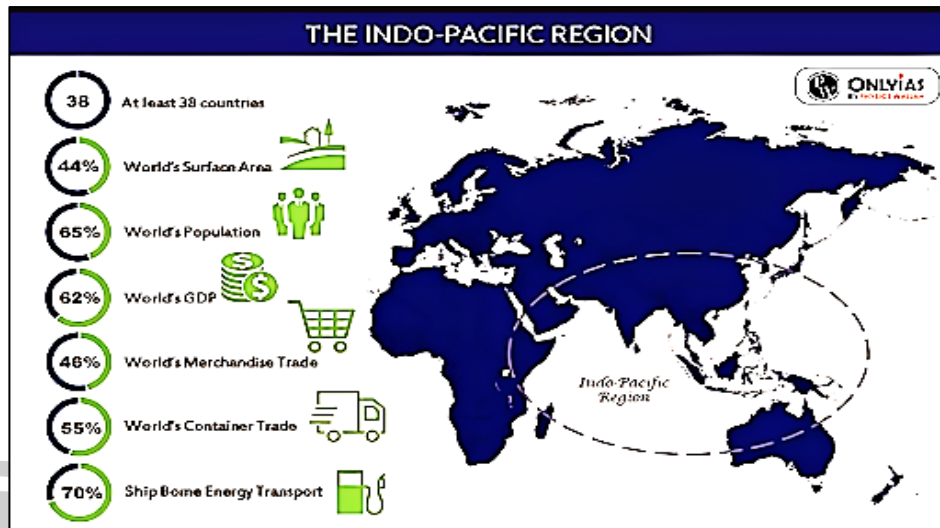
Geographical Extent: It spans from the **eastern coast of Africa** to the **western coast of the Americas**.

Strategic Significance: It is strategically significant **due to its major trade route, important sea lanes, and critical maritime chokepoints** it contains.

The USA sees the Indo Pacific region as **a free and open region based on rule-based order.**

2. Why did its Name Change from Asia Pacific to Indo pacific?

Transition from **"Asia-Pacific" to "Indo-Pacific"** signifies geopolitical and strategic considerations. "Indo-Pacific" is more inclusive, extending beyond traditional Asia-Pacific boundaries, emphasizing Indian and Pacific Ocean interconnectedness. Acknowledges the Indian Ocean's growing importance with vital sea lanes, resources, and geopolitical impact on global affairs. Inclusion o**f "Indo"** recognizes India as a key player, reflecting its increasing influence and strategic significance alongside Pacific powers.

What is the Significance of it in Geopolitics?

❖ **Strategic Maritime Location:** Positioned at major shipping crossroads, serving as a crucial maritime gateway between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

❖ **Economic Powerhouses:** Home to economic giants like India, China, Japan, and Southeast Asian nations, contributing significantly to the global economy.

❖ **Resource Rich:** Abundant in natural resources, including fisheries and hydrocarbons, attracting economic interest.

❖ **Geopolitical Significance:** Witness to complex global power dynamics, with nations vying for influence, highlighting its importance for global security and balance of power.

❖ **Multilateral Forums**: Platform for forums like the Quad and ASEAN to address regional challenges and promote cooperation.

What are the Strategic Challenges in the Indo-Pacific Region?

❖ **Spratly Islands:** Territorial dispute involving China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei in the South China Sea.

❖ **Paracel Islands:** China and Vietnam compete for sovereignty over the Paracel Islands.

- ❖ **Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands:** Japan controls the Senkaku Islands, contested by China (PRC and ROC in Taiwan).
- ❖ **Ladakh:** India and China engage in commander-level talks over territorial disputes in the Pangong Tso region.
- ❖ **Taiwan Strait:** China claims Taiwan, displaying increased aggression, including flying fighter jets near the island.
- ❖ **Chagos Archipelago:** The UK and Mauritius dispute sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean.
- ❖ **Important Chokepoints:** Strategic choke points include the Strait of Malacca, Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, and Mozambique Channel, crucial for regional stability in the Indo-Pacific.

How has the Geopolitical landscape of the Indo-Pacific changed in recent years?

- ❖ **Rise of China:** China's assertive actions have altered power dynamics, challenging established norms. Territorial disputes in the South China Sea have escalated, impacting regional stability. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has increased its influence, raising concerns among neighbouring nations.
- ❖ **Quad Alliance:** The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) between the U.S., India, Japan, and Australia has gained prominence as a counterbalance to China.
- ❖ **Military Buildup:** Countries in the region are enhancing military capabilities, contributing to an arms race.
- ❖ **Cybersecurity Challenges:** Growing digitalization has brought new challenges, necessitating cooperation on cybersecurity.

What are the Roles of Major Groupings in the Indo-Pacific Region?

- ❖ **Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue):** Facilitates strategic coordination among the U.S, Japan, India, and Australia. Focuses on regional security and a free Indo-Pacific.
- ❖ **ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations):** Promotes regional stability, economic integration, and conflict resolution. Serves as a forum for dialogue among Southeast Asian nations and external powers.

What are the Challenges For India in the Indo-Pacific Region?

- ❖ **Strategic Competition:** India faces challenges in managing the strategic competition between major global powers, particularly the **tension between the United States and China.**
- ❖ **Maritime Security and Territorial Disputes: The South China Sea dispute** poses a challenge for India, as it impacts regional maritime security.
- ❖ **Economic Integration and Infrastructure Development:** India is navigating the economic integration of the Indo-Pacific while being cautious about **China's Belt and Road Initiative.**
- ❖ **Diversification of Partnerships:** India is working to diversify its partnerships in the **Indo-Pacific beyond traditional allies.**

What Initiatives has India Taken to Shape the Indo-Pacific Region?

- ❖ **Act East Policy:** To strengthen economic and strategic ties with nations in Southeast Asia and the larger Indo-Pacific region.
- ❖ **Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue):** To enhance security and **promote a free and open Indo-Pacific.**
- ❖ **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA):** To **promote regional economic cooperation** and maritime security in the Indian Ocean.
- ❖ **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region):** To ensure a **secure and prosperous maritime environment** in the Indian Ocean.
- ❖ **BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation):** To promote regional integration and cooperation among countries around the Bay of Bengal.

How does India Tackle both the United States and China in the Indo-Pacific?

India's navigation of relations in the Indo-Pacific amid U.S.-China geopolitical tensions involves nuanced diplomacy:

- ❖ **Balancing Act:** India strives to maintain a delicate balance between its historically strong ties with the U.S. and its crucial economic and strategic engagements with China.

- ❖ **Non-Alignment Tradition:** Building on its non-alignment tradition, India emphasizes maintaining strategic autonomy, avoiding alignment with any specific power bloc.
- ❖ **Quad Participation:** While actively participating in the Quad initiative with the U.S., Japan, and Australia, India insists on preserving the group's inclusive and cooperative nature, steering clear of it being perceived as an **anti-China alliance.**
- ❖ **Economic Engagement:** Economically, India collaborates with both nations independently, seeking mutual benefits while safeguarding its national interests in the evolving geopolitical landscape.

What is China's Military Strategy in the Indo-Pacific region?

- ❖ **String of Pearls:** China aims to establish a network of military and commercial facilities encircling the Indian Ocean, securing sea routes critical for its energy imports.
- ❖ **South China Sea:** Asserting territorial claims, China militarizes artificial islands, bolstering control over this strategic waterway.
- ❖ **Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD):** Developing capabilities to restrict access to contested areas, particularly in the Taiwan Strait, dissuading potential intervention by external powers.
- ❖ **Blue Water Navy:** Expanding its naval capabilities for power projection beyond regional waters, enhancing the **People's Liberation Army** Navy's global reach.
- ❖ **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):** Integrating military strategy with economic initiatives, safeguarding BRI projects and securing overseas interests.

What Steps Can Be Taken to Foster Stability and Prevent Conflicts?

- ❖ **Multilateral Diplomacy and Dialogue:** Emphasize dialogue and negotiations for conflict resolution in the Indo-Pacific. Advocate for confidence-building measures (CBMs) to reduce tensions and build trust.
- ❖ **Strengthen Regional Organizations:** Enhance the capacity of existing regional organizations like ASEAN, SAARC, and the Pacific Islands Forum for cooperation and conflict resolution.
- ❖ **Counterterrorism Cooperation:** Foster collaboration in the Indo-Pacific through intelligence sharing, joint exercises, and measures against terrorist financing and recruitment.
- ❖ **Transnational Crime Combating:** Leverage organizations like INTERPOL and UNODC to coordinate responses and build capacity against drug, human, and wildlife trafficking.
- ❖ **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation:** Collaborate on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adopting sustainable practices, and investing in climate-resilient infrastructure. Enhance disaster preparedness for natural disasters in the Indo-Pacific.
- ❖ **Promote Rules-Based Order:** Encourage adherence to international law, especially UNCLOS, for resolving maritime disputes and ensuring freedom of navigation.
- ❖ **Soft Power Diplomacy:** Promote cultural exchange, educational programs, and people-to-people ties to build understanding and trust among nations in the Indo-Pacific.

With the Rise of China in the Indo-Pacific Region, Do You Think that India can Maintain its Strategic Autonomy?

India faces challenges in maintaining strategic autonomy amidst China's rise in the Indo-Pacific. But in the recent past we have seen how India has maintained its strategic autonomy. Despite having close relations with the USA, India has its own independent foreign policy which is based on national interest and human security. India has made it clear time and again that its engagement in the Indo-Pacific is not against any particular country but for the security and growth of all. India's act of balancing between Russia and USA also reflects how India has been standing tall on its strategic autonomy policy.

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INDUS WATERS TREATY

Context: Recently, Pakistan has expressed optimism that India will adhere to the Indus Waters Treaty in a sincere manner. India has outlined that it cannot be compelled to participate in **"illegal" proceedings at the Permanent Court of Arbitration over the Kishenganga and Ratle hydropower projects in Kashmir**. India's response came after the tribunal ruled that it has the "competence" to consider the dispute between the countries on the matter.

What is the Indus Waters Treaty?

- The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) was **signed by former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and then President of Pakistan, Ayub Khan in 1960.** The treaty sets out a mechanism for **cooperation** between India-Pakistan **over the Indus System of Rivers.**
- The Indus system of Rivers **comprises three Eastern Rivers (The Sutlej, The Beas and The Ravi) and three Western Rivers (The Indus, The Jhelum and The Chenab).**
- The basin is mainly **shared by India and Pakistan with a small share for China and Afghanistan.** Within India, the Indus **Basin lies in Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.**

What are the Salient Provisions of The Indus Water Treaty?

- **Water Allocation:** The three **'western rivers' (Indus, Jhelum and Chenab)** went to Pakistan and the three **'eastern rivers' (Sutlej, Ravi and Beas)** were portioned to India. This means that **80% of the share of water went to Pakistan** while leaving the rest **20% of water for use by India**.
- **Establishment of Permanent Indus Commission:** which s**erved as a forum for the exchange of information on the rivers**, for continued cooperation and as a first stop for the resolution of conflicts.
- **India's Storage Right Over Western Rivers:** India is allowed to have a minimum storage level on the western rivers – meaning it can store up to **3.75 MAF** of water for conservation and flood storage purposes.
- **Dispute Resolution:** The treaty includes provisions for resolving disputes through the Permanent Indus Commission. If a dispute cannot be resolved at the commission level, **either party can approach the World Bank for arbitration.**
- **No Unilateral Changes:** Neither India nor Pakistan can unilaterally modify the terms of the treaty. Any changes must be **mutually agreed** upon.

- **Exit Provision:** IWT does not have a unilateral exit provision and is supposed to remain in force unless both countries ratify another mutually agreed pact. A transition period of 10 years was permitted in which India was bound to supply water to Pakistan from Eastern Rivers. During this period Pakistan was required to build the necessary canal system for the utilization of the waters of Jhelum, Chenab and the Indus itself, as allocated to it under the Treaty.

What is the Dispute Resolution Mechanism under the Indus Water Treaty?

Article 9 of the treaty outlines a dispute resolution process, breaking it down into three categories: question, differences and disputes.

- **Step 1:** Under it, **"questions"** raised by both sides can be resolved at the Permanent Commission, or can also be taken up at the **inter-government level.**
- **Step 2:** In case of unresolved questions or "differences" between the countries on water-sharing, such as technical differences, either side can approach **the World Bank** to appoint a **Neutral Expert (NE)** to come to a decision.
- **Step 3:** And eventually, if either party is not satisfied with the NE's decision or in case of "disputes" in the interpretation and extent of the treaty, matters can be referred to a **Court of Arbitration.**

What are the Challenges to the Indus-Water Treaty?

- **Water Scarcity and Increasing Demand:** Population growth and economic development in both India and Pakistan have led to increased water demand, straining the allocated shares under the treaty.
- **Climate Change Impact:** Changes in precipitation patterns and **glacial melt,** can affect the flow of the Indus River, impacting water availability for both countries.
- **Hydropower Projects and Environmental Concerns:** The Construction of hydropower projects on the Indus River by India, such as the **Kishanganga and Ratle projects**, has raised environmental concerns and triggered disputes.
- **Territorial Changes and Control of Water Sources:** Changes in the control of territories, particularly in the context of the **Kashmir conflict,** can impact the treaty's implementation and lead to disagreements over water usage.
- **Water Management Infrastructure:** Aging infrastructure and the need for modernization can pose challenges to the efficient management and distribution of water as per the treaty provisions.

What is the Role of the World Bank in this Treaty?

- **Mediation and Facilitation:** The World Bank played a key role in facilitating the Indus Waters Treaty between India and Pakistan. In the 1960s, the bank helped broker the agreement and **provided financial assistance** for the construction of replacement works in India to compensate for the diversion of water to Pakistan.
- **Dispute Resolution Mechanism:** The treaty includes provisions for dispute resolution, allowing either party to approach the World Bank for arbitration if bilateral efforts fail. The bank has been involved in several instances, such as the **Baglihar Dam dispute (2005-2007)**, where it helped mediate and resolve issues between India and Pakistan.
- **Continued Involvement and Monitoring:** The World Bank continues to monitor the implementation of the treaty, providing a neutral platform for discussions and addressing concerns.

How Does the Treaty Address the Construction of Run-of-the-River Hydroelectric Projects by Both Countries?

- The Indus Waters Treaty allows both India and Pakistan to construct run-of-the-river hydroelectric projects on the Western Rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab) without storing water beyond specified limits. This enables the generation of hydroelectric power without significantly altering the flow of these rivers.

- The treaty imposes restrictions on the storage capacity of the run-of-the-river projects, ensuring that the water is used for immediate power generation rather than extensive reservoir creation. This limitation aims to prevent any adverse impact on downstream water availability for Pakistan.
- **Data Exchange and Monitoring:** Both countries are obligated to exchange data and maintain monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance with the agreed-upon limitations and to address any concerns related to the construction and operation of run-of-the-river projects.

What are Run-of-the-River Hydroelectric Projects?

Run-of-the-river hydroelectric projects generate electricity by utilizing the natural flow of a river without the need for a large dam or reservoir. These projects typically divert a portion of the river's flow through a penstock to drive turbines and generate electricity.

Examples: Kishanganga Hydroelectric Plant (India): Located in Jammu and Kashmir, it diverts water from the Kishanganga River to generate electricity without creating a large reservoir.

Does the State Government have Any Role in this Treaty?

No, the implementation and management of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) falls under the jurisdiction of the national governments of India and Pakistan, and not the state governments.

Can this treaty be abolished or Modified?

The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) can be modified or abolished, but doing so would require the consent of both parties, India and Pakistan. The treaty itself includes provisions for its modification, and any changes would typically involve negotiations between the two countries.

Can We Implement a Treaty Like This With China for the Brahmaputra River?

India could potentially negotiate a treaty or agreement with China for the Brahmaputra River, similar to the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) with Pakistan. However, there are several challenges and considerations involved in such a process:

- **Bilateral Cooperation:** Any successful agreement would require cooperation and consent from both countries. Negotiating with China would involve **complex geopolitical considerations** and diplomatic efforts.
- **Transboundary River Dynamics:** The Brahmaputra River is a transboundary river shared by China, India, and Bangladesh.
  - Any agreement would ideally involve all riparian countries to address the interests and concerns of each.
- **Water Security and Development Needs:** Negotiations would need to consider the water security and development needs of both countries.
  - Balancing the interests of downstream and upstream users is a key challenge.
- **Environmental and Climate Factors:** Climate change and environmental considerations, such as glacial melt and changes in precipitation patterns, add complexity to any agreement.
- **International Mediation:** Given the complexity of negotiating such agreements, international mediation or facilitation may be considered to assist in the negotiation process.

Do You Think India Should Stop Sharing Water with Pakistan in Order to Counter the Issue of Terrorism and Kashmir?

Yes, India should stop sharing water with Pakistan	No, India should continue sharing water with Pakistan
1. **Strategic Pressure:** Cutting off water supply can be a strategic tool to exert pressure on Pakistan.	1. **Humanitarian Considerations:** Water is a basic necessity, and denying it could harm civilians, irrespective of political issues.
2. **Counterterrorism Measures:** Disrupting water flow may be seen as a deterrent against cross-border terrorism.	2. **International Consequences:** Stopping water sharing might lead to diplomatic and international repercussions.

3. **Asserting Control over Resources**: Retaining control over shared rivers can enhance India's resource management.	3. **Environmental Impact:** A halt in water sharing could have adverse environmental effects on both nations.
4. **Addressing Kashmir Concerns:** Seen as a measure to address concerns related to Kashmir and bolster national security.	4. **Diplomatic Dialogue:** Continuing water sharing allows for diplomatic channels to address issues, fostering cooperation.
5. **Sending a Strong Message:** A cessation can convey India's seriousness about addressing regional issues.	5. **Regional Stability:** Maintaining water cooperation contributes to regional stability and peaceful coexistence.

GLOBAL SOUTH

Questionnaire:

1. *What is the global south?*
2. *What are the challenges of the global south?*
3. *What is the significance of the global south today?*
4. *How significant the global south is for India?*
5. *What are the demands of the global south?*
6. *What led to the revival of the global south?*
7. *Why is the term global south criticized?*
8. *What signifies the influence of the global south in global politics?*
9. *What are the initiatives of India for the global south?*
10. *What are the initiatives for south-south cooperation?*
11. *Do you think that India can play a leadership role in the global south?*
12. *what is the voice of the Global South Summit and how can this summit play a role in resolving issues of the Global South?*

Context: India will host the second Voice of Global South Summit with a focus on sharing with the members the key outcomes achieved in various G-20 meetings during India's presidency of the grouping.

What is the Global South?

Brandt line: Global South is an **imaginary boundary** running **from the Rio Grande into the Gulf of Mexico, across the Atlantic Ocean**, through the Mediterranean Sea, and over the vast expanses of Central Asia to the Pacific Ocean.

It separated countries with comparatively higher GDP per capita concentrated in the Northern Hemisphere and the majority of the poor countries concentrated in the south of the line.

What are the Challenges of the Global South?

The Global South, a term often used to refer to less economically developed countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Oceania, faces a range of challenges that impact their development and well-being. Some key challenges include:

- ❖ **Economic Inequality:** The Global South faces significant economic disparities. According to the **World Bank**, as of 2021, Sub-Saharan Africa has some of the world's lowest GDP per capita figures, contributing to challenges such as poverty, lack of access to education, and limited healthcare resources.
- ❖ **Climate Change Vulnerability:** Small island nations, like those in the Pacific, face rising sea levels due to climate change. This jeopardizes their land, infrastructure, and food security, highlighting the disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable regions.
- ❖ **Political Instability and Conflict:** For instance, ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, such as in **Syria and Yemen**, contribute to displacement, economic disruption, and humanitarian crises.
- ❖ **Debt Burden and Economic Dependence:** For instance, some African countries face debt distress, impacting their ability to invest in development projects. According to the World Bank, the average **debt-to-GDP ratio in Sub-Saharan Africa was around 63% in 2020**.

What is the Significance of Global South Today?

The Global South holds significant importance in the contemporary world for several reasons:
- ❖ **Economic Growth and Emerging Markets:** Countries in the Global South, such as Brazil, India, and South Africa, are experiencing significant economic growth and are considered emerging markets. Their economic contributions and market potential are crucial for the global economy.
- ❖ **Demographic Power and Human Capital:** The Global South is home to a large portion of the world's population, providing a significant labour force and consumer base.
- ❖ **Cultural and Social Diversity:** Countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America contribute to global cultural landscapes through art, music, literature, and traditions, influencing global popular culture.
- ❖ **Natural Resources and Environmental Impact:** For instance, African nations contribute significantly to global resource availability, impacting global markets for minerals, oil, and agricultural products.

How Significant the Global South is for India?

India recognizes the strategic importance of the Global South and actively seeks to strengthen partnerships for mutual development, diplomatic influence, and shared global governance objectives.
- ❖ **Economic Partnerships:** India has established significant economic partnerships with countries in the Global South, contributing to trade and investment. **For instance**, India's economic ties with African nations have expanded, leading to collaborations in sectors such as energy, agriculture, and technology.
- ❖ **Diplomatic Influence and Multilateral Forums:** India actively engages with the Global South in various multilateral forums. As a member of **BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa)**, India collaborates with these nations on issues of global governance, climate change, and economic development.
- ❖ **Development Assistance and Capacity Building:** India provides development assistance and engages in capacity-building initiatives with countries in the Global South. The **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)** program is an example of India's commitment to sharing expertise and skills with partner countries for mutual development.

What are the Demands of the Global South?

- ❖ **Equitable Trade Practices:** They seek to address issues such as agricultural subsidies in developed countries that can distort global markets. For instance, **the Cairns Group,** which includes several Global South nations, advocates for agricultural trade reform to ensure fair competition.
- ❖ **Debt Relief and Financial Assistance: For instance,** during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were widespread appeals for debt relief to help countries cope with the economic impact. The **Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI)** was a temporary relief measure endorsed by the G-20 for eligible countries.
- ❖ **Climate Justice and Sustainable Development:** The Global South emphasizes the need for climate justice and assistance in adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Global South nations seek access to affordable and advanced technologies for sustainable development. Initiatives like **the Technology Facilitation Mechanism under the UN** aim to facilitate the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries.

What Led to the Revival of the Global South?

The revival of the Global South is marked by its economic prowess, collaborative initiatives, and an increased role in shaping global governance structures.

❖ **Economic Growth and Emerging Markets:** According to the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, emerging markets and developing economies are expected to grow faster than advanced economies, collectively reaching **6.3% growth in 2021**.

❖ **South-South Cooperation and Alliances:** Collaborative initiatives like **BRICS** and **IBSA** (India, Brazil, South Africa), provide a platform for joint initiatives, with combined GDPs of these countries accounting for a significant portion of the global economy.

❖ **Diversification of Global Supply Chains: For instance**, Asian countries, including those in Southeast Asia, have become central to global supply chains, attracting investment and contributing to regional economic growth.

❖ **Role in Global Governance:** The Global South, through groups like **G77** (a coalition of developing nations), has asserted its role in global governance discussions. **Calls for reform** in international institutions, including the **United Nations Security Council**, aim to provide more equitable representation for countries from the Global South.

Why is the Term Global South Criticized?

❖ **Homogenization of Diverse Regions:** The term "Global South" is criticized for oversimplifying and homogenizing diverse regions with distinct economic, cultural, and political characteristics. The term ignores significant intraregional disparities within the so-called Global South. **For instance,** within **Africa**, there are substantial differences in economic development, political stability, and access to resources.

❖ **Implies a Hierarchical North-South Divide:** Critics argue that the term perpetuates a North-South binary, reinforcing a hierarchical view of global development.

❖ **Changes in Economic Dynamics:** Some nations traditionally considered part of the Global South, like the **BRICS** nations, have become major global economic players. Using outdated categories may not accurately reflect current geopolitical realities and power shifts.

What Signifies the Influence of the Global South in Global Politics?

The growing influence of the Global South is evident in its active participation in global forums, diplomatic initiatives, and development projects, challenging traditional power dynamics and shaping the evolving landscape of global politics.

❖ **Multilateral Forums and Alliances:** The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) alliance represents a significant influence of the Global South in global politics. **In 2020, BRICS** nations accounted for about **42% of the world's population and 24% of the global GDP.**

❖ **United Nations Representation:** Several Global South countries hold influential positions at the United Nations. **India, Brazil, and South Africa are non-permanent members** of the UN Security Council, contributing to global decision-making. They advocate for reforms to make international institutions more representative.

❖ **Development Initiatives and Aid:** The Global South engages in development initiatives and provides aid to other developing nations. **China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** is a significant example of South-South cooperation, involving infrastructure projects across Asia, Africa, and Europe, contributing to China's influence in global geopolitics.

❖ **Diplomacy and Soft Power:** Diplomatic outreach and cultural influence from the Global South contribute to soft power. India's cultural exports, including **Bollywood and yoga**, and South Africa's **post-apartheid reconciliation efforts** showcase the soft power dynamics that influence global perceptions.

What are the Initiatives of India for the Global South?

❖ **Development Assistance and Capacity Building:** India's flagship initiative, the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)** program, provides training and capacity-building support to professionals from the Global South.

❖ **International Solar Alliance (ISA):** India launched the ISA to promote solar energy cooperation among countries lying between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn.

❖ **Vaccine Diplomacy during COVID-19:** The initiative, known as **"Vaccine Maitri,"** involves supplying vaccines to various countries, contributing to global efforts to ensure equitable vaccine access.

11. Do You Think That India Can Play a Leadership Role in the Global South?

Yes, India can play a leadership role in the Global South	No, India may face challenges in playing a leadership role
1. **Economic Growth:** India's robust economic growth positions it as an influential player among developing nations.	1. **Domestic Challenges:** India grapples with significant internal issues that could divert attention from a leadership role.
2. **Regional Influence:** As a major South Asian power, India can leverage regional partnerships for global influence.	2. **Geopolitical Rivalries:** Competition with neighboring powers may hinder India's leadership aspirations.
3. **Soft Power:** India's rich cultural heritage and democratic values enhance its soft power, attracting collaboration.	3. **Resource Constraints:** Limited resources may constrain India's ability to lead development initiatives.
4. **Multilateral Engagement:** Active participation in international forums showcases India's commitment to global cooperation.	4. **Global Expectations:** Meeting diverse expectations from the Global South may pose challenges for India.
5. **Climate Change Leadership:** India's emphasis on sustainable development aligns with global South priorities.	5. **Diplomatic Balancing:** Navigating diverse interests within the Global South requires adept diplomacy.

12. What is the Voice of the Global South Summit and How Can This Summit Play a Role in Resolving Issues of the Global South?

The "Voice of the Global South" summit represents a platform for nations from the Global South to convene and discuss shared challenges, fostering collaboration and cooperation. Its potential role in issue resolution includes:

❖ **Collective Advocacy:** Enables Global South nations to collectively advocate for their interests on the global stage.

❖ **Shared Solutions:** Facilitates the exchange of ideas and best practices, fostering collaborative solutions to common issues.

❖ **Economic Cooperation:** Encourages economic partnerships among participating nations, addressing developmental challenges.

❖ **Diplomatic Networking:** Strengthens diplomatic ties, enhancing the Global South's collective voice in international forums.

❖ **Policy Influence:** Provides a forum to collectively influence global policies, ensuring representation and consideration of Global South perspectives.

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23RD MEETING OF THE SCO COUNCIL OF HEADS OF STATE

Questionnaire:

1. What is SCO?
2. What is the significance of the SCO in the context of global politics?
3. What are the challenges within the SCO?
4. What initiatives has the SCO undertaken to counter terrorism and extremism in the region?
5. How has India benefited from its membership in the SCO?
6. How has India performed in the SCO presidency?
7. How does India contribute to ensuring regional security and stability through its involvement in the SCO?
8. Why is SCO considered as a new NATO?
9. Do you think that SCO can play a role in countering terrorism and drug trade in the region?
10. Do you think that SCO will become another SAARC because of the presence of Pakistan?

Context: Recently, the Prime Minister of India addressed the 23rd Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Heads of State via video conferencing.

What is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)?

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a eight-member multilateral organization, established on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai, China by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Prior to the creation of SCO in 2001, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan were members of the Shanghai Five.

❖ **Official Languages:** Russian and Chinese. The SCO's geographic scope covers 60 percent of Eurasia and represents 40 percent of the world's population, with a combined GDP accounting for 20 percent of the global economy. The Chairmanship of SCO is by rotation for a year by Member States.

What is the Significance of the SCO in the Context of Global politics?

❖ **Regional Stability and Security:** With a focus on counterterrorism, the organization fosters collaboration among member states to address shared security challenges. For instance, joint military exercises like "Peace Mission" contribute to collective security efforts.

❖ **Economic Cooperation and Trade:** The establishment of the SCO Development Bank and the SCO Business Council promotes economic collaboration.

❖ **Diplomatic Dialogue:** Its annual summits and forums allow leaders to discuss regional and global issues. The SCO's dialogue partner status for nations like Iran and Afghanistan expands its diplomatic influence.

❖ **Multilateralism and Counterbalance:** The SCO serves as a counterbalance to Western-dominated institutions, promoting a multipolar world.

What are the challenges within the SCO?

❖ **Divergent National Interests:** For instance, India and Pakistan, both SCO members, have historical conflicts, potentially impeding unanimous decision-making.

❖ **Security Concerns and Regional Conflicts**: Member states differ in their approaches, affecting the organization's ability to collectively address regional conflicts.

❖ **Economic Disparities and Cooperation:** Economic disparities among SCO member states, with China's economic dominance, pose challenges.

❖ **Differing Political Systems and Governance Models**: SCO members have diverse political systems and governance models. Balancing these differences, particularly between democratic and authoritarian systems, presents challenges for cohesive decision-making within the organization.

What Initiatives has the SCO Undertaken to Counter Terrorism and Extremism in the Region?

❖ **Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS):** in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, to enhance regional cooperation in countering terrorism, extremism, and separatism. RATS facilitates intelligence sharing and coordination among member states.

❖ **Joint Counter-Terrorism Exercises**: For instance, the "Peace Mission" exercises involve collaborative efforts to address security threats. These exercises promote interoperability among security forces.

❖ **Information Sharing and Analytical Center:** in Tashkent serves as a hub for exchanging information on terrorism and extremism. It helps member states assess threats and coordinate responses effectively.

How has India benefited from its membership in the SCO?

India has benefited from its membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in various ways:

❖ **Economic Opportunities**: In 2020, India proposed a Special Working Group on Innovation and Startups under the SCO to enhance economic collaboration.

❖ **Security Cooperation:** The SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) has been utilized for joint exercises and information exchange.

❖ **Diplomatic Engagement:** It allows India to engage with key players in the region, fostering political dialogue and strategic partnerships.

❖ **Cultural and People-to-People Ties**: SCO promotes cultural exchanges, fostering people-to-people ties.

How has India performed in the SCO presidency?

India held the presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) from September 2020 to November 2021. During its presidency, India focused on several key areas: The SCO Heads of Government Council meeting in November 2020 saw discussions on enhancing **counterterrorism measures.**

Efforts were made to enhance connectivity and promote **economic cooperation,** aligning with the organization's goals. India emphasized cultural diplomacy and people-to-people exchanges to foster mutual understanding and goodwill among member nations.

This included events and initiatives showcasing India's rich **cultural heritage.** India, during its presidency, actively participated in SCO's joint efforts to address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This involved discussions on healthcare cooperation, vaccine distribution, and collaborative response strategies.

How does India contribute to ensuring regional security and stability through its involvement in the SCO?

India contributes to ensuring regional security and stability through its involvement in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in the following ways:

❖ **Counterterrorism Cooperation and Military Cooperation:** : In 2020, India hosted the SCO Heads of Government Council meeting, where counterterrorism cooperation was a key focus. The joint military exercises like the "Peaceful Mission" contribute to enhancing interoperability and coordination among member states' armed forces.

❖ **Information Sharing:** India contributes to regional security by sharing crucial information with other SCO members.

❖ **Promotion of Regional Economic Stability:** By participating in initiatives related to trade, investment, and connectivity, India plays a role in fostering economic stability, which is integral to overall regional security.

Why is SCO Considered as New NATO?

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is often likened to a "New NATO" due to certain geopolitical and security-related characteristics.

❖ **Regional Security Focus:** The SCO, like NATO, has a regional security focus. It aims to address security challenges within its member states, particularly in Central Asia.

❖ **Military Cooperation:** For instance, member states conduct regular military drills to improve interoperability and coordination.

❖ Collective Security: Similar to NATO's concept of collective security, the SCO provides a platform for member states to consult and cooperate on security matters affecting the region.

❖ **Membership Expansion:** The SCO has expanded its membership, and discussions about further expansion continue. Similar to NATO's enlargement, the SCO's growing membership reflects its evolving role in regional security.

❖ **Balance of Power Dynamics:** Both organizations are reflective of the evolving global balance of power. The SCO, with major powers like China and Russia as members, represents a multipolar approach to global affairs.

Do you think that SCO can play a role in countering terrorism and drug trade in the region?

Yes, SCO can play a role	No, SCO may not be effective
1. **Collective Security:** SCO provides a platform for member states to cooperate on security issues, facilitating joint efforts against terrorism and drug trade.	1. **Limited Enforcement:** SCO lacks the necessary mechanisms for enforcing strict measures against terrorism and drug trade, limiting its effectiveness.
2. **Intelligence Sharing:** Member states can share intelligence within SCO, enhancing the ability to track and combat terrorist and drug-related activities.	2. **Divergent Interests**: Member states may have conflicting interests, hindering coordinated efforts to address common security threats.

3. **Regional Cooperation:** SCO fosters regional cooperation, enabling coordinated responses to security challenges that transcend national borders.	3. **Resource Constraints:** SCO member states may face resource constraints, impacting their ability to effectively counter terrorism and drug trade.
4. **Preventing Extremism:** SCO's focus on cultural and educational exchanges can contribute to preventing the spread of extremist ideologies.	4. **Sovereignty Concerns:** Some member states may prioritize national sovereignty over collective action, limiting the scope of effective interventions.

Do you think that SCO will become another SAARC because of the presence of Pakistan?

Factors	Yes	No
Presence of Pakistan	Pakistan's history of regional conflicts may hinder cooperation within SCO, leading to a dynamic similar to SAARC.	SCO's focus on economic and security issues could foster collaboration despite Pakistan's presence.
SCO's Objectives	If SCO's goals align more closely with SAARC's historical challenges, it may face similar difficulties.	If SCO successfully maintains its focus on economic cooperation and security, it can avoid SAARC's pitfalls.
Conflict Resolution	Tensions and disputes involving Pakistan may escalate, mirroring SAARC's struggles with resolution.	SCO's mechanisms for conflict resolution might prove effective in managing issues involving Pakistan.
Regional Dynamics	If regional dynamics prioritize bilateral conflicts over collective progress, SCO may face challenges similar to SAARC.	If member states prioritize mutual benefits, SCO can evolve independently of SAARC's historical setbacks.

What is the significance of Iran's Induction in SCO?

❖ The Induction of Iran in SCO is to enhance economic cooperation between member states, which holds immense potential for the once-isolated Iran. Joining this bloc provides the Iranians with a gateway to Central Asian markets, opening up opportunities worth billions of dollars.

❖ Moreover, the SCO represents roughly 60 percent of Eurasia's population. Considering the trajectory of economic relations among SCO member states since the organization's establishment in 2001, Iran is poised to become a gateway for attracting billions of dollars' worth of projects to West Asia, particularly those that contribute to East Asia's growth.

❖ Iran has demonstrated its capability and determination in countering terrorism within its borders, extending its security measures to neighbouring countries, and directly confronting terrorist groups beyond its borders.

❖ It also reflects a failure of the US's strategy to isolate its adversaries through the imposition of unilateral economic punishments, or "sanctions." The SCO, in stark contrast to the West, no longer recognizes these unilateral measures as legitimate obstacles and chooses instead to only uphold the legally binding UN Security Council decisions.

In conclusion, Iran's recent induction into the SCO signifies a pivotal expansion for the organization, carrying far-reaching political, economic, and security implications. This development paves the way for new geopolitical alliances and equips the SCO with additional leverage in the global arena, thereby reshaping the dynamics of international relations.

❀❑❑❑❁

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY SHIFT

> ## *Questionnaire*
>
> 1. *What are the recent changes in India's foreign policies?*
> 2. *How is India moving away from non-aligned towards multi-alignment?*
> 3. *How is India executing the Act East policy?*
> 4. *Why is India focusing on Africa?*
> 5. *What are the major changes visible in terms of India's foreign policy?*
> 6. *What are the reasons for India's changing foreign policy?*
> 7. *What are the challenges for India's foreign policy?*
> 8. *Do you think despite ties with us, India can maintain strategic autonomy in taking decisions?*

Context: India has moved away from some of its **legacy foreign policies**, ushering in a new era of global cooperation. Recent geopolitical situations have reflected how India's foreign policy has made a shift from the past.

What are the Recent Changes in India's Foreign Policies?

- ❖ **Focus of Policy:** The focus of India's foreign policy is **addressing the bigger picture**, looking at India's role in the international stage. Example: India hosting G-20 summit and working for the global south.
- ❖ **Innovative Methods**: India has employed various innovative methods as part of its foreign policy. This includes leveraging its soft power and also engaging with the diaspora. Example: Howdy Modi in USA.
- ❖ **Long-time Interests:** India keeps its long-term interests in sight while initiating a policy. This prevents extreme actions by the government. Example: Balance between USA & Russia during Ukraine-Russia conflict.
- ❖ **Benefitting the Citizens:** The engagement with countries must not just benefit the country, but it must also benefit their citizens.
- ❖ **Walk the Talk approach:** Inclusion of African Union in the G-20, various global initiatives like ISA, CDRI etc.

How is India Moving Away from Non-Aligned towards Multi-alignment?

- ❖ **The Beginning:** During the peak of the Cold War, India invested heavily in the policy of non-alignment by participating in the Non-Alignment Movement.
- ❖ **Recent Updates:** Post the collapse of the Non-Alignment Movement after the disintegration of the USSR, India has been following a policy of **Multi-alignment** by collaborating in the fields of **security, economic equity and the elimination of threats like terrorism. Examples: India balancing USA and Russia, securing S-400 deal with Russia and major defence partner of USA at the same time.**
- ❖ **Engaging with Russia in the Far East and with the USA in the Indo-Pacific reflects India's multiple alignments.**
- ❖ **Similarly, in West Asia, India is balancing between Israel and Arab nations.**
- ❖ **India is following realpolitik and focusing on national interest with humanitarian values. India is engaging with countries having the same interests and values.**

How is India executing the Act East Policy? What is the need?

- ❖ The Act East policy seeks to strengthen India's economic and strategic ties with countries in Southeast Asia and East Asia. The policy works in the fields of connectivity, trade, culture, defence and people-to-people-contact at all engagement levels. Examples of India's actions include engagement with ASEAN, development of infrastructure, supply of aid, provision of defence equipment etc.
- ❖ Under the Act East policy, India is engaging with Japan, S. Korea, and ASEAN nations.

The need for it is to secure stability and development in the Northeast Region and ensure greater role in the open and secure indo-pacific. It also favours India's SAGAR doctrine to provide security to regional countries.

Why is India Focusing on Africa?

❖ India has acknowledged that Africa is central to its plan of creating an alliance of like-minded countries. Due to their shared colonial history, India and Africa have many things in common. In addition, Africa is host to a variety of natural resources, which can potentially be a game-changer.

❖ To defeat China, India needs to ensure Africa does not become extensively dependent on China. Realizing this importance, India enabled the joining of the African Union in the G-20. India is one the **largest contributors** to UN Peacekeeping Operations in Africa.

❖ India also **extends grants and aids** for the development of African Nations. It also provides opportunities for new market access and development. In the recent G-20, India played a crucial role in ensuring membership of the African Union in the G-20.

What are the Major Changes Visible in terms of India's Foreign Policy?

❖ **Engagement with Indian Diaspora:** India has increased its engagement with the global Indian diaspora, seeking to make use of their experience and reach to influence outcomes. **Example**: In Australia this year the PM met the Indian diaspora.

❖ **Leveraging Soft Power:** India's soft power has been leveraged extensively to increase its influence. This includes Indian food, Indian music, Indian movies and Yoga. **Example:** International Yoga Day, humanitarian aid like Operation DOST in Turkey.

❖ **Voice of the Global South:** India has positioned itself as the voice of the global South by raising issues that matter to underdeveloped and developing countries. **Example:** Recent Voice of Global South summit.

❖ **Responsible Climate Actions:** India is the only country from the G-20 group to have been in line to achieve all its climate goals, as provided in the Paris Agreement. **Examples:** ISA, CDRI, IRIS etc.

❖ **Aid-based Support:** India has been the first to respond when it comes to providing aid against disaster. This was visible during the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the Turkey Earthquake (Operation Dost).

❖ **Neutral Position:** India has always taken a neutral unbiased position when it comes to geopolitical issues. This has showcased the ability of Indian diplomats to traverse tricky situations.

❖ **Personal Rapport with Head of State:** The Indian Prime Minister enjoys a personal rapport with other heads of state. This has helped build confidence between countries.

❖ Maintaining strategic autonomy and working for the national interest.

What are the Reasons for India's Changing Foreign Policy?

❖ **Rise of China:** China has quickly established itself as a serious global player by expanding its footprints through projects such as BRI.

❖ **Changing Geopolitics:** Global geopolitics is fast changing. China is emerging as a serious competitor to the US. Along with Russia, China is creating a formidable Eastern bloc to challenge the western bloc.

❖ **Sovereign Rights:** India has been more concerned about its sovereign rights in recent times, compared to previous years. This has necessitated foreign policy changes.

❖ **The Ukraine War:** The Ukraine war has been termed a watershed moment in global politics as it brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.

❖ **COVID-19:** Following the pandemic, there has been a negative sentiment against China and its policies. This has brought together countries sharing similar sentiments.

❖ **Political Stability:** Since 2014, India has enjoyed political stability at domestic level. This has enabled it to make strong policy decisions without compromise.

What are the Challenges for India's Foreign Policy?

❖ **Bipolar World:** The world is fast turning bipolar from multipolar. There may come a time when India will be compelled to choose its partner.

- ❖ **Managing Relations with China:** China's muscular expansionism is causing troubles for India in the Himalayas. Even though India seeks to have normal relations with China, the security challenges cannot warrant a soft approach.
- ❖ **Pakistan Factor:** India's ties with Pakistan are at its lowest. This is due to the absence of communication channels between the leaderships of the two countries. Without a proper channel of communication, the relationship will remain to be affected.
- ❖ **Relevance in Global Politics:** India wants a seat at the UNSC as a permanent member. Without such a position, India cannot remain relevant in global politics.
- ❖ **Regional Influence:** India's regional influence must not fade away, only to be replaced by China. The backdoor entry by China will jeopardize India's interests in the region.
- ❖ Balance between national interest and global interest in the recent Ukraine-Russia war.

Do you think despite ties with the US, India can maintain strategic autonomy in making decisions?

India and the US have grown closer as strategic partners in the Indo-Pacific and elsewhere, but they both have not found much common ground on the Russia-Ukraine war. A cardinal element in Indian foreign policy is to maintain strategic autonomy in making decisions. And we've seen that play out in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war. India maintained its stance even though there was huge pressure from the Western countries. Similarly, in Indo-Pacific, India has a clear stance that we are not against any country in the region but for free and open Indo-Pacific. These incidents reflect how India is maintaining its strategic autonomy in growing in a changing geopolitical scenario. India's foreign policy has been dynamic, allowing it to **handle watershed moments in geopolitics** such as the Ukraine War. The challenges to India's foreign policy are only going to **amplify as a showdown** between the **Western bloc and the Eastern bloc** is on the cards.

Economy

DIGITAL CURRENCY: POTENTIAL AND CHALLENGES

Questionnaire

1. *What is Central Banking Digital Currency (CBDC)?*
2. *What are the different types of Digital currencies?*
3. *Is CBDC a Cryptocurrency?*
4. *Will digital currency replace paper currency?*
5. *Which countries implemented Digital currencies?*
6. *What are the advantages of Central Bank Digital Currencies?*
7. *What are the disadvantages of Central Bank Digital Currencies?*
8. *What are the associated challenges with CDBC?*
9. *How to address challenges associated?*

Context: As per the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), **'Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)'** is to be the future currency of the world and can play an important role in cross-border payments without difficulty. The RBI is also working to introduce new features to popularize the **Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)**, the so-called **e-rupee**.

What is the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)?

Central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) are a form of **digital currency** issued by a country's central bank. They are similar to cryptocurrencies, except that their **value is fixed by the central bank** and equivalent to the country's **fiat currency**.

Fiat Currency refers to a currency that a government has declared to be legal tender, but it's not backed by a physical commodity like gold or silver. Instead, its value is derived from the trust and confidence people have in the issuing government and its economy.

A **digital currency** is any currency that is available entirely in **electronic form**. It is, however, **exclusively exchanged through virtual means** and does not leave a computer network.

Are there any other types of Digital Currency?

There are other two major varieties of digital currency:

- ❖ **Cryptocurrency:** It is a digital currency, which is an alternative form of payment created using encryption algorithms. The use of encryption technologies means that cryptocurrencies function both as a currency and as a virtual accounting system.
- ❖ **Stablecoins:** It is a type of cryptocurrency where the value of the digital asset is supposed to be pegged to a reference asset, which is either fiat money, exchange-traded commodities, or another cryptocurrency.

What are the types of Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)?

1. **Wholesale CBDCs:** They are similar to holding reserves in a central bank. The central bank grants an institution an account to deposit funds or use to settle interbank transfers. Central banks can then use monetary policy tools, such as reserve requirements or interest on reserve balances, to influence lending and set interest rates.
2. **Retail CBDCs:** Retail CBDCs are digital currencies supported by the government that are utilized by both consumers and businesses. It minimizes intermediary risk, which is the chance that private digital currency issuers would go bankrupt and lose the assets of their clients.

Is the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) a Cryptocurrency?

- ❖ Though the idea for central bank digital currencies comes from cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology, **CBDCs aren't cryptocurrencies**.
- ❖ A **central bank controls a CBDC**, whereas **cryptocurrencies are almost always decentralized,** meaning they can't be regulated by a single authority, such as a bank.

Will Digital Currency replace Physical Currency?

A digital currency could provide an alternative "safe" option for citizens to store their cash outside of regular bank accounts. But it **seems very difficult that it will entirely replace any physical money**. Many countries **don't have the proper technology or infrastructural access** to fully replace the physical currency with digital currencies. There is also a **lack of Digital Awareness** to fully implement the Digital Currency.

> ### Which countries implemented Digital Currency?
>
> The **Bahamas, Jamaica, and Nigeria** have already introduced CBDCs. And more than 100 countries are in the exploration stage. Central bankers in **Brazil, China, the euro area, India, and the United Kingdom** are at the forefront.
>
> ❖ **Bahamas** was the first country to launch its nationwide CBDC, **Sand Dollar** in 2020.
> ❖ **Nigeria** is another country to have rolled out **e-Naira** in 2020.
> ❖ **China** became the world's first major country to pilot a **digital currency is-CNY** in 2020.

What are the advantages of Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)?

The advantages of CBDC are:

1. **Faster Mode of Payment:** Digital currency can make payments much faster than current means like automated clearing houses or wire transfers that take days for financial institutions to confirm a transaction.
2. **24/7 Availability:** Digital currency transactions work at the same speed i.e. 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.
3. **No Manufacturing Required:** In digital currencies, there is no expense in manufacturing. Also, digital currencies are immune to soiling or physical defects that are present in physical currency.
4. **Enhanced Financial Inclusion and Access to Banking Services:** It can help enhance financial inclusion and access to banking services and provide individuals who do not have access to traditional banking services in a safe, secure, and affordable way.
5. **Increased Security and Transparency:** CBDCs increase security and transparency. They offer strong encryption and authentication protocols that can help prevent fraud and cyberattacks.
6. **Reduced Costs and Risks of Physical Cash Handling:** CBDCs reduce the costs and risks associated with physical cash handling. It also reduces the need for cash handling and transportation, which can be expensive and pose security risks.

What are the challenges associated with Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)?

The disadvantages of CBDC are:

1. **Costly Transaction:** Crypto uses blockchain technology where computers must resolve complex equations to validate and record transactions. This in turn takes a significant amount of electricity, the more the transaction the more the expense.
2. **Disintermediation and Potential for Bank Runs:** CBDCs can disrupt the existing financial system by removing the need for intermediaries. This can lead to disintermediation, reducing the profitability of banks and other financial institutions.
3. **Technological and Infrastructural Challenges:** CBDCs can present technological and infrastructural challenges. They require significant investments in new technology and infrastructure, which can be expensive and time-consuming.
4. **Potential for Financial Instability:** Rapid adoption or unexpected shifts to CBDCs might lead to volatility or instability in financial markets, impacting economies and investors.
5. **Vulnerable financial system**: CBDC vulnerabilities could be exploited to compromise a nation's financial system. CBDCs would be able to accumulate sensitive payment and user data at an unprecedented scale.
6. **Digital illiteracy**: In many places in rural India high speed internet facilities are still not available. Also, only around 30% women have access to the internet in India, it can lead to gender divide as well.
7. **Privacy issue**: Central authorities can use centralized data for additional purposes. India faces high incidences of cyber attacks and cyber security risk.

8. **Huge Competition:** CDBC can face competition from other digital payment systems, such as bank-based digital payment systems, UPI and existing cryptocurrencies that are not regulated by banks.

CDBC could act as a medium for promoting payment efficiency. To make CDBC successful, the government must come up with concrete guidelines to boost the confidence of people. It would be important to ensure that the general public is educated about the use and risks of a digital currency, and there should be necessary infrastructure and logistics in place, more focus should be on its acceptance by merchants and traders as a form of payment. Education and awareness campaigns may be necessary to overcome these challenges and promote adoption.

Additional information:
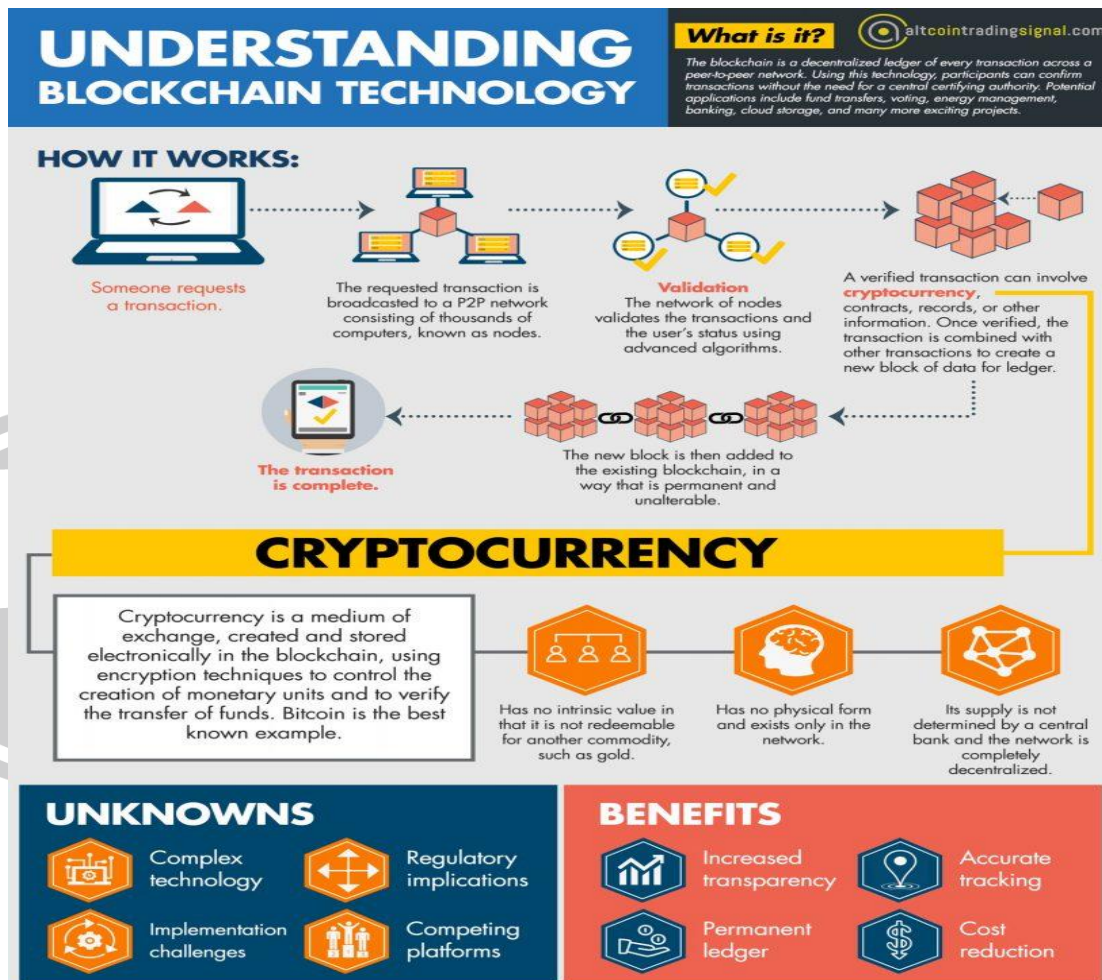
GIG ECONOMY IN INDIA

Questionnaire:

1. *What do you Mean by the Gig Economy?*
2. *How is the Gig Economy Classified?*
3. *According to Your View What are Factors Contributing to the Development of the Gig Economy in India?*
4. *Who is a Gig Worker and Who are Key Players in India's Gig Economy?*
5. *What are the Benefits of the Gig Economy for Worker, Employer and Customers?*

6. *As the Gig Economy Continues to Evolve, what are the Potential Future Trends?*
7. *How does the Gig Economy Contribute to the Country's Workforce Dynamics?*
8. *Which Initiatives have been Taken to Promote the Gig Economy in India?*
9. *What are the Challenges Associated with the Gig Economy?*
10. *Gig economy does not provide stability in the job and puts workers under a lot of competition. What steps can be taken to improve their working conditions?*

Context: Recently, Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill, 2023 was passed by Rajasthan Assembly.

What do you Mean by the Gig Economy?

A gig economy is a labor market that relies heavily on temporary and part-time positions filled by independent contractors and freelancers rather than full-time permanent employees. It is a free market system in which temporary positions are common and organizations hire independent workers for short-term commitments. Examples: Freelancers, independent contractors, project-based workers and temporary or part-time hires.

How the Gig Economy Evolved in India?
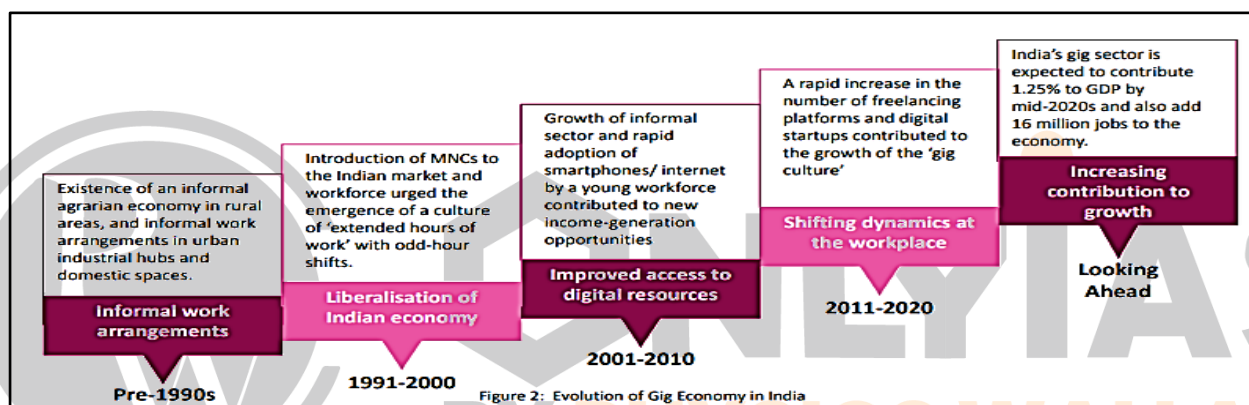
Figure 2: Evolution of Gig Economy in India

According to Your view What are factors contributing to the development of the gig economy in India?

❖ **Digital Infrastructure:** The widespread availability of **smartphones and affordable internet access** has played a crucial role in enabling gig workers to connect with potential employers.

❖ **Government Initiatives:** Some government initiatives, such as the **Digital India campaign**, have aimed at promoting **digital literacy and infrastructure**, indirectly supporting the growth of the gig economy.

❖ **Start-up Ecosystem:** India has a vibrant start-up ecosystem that has given rise to **numerous tech platforms and apps facilitating gig work.**

❖ **Youthful Workforce:** India's large and young population, with a significant portion being **tech-savvy**, has contributed to the growth of the gig economy.

❖ **E-commerce and Logistics Growth:** The booming e-commerce sector has increased the demand for gig workers in **delivery, logistics, and related services**.

❖ **Rise of Remote Work:** The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work, **making companies and workers more open to flexible work arrangements.**

How is the Gig Economy Classified?

❖ **Platform-based:** They use **online apps or digital platforms** to find and perform work, such as ride-hailing, food delivery, e-commerce, online freelancing, etc.

❖ **Non-platform-based gig workers:** They work outside the **traditional employer-employee relationship**, such as casual wage workers and own-account workers in sectors like construction, domestic work, agriculture, etc.

Who are Major Key Players in India's Gig Economy?

Gig Worker: An individual, employed transactionally on a time or task based manner, having flexibility to choose their hours of work.

❖ Breakdown of India's Gig Workforce:
  ➢ **Higher skill Freelancing:** IT, Design, Management
  ➢ **Personal Services:** Care, Wellness, Teaching
  ➢ **Low-skill Gig Work: Cleaning, Microtasks**
  ➢ **Deliveries, Ridesharing.**

Key Players in India Gig Economy:
  ➢ **Personal Transport: Uber, Ola, Swiggy, Zomato,**
  ➢ **Delivery Services: Delhivery, Dunzo**
  ➢ **At Home Personal Services:** Urban Company, Housejoy

High-skilled and Professional Tasks: Flexing It and Upwork

What are the Benefits of the Gig Economy For Worker, Employer and Customers?

❖ **For Workers:** Gig economy can provide more **flexibility, autonomy, income opportunities**, skill development, and inclusion.

❖ **For Employers:** It can enable access to a large and diverse **pool of talent, lower fixed costs, higher scalability**, and better customer satisfaction.

❖ **For Customers:** It can offer more **choice, convenience, quality, and affordability.**

As the Gig Economy Continues to Evolve, what are the Potential Future Trends?

❖ **Prospect:** According to a report by **NITI Aayog**, the **platform-based gig economy** in India has grown rapidly in recent years, **driven by factors** such as demographic dividend, urbanization, digitalisation, and consumer demand.

❖ **Platform Based:** The report also projects that the platform-based gig economy in India can create up to **56 million new jobs by 2029-30,** adding up to **1.3% to India's GDP** in the long run.

❖ **Non-Platform Based: According to Invest India**, there are about **120 million** non-platform-based gig workers in India as of 2019-20, accounting for about **32%** of the non-agricultural workforce or **20% of the total workforce in India.** It can create up to **34 million new jobs by 2029-30**.

❖ **Economic Contribution:** In 2020, **ASSOCHAM** projected that India's gig economy would rise at a compound **annual growth rate of 17% to $455 billion by 2023.**
  ➢ According to a report by **Nasscom,** the gig economy is expected to contribute around **1.25% to India's GDP by 2025**, with the potential to create 90 million jobs.

How does the Gig Economy Contribute to the Country's Workforce Dynamics?

❖ **Employment Opportunity:** Gig economy has **expanded the availability of jobs and improved labor force participation.**

❖ **Catering Demand of Low Skilled:** At present, about **47 per cent of the gig work is in medium-skilled jobs,** about 22 per cent in high skilled, and about 31 per cent in low-skilled jobs.

❖ **Young Demographic Dividend:** India has a large and growing population of young people who are **well-educated and tech-savvy.**
  ➢ Youth participation in the Gig economy has seen an **8-fold increase between 2019-2022.**

❖ **Female Labour Force: Female gig workers** benefit from the income-generating potential, choice and the **flexible work** modalities of the gig economy.
  ➢ Women's participation in the gig economy has **increased from 18% to 36%.**

- ❖ **Catering to Retired Persons: Due to the flexibility** that contract work offers, many people after retirement start working for themselves.
- ❖ **Transforming the Gig Economy: Tech advancements,** particularly in AI, robotics, and data analytics, have **eliminated workplace limitations**.
    - ○ **Tech integration** in the gig economy can boost productivity and improve gig workers' living standards.

Which Initiatives Have Been Taken to Promote the Gig Economy in India?

- ❖ **Centra**l Legislation: Code on Wages, 2019, a universal minimum wage and floor wage should be provided to all organized and unorganized sectors, including gig workers.
    - ➢ **Code on Social Security, 2020,** the gig workers are provided with **recognition as a new occupational category.**
    - ➢ **Dedicated Social Security Fund** to extend Social Security benefits to gig workers.
- ❖ **State Government Initiatives: Karnataka government** has announced for gig workers an accident and life insurance cover of **Rs 4 lakh** for which it will entirely bear the cost of the annual premium.
- ❖ **Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill, 2023**
    - ➢ **Defines Gig Worker:** A person who performs work or participates in a work arrangement and earns from such activities **outside of the traditional employer-employee relationship** and who works on **a contract** that results in a given rate of payment, based on terms and conditions laid down in such contract and **includes all piece-rate work**.
    - ➢ **Registration:** It seeks to **register all gig workers and aggregators** in the state, facilitate a guarantee of **social security** to gig workers, and give them an opportunity to **air any grievances.**
    - ➢ Rajasthan platform-based **Gig Workers Welfare Board** and platform-based **Gig Workers Social Security and Welfare Fund** will be established for the benefit of registered gig workers. **Welfare fees will be charged by aggregators.**
    - ➢ **Penalties on Aggregators:** The state government may impose **a fine that may extend up to Rs 5 lakh** for the first contravention and up to **Rs 50 lakh** for subsequent contraventions.

What are the Challenges Associated with the Gig Economy?

- ❖ **Increase in Voluntary Unemployment:** Some workers prefer the flexibility and autonomy of gig work over traditional employment.
- ❖ **Disrupting Work-Life Balance: Flexibility of working gigs** can actually disrupt the work-life balance, sleep patterns, and activities of daily life.
- ❖ **Job Insecurity:** They may experience **fluctuations in income** due to the **irregular** and **unpredictable** nature of gig work.
- ❖ **Lack of legal protection & social security:** Many gig workers in India operate in the informal sector
    - ➢ **Gig workers do not have access to social security** benefits such as health insurance, retirement benefits, and paid leave.
    - ➢ **Absence of a minimum wage guarantee** makes workers susceptible to financial vagaries during crises/disasters.
- ❖ **Unequal bargaining power: To negotiate** fair compensation and working conditions, particularly when they are competing against a large pool of other workers on digital platforms.
- ❖ **Training and upskilling:** Gig workers often have **limited opportunities for upskilling** and career advancement.
- ❖ **Social stigma:** Gig work is still viewed by some in India as **a temporary or low-paying option,** which can result in social stigma and **lack of recognition** for the work done by gig workers.
- ❖ **Workplace Conditions & Interaction: Lack of appropriate forums** that capture concerns of gig-workers and help platforms to understand the challenges and problem-solve

Gig economy does not provide stability in the job and puts workers under a lot of competition. What steps can be taken to improve their working conditions?

❖ **Health Benefits and Leaves:** Coverage for medical costs, hospitalization, preventive care services such as **regular health check-ups and vaccinations, as well as paid leaves for workers.**

❖ **Skill Development for Informal Gig Employees:** Platform businesses can provide certifications, allowing workers to progress better in their careers.

❖ **Adequate Protection:** Although gig workers get minimum wages, they need certain legal protection, policies, and opportunities like other employees protected under labor laws.

❖ **Addressing Gender Bias:** Adopt gender-inclusive language and imagery to normalize participation of women platform gig-workers enabling platforms to expand markets and attract more women customers.

❖ **NITI aayog recommended** five-pronged **RAISE approach** to ensure realization of full access to social security for all gig and platform workers:

> ➢ **Recognise the varied nature** of platform work to design equitable schemes.

> ➢ **Allow augmentation of social security** through innovative financing mechanisms.

> ➢ **Incorporate**, while designing schemes, the specific interests of platforms, factoring the impact on job creation, platform businesses and workers.

> ➢ **Support workers** to subscribe to government schemes and welfare programmes through widespread awareness campaigns.

> ➢ **Ensure benefits** are readily accessible to workers.

❖ **Incentivising 'Platformization':** To accelerate 'platformisation' i.e., give impetus for more platform businesses by starting a program called **'Platform India'** along the lines of the government's earlier **Start Up India initiative.**

Recently the concept of moonlighting has been in the news. What are its ethical considerations?

Moonlighting in simple language means the **act of working at an extra job, especially without telling your main employer.**

❖ **Reasons for Moonlighting can be cited as below,**

> ➢ **A regular employee**, however, may not always have a strategy in place for such occurrences. **Layoffs can happen surprisingly** frequently in an economy that is failing. People take up a second job **as a backup when they are insecure about their present job.**

> ➢ Any financial adviser advises one should always have **multiple sources of income.** It can be **a small business on the side** or investments that give away a passive source of income or **it can be a second job.** Making extra money never goes out of style, and that's probably what **draws people to moonlighting.**

> ➢ During the COVID-19 pandemic, Vast number of people suffered heavy job losses. **People are depending on moonlight** to pay off debt. **Example:** There could be a home loan they took before the pandemic, or a laptop, or a car. With a second job, they manage to pay for it.

Ethical Considerations:

❖ Moonlighting could be considered **cheating if an employee's contract calls for non-compete and single employment,** which is the situation with the majority of conventional employment contracts. However, **it is not cheating if the employment contracts** do not have such a clause or provide relaxations. **Example: Recently Wipro sacked 300 employees** for taking up a second job after working hours.

❖ **Under the Factories Act**, dual employment is prohibited. However, in some states, IT companies are exempt from that rule. Before looking for side jobs or starting a business, **it is crucial for employees to carefully check their employment contract** with their principal job to ensure compliance with any moonlighting policies.

The increasing demand for gig workers and the rise in participation of gig workers, especially the **youth and women indicate** that the gig economy in India is gaining popularity. According to a report by the **International Labour Organization** (ILO), India is the **second-largest** gig economy in the world, with around 56% of all gig workers in the Asia-Pacific region working in India. The gig economy is predicted to be a significant **building block in achieving India's aim to become a $5 trillion economy by 2025**. This would help in bridging the income and unemployment gap.

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GENTLY PUSHING RUPEE: INTERNATIONALIZATION OF RUPEE

Questionnaire:

1. *What do you understand about the Internationalization of Rupee?*
2. *What are the benefits of Internationalisation of Rupee?*
3. *Why would a country want to internationalize its currency?*
4. *What are the challenges to Internationalize the Rupee?*
5. *What is the current Status for the Rupee's Internationalization?*
6. *Can you explain the concept of a "fully convertible" Rupee?*
7. *What are the government's Efforts to Internationalize Rupee?*
8. *How does having an internationalized currency impact India's standing in the global financial system?*
9. *Can you provide examples of countries that have successfully internationalized their currencies, and what lessons can India learn from them?*
10. *What reforms can be pursued to internationalize the rupee?*
11. *Why did India take so long to internationalize the rupee?*

Context: The Government's announcement of a long-term road map for further internationalization of the rupee can turn out to be a positive exercise.

What Do You Understand about the Internationalization of Rupee?

❖ Internationalization of Rupee refers to the **process of increased cross-border transactions of Indian currency,** especially in import-export trades followed by other current account transactions and then capital account transactions.

What are the Benefits of Internationalising the Rupee?

❖ **Reducing Foreign Currency Dependence:** It lessens reliance on foreign currencies, enhancing economic sovereignty and reducing vulnerability to currency fluctuations.

❖ **Boosting Global Trade:** Facilitates direct international transactions in rupees, eliminating the need for conversions, reducing costs, and simplifying cross-border trade.

❖ **Promoting Financial Integration: It could** attract foreign investors, encourage capital inflows, and enhance liquidity in Indian financial markets, fostering financial integration.

❖ **Enhancing Monetary Policy Effectiveness:** Broad international reach allows the Reserve Bank of India to use the exchange rate as a tool for managing inflation and stimulating economic growth, providing flexibility in responding to economic challenges.

❖ **Strengthening Regional Influence:** A globally accepted rupee positions India as a major economic player in Asia, promoting regional trade, investment, and economic partnerships.

❖ **Diversifying Reserves:** Internationalization increases rupee attractiveness as a reserve currency, offering diversification and stability to central banks and foreign governments' portfolios.

Why Would a Country Want to Internationalize Its Currency?

❖ **Reduced Dependency on Dominant Currencies:** Internationalizing a currency reduces reliance on dominant ones, like the US dollar, minimizing risks tied to external economic and geopolitical factors. **Example**: China's Renminbi (RMB) internationalization.

❖ **Enhanced Economic Sovereignty:** Provides greater control over monetary policy, reducing vulnerability to external economic pressures. **Example:** Euro's role in the Eurozone.

- ❖ **Global Trade Facilitation:** international transactions, cutting currency conversion needs and lowering transaction costs. **Example:** US dollar's dominance in global trade.
- ❖ **Attracting Foreign Investment:** Attracts foreign investors, fostering capital inflows and stimulating economic growth. **Example:** Singapore's internationalization of the Singapore Dollar (SGD).
- ❖ **Enhanced Monetary Policy Tools:** Allows central banks to use their currency for managing inflation and addressing economic challenges. **Example:** Japanese Yen (JPY) in global financial markets.
- ❖ **Diversification of Global Reserves:** Increases currency appeal as a reserve asset, offering diversification and stability to global reserves. **Example:** Chinese RMB inclusion in the IMF's Special Drawing Rights (SDR) basket.

What are the Challenges to Internationalize the Rupee?

- ❖ **Market Depth and Liquidity:** The depth and liquidity of the Indian rupee market are not yet comparable to major global currencies like the US dollar or the euro.
- ❖ **Regulatory Framework:** The regulatory framework governing foreign exchange transactions, capital flows, and financial markets in India needs to be further liberalized and streamlined to support the internationalization of the rupee.
- ❖ **Economic Stability:** The stability of the Indian economy, including factors such as inflation rates, fiscal discipline, and overall economic growth, plays a crucial role in enhancing the credibility and attractiveness of the rupee in international markets.
- ❖ **Investor Confidence:** Factors such as political stability, policy predictability, and investor-friendly reforms contribute to creating a conducive environment for global investors.

What is the Current Status for the Rupee's Internationalization?

- ❖ **Limited Progress in Internationalization:** The internationalization of the rupee remains a distant goal, with its daily average share in the global foreign exchange market hovering around a modest 1.6%.
  - ➢ Moreover, India's share of global goods trade stands at a mere 2%, indicating a considerable gap in achieving broader currency acceptance.
- ❖ **Constraints on Currency Exchange:** India currently restricts full capital account convertibility, indicating limitations on the free movement of local financial investment assets into foreign assets and vice versa.
  - ➢ This restriction is rooted in concerns about potential capital flight triggered by monetary policies or a lack of economic growth.
  - ➢ The apprehension is further fueled by substantial current and capital account deficits.

"Fully Convertible" Rupee?

A "fully convertible" rupee refers to a situation where the Indian Rupee (INR) is freely traded on the foreign exchange market, allowing it to be exchanged for other currencies without any restrictions. In a fully convertible currency regime, there are no controls or limitations on the movement of capital, meaning that individuals and businesses can buy or sell rupees in the international market without facing significant barriers.

- ❖ Here are the key characteristics and implications of a fully convertible rupee:
  - ➢ Free Exchangeability, No Capital Controls, Market-Determined Exchange Rates, Foreign Investment and Trade, Integration with Global Financial Markets.

What are the Government's Efforts to Internationalize the Rupee?

- ❖ **RBI's Foreign Trade Settlements:** In 2022, RBI permitted foreign trade settlements in Indian currency to address rupee depreciation and navigate US sanctions on Iran and Russia.
- ❖ **Foreign Trade Policy 2023:** Aims to promote the internationalization of the rupee in foreign trades, reflecting efforts to strengthen its role.
- ❖ **Existing Rupee Arrangements:** Long-standing rupee arrangements with Bhutan and Nepal; Sri Lanka formerly includes the rupee as a designated foreign currency.
- ❖ **Measures for Internationalization:** Initiatives include allowing external commercial borrowings in rupees and promoting Rupee Vostro accounts for banks from Russia, the UAE, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius.

How Does Having an Internationalised Currency Impact India's Standing in the Global Financial System?

❖ **Increased Prestige and Recognition:** An internationalized rupee enhances India's standing in the global financial community, garnering prestige and recognition.

❖ **Reduced Dependency on Foreign Currencies:** Diminishes reliance on foreign currencies like the US dollar, contributing to economic sovereignty and mitigating exposure to external economic fluctuations.

❖ **Facilitation of International Trade:** Streamlines international trade by enabling direct transactions in Indian Rupee (INR), eliminating conversion needs, reducing costs, and simplifying cross-border trade.

❖ **Improved Monetary Policy Effectiveness:** Broad international reach empowers the RBI to use the exchange rate for managing inflation and stimulating economic growth, enhancing the effectiveness of India's monetary policy.

❖ **Strengthened Regional Influence:** A globally accepted rupee positions India as a significant economic player in Asia, fostering economic partnerships and collaborations within the region.

Examples of Countries That have Successfully Internationalized their Currencies, and What Lessons can India Learn From Them?

United States - U.S. Dollar (USD): Lesson for India: Building confidence in the rupee requires a stable and robust economy, emphasizing economic reforms, fiscal discipline, and macroeconomic stability.

Eurozone - Euro (EUR): Lesson for India: While not in a regional bloc, fostering economic ties with neighboring countries can boost rupee internationalization, akin to the collaboration in the Eurozone.

China - Chinese Yuan (CNY/RMB): Lesson for India: Gradual liberalization of currency controls and promoting rupee use in international trade can enhance acceptance, similar to China's strategic partnerships for yuan internationalization.

United Kingdom - British Pound (GBP): Lesson for India: Leverage India's cultural and historical ties to enhance the rupee's global appeal, as seen with the historical influence of the British Pound.

Japan - Japanese Yen (JPY): Lesson for India: Strengthening financial markets and regulatory frameworks is crucial for rupee internationalization, following Japan's success linked to a well-developed financial infrastructure.

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10. What Reforms Can be Pursued to Internationalize the Rupee?

❖ **Rupee Convertibility:** Rupee must be made **more freely convertible**, with a goal of full convertibility– letting financial investments move freely between India and abroad.

  ➢ This would allow foreign investors to easily buy and sell the rupee, enhancing its liquidity and making it more attractive.

❖ **Focus on Liquid Rupee Bond Market:** The RBI should pursue a **deeper and more liquid rupee bond market,** enabling foreign investors and Indian trade partners to have more investment options in rupees, enabling its international use.

❖ **Encourage Transaction in Rupee:** Indian exporters and importers should be encouraged to invoice their **transactions in rupee** — optimizing the trade settlement formalities for rupee import/export transactions would go a long way.

❖ **Currency Swap Agreements:** Additional currency swap agreements **(as with Sri Lanka)** would further allow India to settle trade and investment transactions in rupees, without resorting to a reserve currency such as the dollar.

❖ **Tax incentives:** Additionally, tax incentives to foreign businesses to utilize the rupee in operations in India would also help.

11. Why did India take so long to internationalize the rupee?

India took a cautious approach to the internationalization of the rupee for several reasons, and the process was influenced by various economic, political, and strategic factors.

- ❖ **Control over Exchange Rates:** Initially, India adopted a fixed exchange rate system, which provided stability to the currency but limited its internationalization. The government was concerned about maintaining control over the exchange rates to manage inflation and balance of payments.
- ❖ **Balance of Payments Concerns:** India faced balance of payments challenges, and the government prioritized stability in external trade and finances. A fully convertible currency could lead to volatility in the exchange rate and potentially worsen the balance of payments situation.
- ❖ **Economic Reforms and Liberalization:** India's economic reforms and liberalization policies began in the 1990s. Before that, the country followed a more closed economic model, and there were restrictions on foreign exchange transactions. The gradual opening up of the economy allowed for a more flexible approach toward the internationalization of the rupee.

OPEN NETWORK FOR DIGITAL COMMERCE: DEMOCRATIZE DIGITAL COMMERCE

Questionnaire:

1. *What is ONDC?*
2. *What is meaning of Participants in ONDC?*
3. *Why has India initiated this revolution?*
4. *What Role can We Play In ONDC?*
5. *Could you provide an update on the Current Status of the (ONDC) in India?*
6. *Is it related to the Unified Payments Interface (UPI)?*
7. *What is the Significance of ONDC in the Context of India's Digital Economy?*
8. *How is the Governance and Oversight Structure of ONDC Designed?*
9. *What are the Criticisms Raised Against the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)?*
10. *Do we need ONDC after so many years of Amazon and Flipkart? How is it going to benefit small players?*

Context: The Union government is looking to formally launch the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) this year **to democratize e--commerce** and to provide alternatives to proprietary e-commerce sites.

What is the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)?

- ❖ It was established on **31 December 2022** with initial investment from **Quality Council of India** and Protean e Gov Technologies Limited.
- ❖ Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) is a network based on **open protocol** and will **enable local commerce across segments**, such as mobility, grocery, food order and delivery, hotel booking and travel, among others, **to be discovered and engaged by any network-enabled application.**
- ❖ The platform aims to create new opportunities, **curb digital monopolies and by supporting micro, small and medium enterprises** and small traders and help them get on online platforms.
- ❖ It is an initiative of the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade** (DPIIT) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

What is the Meaning of Participants in ONDC?

There are two types of Participants in ONDC.
- ❖ **Network Participants:** Network Participants are responsible for connecting sellers or Buyers to the ONDC network through an application.
  - ➤ They are also responsible for digitizing the catalogue and dispersing payments. It consists of both buyer and seller **network participants.**
- ❖ **Ecosystem Participants:** These entities streamline the flow of ideas, talent, and capital throughout the system.

➤ These consist of Technology Service Provider (TSP), Reconciliation Service Providers (RSP), Online **Dispute Resolution Service Providers** (ODR), **Network Participant Account Providers, Associated Service Enablers.**

Why has India Initiated this revolution?

❖ **India's Digital Revolution:** India has been a world leader in demonstrating the successful adoption of **digital infrastructures at the population scale**, such as UPI, AADHAAR, and more.

❖ **Revolutionizing E-Commerce:** The initiative will not only facilitate the **rapid adoption of e-commerce but also boost and strengthen the growth of startups** in India.

❖ **Unlocking E-Retail Potential:** In India, more than **12 million sellers** earn their livelihood by selling or reselling products and services. ONDC recognises the unique opportunity **to increase e-retail penetration** from the existing 4.3% to its maximum potential in India.

What Role can We Play In ONDC?

❖ ONDC identifies **4 types of players.**

➤ **Buyer Network Participant: Connects buyers to the ONDC network** via a buyer application and shoulders buyer-facing responsibilities such as customer support, ensuring a seamless shopping experience.

➤ **Seller Network Participant:** Seller Network Participant is responsible for **connecting sellers to the ONDC network** through a seller application.

➤ **Technology Service Provider:** These are crucial in offering **a range of software applications** either as standalone solutions or via cloud-based services.

➤ **Gateway:** Gateways are essential components in an open-network ecosystem, **serving as technology providers to ensure** that all sellers in the ONDC Network can be discovered. In an unbundled network, there needs to be **seamless interaction between all participants** to facilitate end-to-end e-commerce transactions.
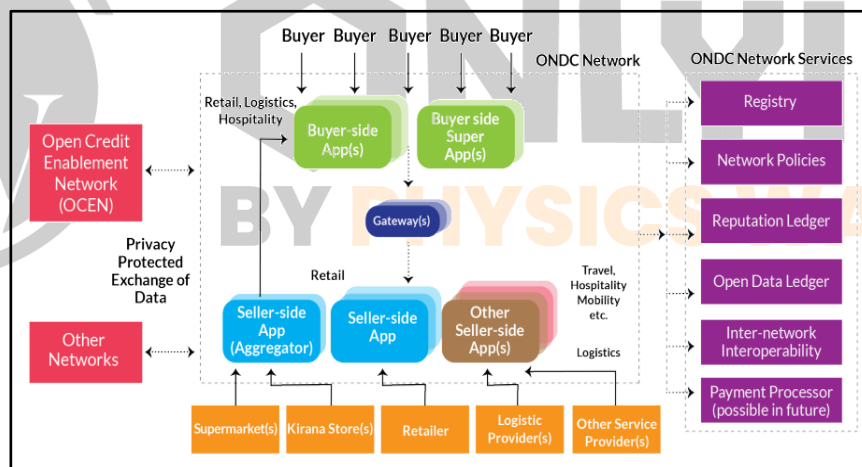
Could you provide an update on the current status of the (ONDC) in India?

❖ **Pilot Project:** ONDC has been **rolled out in five cities** – Delhi NCR, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Shillong, and Coimbatore.

❖ **ONDC will be expanded to 100 cities and towns across India.**

➤ The goal is to accommodate **30 million sellers and 10 million merchants online.**

Is it related to the Unified Payments Interface (UPI)?

❖ **The ONDC is modelled after** the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) project. The government wants to ensure that buyers and sellers of goods in the **e-commerce market can transact regardless of the platforms** on which they are registered. Under ONDC, a buyer registered on Amazon, for example, may directly purchase goods from a seller who sells on Flipkart.

What is the Significance of ONDC in the Context of India's Digital Economy?

❖ **Revolutionizing E-Commerce Accessibility:** ONDC eliminates the need for buyers and sellers to use the same application and promotes the discoverability of local digital stores across industries.

- ❖ **Breaking Monopolies:** The ONDC will put an end to the domination of the e-commerce market by a few large platforms.
- ❖ **Level Playing Field:** ONDC's network-centric approach levels the playing field by making goods and services **equitably accessible to all** and benefiting all participants in the ecosystem. **Example: Amazon and Flipkart** have been accused of promoting certain seller entities in which they hold indirect stakes. Food delivery apps such as **Swiggy and Zomato** have also been accused of charging high commissions from sellers.
- ❖ **Benefits to Buyers:** ONDC offers greater freedom of choice, reducing the overwhelming reliance on a single platform.
- ❖ **Benefits to Sellers:** ONDC reduces the skewed bargaining power in favour of the platforms, which often results in higher entry barriers and lower margins for sellers.

How is the Governance and Oversight Structure of ONDC Designed?

- ❖ **DPIIT's Endorsement and Oversight:** ONDC has been endorsed by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade** (DPIIT) under the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- ❖ **ONDC's Board Composition:** To ensure a **market + community driven approach** to decision-making, the board includes representatives from banks, the government, and independent industry and civil society members.
- ❖ **User Council:** It will be established by **representatives from Network Participants and civil society, to** provide **regular guidance** on various aspects of the network's functioning.

What are the Criticisms Raised Against the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)?

- ❖ **Debating the Viability:** Critics argue that the **purported benefits** of an open network for digital commerce are far from certain at the moment.
- ❖ **Current Freedom in E-Commerce: Sellers are already free to list their products** across various e-commerce platforms even in today's platform centric e--commerce model.
  - ➤ Buyers also rroutinely shop across platforms.
- ❖ **Empowering Consumer Choice:** There are also services such as **price comparison** that are offered by various private websites that bridge the information gap and help buyers make better decisions.
- ❖ **Reassessing Dominance:** So, critics argue, the **domination of the e--commerce** market by platforms such as Amazon and Flipkart may not be due **to any captive hold** that these platforms have over buyers and sellers.
- ❖ **The supposed monopoly** that platforms are said to enjoy may be no different from the limited monopoly that any business today has over its property.

Do we need ONDC after so many years of Amazon and Flipkart? How is it going to benefit small players?

- ❖ **According to Chief Business Officer (CBO) Shireesh Joshi** ONDC cannot be a challenger to the existing ecommerce companies like amazon and Flipkart. The ecommerce industry is in a **very nascent stage in India** compared to countries like the US and China. **The reach of digital commerce within the retail sector is just 4-5%,** which means there is room for more market players as well as disruption.
- ❖ Currently, **Amazon and Flipkart are estimated to have nearly 70% market share** in India's ecommerce sector.
- ❖ **A recent study by research firm Forrester** said that Flipkart, Amazon, Reliance and Tata (FRAT) collectively have an **80% market share** in the ecommerce industry in India. There have been numerous reports in the **media falsely saying that ONDC will challenge Amazon and Flipkart, or even impact their revenues**. These are not true," **the ONDC executive added.**

Benefits to small players:

- ❖ The ONDC initiative will also **promote innovation and entrepreneurship** by providing a platform for **startups and small businesses** to collaborate and access new markets. This will help to create new jobs and boost economic growth in India.
- ❖ **Following are the benefits of ONDC for small businesses:**
  - ➤ It will allow small businesses **to access a broader range of payment options,** including digital wallets, UPI, and credit/debit cards. This will help to **increase sales and revenue** for small businesses.
  - ➤ ONDC will provide small businesses with **access to a wealth of data and analytics**, which will help them **to understand customer preferences and behaviour.**

> ➤ **This will enable** businesses to tailor their products and services to meet their customers' needs, ultimately increasing sales and customer satisfaction.

The ONDC initiative is expected **to have a transformative impact on digital commerce** in India, with small businesses being the biggest beneficiaries. By providing **a level playing field for all businesses**, the initiative will enable small businesses **to compete with larger firms and reach new customers across India.**

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DIGITAL COMPETITION BILL

Questionnaire:

1. *What are Big Tech Companies?*
2. *What is the Difference Between Digital Market and Traditional Market?*
3. *How Do Big Tech Companies Engage in Anti-competitive Practices?*
4. *What is the View of the Parliamentary Committee on Finance on Anti-Competitive Practices?*
5. *What Steps Must be Taken to Improve Regulation of the Digital Ecosystem in India?*
6. *What defines a Digital Intermediary as Systemically Important?*
7. *What is the Competition Commission of India?*
8. *How does the Competition Commission of India Prevent the Abuse of Dominant Position by Multinational Corporations in India, Provide Examples of Recent Action Taken by CCI?*
9. *What are the Digital Markets and Data Unit which is set up by CCI?*
10. *What is the Ex-ante approach of Regulation?*

Context: The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance had called for **ex ante regulation of Big Tech firms as well as a separate digital competition law** to check anti-competitive practices by these firms.

What are Big Tech Companies?

The term 'Big Tech' refers to a **group of technology companies** that have dominated the industry for years due to their size, influence, and financial success. These firms are distinguished by their **ability to collect, process, and monetize** massive amounts of data and their global reach and impact on the economy and society.

❖ **Example: Group of major technology companies** like Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, and Microsoft are known as Big Tech.

What is the Difference Between Digital Market and Traditional Market?

Digital Market	Traditional Market
❖ Driven by Powerful Increasing in Size of Economy	❖ Diminishing Return to Size
❖ Cover both Traditional Market and Online Market	❖ Focused Only on Traditional Market
❖ Powerful Learning and Strong Network	❖ Limited to Its Products and Weak Network
❖ Can Take Monopolistic Outcome within in Short Period (3 to 5 years)	❖ Strong Competition and Multiple Players.
❖ Lack of Competition in the Digital Market is prone to Anti-Competitive Behavior.	❖ Low Chances of Anti-Competitive Behaviour

How Do Big Tech Companies Engage in Anti-competitive Practices?

❖ **Acquisitions and Mergers:** Large firms buying highly valued start-ups **without being subject to merger control rules.**

> ➤ **The lack of capturing** certain mergers and acquisitions due to thresholds not being met is a concern.

❖ **Platform Neutrality/Self-preferencing:** Big Tech favoring their own services or subsidiaries on their platforms, providing **unfair advantages and negatively affecting downstream markets.**

❖ **Data Usage:** Big Tech companies collecting massive amounts of **customer data**, potentially **misusing it for tracking and profiling customers**, creating barriers for smaller competitors.

❖ **Restricting Third-Party Applications:** Preventing the installation or operation of third-party applications, limiting user choice and competition.

❖ **Adjacency/Bundling and Tying:** Forcing consumers to buy related services by linking them to the main product, making it challenging for developers **to establish fair fees and reducing competition.**

❖ **Anti-steering:** Using provisions **to prevent business users** from using alternatives, stifling choice and leading to anti-competitive practices.

   ➢ **Example:** A**pplication stores mandating the use of their own payment systems for application purchases.**

   ➢ **Anticompetitive practices include activities like** price fixing, group boycotts, and exclusionary exclusive dealing contracts or trade association rules.

What is the View of the Parliamentary Committee on Finance On Anti Competitive Practices?

The parliamentary committee on Finance urges the government to finalize the digital competition bill to address **anti-competitive practices** in digital markets by the Big Tech Companies. Committee emphasizes the need to fill vacant positions at the Competition Commission of India (CCI) to ensure effective regulation. In December, the Committee recommended the formation of **Digital Competition Law**, and **defining Big Tech companies as Systemically Important Digital Intermediaries** (SIDIs) on the basis of revenues, market capitalisation and end users.

What Defines a Digital Intermediary as Systemically Important?

Inspired by the **European Union's Digital Markets Act (DMA),** the parliamentary panel has suggested to identify "**systemically important digital intermediaries**" (SIDIs) to curb the dominance of Big Tech **Recognizing Dominance:** The market winners in digital markets who function as **intermediaries or gatekeepers** will be designated as "Systemically Important Digital Intermediaries" (SIDIs). The criteria for designation will be based on factors like revenue, market capitalization, and the number of active businesses and end users - **all of which will be regulated by the Digital Market Unit.**

What Steps Must be Taken to Improve Regulation of the Digital Ecosystem in India?

❖ **Introduction of Digital Competition Act:** To address the specific needs of the digital market and ensure a fair and transparent digital ecosystem.

❖ **Strengthening the Role of CCI**: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) should be empowered to address anti-competitive behavior in digital markets.

   ➢ A specialized unit within CCI should be established to focus on digital markets.

❖ **Monitoring of SIDIs:** The unit would monitor established and emerging Systemically Important Digital Intermediaries (SIDIs).

❖ **Reviewing Compliance:** The unit would review compliance with digital market regulations.

❖ **Adjudication on Cases:** The unit would adjudicate on cases related to digital markets.

What is the Competition Commission of India?

Competition Commission of India has been established by the Central Government with effect from **14th October 2003**.

CCI consists of a **chairperson and 6 Members** appointed by the Central Government. **The Competition Act 2002**, as amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007, follows the philosophy of modern competition laws.

The Act prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and M&A), which causes or likely to cause an **appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.**

How does the Competition Commission of India prevent the abuse of dominant position by Multinational Corporations in India?

❖ Competition Commission of India (CCI) has been bestowed with **adjudicatory powers** n its regulatory role, it has to adjudicate – executively- **issues of appreciable Adverse Effect on Competition and Abuse of Dominance.**

❖ **To promote competition advocacy** which includes creating awareness and imparting training on various economic issues and also giving opinion to the Central Government on policies.

❖ To ensure that the **interests of consumers and the interest of the various players** in the market are balanced. **To ensure freedom of trade** and to bring about healthy competition in the market.

What are the Digital Markets and Data Unit which is set up by CCI?

❖ **Digital Markets and Data Unit (DMDU):** Established by **Competition Commission of India (CCI)**.

❖ It is "a specialized **interdisciplinary center of expertise** for Digital Markets with the composition of various officers from the different divisions and multiple streams of CCI.

❖ According to the Parliamentary Committee report, the role and functions of the DMDU include:

➢ To facilitate **cross-divisional exchange** or discussion on digital market issues

➢ To act as **a nodal point for stakeholder** engagement across academia, other industries, regulators, international deliberations, and government on digital market matters.

➢ To provide **support in data analytics/management** and address the novel enforcement issues of digital markets.

➢ **To lead Market Studies** into matters related to digital markets.

CCI has fined many MNCs in India For abuse of dominant position

❖ **CCI imposed a ₹ 1,337.76 crore fine on Google** for exploiting its dominant position with the Android operating system. The CCI had asked Google **to remove restrictions on phone makers**, including those which required them to have pre-installed Google apps.

❖ The CCI had imposed a **penalty of Rs 202 crore on Amazon in 2021 for failing to disclose its interest** in Future Retail when investing in Future Coupons.

❖ In September 2021, CCI imposed penalties totaling over Rs 873 crore on **UBL, Carlsberg India, All India Brewers' Association (AIBA) and 11 individuals for cartelization in the sale and supply of beer.**

❖ **Recently The Competition (Amendment) Act, 2023 was passed in India.**

❖ These amendments aim to **strengthen competition regulation, streamline operations, and foster a business-friendly environment** which further expands the scope of CCI to check anti-competitive practices by MNCs.

What is the Ex-ante Approach of Regulation?

❖ "Ex-ante," It is a Latin term which means "**before the event**".

❖ An ex-ante approach requires **putting in measures to prevent any abusive anti-competitive practices** by BigTech or Gatekeepers.

❖ **India** currently legally adopts **only an ex-post regime**, where attempts are made to resolve issues after the damage is done.

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MOVING AWAY FROM THE 'TAKE - MAKE - DISPOSE' MODEL

Questionnaire:

1. What do you Mean by the Take-Make-Dispose Model?
2. What is the Reduce-Reuse-Recycle Approach?
3. What is the Circular Economy?
4. What are Priority Areas that India has Identified for the Circular Economy?
5. What do You understand by the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)?
6. Why Circularity in the Steel Sector is important?
7. Which Initiatives have been Taken in Controlling Waste In India using a circular economy?
8. How Addressing Biowaste Through a Circular Bioeconomy Approach will Help?
9. How is the Government of India actively pursuing the adoption of biofuels?
10. How can Industry Coalition be helpful in Utilisation of biofuels?
11. The concept of a circular economy has been followed in many rural areas and middle-class households, but recently this trend has been reducing. Can you mention some of the reasons for the declining trend and some of the practices which reflect the circular economy model in Indian families.
12. Is this trend of circular economy also prevalent in urban households or developed countries, if not then what are the reasons for it?

Context: Recognising the need to switch from the '**take-make-dispose**' to '**reduce-reuse-recycle**' model, India has prioritized '**Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy**' as one of the **three core themes for deliberations in the G-20 forum.**

What are Priority Areas that India has Identified for the Circular Economy?

Four priority areas identified by India for the circular economy during its G-20 presidency.

- ❖ **Circularity in the Steel Sector**
- ❖ **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):**
  - ➤ It is a policy approach that holds producers accountable for the entire life cycle of their products, including their post-consumer stage.
- ❖ **Circular Bioeconomy**
  - ➤ It is an approach that seeks to combine the principles of circular economy with the use of renewable biological resources.
- ❖ **Industry Coalition:** Establishing an industry-led resource efficiency and circular economy industry coalition.

What do you Mean by The Take-Make-Dispose Model?

Take-Make-Dispose Model: It refers to the **traditional and linear approach** to resource consumption and production in the system, which are used by consumers, and then discarded as waste after their use. It is also known as the **linear economy model.**

What is the Reduce-Reuse-Recycle Approach?

It is a sustainable waste management strategy. It aims **to minimize the environmental impact** of resource consumption and waste generation. It promotes **a circular economy model** by encouraging responsible resource use, extending the lifespan of products, and maximizing their use.

What is the Circular Economy?

Circular Economy: It is an **economic system** which is based on the **reuse and regeneration of products**, especially as a means of continuing production in a sustainable or environmentally friendly way. **Applied Principles:** It is based on three principles:

- ❖ **Elimination:** Eliminate waste and pollution
- ❖ **Circulation:** Circulate products and materials (at their highest value)
- ❖ **Regeneration:** Regenerate nature
- ❖ **It includes 6 R's:** Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Repair.

What do You understand by the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)?

Definition: OECD defines Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) as an environmental policy approach in which a producer's responsibility for a product is extended to the **post-consumer stage** of a product's life cycle.

Characteristics of An EPR Policy: It is characterized by:

The shifting of responsibility (physically and/or economically; fully or partially) upstream toward the producer and away from municipalities; and the provision of incentives to producers to take into account environmental considerations when designing their products.

Why Circularity in the Steel Sector is important?

Steel has a crucial role in **infrastructure development**, and hence, its efficient utilization is important. Globally, about **7% of energy sector emission**s are attributed to iron and steel production. Transitioning towards a circular steel sector is a **key strategy to tackle steel sector emissions.** The key lies in ensuring collaboration among the **G-20 member countries** for knowledge sharing, technology co-development and technology transfer.

Which Initiatives have been taken in Controlling Waste In India using a circular economy?

- ❖ **Waste to Wealth Mission:** The mission aims to **identify, test, Validate and deploy technologies to treat waste to generate energy**, recycle materials, and extract resources of value and provide a technology of national and international technologies **to support Urban Local Bodies addressing their waste challenges.**
- ❖ **Swachh Bharat Mission:** Launched in 2014, this nationwide campaign aims to achieve cleanliness and make India open defecation-free. It includes waste management as a crucial component.
- ❖ **Solid Waste Management Rules (2016):** The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change introduced updated rules in 2016, emphasizing the segregation of waste at source and the promotion of recycling.
- ❖ **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):** The EPR framework holds producers responsible for the end-of-life disposal of their products, encouraging a more sustainable approach to waste management.
- ❖ **Waste-to-Energy Projects:** Several waste-to-energy projects have been initiated to convert municipal solid waste into energy, reducing the burden on landfills.

How Addressing Biowaste Through a Circular Bioeconomy Approach will Help?

- ❖ **Biowaste:** Biowaste such as municipal and industrial waste and agricultural residue has become a global issue as much of it is burned, causing pollution, biodiversity loss and global warming.
  - ➢ **High Consumption of Bioresources in G20 countries:** Since 1970, the consumption of biological resources in G-20 member countries has risen 2.5 times.
  - ➢ **Unlocking Potential:** Biowaste can be utilized as valuable primary raw materials and viable substitutes for mineral resources.
- ❖ **Fermenting Opportunities:** Microorganisms can ferment a large amount of usable carbon in biowaste from the food and agricultural industries to produce valuable goods.
- ❖ **As a Raw Material:** Combined with crops well-suited for degraded lands, **biowaste can serve as valuable primary raw materials** and viable substitutes for mineral resources.
- ❖ **Circular Bioeconomy:** It aims to establish a system that **eliminates waste by recycling and reusing its components.**
  - ➢ Adopting a circular bioeconomy approach will reduce **the need for extracting virgin resources** and provide an effective waste disposal solution.

> ➢ Biomaterials, such as **collagen, chitosan, pullulan, hydroxyapatite, cellulose, gelatin, and carbon-based nanocomposites**, can be obtained from biowaste through bioprocessing.

India Surpasses Milestones: India achieved the target of mixing **10 percent ethanol in petrol in May 2022**, five months ahead of the deadline. India has advanced the deadline for **doping 20 per cent ethanol in petrol by five years to 2025.**

How is the Government of India Actively Pursuing the Adoption of Biofuels?

Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana: It provides financial support to integrated bio-ethanol projects to set up second-generation (2G) ethanol projects.

Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources (GOBAR) Dhan Scheme: It was launched by the Government of India to convert cattle dung and other organic waste into compost, biogas, and biofuels to promote sustainable agriculture and reduce pollution.

Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) Scheme: It was launched in 2018 **to promote the use of Compressed BioGas (CBG)** as an alternative green transportation fuel.

The Global Biofuels Alliance: It is a multi-stakeholder alliance of governments, international organizations and industries which is intended to expedite global uptake of biofuels. A global alliance for promoting biofuels was launched at the Group of 20 in September 2023.

How can the Industry Led Coalition be helpful in the Production and Utilisation of biofuels?

Aim of the Coalition: To achieve enhanced **technological collaboration**, **build advanced capabilities** across sectors, **mobilize de-risked finance**, and facilitate a proactive **private sector engagement.**

Here are several ways in which an Industry Coalition can contribute to the effective utilization of biofuels:

❖ **Research and Development: Pooling resources** for research and development initiatives to enhance the **efficiency and cost-effectiveness** of biofuel production processes.

❖ **Technology Innovation: Collaborating on the development of advanced technologies** for biofuel production, including **second and third-generation biofuels**, to improve their performance and sustainability.

❖ **Market Development:** Working together to create and expand markets for biofuels, both domestically and internationally, by demonstrating the economic and environmental benefits of biofuel use.

The concept of a circular economy has been followed in many rural areas and middle class households, but recently this trend has been reducing. Can you mention some of the reasons for the declining trend and some of the practices which reflect the circular economy model in Indian families?

In the past countryside and town areas had **witnessed vagaries of nature** in the form of drought, flood, landslides etc. With this they have developed the attitude of **protecting resources** in every possible way.

Remote areas were not connected to nearby cities easily, besides lack of transport made them immobile so they put a lot of effort into repair, reusing the things that are crucial for their existence.

Example: Iron made tools, Clothes, Plastic bags, Water Cans, Storage for Granary etc. **Practices in Indian Families** especially in rural and middle-class households were aware of the fact that **resources are very important and have to protect it in any possible way.**

However, these practices are in a decline state, Some reason for its decline as mentioned below:

❖ **Massive Waste Generation, rapid urbanization and changing lifestyles** have led to increased waste generation, including electronic waste, plastic, and other non-biodegradable materials.

❖ **Over-exploitation of natural resources**, such as water and forests, contributes to environmental degradation and a decline in overall resource availability.

❖ **Energy Consumption:** Growing energy demands, often met through conventional and non-renewable sources, **can lead to environmental pollution and depletion of finite resources.**

❖ **Pollution:** Air and water pollution from industrial activities, inadequate waste management, and **the use of non-environmentally friendly practices contribute to the decline in environmental quality.**

❖ **Use and Throw Culture:** Materialistic attitudes are changing the attitude of people towards more and more use.

❖ **Easy availability of Plastic Products:** Plastic replaced metals, fibers, sand etc. and moreover it is available at very cheap thus more waste generation.

Various ways to maintain circularity of resource, some of them as mentioned below

❖ **Reuse and Repair:** Many Indian families have a tradition of repairing and reusing items rather than discarding them. **Example:** Clothing, household items, and electronics.

❖ **Composting:** In rural areas, traditional waste management practices involve **composting organic waste and utilizing it for agriculture**. This aligns with circular economy principles by returning nutrients to the soil.

❖ **Reuse of Discarded Materials:** Artisans in India often practice upcycling, **creating new products from discarded materials.** This approach reduces waste and **promotes the reuse of resources.**

❖ **Clothing Practices:** Second-hand clothing markets, local garment repairs, and the passing down of clothing within families contribute **to a circular approach** in the fashion industry.

❖ **Cultural Values:** Many Indian families place a strong emphasis on sustainability and respect for the environment. These cultural values often translate into practices that align with the principles of a circular economy.

❖ **Sustainable Agriculture:** Crop rotation and organic farming, which can contribute to maintaining soil health and biodiversity.

Is this trend of circular economy also prevalent in urban households or developed countries , if not then what are the reasons for it?

In urban culture and developed countries, the trend of the circular economy is **prevalent recently and its absorption in their countries has been witnessed. Many developed countries and urban areas** have been actively promoting and adopting **circular economy principles to address environmental challenges and promote sustainable practices. Some reasons why the circular economy trend** is gaining traction in urban households and developed nations:

❖ **Increased Environmental Awareness, global Initiatives,** many developed countries have implemented policies and regulations that encourage circular economy practices. **Example:** Adoption of Montreal Protocol for the protection of Ozone layer. **The EU aims to transition to a circular economy** to make Europe cleaner and more competitive.

❖ Businesses and industries in developed countries are recognizing the importance of sustainability.

❖ **Consumer Demand:** Rising consumers demand for eco-friendly products and services prompted businesses to adopt circular economy practices as part of their efforts to meet consumer preferences and market trends.

❖ **Technology and Innovation:** Advances in technology and Innovation have facilitated recycling and upcycling processes, making it easier to recover and reuse materials.

❖ **Circular Design Principles:** Designing products with circularity in mind, such as using recyclable materials and ensuring ease of disassembly, is **becoming a standard practice in many industries.**

It's important to note that the **circular economy is an evolving concept**, and practices may vary across different regions and communities within India. Further **Developments in environmental awareness and policy changes** can influence the adoption of circular economy practices over time. It's recommended **to refer to recent sources or studies** on circular economy initiatives in India.

ONLINE GAMING: GAME OF LUCK VS GAME OF SKILL

Questionnaire:

1. What constitutes online gaming?
2. What are different types of online gaming?
3. What is the difference between games of skill and games of chance or luck?
4. What is the current and future potential of India's online gaming industry?
5. Which factors are responsible for the growth of online gaming in India?
6. According to your view, what are the possible benefits online gaming offers?
7. What is the regulatory mechanism of online gaming in India?
8. What are concerns associated with online gaming?
9. Which initiatives have been taken to promote safe online gaming in India?
10. How online gaming is regulated globally?
11. What measures can be taken to promote online safe gaming?
12. Is GST on online games going to impact the online gaming industry in India? Do you think there should be categorisation of games based on skill and luck and no GST should be on games of skill?

Context: The **Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council** decided to levy a uniform **28 per cent tax** on full face value for **online gaming, casinos and horse-racing in its 50th meeting held on July 11.**

What Constitutes Online Gaming?

Online gaming refers to games that can only be played with an **internet connection or any other computer network available**. This is a part of the **sunrise industry** with a growing demand for game access. It can be played on PCs, consoles and mobile devices, and span many genres, including **first-person shooters, strategy games, and massively multiplayer online role-playing games.**

Types of Online Gaming:

❖ **E-sports:** Well organized electronic sports which include professional players).
❖ **Fantasy sports:** Choosing real life sports players and winning points based on players' performance.
❖ **Skill Based:** Mental skill.
❖ **Chance Based:** Based on random activity like roll of a dice online games.

What is the Difference Between Games of Skill and Games of Chance or Luck?

Games of skill	Games of Chance or Luck
❖ **To win or increase the odds of winning** the individual needs to have the prerequisite experience and extensive knowledge of the game. ❖ There is an **identifiable learning curve** in developing the necessary skills and honing them to adapt to different scenarios. ❖ **Example:** Chess, Carrom, Rummy, Teen Patti, Horse Racing and Fantasy Sports are said to be games of Skill.	❖ These games are **based on pure luck** where the **odds of winning cannot be boosted** by a player's skill, experience and/or knowledge. ❖ They are based on **unpredictable outcomes**, thus, there is no skill involved. ❖ **Examples:** Baccarat, slot games, lotteries, and table games such as blackjack, teen patti and roulette.

What is the Current and Future Potential of India's Online Gaming Industry?

❖ **According to Lumikai's State of India Gaming report FY22,** the country is estimated to be home to more than **500 million gamers at present** and
  ➢ India has a market worth **$2.6 billion** for gaming-related offerings, making it one of the biggest gaming markets in the world.

> This opportunity is projected to grow almost four-fold to cross **$8.6 billion within the next half a decade.**

❖ Despite its size, the country is still at a **nascent stage as a gaming market**, both in terms of maturity and adoption.

Which factors are responsible for the Growth of Online Gaming In India?

❖ **Penetration of Smartphone: According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), mobile devices are the primary driver** of India's gaming industry. India Currently has some **650 million** smartphone users.

❖ **Affordability and Availability of Internet:** India is a data-rich market with cheaper mobile data as compared to global averages. India being a mobile-first gaming market, is expected to benefit immensely from this growing internet penetration.

❖ **Young Population:** Gaming has a higher adoption amongst the **younger population in India** with the 18-30 age group highly engaged users of gaming.

❖ **Adoption of Digital Payment Methods:** Increase in penetration of **digital payments instruments driven by demonetisation.**

❖ **COVID-19 Pandemic Impact: Further, COVID-19** induced lockdown has reduced the friction for digital purchases in-game and has contributed to the **rapid growth in online payments on gaming portals.**

❖ **Recognition for Esports as a Standalone Sub-segment:** It has also been officially recognised by the **Indian Olympic Association** by establishing the Esports Federation of India as the leading governing body of Esports in the country.

❖ **Increasing Games with Localized Content:** Most of the popular games in India like **Teen Patti** by Octro, **Ludo King** by Gametion and others provide options to play games in **local languages** like Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi etc., thus attempting to target a large local audience.

According to Your View, what are the Possible Benefits Online Gaming Offers?

❖ **Convenience:** Compared to traditional gaming methods, online gaming may be accessed from the **comfort of one's home or from any location** with an internet connection.

❖ **Inclusive:** Online gaming makes participating in gaming activities that might otherwise be challenging or impossible for those with **disabilities or those who have trouble leaving their homes more accessible.**

❖ **Revenue Generation:** Through taxation and regulation, online gaming has the **potential to bring in a sizable sum of money for the Indian government.**

❖ **Employment:** It may open up **employment prospects for Indian business** owners, who may then construct and manage their own online gaming platforms.

What is the Regulatory Mechanism of Online Gaming in India?

❖ **Seventh Schedule:** The Constitution of India empowers **State governments to legislate** on matters relating to **betting and gambling** vide Entry 34 and Sports vide Entry 33 of the State List of the Seventh Schedule. However, the **State cannot legislate on games of skill** as it is only concerned with betting, gambling and sports, which fall under the ambit of games of chance.

❖ **Courts on Online Gaming:** According to various Court's judgments, betting on games of skill is legal, while betting on games of chance is not. Playing online games and sports of skills forms **part of article 19 (1) (g) and Article 21** of the Constitution. **States only have the power to make laws** and regulate gambling, and betting on the activity of gambling.

❖ **Legal Entity:** Any online gaming platform – domestic or foreign– **offering real money online** games to Indian users will need to be a legal entity incorporated under Indian law.

❖ **Reporting Entity:** These platforms will also be treated as 'reporting entities under the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, of 2002.**

❖ **Information Technology** (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment **Rules, 2023:** It is a comprehensive framework for Online Gaming Ecosystem.

What are Concerns Associated with Online Gaming?

❖ **Betting and Gambling:** Online games based on the **traditional ludo**, arguably the most popular online game in India, **have run into controversy**, and allegations of betting and gambling.

❖ **Financial Risks: Unintentional or unauthorized purchases** within a game that could result in very large bills – **adjusting the device settings and game purchasing settings** such as removing credit card information can help to mitigate against this risk.

- ❖ **Exposure to Inappropriate Content:** Exposure to problematic content such as **violence, sexual content, gender or racial stereotypes**, and exposure to inappropriate behavior from other players.
- ❖ **Cyberbullying and Harassment:** This can happen through online gaming **chat functions or message boards** that can often be **anonymous and targeted.**
- ❖ **Behavioral Changes:** Excessive playing encouraged by the way online, multiplayer games are designed. Online games can become **habit-forming** as they are built specifically to entice users to return often.
- ❖ **Viruses and Malware / Ransomware:** Hackers may try **to get kids to download infected files** or encourage children/youth to visit infected websites on gaming forums.
- ❖ **Privacy:** Personal information may be shared with **third parties**. Some gaming platforms may encourage users to link their gaming accounts with other social network platforms.
- ❖ **Offshore Gambling Websites:** Most of the betting in India is done on cricket matches, through websites like **Betaway, Bet365 and DafaBet.** These websites are headquartered in **tax havens** like Malta, Cyprus and Gibraltar but are accessible to Indian users.

How Online Gaming is Regulated Globally?

- ❖ **China:** It has placed **strict limits** on the time young people may spend playing online games. Online gaming in the country is **now only available to people younger than 18 from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m.** on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays.
- ❖ **USA:** In the U.S., **Internet casino gaming remains illegal** in every state that doesn't explicitly legalize the games.
- ❖ **Germany's Youth Protection laws:** It aimed at **violent games** pushed developers to replace realistic red blood with a green version.
- ❖ **Australia:** It has sought t**o ban games for including depictions of everything from assault to marijuana use.**

What Measures Can Be Taken to Promote Online Safe Gaming?

- ❖ **Uniformity in Laws: Proper gaming regulation** for all parties involved is urgently needed, otherwise the **center should be given the authority to enact rules** and regulations using either the residuary powers under Article 248 of the power under Article 252.
- ❖ **Coordination and Cooperation:** To fully realize the potential of the online gaming industry, the **State and Union Governments** should work together to set appropriate guidelines in conjunction with industry stakeholders.
- ❖ **Monitoring:** To standardize regulations and maintain uniformity in the laws across India, there has to be one **regulatory authority overseeing** the whole online gambling sector.
- ❖ **Parent Responsibility:** Parents need to be **accountable for their children's** gaming habits and time spent online.
- ❖ **Safeguarding Children:** Implement an **age rating system** that restricts minors to go on without their parent's permission. This issue could be solved by using **OTP verification on Aadhaar**.
- ❖ **Awareness:** Gaming businesses should aggressively **inform players about possible risks** and how to spot circumstances where cheating and abuse are likely to occur.
- ❖ **Transparency:** Participants' **anonymity should be removed**, and a strong grievance management mechanism should be developed.

Which Initiatives have been taken to Promote Safe Online Gaming in India?

- ❖ **Digital Gaming Research Initiative:** The government has started a **digital gaming research initiative** to support the Indian digital gaming research space and industry.
  - ➢ **The Science and Engineering Research Board** (SERB) of the Department of Science and Technology has identified **three main directions** for its Digital Gaming Research Initiative:
    1. **R&D** in learning and leisure gaming platforms,
    2. **Immersive game prototypes** with an emphasis on Indian culture and values.
    3. **Collaborative technical design process,** which was made by SERB Game Labs.

❖ **AVGC Promotion Task Force:** The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has established the **Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comic (AVGC) Promotion Task Force.** The government recognizes that the Indian AVGC industry has the ability to carry the **"Make in India" and "Brand India" banners**.

Is GST on Online games going to impact the online gaming industry in India? Do you think there should be categorisation of games based on skill and luck and no GST should be on games of skill?

❖ Different GST rates were applicable in the previous system based on the online game's nature. **Example: Games of skill** (such as rummy or fantasy sports), which depend on a player's expertise, were **subject to an 18% GST rate.** In contrast, **games of chance** (such as gambling and betting), where the outcomes rely mostly on luck, were **taxed at a 28% GST rate**.

❖ Under the new framework, **the GST rate of 28% will apply to the full value of the bets placed in online gaming.** This GST rate shall apply **regardless of whether these gaming activities are categorized as games of skill or chance.**

❖ **Effects on Prize Pools and Face Value:**

❖ **The immediate and visible impact** of this 28% GST implementation on online gaming will be seen in the **total prize pools and the face value of games.**

❖ This tax will be applied **to the funds collected by gaming companies from consumers,** leading to increased costs for players as consumers have to bear the burden of this tax. This may **discourage consumers from participating in online gaming**, thereby negatively impacting the industry's overall growth.

❖ **Consumer Burden:** Online gaming businesses should **proactively assess their tax positions and adapt their ERP systems and tax calculation processes** to align with the amended GST regulations, ensuring seamless compliance.

Luck vs Skill: The debate:

❖ In its most basic form, a game of luck is any game that requires no particular skill for a player to emerge victorious. The results of a game are based **purely on chance or luck.**

❖ **Most elements of the game are so random** that it is almost impossible for anyone other than a very seasoned player to see a pattern. On the other hand, **a game of skill is exactly the opposite** – a game that requires some skill from the player, be it mental acuity, intellect, some special skill or even brute strength.

❖ **The chances of a player winning a game depends on their skill**, the strategies they use and the experience they have in that game.

❖ **The Supreme Court of India**, on two separate occasions, has ruled that fantasy games, like online poker and rummy, **are games of skill**, even though several people who want these industries to be regulated and not just taxed, **believe that these games are in fact games of luck.**

❖ **According to Tax Authorities,** the platform allows you to place stakes and bet on the outcome of the game. **The platform does not disclose the skill of a particular player** to all the players seated at a table.

❖ A player of rummy makes **a conscious decision** as to whom he can compete. As a result, when ability is not a requirement for entry and setting stakes is the only criterion, the outcome of the game is mostly determined by luck.

❖ **Both "games of skill" and "games of chance" share the same element, which is the game's unpredictability.** Therefore, **betting on a game's outcome would be considered "gambling,"** whether the game is one of talent or chance. Irrespective of what one's stance is on whether online games like poker, rummy and fantasy leagues are games of skill or games of luck, **what one cannot deny is the fact that these games need to be regulated.**

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Society

70 HOURS WORKWEEK: BANE OR BOON

Questionnaire

1. *Recently a famous industrialist endorsed the idea of working 70 hours a week. How do you see it?*
2. *Can you elaborate on the benefits and disadvantages of working this long?*
3. *Is there any connecting link between efficiency and working long hours?*
4. *Does India need to increase its work hours?*
5. *Has any step been taken by the government agencies to increase work hour, or it is a mere moral suasion*
6. *What have been the trends regarding this world over?*
7. *What measures industries can take to ensure work-life balance?*

Context: There has been an intense and spirited debate about the ideal number of hours an employee should work each week. This discussion was sparked by a statement from Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy, suggesting that young Indians should commit to working 70 hours a week. Industry leaders have weighed in on this matter, with some opposing the notion, saying that 70 hours is excessive, while others have expressed support for Murthy's perspective.

Recently a famous Industrialist endorsed the idea of working 70 hours a week. How do you see it?

❖ Working 70 hours a week can have both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, it might indicate **dedication, ambition, and a strong work ethic, potentially leading to increased productivity** and progress towards career goals. Some individuals thrive in high-intensity work environments and can manage such demanding schedules effectively.

❖ The man who **stated this has also worked 80-90 hours every day.** He is one of the literal father figures in the Indian IT sector having built a company from scratch to a current net worth of around 70 billion dollars.

❖ However, consistently working such long hours can have **adverse effects on physical and mental health. It often leads to burnout, increased stress levels, fatigue, and a lack of work-life balance.** Quality of work might decrease due to exhaustion, and relationships outside of work could suffer.

❖ It's essential to consider individual circumstances, job requirements, and personal well-being when assessing whether a 70-hour workweek is sustainable or advisable. In many cases, maintaining a balance between work and personal life is crucial for overall health and long-term success.

Can you elaborate on the benefits and disadvantages of working this long?

Pros of 70-Hour Workweek

❖ **Enhanced Productivity and Efficiency:** A 70-hour workweek can significantly boost productivity and efficiency. With more time dedicated to work, individuals can complete a higher volume of tasks, meet deadlines, and make substantial progress in their projects.

❖ **Harnessing the Demographic Dividend:** India currently abhors the wealth of youth. Thus, we need to take advantage of it for the welfare of people and country collectively.

❖ **Skill Development and Mastery:** In the extended work Professionals can focus on refining their skills, gaining expertise, and becoming specialists in their respective fields.

❖ **Financial Rewards:** Working for 70 hours or more per week often leads to increased earnings. With overtime pay and opportunities for bonuses, individuals can substantially increase their income.

❖ **Networking Opportunities:** Collaborating with colleagues and superiors opens doors to new career prospects, mentorship, and valuable connections.

Cons of 70-Hour Workweek

❖ **Burnout**: Consistently working long hours can lead to burnout, causing physical and emotional exhaustion. It can impact productivity, creativity, and overall job satisfaction.

❖ **Health Issues:** Lack of sleep, poor eating habits, and limited time for exercise can lead to various health problems like fatigue, obesity, heart issues, and weakened immune systems. Recent data from **Pharmarack highlights a substantial increase in the sale of antidepressants and mood stabilizers, with a remarkable 41% surge from INR 1,382 crore in August 2019 to INR 1,955 crore in August 2023.**

❖ **Strain on Relationships:** Spending excessive time at work can strain relationships with family and friends. It might lead to conflicts, decreased quality time together, and feelings of neglect.

❖ **Diminished Productivity:** Overworking doesn't necessarily equate to increased productivity. After a certain point, fatigue sets in, leading to decreased efficiency and quality of work.

❖ **Reduced Creativity and Innovation:** Continuous work without breaks or time for relaxation can hinder creativity and innovation. Creativity often flourishes when the mind has time to rest and explore new ideas.

Is there any connecting link between efficiency and working long hours?

Working long hours **doesn't always guarantee increased efficiency.** In fact, there's a diminishing return on productivity as work hours increase beyond a certain point.

Contradictory to this, **short focused hours can help finish more work and boost employee productivity**.

❖ **Increase worker productivity**: It will also ensure adequate rest and protect workers' health and thus reduce sickness, absenteeism and attrition rates, all of which increase employer costs.

❖ **Parkinson's law:** It states that the amount of work expands to fill the time available for completion. Hence, shorter work hours ensure more efficiency.

❖ **Increased Female Participation:** It helps increase female participation in the labour force and ensure more inclusive development.

❖ **Overall welfare:** Short hours ensure work efficiency and work-life balance which assure good mental health.

Does India need to increase its work hours?

As per the International Labour Organization estimates among **163 nations, Indian workers ranked 7th, clocking 47.7 hours a week**. This is marginally even higher than that of China with a weekly work time of 46.1 hours. Thus it is not required. The focus should be more on productivity increase and technology enhancement

Has any step been taken by the government agencies to increase work hours or it is a mere moral suasion

❖ Many states amended the Factories Act, 1948 during the lockdown to increase the maximum number of working hours from eight to 12 per day and the maximum working hours per week from 48 to 72.

  ➢ These states include Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, and Odisha.

  ➢ The reason cited for extending factory shifts is the need to run the factories round the clock using two shifts to beat the global competition.

What have been the trends regarding this world over?

The highest work hours per week were in the United Arab Emirates (52.6 hours) and the lowest in Vanuatu (24.7 hours). **Most developed countries had much lower weekly hours**, including the Republic of Korea (37.9), Japan (36.6), the United States (US) (36.4), the United Kingdom (UK) (35.8), Sweden (35.2), Switzerland (34.4), Germany (34.3), Canada (32.1), and France (30.1).

What measures can be taken to ensure work-life balance?

Structural and qualitative changes:

❖ Enhancing India's labour productivity would need massive efforts by the government and industry.

❖ It will need **capital deepening (larger investments), more sophisticated production methods and innovations (technologies),** more workers with improved skills and a shift in employment towards more productive sectors**. This would require policies that enhance the import of technologies, induce larger research and development efforts, and help improve the quality of education.

New Working models:

- **4 Day workweek:** The most common form of the 4-day workweek is a 32-hour workweek spread across four days. Some variants adopt the 4/10 rule, dividing 40 working hours into four ten-hour days rather than the standard five eight-hour days.
- **100-80-100 model:** Employees receive 100% salaries for working 80% of their regular hours while maintaining 100% productivity.

Individuals may harbour diverse ambitions, but for those aspiring to reach the pinnacle of excellence, akin to figures like Narayana Murthy or Elon Musk, there may be no substitute for investing 70-plus hours per week in their pursuits. However, every individual has their own ambitions and values. They must stay true to themselves by listening to their mind and body.

STUDENT SUICIDE: DEATH OF A DREAM

Questionnaire

1. *Student suicide is often termed as silent pandemic. Why so?*
2. *Can you further elaborate on the reasons for increasing suicide among students?*
3. *What steps do you think can be taken to improve the situation?*
4. *What steps has the government taken in this regard?*

Context: As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2020 data, suicide was reported as the leading cause of death among people aged 15 to 30. The NCRB 2020 data also revealed that every 42 minutes, a student commits suicide. This means that an average of 34 students die by suicide every day.

## Student suicide is often termed as silent pandemic. Why so?

It is silent **because in most of the student suicide cases, the friends and family of the students have no idea what they have been going through.** The cut-throat competition, the anxiety surrounding the probability of clearing the exam, and family expectations are not easy to manage for these tender minds. In most cases, the students who commit suicide, do not share their inner turmoil with anybody and the pent-up frustration and grief aggravate the issue further.

Can you further elaborate on the reasons for increasing suicide among students?

Cause-wise distribution (girls below 18)
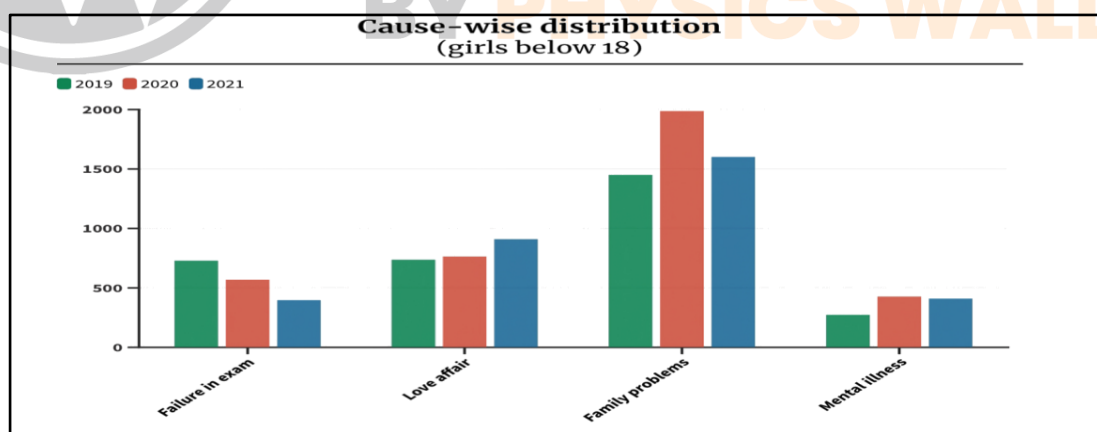
- **Education System:** We have a highly **defective system of education.** It gives unfair importance to marks and grades. It encourages unhealthy competition and rotary learning. It is completely marketed which **promotes a massive coaching culture.**
- **Insurmountable Burden of Expectations**: This does not necessarily mean accusing parents and families of burdening their children with unrealistic expectations. It is a lot more about how children perceive these expectations of being an "ideal child". Many attach their worth to the capability of clearing the highly competitive entrance examinations and fail to realize that failing in an exam is not the end of their life and they consider it a dead end.
- **Bullying and Peer Pressure:** Being bullied or facing social exclusion can lead to feelings of isolation and worthlessness. Peer pressure can also contribute to stress and emotional turmoil. For example caste based discrimination in universities

- ❖ **Relationship Issues:** Problems within friendships, romantic relationships, or family dynamics can lead to emotional distress, which, if left unaddressed, can lead to suicidal thoughts.
- ❖ **Substance Abuse**: Substance abuse or addiction issues can exacerbate mental health problems and contribute to suicidal tendencies.
- ❖ **Trauma and Loss**: Experiencing trauma, such as abuse, the death of a loved one, or a significant life change, can trigger feelings of hopelessness and despair.
- ❖ **Lack of Support:** Inadequate support networks, feeling misunderstood, or not having access to mental health resources can increase the risk of suicide.
- ❖ **Mental Health Issues**: Depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and other mental health conditions can significantly increase the risk of suicidal thoughts and actions.

Cause−wise distribution (boys below 18)

Source: Sneha (Suicide Prevention Centre) — FRONTLINE
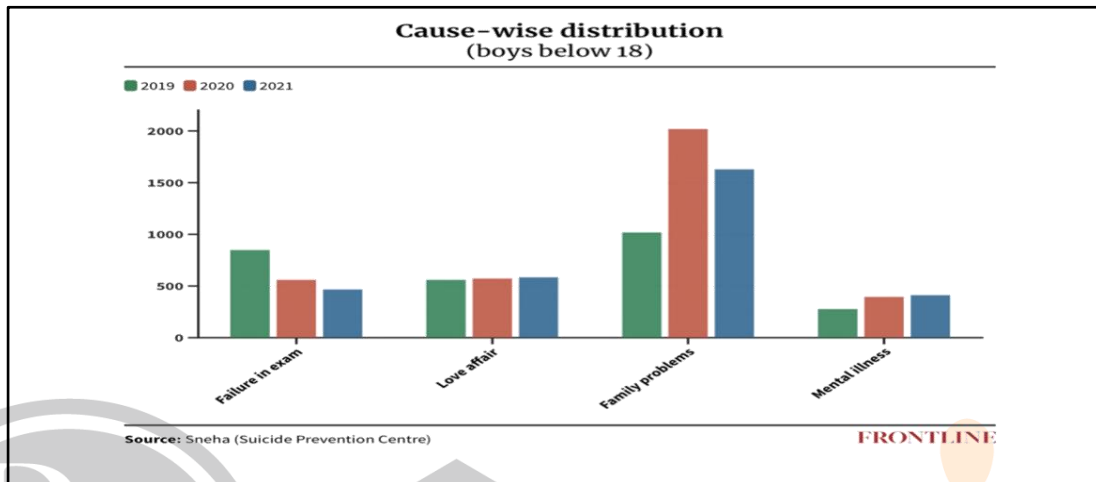
What steps do you think can be taken to improve the situation?

- ❖ **Raise Awareness and Reduce Stigma:** There is a need to address the stigma associated with mental health issues. It is crucial to educate students, teachers, parents, and the community at large This can be achieved through **school-wide campaigns, workshops, and open discussions**, creating a safe space for students to share their experiences and concerns without fear of judgment.
- ❖ **Strengthen Support Systems:** Schools should employ guidance counsellors and mental health professionals who are accessible to students.
- ❖ **Promote a Healthy Work-Life Balance:** Many students succumb to stress due to an overwhelming focus on academic achievements. Schools can reduce excessive homework loads, encourage physical activity, and emphasize the importance of hobbies and interests outside of the classroom.
- ❖ **Train Teachers and Staff:** Offering training programs for teachers and staff on recognizing signs of distress, providing initial support, and referring students to appropriate resources can be instrumental in preventing suicides.
- ❖ **Involve Parents and Guardians:** Parents play a significant role in a student's life. Schools should actively involve parents in discussions about student well-being and provide them with resources to recognize signs of distress in their children.
- ❖ **Monitor Online Activities:** Schools should educate students about responsible internet usage and cyberbullying prevention. Additionally, parents should be vigilant about monitoring their children's online activities and engaging in open conversations about online experiences.
- ❖ **Promoting sex Education:** The students should know the difference between good and bad touch, how to treat the opposite gender, the natural processes their bodies go through such as menstruation and increased communication on other related aspects.

What Measures has the government taken in this regard?

- ❖ **UMMEED (Understand, Motivate, Manage, Empathise, Empower, Develop):** The Union Ministry of Education (MoE) recently released the draft guidelines titled UMMEED for schools to prevent suicide among

students, prescribing in its 'plan of action' the setting up of wellness teams, orientation of teachers and family members, and immediate response to students exhibiting warning signs.

❖ **National Education Policy 2020:** NEP 2020 highlights the urgent need for ensuring 'not only cognitive development **but also building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with key 21st century skills.**

❖ **Reforms in IITs:** IITs announced various interventions to address the growing number of suicides. Measures including a **no-branch change policy, curricula and exam reforms, informal faculty-student interactions,** and engagement with parents have been introduced to combat academic stress.

❖ **Example:** IIT Madras to map student behaviour to prevent depression, suicides. IIT Madras will map student behaviour by studying their attendance in classes, frequency of visits to mess, labs, and places like gym to detect early signs of stress and depression.

❖ **Combating caste-based discrimination:** The UGC has revised its **Grievance Redressal Regulations**, making it mandatory to include a member from a marginalized background in such committees.

❖ **National Suicide Prevention Strategy (NSPS):** This is the **first policy in India to make suicide prevention a public health priority.** The strategy primarily aims to reduce suicide mortality by 10% by 2030 compared with 2020.

❖ **National Mental Health Program (NMHP):** This program aims to provide accessible, affordable, and quality mental health care to all individuals. It includes initiatives focusing on schools and colleges to raise awareness and offer counselling services.

❖ **Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK):** This program specifically targets adolescent health and includes mental health components to address issues like stress, anxiety, and depression among students.

❖ **Manodarpan:** It is an initiative of the Ministry of Education as part of **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan** aimed to provide psychosocial support to students, teachers and families for mental health and emotional well-being during the times of COVID-19 and beyond.

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MTP ACT: RIGHT TO ABORTION V/S. RIGHT TO LIFE OF THE UNBORN CHILD

Questionnaire:

1. *What is the MTP Act, and what does it regulate?*
2. *Can you provide a brief overview of the main objectives of the Medical Termination of pregnancy act?*
3. *Does the act resolve worries about privacy?*
4. *What sections of the Indian penal code deal with abortion?*
5. *What are the rights of an unborn child?*
6. *How does abortion impact the right to an unborn child?*
7. *What is the ethical debate revolving around abortion in the world?*
8. *What are the concerns related to the abortions?*
9. *What are the arguments in favour of abortion?*
10. *What are your views on the recent abortion ban in the USA?*

Context: A two-judge all-woman Supreme Court bench disagreed on allowing a 27-year-old married woman to terminate her 26-week pregnancy and referred the plea to the Chief Justice of India for consideration by a larger bench.

What is the MTP Act, and What Does it Regulate?

MTP Act 2021 Amendment:

❖ **Extended abortion limit from 20 to 24 weeks.** Granted to married and unmarried women up to 20 weeks for contraceptive failure.

❖ One Registered Medical Practitioner (RMP) up to 20 weeks, two RMPs between 20 and 24 weeks, State-level medical board for substantial foetal abnormalities after 24 weeks. 24 weeks for special categories, including survivors of sexual assault, minors, marital status changes, women with disabilities, mentally ill women, cases of foetal malformation, and pregnancies in humanitarian or emergency settings.

❖ Details undisclosed, except to those authorized by existing laws. Marks progress for universal access to comprehensive abortion care, aligning with medical advancements and prioritizing women's reproductive health.

Can you provide a brief overview of the main objectives of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act?

Pre-1960s: Abortion illegal, punishable under Section 312 of IPC. In **1964: Shantilal Shah Committee** formed to review abortion-related matters. **Committee's Recommendations:** Advocated liberalization of abortion laws to curb unsafe abortions and maternal mortality.

❖ **1971:** MTP Act introduced and passed based on Committee's suggestions.

❖ **Provisions:** Allowed abortion up to 20 weeks, granted immunity to doctors.

❖ **Termination Process**: Opinion of one doctor for up to 12 weeks, two doctors for 12-20 weeks.

❖ **2002:** MTP Act amended to permit medical abortion pills (mifepristone and misoprostol).

❖ **2021:** Amendment to Extend Abortion Limit

The MTP Act 1971 and The MTP Act Amendments 2021

	MTP Act 1971	The MTP Amendment Act 2021
Indications (Contraceptive failure)	Only applies to married women	Unmarried women are also covered
Gestational Age Limit	20 weeks for all indications	24 weeks for rape survivors Beyond 24 weeks for substantial fetal abnormalities
Medical practitioner opinions required before termination	One RMP till 12 weeks Two RMPs till 20 weeks	One RMP till 20 weeks Two RMPs 20-24 weeks Medical Board approval after 24 weeks
Breach of the woman's confidentiality	Fine up to Rs 1000	Fine and/or Imprisonment of 1 year

Does the Act Resolve Worries About Privacy?

MTP Act Ensures a woman's right to privacy during abortion. **Section 5A:** Permits disclosure of terminated pregnancy details only to authorized individuals. Violation by medical providers incurs penalties—imprisonment for up to a year, a monetary fine, or both. Emphasizes the importance of upholding confidentiality and privacy rights of women seeking abortion. Section 5A reinforces the MTP Act's commitment to safeguarding the sensitive information of women, maintaining ethical standards in abortion practices.

What Sections of the Indian Penal Code Deal With Abortion?

❖ Indeed, Sections 312 and 313 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) address offences related to miscarriages: **Section 312 of the IPC:** This section deems the act of causing a woman with a child to miscarry as illegal. If someone voluntarily causes a woman's miscarriage, they may face punishment, including imprisonment for up to three years, a fine, or both.

❖ However, an exception is made if the abortion is conducted in good faith with the intention of saving the life of the pregnant woman. **Section 313 of the IPC:** This section deals with causing a miscarriage without the consent of the pregnant woman, regardless of the stage of pregnancy. The punishment for such an act includes life imprisonment or imprisonment for up to ten years, along with a fine.

What are the Rights of an Unborn Child?

❖ Involves legal, ethical, cultural, and religious complexities, sparking debates on universal recognition.

❖ Some advocate for the unborn child's rights to health, well-being, and protection, rooted in cultural and religious beliefs.

❖ Central debate involves balancing reproductive rights and choices of the pregnant person against the rights of the unborn child, challenging decision-making authority.

❖ Some jurisdictions have foetal homicide laws, varying widely in scope, providing legal protections for the unborn child, especially in cases of harm to the pregnant person. Crucial focus on protecting the rights and health of the pregnant person, emphasizing the well-being and autonomy of the individual.

How Does Abortion Impact the Right to an Unborn child?

❖ **Potential Life Denied:** Abortion raises ethical questions about denying the potential right to life for an unborn child.

❖ **Debated Personhood:** The ethical debate centers on when personhood begins, influencing perspectives on the rights of the unborn.

❖ **Balancing Autonomy:** Ethical considerations involve balancing a woman's right to choose against the potential right to life of the unborn.

❖ **Medical and Moral Dimensions:** The ethical discourse navigates medical advancements and moral beliefs in defining the rights of the unborn child.

❖ **Legal Frameworks Vary:** Different legal frameworks worldwide contribute to varying ethical perspectives on the impact of abortion on the rights of the unborn.

What is the Ethical Debate Revolving Around Abortion in the World?

❖ **Women's Autonomy:** Advocates argue for a woman's right to choose, emphasizing autonomy over her body. **Example:** Pro-choice movements worldwide.

❖ **Foetal Rights:** Opponents stress the rights of the unborn, asserting that life begins at conception. **Example:** Anti-abortion groups like "Right to Life" in the U.S.

❖ **Religious Perspectives:** Many debates stem from religious beliefs, with some asserting the sanctity of life, while others emphasize a woman's well-being. **Example:** Ongoing discussions within various religious communities.

❖ **Legal Framework:** Laws regulating abortion vary globally, leading to discussions about access and restrictions. **Example:** Recent changes in abortion laws in Texas and their impact on reproductive rights.

❖ **Medical Considerations:** Health risks and foetal abnormalities fuel debates on when abortion is ethically justifiable. **Example:** Dialogues on late-term abortions due to medical complications

What are the Concerns Related to the Abortions?

❖ **Foetal Pain:** Concern that foetuses beyond 20 weeks of gestation may experience pain during abortion.

❖ **Psychological Impact:** Some argue that young women who undergo abortion may face an increased risk of subsequent depression.

❖ **Reduced Adoptable Babies:** Critics suggest that instead of abortion, women should consider giving unwanted babies up for adoption, as single parenthood becomes more accepted.

❖ **Abortion as Contraception:** Moral objections to using abortion as a convenient method of birth control, emphasizing the value of unborn life.

❖ **Responsibility and Morality:** Argues that individuals should accept responsibility for their actions and consequences, especially when becoming pregnant.

What are Arguments in Favor of Abortion?

❖ **Bodily Autonomy:** Abortion upholds a woman's right to bodily autonomy, empowering her in decisions about her body and reproductive choices.

❖ **Choice and Life Course Impact:** Allows individuals freedom to shape their life course, preventing unwanted pregnancies that may affect education, career, and mental well-being.

❖ **Avoiding Unsafe Abortions:** Legalizing abortion prevents unsafe procedures, reducing serious health risks and fatalities. Unsafe abortions contribute to eight daily deaths in India, accounting for 20% of maternal deaths.

❖ **Changing Social Norms:** Laws should adapt to evolving social norms, recognizing premarital sex, live-in relationships, and diverse family structures.

❖ **Foetal Abnormalities:** Timely access to abortion is crucial, as abnormalities may not be detected within the initial 20 weeks, posing risks to women's lives.

❖ **Addressing Marital Rape Victims:** Accessible abortion is essential for women who may have conceived due to sexual assault or marital rape, safeguarding their mental and physical well-being and preventing further harm.

What are Your Views on the Recent Abortion Ban in the USA?

❖ **Roe v. Wade (1973):** Legalized abortion, allowing it up to foetal viability.

❖ **Mississippi Abortion Ban:** Initially banned most abortions after 15 weeks, challenging Roe v. Wade.

❖ **2018 Ruling:** Struck down the Mississippi ban as unconstitutional, protecting women's rights.

❖ **Trigger Laws:** 13 states had "trigger laws" ready to impose new abortion bans.

❖ **Anticipated State Laws:** Predicted that 26 states, with or without trigger laws, would enact new abortion restrictions.

❖ **Telemedicine Challenges:** Laws often tie telemedicine abortion legality to the patient's location, posing risks for doctors and patients.

❖ **Cross-State Travel:** Women in states with abortion restrictions may travel to legal states for telemedicine consultations and medication.

❖ **Overseas Options:** Some resort to ordering abortion pills online from overseas due to telemedicine crackdowns.

❖ **Legal Oversight Challenge:** State authorities struggle to police orders from foreign doctors and pharmacies, making regulation difficult.

Access to safe and legal abortion is a matter of human rights, and its availability is the best way to protect autonomy and reduce maternal mortality and morbidity. The UN special rapporteur on the right to health has said that criminal laws penalizing and restricting induced abortion are "impermissible barriers to the realization of women's right to health and must be eliminated."

MILLETS: THE FUTURE FOOD

Questionnaire

1. *What is the international year of millets?*
2. *What is the significance of the international year of millet?*
3. *What are some of the popular varieties of millets grown in India?*
4. *What are the Steps taken by the government of India to popularize millets?*
5. *Which are the most popular exported varieties of millets?*
6. *Why is the government of India promoting millets? How can millets solve the issue of hidden hunger in India?*
7. *India has a poor performance in the global hunger index. Do you think that the promotion of millets can help in improving our rank?*

Context: The year 2023 has been recognised as the International Year of Millets by the Food and Agriculture Organization and United Nations.

What is the International Year of Millets?

❖ The Government of India had proposed to the United Nations for declaring 2023 as the International Year of Millets (IYOM). The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets after the proposal was supported by 72 countries.

❖ The Objective is Creating awareness of the contribution of millet to Food Security and nutrition. It seeks to inspire stakeholders to improve sustainable production and quality of millets. Try to enhance investment in research and development in the field of millets.

What is the significance of the International Year of Millet?
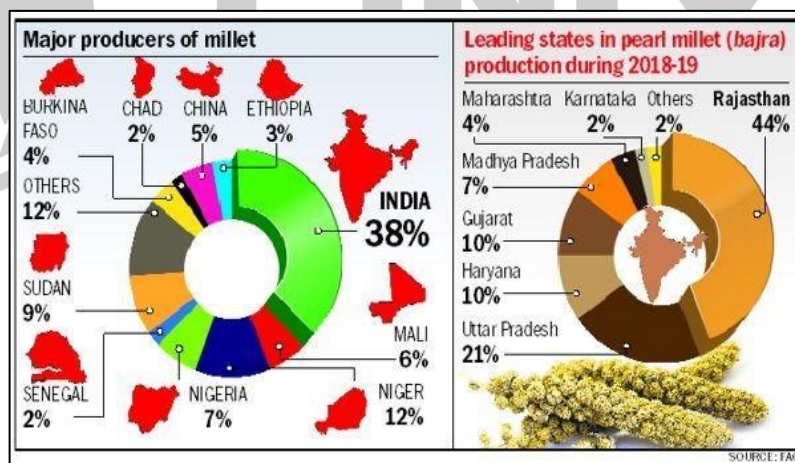
❖ Millet's cultivation has the potential to be a **source of income** for small farmers, who cannot afford high input costs.

❖ Inculcating millets in our diets can reduce the **ecological footprint** of food consumption, especially from methane emissions.

❖ It will also conserve water. The threat of climate change is real and the impact of such will be on agriculture.

❖ Millets will play a vital role in ensuring **food security** for the world.

❖ Millets are a nutritious source of food. Consumption of millets has the potential to tackle the **problem of malnutrition**.

What are Millets?

❖ Millets are small-seeded annual grasses that are cultivated primarily on marginal lands in dry areas in temperate, subtropical and tropical regions. With 55% of global production, India, Nigeria and China are the largest producers of millets.

❖ India's Global Share: With 20 % of global production and 80% of production in Asia, India is the world's largest producer of millet. In 2020, India was one of the biggest producers of millets in the world with an estimated share of around 41 percent. Compared to 2020, India witnessed 27 percent growth in millet production in 2021-22.

❖ Popular Varieties: Ragi (Finger millet), Sama (Little millet), Jowar (Sorghum), Bajra (Pearl millet), and Variga (Proso millet) are commonly available in India.

❖ Top Indian States: Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Maharashtra, and Karnataka are the major millet producing states.

❖ Export Share: currently, the share of export of millets is nearly 1% of the total millet production. Exports of value-added products of millets from India are negligible.

❖ Major Export Destinations: U.A.E, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Oman, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, U.K and U.S.A are major export destinations of Indian millets.

❖ Popular Exported Millets: Bajra, Ragi, Canary, Jawar, and Buckwheat are the millet varieties exported by India.

❖ Apart from India, other countries where millets are grown are Chad, Nigeria, China, Senegal, Sudan, Ethiopia etc. Bajra, Ragi, Canary, Jawar, and Buckwheat are the millet varieties exported by India. U.A.E, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Oman, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, U.K and U.S.A are major export destinations of Indian millets.

What is the Importance of Millets?

❖ **Nutrition Capacity:** Compared to cereals, millet contain many vital nutrients that are vital for a healthy body. They are a source for **protein, fiber, key vitamins, and minerals.**

❖ **Drought Resistant:** Millets can be grown in dry **and arid soil**. They do not require much water for their survival, making them suitable for large parts of the world.

❖ **Lower cost:** The input costs for millet cultivation are very low as these crops do not require high amounts of **fertilizers, water or pesticides**.

❖ **Variety of Conditions:** Millets can grow in a variety **of climatic conditions**, having the capability to survive heat waves, frost, rainfall etc.

❖ **Health Benefits:** Millets are a good source of **antioxidants**. Their consumption can help in control of diabetes, blood pressure, obesity etc.

What are the major activities to be held under the International Year of Millet?

❖ **Popularizing Millets:** Under the initiative, steps will be taken to build support and organize **market, promote, and develop effective market linkages** for millet-based products across the world.

❖ **Eat Right India:** It is a citizen-centric flagship initiative for **social and behavioural change** to ensure that everyone has access to safe, healthy, and sustainable diets.

❖ **Millet Food:** Involving students to create **innovative foods enriched with millets**, to contribute to the popularization of the grain.

❖ **Millet Conference:** India hosted the Global Millets (Shree Anna) Conference to spread **awareness on use of millets**.

How to Popularize Millets?

❖ **Using Influencers:** Social media influencers, celebrities, sportspersons, chefs etc have to be convinced to spread the **importance of millets** among the new generation.

- ❖ **Easy Availability:** Millets will only become popular if it is available easily across the world. For that to happen, **supply chain linkages** have to be strengthened.
- ❖ **Affordability:** The prices of millets and their products must be such that **they can be afforded** by the common man. This will make it an attractive alternative to cereals.
- ❖ **Offering Subsidies:** Farmers must be persuaded to **shift towards millet cultivation** by offering them subsidies, including MSP.
- ❖ **Introducing new Varieties:** Agricultural research institutes **must conduct research** to develop **new varieties of millets** to suit farmers' needs.
- ❖ **Value addition:** The best way to popularize millets is by **popularizing millet products**. For that to happen, value addition must take place.

Steps taken by the Government of India to Popularize Millets?

- ❖ **International Promotional Activities**: The Indian government is likely to hold promotional activities in countries such as South Africa, UAE, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom and United States of America.
- ❖ **Buyer Seller Meets (BSMs):** The government will involve participation of exporters, traders and farmers in 16 international trade expos and Buyer Seller Meets (BSMs).
- ❖ Branding and Publicity: Indian missions abroad will work towards branding and publicity of Indian millets.
- ❖ **Involving Foreign Diplomats:** Diplomats of targeted countries and potential importers would be invited to showcase various millet-based products.
- ❖ **Food Fairs and Platforms:** Indian millets would be shown on global food platforms such as Gulfood 2023, Foodex, Seoul Food & Hotel Show, Saudi Agro Food, San Francisco's Winter Fancy Food Show etc.
- ❖ **Promoting Startups:** Start-ups involved in exports of value-added products in the Ready to Eat (RTE) and Ready to Serve (RTS) category will be supported.

Why is the Government of India promoting millet?

- ❖ **Diverse Nutrition:** The Government of India promotes millets as they offer a rich source of diverse nutrients, including proteins, fibers and micronutrients. Integrating millet into diets addresses malnutrition and enhances overall health, especially among vulnerable populations.
- ❖ **Climate Resilience:** Millets are hardy crops that require minimal water and can thrive in diverse climates. Promoting millet cultivation contributes to agricultural sustainability and climate resilience, aligning with the government's efforts to address climate change challenges.
- ❖ **Farmers' Livelihoods:** Encouraging millet cultivation supports farmers by diversifying crops and increasing income opportunities. Millets are well-suited for small and marginal farmers, fostering agricultural sustainability and rural development.
- ❖ **Biodiversity Conservation:** Millets contribute to biodiversity by being adaptable to various agro-ecological zones, promoting sustainable farming practices and preserving genetic diversity in agriculture.

How can millet solve the issue of hidden hunger in India?

- ❖ Millets are nutrient-dense, containing essential vitamins and minerals, making them an effective solution to the hidden hunger prevalent in India.
- ❖ Integrating millets diversifies diets, providing a range of nutrients often lacking in conventional staples. This helps address hidden hunger by ensuring a more balanced and comprehensive nutritional intake.
- ❖ Millets enhance accessibility to crucial micronutrients like iron, zinc, and calcium, combating deficiencies associated with hidden hunger and promoting overall health.
- ❖ Promoting millet consumption is especially beneficial for vulnerable groups, including women and children, who are more susceptible to hidden hunger, contributing to a holistic approach to nutritional well-being in India.

India has a poor performance in the Global Hunger Index. Do you think that the promotion of millets can help in improving our rank?

- ❖ Promoting millet in India can potentially improve the nation's Global Hunger Index (GHI) ranking by addressing nutritional deficiencies.
- ❖ Millets, being rich in essential nutrients, offer a practical solution to enhance dietary diversity and combat malnutrition, a significant factor in the GHI.
- ❖ Encouraging millet cultivation aligns with sustainable agriculture, bolstering food security and positively impacting the GHI by ensuring a stable and diverse food supply.
- ❖ Millet promotion supports small-scale farmers, fostering economic resilience and contributing to poverty reduction, which, in turn, correlates with improved food security and a potential positive shift in the GHI ranking.

Millets are not just important for **empowering small and marginal farmers**. they will play a vital role in **climate smart agriculture** and ensuring **food security** of the world.

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DRUG MENACE IN INDIA

Questionnaire:

1.   *What do you understand about drug abuse?*
2.   *What is the status of the drug menace in India?*
3.   *What are the major factors contributing to the drug problem in India?*
4.   *What is the impact of drug abuse in India?*
5.   *What are the challenges associated with tackling drug abuse?*
6.   *What is the legal framework in India concerning drug abuse?*
7.   *What are the government policies to curb the drug menace?*
8.   *What are specific regions in India that are more susceptible to the drug menace?*
9.   *Are there any successful case studies or models from other countries that India could learn from in its efforts to combat the drug menace?*
10. *What are the suggestions to cope with drug menace?*
11. *What are the golden crescent and golden triangle and how are they linked with drug issues?*
12. *How is the issue of drug menace linked with terrorism?*
13. *Why are youth more susceptible to drug abuse? Do you think the changing lifestyle and parents are responsible for this? What is the role of parents in handling the issue of drug abuse?*

Context: The **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** has taken a significant step in combating the drug menace by disposing of a massive 1,44,000 kilograms of illegal drugs.

What do you understand about drug abuse?

Drug abuse refers to the habitual and **harmful use of substances, both legal and illegal,** that can lead to physical, psychological, and social harm. It involves the misuse of drugs for non-medical purposes, often **leading to addiction,** dependence, and adverse health consequences. Drug abuse can take various forms, including the misuse of prescription medications, recreational drugs, or the excessive consumption of alcohol.

What is the status of the drug menace in India?

In the 2022 World Drug Report, India ranked fourth globally in terms of opium seizures, with 5.2 tons confiscated in 2020. Additionally, the country recorded **the third-highest amount of seized morphine** at 0.7 tons during the same period.

What are the major factors contributing to the drug problem in India?

- ❖ **Geographical Location:** India's proximity to the **Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent** regions facilitates the illegal trafficking of drugs. For instance, the Northeastern states are vulnerable to heroin smuggling from the Golden Triangle.
- ❖ **Economic Disparities:** Socioeconomic disparities contribute to vulnerability. Areas with economic challenges may witness higher instances of drug abuse. For example, Punjab faced a significant opioid crisis linked to economic distress.
- ❖ **Prescription Drug Abuse:** The availability and misuse of prescription drugs contribute to the problem. In 2021, the World Drug Report highlighted India's increasing diversion of prescription drugs for recreational use.
- ❖ **Political Instability in Neighbouring Regions:** Political instability in neighbouring regions, such as Afghanistan and Myanmar, contributes to the flow of illegal drugs into India, affecting border states.
- ❖ **Youth Population and Changing Lifestyles:** The youth population's vulnerability and changing lifestyles, including increased urbanization, contribute to the drug problem. Prevention efforts need to target this demographic effectively.

What is the impact of drug abuse in India?

- ❖ **Health Consequences:** Drug abuse leads to severe health issues. For instance, the opioid crisis in Punjab resulted in a spike in HIV cases due to needle-sharing practices.
- ❖ **Economic Burden:** The economic impact is substantial. In 2019, the estimated economic loss due to substance abuse in India was approximately 1.4 lakh crore rupees, affecting productivity and healthcare costs.
- ❖ **Social Disintegration:** Drug abuse contributes to social disintegration. Families in affected regions, such as those in Punjab, experience breakdowns due to the emotional and financial strain caused by addiction.
- ❖ **Crime Rates:** Drug abuse is linked to increased crime rates. Data shows that a significant portion of crimes, including theft and violence, is associated with substance abuse.
- ❖ **Youth Population:** The impact on the youth is concerning. A survey reported that over 16% of Indian youth between 10-75 years have tried cannabis, indicating potential long-term societal consequences.

What are the challenges associated in tackling drug abuse?

- ❖ **Cross-Border Trafficking:** India faces the challenge of cross-border trafficking of drugs, notably from the Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent regions. **Example:** The porous borders contribute to the smuggling of narcotics, such as heroin from Afghanistan, impacting states like Punjab.
- ❖ **Online Drug Trade:** The rise of online drug trade poses difficulties in monitoring and regulating illicit transactions **Example:** India's link to drug shipments on major darknet markets between 2011 and 2020 underscores challenges in addressing online drug activities.
- ❖ **Limited Rehabilitation Infrastructure:** Inadequate rehabilitation infrastructure hinders effective treatment and recovery.
- ❖ **Stigma and Awareness:** Stigma surrounding mental health and substance abuse acts as a barrier to seeking help.
- ❖ **Law Enforcement Challenges:** Limited resources and corruption pose challenges in effective law enforcement.

What is the legal framework in India concerning drug abuse?

The legal framework in India concerning drug abuse is primarily governed by the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS Act).

- ❖ **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS Act):** The NDPS Act serves as the cornerstone of drug-related legislation in India. It regulates and controls operations relating to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
- ❖ **Offenses and Penalties:** The NDPS Act outlines offenses related to the production, manufacture, possession, sale, purchase, transport, warehousing, use, consumption, import inter-State, export inter-State, import into India, or external dealings in drugs.
- ❖ **Regulatory Authorities:** The Central Government and State Governments appoint officers, such as Narcotics Commissioners and Narcotics Control Bureau officers, to enforce the provisions of the NDPS Act.

What are the government policies to curb the drug menace?

❖ **Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan (Drug-Free India Campaign):** Launched in 2020, this campaign aims to create awareness about the harmful effects of drug abuse, reduce demand, and mobilize communities to work towards a drug-free India.

❖ **National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR):** NAPDDR focuses on demand reduction strategies, including awareness programs, counselling services, treatment facilities, and community-based interventions to prevent and reduce drug abuse.

❖ **Border Area Development Program (BADP):** Implemented in border areas, BADP aims to address the socio-economic issues contributing to drug trafficking. It includes the development of infrastructure, healthcare, and education to improve living conditions.

❖ **Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act:** This legislation provides for the prevention of illicit trafficking and imposes stringent penalties on offenses related to drug trafficking.

❖ **Rapid Rural Police Response System (RRPRS):** Implemented in Punjab, RRPRS aims to strengthen the police response in rural areas vulnerable to drug trafficking by providing quick and effective intervention.

❖ **Treatment and Rehabilitation Centers:** The government establishes and supports treatment and rehabilitation centers across the country to assist individuals struggling with drug addiction.

What are specific regions in India that are more susceptible to the drug menace?

❖ **Punjab:** Punjab has faced significant challenges related to drug abuse, especially opioids. Proximity to the **Golden Crescent** region, economic distress, and historical factors contribute to the vulnerability of this state.

❖ **North-Eastern States:** States like Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland are susceptible due to their proximity to the Golden Triangle. Heroin and other narcotics are often trafficked through these states.

❖ **Jammu and Kashmir:** The region has faced challenges due to its proximity to Afghanistan, a major producer of opiates. Conflict and instability have also contributed to the drug abuse issue.

❖ **Goa:** Goa faces challenges related to drug abuse, especially among the tourist population. The easy availability of drugs and a transient population contribute to the issue.

❖ **Himachal Pradesh:** Certain regions in Himachal Pradesh, particularly those close to the border with Punjab, have witnessed drug-related challenges, including cannabis cultivation.

❖ **Border States:** States sharing international borders, such as Gujarat and West Bengal, are vulnerable to drug trafficking due to their proximity to neighbouring countries.

❖ **Urban Slums:** Certain urban slums, irrespective of the state, can be susceptible to drug abuse due to challenging living conditions, poverty, and limited access to education and healthcare.

Are there any successful case studies or models from other countries that India could learn from in its efforts to combat the drug menace?

Country	Approach/Model	Key Takeaways for India
Portugal	**Decriminalization of Drug Use (2001):** Focus on treatment over punishment.	**Shift from Punishment to Treatment:** Emphasizes treating drug abuse as a health issue.
Switzerland	**Heroin-Assisted Treatment (HAT):** Provides pharmaceutical-grade heroin.	**Harm Reduction Strategies**: Focuses on minimizing harm, offering controlled substances.
United States	**Drug Courts:** Specialized courts for non-violent drug offenders.	**Judicial Alternatives:** Explore diversionary programs for non-violent drug offenders.
Netherlands	**Harm Reduction Policies:** Tolerance of small-scale cannabis use.	**Balanced Regulation**: Allows certain controlled drug use, emphasizing harm reduction.

Iran	**Harm Reduction and Treatment:** Pragmatic approach despite strict laws.	**Community Engagement:** Involves communities in harm reduction and treatment efforts.
Australia	**Pill Testing Trials:** Allows testing of drugs at events for safety.	**Preventive Measures:** Focuses on harm reduction through proactive measures.

What are the suggestions to Cope with Drug Menace?

❖ **Effective coordination among enforcement agencies:** Promoting cooperation and collaboration between government departments in the fight against drug abuse and trafficking. For example, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation, Border Security Force, the National Investigation Agency, etc.

❖ **Sharing of intelligence:** There is an urgent need to develop a system for sharing of information which would help the enforcement agencies connect the distributors to the source of supply.

❖ **Focus on source of supply:** Enforcement agencies should focus mainly on tracking the network deeply and prosecuting producers and suppliers, rather than the current focus on distributors and peddlers.

❖ **Special skills, dedicated units:** There is a need to develop special skills within state police organizations dealing with drugs.

❖ **Enhancement of punishment under Illegal Drug Control Act:** Smugglers, suppliers and members of drug syndicates should be awarded enhanced punishments.

❖ **Creating awareness among citizens:** Many times, students and young people may not be aware of the harmful effects of illicit drugs. Youth, especially, suffer from insecurity and depression and fall prey to drug peddlers. There is a need to create awareness among the people.

❖ **Establishment of de-addiction centers and camps:** The government agencies can establish district wise de-addiction centers and camps to help the affected youth. Rehabilitation and post care counseling can save many lives.

What are the golden crescent and golden triangle and how are they linked with drug issues?

❖ **Golden Crescent:** The term "Golden Crescent" denotes one of Asia's two illicit drug superhighways situated at the convergence of Central, South, and Western Asia. It encompasses Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.

❖ **Golden Triangle:** The 'Golden Triangle' is situated in **South-East Asia** and comprises parts of **Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam.** This region is notorious for illegal drug production.

❖ **Drug Trade:** Primarily associated with opium and heroin cultivation, these areas contribute significantly to the global illicit drug trade.

❖ **Geopolitical Conflict:** The geopolitical instability in Afghanistan, as the world's leading opium producer, intensifies the challenges.

❖ Insurgent groups often exploit the drug trade for funding, complicating efforts to control and eradicate production.

❖ The Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle remain focal points in international endeavours to address the complex challenges of illegal drug trafficking.

How is the issue of drug menace linked with terrorism?

❖ **Drug Trafficking as a Revenue Source**: The link between drug menace and terrorism lies in the illicit trade's role as a lucrative revenue source for terrorist organizations. Drug trafficking, including the production and distribution of narcotics, provides substantial funding for terror activities.

❖ **Funding Armed Conflicts:** Terrorist groups often engage in drug trade to finance armed conflicts, purchase weapons, and sustain their operations. The influx of funds from the drug trade enhances their organizational capabilities and resilience.

❖ **Undermining Stability:** The drug-terror nexus also undermines social and political stability, as drug-related activities can fuel violence, corruption, and contribute to the overall degradation of affected regions.

❖ **Symbiotic Relationship:** Intersection of drug trafficking and terrorism creates a symbiotic relationship, with illegal drug proceeds empowering and sustaining terrorist activities, while terrorism, in turn, destabilizes regions, fostering an environment conducive to drug-related criminal enterprises.

Why is youth more susceptible to drug abuse? Do you think the changing lifestyle and parents are responsible for this? What is the role of parents in handling the issue of drug abuse?

❖ **Youth Vulnerability to Drug Abuse:** The susceptibility of youth to drug abuse can be attributed to various factors, including biological, psychological, and environmental influences. **Adolescence** is a crucial period of brain development, making individuals more prone to experimentation. **Peer pressure,** curiosity fuelled with unemployment, hopelessness and desire for identity and belonging can drive youth towards substance use.

❖ **Changing Lifestyle Impact:** Shifts in lifestyle, societal norms, and increased exposure to various substances can contribute to increased vulnerability. Stressful academic environments, societal expectations, and the influence of media further play a role in shaping perceptions and behaviours related to drug use.

❖ **Parental Influence:** Parents significantly influence a child's attitudes and behaviours. Lack of parental involvement, communication, or awareness about the child's activities may contribute to susceptibility. Conversely, overbearing parenting styles can lead to rebellion and experimentation.

Role of Parents in Prevention and Intervention: Parents play a crucial role in preventing and addressing drug abuse.

❖ Open communication, fostering a supportive environment, and educating children about the risks of substance abuse are essential.

❖ Setting clear expectations, monitoring activities, and being aware of a child's social circle are preventive measures.

❖ **Early Intervention and Support:** If signs of drug abuse emerge, parents should approach the issue with empathy, seeking professional help if necessary. Early intervention, counselling, and rehabilitation can be crucial in addressing the problem before it escalates.

Thus, while changing lifestyles and external influences contribute to youth susceptibility to drug abuse, parents play a pivotal role in prevention through communication, awareness, and early intervention strategies.

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY

Questionnaire:

1. *What are the key objectives of national education policy?*
2. *What are the salient features of NEP 2020?*
3. *What are the challenges in implementation of NEP 2020?*
4. *How have the national education policies of India evolved since its independence?*
5. *Which factors need to be considered for ensuring the successful implementation of the NEP's ambitious goals?*
6. *Do you think that allowing foreign colleges to open campuses in India will make education more expensive?*
7. *Do you think India needs to incorporate sex education in the curriculum? What benefits can it make?*

Context: Recognizing the need for comprehensive reforms to meet the challenges of the 21st century, the Government of India unveiled the National Education Policy (NEP) in July 2020.

National Education Policy 2020:

This landmark policy represents **a paradigm shift in the Indian education system,** with a vision to transform the way knowledge is imparted, promote holistic development, and equip learners with the skills required to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

What are the key Objectives of National Education Policy?

The NEP aims to revolutionize education in India and prepare the country's youth for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. It seeks **to address the shortcomings of the previous education policy** and proposes a comprehensive framework to make education more inclusive, flexible, and multidisciplinary.

What are Salient Features of NEP 2020?

❖ **5+3+3+4 School Structure:** The policy introduces a new school structure, dividing the pre-school and primary stages into a 5+3+3+4 format.
  ➢ The first five years will focus on foundational learning, followed by three years of preparatory education and four years of multidisciplinary secondary education.
  ➢ This approach aligns with global standards and promotes experiential learning and critical thinking.

❖ **Mother Tongue as Medium of Instruction:** NEP 2020 encourages the use of the mother tongue or **regional language** (along with Hindi and English) as the medium of instruction until at least grade 5 to promote better understanding and cognitive development.
  ➢ This move not only promotes **cultural inclusivity** but also aims **to improve language proficiency and communication skills** among students.

❖ **National Academic Credit Bank (NACB):** The NACB is proposed **to facilitate seamless credit transfers** among institutions and promote multidisciplinary learning.

❖ **Setting Up of National Research Foundation (NRF):** The NRF aims to foster research and innovation in all disciplines, **providing grants and promoting a culture of research in educational institutions.**

❖ **Multiple Entry and Exit Points in Higher Education:** The NEP introduces a **flexible approach to higher education**, allowing students to enter and exit degree programs as per their preferences and requirements.

❖ **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE):** The policy focuses on the crucial early years of a child's development. **It aims to provide a strong foundation** for learning by integrating Early Childhood Care and Education into the formal education system. This will help enhance children's **cognitive, social, and emotional skills** from an early age.

❖ **Teacher Empowerment:** Recognizing the pivotal role of teachers in shaping young minds, the NEP aims to enhance teacher training and professional development.
  ➢ It also encourages **a more learner-centric pedagogical approach** and a greater emphasis on nurturing teachers' creative and critical thinking skills.

Gender and Social Inclusion: The NEP emphasizes the importance of inclusivity, **aiming to bridge gender and social gaps in education.**
  ➢ It strives to ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender, caste, or economic background.

What are the Challenges in Implementation of NEP 2020?

❖ **Addressing Infrastructural Gaps:** One of the primary concerns is the need for **major infrastructural changes** in schools nationwide to make them compliant with the policy guidelines.
  ➢ **Smaller classrooms and more students** can have negative effects on a child's health, decreasing their interest and motivation for learning.

❖ **Lack of Budget:** There is also a need for **adequate funding and resources** to be made available for proper implementation.

❖ **Too Much Pressure on Grades:** In India, a student's intelligence and performance are thought to be mostly determined by their grades.

❖ **Lack of Training:** In the Indian education system, rote memorization typically dominates the curriculum. It is heavily theoretical. It is so prevalent that even to get admission **to a school a child should know the alphabet, numbers, and whatnot.**

❖ Therefore, **tackling the challenges facing the implementation of NEP 2020** will require **collective efforts** from the government, educationists, teachers, and other stakeholders.

National Education Policies in India Since Independence

❖ **Education Policy of 1968 (NEP 1968):**
  ➢ **The first comprehensive National Education Policy** of independent India was formulated in 1968. This policy aimed **to promote a uniform educational structure across the country,** focusing on

improving access to primary education, adult literacy, and technical education. **The NEP 1968 sought to implement a 10+2+3 education system**, where schooling would consist of ten years of primary and secondary education, followed by a three-year undergraduate degree.

❖ **Education Policy of 1986 (NEP 1986):**

➢ With the realization that the **NEP 1968 did not adequately address the emerging challenges in the education sector,** the government introduced the National Policy on Education in 1986. This policy aimed to modernize and internationalize education while giving due importance to India's rich cultural heritage.

➢ NEP 1986 also emphasized the integration of **education for children with special needs and the establishment of the National Council of Educational Research and Training** (NCERT) and the National Open School (now known as the National Institute of Open Schooling, NIOS).

❖ **Education Policy of 1992 (Program of Action 1992):**

➢ The National Policy on Education 1986 underwent an amendment in 1992, resulting in the Program of Action. This program addressed **the challenges in the implementation of the NEP 1986** and provided a roadmap for achieving its objectives.

➢ **It focused on decentralization of education**, enhancing the role of teachers, promoting value-based education, and strengthening vocational education to address unemployment issues.

❖ **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**

➢ The NEP aims to revolutionize education in India and prepare the country's youth for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. It seeks **to address the shortcomings of the previous education policy** and proposes a comprehensive framework to make education more inclusive, flexible, and multidisciplinary.

Which Factors Need to Consider for Ensuring the Successful Implementation of the NEP's Ambitious Goals?

❖ With a growing population of **over 1.3 billion and a rapidly expanding economy**, the education system must **adapt to meet the needs of a changing society.**

❖ While progress has been made in recent years, some challenges must be overcome, **such as improving access to quality education for all, particularly in rural areas. The curriculum needs to be modernized, prioritized** vocational education, and integrate emerging technologies into the classroom.

❖ **India possesses a wealth of intellectual talent and human capital** that can be harnessed to propel the country forward.

❖ The future of India's education system is crucial to its development, and its success will be a key factor in determining its place on the world stage in the years to come.

❖ Overall, India's National Education Policy 2020 offers **a great promise of success for India's educational system.**

To ensure its success, there should be **a robust public-private collaboration between government and private entities** and effective monitoring and regulation of these initiatives. Nonetheless, if properly executed, NEP 2020 stands **to shape today's India into a brighter tomorrow filled with greater chances** and opportunities in education, ultimately leading India towards becoming a fully developed society.

Do you think that allowing foreign colleges to open campuses in India will make education more expensive?

The impact of allowing foreign colleges to open campuses in India on the cost of education is a complex and debated topic. Different factors come into play, and the overall effect can vary depending on how such initiatives are implemented. Here are some **considerations:**

Benefits of Opening Foreign Colleges: Careful planning, effective regulation, and consideration of the broader impact on accessibility and quality are crucial aspects when evaluating the **potential effects** of allowing foreign colleges to open campuses in India.

❖ The presence of foreign campuses could contribute to a **more diverse and competitive educational landscape**, potentially influencing **affordability in the long run.**

- ❖ **Enhanced Quality:** The presence of foreign colleges can bring global academic standards and practices, raising the overall quality of education available in India.
- ❖ **Access to World-Class Faculty:** Collaboration with international institutions may provide students with access to renowned faculty members and experts from various fields.
- ❖ **Expanded Course Offerings:** Foreign colleges often bring a diverse range of academic programs and courses, providing students with more options and opportunities to pursue specialized fields of study.
- ❖ **Faculty Development:** Exposure to international teaching methods and research practices can contribute to the professional development of local faculty.
- ❖ **Diplomatic Relations:** The presence of foreign campuses can contribute to educational diplomacy, fostering positive diplomatic relations between India and other countries.
- ❖ **Soft Power:** Education is a form of soft power, and hosting foreign institutions can enhance India's influence in the global academic community.
- ❖ **Job Creation:** The establishment of foreign campuses can create jobs in the education sector and related industries, contributing to local and national economic growth.
- ❖ **Following steps can be taken to make campuses cost-effective:**
  - ➢ **Scholarships and Financial Aid:** Foreign campuses might **offer scholarships and financial aid programs to attract students**, mitigating the financial burden on individuals. The impact on the cost of education is contingent on various factors, including the specific business models adopted by foreign institutions, the regulatory environment, and the competitive dynamics in the education sector.
  - ➢ **Government Regulations and Policies:** The regulatory framework established by the government can significantly influence how foreign campuses operate and the fees they charge. Stringent regulations may limit their ability to increase costs excessively. Governments may implement policies to ensure that education remains affordable for a broader section of the population, **potentially placing constraints on fee structures.**

Do You Think India Needs to Incorporate Sex Education in Curriculum? What Benefits Can It Make?

In Indian society, sex remains a matter to be discussed inside the closed doors of the bedroom. Instead of talking about it in public spaces to create more awareness, the word "SEX" still remains taboo in India.

At the 1994 United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) which included India, the **Sexual and Reproductive Rights** (SRRs) of adolescents and young people was affirmed.

- ❖ **Right to Choose:** In the conference, it was understood that for **adolescents and the youth to be able to freely make informed decisions** on all matters concerning their sexuality and reproduction, they require comprehensive education on sexuality.
- ❖ **Compulsory Education:** Therefore, as a part of their commitments under the ICPD agenda, governments are obliged to provide free and compulsory **comprehensive sex education** for adolescents and young people.

Sex Education is Beneficial for Various Reasons

- ❖ **Empowering Adolescents:** It is of utmost importance that teenage girls and boys understand the changes that their bodies undergo when they reach adolescence, and this is possible only when sex education is imparted.
- ❖ **Fostering Inclusivity and Understanding:** Both the girls as well as the boys need to understand all about the menstrual cycle; so that the girls learn to accept it as a normal role of nature; and the boys do not get grossed out by periods, tampons and sanitary pads and learn early in life to be sensitive to this issue.
- ❖ **Empowering Youth:** An awareness about sex will also create awareness about pregnancies and other related issues including safe sex and diseases like Sexual Transmitted Disease (STD) and Human Immuno Virus (HIV).
- ❖ **Informed Choices, Responsible Futures:** Sex education will make the young more responsible and thus they will take the decision to have sex with full knowledge of the possible outcome instead of indulging in it out of curiosity and without any information thus bearing the brunt of the repercussions.
- ❖ **Empowering Consent:** Sex education is vital because the young learn the concept of consent and what constitutes/does not constitute rape/assault.

❖ **Breaking the Silence:** Last but not the least, victims of child sexual abuse will understand that something wrong is being done to them and will be able to communicate to their parents the untoward incident. **Example:** A study by the Department of **Women and Child Development** shows that some **53 per cent of children** in the country have been victims of some kind of sexual abuse.

Keeping in mind the changing dynamics of the society in India, the Government of India has brought out the **National Education Policy, 2016,** which **accepts the significance of sex education in schools** for adolescents for safety measures.

AGE OF CONSENT IN POCSO

Questionnaire

1. *What is the age of consent?*
2. *How did the age of consent originate in India?*
3. *When was the age of consent raised in India?*
4. *Can lowering the age of consent affect the safety of children?*
5. *How does the age of consent vary across the world?*
6. *What is the importance of the age of consent?*
7. *How does the age of consent empower women?*
8. *What is the POCSO Act?*
9. *What is the punishment for the crime under the POCSO Act?*
10. *What is the significance of The POCSO Act?*
11. *How is the POCSO Act misused?*

Context: The Law Commission has suggested the government not to tinker with the age of consent — currently 18 years — under the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act**.

What is the Age of Consent?

The age of consent is the **minimum age** at which a person is considered to be **legally competent** to provide consent to sexual acts. It is the **minimum age of a person** with whom another person has **legal permission** to engage in sexual activity.

How did the Age of Consent Originate in India?

The idea of the age of consent was first deliberated in the **19th-century** case of Phulmoni Devi, a minor woman of 11 years who was married off to a man, who was aged 35. The minor woman died after her husband forcibly consummated the marriage. This forced the colonial government to enact the **Age of Consent Act, 1891**. The age of consent has been changed multiple times by various laws in India and was 16 from 1940 until 2012, when it was raised to 18 years by the POCSO **Act**.

How Does Age of Consent Vary Across the World?

❖ **India:** The age of consent in India is **one of the highest in the world at 18 years**, whereas in the majority of countries it is between 14-16 years.

❖ **European Countries:** The age of consent is 14 years in **Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy**, and **Portugal**.
  ➢ In England and Wales, the age of consent is 16 years. Countries such as **Cyprus (17), Ireland (17), Turkey (18)**, and the **Vatican (18)** show variation.

❖ **Asian Countries: Japan** has set the age of consent at 13 years and in **Bangladesh**, the age of consent is 16 years.

> ➤ **Sri Lanka** has an age of consent of 16 years, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

What is the Importance of Age of Consent?

- ❖ **Affects Child Safety: Increasing or decreasing age of consent** will have a direct and negative bearing on the fight against child marriage and child trafficking.
- ❖ **Rape Cases:** In absence of clear **age of consent**, it is difficult to ascertain if a particular **sexual activity** was an offence or was consensual.
- ❖ **Curb Child Pornography:** Age of consent is also very important in order to control the **menace of child pornography**.

How does the age of consent empower women?

- ❖ **Reproductive Health:** With age of consent, the government can **prevent early pregnancy** and exposure to sexually transmitted diseases among youngsters.
- ❖ **Educational Standards of Women:** In case of lack of age of consent, there are high chances of **teenage pregnancies**. This can lead to loss of education among girls.

Can Lowering the Age of Consent Affect the Safety of Women and Children?

- ❖ Lowering the age of consent could potentially affect the **ability of the judiciary** to punish individuals, who are said to have sexual intercourse with minors.
- ❖ It could also have a bearing on the fight against **child marriage, child trafficking and crimes against women**.

What is Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POSCO) Act, 2012?

- ❖ **Objective**: The law has been framed **to protect children** from offences of **sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography** and provide for establishment of special courts for trial.
- ❖ **Crime**: Individuals committing **sexual advances on a child below 16 years of age** shall be punished with jail term ranging **from 20 years to imprisonment for life** (or the remainder of natural life of the person) besides a fine.
- ❖ **Consent**: Consent given by a girl child below the age of 18 years **is not regarded as valid consent** and sexual intercourse with a minor **girl amounts to offence of rape**.
- ❖ **Amendment**: The law was amended in 2019 to introduce stringent punishment including the **death penalty** for committing sexual crimes on children.
- ❖ **Other Feature**: Apart from sexual abuse, POCSO also seeks to award punishment in cases of **drugs being administered to children to bring about early sexual maturity**.
- ❖ **Investigation Process:** Investigation process is made as **child-friendly as possible**. Justice has to be served promptly within a year of reporting the case.

What is the Punishment for Crime under POCSO Act?

Individuals committing sexual advances on a child below 16 years of age shall be punished with jail term ranging from 20 years to imprisonment for life (or the remainder of natural life of the person) besides a fine.

What is the Significance of the POCSO Act?

- ❖ **Control Child Exploitation:** POCSO law will act as a deterrent against **exploitation of children**, especially sexual harassment.
- ❖ **Protect Young Population:** India has one of the biggest populations of **children under 18 years** of age and a law is needed to protect their rights.
- ❖ **Fundamental Rights:** The constitution mandates that the state must **protect children**. The law seeks to uphold this responsibility of the state.

- ❖ **Cater to Child-specific Issues:** Problems faced by children are unique, which cannot be catered to by IPC. Hence, **POCSO specifically caters** to the best interests of the children.

How is the POCSO Law Misused?

- ❖ **Control Marriage:** There has been rampant misuse of POCSO law, sometimes by parents who want to control who their daughters or sons want to marry.
- ❖ **Political Motive:** Many POCSO cases are based on political motivation. This defeats the actual purpose of the act.
- ❖ **Mental Trauma on Suspect:** In POCSO cases, the judges seldom give bail, and if the case is false, the mental health and trauma of the suspect worsen.

Who's a child? | While most laws fix 18 as the age when one ceases to be a child, there are exceptions:
- ■ The Majority Act, 1875 sets the age of majority at 18
- ■ 61st Constitutional Amendment Act fixes the minimum voting age at 18
- ■ POCSO Act, 2012 and Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 define a child as someone under the age of 18
- ■ Right to Education Act, 2009 says a child is someone between the ages of six and 14
- ■ Child Labour Amendment Act, 2016 says a child is someone under the age of 14 and an adolescent is aged between 14 and 18

Why is there a need to reconsider the age of consent?

- ❖ Under the POCSO Act, 2012 and under several provisions of the IPC, whoever commits a penetrative sexual assault on a child — anyone below 18 years of age — can be "imprisoned for a term which is not less than seven years but which may extend to imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine. Even if the girl is 16 years old, she is considered a "child" under the POCSO Act and **hence her consent does not matter**, and **any sexual intercourse is treated as rape,** thus opening it up to stringent punishment. There have been several instances in the past few years when the courts have quashed criminal proceedings of rape and kidnapping, after being convinced that the law was being misused to suit one or the other party.
- ❖ Critics argue that lowering the age of consent could potentially expose younger teenagers to exploitation, especially if there is a significant age gap between partners.
- ❖ The Karnataka high court went on to advise that the Law Commission reconsider the age of consensual sex to address the issue of instances of mutual love affairs amongst minor girls and boys, who are aged above 16 but below 18 years. It also observed that there has been a pattern of similar cases where minor girls above 16 have eloped and entered into consensual sexual relationships.

SAME SEX MARRIAGE IN INDIA

Questionnaire:

1. What do you understand about same-sex marriage?
2. Who are LGBTQ and their demand?
3. What do you know about section 377?
4. What is the current legal status of same-sex marriage in India?
5. What is the Special Marriage Act (SMA) 1954?
6. What are the arguments in favour of same-sex marriage?
7. What are the Arguments against same-sex marriage?
8. What are the global laws regarding homosexuality?
9. What could be done to promote awareness about them?
10. What is your perspective on the future of same-sex marriage in India?
11. Some people argue that same-sex marriage is against nature and our culture. What are your views on it?

Context: The Supreme Court has finally issued its anticipated verdict, dismissing petitions that sought the legalization of same-sex marriage. The court has undertaken a comprehensive examination of the provisions within the Special Marriage Act of 1954, delving deeper into their convergence and interrelationship with issues related to homosexuality.

What Do You Understand by Same Sex Marriage?

Same sex marriage in India refers to **marriages between two individuals of the same gender.** Traditional religious groups have opposed homosexual marriages as they believe them to be against the natural order. In some countries, homosexuality itself is criminalized and same sex marriage looks like a distant dream.

Who are LGBTQ and their Demand?

LGBTQ stands for **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning**. It's an inclusive term that encompasses a diverse group of individuals with different sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions.

- ❖ **Lesbian (L):** Refers to women who are emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women.
- ❖ **Gay (G):** Refers to men who are emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other men. It is also used as an umbrella term for the broader LGBTQ community.
- ❖ **Bisexual (B):** Refers to individuals who are emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to more than one gender.
- ❖ **Transgender (T):** Refers to individuals whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned to them at birth. Transgender people may identify as male, female, or non-binary.
- ❖ **Queer/Questioning (Q):** "Queer" is an umbrella term that encompasses sexual orientations and gender identities outside of the heterosexual and cisgender norms.

Demands of the LGBTQ Community:

- ❖ **Legal Recognition and Rights:** Advocacy for legal recognition of same-sex relationships, marriage equality, and anti-discrimination laws to protect LGBTQ individuals.
- ❖ **Anti-Discrimination Measures:** Implementation and enforcement of laws that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in various settings, including employment, education, and public services.
- ❖ **Visibility and Representation:** Increased visibility and representation of LGBTQ individuals in media, politics, and other spheres to challenge stereotypes and promote acceptance.
- ❖ **Family and Relationship Recognition:** Recognition and protection of LGBTQ families, including parenting rights, adoption, and legal recognition of diverse family structures.

What do you know About Section 377?

Section 377 refers to a provision in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) that criminalized "unnatural offenses." **Historical Context:** Section 377 was introduced during the British colonial period in India in 1861 and reflected the moral values of the time.

- ❖ **Naz Foundation Case (2009):** In 2009, the Delhi High Court, in the Naz Foundation case, declared that Section 377 was unconstitutional to the extent that it criminalized consensual sexual acts between adults.
- ❖ **Supreme Court Reversal (2013):** However, in 2013, the Supreme Court of India overturned the Delhi High Court's decision, reinstating the criminalization of consensual same-sex relations under Section 377.
- ❖ **Landmark Judgment (2018):** A significant turning point came in 2018 when the Supreme Court, in the **Navtej Singh Johar case,** unanimously declared that Section 377 was unconstitutional insofar as it criminalized consensual sexual acts between adults.

What is the Current Legal Status of Same-Sex Marriage in India?

- ❖ **Against Constitutional Validity:** In a **3:2 verdict**, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, led by the Chief Justice of India, ruled against granting constitutional validity to same-sex marriages.
- ❖ **Domain of Parliament:** Chief Justice, in his opinion, emphasized that the court lacks the authority to either invalidate or introduce provisions into the **Special Marriage Act (SMA) 1954** to encompass same-sex unions.
  - ➢ The Supreme Court asserted that the responsibility to legislate on this matter lies with the Parliament and state legislatures.
- ❖ **Other Observations:** Simultaneously, the Supreme Court noted that the concept of marriage is dynamic and not static. The court affirmed that individuals within the **queer community** possess an equal right and freedom to **form a "union."** The Bench, composed of all five judges, unanimously acknowledged that there is no fundamental right to marry explicitly enshrined in the Constitution.

What is the Special Marriage Act (SMA) 1954?

- ❖ Marriages in India can be officially registered under distinct personal laws, including the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, the Muslim Personal Law Application Act, 1937, or the Special Marriage Act, 1954.
  - ➢ The Judiciary bears the responsibility of safeguarding the rights of both spouses.
  - ➢ The Special Marriage Act, 1954 encompasses provisions for civil marriages applicable to Indian citizens and nationals abroad, transcending religious affiliations.
  - ➢ When individuals choose this legal framework, the marriage is regulated by the Special Marriage Act rather than individual personal laws.

Key Features:

- ❖ **Interfaith Marriages:** Facilitates marriages between individuals belonging to different religious backgrounds, fostering unity and inclusivity.
- ❖ **Procedure for Solemnization and Registration:** Clearly outlines the process for both the solemnization and official registration of marriages.
  - ➢ This is particularly relevant when either or both partners are not Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, or Sikhs.
- ❖ **Secular Nature:** As a secular legislation, the Special Marriage Act plays a pivotal role in freeing individuals from traditional constraints associated with marriage, allowing for greater personal choices.
- ❖ **Applicability Beyond Personal Laws:** When individuals opt for marriage under this Act, it signifies that their union is governed by the provisions laid out in the Special Marriage Act, rather than being subject to specific personal laws.

What are the Arguments in Favour of Same Sex Marriage?

- ❖ **Promotion of Equal Rights and Legal Protections:** Every individual, irrespective of their sexual orientation, possesses the inherent right to marry and establish a family.
- ❖ **Empowering Families and Communities:** Marriage extends social and economic advantages to couples and their families, benefiting individuals in same-sex unions as well.
- ❖ **Acknowledgment of Cohabitation as a Fundamental Right:** The Chief Justice of India (CJI) has affirmed that cohabitation is a fundamental right.

❖ **Fluidity of Biological Gender:** The Supreme Court of India has underscored that biological gender is not an absolute concept.

❖ **Global Recognition:** Currently, **32** countries have legalized same-sex marriage, highlighting a global trend toward recognizing and respecting diverse forms of unions.

What are the Arguments Against Same Sex Marriage?

❖ **Considerations Based on Religious and Cultural Beliefs:** Numerous religious and cultural communities maintain the viewpoint that marriage should exclusively involve a union between a man and a woman.

❖ **Emphasis on Procreation:** Some individuals contend that the primary purpose of marriage is procreation, positing that same-sex couples are unable to have biological children.

❖ **Legal Concerns:** Apprehensions exist regarding the potential legal complications arising from the acceptance of same-sex marriage, including issues related to inheritance, taxation, and property rights.

❖ **Challenges in Adoption of Children:** The adoption of children by queer couples may be accompanied by societal stigma, discrimination, and adverse effects on the emotional and psychological well-being of the child.

What are the Global Laws Regarding Homosexuality?

Country	Law
Netherlands	The Netherlands became the first country to give Same-sex couples the legal right of marriage and adoption.
Canada	In 2005, Canada's federal legislature legalized same-sex marriage.
South Africa	In 2006, South Africa became the first country in Africa and the first country in the Southern Hemisphere to legalize same-sex marriages.
Argentina	In 2010, Argentina became the first country in Latin America to legalize same-sex marriages in the country.
New Zealand	After receiving approval from the crown in 2013, New Zealand became the first country in the Asia-Pacific region to allow same-sex marriage.
England and Wales	After approval from the queen, same-sex marriage in England was legalized through a Parliamentary measure.
Ireland	Ireland legalized same-sex marriages in the country in 2015 through a popular referendum, making it the first country to legalize such marriages by popular vote.
United States	After a decision by the Supreme Court in 2015, protecting the rights of people in marriages, the federal government approved same-sex marriages.
Taiwan	Taiwan became the first Asian country to legalize same-sex marriages after the country's Constitutional Court found a law recognizing marriage as between a man and a woman to be unconstitutional.
Estonia	Estonia's parliament approved same-sex marriage in June 2023, making it the first ex-Soviet and first Baltic country to do so.

What Could be Done to Promote Awareness About Them?

❖ **Promoting Awareness:** Foster equality and acceptance through awareness campaigns.

❖ **Advocating Legal Reforms:** Propose amendments to the Special Marriage Act, 1954.
  ➢ Introduce contractual agreements for parity with heterosexual individuals.

❖ **Facilitating Dialogue and Engagement:** Initiate dialogues with religious leaders to bridge gaps in perspectives.

❖ **Addressing Legal Challenges:** Actively challenge constitutionality of laws restricting same-sex marriage.

❖ **Encouraging Collaboration:** Collaborative effort involving LGBTQIA+ community, government, civil society, and religious leaders.

What is Your Perspective on the Future of Same-Sex Marriage in India?

❖ **Legal Challenges & Activism:** LGBTQIA+ legal challenges and activism challenges discriminatory laws, potentially leading to legal framework changes.

❖ **Changing Social Attitudes:** Global shifts in societal views on same-sex relationships are mirrored in India, with increased awareness, education, and advocacy promoting acceptance.

❖ **Global Trends:** International movements recognizing same-sex marriages may influence India's discourse and perspectives on LGBTQIA+ rights.

❖ **Youth Perspectives:** Younger generations, more progressive on LGBTQIA+ rights, could drive momentum for change as they become politically and socially active.

❖ **Legal Precedents:** Landmark judgments, like the 2018 Supreme Court ruling decriminalizing same-sex relations, set legal foundations for future developments.

Some people argue that same sex marriage is against nature and our culture. What are your views on it?

Against	Favour
Against Nature: Some argue that same-sex marriage goes against traditional reproductive norms observed in nature.	**Equal Rights:** Opponents argue for the right to marry irrespective of gender, emphasizing the importance of equal rights and non-discrimination.
Cultural Norms: Critics claim that same-sex marriage contradicts cultural and religious norms in certain societies.	**Diversity and Inclusion:** Advocates stress the evolving nature of culture and the need for inclusivity, embracing diverse expressions of love.
Social Stability: Some believe that traditional marriage norms contribute to social stability and should be preserved.	**Individual Freedom:** Supporters emphasize individual autonomy, asserting the right to choose one's life partner regardless of gender.

Thus, cultural norms evolve, and societies increasingly recognize the validity of diverse expressions of love and commitment, challenging traditional perspectives on marriage. Embracing diversity contributes to a more inclusive and accepting society.

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CARE ECONOMY

Questionnaire:

1. *What is the care economy?*
2. *Why is there an increasing demand for care work?*
3. *What is the significance of the care economy?*
4. *What are the challenges faced by India's care economy?*
5. *What measures can be taken to overcome the undervaluation of care work?*
6. *How can a robust care economy contribute to broader economic growth and sustainability?*
7. *Does the care economy serve as a tool for challenging and transforming traditional gender roles?*
8. *How do public policy and awareness play its role in supporting and developing the care economy?*
9. *What are government initiatives for the care economy?*
10. *How can the care economy be brought into the monetized economy through women's empowerment?*
11. *How does the Care economy provide an opportunity to create jobs and close the gender gap?*

12. *Do you think women are burdened with much of the care work, which is generally unregulated and poorly paid?*

What is the care economy?

The care economy refers to the set of activities and services that provide care, support, and assistance to individuals, families, and communities. It encompasses both paid and unpaid work that contributes to the well-being and functioning of individuals, particularly in areas related to health, education, childcare, elderly care, and social services.

Why is there an increasing demand for care work?

❖ Several factors contribute to the increasing demand for care work, both paid and unpaid, in contemporary societies.

❖ **Aging Population:** Demographic shifts, including an ageing population, contribute significantly to the demand for care work.

❖ **Increased Life Expectancy:** As life expectancy increases, there is a growing need for eldercare and associated services to support the health and well-being of older individuals.

❖ **Changing Family Structures:** Changes in family structures, such as an increase in single-parent households and dual-income families, can result in a greater need for external caregiving support.

❖ **Dual-Income Households:** The trend of dual-income households, where both partners are engaged in paid employment, amplifies the demand for care services.

❖ **Increased Female Workforce Participation:** The rising participation of women in the workforce, both globally and within various cultures, has led to an increased demand for external caregiving services.

❖ **Chronic Health Conditions:** The prevalence of chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and mental health disorders, has increased.
  ➢ Managing these conditions often requires ongoing care and support, contributing to the demand for healthcare professionals and caregivers.

❖ **Urbanization:** Urbanization trends often lead to geographically dispersed families, limiting the availability of family members to provide care.
  ➢ This results in a higher reliance on external care services to support individuals in need.

What is the significance of the care economy?

❖ **Social Well-being:** The care economy is paramount for societal welfare, providing crucial services related to healthcare, education, and domestic support.

❖ **Demographic Shifts:** Addressing an aging population, the care economy meets the escalating demand for eldercare, ensuring the well-being of older individuals.

❖ **Economic Impact:** A key driver of economic growth, the care economy generates employment, supports diverse skill sets, and sustains overall economic productivity.

❖ **Gender Equity:** Integral to gender dynamics, recognizing care work promotes gender equity by valuing contributions from all genders.

❖ **Community Resilience:** By providing essential services, the care economy enhances community resilience during various life stages and crises.

❖ **Global Perspectives:** Recognizing diverse cultural contexts, the care economy plays a crucial role globally, adapting to varied societal structures.

❖ **Inclusive Growth:** Fostering inclusive growth, the care economy addresses societal needs, promoting social cohesion and equitable caregiving responsibilities for healthier communities.

What are the challenges faced by India's care economy?

❖ **Burden on Women:** Traditional gender roles often burden women with unpaid care work, limiting their economic opportunities.

❖ **Underdeveloped Elderly Care Infrastructure:** Inadequate facilities and social support for the elderly pose challenges as India's population ages, demanding more comprehensive eldercare services.

❖ **Skewed Distribution of Healthcare Workers:** There is an uneven distribution of healthcare professionals, with urban areas benefiting more than rural regions, affecting healthcare accessibility.

❖ **Low Wages:** Many care professions, especially those dominated by women, suffer from low wages, reflecting the undervaluation of care work.

❖ **Work-Life Imbalance:** Insufficient work-life balance policies hinder women's workforce participation, perpetuating gender disparities in the care economy.

What measures can be taken to overcome the undervaluation of care work?

❖ **Policy Advocacy:** Engage in policy advocacy to raise awareness about the undervaluation of care work, urging governments to implement measures for its recognition.

❖ **Equal Pay Initiatives:** Implement equal pay initiatives to rectify wage disparities, ensuring fair compensation for care professionals, particularly in female-dominated sectors.

❖ **Professionalization of Care Roles:** Promote the professionalization of care roles, emphasizing the skill, training, and expertise required in caregiving professions.

❖ **Education and Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct education and awareness campaigns to challenge societal stereotypes, emphasizing the importance and complexity of care work.

❖ **Inclusive Policies:** Develop inclusive policies that address gender imbalances, support work-life balance, and recognize the significance of caregiving in both domestic and professional spheres.

How can a robust care economy contribute to broader economic growth and sustainability?

❖ **Job Creation:** By expanding healthcare, education, and social services, a robust care economy generates employment, addressing unemployment and fostering economic growth.

❖ **Enhanced Workforce Productivity:** A healthy and educated population, supported by the care economy, contributes to a more productive workforce, boosting overall economic output.

❖ **Investment in Human Capital:** Prioritizing healthcare and education within the care economy nurtures human capital, fostering innovation, creativity, and long-term economic sustainability.

❖ **Reduced Economic Inequalities:** Adequate care services mitigate disparities, ensuring that all segments of society can actively participate in economic activities, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable economy.

❖ **Social Stability and Well-being:** A robust care economy promotes social stability, reducing societal burdens and enhancing overall well-being, creating a foundation for sustained economic growth.

Does the care economy serve as a tool for challenging and transforming traditional gender roles?

❖ The care economy acts as a catalyst for challenging and transforming traditional gender roles.

❖ **Professional Diversification:** Encouraging men to enter caregiving professions diversifies the workforce, challenging stereotypes and fostering gender equality.

❖ **Policy Reforms:** Implementing policies supporting work-life balance, parental leave, and equal opportunities challenges traditional gender norms, promoting a more equitable distribution of caregiving responsibilities.

❖ **Cultural Shift**: Recognizing and valuing caregiving work shifts societal perceptions, challenging ingrained gender stereotypes and contributing to a more inclusive understanding of individual and familial roles.

❖ **Equal Participation:** As the care economy evolves, it becomes an instrument for societal change, encouraging equal participation by individuals of all genders in caregiving roles and challenging traditional expectations.

How public policy and awareness play its role in supporting and developing the care economy?

❖ **Educational Campaigns**: Launch comprehensive educational campaigns highlighting the importance and complexity of care work to reshape public perception and challenge stereotypes.

- ❖ **Media Representation:** Encourage accurate and diverse portrayals of care professionals in media to counteract stereotypes and showcase the significance of their contributions.
- ❖ **Public Discourse:** Foster open public discourse on the value of care work, engaging communities in discussions that challenge existing norms and elevate the societal importance of caregiving.
- ❖ **Policy Advocacy:** Advocate for policies that recognize and support care work, emphasizing its essential role in societal well-being and economic stability.
- ❖ **Highlighting Success Stories:** Showcase success stories of individuals in caregiving professions, emphasizing their impact on individuals, families, and communities to inspire a positive shift in public perception.

What are government initiatives for the care economy?

- ❖ India has taken significant strides in promoting the care economy.
- ❖ **Maternity Leave:** New mothers benefit from an extended maternity leave of 26 weeks, surpassing the ILO's 14-week baseline implemented in 120 nations.
- ❖ **Paternity Leave:** Although no formal policies apply to the private sector, central government employees enjoy 15 days of paternity leave.
- ❖ **Statutory Backing:** Furthermore, domestic workers in India now fall under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act and minimum wage laws.
- ❖ **Comprehensive Survey:** To assess the status of domestic workers nationwide, the Labour Bureau is conducting a comprehensive All-India Survey on Domestic Workers, reflecting India's commitment to understanding and addressing issues within the care economy.

How can the care economy be brought into the monetized economy through women empowerment?

- ❖ **Empowering Women in Formal Employment:** Promoting women's access to formal employment in the care sector, such as healthcare, education, and social services, brings these essential roles into the monetized economy. This involves creating opportunities, ensuring fair wages, and offering career advancement.
- ❖ **Recognizing Unpaid Care Work:** Acknowledging and valuing unpaid care work performed by women at home is crucial. Implementing policies that recognize and compensate for such contributions, potentially through tax credits or social security benefits, integrates the care economy into the formal economy.
- ❖ **Skill Development and Training:** Investing in women's skill development and training for caregiving professions enhances their employability, fostering economic empowerment and elevating the care economy's status in the monetized sector.

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YOUTH-LED DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

Questionnaire:

1. *What is the demographic dividend?*
2. *How does the UNFPA's State of World Population Report 2023 depict India's demographic situation?*
3. *How does the demographic situation suggest a potential economic opportunity for India?*
4. *What are the immediate challenges concerning India's efforts to derive a demographic dividend?*
5. *How to address the challenges related to India's demographic dividend?*

What is the Demographic Dividend?

Demographic dividend refers to **the growth in an economy that is the result of a change in the age structure of a country's population.** The change in age structure is typically brought on by a **decline in fertility and mortality rates**. Demographic dividends are occurrences in a country that **enjoys accelerated economic growth** that stems from the decline in fertility and mortality rates.

How does the UNFPA's State of World Population Report 2023 depict India's demographic situation?

India has gained the distinction of being the **most populous country in the world**, as per the UNFPA's State of World Population Report 2023. However, the most interesting part of the report is - **the working population of India**, which includes the **15-64 age group**, comprises **68%** of the total population. This scenario highlights the potential of India reaping the demographic dividend in the years to come. **By 2020**, India had one of the youngest populations in an ageing world, with **a median age of just 28**, compared to **37 in China** and the **US, 45** in Western Europe, and **49 in Japan.** India is expected to enjoy the demographic dividend **window for 37 years starting 2018 and up to 2055.** However, this window is available at **different times in different states** because of the differential behaviour of the population parameters.

How Does the Demographic Situation Suggest a Potential Economic Opportunity for India?

❖ Simply put, with more people in the labour force and fewer children to support, India has a window of opportunity for achieving higher economic growth.

❖ Harnessing this dividend requires expanding opportunities for young people to engage in the economic sector, guided through the right social and economic investments and policies made in health, education, governance, and the economy, in tune with the demographic transition.

What are the Immediate Challenges Concerning India's Efforts to Derive a Demographic Dividend?

❖ **According to** **UNFPA's State of World Population Report 2023,** Immediate challenges for deriving a demographic dividend include **growth in the working age ratio** being concentrated in some of the **poorest states in India**, while the employability of youth is an important factor in deriving benefits from the demographic dividend.

❖ **Mismatch in skillsets** availability and industry-specific needs.

❖ **Low human development parameters** are reflecting the need to improve quality health and education infrastructure to make the Indian workforce efficient and skilled.

❖ Current trends such as the **informal nature of the economy in India**.

❖ **Jobless growth** has been witnessed over the last two decades due to the advent of technologies like Industry 4.0.

❖ Cornering of some industrial activities and **de-globalization**, are also evoking concerns over the Indian job market, leading to higher unemployment levels.

How to Address the Challenges Related to India's Demographic Dividend?

❖ **Invest in Education**: Creating a **robust education system** that prepares individuals for the evolving job market, can help overcome these challenges.

❖ **Promote Skill Development:** Implement widespread vocational training programs to equip the youth with practical skills aligned with market demands.

❖ **Industry-Academia Collaboration:** Fostering **industry-academia collaboration** to identify and fill skill gaps and promoting research and innovation.

❖ **Facilitate Job Creation**: **Encourage entrepreneurship** by providing support, mentorship, and financial resources to aspiring entrepreneurs, leading to job creation.

❖ **Address Gender Disparities:** Implement policies that empower women, including equal opportunities for education and employment, to maximize the contribution of the entire population to the workforce.

❖ **Improve Healthcare Infrastructure:** Strengthen healthcare infrastructure to address health challenges and ensure a healthy workforce.

❖ **Enhance Rural Development:** Implement reforms in the **agricultural sector** to enhance productivity, improve farmers' income, and create non-agricultural employment opportunities.

❖ **Digital Literacy:** Promote digital literacy to **enable individuals to participate in the digital economy** and access online education and job opportunities.

To address these challenges related to demographic dividend **we require a coordinated effort** from the government, private sector, civil society, and international organizations. The goal is to create an environment that **maximizes the potential of the youth population**, ensuring inclusive and sustainable development for the entire nation.

Many of the Developed Countries are Facing the Issue of an Aging Population. Do you think Indian youth can Fill that Gap?

❖ **According to the UNFPA 2023 report By 2020**, India will have one of the youngest populations in an ageing world, with **a median age of just 28**, compared to **37 in China** and the **US, 45** in Western Europe, and **49 in Japan.**

❖ India is expected to enjoy the demographic dividend **window for 37 years starting in 2018 and up to 2055.**

❖ **Global Skill Gap Study: NSDC,** along with Ernst & Young (EY) has conducted the **'Global Skill Gap Study'.** The study highlights nations that would face **workforce shortages in the foreseeable future** and maps out the corresponding opportunities that these shortages present for the Indian workforce. Key findings of the study highlight the **demand for Indians** in European countries, countries with mature migration systems like **Japan, US, Australia, Canada, Singapore and countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).**

❖ At present, NSDC has actively worked in markets like **Japan through the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP)** and the GCC countries including UAE and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through **Government to Government (G2G) and Business to Business (B2B)** workforce mobility collaborations. Progress has also been made for developing partnerships across countries like **Canada, Australia, Finland, Morocco, Sweden, Russia, Jordan, and Maldives, among others.**

❖ **India International Skill Centre (IISC) Network:** This network will be central to the GOI's plan to make India the skill capital of the world.

   ➢ It will be a fee-based, market-driven model, determined by global workforce supply and demand dynamics.

   ➢ Through the IISC Network, Member Organisations will be supported to work across various country clusters including:

      ✓ **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**

      ✓ **Japan, Russia, Southeast Asia**

      ✓ **North America**

      ✓ **Australia, New Zealand**

      ✓ **Europe**

It's important to note that addressing the issue of an ageing population is a complex and multifaceted challenge. While Indian youth can potentially contribute, it requires a concerted effort from governments, businesses, and educational institutions both within India and in the developed countries facing demographic shifts.

What Hurdles Does India's Demographic Dividend Encounter in Seizing Opportunities in Developed Countries?

❖ India's demographic dividend, which refers to the **large and youthful population of the country,** can be a significant asset in terms of economic growth and productivity.

❖ Following are some of the challenges faced by Indians include:

   ➢ **Global Economic Slowdown:** It has severely reduced entry-level employment opportunities for international students.

- ➢ **High Inflation:** Other economic factors such as high inflation, **escalating cost of living** (especially in Europe reeling under high energy prices on account of the **Ukraine war**)
- ➢ **The Struggle for Recognition of Foreign Degrees in the Job Market:** According to the study, one of the primary issues faced by Indian students is the lack of recognition of their foreign degrees and diplomas in the job market.
- ➢ **Skills Mismatch:** Despite having a large workforce, there may be a gap between the skills possessed by Indian workers and the skills demanded by developed countries.
- ➢ **Educational Disparities:** Disparities in the quality of education across different regions of India can result in variations in the skill levels of the workforce. Access to quality education and vocational training is crucial for individuals to meet the requirements of developed economies.
- ➢ **Language Barriers:** Proficiency in the English language is often a key requirement for many jobs in developed countries.
- ➢ **Cultural Adaptation:** Cultural differences can be a hurdle for Indian workers in developed countries.
- ➢ **Visa Hurdles: Stringent work visa regulations** and immigration policies in developed countries can pose challenges for Indian workers seeking employment opportunities.
- ➢ **Global Competition:** Indian workers face competition from individuals in other countries who are also seeking opportunities in developed economies.

Overcoming Challenges:

- ❖ **Proactive Career Building Strategies: To overcome these challenges**, experts recommend that students take a proactive approach to building their careers while studying abroad.
- ❖ **Policy Initiatives:** Government policies can encourage or hinder the participation of Indian youth in addressing the challenges of ageing populations. Example: **India International Skill Centre (IISC) Network** is envisioned to be the **nodal platform to facilitate international workforce mobility** opportunities for Indians.
- ❖ **Skill Development:** The ability of Indian youth to fill the gap will be influenced by their skill sets.
- ❖ **Global Collaboration:** Collaboration between India and developed countries in addressing demographic challenges can lead to mutually beneficial solutions.
- ❖ **Technology and Innovation:** The youth's ability to contribute to addressing the challenges of ageing populations can be amplified through technological advancements.

PROLONGED USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CHILDREN

Questionnaire

1. *What is social media?*
2. *How does social media work?*
3. *What are different types of social media?*
4. *What are the advantages of social media?*
5. *What are the disadvantages of social media?*
6. *What are the effects of social media on children?*
7. *How can social media effects be reduced among children?*
8. *How social media is regulated in India?*
9. *What are China's new regulations on social media for children?*
10. *Do you think India should also have such regulations for children?*
11. *What are the reasons for the increasing use of social media among children?*

Context: Recent studies have shown that **about 60% of children** spend more than three hours on social media.

How does Social Media Work?

- ❖ **Composition**: Social media is based on **technology and internet connectivity**. Users can access social networking sites using their PCs, smartphones or other devices.
  - ➢ **Example**: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok etc.
- ❖ **Working**: Most social networking sites contain **searchable databases** as back end that use **advanced programming languages**, such as Python, to organize, store and retrieve data in an easy-to-understand format.

What are the Advantages of Social Media?

- ❖ **Sharing of Information:** It is a platform for people to share their interests, ideas, opinions, insights, and feelings.
- ❖ **Keeping Touch with far-away Friends:** Individuals who live far away from their friends and family use social media to keep in touch.
- ❖ **Business Opportunities:** Social media provides business opportunities to talk to customers, increase sales through advertising and promotion, keep an eye on consumer trends etc.
- ❖ **Gaining Knowledge:** There are many social media sites that contain vital information. They act as a source of knowledge.
- ❖ **Political Campaigning:** Social media can be effectively leveraged to reach out to voters, especially those who are of young age.
- ❖ **Spreading Ideas:** Social media is a tool for people to spread their ideas and thoughts, allowing the world to be influenced by it.
- ❖ **Attracting Attention:** Social media is a platform for people to fight for their rights. It helps people to come together and fight.
- ❖ **Governance Tool:** Social media is a very good tool for effective governance, especially when it comes to sending messages to the masses.

What are the Disadvantages of Social Media?

- ❖ **Depression:** According to studies, people using social media are more likely to feel sad, anxious, lonely, want to hurt themselves or even think about suicide.
- ❖ **Political Propaganda:** Social media can be used to push political propaganda, which is mainly done to gain political mileage.
- ❖ **Peddling Fake News:** Social media's reach has enabled miscreants to deliberately spread fake news and create unstable situations in society.
- ❖ **Illegal Activities Hub:** Social media has become a hub for illegal activities such as child pornography, terrorism, narcotics trade etc.
- ❖ **Distraction:** Social media acts as a distraction for youngsters from their academic activity. This affects their future career.
- ❖ **Privacy Concerns:** Social media can be misused to steal personal information, leading to a breach of individual privacy.
- ❖ **Fraud:** People are falling victim to financial frauds that are fast gaining a foothold through social media.

How are Children exposed to social media?

- ❖ **Peer Pressure:** Among teenage children, access to social media is mainly due to peer pressure. Children feel they have to frequent social media sites to fit into the modern world.
- ❖ **Parental Exposure:** Some children are exposed to social media by their own parents, who knowingly or unknowingly get them addicted.
- ❖ **Entertainment:** Social media has turned into a hub for entertainment. This acts as a medium attraction for young minds.
- ❖ **Boredom:** In modern society, physical activities have taken a back seat and children are forced to access social media to get over their boredom.
- ❖ **Easy Access to Digital Devices:** Easy access to digital devices has made it easy for children to open a social media account and use it frequently.

What are the Negative Effects of Social Media on Children?

- **Violence:** Social media, with its unfiltered content, can create violent tendencies among children. Its effect can be felt in their future behaviour.
- **Cyber Bullying:** Young children, especially girls, are easily the victims of cyberbullying. Social media is the most probable source of such bullying.
- **Pornography:** Social media and pornography have close links. The young minds of children can get easily addicted to pornographic material, affecting their academic life.
- **Illegal Betting:** Social media sites host many illegal betting pages. Children can potentially get addicted to such financially dangerous activities.
- **Mental Instability:** Children start living in a virtual world looking at social media content. This affects their future mental peace and stability.
- **Socialization:** Social media is not a substitute for physical socialization. Excessive social media use can affect a child's social life.
- **False Information:** Social media is a hub for false information. Children can be brainwashed easily through propaganda.
- **Sleep Pattern Affected:** The sleep pattern of children is affected due to excessive use of social media.

COMPLIANCES FOR SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL MEDIA INTERMEDIARIES — INTERNET FREEDOM FOUNDATION

STRINGENT DEADLINES
24hr and 15 day limits for grievance officers to acknowledge and address complaints, 36hrs for takedowns under Sec 79(3) of the IT Act, and 72hrs to provide assistance to law enforcement.

E2E ENCRYPTION AT RISK
First originator traceability requirement under Rule 4(2) of the Intermediary Rules.

LAYING THE GROUNDS FOR FUNCTION CREEP
Automated tools for content removal under Rule 4(4) of the Intermediary Rules.

FUTURE RISKS TO ANONYMITY
Voluntary verification of identity under Rule 4(7) of the Intermediary Rules.

LOSS OF IMMUNITY AND CONSEQUENCES UP TO CRIMINAL PROSECUTION FOR NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THESE RULES

What are the Advantages of Social Media for Children?

- **Critical Thinking:** Social media can help children to think critically and build critical skills for the future.
- **Communicate:** Social media helps children to communicate with people of similar interests, helping build knowledge.
- **Maintain Relation:** Social media helps maintain relationships with friends and relatives who live far away.
- **Develop the Art of Learning:** Social media helps individuals to develop and master the art of learning new things in life.

How to reduce Social Media Effects on Children?

- **Parental Control:** Parents must keep a watch over their children's social media activity. Parents must win the confidence of their children and guide them.
- **Digital Education:** It is the responsibility of the parents, teachers as well as authorities to inculcate digital education among children, in order for them to use social media in a beneficial way.
- **Regulation of Social Media:** Social media companies must self-regulate their activities or the government must make them do it.
- **Counselling:** Professional counsellors can help children overcome the habit and addiction associated with social media.

How Social Media is regulated in India?

- Guidelines for social media/Intermediaries under IT Rules 2021
    - **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** A three-level grievance redressal mechanism has been established to handle the concerns of the user.
    - **Information on Origin:** Social media platforms have to disclose the first originator of a mischievous tweet or message if asked by a relevant court.
    - **Chief Compliance Officer**: All social media intermediaries have to appoint a chief compliance officer to handle compliance. The chief compliance officer shall be a resident of India.
    - **Voluntary Verification:** Users of significant social media intermediaries must be given a facility to voluntarily verify themselves.

What is China's new Regulation on Social Media for Children?

- **Control Screen Time:** China has been making efforts to regulate the amount of time children **spend on digital devices** to access social media as well as play games.

- ❖ **Time Limit:** The guidelines given by Chinese authorities, state that **minors would not be allowed** to use most internet services on mobile devices from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.
  - ➢ Children between the age of 16 and 18 can use the internet for **only two hours a day**, while those between 8 and 15 years will be allowed to **use the internet** for only an hour.
- ❖ **Youth Mode:** In order to protect minors, authorities are urging platforms to set up **youth mode**, which has age-appropriate content.

Do you think India should also have such regulations for children?

Arguments in Favor:

- ❖ **Child Protection:** Regulations can help protect children from inappropriate content, online harassment, and potential exploitation. Guidelines can ensure that platforms take measures to create a safer online environment for young users.
- ❖ **Digital Literacy and Responsibility:** Regulations could encourage platforms to promote digital literacy and responsible online behaviour among children. This includes educating them about the risks associated with social media and providing tools for safer usage.
- ❖ **Parental Control:** Regulations might facilitate the implementation of features that allow parents to have more control over their children's online activities, including setting age-appropriate content filters and monitoring usage.

Arguments Against:

- ❖ **Freedom of Expression:** Stringent regulations might be perceived as impinging on freedom of expression. Striking a balance between protecting children and ensuring a free and open digital space is crucial.
- ❖ **Innovation and Development:** Overly restrictive regulations could stifle innovation in the tech sector. Balancing child protection with an environment that fosters innovation is essential for the growth of the digital industry.
- ❖ **Parental Responsibility:** Critics argue that the primary responsibility for monitoring and guiding children's online activities lies with parents. They assert that regulations should not replace parental involvement but rather support it.

MENTAL HEALTH

Questionnaire

1. *What defines mental health?*
2. *What are the primary factors influencing mental health?*
3. *What is the status of mental illness in India?*
4. *What is the current mental health status among Indian school children?*
5. *What are the key challenges hindering the resolution of mental health issues in India?*
6. *What government initiatives are in place for addressing mental health concerns in India?*
7. *What government programs focus on enhancing mental health specifically among school children?*
8. *What are the predominant issues undermining the effectiveness of India's school mental health programs?*
9. *What measures can bolster the overall mental health landscape in India?*
10. *How can the mental health ecosystem for school children in India be notably improved?*
11. *What key recommendations did the parliamentary standing committee propose for enhancing the mental health ecosystem in India?*
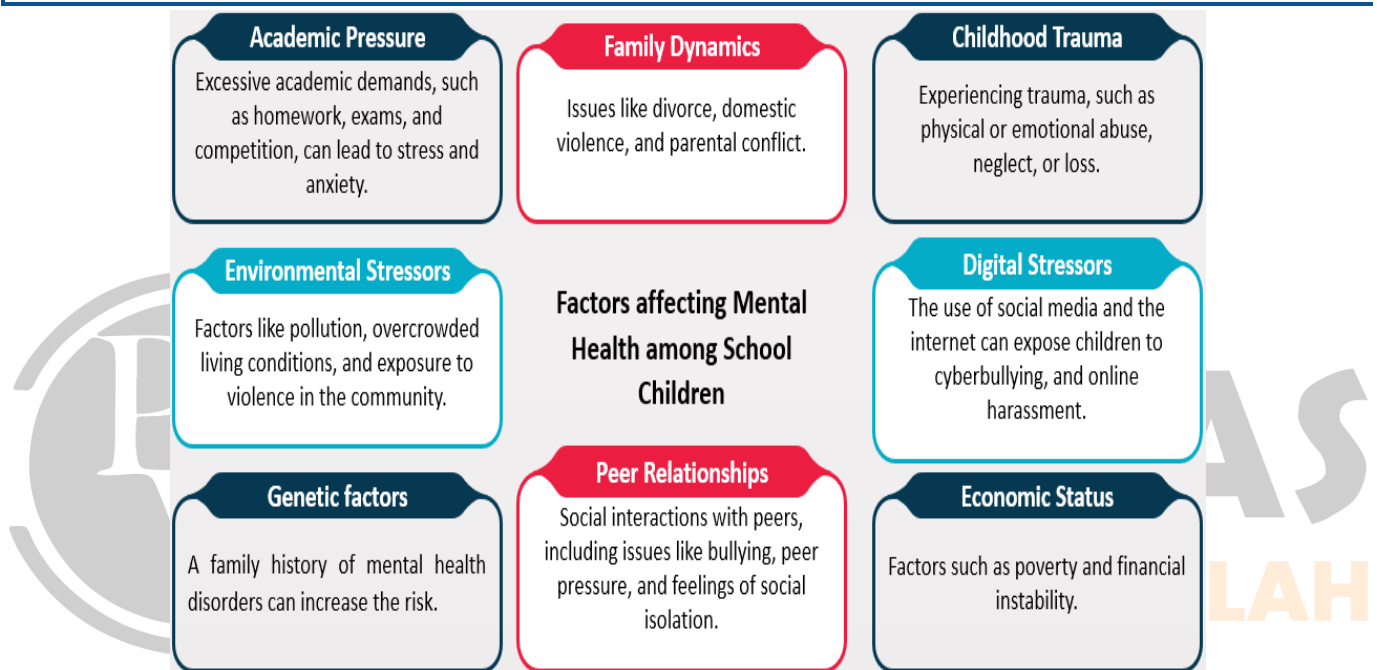
> 12. *Do you think that social media is one of the reasons for rising mental health issues? If yes, what are the reasons for it?*

Context: The Parliamentary **Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare** submitted its report titled **'Mental Health Care and Its Management in Contemporary Times'.** The Committee noted that **mental health-related issues are rising in India,** and seeks to examine the status of infrastructure, regulatory structure, and causes behind its prevalence.

What defines mental health?

❖ The **World Health Organization (WHO)** defines mental health as a state of **mental well-being** that enables people to **cope with the stresses of life,** realize their abilities, learn well, and work well, and contribute to their community. Mental health is an **integral part of health;** it is **more than the absence of mental illnesses.** It is the foundation for well-being and effective functioning of individuals.

What are the primary factors influencing mental health in school children?

Academic Pressure
Excessive academic demands, such as homework, exams, and competition, can lead to stress and anxiety.

Family Dynamics
Issues like divorce, domestic violence, and parental conflict.

Childhood Trauma
Experiencing trauma, such as physical or emotional abuse, neglect, or loss.

Environmental Stressors
Factors like pollution, overcrowded living conditions, and exposure to violence in the community.

Factors affecting Mental Health among School Children

Digital Stressors
The use of social media and the internet can expose children to cyberbullying, and online harassment.

Genetic factors
A family history of mental health disorders can increase the risk.

Peer Relationships
Social interactions with peers, including issues like bullying, peer pressure, and feelings of social isolation.

Economic Status
Factors such as poverty and financial instability.

What is the status of mental illness in India?

❖ In 2017, an estimation of the **burden of mental health conditions** for the states across India revealed that as many as 197.3 million people required care for mental health conditions.
  ➢ This included around 45.7 million people with **depressive disorders** and 44.9 million people with **anxiety disorders**.
  ➢ The situation has been exacerbated due to the **Covid-19 pandemic,** making it a serious concern world over.

What is the current mental health status among Indian schoolchildren?

❖ **As per the National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) conducted in 2015-16:**
  ➢ The **prevalence of mental disorders** among children between ages 13-17 was 7.3% in both genders. Further, 26.8% of girls were **getting married below the legal age**, while 8% of girls between ages 15-19 were **already mothers or pregnant.** The survey also found that 37% of women between ages 15-24 have experienced **physical, sexual, or emotional violence** by their husbands— this includes children technically of school-going age.
❖ **According to statistics from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB):**
  ➢ Since 2011, the **number of suicides** among students has steadily increased from 7696 students (2011) to 13,089 students (2021). For those below 18, 1408 cases saw **illness** cited as the **reason for suicide**; 58% of these illnesses were **related to mental health.** Other than this, 1495 cases listed **'love affairs'** as the cause and 864 listed **'failure in exams.'**

What are the key challenges hindering the resolution of mental health issues in India?

Challenges faced by patients:

❖ **Stigmatization:** Mental health patients often refrain from seeking medical assistance due to the pervasive stigma surrounding their conditions. This can have a deep isolating psychological impact.

❖ **Treatment Discontinuation:** Sometimes treatment including counselling can take over a year. Also, these sessions are prohibitively costly, forcing patients to withdraw.

❖ **Hospital beds:** India has only 1.43 hospital beds available for mental health patients per 100,000 population, compared to a median of seven in low-income countries and 50 in high-income countries.

❖ **Shortage of doctors:** Estimates from WHO in 2017 show that India has only 0.15 psychologists per lakh while the requirement is three psychiatrists per lakh.

❖ **Inadequate training to doctors:** There is a range of mental illnesses that need to be identified and treated, however training of doctors is not commensurate with the demand of the job.

❖ **Rehabilitation facilities:** There is a dearth of rehabilitation facilities in India's landscape of mental healthcare services.

❖ **Underutilisation of funds:** For example, less than 40% of funds allocated to states from 2015 to 2020 under the District Mental Health Programme were utilized.

❖ **Regional disparity:** Due to inadequate resources in rural and remote areas, many mental health professionals are reluctant to work in rural areas.

What government initiatives are in place for addressing mental health concerns in India?

❖ **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP):** The Government of India launched the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) in 1982, with the following objectives:

❖ To ensure the **availability and accessibility** of minimum mental healthcare for all in the foreseeable future, particularly to the most vulnerable and underprivileged sections of the population.

❖ **The District Mental Health Program (DMHP):** It was launched under NMHP in 1996 (in IX Five Year Plan). The DMHP was based on the **'Bellary Model'** with the following components:

❖ **Early detection & treatment. Training:** imparting short term training to general physicians for diagnosis and treatment of common mental illnesses with a limited number of drugs under the guidance of specialists. The Health workers are being trained in identifying mentally ill persons. \

❖ **Mental HealthCare Act 2017:** It was enacted to provide better mental health care and protect the rights of individuals with mental illness.

❖ **Key provisions include:** The Act guarantees the right to access mental health care and treatment for individuals with mental illness. It allows individuals to make advance directives regarding their treatment preferences. The Act decriminalizes suicide and prohibits the use of electroconvulsive therapy without anaesthesia. It establishes Mental Health Review Boards to safeguard the rights of individuals with mental illness. It mandates insurance companies to provide coverage for mental health treatment. The Act promotes the establishment of mental health services and facilities. The Act prohibits the use of seclusion and chaining of mentally ill individuals.

❖ **Tele Mental Health Assistance and Networking Across States (Tele-MANAS) initiative:** It was launched by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare in October 2022. It aims to provide **free tele-mental health services all over the country round the clock,** particularly catering to people in remote or under-served areas.

What government programs focus on enhancing mental health specifically among school children?

❖ **School Health Program (2018):** Launched under the **Ayushman Bharat scheme**, this program has a broad focus, including screening children's health, conducting classroom activities on health and wellness, and organizing thematic school assemblies.

➢ The programme promotes activities like meditation and yoga, bullying prevention, internet safety and media literacy, prevention of substance abuse, violence and **mental health awareness**.

❖ **Teacher and Counsellor Training:** In 2022, the Union Health Ministry issued a handbook for schools to train teachers, and counsellors to identify, detect, and intervene in cases of **mental health issues.**

❖ **Manodarpan Portal:** Launched during the **COVID-19 pandemic**, it provides guidelines, FAQs, posters, and videos for support to students facing **psychosocial issues,** loneliness, and withdrawal behavior.

- ❖ **NCERT Counselling Services:** The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) offers free **counselling services for children**, employing 270 counsellors across regions to address mental health issues among students through live interactive sessions.
- ❖ **Kiran Helpline:** The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has launched a 24/7 toll-free helpline 'Kiran' to provide support to people facing anxiety, stress, depression, suicidal thoughts and other mental health concerns.

What measures can bolster the overall mental health landscape in India?

- ❖ **Promoting Mental Health Literacy:** Launching awareness programs plays a pivotal role in destigmatizing mental health interventions.
- ❖ **Affordability Measures:** Regulating the costs of counselling sessions and refining underwriting norms in insurance policies, particularly concerning outpatient expenses, disease classification, and pre-existing conditions, requires attention.
- ❖ **Administrative Reforms: Bottom-Up Approach:** A mental healthcare system inspired by the reproductive and child health model, beginning with services at the village level and extending to tertiary hospitals, is essential.
- **Transitioning from Institutions to Communities:** To promote community-based rehabilitation, India should strengthen outpatient services and establish day-care centers.

How can the mental health ecosystem for school children in India be notably improved?

- ❖ **UNICEF's Framework:** As per the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), any **mental health programme in schools** must include **five pillars of support:**
  - ➢ an enabling learning environment,
  - ➢ access to early intervention and mental health services,
  - ➢ teachers' well-being,
  - ➢ targeted mental health programmes using educational workforce at national, state, and local levels, and
  - ➢ meaningful collaboration between school, family, and community.
- ❖ **NITI Aayog is planning to set up a comprehensive school healthcare programme:** the programme will cover students in both **government and private schools** via policy intervention to existing health promotion and disease prevention measures under the **Ayushman Bharat scheme.**

Do you think that social media is one of the reasons for rising mental health issues? If yes, what are the reasons for it?

Yes, social media is considered one of the factors contributing to rising mental health issues. Several reasons contribute to this phenomenon:

- ❖ **Social Comparison:** Social media often presents an idealized version of people's lives, creating a constant comparison culture. Users may feel inadequate when comparing their lives to the seemingly perfect lives of others, leading to feelings of low self-esteem and anxiety.
- ❖ **Cyberbullying:** The anonymity and distance provided by social media can lead to cyberbullying, which can have severe consequences on the mental health of victims. The constant threat of online harassment can contribute to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues.
- ❖ **Fear of Missing Out (FOMO):** Social media platforms often showcase social events, achievements, and experiences. The fear of missing out on these activities can lead to feelings of isolation and inadequacy among those who are not part of such events.
- ❖ **Negative Impact on Body Image:** social media is filled with images promoting certain beauty standards. Exposure to such images can negatively impact body image and contribute to the development of eating disorders and body dysmorphia.
- ❖ **Addiction and Social Isolation:** Excessive use of social media can lead to addiction, with individuals spending significant amounts of time online. This can contribute to social isolation, as real-world interactions are replaced by online engagements.

CHILD ADOPTION IN INDIA

Questionnaire

1. *What is the status of child adoption in India?*
2. *What are the laws related to adoption in India?*
3. *What is the adoption process in India?*
4. *What are the major challenges related to adoption in India?*
5. *Suggest steps for addressing adoption challenges in India*
6. *What are the ethical issues associated with child adoption?*
7. *How can technology be leveraged to streamline the adoption process and provide better tracking mechanisms for children in need of adoption and prospective parents?*
8. *How can a structured approach to promoting child adoption contribute to shaping a demographic dividend in India and address challenges related to an aging population and workforce dynamics?*

Context: Recently, the Supreme Court of India ruled 3:2 against **adoption rights for queer couples.** The majority judges said that **non-heterosexual couples** cannot be granted the right to jointly adopt a child.

What is the Status of Child Adoption in India?

❖ **It is a legal** and emotional process that involves accepting the responsibility of caring for a child who is not biologically related to the adoptive parents.

❖ The process of adoption in India is monitored and regulated by the **Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA),** which is part of the Ministry of Women and Childcare.

❖ CARA is the **nodal body for adoption of Indian children** and is mandated to monitor and regulate in-country adoptions.

❖ **CARA** is also designated as the **Central Authority** to deal with inter-country adoptions in accordance with the provisions of the **Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, 1993,** ratified by Government of India in 2003.

What are the Laws Related to Adoption in India?

❖ **The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 (HAMA):** This law applies to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs. It governs the adoption of children within these communities, including the eligibility criteria for adoptive parents, the process of adoption, and the legal rights and obligations of adoptive parents and children.

❖ **The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act):** This law applies to all children in India, regardless of their religion. It governs the adoption of children who are orphans, abandoned, surrendered by their parents, or have been declared legally free for adoption by a court.

What is the adoption process in India?

❖ A database of children and registration of prospective parents is done on a centralized **Child Adoption Resource Information and Guidance System (CARINGS),** which is maintained by CARA.

❖ **Who can be adopted?**
  ➢ An orphan, abandoned, or surrendered child who has been declared legally free for adoption by Child Welfare Committee (CWC) can be adopted under the provisions of the JJ Act 2015.
  ➢ A child of a relative (paternal uncle or aunt, a maternal uncle or aunt or paternal and maternal grandparents).
  ➢ Children of the spouse from earlier marriage surrendered by the biological parent(s).

Who can adopt?

❖ Physically, mentally stable, financially capable and should not have any life-threatening medical condition.

❖ Married couple- 2 years of stable marital relationship and consent of both spouses, composite age of the married couple should not exceed 110 years.

❖ Single- A single woman can adopt a child of any gender, but a single male is not eligible to adopt a girl child, age of a single parent should not exceed 55 years.

❖ Minimum age difference between the child and either of the prospective adoptive parents should not be less than 25 years.

❖ Age criteria is not applicable in the case of adoptions by relative or stepparent.

❖ Couples with three or more children are not considered except in case of adoption of children with special needs or hard-to-place children.

What are the Major Challenges Related to Adoption in India?

❖ The adoption process in India is bureaucratic, complex, and time-consuming, resulting in delays in placing children with suitable families.

❖ There are far more prospective adoptive parents in India than there are children available for adoption.

❖ Instances of illegal adoption practices, such as baby trafficking, child-selling, and the presence of unregistered adoption agencies, exploit vulnerable children and biological parents.

❖ High-profile cases, like the 2018 scandal involving Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, highlighted issues within adoption practices.

❖ There's an unusual trend where adoptive parents in India are returning children post-adoption.

❖ Reports from CARA in 2020 indicated that over 1,100 adopted children were returned to childcare institutions by their adoptive parents in the past five years.

Suggest steps for addressing adoption challenges in India

❖ Strengthen Adoption Laws:
  ➢ Review and update adoption laws to streamline the process, ensure transparency, and prioritize the child's best interests.
  ➢ Simplify paperwork, minimize delays, and address any loopholes or ambiguities in the legislation.

❖ Post-Adoption Services:
  ➢ Establish comprehensive post-adoption support services for both adoptive parents and children.
  ➢ Offer counselling, educational support, healthcare access, and guidance to navigate challenges post-adoption.

❖ Awareness and Education:
  ➢ Promote adoption as a **viable means of family-building** through awareness campaigns.
  ➢ **Educate the public** about adoption procedures, legal aspects, and benefits, and foster positive attitudes while dispelling misconceptions or stigma.

What are the ethical issues associated with child adoption?

❖ **Child welfare and best interests:** This means ensuring that the adoption is in the child's best interest, considering their emotional, psychological, and social needs.

❖ **Informed consent and voluntary surrender:** Ethical adoption requires informed consent from the child's biological parents or guardians.

❖ **Prevention of child trafficking and exploitation:** Adoption agencies and authorities must have strict safeguards in place to prevent child trafficking and exploitation.

❖ **Gender discrimination and preference for sons:** In India, there is a strong preference for sons, which can lead to gender discrimination in adoption practices.

How can technology be leveraged to streamline the adoption process and provide better tracking mechanisms for children in need of adoption and prospective parents?

❖ **Centralized Adoption Database:** A centralized adoption database can be established to connect prospective adoptive parents with children eligible for adoption.

❖ **Data Analytics and Matching Algorithms:** Data analytics and matching algorithms can be employed to improve the matching process by identifying potential compatibility between children and adoptive families based on their shared interests, values, and backgrounds.

❖ **Mobile App for Child Welfare Monitoring:** A mobile app can be developed to enable adoption agencies and social workers to track the well-being of adopted children, providing a platform for communication, reporting concerns, and accessing support services.

- ❖ **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Chatbots:** AI chatbots can be implemented to provide initial information, answer frequently asked questions, and guide prospective parents through the adoption process.
- ❖ **Blockchain Technology for Secure Record Keeping and Transparency:** Blockchain technology can be utilized to create a secure and transparent record-keeping system, ensuring data integrity and traceability throughout the adoption process.
- ❖ **Telehealth Services for Post-Adoption Support:** Telehealth services can connect adoptive families with mental health professionals, child development specialists, and other support providers remotely, improving accessibility and convenience.

How can a structured approach to promoting child adoption contribute to shaping a demographic dividend in India and address challenges related to an aging population and workforce dynamics?

- ❖ **Enhanced Human Capital Development:** Adoption provides children with access to education, healthcare, and opportunities for personal growth, contributing to the development of a skilled and knowledgeable workforce.
- ❖ **Reduced Burden on Social Welfare Systems:** By providing children with permanent homes and reducing the number of dependents on orphanages and childcare institutions, adoption can alleviate the burden on social welfare systems and free up resources for other critical services.
- ❖ **Increased Social Cohesion and Intergenerational Bonding:** Adoption fosters intergenerational bonding and social cohesion by creating families that span different age groups.
- ❖ **Improved Mental Health and Well-being:** Adoption provides children with a sense of belonging, stability, and emotional security, which can significantly improve their mental health and well-being.
- ❖ **Addressing Gender Imbalances:** In India, where there is a preference for sons, adoption can help to address gender imbalances by ensuring that girls have equal opportunities to find loving homes and thrive.
- ❖ **Promoting Social Inclusion and Diversity:** Adoption can contribute to a more inclusive and diverse society by creating families that reflect the varied cultural and religious backgrounds of India's population.
- ❖ **Fostering Innovation and Entrepreneurship**: By providing children with a supportive and nurturing environment, adoption can encourage them to pursue higher education, engage in innovation, and contribute to entrepreneurial ventures.
- ❖ **Enhancing Family Structures and Values:** Adoption can strengthen family structures and promote positive family values by creating stable and loving homes that nurture children's emotional, social, and intellectual development.

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GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX 2023

Questionnaire:

1. *What is the Global Hunger Index 2023?*
2. *What are the key parameters of GHI?*
3. *What is the performance of India on various parameters?*
4. *What progress India makes in improving GHI?*
5. *Why has progress in reducing hunger slowed?*
6. *Why does the government criticize the Global Hunger Index report?*
7. *What are the government initiatives to Combat hunger?*
8. *What measures should be taken to combat hunger?*
9. *One hand India has surplus grains but on the other hand there are millions of people in India who sleep without food. What are the reasons for it?*
10. *Despite many government programs to tackle hunger, India has been performing poorly in these global rankings and even in our domestic ranking the issue of malnutrition has been highlighted. What are the reasons for it?*

What is the Global Hunger Index 2023?

- ❖ **Objective:** To comprehensively measure and track global, regional, and national hunger.
- ❖ **Published by:** Concern Worldwide and Welt Hunger Hilfe.
- ❖ **Significance:** The report attempts to "raise awareness of United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2) that endeavours to achieve 'Zero Hunger' by 2030.
- ❖ **Scores:** The GHI score is calculated on a 100-point scale reflecting the severity of hunger, where zero is the best score (no hunger) and 100 is the worst.

What are the key parameters of GHI?

- ❖ The GHI employs a multidimensional approach, incorporating four key indicators to calculate a numerical score on a 100-point scale:
- ❖ **Undernourishment:** Reflects the share of the population with insufficient caloric intake.
- ❖ **Child Stunting:** Represents the share of children under the age of five who have low height for their age, indicating chronic undernutrition.
- ❖ **Child Wasting:** This signifies the share of children under the age of five who have low weight for their height, indicating acute undernutrition.
- ❖ **Child Mortality:** It shows the share of children who die before their fifth birthday, influenced by factors such as inadequate nutrition and unhealthy environments.

What is the performance of India on various parameters?

- ❖ India ranked **111th out of 125 countries** in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2023. India came after neighbouring countries Pakistan (102nd), Bangladesh (81st), Nepal (69th) and Sri Lanka (60th). However, India fared better than South Asia and Africa South of the Sahara, which recorded a score of 27 each.
- ❖ **Rate of undernourishment:** 16.6 per cent
- ❖ **Under-five mortality:** 3.1 percent,
- ❖ **Prevalence of anaemia in women aged between 15 and 24 years:** 58.1 per cent.
- ❖ **Child wasting rate in the world:** 18.7 per cent.

What progress India makes in improving GHI?

- ❖ India made significant progress between 2000 and 2015, with its score improving from 38.4 in 2000 to 35.5 in 2008 and 29.2 in 2015, over the past eight years, the country has advanced on the GHI by only 0.5 points.
- ❖ This year, **India has a score of 28.7**, indicating a serious level of hunger.

Why has progress in reducing hunger slowed?

- ❖ According to the report, the compounding impacts of **climate change, conflicts, economic shocks, the global pandemic, and the Russia-Ukraine war** have exacerbated social and economic inequalities and slowed or reversed previous progress in reducing hunger in many countries.
- ❖ The 2023 GHI score for the **world is 18.3,** which is considered moderate.

Why does the government criticize the Global Hunger Index report?

- ❖ The Ministry of Women and Child Development not only dismissed the GHI but also questioned the intent of its authors.
- ❖ An official statement has described the report as part of a "consistent effort'' to "taint India's image".
- ❖ **Methodological Issues**: Three of the four indicators used for calculating the index are related to children's health and cannot be representative of the entire population.
- ❖ **Limited Sample Size:** The fourth and most important indicator 'Proportion of Undernourished (PoU) population' is based on an opinion poll conducted on a very small sample size of 3,000.
- ❖ **Source of Data:** Data used in the Global Hunger Index report are sourced from international agencies which are not updated as per the latest data available in the country.
    - ➢ **Example:** The percentage of child wasting, as seen on the Poshan Tracker, has been consistently below 7.2%, month-on-month, as compared to the value of 18.7% used for child wasting in the Global Hunger Index 2023.

- ❖ **Inconsistent Evidence:** There is hardly any evidence that child mortality (one of four indicators) results from hunger.
- ❖ **Variations**: The experts also claim that in India children and adults have more petite body frames, which is why overweight and obesity classification is different (lower cut-off for Asians).
  - ➢ The same argument would also apply to children.

What are the government initiatives to Combat hunger?

- ❖ **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY):** The Central Government launched PMGKAY with the specific purpose of ameliorating the hardships faced by the poor and needy due to economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19.
- ❖ **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013:** The Act provides for coverage of up to 75% of the rural population and up to 50% of the urban population for receiving subsidized foodgrains under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), thus covering about two-thirds of the population.
- ❖ **Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0:** It is an Integrated Nutrition Support Programme to address the challenges of malnutrition in children, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers.
- ❖ **The Zero Hunger Programme:** It aims to decrease child stunting for children 2 years and younger, ensure access to food all year round and Create stable food systems.
- ❖ **Eat Right India Movement:** The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India started the Eat Right India movement to ensure that the Indian population has access to healthy and safe food.

What measures should be taken to combat hunger?

- ❖ **Consensus on a definition of Hunger and parameters:** a new Index could be developed following consensus on a definition of hunger and objectives.
- ❖ **Inclusive Governance:** Put inclusive governance and accountability at the center of efforts to transform food systems. **Example:** Improve public distribution and civil supplies network especially the local rationing system. People should have the option to at least take a minimum amount of wheat, rice, salt and other requisite items without Aadhaar also.
- ❖ **Resource Mobilization:** Scale up resources to address pressing humanitarian needs, while transforming food systems to make them resilient to shocks.
- ❖ **Improved Implementation of Social Welfare Schemes:** India has demonstrated significant political will to transform the food and nutrition landscape. **Examples:** The National Food Security Act, Poshan Abhiyan (National Nutrition Mission), PM Garib Kalyan Yojna and National Mission for Natural Farming.

One hand India has surplus grains but on the other hand there are millions of people in India who sleep without food? What are the reasons for it?

- ❖ **Surplus Grains:** India's agricultural sector often yields surplus grains due to factors like bumper harvests, effective procurement, and strategic grain reserves.
- ❖ **Food Insecurity Challenges:** However, Several factors contribute to the paradox of surplus grains coexisting with widespread food insecurity.
  - ➢ These factors include inefficient distribution systems, storage losses, logistical challenges, and limited purchasing power among economically disadvantaged populations.
- ❖ **Supply Chain Inefficiencies:** The gap between surplus production and food accessibility highlights supply chain inefficiencies, lack of infrastructure, and bureaucratic hurdles, preventing surplus grains from reaching those in need.
- ❖ **Policy and Implementation Gaps:** Policy and implementation gaps in food distribution programs, like the Public Distribution System (PDS), also contribute to the persistence of hunger amidst plenty in certain regions of India.

Despite many government programs to tackle hunger, India has been performing poorly in these global rankings and even in our domestic ranking the issue of malnutrition has been highlighted. What are the reasons for it?

- ❖ Despite numerous government initiatives to address hunger, a significant challenge lies in the ineffective implementation of these programs.
- ❖ **Ineffective Implementation of Programs:** Administrative bottlenecks, corruption, and insufficient monitoring mechanisms often hinder the efficient delivery of benefits to those in need.
- ❖ **Distribution Disparities:** Disparities in the distribution of resources, especially in remote or marginalized areas, contribute to the persistence of hunger.

➤ Inadequate infrastructure and logistical challenges impede the timely and equitable delivery of food and nutritional support.

❖ **Economic Disparities:** India's economic disparities exacerbate malnutrition issues, with a large population lacking purchasing power to access nutritious food.

❖ Limited employment opportunities and income inequalities further amplify food insecurity.

❖ **Agricultural Challenges:** Challenges in the agricultural sector, including reliance on specific crops, inadequate irrigation, and vulnerability to climate change, impact food production and availability, affecting the overall nutritional landscape.

❖ **Lack of Awareness and Education**: Insufficient awareness about proper nutrition and healthcare practices, particularly in rural areas, contributes to the prevalence of malnutrition.

Addressing these root causes necessitates holistic strategies that go beyond immediate food distribution, encompassing education, healthcare, and economic empowerment.

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GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON DIGITAL HEALTH' (GIDH)

Questionnaire:

1. *What do you understand about Digital Health?*
2. *What are the benefits of digital health?*
3. *What are the key challenges of Digital health?*
4. *What is the Global Initiative on Digital Health?*
5. *What is the aim of the Global Initiative on Digital Health?*
6. *What is the Significance of Global Initiative for Digital Health (GIDH)?*
7. *What are the key pillars of GIDH?*
8. *What are the priority areas of the GIDH?*
9. *In the era of digitalisation don't you think digitalisation of health status can be misused by big pharma companies and it is against the right to privacy under the constitution? What are your views on it?*

Context: Recently, India in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the Global Initiative on Digital Health.

What do you understand about Digital Health?

Digital health signifies the integration of information technology into healthcare, revolutionizing the industry. Embracing electronic health records, telemedicine, wearables, and mobile apps, it enhances patient care and management.

What are the benefits of digital health?

❖ **Accessibility and Cost Reduction:** Remote monitoring, personalized treatments, and streamlined administration are among its myriad benefits.

❖ **Empowering Individuals in Health Management:** From wearable devices to mobile apps, these technologies enable users to monitor their health, access information, and engage in preventive measures, fostering a proactive approach to well-being.

❖ **Transformative Impact:** The intersection of technology and healthcare is transforming the industry, promising a future where data-driven insights, connectivity, and personalized approaches define a new standard of care.

❖ **Advancing Universal Health Coverage:** Digital health serves as a powerful facilitator in delivering healthcare services, significantly contributing to the attainment of universal health coverage targets.

➤ Its potential lies in ensuring the availability, accessibility, affordability, and equity of health services.

➤ **Example:** Telemedicine enables patients to remotely connect with healthcare providers.

What are the key challenges of Digital health?

- ❖ **Interoperability Dilemmas**: Achieving seamless interoperability among diverse digital health systems remains a major challenge.
- ❖ **Data Security Concerns:** Digital health systems face persistent threats to data security and privacy.
  - ➢ The growing volume of sensitive health data, coupled with evolving cyber threats, necessitates robust cybersecurity measures to safeguard patient information and maintain trust in digital health solutions.
- ❖ **Regulatory Hurdles:** Adherence to diverse regulations across regions demands a careful balancing act to ensure compliance without stifling innovation.
- ❖ **User Adoption and Engagement:** Encouraging widespread adoption and sustained engagement with digital health tools among both healthcare providers and patients remains a hurdle.
  - ➢ Overcoming resistance, promoting digital literacy, and ensuring user-friendly interfaces are critical for successful integration.
- ❖ **Integration with Traditional Systems:** Harmonizing digital health solutions with existing traditional healthcare systems presents challenges.
  - ➢ Bridging the gap between legacy systems and cutting-edge digital technologies is essential for a cohesive, efficient, and effective healthcare ecosystem.
- ❖ **Financial Barriers:** Despite long-term cost-effectiveness, the initial investment required for implementing digital health infrastructure can be a barrier.
  - ➢ Funding challenges may impede the adoption of these technologies, particularly in resource-constrained settings, limiting their potential impact.

What is the Global Initiative on Digital Health?

- ❖ GIDH is one of the key deliverables of India's G-20 Presidency.
- ❖ It will consolidate the evidence and "amplify recent and past gains in global digital health" while strengthening mutual accountability to enhance the impact of future investments.
- ❖ The GIDH will be a WHO-managed network that will promote equitable access to digital health by addressing challenges such as duplication of efforts and "products-focused" digital health transformation.
- ❖ The Initiative will serve as a platform to enable a wide global ecosystem to work collectively to promote country capacity and strengthen international cooperation in digital health.

What is the Aim of Global Initiative on Digital Health?

- ❖ Through this evidence-based and comprehensive co-creation process, GIDH will ultimately aim to:
- ❖ **ALIGN** efforts to support the Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020–2025.
- ❖ **SUPPORT** quality-assured technical assistance to develop and strengthen standards-based and interoperable systems aligned to global best practices, norms, and standards.
- ❖ **FACILITATE** the deliberate use of quality assured digital transformation tools that enable governments to manage their digital health transformation journey.
- ❖ The first-of-its-kind global initiative is aimed at data convergence, the interface of health platforms and investments in the digital health space around the globe.
- ❖ GIDH will ultimately aim to align efforts to support the 'Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020–2025.

What is the Significance of Global Initiative for Digital Health (GIDH)?

- ❖ It has been envisaged to have a convergent approach that breaks the silos and ensures that existing and ongoing digital health efforts can be made accessible under one umbrella.
- ❖ It will include an investment tracker, an ask tracker (to understand who needs what kind of products and services) and a library of existing digital health platforms.
- ❖ It will aid in universal health convergence and improve healthcare service delivery.
- ❖ The initiative has also found funding from global partners.

What are the key pillars of GIDH?

- ❖ As a WHO Managed Network ("Network of Networks"), GIDH will address challenges such as duplication of efforts and "products-focused" digital health transformation through a focus on four foundational pillars:

1. **Country Needs Tracker** - facilitating digital health investments to be informed by country priorities.
2. **Country Resource Portal –** identifying traditional as well as innovative resource opportunities, and promoting transparency, while reducing the risk of duplication for enabling a standards-based prospective and retrospective analysis of resourcing gaps in digital health.
3. **Transformation Toolbox** – advocating for quality-assured tools and resources that strengthen country capacity and autonomy to manage the national digital health transformation.
4. **Convening and Knowledge Exchange -** promoting strengthened collaboration and knowledge exchange across global, regional, and national networks in digital health.
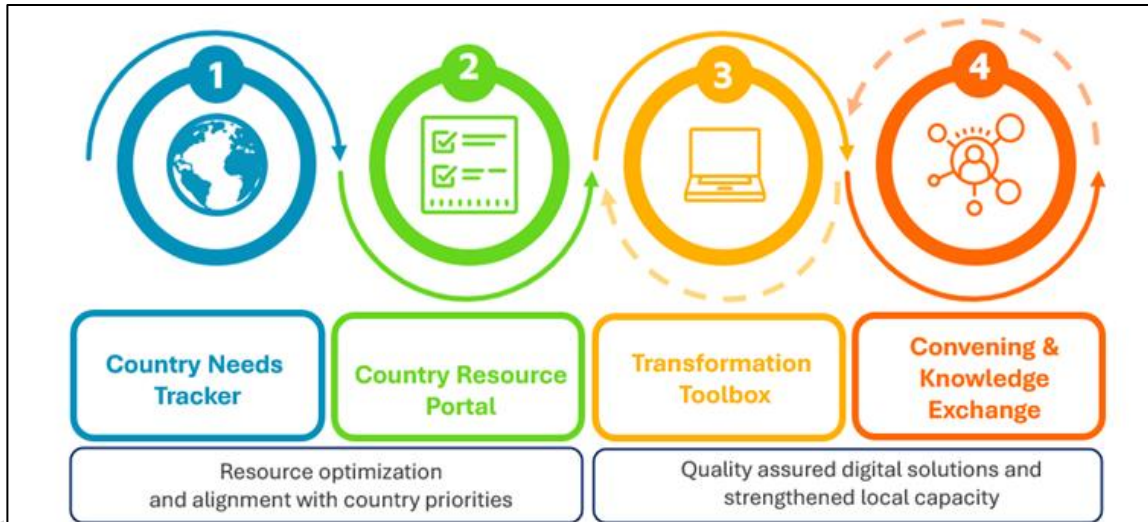
What are the priority areas of the GIDH?

❖ GIDH will prioritize the following core areas of work:
  ➢ Assessing and prioritizing Member States' needs
  ➢ Evaluating the availability and reporting of country-level digital health resources and identifying under-funded priorities
  ➢ Supporting technically and financially the accelerated achievement of the strategic objectives defined in the Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020-2025
  ➢ Building capacity and converging efforts to encourage developing,
  ➢ Maintaining and adapting digital health technologies to continuously changing needs.

In the era of digitalisation don't you think digitalisation of health status can be misused by big pharma companies and it is against the right to privacy under the constitution? What are your views on it?

❖ **Concerns in Digital Health:** In the era of digitalization, concerns about the potential misuse of health data by big pharmaceutical companies are valid.

❖ **Privacy Concerns:** The digitalization of health status has the potential to be exploited for profit-driven motives, raising significant privacy issues.

❖ **Constitutional Implications:** This could conflict with the right to privacy under constitutional frameworks that protect individuals' personal information.

❖ **Balanced Approach:** Striking a balance between leveraging digital tools for healthcare advancements and safeguarding privacy is crucial.

❖ **Need for Robust Regulations:** Implementing robust regulations and ethical guidelines is necessary to ensure responsible data use, preventing unauthorized access and addressing the ethical implications of sharing **sensitive health information** in the evolving landscape of digital health.

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# INCIDENTS OF HEART ATTACK AMONG YOUTH

Questionnaire

1. *What is heart attack?*
2. *What are the symptoms of heart attack?*
3. *What is the status of heart attack deaths?*
4. *What are the reasons for rise in heart attacks in youth?*
5. *What is the role of modern lifestyle on heart attacks?*
6. *What are the effects of heart diseases?*
7. *What is the socio-economic burden of heart diseases?*
8. *How to overcome risks of heart diseases?*
9. *Can covid-19 increase the risk of heart attacks?*

Context: In recent years, the **incidence of heart attacks** among youths has drastically increased.

What is Heart Attack?

Heart attack is a medical condition in which a blood clot blocks blood flow to the heart. Lack of blood supply causes heart tissue to die.

When the heart is unable to pump blood to all organs of the body. It mainly takes place **due to obstruction** in arteries carrying blood to the heart.
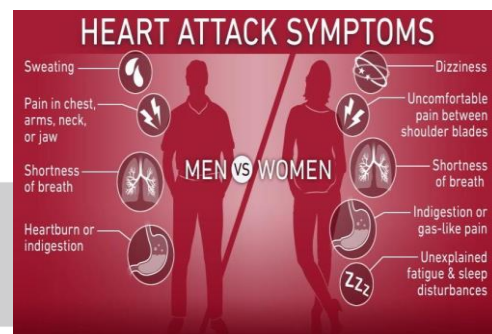
Heart Attack Deaths

❖ Heart disease is a **major cause of death** across the world and its prevalence has risen in India over the past five years.

❖ Affecting every other young person between the ages of 30 and 40. Globally, 17.9 million people died from **Cardio-vascular diseases** in 2019, representing 32% of all global deaths. Of these deaths, 85% were due to heart attack and stroke.

❖ According to the ICMR report, **heart diseases accounted** for 28.1% of the deaths in India in 2016. The corresponding figure in 1990 was 15.2%.

❖ In 2020, of the total deaths registered in the country 25.43% were due to **heart attacks**. The **cardiovascular disease** death rate is 272 per 100,000, compared with the global average of 235 per 100,000.

Reasons for rise in Heart Attacks in Youth

❖ **Changing Lifestyle:** The **rise in heart related issues** is attributed to today's fast-paced lifestyle and changes in habits. Sedentary lifestyle has accentuated the problem.

❖ **Lifestyle Diseases:** Increase in **lifestyle diseases** such as diabetes, blood pressure, obesity, stress, hypertension, insomnia etc have contributed to heart diseases.

❖ **Human Vices:** Bad habits such as **smoking, consumption of alcohol, use of drugs**, nutrient-poor foods etc have increased the risks.

❖ **Lack of Exercises:** Due to **limited physical exercise**, cholesterol levels in the body increases. This puts additional stress on the heart.

❖ **Chronic stress:** The **competitive modern life** often subjects young individuals to chronic stress, leading to release of hormones like cortisol and adrenaline, which can prove deadly over time.

❖ **Long-term Effect of Covid-19:** Studies have shown that **youths who have recovered** from severe Covid-19 infection are vulnerable to heart attacks.

What is the role of modern lifestyle on heart attacks?

❖ **Fast-paced Lifestyle:** The **rise in heart related issues** is attributed to today's fast-paced lifestyle and changes in habits. Sedentary lifestyle has accentuated the problem.

❖ **Rise in Diseases:** Increase in **lifestyle diseases** such as diabetes, blood pressure, obesity, stress, hypertension, insomnia etc have contributed to heart diseases.

Impact of Heart Attacks

❖ **Financial Burden:** The treatment of heart diseases can be a **burden on the individual** and the family when it occurs at a young age.

❖ **Affects Normal Functioning:** Individual's **normal life gets affected** due to heart attacks. Their food choice, lifestyle, as well as bodily functions gets affected.

❖ **Social Impact: Relationships with friends and family** can be affected due to heart conditions. People may also suffer from loneliness.

❖ **Mental Wellbeing:** There are chances that **mental disorders** such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD can develop after cardiac events.

❖ **Sexual Life:** People recovering from cardiac related events hesitate to resume their sexual life for the fear of relapse of the condition.

What is the Socio-economic burden of heart diseases?

❖ **Financial Burden:** The treatment of heart diseases can be a **burden on the individual** and the family when it occurs at a young age.

❖ **Social Burden:** Individual's **normal life gets affected** due to heart attacks. Their food choice, lifestyle, as well as bodily functions gets affected.

How to Overcome Risks of Heart Diseases?

❖ **Healthy Food Habits:** Adopting healthy food habits can help **mitigate cardiovascular** risk factors and promote overall well-being.
  ➢ There is a need to inculcate fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds into diet.

❖ **Limited Uptake of Sugar and Salts:** Consumption of **sugar and salts** must be within limits to enable cardiovascular health.

❖ **Regular Exercise:** Regular **physical exercise** keeps cholesterol under control. It allows the heart to function optimally.

❖ **Mental Peace:** It is necessary to **keep stress levels under check**. This can be achieved through yoga and meditation.

Can COVID-19 increase the risk of Heart Attacks?

❖ **Relation:** Studies have pointed out that covid-19 **increases the risk of heart attack** and stroke. This is due to the **inflammation that occurs throughout the body** in severe cases.

❖ **Role of the Virus:** There is no clear evidence to say that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, directly affects blood vessels.
  ➢ However, a study of heart tissue of infected patient found **viral RNA in the arterial walls** than in the surrounding fat tissue.
  ➢ The infected cells, which were **macrophages**, help remove cholesterol from blood vessels. When they are laden with cholesterol, they are known as **foam cells**.
  ➢ **Accumulation of foam cells** within arteries forms plaques that are a hallmark of atherosclerosis. This condition contributes to heart attacks and strokes.

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Questionnaire:

1. *What is the official language of India?*
2. *How many recognized languages are there in the Indian constitution?*
3. *Why does India have multiple official languages?*
4. *What is the significance of article 343 in relation to the official language of India?*
5. *What is the committee of parliament on official language?*
6. *Why was Hindi declared as an official language?*
7. *How does the choice of official languages contribute to cultural representation and inclusivity in India?*
8. *How does the three-language formula play a role in education in India?*
9. *What are the challenges in furthering Hindi as an official language?*
10. *What is the government's effort to promote Hindi and other regional languages?*
11. *You might have heard about making Hindi as the national language. Do you think that in a country like India where unity in diversity is the key element, imposition of one language can result in division in the society?*
12. *What will be the significance of having Hindi as the national language for India?*

Context: Recently, the union Home minister chaired the 38th meeting of the Committee of Parliament on Official Language. In his address, the union Home minister emphasized that respect of heritage is incomplete without respect of language and acceptance of official language will come only when we give respect to local languages.

What is the official language of India?

The official language of India is Hindi. However, India is a linguistically diverse country, and to address the multilingual nature of the nation, the Constitution of India recognizes several languages.

❖ **Hindi as Official Language:** Hindi, written in the Devanagari script, is recognized as the official language of the Indian government.

❖ **English as Associate Official Language:** English holds the status of an associate official language to facilitate communication at the central government level.

❖ **Constitutional Recognition:** The Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution lists 22 officially recognized languages, including Hindi and English.

❖ **Scheduled Languages:** Apart from Hindi and English, the Constitution recognizes other languages as scheduled languages, giving them official status at the state and union territory levels.

❖ **State Official Languages:** Each state and union territory in India can have its own official language(s) for use within the state legislature and government.

How many recognized languages are there in the Indian Constitution?

The Indian Constitution recognizes 22 languages under the Eighth Schedule. These languages have been accorded official status at the national level, and they include:

❖ Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu

❖ These languages, along with Hindi and English, contribute to the rich linguistic diversity of India.

Why does India have multiple official languages?

India has multiple official languages to recognize and accommodate its linguistic diversity, reflecting the country's rich cultural and regional variations. The decision to have multiple official languages is enshrined in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

- ❖ **Cultural Pluralism:** India is home to a vast array of cultures and communities, each with its own distinct language.
- ❖ **Historical and Regional Significance:** Different regions of India have a long history of using specific languages. **For example**, Bengali is spoken in West Bengal and parts of Bangladesh, while Tamil is predominantly spoken in Tamil Nadu.
- ❖ **Linguistic Federalism:** The linguistic diversity of India is a key aspect of its federal structure. States have the flexibility to adopt their own official languages, promoting linguistic federalism. **For instance,** Tamil is an official language in Tamil Nadu, and Kannada is in Karnataka.
- ❖ **Preservation of Languages:** Recognizing languages as official languages helps in the preservation and promotion of languages that might be at risk of decline. **Maithili, for example**, is recognized as an official language, contributing to the preservation of this language and its cultural heritage.
- ❖ **Education and Administration:** Multiple official languages support education in regional languages and facilitate administration at the state and local levels. **For example,** Gujarati is used in official capacities in the state of Gujarat.

What is the significance of Article 343 in relation to the official language of India?

- ❖ **Constitutional Provision:** Article 343 of the Indian Constitution deals with the official language of the Republic of India.
- ❖ **Hindi as Official Language:** It designates Hindi, written in the Devanagari script, as the official language of the Indian government.
- ❖ **Transition Period:** The article provides for a transitional period during which English can continue to be used for official purposes, ensuring a smooth shift.
- ❖ **Parliamentary Authority:** The authority to make provisions regarding the official language, including the continued use of English, rests with the Parliament of India.
- ❖ **Reflects Linguistic Diversity:** Article 343 recognizes the linguistic diversity of India while establishing Hindi as the principal official language.

What is the Committee of Parliament on Official Language?

- ❖ It was set up in 1976 under Section 4 of The Official Languages Act, 1963.
- ❖ **Mandate:** To review the progress made in the use of Hindi for official purposes, and to make recommendations to increase the use of Hindi in official communications.
- ❖ **Composition**: It comprises 30 members of Parliament, 20 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha, headed by Home- Minister.
- ❖ Under the provisions of the 1963 Act, the Committee submits its report to the President, who "shall cause the report to be laid before each House of Parliament and sent to all the State Governments".

Why was Hindi declared as an official language?

- ❖ **Historical Context:** Hindi has a long history as a prominent language in northern India and has been used for administrative and cultural purposes for centuries. It was already in use in many regions as a lingua franca.
- ❖ **Independence Movement:** During the Indian independence movement, leaders like Mahatma Gandhi advocated for the use of Hindi as a means of bringing together people from different linguistic backgrounds. They saw it as a symbol of unity in the struggle against British colonial rule.

How does the choice of official languages contribute to cultural representation and inclusivity in India?

- ❖ **Cultural Diversity Acknowledgment:** Recognizing multiple official languages acknowledges India's rich cultural tapestry, ensuring the representation of diverse linguistic communities.
- ❖ **Preservation of Cultural Heritage:** Official status for languages like Sanskrit, Tamil, and Urdu promotes the preservation of cultural heritage and historical significance.
- ❖ **Inclusive Governance**: The use of regional languages in administration fosters inclusivity, ensuring that citizens can engage with government services and documents in languages they are comfortable with.
- ❖ **Empowerment of Linguistic Minorities:** Official status empowers linguistic minorities, as seen with languages like Konkani, Maithili, and Santali, providing them a platform for cultural expression.

- ❖ **Promotion of Regional Identity:** States adopting their official languages, such as Kannada in Karnataka, strengthen regional identity and pride.
- ❖ **Language-Based Political Representation:** Political decisions to recognize languages reflect linguistic aspirations, promoting representation and cultural inclusivity in governance.

How does the three-language formula play a role in education in India?

The three-language formula in India plays a crucial role in shaping language education policies at the national level. Introduced in 1968, the formula aims to promote multilingualism and a balanced linguistic approach in the education system.

- ❖ **First Language:** The mother tongue or a regional language is encouraged as the medium of instruction to ensure a strong foundation in a language familiar to the student.
- ❖ **Second Language:** Hindi, as the official language, is usually the second language taught to students, regardless of their linguistic background. This fosters a sense of national integration and enables communication across diverse linguistic communities.
- ❖ **Third Language:** Students are encouraged to learn a third language, often a language from another linguistic group or English. This promotes linguistic diversity, cultural understanding, and prepares students for a globalized world.
- ❖ **Flexibility for States:** The formula allows flexibility for states to adapt it based on their linguistic demographics. States can choose the third language based on regional or international considerations.
- ❖ **Cultural and Linguistic Harmony:** By exposing students to multiple languages, the formula promotes cultural and linguistic harmony, fostering a sense of unity in diversity.
- ❖ **National Integration:** The inclusion of Hindi and a third language facilitates communication among people from different states and linguistic backgrounds, contributing to national integration.
- ❖ **Global Competence:** English as a third language enhances students' global competence, as it is widely used in international communication, trade, and academia.

What are the Challenges in furthering Hindi as an official language?

- ❖ **Linguistic Diversity:** While Hindi is widely spoken in some regions, it is not the native language for many Indians.
  - ➢ **For Example:** South India is home to Dravidian states- Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. These states are not really willing to readily accept Hindi as an official language.
- ❖ **Language Identity:** Many states have their own languages that are deeply rooted in their cultural identities. These states may resist attempts to prioritize Hindi over their own languages, as it could be seen as a threat to their linguistic heritage and cultural identity.
  - ➢ **For Example:** Since language is a state subject, Tamil Nadu has refused to accept three language formulas. The Tamil Nadu government has been following a two-language formula which is English and Tamil as two languages of the state.
- ❖ **Political Sensitivities:** Language issues can be highly sensitive and political in nature. Attempts to promote one language over others could lead to political conflicts and controversies.

What is the Government's Effort to Promote Hindi and Other Regional Languages?

The Indian government has undertaken various efforts to promote both Hindi and other regional languages, recognizing the importance of linguistic diversity in the country.

- ❖ **Official Language Act:** The Official Languages Act of 1963 mandates the use of Hindi for official purposes at the central government level. However, it also allows for the continued use of English.
- ❖ **Three-Language Formula:** The government promotes the three-language formula in education, encouraging the learning of the regional language, Hindi, and English to foster multilingualism and national integration.
- ❖ **Central Institute of Hindi:** The Central Institute of Hindi, established in Agra, focuses on the promotion and teaching of Hindi. It offers courses, conducts research, and develops educational material.
- ❖ **Rajbhasha Vibhag:** The Department of Official Language, known as Rajbhasha Vibhag, works to implement the official language policy and promote the use of Hindi in government offices.

- ❖ **Sahitya Akademi and Language Academies:** The Sahitya Akademi and various language academies promote literature and cultural activities in Hindi and other regional languages, providing platforms for writers and artists.
- ❖ **Promotion of Indian Languages Abroad:** The government supports initiatives to promote Indian languages, including Hindi, internationally. This includes funding language courses and cultural events.
- ❖ **Bhasha Sangam Initiative:** The Bhasha Sangam initiative in schools encourages students to learn and appreciate different languages, including Hindi and regional languages, to enhance linguistic diversity awareness.
- ❖ **Language Awards and Recognition:** The government acknowledges contributions to language and literature through awards like the Sahitya Akademi Awards, recognizing achievements in Hindi and other regional languages.

You might have heard about making Hindi as the national language. Do you think that in a country like India where unity in diversity is the key element, imposition of one language can result in division in the society?

Yes	No
❖ Imposing Hindi may lead to cultural and linguistic hegemony, alienating non-Hindi speakers.	❖ Promoting a common language fosters national integration and effective communication.
❖ Linguistic diversity is a source of India's strength, fostering unity through cultural coexistence.	❖ Imposing a single language may simplify administration and promote a sense of common identity.
❖ Regional languages play a crucial role in preserving diverse cultural identities.	❖ A national language could facilitate uniform educational standards and economic development.
❖ Historical tensions over language issues may be exacerbated, leading to social unrest.	❖ A shared language can enhance political stability and streamline governance processes.
❖ Embracing linguistic diversity promotes inclusivity and respect for all citizens.	❖ Enforcing a national language might marginalize non-native speakers and hinder social cohesion.

What will be the significance of having Hindi as the national language for India?

- ❖ **Linguistic Unity:** Hindi as the national language could promote linguistic unity, fostering a sense of common identity among diverse linguistic communities.
- ❖ **Administrative Efficiency:** A national language can simplify communication and administration, streamlining government processes and reducing language-related complexities.
- ❖ **Educational Standardization:** Having Hindi as a national language may lead to standardized educational curriculum, facilitating uniformity and comparability across regions.
- ❖ **Cultural Integration:** It could contribute to cultural integration by providing a shared medium for cultural expression, media, and arts, bridging gaps between different states and communities.
- ❖ **National Identity:** Hindi as the national language might strengthen the perception of a unified nation, reinforcing a common bond among citizens.
- ❖ **Economic Advantages:** A common language can enhance economic interactions, trade, and business across regions, potentially boosting economic development.

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Context: The latest UN report titled **"Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2023"** stated that the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030.

What is the recently released Gender Snapshot Report 2023?

- ❖ The Gender Snapshot Report 2023, titled "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender Snapshot 2023," is an annual report published by the United Nations Women (UN Women).
- ❖ The report that tracks progress towards gender equality across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- ❖ The Gender Snapshot Report 2023 is an important tool for tracking progress towards gender equality and identifying areas where more work is needed.

Outline the major highlights concerning gender equality by the Gender Snapshot Report 2023.

- ❖ **SDG 1: No Poverty:** Over 340 million women and girls will still live in extreme poverty by 2030. Women are more likely to be employed in informal sectors with lower wages and less social protection.
- ❖ **SDG 2: Zero Hunger:** Close to one in four women will experience moderate or severe food insecurity by 2030. Women play a crucial role in agriculture but often lack access to resources, land, and credit.
- ❖ **SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being:** Gender disparities persist in maternal and child health outcomes, with women and girls facing higher risks of mortality and morbidity. Women are more likely to experience chronic diseases and mental health issues.
- ❖ **SDG 4: Quality Education:** Girls still face barriers to education, particularly in secondary and higher education. Gender stereotypes and social norms hinder girls' participation in certain fields of study and STEM careers.
- ❖ **SDG 5: Gender Equality:** The gender gap in power and leadership positions remains entrenched. Women are underrepresented in parliaments, governments, and corporate boards.
- ❖ **SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation:** Women and girls often bear the primary burden of water collection and sanitation, limiting their time for education and income-generating activities.
- ❖ **SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy:** Women are disproportionately affected by energy poverty, lacking access to clean and affordable energy sources.
- ❖ **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth:** Women are more likely to be employed in informal sectors with lower wages and less social protection.
- ❖ Gender disparities persist in pay and occupational segregation.
- ❖ **SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure:** Women are underrepresented in STEM fields and leadership positions in innovation and technology.
- ❖ **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities:** Gender disparities persist in income, assets, and access to social protection. Women are more likely to live in poverty and experience multiple forms of discrimination.
- ❖ **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Women are often underrepresented in urban planning and decision-making processes, leading to gender-biased infrastructure and services.
- ❖ **SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production:** Women play a key role in sustainable consumption patterns but often lack access to resources and information.
- ❖ **SDG 13: Climate Action:** Women are disproportionately affected by climate change, facing increased risks of displacement, food insecurity, and water scarcity.
- ❖ **SDG 14: Life Below Water:** Women's participation and leadership in marine conservation and sustainable fisheries management are crucial for ocean health.

- ❖ **SDG 15: Life on Land:** Women play a vital role in sustainable land management and biodiversity conservation but often lack access to land ownership and decision-making power.
- ❖ **SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions:** Women's participation in peace processes, conflict resolution, and justice systems is essential for sustainable peace.
- ❖ **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals:** Inclusive partnerships involving women's organizations, civil society, and the private sector are crucial for achieving gender equality and the SDGs.

What are a few of the recommendations put forth in the report's findings?

- ❖ Enhance collaboration and coordination across stakeholders to address gender equality comprehensively:
  - ➢ Strengthen partnerships between governments, civil society, the private sector, and international organizations to implement effective gender equality policies and programs.
- ❖ Increase funding for gender equality initiatives:
  - ➢ Allocate more resources to gender equality programs and projects, both at the national and international levels.
- ❖ Implement targeted policy interventions to address specific gender disparities:
  - ➢ Address the root causes of gender inequality, including discriminatory laws, practices, and gender stereotypes.
- ❖ Strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms to track progress on gender equality:
  - ➢ Establish clear indicators and targets for gender equality across all SDGs.
  - ➢ Regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of gender equality policies and programs.
- ❖ Foster a gender-responsive culture and environment:
  - ➢ Promote gender equality in leadership positions and decision-making processes.
  - ➢ Address gender-based violence and discrimination in all its forms.

ENVIRONMENT

STUBBLE BURNING: A PROBLEM FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, AGRICULTURE AND HUMANS

Context: In the months of October and November, the agricultural states in Northwest India witness a daily average of over 160 fire incidents as the paddy harvesting season intensifies.

For the last several years, the practice of stubble burning has been one of the prime reasons for air pollution over the National Capital Region (NCR) and other parts of the Indo-Gangetic plains, before the onset of the winter season.

What is Stubble Burning?

The North Western Part of the country has **two growing seasons**: **one from May to September and another from November to April.** Many farmers rotate between crops, planting rice in May and wheat in November. In order to quickly prepare their fields for the wheat crop, many farmers simply burn leftover plant debris after harvesting rice. The practice is known as paddy **stubble burning.**

What are the crops associated with it?

There are mainly three crops associated with the stubble burning Wheat, paddy and sugarcane leaves. But stubble from paddy causes much more damage.

What are the reasons for stubble Burning?

1. **Huge costs** are associated with the cutting of stubble and their transportation
2. **The short time** available between rice harvesting and sowing of wheat as delay in sowing wheat affects the wheat crop. Between the harvesting of the paddy and the sowing of the wheat, there is only a two to three weeks time window left.
3. **Lack of awareness** among the farmers about the environmental issues associated with stubble burning.
4. **No alternative**: The farmers do not have any alternatives for utilizing the crop residue or the stubble effectively.
5. **State Policies:** Some of the policies of the Government of India, like the Punjab Reservation of Subsoil Water Act of 2009, unintentionally promoted the burning of stubble.

Why is this issue prominent in Punjab and Haryana?

The stubble burning phenomenon in Haryana and Punjab is linked to three factors:
- ❖ **The (relatively) large size of landholdings of farmers in these states;**
- ❖ **The (consequent), high level of mechanization:** use of mechanized harvesters, which results in loose straw left on fields.
- ❖ **The Water-conservation Law** of 2009 prohibits early paddy plantation, delaying it by two to three weeks towards mid-June and beyond, so that the paddy plantation in these states is done nearer to the arrival time of the monsoon in July, thus conserving groundwater. Consequently, the window available for harvesting paddy is also limited to 15-20 days.

What are the Implications of Stubble Burning?

1. **Toxic Pollutants:** Stubble burning emits **toxic pollutants** in the atmosphere containing harmful gases like **Carbon Monoxide (CO), methane (CH4) etc.**
2. **Soil Fertility**: Soil becomes less fertile, and its nutrients are destroyed when the husk is burned on the ground.
3. **Damage to microorganisms in soil:** Burning of crop residue causes damage to soil-friendly microorganisms present in the upper layer of the soil as well as its organic quality.
4. **Soil Solubility:** The solubility capacity of the upper layers of soil is reduced.
5. **Social and Economic cost:**
   a. **Health issues:** like breathing problems, irritation in the eyes, cancer, respiratory disorders, mental health issues etc.
   b. **The education** of students is impacted due to the closing of schools during severe air pollution days.
   c. **Negatively impacts tourism**, and **investments** and affects the **reputation** of the country.

Stubble burning and Delhi-NCR pollution:

❖ The main sources of pollution in the Delhi-NCR are local traffic, industries, construction works, sweeping of roads, local biomass burning, hotels, restaurants, households, crop residue burning etc.

❖ As per the **Report of IIT, Kanpur**, the back trajectory analyses suggest that the Crop Residue Burning and other biomass emissions may be transported to Delhi from the sources upwind of Delhi.

❖ In September or October, **plummeting temperatures and low wind speed spread the smoke far and wide.**

❖ If we factually consider the contribution of stubble burning to this pollution it mostly falls in the range of 15 to 30 per cent during this period, as per the government agencies' data.

What are the steps taken so far?

1. **The Chhattisgarh government is setting** up the **Gauthans and Parali Daan scheme**. A Gauthan is a five-acre common land, held by each village, where the unused stubble is collected through Parali Daan (people's donations) and is converted into organic fertilizer by mixing with cattle dung.
2. The Haryana Cabinet has unveiled a **paddy stubble management policy** aimed at **utilizing paddy straw for sustainable energy** and completely curbing crop residue-burning practices by 2027.
   a. The policy provides a framework for attracting private investment in paddy straw-based projects, encouraging farmers to engage in responsible practices, and **establishing a robust linkage between farmers and industries**.
   b. The policy also offers a variety of incentives to promote the utilization of paddy straw under the **Haryana Bio-energy Policy, 2018,** and its amendments.
3. Burning crop residue is a crime under **Section 188 of the IPC** and under the **Air and Pollution Control Act of 1981**.
4. In 2018, a new **Central Sector Scheme** was launched for the 'Promotion of Agricultural Mechanization for In-Situ Management of Crop Residue in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi'

How to better manage the stubble burning issue?

1. **Local FPOs (Farmer-producer organizations)** can be utilized to streamline and provide technology and market access to small and marginal farmers.
2. **Increase private players and corporates** in the agriculture sector, who can bear the cost of utilizing this stubble for producing organic fertilizers.
3. **MGNREGA workers** can be utilized to ensure the cutting of stubble and effective transportation to market.
4. **Employing agricultural machines:**
   a. *Happy Seeder* (used for sowing of crop in standing stubble)

PUSA BIO-DECOMPOSER
➤ Developed by Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) to decompose stubble into manure; field validation started in 2019; being used in Delhi since 2020
➤ The product, a set of four capsules, mixed in 10 or 25 liters of water to prepare solution
➤ 10 litres of solution takes 5 days, 25 litres takes 10-12 days to form concentrated solution
➤ The solution is mixed with 200 litres of water to prepare spray for one acre of stubble (approx 2.5 tonnes)
➤ Stubble is then mulched or mixed with soil
➤ Field lightly irrigated
➤ Scientists claim it takes 15 to 25 days for decomposing, later field is prepared for winter crops
➤ It increases soil fertility

   b.   *Rotavator* (used for land preparation and incorporation of crop stubble in the soil)
   c.   *Zero till seed drill* (used for land preparations directly sowing of seeds in the previous crop stubble)
   d.   *Baler* (used for collection of straw and making bales of paddy stubble)
   e.   *Paddy Straw Chopper* (cutting of paddy stubble for easily mixing with the soil)
   f.   Reaper Binder (used for harvesting paddy stubble and making it into bundles)
5. **Decomposition of stubble into Manure**: e.g. PUSA bio-decomposer
6. **Incentivise Start-ups:** to utilize this opportunity to use their innovation, streamline the process and ensure the production of green energy and organic fertilizers.

Should farmers be penalized for pollution due to stubble burning?

Farmers have been the backbone in turning a **food grains-deficient and importing country** into a **food grains-surplus and exporting country.** We can't push the bill for pollution onto the farmers alone or punish them for the consequences of ensuring the food security of the nation.

❖   The **delinking of food production and health and environmental problems** has created dual effects. On the one hand, it prioritizes increased agricultural productivity over environmental sustainability.

❖   On the other hand, it disengages the consumers from being part of the food production process. Thus a **'disengaged' consumer**, living in the urban environment such as Delhi, who buys food from supermarkets, holds farmers responsible for a problem of which they are an integral part.

❖   The problem of stubble burning is a **collective responsibility.** In order to avoid stubble burning, Farmers should be paid compensation so that they switch back to manual harvesting of paddy.

❖   MGNREGA funds could also be used to partly finance the manual harvesting of paddy and subsequent manual stubble management. The additional fiscal burden will be balanced by the cost saved in handling the menace of pollution.

❖   Instead of burning the stubble, it can be used in different ways like cattle feed, compost manure, roofing in rural areas, biomass energy, mushroom cultivation, packing materials, fuel, paper, bio-ethanol industrial production, etc.

❖   Farmers can also be nudged towards crop diversification towards crops like coarse cereals, oilseeds and pulses. This will reduce the area under water-guzzling crops like paddy in Punjab and Haryana and ensure self-reliance on vegetable oils.

The government must work with all the stakeholders involved and try to ensure effective management of stubble. The problem is complicated and solving it will require a combination of persuasion, subsidy and firm decision making.

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AIR POLLUTION IN DELHI: ITS MAGNITUDE AND EFFECTS ON HEALTH

Questionnaire:

1.   *What are the findings of a recent air quality study in Delhi?*
2.   *What is the Air Quality Index (AQI)?*
3.   *What is the difference between Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5 and Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5?*
4.   *What are the causes behind Rising Pollution levels in Delhi during Winter?*
5.   *What is the impact of air pollution in Delhi?*
6.   *How has the Supreme Court intervened regarding air pollution in Delhi?*
7.   *How has the government responded to air pollution in Delhi?*
8.   *Why does air pollution occur in Delhi every year despite various government measures?*
9.   *What Measures can be taken to control air pollution In Delhi?*

Context: Delhi recently experienced a preview of the imminent environmental challenges looming in the upcoming months: air pollution. On a particular day, the air quality index exceeded 300 on a scale that maxes out at 500, enveloping the skies in a hazy blanket and filling the outdoors with a noticeable scent of dust and smoke.

What are the findings of a recent Air Quality study in Delhi?

❖ As per the latest data from the **System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR)**, overall air quality in Delhi on 03 November 2023 further deteriorated in the "severe" category.

❖ **Stubble burning** accounted for 25% of the PM2.5 pollution in Delhi on November 2 and may reach as high as 35% today.

Air Quality Index:

It is a tool for effective communication of air quality status to people in terms that are easy to understand.

❖ **Category of AQI:** Good, satisfactory, moderate, poor, very poor, and severe.

❖ **Factor:** Each of these categories is decided based on the ambient concentration values of air pollutants and their likely health impacts (known as health breakpoints).

❖ **Parameters of AQI:** According to the AQI scale, the air quality check between
  ➢ **Good:** 0 and 50
  ➢ **Satisfactory:** 51 and 100
  ➢ **Moderate:** 101 and 200
  ➢ **Poor:** 201 and 300
  ➢ **Very Poor:** 301 and 400
  ➢ **Severe:** 401 and 450.

What is the difference between PM 2.5 and PM 10?

Characteristic	Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5	Particulate Matter (PM) 10
Size	PM2.5 refers to ≤2.5 micrometers in diameter	PM10 includes particles with a diameter ≤10 micrometers
Sources	Combustion processes, vehicle emissions, industrial activities, natural sources (wildfires)	Similar sources as PM2.5, include larger particles like dust and pollen
Health Impact	More hazardous; fine particles penetrate deep into the respiratory system, causing various health issues (respiratory, cardiovascular)	Can affect respiratory and cardiovascular systems; generally less severe than PM2.5
Examples	Combustion from vehicles, industrial emissions, tobacco smoke	Dust from construction sites, pollen, mold spores, larger particles from combustion processes

What are the causes Behind Rising Pollution levels in Delhi during Winter?

❖ **Stubble burning:** surge in stubble burning across neighbouring states Punjab and Haryana. **North-westerly winds** carry stubble-burning smoke from Punjab and Haryana into Delhi-NCR.

❖ **Industrial Pollution:** Delhi has the **highest cluster of small-scale industries** in India. With as many as 3,182 industries located across the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR), industrial pollution adds about 18.6 per cent to poor air quality.

❖ **Vehicular emissions:** The emission inventory and source apportionment studies suggest that on-road vehicular exhaust emissions account for **nine to 38 per cent of PM2.5** emissions in the capital.

❖ **Construction:** Fine dust from construction activities is a significant contributor to the poisonous mixture referred to as 'smog'.

❖ **Weather Conditions:** Due to stagnant winds during winter, the pollutants generated in the area get trapped over the region. This increases the chances of pollution to a great extent.

❖ **Geographical Reason:**

- Delhi is **landlocked** from all sides. The capital city lies to the northeast of the Thar Desert, to the northwest of the central plains, and to the southwest of the Himalayas.
- The **north-westerly winds** coming from Pakistan and Afghanistan bring large amounts of dust particles to the region.
- As winds arrive from the coasts, bringing with them pollutants picked up along the way, they get 'trapped' right before the Himalayas.
- The air pressure pushes from one direction, and with the inability to escape quickly in the other, the particulate matter accumulates over the northern plains.
- This accumulation and entrapment affect not only Delhi but the entire expanse between Punjab in the west to West Bengal in the east.

What is the impact of Air Pollution in Delhi?

- ❖ **Health:** Acute effects like burning eyes, irritation of nose and throat, cough, and feeling of choked breath, Serious harms include heart attacks and brain strokes. Exposure during pregnancy increases the risk of stillbirths, neonatal deaths, low birth weight babies, and birth defects.
- ❖ **Economic growth:** It leads to reduced worker output, lower consumer footfall in consumption-led services, hampered asset productivity, and a surge in health expenses and welfare allocations, especially in the productive age groups.
- ❖ **Impact on the Services sector:** air pollution takes a toll on productivity.
- ❖ **Environment:** Air pollution, particularly sulphur and nitrogen emissions, as well as ground-level ozone, affects the ability of natural ecosystems to function and grow.

Supreme Court's Judgments:

- ❖ **M C Mehta Case 1998:** The court ordered that public road transport in New Delhi be run on compressed natural gas or CNG, and not on fossil fuels, by April 2001.
- ❖ **Subash Kumar Case:** The Court recognized the right to a wholesome environment as part of the fundamental right to life under Article 21.
- ❖ The court passed orders in 2016 banning the sale and use of firecrackers in Delhi.
- ❖ **In 2018,** it allowed the sale and use of **'green firecrackers'** in Delhi.
- ❖ The SC directed the state governments to provide farmers with machines that they can hire to remove stubble.
- ❖ The SC asked the Delhi government to install smog towers and ordered it to use smog guns at construction sites.
- ❖ In October 2020, the court set up the **Madan B. Lokur Committee** to oversee the steps taken to prevent stubble burning.

What is the government's response to air pollution in Delhi?

- ❖ Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP): These are the set measures that have to be taken only when the air quality in Delhi NCR deteriorates beyond a certain threshold. It was introduced in 2017.
  - Some of the steps include stopping construction and demolition activities, holidays for schools and offices, restrictive vehicular movement etc.
- ❖ The government brought the **Commission for Air Quality Management(CAQM) Act 2021** under which CAQM was created to deal with pollution in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas.
- ❖ The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has announced the implementation of the third stage of its graded response plan.
  - CAQM directed authorities in the NCR to increase parking fees to discourage private transport and enhance the services of CNG or electric buses and metro trains amid a likely increase in pollution levels.
  - **15-point winter action plan:** It was announced to deal with air pollution in the national capital during winter.

> **Odd-Even Scheme:** it was introduced in 2016 by the government to control vehicular pollution and bring down increasing particulate matter levels.

❖ **Red Light On Gaadi Off" campaign:** It aims to reduce vehicular pollution in the national capital by encouraging drivers to switch off their vehicles while waiting for traffic lights to turn green.

Why does air pollution reoccur every year despite government interventions?

The persistence of air pollution in Delhi, despite various measures taken by the government, can be attributed to a combination of complex and interconnected factors.

❖ **Ineffective Implementation of Policies:** Weak regulatory mechanisms and enforcement lead to non-compliance by industries, vehicles, and construction activities.

❖ **Lack of Regional Coordination:** The lack of effective coordination and collaboration among states in the region hinders comprehensive solutions to cross-border pollution.

❖ **Growing Urbanization and Industrialization:** Rapid urbanization and industrialization contribute to increased emissions from vehicles, industries, and construction activities.

❖ **Dependency on Fossil Fuels:** The heavy reliance on fossil fuels for energy, including coal and diesel, continues to be a major source of pollution. Despite efforts to transition to cleaner energy sources, the demand for and use of fossil fuels remains high.

❖ **Agricultural Practices:** Stubble burning in neighbouring agricultural states is a significant contributor to air pollution in Delhi, especially during certain seasons.

❖ **Weather Conditions:** Meteorological conditions, such as temperature inversions and low wind speeds, can trap pollutants close to the ground, exacerbating air pollution.

❖ **Incomplete Adoption of Cleaner Technologies:** The slow adoption of cleaner technologies in industries, transportation, and other sectors contributes to ongoing pollution.

What measures can be taken to control Air pollution in Delhi?

❖ **Peripheral Road or express highways:** The construction of western and eastern peripheral highways allowed large commercials to bypass Delhi, thereby reducing the pollution burden.

❖ **Ban on old Fossil fuel Vehicles:** The government of Delhi has banned diesel vehicles over 10 years old, and petrol vehicles over 15 years old.

❖ **Control Stubble Burning:** To control stubble burning, farmers are subsidized to use farm machinery that reduces the need to burn stubble.

> Fines have been imposed for stubble burning. In addition, new techniques to speed up the process of decomposition of farm stubble have been promoted.

❖ **Vehicle Norms:** Vehicles plying on the streets of Delhi-NCR must use vehicles that follow **Bharat Stage VI norms**. This reduces pollution.

❖ **Electric Vehicles Promotion:** The government is making efforts to promote electric vehicles as an alternative to fossil fuel vehicles.

❖ **Ban on firecrackers:** The government of Delhi has banned bursting of firecrackers to prevent the increase in air pollution.

Should farmers be penalized for pollution in Delhi due to stubble burning?

Note: Already covered in the Stubble Burning Issue.

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COP 27: THE COOLER, THE BETTER

Questionnaire:

1. What are some of the main initiatives taken during COP27?
2. The concept of Loss and damage has regained significance during COP 27. Can you elaborate on the concept?
3. What is Climate Finance and why do we need more of it?
4. Why does less amount go to adaptation?
5. What is climate equity?
6. Energy Transition is a debatable matter. Why do you think India did not accept the complete phase-out of coal at COP 26?
7. How do you think Agriculture can play a role in tackling climate change?
8. Do you think market mechanisms and other related measures actually influence the climate change indication in a positive manner?
9. Have you heard about the term Fossil Fuel lobbying?
10. Mention some of the measures taken by the Indian government to mitigate climate change in recent years?

Context: The **27th session of the Conference of Parties (COP)** was conducted at **Sharm el-Sheikh** for over two weeks in November 2022. Heads of government, diplomats, business heads, activists, journalists, and lobbyists converged in an attempt to inch ahead on a global rehaul of energy consumption to improve Earth's chances against catastrophic climate change.

What are some of the main initiatives taken during COP27?

Key Highlights:

* **Loss and Damage:** COP27 closed with a **breakthrough agreement to provide loss and damage funding for vulnerable countries hit hard by floods, droughts and other climate disasters**.
  * A **transitional committee** will make recommendations on how to operationalize both the new funding arrangements and the fund for consideration and adoption at COP28 next year.
* **Energy**: The text called for **efforts to phase down the use of unabated coal power and phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.**
* **Climate Finance:** For the first time, a COP meeting included a **call to reform the global financial architecture so that it better aligns with climate goals.**
* **Methane momentum continued**: More countries signed up to the methane pledge launched in Glasgow at COP 26. There are now 150 nations that have pledged to cut emissions of the super-powerful greenhouse gas by 30% by the end of the decade.
* **Adaptation Fund:** New pledges, totaling **more than USD 230 million, were made to the Adaptation Fund.** These pledges will help many more vulnerable communities adapt to climate change through concrete adaptation solutions.

The concept of Loss and damage has regained significance during COP 27. Can you elaborate on it?

Loss and damage mean different things to different groups and there is no agreed upon definition of loss and damage within the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).**

In general terms it can be understood as the **negative impacts of climate change** that occur despite, or in the absence of, mitigation and adaptation. Loss and damage can occur due to both extreme events – such as heat waves and storms – and slow onset events – such as sea-level rise or ocean acidification.

Economic or non-economic categorisation:

* **Economic loss:** This includes things such as the costs of rebuilding infrastructure that has been damaged due a flood, or the loss of revenue from agricultural crops that were destroyed due to drought.
* **Non-economic loss:** These are things such as trauma from experiencing a tropical cyclone, loss of community due to displacement of people, or loss of biodiversity.

What is Climate Finance and why do we need more of it?

Climate finance: It refers to financial resources and instruments that are used to support action on climate change.

- ❖ **Source:** Climate finance **can come from different sources: public or private, national or international, bilateral or multilateral**. It can employ different instruments such as **grants and donations, green bonds, equities, debt swaps, guarantees, and concessional loans. Uses:** It can be used for different activities, including **mitigation, adaptation, and resilience-building.**
- ❖ **Important Funds:** Some multilateral funds that developing countries can access include the **Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and the Adaptation Fund (AF)**. These funds were established throughout the years as financial instruments of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to provide resources to developing countries.
- ❖ **Need for More Such Initiatives:** According to the latest assessment report by the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), current financial flows for climate change mitigation need to increase between three and six times to meet average annual needs between 2020 and 2030,** if we are to limit global warming to 2°C or below.
- ❖ The IPCC notes there is sufficient global capital and liquidity to close this investment gap. The situation is even more critical when it comes to adaptation, as 90 percent of climate finance goes to mitigation actions, despite the strong economic rationale to invest in adaptation.

Why does less amount go to adaptation?

- ❖ **What is Adaptation:** It is finance for **actions that help communities reduce the risks they face and harm they might suffer from climate hazards like storms or droughts**. It pays for things like stronger housing, more drought-tolerant crops, social safety nets, or improved decision-making around climate-related risks.
  - ➢ **Fund available:** Climate Policy Initiative (CPI) estimates that less than $50 billion is spent around the world today on adaptation every year, many times less than what's needed.

Reason for low Focus on adaptation funds:

- ❖ **Subjective Nature: In comparison to adaptation,** mitigation's focus on GHG emissions not only makes it easier to define, it also makes it easier to invest in. Mitigation activities, like installation of solar panels or manufacturing of electric vehicles, bring a more immediate and certain financial return than many adaptation initiatives, which **focus on building long-term resilience.**
- ❖ **No Market mechanism:** Carbon markets, which currently provide investment incentives for mitigation, **do not exist for adaptation.**
- ❖ **Low Private Support:** There are several reasons behind limited private investments in adaptation.
  - ➢ Adaptation projects often bring broad social benefits but may **not result in clear financial returns for a private investor.**
  - ➢ Private investments in adaptation are not taking place merely due to **inertia and a lack of long-term planning, technical capacity and data.**

What is climate equity?

Climate equity is the **goal of recognizing and addressing the unequal burdens made worse by climate change**, while ensuring that all people share the benefits of climate protection efforts. Achieving equity means that all people regardless of their **race, color, gender, age, sexuality, national origin, ability, or income live in safe, healthy, fair communities.**

Energy Transition is a debatable matter. Why do you think India did not accept the complete phase out of coal at COP 26?

The negotiations at the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow ended with an **agreement to phase down the use of coal instead of phasing it out as India wanted to negotiate terms for the usage of all forms of fossil fuels and not just coal.**

- ❖ **Phase down allows time to transition to renewable:** At the COP26 summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India would increase the installed capacity of renewables to 500 GW by 2030. The coal phase

down will help expand the commercial viability of technologies and storage needed to scale up renewable capacities.

❖ **Phase down assures investors of coal-based projects:** Coal-based projects are facing difficulty in terms of funding and a phase-down will give some assurance to financiers of such projects.

India is here trying to make a point on differences between **developed and developing countries**. It is not just India but also China, South Africa, Nigeria who made the same comments in their final remarks. Coal phase out is not easy for a developing country. Thus, they need time to complete the transition.

How do you think Agriculture is getting negatively influenced, as a source to tackle climate change?

Agriculture faces a complex and unique challenge in the context of climate change:

❖ **Negative Impact:** The sector is already experiencing **negative impacts from higher temperatures, more variable rainfall, invasive pests, and more frequent extreme weather events,** which will worsen as climate change accelerates.

❖ **Source of Climate Change:** Agriculture is a major source of GHG emissions, both directly (through on-farm emissions linked to production) and indirectly (through land use change due to agricultural expansion). Overall, agriculture, forestry and other land use (AFOLU) represents around **one-fifth (22%)** of global anthropogenic GHG emissions.

❖ **Agriculture to tackle Climate Change:** Agriculture can play a pivotal role in addressing climate change through various practices and innovations:

➢ **Carbon Sequestration** through practices such as agroforestry, planting cover crops, and no-till farming help sequester carbon in the soil, reducing the amount of CO_2 in the atmosphere.

➢ **Regenerative Agriculture:** focusing on enhancing soil health, increasing biodiversity, and improving water retention. It involves techniques like crop rotation and diverse cover cropping.

➢ **Precision Farming**: Utilizing technology such as GPS, sensors, and data analytics helps optimize resource use which minimizes waste.

➢ **Climate-Resilient Crops:** Developing and utilizing crop varieties that are more resistant to climate extremes, like drought-resistant or flood-tolerant crops, helps ensure food security in changing climates.

Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) :

The Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) is a landmark decision under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that recognizes the unique potential of agriculture in tackling climate change

The Koronivia decision addresses six interrelated topics on soils, nutrient use, water, livestock, methods for assessing adaptation, and the socio-economic and food security dimensions of climate change across the agricultural sectors

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Do you think market mechanisms and other related measures actually influence the climate change indication in a positive manner?

Market mechanisms and related measures can have a significant impact on addressing climate change. They can be effective in several ways:

❖ **Carbon Pricing:** Implementing a price on carbon emissions through mechanisms like carbon taxes or cap-and-trade systems incentivizes businesses to reduce their emissions.

❖ **Incentivizing Renewable Energy**: Subsidies, tax incentives, and feed-in tariffs for renewable energy sources can drive investment and innovation in clean energy technologies, making them more competitive with fossil fuels.

❖ **Emissions Trading Schemes:** Cap-and-trade systems allow for the trading of emissions permits. Companies that can reduce emissions more cost-effectively can sell their surplus permits to those struggling to meet their targets, creating economic incentives for emission reductions.

- ❖ **Green Bonds and Financing:** Governments and organizations can support initiatives like renewable energy infrastructure or climate-resilient agriculture.
- ❖ **Corporate Sustainability Initiatives**: Market pressure and consumer demand for sustainable products can drive corporations to adopt environmentally friendly practices to maintain their market share and reputation.

While **market mechanisms can positively influence climate change, they're not a singular solution.** They need to be part of a comprehensive approach that includes regulatory policies, technological innovation, public engagement, and global cooperation to effectively mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Have you heard about the term Fossil Fuel lobbying?

- ❖ The fossil fuel lobby refers to a powerful and influential group of individuals, organizations, and companies that advocate for the interests of the fossil fuel industry.
- ❖ These entities include oil, gas, and coal producers, as well as related industries and trade associations. They often wield considerable political influence and financial resources to shape policies, regulations, and public opinion in favour of their industry.

Mention some of the measures taken by the Indian government to mitigate climate change in recent years?

The government of India has taken various measures to mitigate the climate change impact. Some of the important policies include:

- ❖ **The National Green Hydrogen Mission: It aims to accelerate the deployment of Green Hydrogen as a clean energy source and will support the development of supply chains that can efficiently transport and distribute hydrogen.** This includes the use of pipelines, tankers, intermediate storage facilities, and last leg distribution networks for export as well as domestic consumption.
- ❖ **Pledging Net Zero by 2070:** Net zero refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gasses produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere. It means achieving an overall state where the emissions released are equivalent to the emissions taken out of the atmosphere.

This is typically accomplished by reducing emissions as much as possible and then offsetting the remaining emissions by investing in or implementing projects that remove greenhouse gasses from the atmosphere, such as afforestation or carbon capture technologies.

- ❖ **LiFE Mission:** LiFE is a public movement to mobilize individuals to become 'Pro-Planet People' Mission Lifestyle for Environment recognizes that Indian culture and living traditions are inherently sustainable.
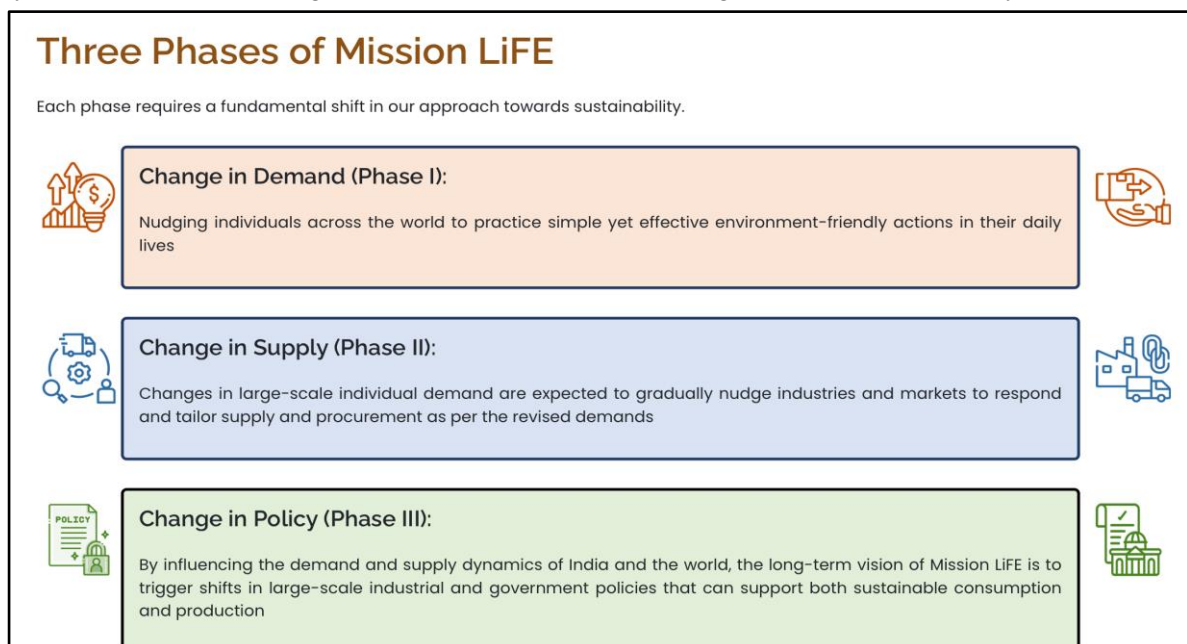
- ❖ **Panchamrita:** It is a Five-fold strategy for India to play its part in helping the world get closer to 1.5 degrees Celsius. **'Panchamrita' promises include:**
  1. India will get its non-fossil energy capacity to 500 gigawatts by 2030.
  2. India will meet 50 per cent of its energy requirements till 2030 with renewable energy.
  3. India will reduce its projected carbon emission by one billion tonnes by 2030.
  4. India will reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by 45 per cent by 2030.
  5. India will achieve net zero by 2070.

HIMALAYAN BLUNDERS : RAVAGING THE HIMALAYAS

Questionnaire

1. *What are the Landslides?*
2. *What are the Causes of Landslides?*
3. *Do you Know Major Instances of Landslides in India?*
4. *Which are the Landslides Prone Region in India?*
5. *Differentiate the causes of landslides in the Himalayan region and the Western Ghats.*
6. *What are the Consequences of Landslides?*
7. *What are the key challenges highlighted in the NDMA's 2019 report?*
8. *How can These Recommendations Contribute to Better Landslide Risk Management?*
9. *Every year we witness landslides in hilly areas. Do you think that development at the cost of the environment and lives of people is ethical?*

Context: A landslide in Himalayan mountains has destroyed several buildings, the latest in a string of disasters in the Himalayas that have killed scores of people in August 2023.

Amid landslides in hill states**,** a 2019 strategy document- National Landslide Risk Management Strategy by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) highlighted issues of inadequate urban planning, absence of comprehensive land use policy.

What are the Landslides?

- ❖ A landslide is a **mass movement of material**, such as rock, earth or debris, down a slope. They can happen **suddenly or more slowly over long periods of time.**

What are the Causes of Landslides?

- ❖ **Natural causes** that trigger landslides include **heavy rainfall, earthquakes, snow melting, and undercutting of slopes** due to flooding.
- ❖ **Anthropogenic** activities such as **excavation, cutting of hills and trees, excessive infrastructure development, and overgrazing** by cattle can also cause landslides.
- ❖ **Other Factors:** Lithology, geological structures like faults, hill slopes, drainage, geomorphology, land use and land cover, soil texture and depth, and weathering of rocks.

Major Instances of Landslides in India in the Past?

- ❖ **Amboori landslide, Kerala:** The landslide was known as the **worst landslide in Kerala's history.**
  - ➢ The landslide occurred on **November 9, 2001, due to heavy rains** and around 40 people died in the incident
- ❖ **Kedarnath landslide, Uttarakhand:** The landslide took place on **June 16, 2013,** and was the result of Uttarakhand floods.

> ➢ **Over 5700 were reported dead** and over 4,200 villages had been affected by the floods and post-floods landslide.
- ❖ **Malin landslide, Maharashtra:** The landslide occurred on July 30, 2014, in a village in Malin.
  - ➢ The landslide occurred due to heavy rainfall and **around 151 people died** and 100 people went missing after the disaster.
- ❖ **Malpa landslide, Uttarakhand:** Consecutives landslides occurred between August 11 and August 17 in 1998 in the village of Malpa where **over 380 people died** as the entire village washed away in the landslide.

Which are the Landslides Prone Region in India?

Landslide Vulnerability Zones

- ❖ **Very High Vulnerability Zone: Highly unstable, relatively young mountainous areas in the Himalayas and Andaman and Nicobar,** high rainfall regions with steep slopes in the **Western Ghats and Nilgiris**, the **north-eastern regions,** along with areas that experience frequent ground-shaking due to earthquakes, etc.
- ❖ **High Vulnerability Zone:** Areas that have almost similar conditions to those included in the very high vulnerability zone are also included in this category. The only difference between these two is the combination, intensity and frequency of the controlling factors. **All the Himalayan states** and the **states from the north-eastern regions except the plains of Assam** are included in the high vulnerability zones.
- ❖ **Moderate to Low Vulnerability Zone:** Areas that receive **less precipitation** such as Trans Himalayan areas of Ladakh and Spiti (Himachal Pradesh), the Aravali, **rain shadow areas in the Western and Eastern Ghats and Deccan plateau** also experience occasional landslides. **Landslides due to Mining and Subsidence:** These are most common in states like Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Goa and Kerala.
- ❖ **Other Areas**: **The remaining parts of India**, particularly states like Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal (except district Darjeeling), Assam (except district Karbi Anglong) and Coastal regions of the southern States are safe as far as landslides are concerned.

Differentiate the causes of landslides in the Himalayan region and Western Ghats.

Himalayan Region:

- ❖ **Tectonic instability:** The Himalayas Mountain belt comprises tectonically unstable younger geological formations subjected to severe seismic activity.
- ❖ **Glacial Lake outburst floods (GLOFs)**
- ❖ **Cloud Bursts and Torrential Rains**
- ❖ **Loose sediments**
- ❖ **Unsustainable development** of infrastructure and deforestation

Western Ghats:

- ❖ **Heavy rains:** Almost all mass movements occur during monsoons (SW and NE monsoon) in the western flank of western Ghats and during occasional cyclonic events in the eastern flank
- ❖ **Steep slopes:** vulnerable slopes deforestation
- ❖ **Improper land use practices** such as heavy tilling, agricultural practices and settlement patterns
- ❖ Blockage of natural drainage due to change in land use pattern

What are the Consequences of Landslides?

- ❖ Landslides have relatively **small and localized area of direct influence,** but roadblock, **destruction of railway lines** and **channel blocking** due to rock-falls have far-reaching consequences.
- ❖ **Diversion of river courses** due to landslides can also lead to flooding and **loss of life and property.**
- ❖ It also makes spatial interaction difficult, **risky as well as a costly affair**, which, in turn, adversely affects the developmental activities in these areas.

What are the key challenges highlighted in the NDMA's 2019 report?

Key Highlights of NDMA's 2019 Report:

❖ **Non-Compliance:** Most of the construction plans do not follow standard norms.

❖ **Challenges in Planning, Design, and Infrastructure of Hill Towns:** The document highlighted problems related to planning and design of buildings, inadequate infrastructure, in hill towns.

❖ **Copy from Delhi Master Plan:** Existing building regulations enforced in Indian hill towns are mostly inspired from Delhi Master Plan(s), which are not appropriate to the context of hill towns, as the geo-environmental and socio-developmental context of Delhi is varied to a greater extent from that of hill towns.

❖ **Absence of National Schemes for Landslide Risk Mitigation:** On mitigation of landslides, the 2019 report underlined that no Union ministry had any scheme for landslide risk management in the country.

❖ **Lack of Funds:** Due to resource crunch, particularly Hilly States, are unable to take up mitigation, rehabilitation and reconstruction measures.

❖ **Lax Governance:** The State Municipal Acts in all the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) and Western Ghats (WG) states have less focus on landslide problems.

How can These Recommendations Contribute to Better Landslide Risk Management?

Recommendations of Report:

❖ **No construction** should be ordinarily undertaken in areas having **slopes above 30 degrees** or areas which fall in landslide hazard zones or areas falling on the spring lines and first order streams.

❖ The report also emphasized the **necessity of load bearing tests, hazard zonation and slope and land-use maps** to guide urban planners for clearing constructions.

❖ It also flagged **paucity of basic data** (e.g., rainfall) in mountainous areas, especially in the Northeast.

Other Mitigation Measure that can be Taken Such as,

❖ It is always advisable to adopt **area-specific measures** to deal with landslides. Restriction on the construction and other developmental activities such as **roads and dams, limiting agriculture to valleys and areas with moderate slopes**, and control on the development of large settlements in the high vulnerability zones, should be enforced.

❖ This should be supplemented by some positive actions like promoting **large-scale afforestation programmes and construction of bunds to reduce the flow of water.**

❖ **Terrace farming should be encouraged** in the northeastern hill states where Jhumming (Slash and Burn/Shifting Cultivation) is still prevalent.

Why are there increasing incidents of Landslides in the Himalayas?

❖ **The repeated tragedies in the hill States of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh**, epitomize a **flawed developmental paradigm** institutionalized in an eco-fragile region.

❖ There has been a rapid increase in the **number of national highway projects,** power plants and hotels in the Himalayan states and indiscriminate construction has taken its toll on the environment.

❖ The Himalayas are continuously growing due to the continuous movement of geological plates. Infrastructure development plans in this area are prone to risk.

❖ **Lack of drainage systems** increases soil moisture and reduces frictional resistance.

❖ **Chardham Mahamarg Vikas Pariyojna 2016:** It is being alleged that this massive project was broken up into **53 small projects, each less than 100 km long**, thus **by-passing environmental impact assessment** (EIA) requirements. Such bypassing makes projects disaster prone.

Every Year We Witness Landslides in Hilly Areas. Do You Think that Development at the Cost of the Environment and Lives of People is Ethical?

Development at the cost of the environment and lives of people is an ethically complex and subjective matter that often involves weighing diverse values and priorities.

Some Important Views,

- ❖ **Environment Ethics in Development:** Development that harms the environment, such as **deforestation** can lead to consequences like **landslides, loss of biodiversity, and disruption of ecosystems.** Ethical development should prioritize **sustainability and reduce negative environmental impacts.**

- ❖ **Citizen Centric Approach:** The well-being and safety of communities must be a central concern. If development activities disturb the ecological balance which in turn threatens human life (landslides, Flood, Draught Epidemic), ethical considerations should prioritize the **safety and welfare** of the affected population.

- ❖ **Long Term Vision:** Ethical development should consider the **long-term consequences and benefits** rather than short-term gains. **Immediate economic advantages** should not have long-term environmental degradation or harm to communities.

- ❖ **Bottom-Up Approach: Local communities,** who are directly impacted by development projects, **should have a say** in the planning and implementation of such projects**.** Ethical development involves **inclusive and participatory decision-making processes.**

- ❖ **Sustainable Development:** Striking **a balance between development and environmental conservation is crucial**. Sustainable development practices seek to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Ethical considerations in development involve finding a **balance between economic progress, environmental preservation, and social well-being**. It requires careful **planning, stakeholder engagement, and a commitment** to sustainable practices to ensure that development enhances rather than undermines the overall quality of life for current and future generations.

MAKING SENSE OF ASSAM FLOODS

Questionnaire:

1. *Why Assam Gets Flooded Every Year?*
2. *What are the Adverse Effects of Floods on Assam?*
3. *What Measures can be Taken to Prevent Floods in Assam?*
4. *Do You Think There are Advantages of Floods?*
5. *What are the Steps Taken by the Government to Manage Floods?*
6. *Do you Know Any Major Events of the Flood in India?*
7. *Do You Think Flood is a Man-Made Phenomenon?*
8. *Can Flood be Prevented?*
9. *Do you think China is somehow linked with floods in Assam?*
10. *What can we learn from other countries to handle floods like Japan has been very effective in handling floods?*
11. *What is the floating house concept? How can it be helpful?*
12. *You might have heard about the sponge city concept of China. Recently the floods in China have shown how this concept is a failure. What are your views on it?*

Context: Floods in the state of Assam, have affected 20 districts and over 100,000 people since 14 June 2023. Disaster management authorities in Assam reported flooding began after a period of heavy rain around 14 June 2023.

What Do You Understand By The Flood?

A flood is an overflow of water that submerges land that is usually dry. In the sense of "flowing water", the word may also be applied to the inflow of the tide.

Why Assam Gets Flooded Every Year?

Following factors have contributed to the flood in the Assam every year,

❖ **The Brahmaputra factor:** Assam is situated at the **foothills of the Himalayas** and comprises **two valleys** namely Brahmaputra and Barak.

❖ **High Sediments:** There is a sudden drop in velocity and the river deposits huge quantities of sediment and other debris collected from **hilly terrains on the riverbed, raising its level.** During summers, the **sedimentation increases as soil erodes** with the melting of glaciers.

❖ **The Monsoon Factor:** The valley gets a good amount of **rainfall in April and May due to thunderstorm** activities.

❖ **Human intervention:**

❖ **Construction of Embankments:** Embankments are constructed **to confine the course of a river**. This solution, however, has evolved to be an **added challenge** over time in Assam.

❖ **Population Boom:** Population boom in the State has put more **pressure on the State's ecology.**

❖ **Climate change:** A Report by the State government states that **extreme rainfall events will increase by 38%. Heavy rainfall replacing continuous low or normal rainfall** during monsoon combined with the melting of glaciers due to rising temperatures.

❖ **Other Factors Worsened the Flood Situation:** Deforestation, Hill Cutting, Encroachments, Destruction of Wetlands, Lack of Drainage System in the State, Unplanned Urban Growth, Construction of Dams, Hydro Projects, Irrigation Projects, etc.

What are Adverse Effects of Floods on Assam?

❖ **Kaziranga National Park: More than 15%** of the Kaziranga National Park has been inundated with the Brahmaputra flowing above the danger level, an official statement noted.

❖ **Effects on Infrastructure: Train services got disrupted** as water affected railway tracks at several places. Roads and bridges have suffered serious damage.

❖ **Effects on Animals:** Animals are also **killed by poachers** who take advantage of their vulnerability. Animals also move towards villages in floods, this leads to human-animal conflict.

What Measures can be Taken to Control Floods in Assam?

❖ **Information Communications:** It should be ensured that more credible **information is made available** so that preparedness can be improved, and residents can be alerted.

❖ **Protecting Kaziranga:** Emphasis needs to be put on **securing animal corridors and ensuring a safe passage to the Karbi hills.** Need for a landscape-scale conservation approach that recognises the value of the Karbi Anglong hills.

❖ **Other Measures: A Centre for Disaster Management** should be established in Assam to carry out studies for effective implementation of measures.

❖ **Sustainable Land Management:** Construction projects that impede the movement of water and sediment across the floodplain must be reconsidered.

❖ **Early Warning Systems: Climate-imposed exigencies** demand new paradigms of early-warning and response systems and securing livelihoods and economies.

❖ **Improved Infrastructure and Drainage systems:** Investing in **well-designed and adequately maintained infrastructure,** including drainage systems, can help manage and redirect excess water during heavy rainfall events.

Do You Think there are the Advantages of Floods?

There are several advantages of floods as mentioned below:

❖ **Raising of Lowlands:** Every year, the Brahmaputra and its tributaries **transport billions of tonnes of sediment,** mainly from the Eastern Himalayas. **This raised the lowlands** and regularly adjusted river beds.

❖ **Rejuvenation of Ecosystem:** Floods cause disruption and damage, but they also generate a **bounty of fish and rejuvenate flood-plain ecosystems** all along the Brahmaputra, including in the Kaziranga.

❖ **Shaping of the State:** The entire Assam landscape has been shaped over millions of years with the help of an **active monsoonal environment and mighty rivers** that carry sediments weathered from the still-rising Himalayas.

What are the Steps Taken by the Government to Manage Floods?

❖ **National Flood Management Programme (1954):** In this program, **structural and non-structural methods had been adopted** depending on the nature of the problem, geographical conditions and available resources.

❖ **Rashtriya Barh Ayog** (National Flood Commission, 1976): Set up by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation with the purpose **to evolve an integrated and scientific approach** to the flood control problems and prepare a national plan to fix the priorities.

❖ **Flood Management and Border Areas** Programme (FMBAP, 2017-20): It was implemented throughout the country for effective flood management, and soil and anti-sea erosion.

❖ **Flood Management by Establishing Dams:** Various dams like **Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC), Bhakra Dam across Sutlej, the Hirakud Dam on the Mahanadi**, etc. are constructed to control floods.

❖ **Flood management by Establishing a National Disaster Team:** Various National disaster teams are formed to manage the approach of floods and **excavate the people and take them to the shelter** home where they are given food, water, and clothes until the situation comes under control.

Major Events of the Flood in Recent History of India

❖ **Kerala, August 2018:** The heavy rainfall, combined with **alleged delays on the authorities' part** in opening dam floodgates, swamped several districts of Kerala and triggered landslides in Wayanad and Idukki.

❖ **Chennai - November 2015:** One of the world's **most expensive natural disasters in 2015**, More than **500 people died**, over 50,000 homes were structurally damaged, and over **1.8 million people were displaced.**

❖ **Jammu and Kashmir, September 2014:** In 2014, massive floods hit Jammu and Kashmir and some areas of Pakistan. There were reports of **bodies floating around the streets of Srinagar,** the disaster lasted for eight days.

❖ **Uttarakhand, June 2013: One of the worst floods** in India's recent history occurred in Uttarakhand in June 2013. **Heavy rain due to a cloudburst** led to sudden **flash floods and landslides** in the northern part of Uttarakhand.

Do You Think Flood is a ManMade Phenomenon?

Human Factor: Following is a list of human causes of flood:

❖ **Siltation:** Siltation refers to the **flow of silt and sediments in the riverbed**. As particles remain suspended in the river and accumulated in the riverbed, it disrupts the flow of the river, causing a flood.

❖ **Improper Agricultural Practices:** If farmers are not cautious of the effects of farming practices meaning if **they leave the waste material into the river** or cannot handle water management properly, it can lead to a flood.

❖ **Deforestation:** Deforestation is one of the major human causes of floods. **Trees act like a sponge** that helps to hold soil and water and prevent flooding. As trees are being cut down at a fast pace to make way for **urbanization to grow**, more water runs towards a river during heavy rainfall. As a result, a flood occurs.

❖ **Collapse of Dams:** Dams are built to store water and provide water to people. **As dams are human-made**, these can be worn out and subsequently collapse causing floods. Also, **if heavy rainfall sustains for a long time**, State Governments often declare to open dam gates which can lead to a dangerous flood.

Can Flood be Prevented?

While **it's impossible to completely prevent floods,** as they are **often a result of natural occurrences like rainfall and hurricanes**, human-made infrastructure can be developed to minimize the damage caused by flooding.

Preventive Measures to Control Floods in India

❖ **Planting Mangroves:** State Governments must actively take part in **planting more mangroves in coastal areas** to mitigate coastal flooding. Mangroves act as a **robust barrier against floods**. Hence, governments must focus on mangrove conservation in coastal areas.

- ❖ **Optimising Technology:** Advancement in technology can help **to predict floods**. Here, using intelligent flood warning systems like **IFFLOWS** can prove to be extremely beneficial.
- ❖ **Taking Structural and Non-Structural Measures:** Structural measures refers to the **physical changes or acts** (such as redesigning buildings or designing physical barriers to disasters) to protect against a flood.
- ❖ **Non-structural measures** refer to bringing **social solutions** such as planning evacuation, preparing for emergency situations in flood.

Do you think China is somehow linked with floods in Assam?

- ❖ The Brahmaputra, the world's second-biggest river, originates in the Tibet region of China. The river flows through Arunachal Pradesh and Assam before it drains out into the Bay of Bengal through Bangladesh.
- ❖ There are reports that China has constructed several big dams in the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra and so the flow of water is more when excess water is released suddenly. Panic gripped the frontier state when the water level in the Siang suddenly dropped in October last year.
- ❖ As per the agreements, China and Bhutan provide river flow or rainfall data to India but the two countries lack a joint mechanism to manage the trans-boundary rivers.

What can we learn from other countries to handle floods like Japan has been very effective in handling floods?

- ❖ Through its long history reflecting and learning from each urban flood disaster going back to the Great Kanto Flood of 1742, **Japan has reevaluated its laws, plans, and measures**. Japanese cities have over time improved their capacity to better cope with urban flood risks.
- ❖ **Key lessons from Japan's experience** in integrated flood risk management include the following:
  - ➢ **Risk assessment and communication: Approaches must be selected based on flood type and local characteristics,** reflect different stakeholders' specific needs and objectives, and account for climate change uncertainty.
  - ➢ **Planning and prioritization:** The national government plays an **important role supporting local governments.** City governments also have to broker consensus between stakeholders.
  - ➢ **Investment implementation:** Wherever possible, **measures should include multi-functional systems that provide other benefits** in addition to managing flood risks. It is also necessary to design and implement clear governance mechanisms.
  - ➢ **Operations and Maintenance (O&M): Regular performance monitoring and evaluation** of IUFRM measures; and regular inspection, maintenance, repair, and replacement work are required for sustainable O&M.

What is the floating house concept?

Faced with worsening floods and a shortage of housing, the Netherlands is seeing growing interest in floating homes. These floating communities are inspiring more ambitious Dutch-led projects in flood-prone nations, from French Polynesia to the Maldives. Floating homes are similar to conventional buildings and are often characterized as buildings built on water in such a manner that the structure's load is equal to or lesser than the uplift force of the water, allowing the house to stay afloat in water.

Sponge city:

The term "sponge cities" is used to describe **urban areas with abundant natural areas such as trees, lakes and parks or other good design** intended to absorb rain and prevent flooding. It aims to resolve the issue of **waterlogging, infrastructural damage and human lives** of China. The idea was t**o use rainwater through architectural, engineering and infrastructural tweaks.**

You might have heard about the sponge city concept of China. Recently the floods in China have shown how this concept is a failure. What are your views on it?

One of the problems that urban China still faces is the **devastating impact of floods,** especially during the monsoon season. Every year the country attempts to tackle the issue. In 2015, it came up with a solution – 'sponge city' initiative. **Although recent floods in China have shown how the concept has not been that effective.**

These are the main features and strategies associated with Sponge City initiatives. If these points can be utilized properly it can be one of the effective solutions for floods.

- ❖ **Green Spaces:** Adding more parks, trees, other greenery or natural drainage can boost a city's absorbency and make it more **flood- and drought-resilient.**
- ❖ **Permeable Surfaces:** The use of permeable materials for **pavements, sidewalks, and other surfaces to allow water** to infiltrate the ground rather than runoff.
- ❖ **Rainwater Harvesting: Collecting and storing rainwater** for various purposes, such as irrigation, flushing toilets, or replenishing groundwater.
- ❖ **Retention Ponds and Lakes:** Constructing retention ponds or artificial lakes **to detain and manage excess water** during heavy rainfall, reducing the risk of flooding downstream.
- ❖ **Urban Wetlands:** Creating artificial wetlands within the urban landscape **to act as natural filtration systems** and provide habitat for biodiversity.

The Sponge City concept promotes **a holistic and integrated approach to urban planning,** combining ecological and engineering solutions to create more sustainable and resilient cities.

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GLACIAL LAKE OUTBURST FLOOD IN SIKKIM

Questionnaire:

1. *What are the Reasons of Glacial Lake Outburst Flood in Sikkim?*
2. *What is Glacial Lake Outburst Flood?*
3. *Why are some regions and people affected by GLOFs more than others?*
4. *What is the Impact of Glacial Lake Outburst Flood?*
5. *What is the Reason for the Glacial Lake Outburst Flood?*
6. *What Measures can be Taken to Stop Glacial Lake Outburst Flood?*
7. *Do you think we should leave Himalayan states without development because recently we have been witnessing a lot of disasters in these states. What should be the approach of the government in developing these states without impacting the environment and fragile ecosystem?*

Context: Flash floods occurred in north Sikkim after the South Lhonak Lake burst due to incessant rains. For years, numerous studies highlighted the lake's rapidly growing size and marked it as susceptible to glacial lake outburst flood.

A Glacial Lake Outburst Flood, or GLOFs,

It is a sudden release of water from a lake fed by glacier melt that has formed at the side, in front, within, beneath, or on the surface of a glacier. Glacial lake outburst flood occurs when the boundary of Glacial lakes around them breaks, then a huge amount of water rushes down the side of the mountains, which could cause flooding in the downstream areas.

What are the Reasons for the Glacial Lake Outburst Flood that Occurred Recently in Sikkim?

Glacial lake outburst flood accident happened after the South Lhonak Lake (a glacial lake, situated in Sikkim's northwest at 17,000 ft) burst **due to continuous rains,** leading to the release of water in downstream areas. This caused the rise of water levels in Teesta River, as per the Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA).

What are Causes of Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF)?

Causes of Glacial Lake Outburst Flood

❖ **Extreme Weather Events: Excessive rainfall, heatwaves** that result in rapid snow melting, or other disastrous but natural weather events like **earthquakes** may also become the reason for a glacial lake outburst that can further lead to flooding.

❖ **Upstream Flooding:** Another lake being flooded by any of the reasons above mentioned can lead to a domino effect on other glacial lakes downstream. One moment they can be **steady and calm** and a few moments later they can also be **flooding** due to the flow of the water coming from upstream.

❖ **Slope Failure:** Rapid slope movement **into the lake** which involves melting ice can accumulate overtime behind dams or any other structure and suddenly be released without any warning. This also leads to GLOFs.

❖ **Lack of Dams or Degraded Dams.**

❖ **A major earthquake** could destabilize the moraine and cause an outburst.

❖ **A snow avalanche or landslide** finds its way into the lake, it could also lead to an outburst.

❖ **Example:** In June 2013, Uttarakhand had received an unusual amount of rainfall leading to the melting of the Chora Bari glacier and the eruption of the Mandakini River.

❖ **According to the National Disaster Management Authority**, glacial retreat due to climate change occurring in most parts of the Hindu Kush Himalayas has given rise to the formation of numerous new glacial lakes, which are the major cause of glacial lake outburst floods.

What are the Effects of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods?

Mountain communities are vulnerable to flooding and other impacts associated with it. **Water Pollution** due to meltwater that is further contaminated by Particulate matter and air pollutants. **Destruction of infrastructure** and developmental progress Large scale **displacement** of people and **loss of life and property.**

Why are some regions and people affected by GLOFs more than others?

❖ GLOFs are not a recent phenomenon, but **they remain a persistent threat to downstream communities** and infrastructure besides flora and fauna. If a population lives downstream of less than 20 kilometers away from glacial lake, then the threat is bigger. These areas need proper monitoring and planning to avoid any casualties.

❖ **Western Himalayas** have not been a hotspot for GLOFs historically, there have been many changes in the last 30 years, **as many lakes have emerged** and have the potential to have an outburst.

❖ **In Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh**, there are 300 potential hotspots for GLOFs. **Example:** The Gya glacial lake in Ladakh which had an outburst in 2014. In August 2014, the **Gya village of Ladakh** witnessed a GLOFs. The glacial stream of the village started to gush and the water destroyed the farmlands, crops and a couple of houses.

❖ **According to a 2020 study** titled Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) Hazard, Downstream Impact, and Risk over the Indian Himalayas authored by Saket Dubey and Manish Kumar Goyal of Indian Institute of Technology (Indore), **Indian Himalayas are home to numerous glacial lakes, which can pose serious threats to downstream communities and lead to catastrophic socioeconomic disasters in case of a GLOFs.**

What Measure can be Taken to Reduce Impacts of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods?

❖ **Monitoring Of Glacial Lakes:** A robust monitoring system to track changes in glacial lakes to identify potential hazards.

❖ **Install Radar and Early Warning Systems:** Early warning systems can provide timely alerts to nearby communities in the event of a glacial lake outburst, allowing for evacuation and emergency response.

❖ **Infrastructure Development:** Designing and constructing infrastructure, such as dams, moraine dams or controlled drainage outlets, to control glacial lake water levels and prevent sudden outbursts. Construction of outflows or outlets to pump or remove water out from the lake

- ❖ **Mitigating Climate Change:** Reduce greenhouse gas emissions with global efforts, which contribute to the warming of the atmosphere and the accelerated melting of glaciers.
- ❖ **Awareness and Preparedness:** Conducting community education programs to raise awareness about the risks of GLOFs and providing training on emergency response and evacuation procedures.
- ❖ **Land Use Planning:** land use planning measures can be implemented to restrict human settlement in high-risk zones prone to GLOFs, thereby reducing the potential impact on nearby population.

> **Do you think we should leave Himalayan states without development because recently we have been witnessing a lot of disasters in these states. What should be the approach of the government in developing these states without impacting the environment and fragile ecosystem?**

Even Ten years after the Uttarakhand disaster, the Himalayan state remains extremely vulnerable to disasters exacerbated by unsustainable development.

The following are some steps that can be taken to achieve balance between the two.

- ❖ **Ecosystem Preservation: Enforce strict regulations** on land use, deforestation, and infrastructure development in environmentally fragile zones.
- ❖ **Community Participation:** Involve local communities in the decision-making processes related to development projects. Their traditional knowledge can help in designing interventions that are culturally and ecologically sensitive.
- ❖ **Disaster Preparedness:** This includes early warning systems, evacuation plans, and infrastructure resilient to natural disasters. Regular drills and awareness programs **to educate the local population about disaster preparedness and response**.
- ❖ **Green Infrastructure:** One of the main reasons for the devastating impact of floods in the region is the **uncontrolled construction of these hydropower projects**, which have essentially transformed mountain rivers into mere streams. Focus should be on green infrastructure.
- ❖ **Tourism Management:** Regulate tourism to prevent over-exploitation of natural resources and degradation of ecosystems.
- ❖ **Renewable Energy:** Invest in renewable energy sources to reduce dependence on environmentally harmful practices, such as traditional fuelwood burning, and to promote sustainable energy solutions.
- ❖ **Research and Monitoring: Establish monitoring systems** to track environmental changes and the impact of development activities over time.
- ❖ **Collaboration** between the government, local communities, environmental experts, and other stakeholders is crucial to finding and implementing effective and sustainable solutions.

The tragic incident of the Glacial Lake Outburst Flood in Sikkim highlighted the urgent need for proactive measures such as advanced technology, early warning systems, and community training to mitigate the impact of such disasters in vulnerable regions.

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INDIA'S UPDATED NDCS

Questionnaire

1. *What do Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) entail within the framework of climate agreements?*
2. *What are the recently updated NDCs of India, and what progress has been achieved in their implementation?*
3. *What is the global progress on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) across various countries?*
4. *What criticisms or challenges are associated with the concept of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in addressing climate change?*

Context: In **August 2022,** India updated its **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**).

What do Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) entail within the framework of climate agreements?

❖ **Paris Agreement:** Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, countries must prepare and submit **two kinds of climate action plans** — one for the short term, and another for long-term.

❖ **The short-term climate action plans:** Also called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), must be submitted every five years, with specific actions being taken over **5- or 10-year periods.** The NDCs of all countries currently contain the actions they are taking **till 2030.**

❖ **The long-term climate action plans:** Apart from NDCs, the Paris Agreement also asks countries to submit their long-term strategies **to reduce emissions.** There is **no time frame** for which these long-term strategies must be prepared, but it is **generally** understood that countries will draw out plans till the **middle of the century.**

What are the recently updated NDCs of India, and what progress has been achieved in their implementation?

Target (for 2030)	Existing: First NDC (2015)	New: Updated NDC (2022)	Progress
Emission intensity reduction	33-35 per cent from 2005 levels	45 per cent from 2005 levels	24 per cent reduction achieved in 2016 itself. Estimated to have reached 30 per cent
Share of non-fossil fuels in installed electricity capacity	40 per cent	50 per cent	41.5 per cent achieved by the end of June this year
Carbon sink	Creation of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of additional sink through afforestation	Same as earlier	Not clear.

❖ **In August 2022, India updated its NDCs** to UNFCCC, under which India has promised **three main targets for 2030:**
   ➢ 45 per cent reduction in **emission intensity** (emission per unit of GDP) from 2005 levels.
   ➢ 50 per cent share of **renewables** in electricity generation.
   ➢ Creation of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of **additional carbon sink** through forests.

❖ **India's progress on NDCs so far:**
   ➢ **Renewable Energy Expansion:** India has witnessed a remarkable surge in renewable energy capacity, reaching over 175 GW in 2022. The country aims to achieve 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030.
   ➢ **Emission Intensity Reduction:** The country's emissions intensity has already declined by 29% between 2005 and 2020.

- **Forest Cover Expansion:** India has been actively expanding its forest cover, aiming to increase it to 33% of the country's geographical area. This expansion helps absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- **Energy Efficiency Initiatives:** India has implemented various energy efficiency measures across sectors, including industries, buildings, and transportation.
- **Climate Adaptation Strategies:** India has developed and implemented climate adaptation strategies in various sectors, including agriculture, water resources, and coastal areas. These strategies aim to build resilience to climate change impacts.

What is the global progress on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) across various countries?

- ❖ As of October 2023, **196 countries** have communicated their NDCs to the UNFCCC. These NDCs cover **94.9% of global greenhouse gas emissions.**
- ❖ According to the **UNFCCC's NDC Synthesis Report,** the total emissions reduction pledged by countries in their NDCs is not enough to limit global warming to 1.5°C.
- ❖ **Here are some of the key findings of the NDC Synthesis Report:**
  - The **total emissions reduction pledged** by countries in their NDCs is 24.7-26.4 Gt CO2 eq in 2025 and 22.2-25.0 Gt CO2 eq in 2030.
  - Despite, the total emissions reduction pledged by countries is still **not enough to limit global warming to 1.5°C.**
  - **Developing countries** are making progress in strengthening their NDCs.
  - **Developed countries** are also making progress, but their NDCs still fall short of what is needed to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

What criticisms or challenges are associated with the concept of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in addressing climate change?

- ❖ **Lack of ambition and fairness:** NDCs collectively fall short of achieving the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius especially from the developed countries, which have historically contributed more to greenhouse gas emissions.
- ❖ **Lack of transparency:** Some countries lack clear methodologies for setting and tracking their NDC targets, making it difficult to assess their progress. There is no formal enforcement mechanism to ensure that countries meet their NDC commitments.
- ❖ **Limited focus on adaptation:** Adaptation measures receive insufficient attention compared to mitigation efforts.
- ❖ **Lack of long-term vision:** Current NDCs typically have a five-year timeframe, which is considered too short to achieve the necessary transformative changes.
- ❖ **Coordination and cooperation gaps:** NDCs are primarily national in scope, and there is limited international coordination to ensure that NDCs are aligned and complementary.
- ❖ **Financial constraints:** Implementing NDCs, particularly in developing countries, requires significant financial resources.

Has India committed to any additional climate goals or objectives beyond its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)?

- ❖ In November 2021, at the **26th Conference of the Parties (COP26)** of the **UNFCCC** held in **Glasgow**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the country's ambitious climate action plan, known as the 'Panchamrit'.
- ❖ **The five goals outlined in the Panchamrit are:**
  - Reaching 500 GW of **non-fossil fuel energy** capacity by 2030.
  - Meeting 50% of energy requirements from **renewable sources** by 2030.
  - Reducing total **projected carbon emissions** by one billion tonnes from now to 2030.

- Reducing **carbon intensity** of every unit of GDP by 45% by 2030.
- Achieving **net-zero emissions by 2070.**

Besides short-term NDCs, does India have a strategic plan for long-term emission reduction?

- ❖ In November 2022, India submitted its **Long-Term Low-Carbon Development Strategy (LT-LEDS)** at the **UNFCCC's COP27 in Egypt's Sharm el-Sheikh.**
- ❖ It is India's long-term strategy of achieving **net-zero emissions by 2070.**

Provide an overview of India's Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS) and its significance in climate change mitigation.

- ❖ India's LT-LEDS rests on **seven key transitions to low-carbon development pathways**.
  - ➢ Low Carbon Development of Electricity Systems
  - ➢ Integrated, Efficient, Inclusive, Low-Carbon Transport Systems
  - ➢ Promoting Adaptation in Urban Design and Sustainable Urbanization
  - ➢ Low-carbon Industrial systems
  - ➢ CO2 Removal and Related Engineering Solutions
  - ➢ Enhancing Forest and Vegetation Cover.

Provide an overview of India's role in contributing to global greenhouse gas emissions.

- ❖ According to **the Global Carbon Project,** India's total GHG emissions in 2021 were 2.99 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO2e), ranking third globally behind China and the United States.
- ❖ **Historical Responsibility for Emissions:** India's cumulative emissions from 1850 to 2019 were about **4% of the global total, while** the United States and China accounted for 25% and 13%, respectively.
- ❖ **Per Capita Emissions:** India's per capita emissions, the average amount of GHGs emitted per person, are also significantly lower than developed countries. In 2021, India's per capita emissions were **2.3 tonnes of CO2e,** while the **global average was 4.8 tonnes of CO2e.**
- ❖ **India's Emission Sources:** India's GHG emissions are primarily from the **energy sector,** which accounts for about **75% of total emissions.** The main sources of emissions in the energy sector are coal, electricity generation, and transportation.

What are the challenges to India's emission reduction efforts?

Balancing Economic Growth and Environmental Protection: India's reliance on fossil fuels for energy production poses a significant challenge to reducing emissions. **Access to Affordable Clean Energy Technologies, addressing Methane Emissions** primarily from agriculture and livestock production. **Promoting Energy Efficiency:** Implementing energy-efficient technologies. Raising public awareness about climate change . Strong political will and effective policy frameworks are crucial to prioritize climate change mitigation and ensure that the necessary measures are implemented effectively.

What other efforts or initiatives has India undertaken in mitigating climate change?

National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)	❖ It was **launched in 2008** by the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change. It includes 8 **national missions** to address the challenges of climate change: ➢ National Solar Mission ➢ National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency ➢ National Mission on Sustainable Habitat ➢ National Water Mission ➢ National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem ➢ National Mission for A Green India ➢ National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture ➢ National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change

The National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC)	❖ It was established to support **adaptation activities in the States and UTs** that are vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. ❖ NAFCC is implemented in project mode and to date, 30 projects have been sanctioned in **27 States and UTs.** As a result of various actions undertaken, India has **achieved reduction of 24% in emission intensity of its GDP** between 2005 and 2016

Mission LiFE	❖ It is an **India-led global mass movement** which aims to nudge **individual and collective action** to **protect** and **preserve the environment.** Its objectives include the following:
	  ➢ To mobilize at least **1 billion Indians and other global citizens** to take **individual and collective action** for protecting and preserving the environment in the period **2022 to 2027.**
	  ➢ Within **India, at least 80%** of all **villages and urban local bodies** are aimed to become environment-friendly by **2028.**

Action plans by States and UTs	❖ Thirty-four States /UTs have prepared, and some have updated their **State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) in line with NAPCC** considering the State-specific issues relating to climate change. These SAPCCs outline **sector-specific** and **cross-sectoral priority actions**, including adaptation and climate resilient infrastructure.

International Coalitions	❖ Apart from resolutely addressing climate change domestically, India has launched international coalitions such as:
	  ➢ **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**
	  ➢ **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)**
	  ➢ **Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS)**
	  ➢ **Green Grids Initiative—One Sun One World One Grid (GGI-OSOWOG)**
	  ➢ **The Leadership Group for Industry Transition (LeadIT)**

International frameworks, conventions, and treaties	❖ India is a party to several international frameworks, conventions, and treaties related to climate change, including:
	  ➢ **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):** This is a global treaty signed in 1992 to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere and mitigate the impacts of climate change.
	  ➢ **Paris Agreement:** A global agreement signed in 2015 under the UNFCCC to limit global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.
	  ➢ **Kyoto Protocol:** An international treaty signed in 1997 that sets targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by developed countries. India has signed and ratified the protocol as a developing country.
	  ➢ **Montreal Protocol:** A global treaty signed in 1987 to protect the ozone layer by reducing the production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances.
	  ➢ **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** This is a global treaty signed in 1992 to conserve biological diversity, promote sustainable use of its components, and ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.
	  ➢ **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD):** This is a global treaty signed in 1994 to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa.

ELECTRIFIED FLEX FUEL VEHICLE

Questionnaire

1.   What is an Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicle?
2.   What is Flex Fuel?
3.   How does Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicle Work?
4.   What are the advantages of an Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicle?
5.   What are the drawbacks of the Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicle
6.   What is India's ethanol blending target?
7.   What is India's status in Ethanol Production?
8.   What are the benefits of Ethanol Blending?
9.   What are Bharat Stage (BS) Norms?
10. How do Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicles create dependency on China?

Context: Recently, the Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas has unveiled the prototype of **World's 1st BS-6 Stage-II Electrified Flex fuel vehicle**.

What is an Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicle?

The Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicle is a passenger vehicle having both a **Flex Fuel engine and an electric powertrain**.

This type of vehicle can run on both **ethanol fuel engines as well as on EV Mode**. It enables dual mode of working of a **vehicle's transmission**. These types of vehicles have the potential of r**unning on up to 85% ethanol blended petrol**.

What is Flex Fuel?

Flex fuel is a type of **alternative fuel** made by mixing petrol with ethanol. Currently, vehicles manufactured in India are **compatible with E20 fuel** (petrol blended with 20% ethanol). Flex fuel vehicles have the capability to **run on any fuel**, which can be up to 100% ethanol. However, the commonly used flex fuel uses **85 percent ethanol** and 15 per cent petrol. Only flex fuel vehicles have **lower fuel efficiency** as ethanol has lower energy density compared to petrol and diesel.
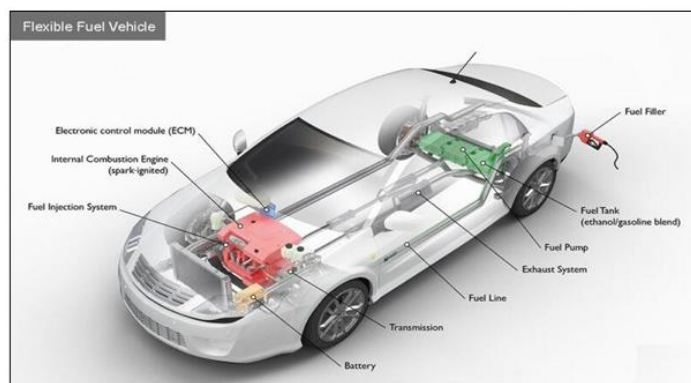
How does Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicle Work?

❖   **Powering Unit:** The Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicle will contain **two sets of powering units**. One will be the flex fuel engine and the other will be an electric motor.

❖   **Operation:** Initially, the flex fuel engine will provide power for the vehicle through its **Internal Combustion Engine**.

  ➢   During running of the vehicle, the **electric power storing unit** will get charged. When the battery is fully charged, the **transmission will switch to electric power**.

  ➢   This will continue until electric power lasts, after which the transmission will switch back to **flex fuel engine**. This cycle will continue.

What are the advantages of an Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicle?

❖ **Higher Fuel Efficiency:** Electrified Flex Fuel vehicles have **30-50% higher Fuel Efficiency** as it can run 40-60% in EV mode by keeping engine shut.

❖ **Promote Ethanol Blending:** The introduction of flex fuel engines has enabled **greater blending** of ethanol in petroleum.

❖ **Lower Emissions:** Due to **lower use of fuel-based engines** in energy transmission, the emission of **greenhouse** gasses is lower.

❖ **Self-sufficiency**: Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicles use **minimal chemical batteries**, enabling India to reduce the Geo-political risks of battery raw material supplies.

❖ **Rise in Agricultural Income**: Ethanol is manufactured from **agricultural produce**. This will serve as an **additional source of income** for farmers.

❖ **Reduce Petroleum Import Bills**: Due to **steady increase in ethanol blending**, the demand for petroleum imports has remained under control. This has allowed saving of **precious foreign exchange**.

What are the drawbacks of the Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicle?

❖ **Maintenance Cost is High:** Ethanol fuel can cause **corrosion and damage** to the engine, mainly because it absorbs dirt easily.

❖ **Supply Chain:** The **supply chain of flex fuel** is not widespread as petroleum fuel. This discourages users from opting for flex fuel cars.

❖ **Infrastructure Investment:** Initial **investment required to switch to flex fuel vehicles** is high. Appropriate infrastructure needs to be set up at every fuel station.

❖ **Lower Mileage:** Ethanol contains less energy than pure petrol. Hence, a flex-fuel car will use **more fuel** as compared to a conventional petrol car.

How do Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicles create dependency on China?

Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicles operate on a **hybrid of flex fuel engines** and electric power units. The electric power unit requires a battery for storage. Construction of batteries requires r**are-earth elements**, a market essentially controlled by China. **Over dependence** on the Electrified **Flex Fuel Vehicles** would basically mean **excessive dependence on China.**

Electrified Flex Fuel technology needs further refinement to make it suitable for **mass adoption**. In absence of such policies, the potential advantages cannot be reaped.

What is ethanol blending?

Ethanol: Known as ethyl alcohol, ethanol is a **biofuel** with the chemical formula C_2H_5OH. It is a byproduct of sugar manufacturing. Ethanol can be obtained from **agricultural feed-stocks** such as corn, sugarcane, hemp, potato, and rice, among many other things.

Advantages:

Ethanol can be produced **domestically at a lower cost than importing crude oil**. This saves foreign exchange. It is considered a clean fuel as it has very **negligible carbon emissions**. There is a reduced emission of **carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, and nitrogen oxides**.

Production in India: India is currently the **fifth largest producer of ethanol**.

The US, Brazil, the European Union and China are above India. Currently, India has advanced the **target for 20% ethanol blending in petrol (called E20) to 2025 from 2030. The current level of ethanol blending in petrol is 11.8%. This is a significant rise from** 1.53% in 2013-14.

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> ### *What are Bharat Stage (BS) Norms?*
>
> The Bharat Stage (BS) norms are **emission standards** set up by the Government of India to regulate the emission of air pollutants from motor vehicles. Implemented by the **Central Pollution Control Board**, the BS norms are based on the European emission standards. The current emission standard requires that all new cars produced, sold, and registered in India from April 2020, must comply with the BS-VI norms.
>
> **BS6 Stage II Norms:** This norm includes **Real Driving Emissions (RDE) and Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE 2) and On-Board Diagnostics**. These features provide a **realistic estimation** of the amount of emissions taking place from vehicles in **real traffic conditions** with frequent changes in speed, acceleration, and deceleration.

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GREEN HYDROGEN: A JOURNEY TOWARD GREEN ENERGY

Questionnaire:

1. *What is green hydrogen?*
2. *What is the different color spectrum of hydrogen?*
3. *What is the status of hydrogen consumption in India?*
4. *What are the Reasons to Develop Green Hydrogen?*
5. *What are the Applications of Green Hydrogen in Different Sectors?*
6. *What are the Difficulties in Producing Green Hydrogen?*
7. *What are Government Initiatives to Promote Green Hydrogen?*
8. *What are the challenges associated with the National Green Hydrogen Mission?*
9. *What are the suggestive measures?*
10. *Don't you think green hydrogen will be a costly alternative and it will not give any concrete result in green fuel or tackling climate change? Then why has the government been promoting it?*

Context: Cabinet approves National Green Hydrogen Mission. It aims to make India a Global Hub for production, utilization and export of Green Hydrogen and its derivatives. It will help in India becoming energy independent and in Decarbonisation of major sectors of the economy.

> ### *What is green hydrogen?*
>
> Hydrogen is a colorless, odorless, tasteless, non-toxic and highly combustible gaseous substance. Hydrogen is the most abundant member of the family of chemical elements in the universe. Green hydrogen refers to hydrogen produced by electrolysis of water using renewable or green energy. Green hydrogen is considered as one of the cleanest forms of energy.

What is the different color spectrum of hydrogen?

❖ Green hydrogen, blue hydrogen, brown hydrogen, yellow hydrogen, turquoise hydrogen and pink hydrogen are colourful terms given to hydrogen. Depending on the type of production used, different color names are assigned to the hydrogen.

Color	GREY HYDROGEN	BLUE HYDROGEN	TURQUOISE HYDROGEN*	GREEN HYDROGEN
Process	SMR or gasification	SMR or gasification with carbon capture (85-95%)	Pyrolysis	Electrolysis
Source	Methane or coal	Methane or coal	Methane	Renewable electricity

Note: SMR = steam methane reforming.
* Turquoise hydrogen is an emerging decarbonisation option.

What is the status of hydrogen consumption in India?

❖ India currently consumes approximately 6 million tonnes of hydrogen annually.
❖ The primary consumers are the fertilizer industry, utilizing 3.25 million tonnes, and refineries.
❖ By 2050, industry estimates suggest a surge in hydrogen demand, reaching 28 million tonnes.
❖ The goal is for 80% of this demand to be met with green hydrogen.

What are the benefits of developing Green Hydrogen?

❖ **Export Promotion:** Creation of export opportunities for green hydrogen and its derivatives.
❖ **Tackle Climate Change:** Decarbonization of industrial, mobility, and energy sectors.
❖ **Energy Security:** Reduced dependence on imported fossil fuels.
❖ **Enhance Capabilities:** Development of indigenous manufacturing capabilities.
❖ **Creating New Industries and Jobs:** Employment opportunities and technological advancements.

What are the Applications of Green Hydrogen in Different Sectors?

❖ **Industrial Applications:** Green hydrogen is utilized as a clean feedstock in heavy industries like steel and chemicals, reducing carbon emissions in manufacturing processes.
❖ **Transportation:** In transportation, green hydrogen powered fuel cell vehicles, offering a zero-emission alternative for buses, trucks, trains, and maritime transport.
❖ **Power Generation:** Green hydrogen plays a vital role in power generation, providing a clean and reliable energy source through fuel cells or as backup during low renewable energy periods.
❖ **Residential and Commercial Heating:** Used in fuel cells, green hydrogen provides clean heat and electricity for residential and commercial heating systems.
❖ **Energy Storage:** As an efficient energy carrier, green hydrogen serves as a storage solution for excess renewable energy, addressing intermittency challenges.

What are the Difficulties in Producing Green Hydrogen?

❖ **Cost:** Currently, the production, storage, and distribution of green hydrogen incur higher costs compared to traditional fossil fuels due to the need for specialized equipment and infrastructure.
❖ **Infrastructure:** For the widespread adoption of green hydrogen, a robust infrastructure must be developed to support its production, storage, and distribution.
❖ **Energy Storage:** Green hydrogen production relies on intermittent renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, and hydro power.
   ➢ Thus effective energy storage solutions, such as batteries are essential to store excess energy, ensuring a consistent and reliable supply of green hydrogen.
❖ **Safety:** Given that green hydrogen is a highly flammable gas, special handling and storage measures are necessary.

- ❖ **Public Acceptance:** The acceptance of green hydrogen by the public plays a pivotal role in its widespread adoption.
  - ➢ Public awareness and education about the environmental benefits of green hydrogen and its role in addressing climate change are essential for fostering acceptance and support.

What are Government Initiatives to Promote Green Hydrogen?

- ❖ The government has implemented various initiatives and policies aimed at fostering the production, utilization, and export of green hydrogen.
- ❖ **National Hydrogen Mission:** The Union Cabinet has approved the **National Green Hydrogen Mission** in Jan 2023.
  - ➢ **Aim:** To make India a global hub for the production, utilization, and export of green hydrogen and its derivatives.
  - ➢ **Implementation:** Ministry of New & Renewable Energy
  - ➢ **Goals:** This mission focuses on creating an enabling ecosystem for green hydrogen production through research, development, and capacity-building activities.
- ❖ **Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition Programme (SIGHT):** It will fund the domestic manufacturing of electrolysers and produce green hydrogen.
- ❖ **Green Hydrogen Hubs:** States and regions capable of supporting large scale production and/or utilization of hydrogen will be identified and developed as Green Hydrogen Hubs.

What are the challenges associated with the National Green Hydrogen Mission?

- ❖ **Incentive Disparity:** The starting incentive of Rs 50 per kilogram, dropping to Rs 40 in the second year and Rs 30 in the third year, is perceived as insufficient to stimulate significant investment.
- ❖ **Global Comparisons:** The US provides up to $3 per kilogram in base tax credit.
  - ➢ Additionally, the U.S. has committed $8 billion for the development of regional hydrogen hubs.
  - ➢ Europe offers around 4 Euros/Kg for green hydrogen projects, making it a more attractive destination.
- ❖ **Funding Insufficiency:** The government's allocation of around Rs 5,400 crores for funding 1.35 million tonnes of green hydrogen production for three years is considered meager.
  - ➢ It represents only around 40% of the total budget for fuel production.

What are the suggestive measures to utilize the potential of Green Hydrogen?

- ❖ **Policy Support and Incentives:**Governments should implement supportive policies, such as subsidies, tax incentives, and regulatory frameworks, to encourage investments and market growth in the green hydrogen sector.
- ❖ **Research and Development:** Investment in research and development is critical for advancing technology, reducing production costs, and enhancing the efficiency of green hydrogen production methods.
- ❖ **Infrastructure Development:** Establishing a robust and interconnected infrastructure for green hydrogen production, storage, and distribution is essential to ensure a seamless transition and widespread adoption.
- ❖ **International Collaboration:** Collaboration with global partners allows for knowledge exchange, technology transfer, and collective efforts to address challenges, fostering a thriving international green hydrogen market.
- ❖ **Public Awareness and Education:** Educating the public about the environmental benefits and potential applications of green hydrogen builds support and acceptance, creating a positive environment for its successful integration into various sectors.
- ❖ **Industry Collaboration:** Encouraging collaboration between industries, research institutions, and government bodies facilitates the sharing of expertise and resources, fostering innovation and efficient problem-solving.
- ❖ **Standardization and Certification:** Developing industry standards and certification processes ensures the safety, quality, and interoperability of green hydrogen technologies, fostering confidence among stakeholders.

Don't you think green hydrogen will be a costly alternative and it will not give any concrete result in green fuel or tackling climate change? Then why has the government been promoting it?

While green hydrogen currently faces cost challenges, its potential in green fuel and climate change mitigation is significant. Continuous research and technological advancements are expected to drive down production costs. Investing in green hydrogen aligns with climate goals, offering a scalable, low-carbon alternative to fossil fuels.

Governments anticipate that sustained support will drive innovation, making green hydrogen more economically competitive and effective in addressing climate change.

While challenges exist, ongoing commitment and innovation suggest that green hydrogen can play a vital role in the global transition to a more sustainable and climate-friendly energy landscape.

FOREST CONSERVATION BILL: AN ENCOMPASSING GREEN

Questionnaire:

1. *How are Forests defined in India?*
2. *What is the Current Status of Forest Cover in India?*
3. *Can Forest Land Converted Into Other Types of Land?*
4. *What is Features of the Forest Conservation Act 1980?*
5. *Why It Became Necessary to Amend the Forest Conservation Act 1980?*
6. *What are the Key Features of the Amendment Bill?*
7. *What is the Significance of Recent Amendments?*
8. *What are the Key Issues and Concerns Associated with the Bill?*
9. *How does the Bill restrict the scope of the Act?*
10. *Why is the exemption for border infrastructure controversial?*
11. *One hand the governments in UNFCCC meet calls for environment protection and on other hand they are exploiting forests for development purposes. What are your views on it?*
12. *What can be the way forward, how can the government balance between the two?*
13. *How is Forest Cover Classified in India?*
14. *What is Reserved Forest, Protected Forest and VIllage Forest?*
15. *What are Major Initiatives taken by the Government For the Conservation of Forest?*

Context: The Lok Sabha has recently passed the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023. It seeks to amend the Forest Conservation Act (FCA), 1980 which **regulates the extraction of forest resources** including timber and **other minerals** by industries and local communities. Modifies the criteria for **including and excluding forest land** from the purview of the Act. It **Expands the list of forest activities** that will be permitted on forest land.

How are Forests defined in India?

The forest cover is defined as '**all land, more than one hectare in area, with a tree canopy density of more than 10 percent irrespective of ownership and legal status**. Such **land may not necessarily** be a recorded forest area. It also includes **orchards, bamboo and palm**'. The definition of forest cover has clearly been defined in **all the India State of Forest Report** (ISFR) and in all the international communications of India.

How is Forest Cover Classified in India?

Very dense Forest	Tree cover canopy density of **70% and above**
Moderately Dense	Tree cover of canopy density between **40% and 70% above**
Open forest	Tree cover of canopy density between **10% and 40%**
Scurb	Trees having canopy density **less than 10 percent**
Non Forest	Any area not included in the above classes

What is Reserved Forest, Protected Forest and Village Forest?

❖ **Reserve Forest:** Reserve forest includes **any forest land or wasteland that is under the ownership of the government.** This land is **not open to the local people** without the permission of the government.

❖ **Protected Forests: The land other than reserved forests** over which the government has proprietary rights is termed as a protected forest which is empowered by the State Government. The rules regarding the use of the forests are given by the government.

❖ **Village Forest:** When the reserved forests are provided by the government for the **usage of the village community** that particular land is considered as village forest land.

What is the Current Status of Forest Cover in India?

❖ **Forest Survey report 2021 released**; increase of 2,261 sq km in the **total forest and tree cover** of the country in the **last two years.** Now Forest Cover in India constitutes **24.62%** of the geographical area of the country.

❖ Area-wise **Madhya Pradesh** has the largest forest cover in the country. Maximum increase in forest cover was witnessed in **Andhra Pradesh** (647 sq km) followed by **Telangana** (632 sq km) and **Odisha** (537 sq km).

❖ **17 states/UT's have above 33 percent** of the geographical area under forest cover.

❖ **Total carbon stock in the country's** forest is estimated to be **7,204 million tonnes**, an increase of 79.4 million.

❖ **Total mangroves cover** in the country is 4,992 sq km, an increase of 17 sq Km observed

What are the Features of the Forest Conservation Act 1980?

❖ **An act to provide for the conservation of forests and for matters connected therewith or ancillary or incidental thereto.** It regulates **restrictions on the de-reservation of forests** or use of forest land for non-forest purposes.

❖ **Constitution of Advisory Committee:**

➢ The **Central Government** may constitute a committee consisting of such number of persons as it may deem fit to advise that Government with regard to the **grant of approval** for the purpose which is prohibited in this act. And any other matter connected with the **conservation of forests** which may be referred to by the Central Government.

➢ The **Central Government may**, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the provisions of this Act.

➢ **Penalty** for contravention of the provisions of the Act. It states that Whoever contravenes or abets the contravention of any of the provisions in this act, shall be punishable with simple imprisonment for **a period which may extend to fifteen days.**

Why It has Become Necessary to Amend the Forest Conservation Act 1980?

- ❖ **Varied Interpretations of the Act:** The act's applicability in different **types of lands has changed,** resulting in different interpretations of its provisions, especially in **recorded forest lands, private forest lands, plantations, etc.**
- ❖ **Afforestation and Plantation of Trees Outside Forests:** Afforestation and tree planting outside forests are lagging due to concerns that the **FCA will target private landowners.**
- ❖ **Fast Tracking of Strategic and Security Related Projects: Projects of national importance** need to be fast-tracked to ensure development of vital security infrastructures, especially along the **international border areas**.
- ❖ **Connecting Remote Habitations:** Small habitations along roads/railways **need access to main arterial roads** and other public utilities.
- ❖ **Expanding the Scope:** New challenges relating to **ecological, social and environmental developments have emerged** at national as well as international levels. **Example:** Mitigating climate change, achieving targets of Net Zero Emission by 2070, enhancing the forest carbon stock, etc.

Therefore, to carry forward the country's rich tradition of preserving forests and their bio-diversity and to tackle the climate change challenges, it is necessary to encompass such issues in the ambit of the Act.

What are the Key Features of the Amendment Bill?

- ❖ **Insertion of Preamble:** Preamble has been inserted changing the name of the Act as **Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980.**
- ❖ **Exempted Categories:** Forest land along a **railway line or public road** maintained by the government up to a **maximum size of 0.10 hectare.** Forest land within **100 km from international borders, Line of Control, or Line of Actual Control. Land up to 10 hectares for Security** related infrastructure Land proposed to be used for constructing **defense related projects, camps for paramilitary forces**, or public utility projects up to **5 hectares in a left-wing extremism** affected area.
- ❖ **Legal Provisions and Requirements:** The Act requires **prior approval from the central government** for the leasing of forest land to any entity, whether government-owned or not.

Redefining the Ambit of "Non- Forest Purpose" Exemptions:

- ❖ **Non-Forest Land:** Non-forest purposes include using the land for cultivation of **horticultural crops or any purpose other than reafforestation.**
- ❖ **Exclusion from Non-Forest Land:** The Bill proposes to expand the list of excluded activities from non-forest land to include:
  - ➢ **Zoos and safaris** under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
  - ➢ **Ecotourism facilities**
  - ➢ **Silvicultural operations** to enhance forest growth.
  - ➢ **Survey and investigation** in the forest areas

What is the Significance of Recent Amendments?

- ❖ **Facilitating Non-Forestry Use of Forest Land: Elimination of ambiguities** in the applicability of Act, will facilitate the **decisions making process** on the proposals involving non-forestry use of forest land by the authorities.
- ❖ Inclusion of **more forestry activities** in the Bill such as infrastructure for the frontline will help **to secure quick response to natural hazards** in the forests. It will pave the way for **better management of forest** for improved productivity and flow of ecosystem goods and services. It will also mitigate the impact of **climate change** on conservation of forests.
- ❖ **Farmers or owners of private forests can harvest their lands,** for commercial or other uses, without the **need for acquiring forest clearance.**

❖ **Mainstreaming protection of forest** and enabling local communities by providing **livelihood sources**. It will be promoted as per approved Working Plan or Wildlife Management Plan or Tiger Conservation Plan will be taken up in the forest areas.

❖ Activities like establishment of Zoo and Safaris, etc. will be **owned by the Government.** These will be set up as per the **Plan approved by the Central Zoo Authority outside the Protected Areas.**

What are the Key Issues and Concerns Associated with the Bill?

❖ **Certain types of forest land** which are excluded from the purview of the Act which will lead to degradation of forest and loss of biodiversity.

❖ **Exemptions Near Border Areas:** It would cover large parts of the north-eastern region which has following issue,

➢ **Further Decline: Shifting cultivation, felling of trees, natural calamities, anthropogenic pressure, and developmental activities** has led to decrease in forest cover and exemption will exacerbate it.

➢ **Habitat and Biodiversity Loss: Linear projects** which fragment habitat can **reduce biodiversity** in an area greater than their own footprint.

❖ **Poor Identification of the Problem: Delay in forest clearance exemption** for security related projects is caused mostly by state delays, however the **bill reduces the compliance** by central government.

❖ **Blanket Exemption to Security Projects**: Security projects may **harm forest cover and biodiversity**, so a blanket exemption may not be appropriate.

❖ **Zoos Inside the Forest:** The purpose of allowing a zoo inside a forest is not clear. The bill also exempts prior approval under the Forest Act 1980. **The Supreme Court (2023)** has remarked that they do not appreciate the necessity of having a zoo inside tiger reserves or national parks.

How does the Bill restrict the scope of the Act?

The Bill's principal thrust is that it redefines what a 'forest' is in Indian law. It stipulates that only those lands that were notified as 'forest' under the **Indian Forest Act 1927, any other relevant law or were recorded as 'forests' in government records** will be acknowledged as 'forests' under the Act as well.

This revision stands in **stark contrast to the wide applicability of the extant Act** at present – i.e. it applies to **"any forest land".**

❖ **A Supreme Court judgment in 1996** had reiterated such a broad application. But even after almost 30 years, many states are yet to complete this exercise of classifying deemed forest. In cases where they have, we don't know how scientific the process of identification was.

❖ As such, the **amendment opens up all land that hasn't been officially classified** as 'forests' to commercial activity. **It also removes the checks and balances** the Act currently includes, in the form of forest clearance permissions and the informed consent of the local community.

❖ **Example:** The areas that stand to be affected in a significant way include about **40% of the Aravalli range and 95% of the Niyamgiri hill range** (Dongria Kondh, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group reside here). Many experts are also uncertain, and thus apprehensive, about **the actual extent of land that will fall outside the purview of the amended Act** considering the **State-wise data of deemed forests is not publicly available.**

Why is the Exemption for Border Infrastructure controversial?

❖ **The Bill seeks to exempt linear infrastructure project**s – like roads and highways – from seeking forest clearance permissions if they are located **within 100 km** of the national border. **Experts have raised concerns** because "**strategic linear projects of national importance**" is an **undefined term** and can thus be misused to push through infrastructure projects that are **devastating for the local ecology**. **Example: In the Northeastern States**, exemptions would apply de facto almost across the region.

❖ **State Government's Demands: Nagaland** asked for **a variable distance for exemption**, given its small size and location within the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot.

➢ **Tripura** wanted it to be reduced to 10 km.

➢ **Arunachal Pradesh** asked for the range to be increased to 150 km.

One hand the governments in UNFCCC meet to call for environment protection and on other hand they are exploiting forests for development purposes. What are your views on it?

This situation often arises due to the need to balance economic development with environmental conservation.

Here are some perspectives on this issue:

❖ **Balancing Development and Conservation:** Striking a balance between development and conservation is complex, as economic growth may sometimes be perceived as being at odds with environmental protection.

❖ **Resource-Dependent Nations:** Some nations derive their wealth from natural resources, including forests, for economic activities such as logging, agriculture, or infrastructure development. These countries are driven by the **immediate economic needs of a country**, even as it recognizes the importance of environmental protection on the global stage.

❖ **Policy Implementation Issues:** Sustainable development policies can face hurdles due to factors such as conflicting interests, economic pressures, and the need for short-term gains while implementation. Some governments may struggle to enforce environmental protection measures effectively. Integrated policy frameworks that align economic development goals with environmental sustainability can provide a more coherent approach to addressing these challenges.

❖ **Domestic Priorities vs International Goals:** The tension between global environmental goals and local development needs can lead to apparent contradictions in policy and action. **Example: Strategic Great Nicobar Project and associated deforestation.**

Exploiting forests for immediate economic gains may offer short-term benefits, but **it can have long-term consequences** for biodiversity, ecosystem services, and climate resilience. Sustainable development involves **considering the long-term impacts and balancing immediate economic benefits** with the preservation of natural resources. Increased public pressure and awareness may encourage governments to adopt more environmentally friendly and sustainable development practices.

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GREAT NICOBAR PROJECT : PLAN FOR THE PARADISE

Questionnaire:

1. *What are the General Features of the Great Nicobar Island?*
2. *What is the Great Nicobar Project?*
3. *What is the Significance of the Great Nicobar Project?*
4. *What are Challenges Associated with Great Nicobar Projects?*
5. *What Measures can be taken to Make this Project Sustainable?*
6. *What is the Importance of Great Nicobar Island?*
7. *What is Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority Fund (CAMPA)?*
8. *The Environment Ministry had estimated that close to 8.5 lakh trees were expected to be cut for the project, don't you think it is going to impact the livelihood and biodiversity of nicobar island. Why do we need such projects that cost us the environment and livelihood of people?*

Context: Union Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda said **"utmost precautions"** will be taken while executing the "holistic development of Great Nicobar Island" which includes an international container trans-shipment terminal, airport, power plant and a green-field township in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

What is the Great Nicobar Project?

❖ **Origin: The proposal to develop Great Nicobar Island** was first introduced in the **1970s**, emphasizing its role in **national security** and consolidating the Indian Ocean Region. However, increasing **Chinese assertion** in the Bay of Bengal and the Indo-Pacific has added great urgency to this imperative in recent years. **It is a Rs 72,000 crore development project proposed by Niti Aayog** on the strategically important Great Nicobar Island.

❖ It has **four components:**
  ➢ A ₹35,000 crore **transshipment port at** Galathea Bay
  ➢ A dual-use **military-civil international airport**
  ➢ **A power plant**
  ➢ **A greenfield township**

❖ **Implementation Agency:** Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation

What is the Significance of the Great Nicobar Project?

❖ **Enhancing Great Nicobar Role in Global Maritime Trade:** It will allow Great Nicobar to participate in the **regional and global maritime economy** by becoming a major player in cargo transshipment.

❖ **Electricity Generation:** The project proposes the **development of a power plant**, with capacity to produce sufficient electrical power to run the new city.

❖ **Employment Creation:** More than **one lakh new direct jobs** and 1.5 lakh indirect jobs can be created on the island during the next 30 years.

❖ **Tri Service Command: India's strategic concerns** in Southeast Asia and the Malacca Strait region are overseen by the Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC), located in Port Blair.

❖ **Helpful in Tackling Challenges:** The island provides **a natural base for India to tackle major challenges in the Indian Ocean** region like piracy, smuggling, Sea lines of communication security and most crucially, intrusions by Chinese ships.

❖ **In Sync with Act East Policy:** One of the major objectives of the Act East policy is **economic cooperation with Indo-Pacific countries**, and the location of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a boon for the prospects of economic integration.

❖ **Enhancing the Blue Economy:** It will create an **economic hub** in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, thereby giving a boost to the Blue Economy. Further, it will help in **developing a free trade zone**, **limiting round-tripping** and promotion as a **Special Economic Zone (SEZ)**.

What are Challenges Associated with Great Nicobar Projects?

❖ **Biodiversity Threat:** The loss of tree cover will not only affect the **flora and fauna** on the island, but it will also lead to **increased runoff and sediment deposits** in the ocean, impacting the **coral reefs in the area. The Environment Ministry had estimated** that close to 8.5 lakh trees were expected to be cut for the project.

- ❖ **Balancing Ecological Fragility and Infrastructure Development:** The proposed massive infrastructure development in an ecologically important and fragile region, the northern **end of the project falls** in the biosphere reserve, which means a part of this protected region will have to be allotted to the project.
- ❖ **Tribal Rights:** This project runs counter to the **rights of vulnerable tribal communities** and depends on the forests for survival. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are home to **5 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups: Great Andamanese, Jarwas, Onges, Shompens and North Sentinelese.**
- ❖ **Far-field Afforestation:** To recommend afforestation as compensation for the loss of forest in the Great Nicobar Island is farcical. **The EIA report says compensatory afforestation** will be carried out in **Haryana and Madhya Pradesh. Far-field afforestation**, that too in areas that have no ecological comparison with Nicobar Island, makes no sense.
- ❖ Critics claimed the **restriction on non-islanders** was imposed **to curb criticism** against the project - Holistic Development of Great Nicobar Island.

The Environment Ministry had estimated that close to 8.5 lakh trees were expected to be cut for the project, don't you think it is going to impact the livelihood and biodiversity of Nicobar island. Why do we need such projects that cost us the environment and livelihood of people?

- ❖ **Need of the project:** The idea of developing Great Nicobar was first proposed in the 1970s, and its significance for national security and the consolidation of the Indian Ocean Region has been emphasized time and again. The idea behind the development of GNI is based on leveraging the **locational advantage of being on the international sea route and developing GNI** as a sustainable, green, global destination for business, trade, and leisure.
- ❖ **Strategic Reasons:** Its importance for **national security and consolidation** of the Indian Ocean Region has been repeatedly underlined**.**
  - ➢ **Chinese assertiveness in the Bay of Bengal** and the Indo-Pacific has added urgency to this requirement.
- ❖ Thus, the challenge is to find a balance between development and environmental and social sustainability involves **adopting more sustainable technologies and practices**.
  - ➢ Engaging in **responsible resource management, respecting the rights and needs of local communities,** and implementing effective policies and regulations.
  - ➢ **Public awareness, advocacy, and ethical business practices** are also crucial in promoting a more balanced and sustainable approach to development.

What Measures can be taken to Make this Project Sustainable?

- ❖ **Safeguarding Tribal Rights:** Firstly, utmost **respect for tribal rights is imperative**, aligning with policies like the **Shompen Policy of 2015.**
  - ➢ This policy underscores prioritizing tribal rights **over extensive developmental projects.**
- ❖ **Environmental Impact Assessments:** All construction activities within the framework of the Great Nicobar Development plan must strictly **follow environmental impact assessments**, as stipulated by the Environment Protection Act of 1986.
  - ➢ These assessments not only improve the practicality of development but also reduce the possibility of substantial environmental harm.
- ❖ **Adapting Eco-Friendly Practices:** The creation of infrastructure should **embrace eco-friendly practices,** including strict adherence to the **Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA) code for building construction.**
- ❖ **Maintaining Transparency: NITI Aayog and associated planning entities** should release comprehensive data on the reasoning, creation process, consulted groups, and related aspects to the public.
  - ➢ This level of openness offers a comprehensive perspective for both critics and advocates.

What is Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority Fund (CAMPA)?

❖ **The CAMPA funds** are utilized for **compensating the loss of forest land and ecosystem services** by raising of compensatory afforestation, improving quality of forests through assisted natural regeneration, enrichment of biodiversity, improvement of wildlife habitat, control of forest fire, forest protection and soil and water conservation measures.

❖ **The Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF Act), 2016 and Rules, 2018** provide elaborate guidelines and activities for utilization of CAMPA Fund.

❖ CAMPA also supports **creation of nurseries** for multiplication of quality planting material of locally suitable plant species.

❖ **The monitoring and evaluation of CAMPA activities** is provided in the CAF Act, 2016. The monitoring of CAMPA activities in States/UTs are carried out through Internal and Third Party monitoring and e-Green watch web portals.

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Science & Technology

CHANDRAYAAN 3: HOW IT CHANGED OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE MOON

Questionnaire

1. *Provide a brief on Chandrayaan 1 and Chandrayaan 2 missions.*
2. *What was discovered by the Chandrayaan I mission?*
3. *What is the Chandrayaan 3 mission?*
4. *What is the significance of the Chandrayaan 3 mission?*
5. *What are the challenges of landing on the South Pole of the Moon?*
6. *Why does ISRO want to explore the South Pole of the Moon?*
7. *What are the differences between Chandrayaan 1,2, and 3 missions?*
8. *Can we buy Land on celestial bodies like the Moon? How are people buying it? Is it legal?*
9. *Difference between private space tech companies and ISRO?*
10. *How does ISRO's work impact the lives of common people?*
11. *Is it justified to allocate increased funding to ISRO in a developing nation like India, and how does this financial investment align with the country's development goals and priorities?*
12. *How India's achievements in the field of space science and technology have helped it in its socio-economic development?*
13. *What are ISRO's future expeditions?*
14. *India has joined the elite space club after successfully landing on the moon, how will this impact the image of India globally?*
15. *On One side we see India has huge poverty and on the other hand we are spending money on these space missions, is it justified?*

Context: The Chandrayaan-3 Mission is the **Indian Space Research Organization's** second attempt, following Chandrayaan-2, to demonstrate India's capacity in safe landing and roving on the lunar surface. On August 23, 2023, the Lander Module of Chandrayaan-3, carrying the **Lander Vikram and Rover Pragyan,** made the historic soft touchdown on the surface of the Lunar South Pole. As a result, India became the first country to soft-land on the surface of the Moon's south pole, and the fourth to do it at any place on the moon. On July 14, 2023, the Indian Space Research Organization launched the Chandrayaan-3 Mission from Sriharikota utilizing the **Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark III (LVM3).**

Provide a brief on Chandrayaan 1 and Chandrayaan 2 missions?

Chandrayaan-1, launched on October 22, 2008, marked India's first lunar exploration mission. Its primary goals were **to survey the Moon's surface, map its topography, and analyze its mineral composition.** Equipped with 11 scientific instruments, including a **Moon Impact Probe, Chandrayaan-1** made notable discoveries, confirming the **presence of water molecules on the lunar surface.**

Chandrayaan-2, launched on July 22, 2019, aimed to further India's lunar exploration by **studying the south pole region, analyzing the distribution of elements, and searching for water ice.** Comprising an **Orbiter, Lander (Vikram), and Rover (Pragyan),** the mission faced challenges when communication with the Vikram lander was lost during descent. However, the Orbiter continues to operate successfully, providing valuable data from lunar orbit. Despite the setbacks, both Chandrayaan missions have significantly advanced our understanding of the Moon and contributed to global lunar exploration efforts.

What was discovered by Chandrayaan 1 mission?

One of the significant discoveries made by the **Chandrayaan-1 mission** was **the confirmation of water molecules on the lunar surface.** In September 2009, the **Moon Impact Probe (MIP),** released by Chandrayaan-1, made a controlled impact on the lunar surface. During this impact, the MIP carried a mass spectrometer that **detected molecules containing water (H_2O) and hydroxyl (OH) on the Moon.**

This discovery was groundbreaking because, for a long time, the Moon was thought to be dry and devoid of water. The confirmation of water molecules has implications for future lunar exploration, as water is a critical resource that could support future human missions to the Moon by providing essential components for life support and fuel.

What is the Chandrayaan 3 mission?

Chandrayaan-3 is India's third moon mission and the successor to Chandrayaan-2, which is **targeted to land a rover on the lunar South Pole in 2019.** The Chandrayaan-3 Mission will consisted of three primary modules:

❖ The propulsion module (which transported the lander and rover configuration to a 100-kilometer lunar orbit)
❖ Lander module (capable of soft landing and deploying Rover)
❖ Rover (conducted on-the-ground chemical investigation of the lunar surface).

What is the significance of the Chandrayaan 3 mission?

Future Lunar Exploration	The Mission could be extremely important to India's efforts to send humans to the moon.
Advancing Space Education	India's scientific temper and space education would be furthered by the Mission. Both the scientific community and upcoming generations of space enthusiasts can draw inspiration from it.
Scientific Discoveries	Chandrayaan-3 carried instruments for studying moonquakes and underground heat. Seismometers on its surface showed the moon's interior, and thermal probes unveiled crust movements, this all will enhance our understanding of the moon.
Job Creation	Future programs and successful lunar expeditions have the potential to, directly and indirectly, generate new high-tech business prospects.
Lunar Surface Exploration	The lander and rover aboard Chandrayaan-3 are studying rocks and soil to learn more about the moon's history, which may show asteroid collisions that caused surface changes.

What are the challenges of landing on the South Pole of the Moon?

Landing on the lunar South Pole poses unique challenges for exploration missions.

❖ The region experiences **extreme lighting conditions** with **long periods of darkness** and low-angle sunlight, making navigation and **communication difficult.**
❖ The **rugged and uneven terrain,** coupled with potential hazards like boulders, requires careful site selection for safe landings and rover mobility.
❖ There are a large number of **Craters** in the southern region of the moon that make it difficult to land.
❖ This **constant shadowing** poses problems for solar-powered missions, as they are **unable to harness sunlight for power generation.**
❖ The moon's south pole is subject to **extreme temperature variations.** During its long lunar night, temperatures can plummet to as low as -173°C. Such frigid conditions can adversely affect equipment and electronics, requiring specialized design and insulation to ensure their functionality.

Overcoming these challenges is crucial for successful exploration, especially given the scientific interest in the South Pole's potential water ice deposits and its significance for future lunar missions.

Why does ISRO want to explore the South Pole of the Moon?

ISRO's interest in exploring the Moon's South Pole is motivated by various factors:

❖ **Scientifically,** it offers the potential **to uncover valuable insights into the Moon's geological history and composition.**
❖ The presence of **water ice** in the permanently shadowed regions is a significant draw, as it could serve as a crucial resource for future lunar exploration, supporting life and fuel production.

❖ The **strategic location of the South Pole,** with the possibility of near-continuous sunlight exposure, makes it advantageous for power generation and offers a unique perspective for observing Earth and deep space.

What are the differences between Chandrayaan 1, 2, and 3 missions?

Mission	Chandrayaan 1	Chandrayaan 2	Chandrayaan 3
Launch Year	**2008**	**2019**	**2023**
Objectives	Study Lunar Surface	Study the lunar surface and land rover on the lunar south pole.	Demonstrate landing capabilities for Lunar Polar Exploration Mission.
Components	Orbiter, Moon Impact Probe	Orbiter, Lander, Rover	Propulsion module, Lander, Rover
Discovery	Confirmed presence of water, lunar caves, tectonic activity, faults and fractures.	Building on the evidence of water molecules shown by Chandrayaan 1.	The presence of sulfur on the lunar surface near the South Pole was confirmed by the Pragyan rover. Other elements discovered were aluminum, calcium, iron, chromium, titanium, manganese, silicon, and oxygen (O).

Can we buy land on celestial bodies like the Moon? How are people buying it? Is it legal?

❖ It is **not legally possible** to buy land on celestial bodies such as the Moon. The **Outer Space Treaty**, which was signed by many countries, including major space-faring nations, explicitly states that celestial bodies, including the Moon, cannot be claimed by any sovereign nation. The treaty also prohibits any individual or entity from appropriating these celestial bodies by means of use or occupation.

❖ While there have been claims of individuals or companies selling lunar real estate, these transactions have no legal standing.

❖ The international community recognizes that no entity or individual can lay ownership claims on celestial bodies, as outlined in the Outer Space Treaty.

Difference between private space tech companies and ISRO?

❖ Private space tech companies, often founded by entrepreneurs or investors, operate as independent businesses with profit motives. They rely on private investment, form commercial partnerships, and generate revenue through commercial space activities, competing in the market to attract customers and investors.

❖ Driven primarily by profit and business interests, these companies may provide services such as satellite launches, space tourism, and satellite manufacturing, demonstrating agility, innovation, and a capacity to adapt swiftly to market demands through experimentation with new technologies and business models.

❖ In contrast, ISRO, a government space agency owned and operated by the Indian government, faces bureaucratic processes and decision-making influenced by political considerations. Despite this, ISRO has showcased technological prowess and adaptability.

❖ Its mandate extends beyond commercial activities to include scientific research, Earth observation, communication, navigation, and space exploration, contributing to national development goals. Funded by the Indian government, ISRO's budget is allocated for space research, satellite launches, and various space-related activities, reflecting its role as a national space research organization with a focus on both civilian and military space applications.

How does ISRO work impact the life of common people?

ISRO's work significantly impacts the lives of common people through various applications.

- ❖ Its communication satellites play a crucial role in providing telecommunication, broadcasting, and internet services.
- ❖ Remote sensing satellites aid in agricultural monitoring, disaster management, and weather forecasting, benefiting farmers and communities.
- ❖ Navigation services, such as NavIC, enhance transportation and navigation accuracy. The organization's initiatives in education and scientific research inspire students and researchers.
- ❖ ISRO's contributions extend to job creation, economic development, and international collaboration, fostering advancements in space exploration, technology, and environmental monitoring.

Overall, ISRO's multifaceted activities positively influence daily life, from improved connectivity and disaster response to advancements in agriculture and education.

Is it justified to allocate increased funding to ISRO in a developing nation like India, and how does this financial investment align with the country's development goals and priorities?

- ❖ Increasing budget allocations for ISRO in a developing country like India is a topic with diverse considerations.
- ❖ Advocates argue for several reasons, including the technological advancements that benefit various industries, economic development through the space industry, ISRO is major source of foreign currency and enhanced national security capabilities.
- ❖ A well-funded space program can boost international prestige, contribute to disaster management, and support education and research in science and technology.
- ❖ The economic competitiveness gained through space-based technologies and the potential for commercial opportunities are additional factors.
- ❖ Investments in ISRO's human spaceflight program, Gaganyaan, signify India's ambition and have the potential to inspire future generations.

However, it's crucial to balance these priorities with other developmental needs, reflecting the complexity of decision-making on budget allocations.

How India's achievements in the field of space science and technology has helped it in its socio economic development?

India's accomplishments in space science and technology have played a pivotal role in the nation's socio-economic development.

- ❖ Through communication satellites, the country has achieved widespread access to telecommunication, broadcasting, and the internet, fostering economic activities and education.
- ❖ Remote sensing satellites have enhanced agricultural practices, contributing to increased productivity and food security. Weather satellites aid in accurate forecasting, benefiting farmers and disaster management agencies.
- ❖ Navigation services, like NavIC, improve transportation efficiency.
- ❖ Telecommunication services support telemedicine and education, particularly in remote areas. The economic impact is evident in the growth of the space industry, generating jobs, fostering innovation, and attracting investment.
- ❖ International collaborations enhance India's global standing, and scientific research advancements inspire future generations.

Overall, India's space achievements have become integral to addressing challenges and advancing socio-economic well-being.

What are ISRO's future expeditions?

ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) had various planned future expeditions and missions. Please note that plans for space missions are subject to updates, changes, and new announcements. Here are some of the future missions that were discussed or planned:

1. **Gaganyaan - Human Spaceflight Program:** ISRO is working on Gaganyaan, India's first manned space mission. The program aims to send Indian astronauts (Gagannauts) to space and is expected to include crewed missions in the near future.

2. **Aditya-L1:** Aditya-L1 is a solar mission designed to study the Sun. It aims to observe the Sun's outermost layer, the corona, and understand the fundamental processes that drive solar activities. (Launched on 2nd September 2023)

3. **Mars Orbiter Mission 2 (Mangalyaan-2):** Following the success of the Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan), ISRO was considering a follow-up mission, Mangalyaan-2, to further explore Mars and study its atmosphere, surface, and mineralogy.

4. **Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV):** ISRO has been working on the development of a reusable launch vehicle, an experimental spaceplane that could potentially reduce the cost of launching payloads into space.

5. **NavIC Constellation Expansion:** Expansion of the NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation) satellite system to enhance regional navigation capabilities.

India has joined the elite space club after successfully landing on the moon. How will this impact the image of India globally?

The successful landing of Chandrayaan 3 on the south pole of the moon has elevated the country's global image in several keyways.

❖ This achievement showcases India's technological prowess and competence in space exploration, positioning the nation as a significant player in the global space community.

❖ The success of lunar landings contributes to international collaboration, scientific contributions, and strategic importance.

❖ The Soviet Union, the United States, China, and India are the only four nations to have successfully achieved soft landings on the moon.

❖ It serves as an inspiration for developing nations, fostering national pride and contributing to India's soft power. The potential for economic opportunities in the space industry, diplomatic relations, and educational impact further solidify India's positive global image.

❖ Additionally, ambitions like the human spaceflight program (Gaganyaan) reinforce India's commitment to space exploration, positioning it among nations with advanced space capabilities.

Overall, India's achievements in space significantly influence how the country is perceived on the world stage.

On one side we see India has huge poverty and on the other hand we are spending money on these space missions. Is it justified?

❖ The allocation of funds for space missions in India, amid significant poverty, sparks a debate with diverse perspectives.

❖ Supporters argue that investment in space contributes to technological advancement, international prestige, economic returns, scientific discovery, and inspiration for education.

❖ ISRO missions are known for being among the most cost-effective space endeavours globally.

❖ Critics, on the other hand, question resource allocation, emphasizing the immediate socio-economic needs, basic necessities, and potential inequality in prioritizing space missions.

❖ The ongoing discourse revolves around striking a balance between advancing space capabilities and addressing pressing societal challenges, with countries like India navigating this balance through a combination of space exploration and targeted social and economic programs.

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ADITYA-L1 MISSION: SHEDS LIGHT ON MYSTERIES OF SOLAR WIND

Questionnaire:

1. *What is Aditya-L1 Mission?*
2. *What are the payloads carried by the Aditya-L1 Mission?*
3. *What are the Major Science Objectives of the Mission?*
4. *What are the Associated Concepts related to the Sun?*
5. *What are Lagrange Points?*
6. *What is the Significance of Aditya L-1 Mission?*
7. *What are the Challenges Associated with the Aditya L-1 Mission?*
8. *What Steps can be Taken to Further Facilitate such Missions?*
9. *On One side we see India has huge poverty and on the other hand we are spending money on these space missions. Is it justified?*
10. *How India's achievements in the field of space science and technology have helped it in its socio-economic development?*

Context: Recently, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) launched Aditya L-1, its first space-based mission to study the Sun, from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.

What is Aditya-L1 Mission?

Aditya-L1 is the first Indian space mission to observe the Sun and the solar corona. The meaning of Aditya is "Sun God". It will be placed in a halo orbit around the first Lagrange point (L1) of the Sun-Earth system which allows it to look at the Sun continuously.

PSLV-C57: It is the 25th mission using PSLV-XL configuration.

What are Major Science Objectives of Mission?

❖ **To Study:** Solar upper atmospheric (chromosphere and corona) dynamics, Chromospheric and coronal heating, Physics of the partially ionized plasma, Initiation of the Coronal Mass Ejections (CME), Solar Flares.

❖ **To Observe:** In-situ particle and plasma environment providing data for the study of particle dynamics from the Sun, Physics of solar corona and its heating mechanism, Diagnostics of the coronal and coronal loops plasma: Temperature, Velocity and Density, Development, dynamics and origin of CMEs.

❖ Identify the sequence of processes that occur at multiple layers which leads to solar eruptive events.

❖ Identify magnetic field topology and magnetic field measurements in the solar corona.

❖ Identify the drivers for space weather.

What are the Associated Concepts related to the Sun?

❖ **Sun's Corona:** It is the outermost layer of the Sun. The corona's high temperature causes its particles to move at very high speeds. These speeds are so high that the particles can escape the Sun's gravity.

❖ **Space Weather:** It refers to changing environmental conditions in space. It is mainly influenced by activity on the Sun's surface like solar wind, magnetic field, etc.
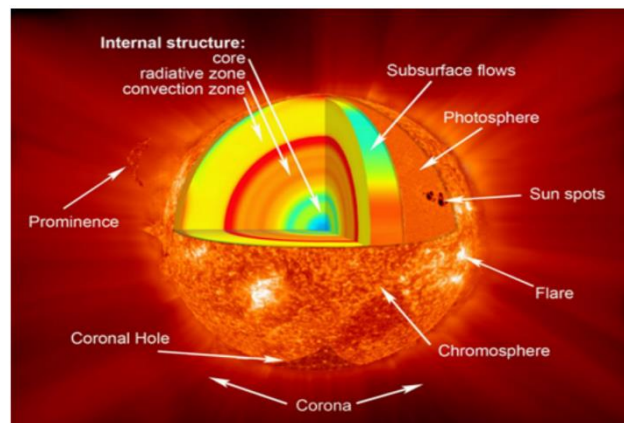
- **Chromosphere:** It is a layer of gas above a star's photosphere with temperature ranging from 6,000 to 20,000 degrees Celsius. It is the transition between the corona and the photosphere. The temperature rises as the chromosphere moves farther away from the Sun, unlike other objects of the solar system.
- **CME:** These are the large eruptions of magnetized plasma from the corona that propagates outward into interplanetary space.
- **Solar Flares:** It is an intense burst of radiation coming from the release of magnetic energy associated with sunspots. They are seen as bright areas in the sun, and they can last from minutes to hours.
- **Plasma:** It is a gas that is so hot that some or all its constituent atoms are split up into electrons and ions, which can move independently of each other. It is the **fourth state of matter.**

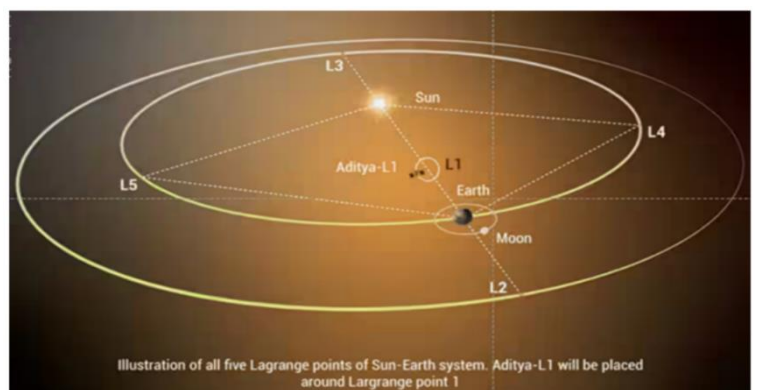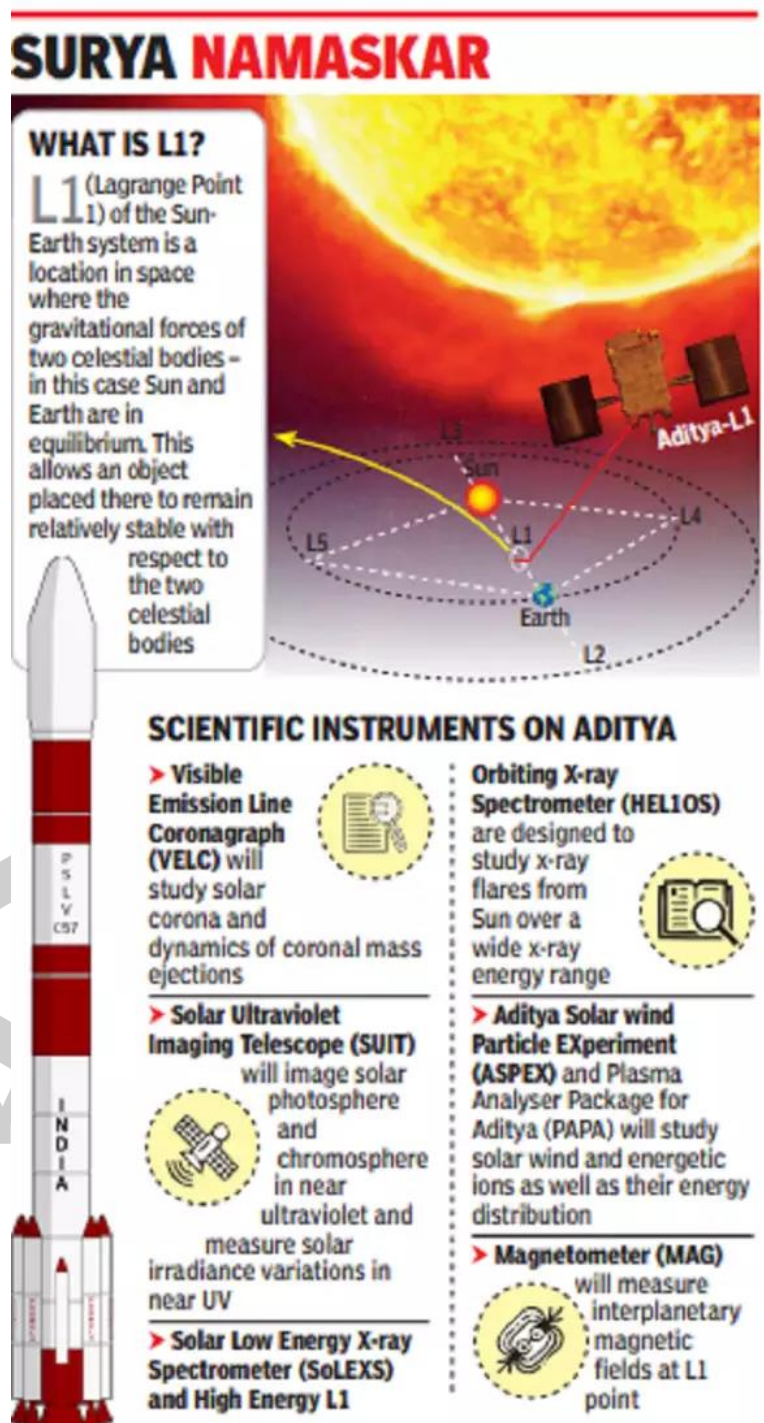## What are the Payloads Carried by the Aditya-L1 Mission?

Refer to infographic.

What are Lagrange Points?

They have been named after Italian-French mathematician Joseph-Louis Lagrange. There are five Lagrange points, L1 to L5, between any two-celestial body system. At these positions, the gravitational pull of the celestial bodies equals the centripetal force, thus the forces acting on the third body cancel each other out. The L1 point of the Earth-Sun system provides an uninterrupted view of the sun and is currently home to the Solar and Helio spheric Observatory Satellite SOHO. According to NASA, the points can be used as 'parking spots' for spacecraft in space to remain in a fixed position with minimal fuel consumption.

Why is India spending a lot of money on these missions? What is the Significance of Aditya L-1 Mission?

- It promises to provide crucial insights into the Sun's activities and their implications for the Earth. For instance, the mission aims to

comprehend how solar storms generate high-energy charged particles that can potentially damage satellites and disrupt our modern way of life.

SURYA NAMASKAR

WHAT IS L1?

L1 (Lagrange Point 1) of the Sun-Earth system is a location in space where the gravitational forces of two celestial bodies – in this case Sun and Earth are in equilibrium. This allows an object placed there to remain relatively stable with respect to the two celestial bodies

SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTS ON ADITYA

- **Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC)** will study solar corona and dynamics of coronal mass ejections
- **Orbiting X-ray Spectrometer (HEL1OS)** are designed to study x-ray flares from Sun over a wide x-ray energy range
- **Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT)** will image solar photosphere and chromosphere in near ultraviolet and measure solar irradiance variations in near UV
- **Aditya Solar wind Particle EXperiment (ASPEX)** and Plasma Analyser Package for Aditya (PAPA) will study solar wind and energetic ions as well as their energy distribution
- **Magnetometer (MAG)** will measure interplanetary magnetic fields at L1 point
- **Solar Low Energy X-ray Spectrometer (SoLEXS) and High Energy L1**

Illustration of all five Lagrange points of Sun-Earth system. Aditya-L1 will be placed around Largrange point 1

❖ Aditya-L1 holds the promise of providing us with the knowledge to predict space weather. For instance, it will monitor the near-Earth space environment and contribute to refining space weather forecasting models.

❖ Severe space weather impacts telecommunication and navigational networks, high-frequency radio communications, air traffic on polar routes, electric power grids, and oil pipelines at high latitudes of the Earth. The ambitious mission marks the country's inaugural journey into space-based solar studies.

❖ ISRO will join the ranks of NASA and the European Space Agency to station a solar observatory there. It is situated outside Earth's atmosphere and magnetosphere thus it remains unaffected by Earth.

❖ Moreover, a satellite experiences much fewer mechanical and thermal disturbances thus it is more stable. Solar missions often lead to unexpected discoveries and new insights into the Sun's behavior. **Example:** Parker Solar Probe, launched by NASA, has provided new data about the solar wind.

❖ Apart from the primary pursuit of the scientific goals, the impact of the mission extends to critical aspects of industry and society. **Example:** Space-based solar studies help in creating scientific and technical jobs, enhance safety on Earth, and increase international collaboration among different countries.

What are the Challenges Associated with the Mission?

❖ Navigating a spacecraft requires extremely precise calculations and maneuvers to ensure it remains on its desired trajectory.

❖ The Sun's gravitational pull and the spacecraft's high speed can complicate navigation. Proximity to the Sun exposes spacecraft to extreme temperatures and intense radiation.

❖ To withstand these conditions, solar missions require advanced materials and thermal protection systems to ensure the functioning of moving components. Solar missions must rely on solar panels to generate power.

❖ However, as they get closer to the Sun, the intensity of sunlight becomes too intense for conventional solar panels to generate power for the spacecraft's operation.

❖ The interference from the Sun's radio emissions with a spacecraft transmitting data over such vast distances hinders communication.

❖ Precise calibration of scientific instruments is crucial to ensure the accuracy of data collected during a solar mission, but the extreme environment makes it a challenging task.

What Steps can be Taken to Further Facilitate such Missions?

❖ Investing in the development of advanced solar observation instruments and technology including improving data collection capabilities, precision of measurements, and enhancing the longevity of instruments.

❖ India should seek international cooperation in space exploration with like-minded players like the USA, ESA etc.

❖ India needs to strive for leadership in solar science and technology to better understand the Sun and space weather phenomena.

❖ Engaging with the public and educational institutions to promote interest in space science. This can help foster the development of future scientists and engineers. Such missions require long-term planning and financial commitment, and it is important to ensure a supportive space policy environment and adequate funding.

❖ Effective utilization of the data collected from solar missions can maximize the scientific return on investment.

On one side we see India has huge poverty and on the other hand we are spending money on these space missions. Is it justified?

Already covered in Chandrayaan-3

How India's achievements in the field of space science and technology has helped it in its socio-economic development?

Already covered in Chandrayaan-3

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PRIVATIZATION OF SPACE SECTOR

> *Questionnaire:*
>
> 1. *What do you understand about the Privatization of Space?*
> 2. *What is the Current Status of the Indian Space tech Sector?*
> 3. *What are the achievements and potential of India's Space Sector?*
> 4. *Where does India stand in the global private space market?*
> 5. *Name some of the Indian startups and their working in Space tech.*
> 6. *What is the need for space privatization?*
> 7. *What are the government efforts in the Privatisation of the Space Sector?*
> 8. *What advantages will the participation of private entities bring to the Indian space industry?*
> 9. *What are the key challenges in the sector?*
> 10. *What more can be done to ensure private players' participation in space?*

Context: According to Deloitte consultancy, private investments in the Space sector increased by 77 percent between 2021 and 2022 with the Opening of 190 Indian space start-ups.

What do you understand about the Privatization of Space?

❖ The privatization of space denotes the growing participation of private companies and entities in space exploration, satellite deployment, and associated endeavours that were conventionally within the purview of government space agencies.

❖ This transition encompasses the design, launch, and management of spacecraft, satellites, and space-related technologies by private entities, frequently driven by commercial objectives.

❖ This trend attracts private knowledge, expertise, and investment to advance the field, fostering increased competition that accelerates the pace of innovation and the development of cutting-edge technology.

What is the Current Status of the Indian Space tech Sector?

According to the recently released **Arthur D Little (ADL) report,** India's space economy could potentially touch **$100 billion by 2040.** Currently, India's space industry is valued at $8 billion with a 2% share in the global space economy.

What are the achievements and potential of India's Space Sector?

❖ India has developed reliable and cost-effective satellite launch vehicles, such as the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (**PSLV**), the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (**GSLV**), and the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mk-III (**LVM3**).

❖ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has a robust Earth observation program, with satellites like **the IRS series** providing valuable data for agriculture, disaster management, urban planning, and environmental monitoring.

❖ India has developed **the Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) system,** an independent regional navigation satellite system.

❖ India has demonstrated its capability in space exploration with missions like **the Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan), and Gaganyan missions** showcasing its ability to undertake interplanetary missions.

❖ India has ambitious plans for human spaceflight with **the Gaganyaan mission, aiming to send Indian astronauts into space.**

❖ ISRO chairman S. Somanath underscored that the space sector is expected to witness a substantial increase in its economic contribution. This rise is anticipated to be driven not predominantly by the manufacturing of rockets and satellites but rathe**r by a focus on advancing applications, services, and manufacturing initiatives within India.** Instances such as **hyperlocal weather updates, map services, remote sensing, and communication applications** were highlighted, given their considerable utility and potential use cases.

❖ By **2047**, the Indian space economy is expected **to be 1.8 percent of its total GDP at USD 0.7 trillion.** Emerging trends in the space sector include mining rare metals and minerals, space real estate, and made-in-space products.

Where does India stand in the global private space market?

As per SpaceTech Analytics, India is the sixth-largest player in the industry internationally having 3.6% of the world's space-tech companies (as of 2021). The U.S. holds the leader's spot housing 56.4% of all companies in the space-tech ecosystem. Other major players include the U.K. (6.5%), Canada (5.3%), China (4.7%) and Germany (4.1%). According to the Economic Survey of India, there have been over 100 active space companies since 2012.

Name some of Indian startups and their working in Space tech?

Skyroot launched **India's first privately built rocket, Vikram-S**, into space, with plans to revolutionize satellite launches.

Agnikul Cosmos, a private Indian company set up India's first launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre.

Bellatrix Aerospace, another Indian space startup, is engaged in advanced in-space propulsion systems and rocket propulsion technologies.

What is the need for space privatization?

❖ **Enhancing Foreign direct investment:** It will also serve as a key driver for attracting more foreign direct investment for space startups and related technology companies in India.

❖ **Realizing the vision of ''Make in India'':** The vision of "Make in India" and "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" initiatives call for a remodelling of the mostly government-led space sector of the country.

❖ **Policy Framework and Goals:** The Private Sector participation will help India increase its share in the global space economy from about 2 percent to 9 percent by 2030, according to a recent **report by Deloitte India.**

❖ **Socio-Economic Impact of Space Applications:** Empowering the private sector amplifies the socio-economic impact of space applications.

❖ **Emerging Opportunities in the Global Space Sector:** Future opportunities in fascinating areas like space tourism and commercial recovery of space resources are coming up, promising an enormous scope of growth in the sector.

❖ **ISRO's Focus on Core Competencies:** Encouraging private participation could free up ISRO to focus on science, research and development, interplanetary exploration, and strategic launches.

What are the government efforts in the Privatisation of Space Sector?

❖ **Indian Space Policy, 2023:** The Indian Space Policy, 2023 has provided much-needed clarity on the role of private sector participants and removed stern barriers to their entry into the sector.

❖ **IN-SPACe:** The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) is a single-window, independent, nodal agency that functions as an autonomous agency in the Department of Space (DOS).

❖ **New Space India Limited (NSIL):** It was incorporated in 2019, as a wholly owned Government of India Undertaking / Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE), under the administrative control of the Department of Space (DOS) to commercially exploit the research and development work of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

❖ **Space Remote Sensing Policy of India – 2020:** To promote the commercialization of space technology, the "Space Remote Sensing Policy – 2020" (Space RS Policy – 2020) aims to motivate different stakeholders in the nation to actively participate in space-based remote sensing operations.

❖ **Government-owned, company-operated (GOCO) system:** The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has thrown open the doors for its RF (radio frequency) systems and electromagnetic actuator manufacturing to private players through a government-owned, company-operated (GOCO) system. A GOCO facility is a model used by the federal government in which the government pays a privately owned company to operate a facility that the government owns.

What advantages will the participation of private entities bring to the Indian space industry?

- ❖ **Accelerated Innovation and Technology Development:** Private players are expected to bring fresh perspectives, innovation, and a competitive spirit to the space sector, leading to the development of cutting-edge technologies and solutions.

- ❖ **Enhanced Access to Space Technologies:** Increased private participation will make space technologies more accessible to a wider range of users, including government agencies, industries, and startups. This will drive the adoption of space-based solutions across various sectors.

- ❖ **Transfer Of Technology:** Non-disclosure agreements and MOUs for transfer of technologies have been signed between ISRO centers and several private sector companies.
  - ➢ To capture the small satellite launching market ISRO has developed a Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) with a view to transfer the technology to the industry.

- ❖ **Investment in Space Sector:** Ranking 7th globally in terms of funding, the Indian space startup sector has seen significant funding growth, from Rs 28 million in 2020 to Rs 112 million in 2022, with Rs 62 million invested in the first half of the current year. This surge can be attributed to increased demand for space-based solutions, cost-effective satellite manufacturing, reduced launch costs, and advancements in supporting technologies like AI and 3D printing.

- ❖ **Reduce exploration Cost:** Companies like SpaceX, Blue Origin, Virgin Galactic, and Arianespace have revolutionized the space sector by reducing costs and turnaround time, with innovation and advanced technology.

- ❖ **Tourism:** Blue Origin, a private spaceflight company founded by Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, is developing a reusable rocket system that could take passengers on trips beyond Earth's atmosphere.

- ❖ **Natural Resources:** In 2017, Luxembourg became the first European country to establish a legal framework securing private rights over resources mined in space, and similar steps have been taken at the domestic level in Japan and the United Arab Emirates.

What are the key challenges in privatization of space?

- ❖ **Access to capital:** In terms of lack of financing, private capital is still not flowing freely and blindly through to space-based enterprises like it is with internet-, digital media- and hardware-related technology businesses. **Example:** In 2015, approximately $129 billion in VC funding was deployed globally across 7,872 deals. Of this total, just over $2 billion was deployed to space-based companies across 44 deals.

- ❖ **Access to insurance:** There also is a lack of adequate and secured insurance, which is because of the inability of insurers to see and test the reliability of space-based technologies in the recent past.

- ❖ **Ability to create self-sustaining markets:** An inability to forge self-sustaining commercial markets in the past puts into question the commercial viability of space-based enterprises. For Instance, two decades ago, the commercial satellite business was expected to achieve independence within a few years of being established, but government involvement is still needed to this day to see projects to the execution phase.

- ❖ **Regulation:** Though it is a profitable investment, regulation of private sector participation is not easy. The time taken for regulatory clearances and unstable political institutions can cause delays and hurdles in the decision-making of investors.

- ❖ **Spacecraft emissions:** The participation of the private sector in the aerospace industry has led to an enormous increase in the number of launches that will likely continue to grow in spacecraft emissions. For Instance, Atmospheric scientists, Martin Ross and Darin Toohey (2019), explained that particulate emissions from rockets may have a significant impact on the global climate.

- ❖ **Growing number of collisions and Orbital debris:** NASA researchers, Matney, Vavrin, and Manis (2017), suggest that satellite constellations and the increase of launches due to private sector participation are leading to a growing number of collisions, and consequently, orbital debris.

What more can be done to ensure private players' participation in space?

- ❖ **Enable and promote Non-Governmental Entities (NGE):** To carry out independent space activities Provide a level playing field and favourable regulatory environment for players within the Indian private sector.

- ❖ **Open up ISRO Infrastructure and Facilities:** The reform also aims to make national space infrastructure developed over the years, available for use by the private industry through a business-friendly mechanism.
  - ➢ Facilities pertaining to testing, tracking and telemetry, launch-pads, and laboratories, created by ISRO, would also enable the private space industry to climb the value chain.

❖ **Demand-driven approach for the development of Space Assets:** Optimizing the utilization of space assets such as satellites and launch capacity by determining accountability amongst various stakeholders.

➢ Creation of new assets to be made contingent on confirmation of demand from user agencies/ entities.

❖ **Upskilling the human power:** DoS and the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE), under an MoU, conduct ISRO Technical Training Programme (ITTP) at various National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs) across the country to upskill/reskill 4000 Technicians / Technical / Scientific Assistants of ISRO in four to five years in phased manner to give a boost to private sector participation in space sector.

GENERIC MEDICINE

Questionnaire:

1. What defines a generic medicine, and how does it differ from branded drugs?
2. What are the advantages or benefits associated with the usage of generic drugs?
3. Explain the regulatory mechanisms in place for generic drugs within the Indian pharmaceutical industry.
4. What recent actions has the government taken regarding the revision of GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices) for pharmaceuticals, and what impact does this hold?
5. What are some of the major challenges faced by generic drugs in India?
6. What are the steps taken for the promotion of generic drugs in India?
7. Green flags for generic drugs would be detrimental to innovation in the field of Medicine. Do you agree?

Context: Recently, the Union government directed **pharmaceutical companies** to implement the **revised Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP).**

What defines a generic medicine, and how does it differ from branded drugs?

A generic drug is a pharmaceutical product that contains the **same active ingredient(s),** in the same dosage form and strength, and has the **same therapeutic effect** as a reference product but is marketed under a different name.

Generic drugs vs. Branded drugs:

Feature	Branded Drugs	Generic Drugs
Active Ingredient	Same active ingredient as the generic drug	Same active ingredient as the brand-name drug
Effectiveness	Must undergo rigorous clinical trials to prove effectiveness	Must demonstrate bioequivalence to the brand-name drug
Cost	More expensive than generic drugs	Less expensive than brand-name drugs
Patent Protection	Protected by patents for 20 years	Not protected by patents
Marketing	Heavily marketed by pharmaceutical companies	Not as heavily marketed as brand-name drugs
Availability	Available in limited quantities	Widely available

What are the advantages or benefits associated with the usage of generic drugs?

❖ **Cost-effectiveness:** Generic drugs are generally more affordable than brand-name drugs, making healthcare more accessible and reducing expenses for patients and healthcare systems.

- ❖ **Increased Access:** Availability of generic drugs widens access to essential medications, especially for poor populations.
- ❖ **Equivalent Quality and Efficacy:** Generic drugs undergo stringent regulatory standards to ensure they are bioequivalent to brand-name drugs, providing comparable quality and efficacy.
- ❖ **Competition and Innovation:** Increased competition among generic drug manufacturers can drive innovation and reduce prices for consumers.

Explain the regulatory mechanisms in place for generic drugs within the Indian pharmaceutical industry.

- ❖ The regulatory process for generic drugs in India is governed by **the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, and Rules, 1945.**
- ❖ **The Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO):** The CDSCO is the national regulatory authority for drugs and cosmetics in India. The CDSCO is responsible for reviewing and approving generic drug applications, conducting inspections of manufacturing facilities, etc.
- ❖ **The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA):** The NPPA is responsible for regulating the prices of drugs in India.

What recent actions has the government taken regarding the revision of GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices) for pharmaceuticals, and what impact does this hold?

The Government of India directed **pharmaceutical companies** to implement the **revised Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP).** The revised GMP aims to ensure that the quality and safety of drugs produced in India are **consistent with global norms.**

The revised GMP guidelines:
- ❖ **Deadlines:** The government has announced **different deadlines** for different categories of companies to implement the revised GMP:
- ❖ **Companies with a turnover of Rs 250 crore** and more will have to implement the revised GMP within six months.
- ❖ **Medium and small-scale enterprises** with a turnover of less than Rs 250 crore will have to implement it within a year.

Need for the revised GMP:
- ❖ **Safety Concerns:** Incidents of contamination in Indian-manufactured drugs causing fatalities raise significant safety concerns.
- ❖ **Widespread Non-compliance:** Most drug manufacturing units (8,500 out of 10,500) don't meet global standards, indicating a lack of adherence to quality practices.
- ❖ **Critical Deficiencies Found:** Inspections reveal serious gaps like untested raw materials, inadequate quality reviews, infrastructure issues, and poor documentation.
- ❖ **Global Reputation Impact:** These incidents damage India's pharmaceutical industry reputation globally.

Significance of the move:
- ❖ The revised GMP will bring the Indian industry on **par with global standards.**
- ❖ This will **improve the quality of medicines** available in India as well as sold in global markets.

What are some of the major challenges for the adoption of generic drugs in India?

- ❖ **Perception and Awareness:** Lack of understanding or misconceptions about generic drugs among patients and healthcare professionals can hinder their acceptance and usage.
- ❖ **Brand Loyalty:** Strong loyalty to specific brand-name drugs may deter patients from switching to cost-effective generic alternatives.
- ❖ **Trust and Misinformation:** Instances of substandard or counterfeit generic drugs and misinformation can erode trust in their quality and effectiveness.
- ❖ **Prescription Practices:** Healthcare professionals' prescribing patterns and potential incentives from pharmaceutical companies may influence the preference for brand-name drugs over generics.

- ❖ **Regulatory Compliance:** Ensuring consistent adherence to quality standards across all generic drug manufacturers poses a challenge, requiring stringent monitoring and enforcement.
- ❖ **Price Differentials:** Despite being more affordable, substantial price differences between some generic and brand-name drugs can still pose financial barriers for certain patients.
- ❖ **Intellectual Property Concerns:** Patent-related issues and complex litigation processes can delay the entry of generic versions.

What are the steps taken for the promotion of generic drugs in India?

- ❖ **Establishment of PMBJKs:** Over 9,500 dedicated outlets called Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs) provide quality generic medicines at significantly reduced prices (50-90% lower than branded medicines).
- ❖ **Mobile Application 'Janaushadhi Sugam':** A mobile app offers information on Kendra locations, helps locate and compare generic vs. branded medicine prices.
- ❖ **Regulatory Directives:** Government regulations mandate physicians to prescribe drugs using generic names, and Central Government hospitals and CGHS doctors are directed to prescribe generic medicines only.
- ❖ **NHM Free Drug Initiative:** The National Health Mission supports the provision of essential generic drugs free of cost in public health facilities.
- ❖ **Quality Assurance:** PMBJKs sell only quality generic medicines procured from WHO-GMP-certified suppliers. Every batch undergoes testing at NABL-accredited laboratories.
- ❖ **Regulatory Measures by Health Ministry and CDSCO:** Various amendments in the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules ensure efficacy and proper naming in drug applications. National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) inclusion helps in pricing control by NPPA under DPCO, 2013.
- ❖ **Bioequivalence Studies:** Amendments in the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules require applicants to submit bioequivalence study results for specific drugs to ensure their effectiveness.
- ❖ **Proper Naming and Branding:** Amendments mandate applications for drug licenses to use proper/generic names, and if marketed under a brand name, applicants must ensure uniqueness and clarity to avoid confusion.
- ❖ **Pricing Regulation:** NPPA fixes ceiling prices for scheduled medicines under DPCO, 2013, with the inclusion of new drugs and provisions for public interest-based pricing in extraordinary circumstances.

Green flags for generic drugs would be detrimental to innovation in the field of Medicine. Do you agree?

- ❖ Widespread use of generic drugs poses potential risks to the financial incentives for pharmaceutical companies to engage in expensive research and development of novel medications. Additionally, the argument may highlight the prospect of diminished profits, which could, in turn, hinder companies' capacity to allocate funds for future research initiatives.
- ❖ Generic drugs play a vital role in enhancing the availability of affordable medications, especially following the expiration of patent protections for brand-name drugs. Given their cost-effectiveness, generic drugs contribute to making essential medications more accessible to a broader segment of the population. This heightened accessibility is viewed as a positive and beneficial outcome.
- ❖ Recently GOI gave the green flag to launch generic drugs to treat four rare diseases.

Recently doctors were asked to prescribe medicines in generic form, but it was not taken well. What were the reasons associated with it and do you think there should be prescription in generic terms?

- ❖ NMC imposed a directive mandating doctors to prescribe generic drugs instead of branded equivalents. In case of non-compliance, they can be penalized.
- ❖ For breaches, doctors could also receive warnings and mandatory participation in workshops and training sessions. Persistent violations of the directive could further lead to the suspension of their licenses, as per an official notification by the NMC.

❖ However, apprehensions have arisen regarding the efficacy and quality of these generic drugs. Critics who are majorly medical professionals and academicians in medical education institutions argue that their effectiveness and reliability may be compromised due to a lack of standardized testing and approval procedures. They further contend that branded drugs offer greater assurance of quality.

❖ The directive appears to shift decision-making power from medical practitioners to pharmacists or individuals in pharmacy settings. This shift may not align with the patients' best interests, as it places a crucial treatment decision in the hands of non-medical personnel.

❖ Generally known, despite concerns about generic medications, their affordability remains a significant advantage. Their lower prices result from the absence of patent protection and marketing expenses, making healthcare more accessible to the masses.

❖ This shift in prescription practices could hold particular significance for chronic patients burdened by medical costs, the government holds.

❖ The mandate aims to make healthcare more affordable and grant greater access to essential medications for economically disadvantaged populations.

❖ There should be a more flexible stance that encourages the prescription of generic drugs while allowing medical judgment to prevail in cases where brand-specific medications are medically justified. We urge the Ministry/Department to consider our concerns and resentments with an open mind.

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NOBEL PRIZE 2023

Questionnaire

1. *What is the Nobel Prize?*
2. *Can the Nobel Prize be given posthumously?*
3. *Why did Mahatma Gandhi not receive the Nobel Peace Prize?*
4. *What are the Controversies Surrounding Nobel Prizes?*
5. *Who are the Winners of the Nobel Prize in Physics for 2023?*
6. *What is the Significance of the research that was awarded with the Nobel Prize in Physics?*
7. *Who are the Winners of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for 2023?*
8. *What are Quantum Dots?*
9. *Who won the Nobel Prize in Medical Science for 2023?*
10. *What is mRNA Technology?*
11. *Who won the Nobel Prize in Economics for 2023?*
12. *What is the unique feature of the Nobel Prize in Economics?*
13. *Who won the Nobel Prize in Literature for 2023?*
14. *Who won the Nobel Prize in Peace for 2023?*
15. *What is the unique feature about the Nobel Peace prize?*
16. *How many Indians have won the Nobel prize till date?*
17. *Why is the Nobel prize not awarded to Mathematics?*
18. *According to you which Indian deserved but missed winning the Nobel prize?*

Context: The **Nobel Prizes for the year 2023** were announced in October.

What is the Nobel Prize?

❖ **About:** The Nobel Prizes are five different prizes that are **awarded to individuals** who, during the preceding year, have contributed to the **greatest benefit to humankind**. It is based on Alfred Nobel's will of 1895.

- ❖ **Streams:** Based on **Alfred Nobel's will**, prizes are awarded in the fields of **Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature Economic Sciences, and Peace**.
- ❖ **Economics Prize:** In 1968, Sveriges Riksbank funded the setting up of the Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel, which was to be administered by the Nobel Foundation.
- ❖ **Posthumous:** Nobel Prizes are not awarded posthumously, but if a **person is awarded a prize and dies before receiving it**, the prize is presented.

Why did Mahatma Gandhi not receive the Nobel Peace Prize?

- ❖ Mahatma Gandhi was nominated for the prize five times but still could not win the award. It is strongly believed that the British **government influenced the committee** to prevent Mahatma Gandhi from being awarded.

What are the Controversies Surrounding Nobel Prizes?

- ❖ **Political Bias**: Nobel prizes, especially in the fields of literature and peace are given based on political bias. People who suit the western agenda receive the prize.
- ❖ **Eurocentrism:** Nobel prizes are criticized for being too Eurocentric and not awarding to worthy people beyond Europe.
- ❖ **Criteria:** Criteria like the receiver must be alive and the prize cannot be shared between more than three individuals to prevent deserving candidates from being awarded.

Nobel Prizes, 2023:

- ❖ **Nobel Prize in Physics for 2023:**
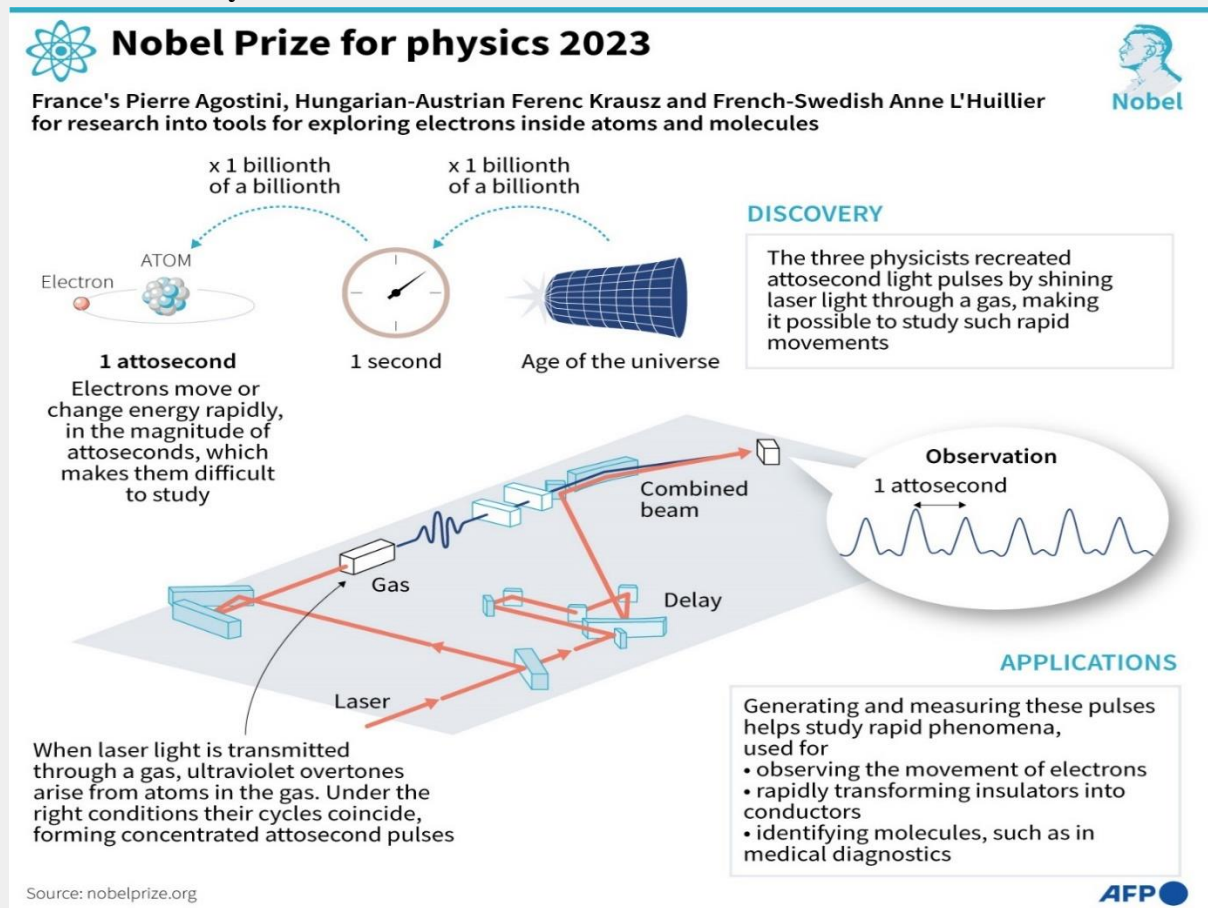
- ❖ **Applications of Research:** Allows studying **molecular-level changes in blood**, to identify diseases. Understanding movement of **electrons and transmission of energy** can also help in creating more efficient electronic gadgets.
- ❖ **The Nobel Prize in Literature 2023:** Jon Fosse "for his innovative plays and prose which give voice to the unsayable".
- ❖ **The Nobel Peace Prize 2023**: Narges Mohammadi "for her fight against the oppression of women in Iran and her fight to promote human rights and freedom for all".

❖ **Nobel Prize in Chemistry for 2023:**

Nobel prize for chemistry 2023

Alexei Ekimov, Louis Brus and Moungi Bawendi were awarded the Nobel prize for chemistry for the discovery and synthesis of quantum dots
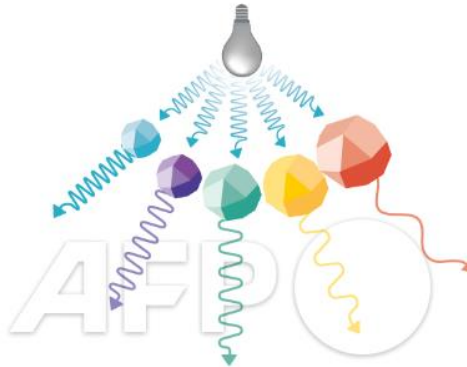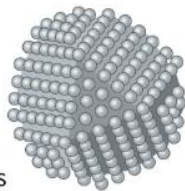
Quantum dots are tiny crystals, often consisting of just a few thousand atoms, made from semiconductor materials

The size ratio of a quantum dot to a football is about the same as a football to the Earth

Because their size is reduced to the **nanometre scale**, they exhibit **quantum effects** that determine their characteristics

By manipulating their size, scientists can precisely control their properties and make them emit light of specific colours when they are excited by light

SOME APPLICATIONS
• TV screens / illumination sources
• Biomedical imaging
• Producing photons for quantum communication
• Making better and cheaper solar cells

AFP ● Source: nobelprize.org

❖ **Nobel Prize in Medical Science for 2023:**

Nobel prize for medicine 2023

Hungarian Katalin Kariko and American Drew Weissman, from the University of Pennsylvania, whose research paved the way for the therapeutic use of mRNA
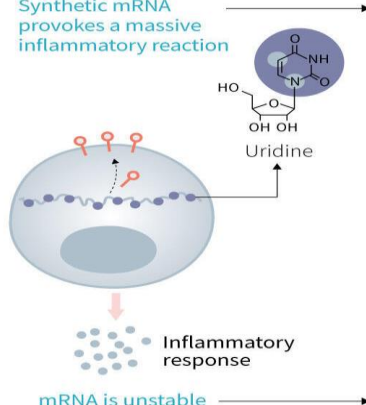
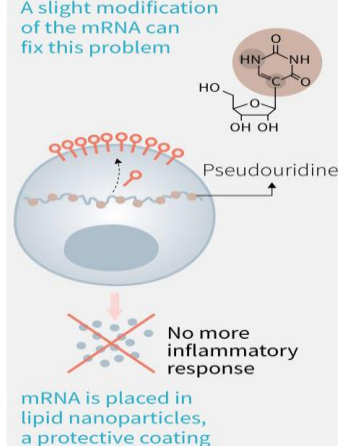Messenger RNA (mRNA) Transmits instructions to cells to produce proteins — Protein, mRNA, Cell
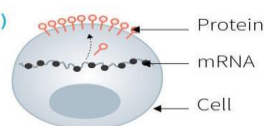
OBSTACLES
Synthetic mRNA provokes a massive inflammatory reaction
Uridine
Inflammatory response
mRNA is unstable

DISCOVERIES
A slight modification of the mRNA can fix this problem
Pseudouridine
No more inflammatory response
mRNA is placed in lipid nanoparticles, a protective coating

APPLICATIONS
A new type of vaccine, with messenger RNA
Teaches the body to produce antigens, to which the immune system learns to react
Until now, vaccine immunity functioned by injecting the body with a weakened form or part of the virus.
Inactivated or live-attenuated virus / Protein-based vaccine / Viral vector
Other applications are being explored, such as fighting against certain cancers and genetic diseases.

Source: nobelprize.org   AFP ●

❖ **Nobel Prize in Economics for 2023:** Claudia Goldin was the award winner. She was awarded for revealing the U-shaped curve in female labour force participation over a 200-year period, showing a decline during the transition from agrarian to industrial society in the 19th century and an increase with the growth of the service sector in the 20th century.

How many Indians have won the Nobel prize till date?

The following Indians have won the Nobel Prize:

1. Rabindranath Tagore (Literature, 1913)
2. C.V. Raman (Physics, 1930)
3. Hargobind Khorana (Physiology or Medicine, 1968)
4. Mother Teresa (Peace, 1979)
5. Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar (Physics, 1983)
6. Amartya Sen (Economic Sciences, 1998)
7. Venkatraman Ramakrishnan (Chemistry, 2009)
8. Kailash Satyarthi (Peace, 2014)
9. Abhijit Banerjee (Economic Sciences, 2019

Why is the Nobel prize not awarded to Mathematics?

The reason often cited for Alfred Nobel not including a Nobel Prize for Mathematics is not explicitly documented and unclear. Some discussed possibilities are:

Personal History: Nobel had a complex relationship with a Swedish mathematician, Gösta Mittag-Leffler. Some suggest that Nobel may have excluded mathematics due to personal issues or disagreements with Mittag-Leffler.

Rivalry: Nobel had a friendship and intellectual rivalry with the French mathematician Henri Poincaré. Some theories propose that this rivalry influenced Nobel's decision to omit mathematics.

According to you which Indian deserved but missed winning the Nobel prize?

Determining who "deserved" a Nobel Prize is subjective, and it's important to note that Nobel Prizes are awarded based on the judgment of the Nobel Committees. However, some individuals have made significant contributions and were considered contenders. One example is Mahatma Gandhi, who is often mentioned as a notable figure who missed the Nobel Peace Prize, despite his pivotal role in India's independence through nonviolent means.

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AI AND FUTURE

Questionnaire

1. *What is the Global AI Summit?*
2. *What is AI?*
3. *What are the applications of AI?*
4. *What are the Advantages of AI?*
5. *What are the Drawbacks of AI?*
6. *How Can AI Lead to Job Loss?*
7. *How Can AI Pose a Threat to Human existence?*
8. *What are the Ethical Concerns Associated with AI?*
9. *What is the Potential for AI in the future?*
10. *What has India done to regulate AI?*
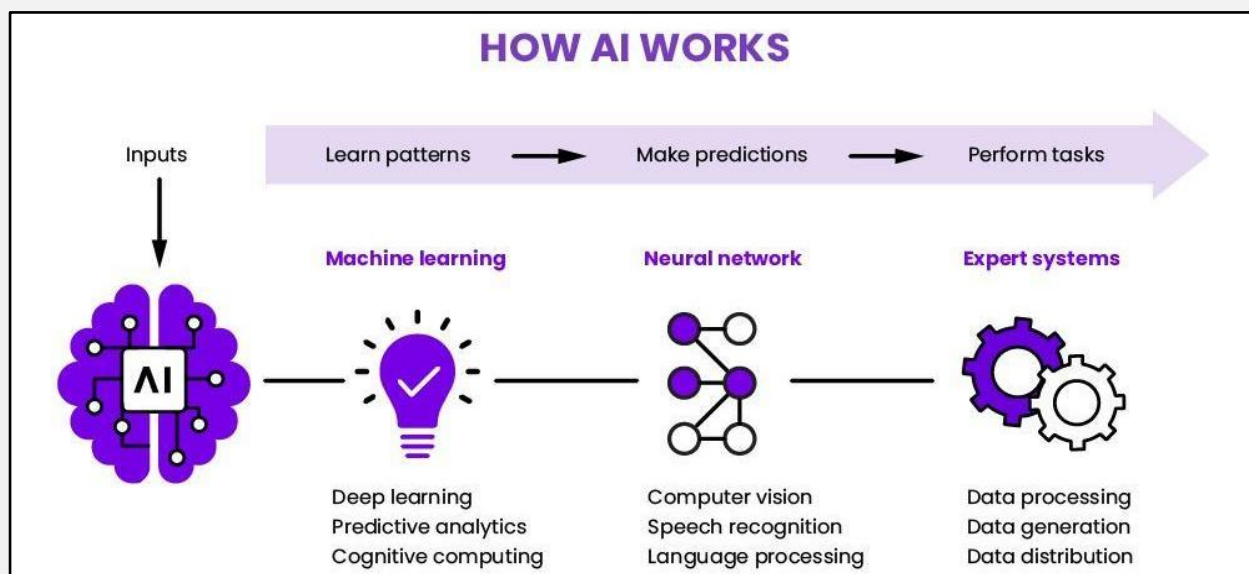11. What do you understand about the recent issue of Deep fake?

Context: The UK recently hosted a **global AI summit** on November 1 and 2 in London.

What is the Global AI Summit?

❖ **Objective:** To find some level of international coordination regarding some principles on the ethical and responsible development of AI models.

❖ **Participants:** The summit will host representatives from government as well as private companies.

❖ **Area of Focus:** The summit will be focusing on the "frontier AI" models, which are the advanced large language models.

❖ **Issues to be Addressed:** The summit seeks to address two key categories of risk when it comes to AI: **misuse and loss of control**.

   ➢ **Misuse** means AI **helping a bad actor** in committing actions that can affect safety and security of the world.

   ➢ **Loss of control** pertains to the situation when the **AI that humans create could be turned against them**.

❖ **Significance of the Summit:** The summit is a significant achievement for bringing together the **right kind of people** associated with AI to discuss frontier challenges.

   ➢ The summit will not only look at addressing the **safety, ethics, and responsible development** of AI, but also calling for **collaboration at a global level**.

Artificial Intelligence:

Artificial Intelligence is a segment of **Computer Science** that has the potential to perform tasks commonly associated with **human cognitive functions**. It allows computers to learn and solve problems like humans.

These functions include **interpreting speech, playing games, identifying patterns, generating arts** etc.

HOW AI WORKS

Inputs → Learn patterns → Make predictions → Perform tasks

Machine learning	Neural network	Expert systems
Deep learning	Computer vision	Data processing
Predictive analytics	Speech recognition	Data generation
Cognitive computing	Language processing	Data distribution

Applications of AI:

❖ **Healthcare:** AI can help provide **personalized medicine** and X-ray readings. It can analyze reports in a better way and make accurate diagnoses. Ex: Cancer diagnosis.

❖ **Robotics:** AI can help robots **learn the processes** and perform the tasks with complete autonomy, without any human intervention. Ex: Bomb Disposal.

❖ **Transport:** Driverless vehicles have been developed as a part of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Ex: Self-driving taxis.

❖ **Banking and finance:** AI bots, **digital payment advisers and biometric fraud detection** are some of the applications of AI in banking and finance.

❖ **Security:** AI **facial recognition** tools may be used for surveillance and security purposes to identify criminals. Ex: Terrorist identification.

- ❖ **Agriculture:** AI can analyze the **crop health** by looking at images of crops and suggesting **appropriate amounts** of fertilizers and water. It can also predict yields. Ex: Output analysis.
- ❖ **Education:** AI can be used to develop **educational content**, which could convey knowledge in an effective way. Ex: Self-learning software.

What are the Advantages of AI?

- ❖ **Reduces Human Error:** Humans, assisted by AI, can **commit fewer mistakes** as the system is free from issues that plague human abilities such as fatigue.
- ❖ **Reduce Risks:** AI assisted systems can be programmed to **perform risky jobs** that can potentially harm human lives.
- ❖ **Full-time Availability:** Unlike humans, AI systems can **function without break**. They can assist customer queries even in the middle of the night.
- ❖ **Efficient use of Workforce:** AI can **perform mechanical tasks** that do not require much skill, such as sending acknowledgement mails, verifying documents etc.
- ❖ **Speedy Decisions:** AI systems can make **decisions faster than humans**. These decisions are not just fast but also accurate. Ex: Actions to be taken in case there is a radiation leak.
- ❖ **Making Life Easy:** AI powered assistance devices can act as **personal assistants**, making it easy for the user to carry out day to day tasks. Ex: Alexa, Siri etc.

What are the Drawbacks of AI?

- ❖ **Security Threats:** AI can be used to **assist criminals** in launching **cyber-attacks** or help terrorists in planning chemical attacks. Ex: Developing Virus programme.
- ❖ **Environmental Concerns:** To operate AI, it needs a **lot of electricity**. Going by the numbers, excessive use of AI can lead to increase in global warming as well as carbon footprint. Ex: Running supercomputers require high amounts of power.
- ❖ **Data Privacy:** AI systems need access to **large amounts of data sets** to train effectively. This raises concerns about data privacy and potential misuse of the same.
- ❖ **Data Poisoning:** It refers to **inaccurate or biased outcomes** based on input data manipulation. Criminals can insert malicious data into an AI system's training to compromise its performance. Ex: Gender bias.
- ❖ **High Cost of Operation: Designing and maintaining** AI systems need huge costs. In addition, **regular updates** have to be made.

How Can AI Lead to Job Losses?

- ❖ AI has the potential to **replace the equivalent of 300 million full-time jobs** across the globe in the near future.
- ❖ This is mainly in the sectors which involve **mechanical repetitions**.

How Can AI Pose a Threat to Human existence?

- ❖ AI can be designed to go **beyond safe levels** and assist humans in developing methods that can eliminate the whole world.
- ❖ methods of human elimination include **nuclear war, chemical war, biological war, cyber war etc.**

What are the Ethical Concerns Associated with AI?

- ❖ **Violation of Privacy:** Surveillance practices for **data gathering affects privacy** of individuals. Ex: Data on an individual's health.
- ❖ **Non-transparent Functioning:** There is no clarity regarding how a particular AI programme functions. The **basis of evaluation** is also not known.
- ❖ **Partiality:** AI systems are **not always neutral**. They are biased and may function based on the biased thinking of its programmer. Ex: Political affiliation of the programmer.
- ❖ **Gender Bias:** AI is known to **show gender bias** while representing male and female. This is due to the stereotypical representations in our society. Ex: All women are bad drivers.
- ❖ **Accountability:** AI systems do not have an **accountability mechanism** to take responsibility for its actions, which could have a larger impact on society. Ex: Deepfakes.

What is the Potential for AI in the future?

- ❖ **Prediction and Forecasting:** AI could be used for **making predictions** based on available data. It will help individuals plan their future.
- ❖ **Mimic Human Actions:** AI chatbots are being developed that can actually use **websites and software applications** as a human does.
- ❖ **Artificial General Intelligence (AGI):** The future of AI is AGI, which is an AI machine that can **perform any task** the human brain can do.
- ❖ **Manipulative AI:** As AI starts becoming smarter and **starts to mimic humans**, it will no longer be bound by the programmer's barrier. It can even lie, if prompted by the user.

What has India done to regulate AI?

- ❖ **India's Policy**: India's policy on **AI regulation has oscillated** between no regulation and regulation based on user harm.
- ❖ **Reason for Policy**: With minimal regulation, India hopes to create an **innovation-friendly environment** that could potentially propel it to global leadership.
- ❖ **Regulation Efforts:** In terms of regulation, India's **regulatory landscape for AI is fragmented**, with various ministries and committees addressing different aspects.
  - ➢ Currently, India is trying to bring in an AI regulation law by modeling it on existing global laws. However, **India's situation is different** from other countries.

What do you understand about the recent issue of Deep fake?

Deep Fakes can manipulate **facial expressions, voice, and body movements with remarkable realism.** The technology can be misused for **various malicious purposes, such as creating fake news, spreading disinformation, or generating misleading** content that could harm an individual's reputation. The widespread use of deepfakes has the potential to erode trust in digital media, making it challenging to distinguish between authentic and manipulated content. For example: A controversial video circulating online shows actress **Rashmika Mandanna** entering an elevator, but it's actually a 'deep fake.' Deep Fakes are a compilation of artificial images and audio put together with machine-learning algorithms to spread misinformation and replace a real person's appearance, voice, or both with similar artificial likenesses and voices.

Artificial Intelligence is indeed the **future of the world,** but its action must align with human values and legal framework. In addition, **ethical use of AI** must be prioritized.

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Questionnaire

1. *What is the recently signed Gujarat Declaration on traditional medicine?*
2. *What do you mean by traditional medicine?*
3. *What are some of the well-known traditional medicine systems in India?*
4. *What are the advantages of traditional medicine?*
5. *What is the current market status of traditional medicine in India?*
6. *What steps have been taken so far by the government to promote traditional medicine?*
7. *What challenges do you foresee in integrating traditional medicine into the formal healthcare infrastructure?*
8. *Can you provide some steps to increase the adoption of traditional medicine in India?*
9. *Why did it take so long for our government to understand the utility of traditional medicines?*
10. *Do you think ayurvedic medical practitioners must be allowed to do allopathic practice?*
11. *Can you provide international examples of successful integration of traditional medicine practices into mainstream healthcare systems?*
12. *Do you think traditional medicines should be given more prominence in national healthcare policies? Why or why not?*

Context: The WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit 2023 in Gujarat, India, concluded with the "Gujarat Declaration", a document that reaffirms the global commitments to indigenous knowledge, biodiversity, and traditional, complementary, and integrative medicine (TCIM).

What is the recently signed Gujarat Declaration on traditional medicine?

The recently signed Gujarat Declaration on traditional medicine reaffirms global commitments to indigenous knowledge, biodiversity, and traditional, complementary, and integrative medicine (TCIM).

It emphasizes collaboration, research, and regulation of indigenous knowledge, biodiversity, and TCIM practices, along with scaling up evidence based TCIM interventions and approaches.

What do you mean by traditional medicine?

Traditional medicine, as defined by the **World Health Organization (WHO),** refers to the **knowledge, skills, and practices** that **various cultures** have developed over time to maintain health, prevent, diagnose, and **treat physical and mental illnesses.** It encompasses a wide **range of ancient and modern practices** used in different regions around the world.

What are some of the well-known traditional medicine systems in India?

❖ **Ayurveda:** Ayurveda is an ancient Indian system of medicine that focuses on balancing the body's energies (doshas) to promote health and prevent diseases. It includes herbal medicines, diet, lifestyle modifications, and therapies like massage and Panchakarma.

❖ **Yoga:** Yoga is a holistic practice that originated in ancient India and includes physical postures, breathing exercises, meditation, and ethical principles. It is not only a physical exercise but also a mental and spiritual practice to enhance overall well-being.

❖ **Siddha:** The Siddha system of medicine is practiced predominantly in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It is an ancient medical system that originated in Tamil Nadu and is based on the concept of maintaining a balance between the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, and ether) in the body.

❖ **Sowa-Rigpa (Tibetan Medicine):** Sowa-Rigpa is a traditional medical system practiced mainly in the Himalayan regions such as Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Darjeeling, Lahaul & Spiti, and Leh-Ladakh. It is influenced by both Ayurveda and traditional Tibetan medicine.

❖ **Homeopathy:** While not originally part of Indian tradition, homeopathy has become an integral part of India's traditional medicine practices over the years. Homoeopathy is based on the principle of "like cures like" and uses highly diluted substances to stimulate the body's healing response.

What are the advantages of traditional medicine?

❖ **Cultural Wisdom:** Traditional medicine is deeply intertwined with cultural practices, beliefs, and experiences, making it a valuable repository of diverse healthcare insights.

❖ **Holistic Approach:** Unlike some modern medical systems that focus solely on specific symptoms or diseases, traditional medicine emphasizes the interconnectedness of the body, mind, and spirit.

❖ **Natural Remedies:** Traditional medicine often relies on natural ingredients such as herbs, plants, and minerals, which are gentler on the body and may have fewer side effects compared to synthetic drugs.

❖ **Preventive Care:** Traditional medicine places great importance on prevention rather than just treatment.

❖ **Accessible and Affordable:** Traditional medicine often uses locally available resources, making it more accessible and affordable, particularly in rural or underserved areas.

❖ **Global Interest:** Traditional medicine has gained recognition on the global stage, leading to research and scientific validation of its effectiveness.

What is the current market status of traditional medicine in India?

❖ The market for medicinal plants in India is expected to increase at a CAGR of 38.5 percent to Rs. 14 billion (US$ 188.6 million) by 2030.

❖ Overall, AYUSH exports have reached **$18 billion** from $3 billion before 2014. **AYUSH stands for** Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy.

❖ About **40,000 MSMEs** are active in the AYUSH sector.

What steps have been taken so far by the government to promote traditional medicine?

- ❖ **Ministry of AYUSH:** The Ministry of AYUSH was established in 2014 with a vision of reviving the profound knowledge of our ancient systems of medicine.
- ❖ **National AYUSH Mission (NAM):** Government of India is implementing the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of NAM in the country through State and UTs for promotion and development of AYUSH systems.
- ❖ **Grant-in-aid** is being provided to **State Governments** for development and promotion of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy.
- ❖ NAM also supports **cultivation of medical plants,** production of quality and standardized ingredients for supply of AYUSH, integration of medicinal plants in farming systems and increasing **export of value-added items** of medicinal plants.
- ❖ **AYUSH Gram:** Under the concept of AYUSH Gram, **AYUSH based lifestyles** are promoted through behavioural change communication, training of village health workers towards identification and use of local medicinal herbs and provision of AYUSH health services.
- ❖ **Global partnerships:** India has signed **MOUs with 23 countries** for cooperation in the field of Traditional Medicine and Homoeopathy in areas such as research, education, training, and more.
  - ➢ **33 AYUSH Information Cells** have been set up in 31 countries to disseminate authentic information about AYUSH systems.

What challenges do you foresee in integrating traditional medicine into the formal healthcare infrastructure?

- ❖ **Trust-Deficit:** There is a major trust-deficit in the soundness of Ayurvedic theories and the fruitfulness of its practices. Ayurveda is not the medical system of first choice for many people.
- ❖ **Lack of Scientific Validation:** Ayurveda has failed to keep pace with the intellectual and scientific advances of the times. So, it has diminished evidence-based quality.
- ❖ **Sub-Standard Courses:** Ayurvedic practitioners' graduation courses are often substandard and the post-graduate courses offered at most of their institutes are of extremely poor quality.
- ❖ **Lack of Practice:** While MBBS graduates and postgraduates from public hospitals must mandatorily serve a specified bond period in rural areas, graduates and postgraduates from AYUSH public hospitals are not subjected to any such restrictions.
- ❖ **Lack of Ecosystem:** Ayurveda lacks a vibrant ecosystem of science and research.
- ❖ **Trial and Error Methods:** Ayurvedic practitioners must discover treatments and approaches that work. It involves a lot of trial and error with patients and leads to an erosion of the practitioner's reputation.
- ❖ **Lack of Investment:** Despite numerous efforts made by individuals and organizations to conduct research, the lack of investment into Ayurvedic research has been a major setback.
- ❖ **Less Integration with Modern Medicine:** Ayurveda can be used safely and efficiently only in about 60%-70% of primary-care illnesses. For rest, Ayurveda needs to be integrated with modern medicine.

Can you provide some measures to increase the adoption of traditional medicine in India? How might India position its traditional medicine heritage as a global healthcare leader and contributor?"

- ❖ **Enhance Scientific Research:** Government should invest in scientific research to validate the safety and efficacy of traditional medicine practices and remedies which will help build a stronger evidence base and increase confidence among both practitioners and the public.
- ❖ **Education and Training:** Improve the quality of education and training for traditional medicine practitioners by enhancing curriculum standards, and offering advanced courses etc.
- ❖ **Integration with Modern Medicine:** Promote the integration of traditional medicine into the broader healthcare system to leverage the strengths of both systems.
- ❖ **Regulation and Licensing:** There is a need to establish clear regulations and licensing requirements for traditional medicine practitioners to ensure quality services.
- ❖ **Telemedicine and Digital Health:** Utilization of technology to expand the reach of traditional medicine.

❖ **International Collaboration:** Collaborating with other countries and international organizations on research, education, and the promotion of traditional medicine.

Why did it take so long for our government to understand the utility of traditional medicines?

❖ **Historical Bias:** Traditional medicines were often marginalized in favor of modern allopathic medicine due to historical biases and a perception of traditional practices as less scientifically validated. The initial focus was on Western medical approaches.

❖ **Lack of Scientific Validation:** Traditional medicines were not initially subjected to rigorous scientific scrutiny. It took time for researchers and policymakers to appreciate the value of traditional knowledge and to conduct studies validating the efficacy and safety of traditional remedies.

❖ **Global Recognition and Demand:** As global interest in alternative and holistic healthcare practices grew, and as traditional medicines gained recognition internationally, there was a subsequent revaluation within the Indian government about the potential benefits of integrating traditional healing systems.

❖ **Comprehensive Healthcare Approach:** Recognizing the limitations of a purely allopathic healthcare system, there has been a realization that a comprehensive healthcare approach should include traditional medicines. This shift in perspective has contributed to the government's evolving understanding of the utility of traditional healing practices.

Do you think ayurvedic medical practitioners must be allowed to do allopathic practice?

Arguments in Favor:

❖ **Integrated Healthcare:** Advocates argue for an integrated healthcare system where practitioners from different traditions collaborate to provide comprehensive and holistic care. This approach can leverage the strengths of each system.

❖ **Addressing Shortages:** Allowing Ayurvedic practitioners to practice allopathic medicine might help address shortages of healthcare professionals, particularly in rural areas where access to doctors is limited.

❖ **Patient Choice:** Patients may appreciate having more choices in healthcare providers, and some might prefer practitioners who are knowledgeable in both Ayurvedic and allopathic approaches.

Arguments Against:

❖ **Safety Concerns:** Allopathic medicine and Ayurveda have different philosophies and diagnostic methods. Allowing crossover without proper training could raise concerns about patient safety and the potential for misdiagnosis or inappropriate treatments.

❖ **Educational Standards:** Allopathic medicine requires specific educational standards and training that differ from Ayurveda. Critics argue that maintaining the integrity of these standards is essential for ensuring the quality of healthcare.

❖ **Lack of Standardization:** Integrating the two systems without clear standards and guidelines could result in a lack of standardization and consistency in healthcare delivery, potentially compromising patient care.

Can you provide international examples of successful integration of traditional medicine practices into mainstream healthcare systems?

❖ **Kampo**, the traditional Japanese herbal medicine system,

❖ **Phytotherapy**, involves the use of plant-based medicines, is integrated into the German healthcare system.

Do you think traditional medicines should be given more prominence in national healthcare policies? Why or why not?

Traditional medicines often reflect cultural and historical practices. Traditional medicines often adopt a holistic approach to health, addressing not only physical symptoms but also mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Traditional medicines, often based on natural remedies, can be cost-effective compared to some modern pharmaceuticals. Recognizing traditional medicines as complementary to modern healthcare practices allows for an integrative approach, combining the strengths of both systems to enhance overall patient care.

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SATELLITE-BASED BROADBAND

1. *What is the Starlink Project?*
2. *What is Satellite Broadband?*
3. *How does a satellite-based Broadband System work?*
4. *What do you know about Ku-band and Ka-band?*
5. *What are high-throughput satellites (HTS)? What are their applications?*
6. *What are the Advantages of Satellite-based Broadband?*
7. *Discuss the potential impact of satellite-based broadband on sectors like education, healthcare, and agriculture in rural regions.*
8. *What are the Drawbacks of Satellite-based Broadband?*
9. *How can satellite-based internet affect ground-based astronomy?*
10. *What steps can be taken to ensure the responsible and sustainable deployment of satellite constellations to minimize their impact on astronomical observations?*
11. *What are the different types of Internet Connection?*
12. *Do you think it can curtail the issue of digital divide?*

Context: Elon Musk has agreed to extend support to internationally recognised aid organizations in Gaza through satellite-based communications system, **Starlink**.

What is the Starlink Project?

Starlink is a satellite internet constellation project developed by SpaceX, the aerospace company founded by Elon Musk. The goal of Starlink is to provide high-speed, low-latency internet access to underserved and remote areas around the world. Starlink project consists of over **5,500 mass-produced small satellites** in low Earth orbit (LEO). There are plans to launch **12,000 satellites** as a part of the project.

❖ **Salient Features:**
   ➢ **Hall-effect Thrusters:** These allow the satellites to raise their orbit, **stabilize and de-orbit** after completing its life cycle.
   ➢ **Low Brightness**: Starlink satellites will **reduce their brightness** during operation.
   ➢ **Collision Avoidance**: The satellites have been designed to **autonomously and smoothly** avoid collisions.

What is Satellite-based Broadband?

❖ **Working:** Satellite-based broadband works by providing internet access through **communication** satellites.
   ➢ Internet access is usually provided through **geostationary satellites** that can offer relatively high data speeds, which can go up to 506 Mbit/s.

How does satellite internet work?
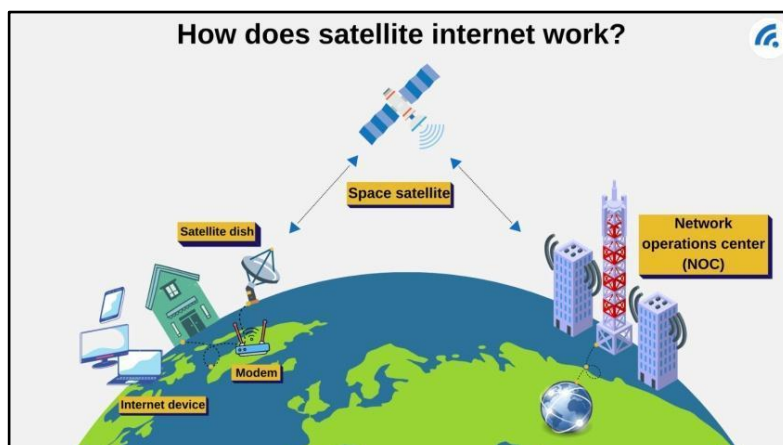
> Internet signals are **relayed by satellites**, which are then caught by a home-based antenna kit.

How does Satellite-based Broadband Work?

- ❖ **Components**: Satellite-based broadband relies usually on three components for working – a **satellite**, **ground stations** and pack of **small antenna and transceiver**, which is owned by each subscriber.
- ❖ **Mechanism**: The ground stations, known as **gateways**, relay Internet data to and from the **satellite** via radio waves. These waves are received by **satellites** and relayed back to individual antennas and transceivers.
- ❖ **Monitoring the Network:** The system also includes **a modem at the user end** which links the user's network with the transceiver, and a centralized network operations center (NOC) for monitoring the entire system.

What are high-throughput satellites (HTS)? What are their applications?

- ❖ **High-Throughput Satellites (HTS)** are a type of satellite design that focuses on delivering significantly higher data transfer rates and capacity compared to traditional satellites.
- ❖ Instead of using a single wide beam to cover a large geographic area, **HTS use multiple smaller spot beams** that can be directed to specific regions.
- ❖ HTS employs frequency reuse techniques, allowing the same frequency to be used in different spot beams without causing interference.

Applications:

- ❖ HTS are extensively used to provide high-speed broadband internet services, especially in areas **with limited terrestrial infrastructure.**
- ❖ HTS supports **in-flight connectivity on airplanes**, enabling passengers to access high-speed internet, streaming services, and other online applications during flights.
- ❖ High-Throughput Satellites play a crucial role in **maritime communication** by providing broadband connectivity to ships and vessels

What are the Advantages of Satellite-based Broadband?

- ❖ **Bridge Digital Divide:** Satellite internet removes **geographical barrier** in accessing internet. People from any part of the Earth can have internet connectivity.
- ❖ **No Need for Wiring:** There is no need to create new **wiring infrastructure** to serve far-off areas.
- ❖ **Maritime Communication:** Satellite internet is suitable for communication in **isolated areas**, especially high seas.
- ❖ **Security**: Chances of **hacking into a satellite-based internet** connection is tougher compared to simple cable-based internet.

What are the Drawbacks of Satellite-based Broadband?

- ❖ **Space Debris:** The decommissioned satellites as well as junk parts may further increa**se space debris**.
- ❖ **Ground-based Astronomy:** The satellite constellation may **hamper ground-based astronomy**, having a negative effect on scientific studies.
- ❖ **Congest Space:** The 12,000 satellites planned by Starlink will further congest the already over-populated **satellite orbits**.
- ❖ **Safety of Satellites:** The debris from Starlink may initiate **Kessler syndrome**. This is a scenario perpetuated by collisions between orbiting objects, creating more debris and thus creating a domino effect of future collisions.
- ❖ **Signal Latency:** The **latency in satellite internet** is higher than traditional internet. Usually, the satellite communications account for approximately 550 milliseconds of latency round-trip time.
- ❖ **Signal Interference:** Satellite-based internet connectivity is affected by m**oisture and various forms of precipitation**, causing interference.
- ❖ **Higher Costs:** Compared to cable-based internet, **satellite internet is costly** due to the sophisticated equipment involved.

How can satellite-based internet affect ground-based astronomy?

- ❖ The satellite constellation may **hamper ground-based astronomy**, having a negative effect on scientific studies.

- Large constellations of satellites in **low Earth orbit (LEO)** can contribute to increased light pollution in the night sky.
- **Satellite communication systems emit radio frequency signals.** If not properly managed, these signals can cause interference with radio astronomy observations, impacting the ability to detect and study cosmic radio waves.
- Sunlit satellites in low Earth orbit can reflect sunlight, causing brief but bright flares. These flares, known as **satellite glints or flares**, can be visible from the ground and may interfere with optical observations, especially during twilight.
- Organizations like **the International Astronomical Union (IAU)** and regulatory bodies are working to establish guidelines and standards to minimize the impact of satellite constellations on ground-based astronomy.

What steps can be taken to ensure the responsible and sustainable deployment of satellite constellations to minimize their impact on astronomical observations?

- **Light Mitigation Technologies**: Develop and implement technologies on satellites to reduce their brightness, such as deploying sunshades, visors, or coatings that minimize reflection.
- **Astronomical Software Tools:** Develop and implement software tools that help astronomers predict satellite passes and optimize observation schedules to avoid interference.
- **Space Debris Mitigation:** Implement best practices for space debris mitigation to reduce the long-term impact of satellite constellations on the space environment.

Do you think it can curtail the issue of digital divide?

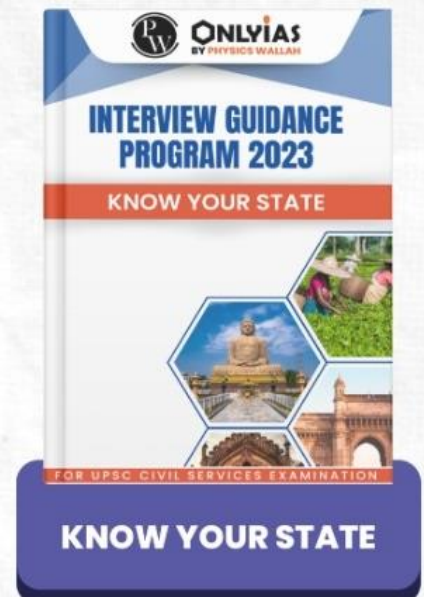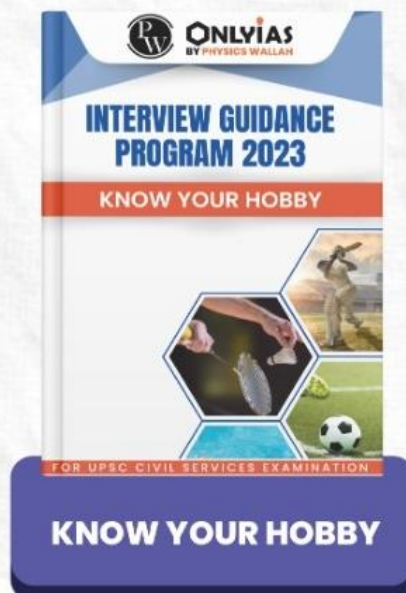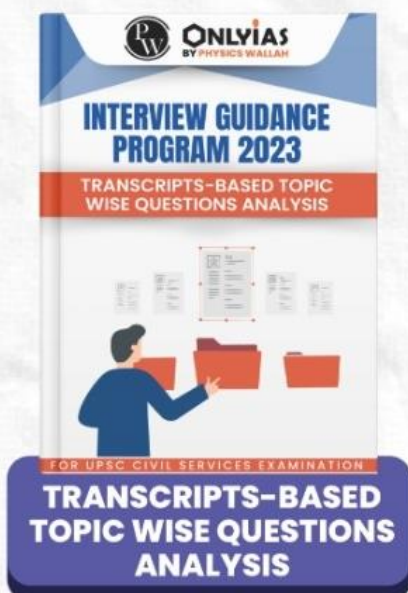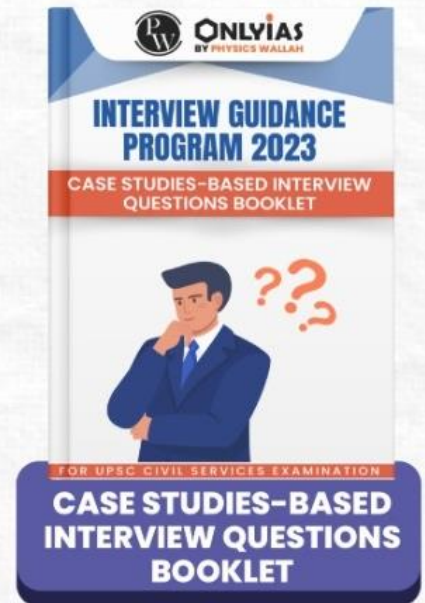| Yes	No
❖ Satellite-based communication can bridge the digital divide by providing connectivity to remote and underserved areas where traditional infrastructure is challenging to deploy.	❖ The digital divide involves various complex factors, and while satellite communication can help, it may not be the sole solution to address all aspects of the divide.
❖ India has initiated efforts to leverage satellite-based communication for enhancing connectivity in rural and remote areas. Initiatives like the BharatNet project aim to use satellite technology to extend internet services to these regions.	❖ Challenges such as high costs and technical limitations may impede the widespread adoption of satellite-based communication, limiting its impact on the digital divide.
❖ Satellites can play a crucial role in delivering internet services, education, and healthcare to distant locations, contributing to the overall reduction of disparities in digital access.	❖ While satellite communication can extend connectivity, other complementary strategies, such as fiber-optic networks and mobile infrastructure, are also essential for comprehensive digital inclusion.
❖ Technologies like Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite constellations, as pursued by companies like SpaceX and One Web, have the potential to provide affordable and high-speed internet access globally, including in remote areas of India.	❖ Relying solely on satellite communication may not address the broader challenges related to digital literacy, affordability, and the availability of locally relevant digital content in overcoming the digital divide.