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GOVERNANCE & SOCIAL ISSUES

Contents

GOVERNANCE & SOCIAL ISSUES

1. STRENGTHENING RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI) FOR TRANSPARENT GOVERNANCE

◈ **Preface:** The Supreme Court's recent directive urging the prompt filling of vacancies in the **Central Information Commission (CIC)** and **State Information Commissions (SIC)** has brought attention to the critical state of the **Right to Information (RTI) Act.** The Court emphasized that the persistent vacancies undermine the very essence of the RTI Act, making it a "dead letter."

◈ **Challenges in Implementation:**

   ◆ Despite the 2019 Supreme Court judgment in **Anjali Bhardwaj and Ors v. Union of India**, the vacancies in the CIC and SICs remain unfilled, leading to a backlog of cases and prolonged delays in appeals and complaints.

   ◆ The **RTI (Amendment) Act, 2019** altered the tenure of CIC and ICs, reducing it from five years to three years. This change aimed at empowering ICs to exercise their authority fearlessly, even against senior officials.

◈ **Key Provisions of RTI Act, 2005:**

   ◆ The RTI Act empowers Indian citizens to request information from government offices, promoting transparency and accountability.

   ◆ **Section 2(h)** defines public authority, encompassing various bodies and institutions established by the Constitution, laws, or government notifications.

   ◆ **Section 4(1)(b)** emphasizes proactive disclosure of information by public authorities.

   ◆ **Section 6(1)** outlines the process for individuals to request information from Central Public Information Officers (PIOs) or State PIOs.

   ◆ **Section 8** provides exemptions from disclosure, safeguarding sensitive information.

◈ **Concerns and Challenges:**

   ◆ Recent exemptions under section 24(2) have excluded the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) from the RTI Act, raising questions about the scope of exemptions.

   ◆ Poor record-keeping, lack of infrastructure and staff, and significant pendency contribute to the challenges in RTI implementation.

   ◆ Threats, violence, and lack of awareness among citizens further hinder the effectiveness of the RTI Act.

◈ **Way Forward:**

   ◆ **Urgent steps are needed to fill vacancies** in CIC and SICs within the stipulated three-month period.

- ◆ **Extensive awareness campaigns**, integrated into educational curricula, are essential to empower citizens with knowledge about their rights under the RTI Act.

- ◆ **Strengthening legal provisions** to protect whistleblowers and creating a safe environment for information providers are crucial for the success of the RTI Act.

- ◆ **Training programs for government officials** and proactive disclosure of information by public authorities can contribute to reducing the burden of RTI applications and enhancing transparency.

2. ADVANCING ACCESSIBILITY: EMPOWERING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH INCLUSIVE URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE

- ◈ **Preface:** The recent judgments from the **Court of Chief Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities** mark a significant turning point in **redefining attitudes** towards **Persons with Disabilities (PwD)**. These legal directives emphasize the urgent need for accessible infrastructure and have far-reaching implications for various sectors.

- ◈ **Legal Right to Accessibility:** The Court mandates government offices operating from inaccessible premises to relocate services to the ground floor or another accessible location within the same facility.

  - ◆ Airlines operating in the country are directed to implement the provisions of the Rights of Persons with **Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016** to its true spirit, ensuring inclusivity in air travel.

- ◈ **Importance of Accessible Infrastructure:**

  - ◆ **Fulfillment of Legal Right:** The RPwD Act 2016 guarantees the right to accessibility for PwDs, acknowledging that nearly 2.21% of the population has some form of disability.

  - ◆ **Livelihood Opportunities:** Accessible infrastructure provides avenues for skills development and employment, addressing the high percentage of children with disabilities not attending educational institutions.

  - ◆ **Differing Needs:** Recognizing diverse accessibility needs, ranging from physical to sensory and mental capabilities, and designing infrastructure accordingly.

  - ◆ **Economic Aspects:** Inclusion of PwDs in employment could contribute to a significant increase in GDP, emphasizing the economic benefits of an inclusive approach.

Government Initiatives for Accessibility:

- ◆ **Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan):** Aims to create a barrier-free environment in the built environment, transportation sector, and the ICT ecosystem.

- ◆ **Harmonized Guidelines and Space Standards:** Issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs for Barrier-Free Built Environment.

- ◆ **Scheme for Implementation of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (SIPDA):** Provides financial assistance to make existing government buildings accessible to PwDs.

- ◆ **Sugamya Bharat App:** Enables PwDs to report inaccessible buildings.

- ◆ **ICT Ecosystem:** Over 603 government websites made accessible for the visually impaired, with set standards by the Bureau of Indian Standards.

- ◈ **Challenges in Establishing Accessible Infrastructure:**

  - ◆ **Missed Targets:** The Accessible India campaign falls short of targets, with only 8.73% of buses and 48.5% of government buildings made accessible by 2022.

- **Funding Constraints**: Meager allocation of funds for improving accessibility in public infrastructures, with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment receiving only 0.027% of the total budget for 2023-24.

- **Dispute Redressal**: Slow resolution of complaints related to accessibility issues.

- **Lack of Awareness**: PwDs lack awareness about their right to claim accessibility as per the RPwD Act, 2016.

◈ **Way Forward:**

- Introduction of accessibility professionals, codifying their roles in model building bye-laws and the National Building Code.

- Establishment of an accessibility committee by Parliament to enhance disabled-friendliness in all aspects of the parliamentary process.

- Integration of accessibility criteria in central and state-level procurement laws and policies.

- Ensuring allocated funds align with meeting accessibility targets and addressing the specific needs of PwDs.

- Viewing accessibility not only as a physical attribute but also considering sensory, cognitive, and multi-faceted impacts to cater to all PwDs.

3. EMPOWERING WOMEN: DRAFT NATIONAL MENSTRUAL HYGIENE POLICY, 2023

◈ **Preface:** The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's** recent release of the **Draft National Menstrual Hygiene Policy, 2023**, signifies a transformative step towards addressing long-standing challenges associated with **menstruation in India**. Recognizing menstruation as a natural bodily process, the policy aims to create a safe, healthy, and stigma-free experience for all women, girls, and persons who menstruate.

◈ **Policy Objectives:** The policy adopts a life cycle approach, ensuring comprehensive support from menarche to menopause, acknowledging the unique needs of individuals at different stages.

- Underserved and vulnerable populations are a specific focus, ensuring equitable access to menstrual hygiene resources.

- The strategy emphasizes affordable and safe menstrual hygiene products, quality standards, clean and dignified hygiene facilities, education, awareness, collaboration with the private sector, and integration into existing programs.

◈ **Policy Strategy:**

- Ensuring Access to Affordable and Safe Menstrual Hygiene Products

- Promoting Quality Standards and Regulatory Framework

- Availability of Clean and Dignified Menstrual Hygiene Facilities

- Promotion of Education and Awareness

- Collaboration with Non-Government and Private Sectors

- Foster Research and Innovation

◈ **Need for a Menstrual Hygiene Policy:**

- **Health and Well-being**: Access to safe menstrual products can prevent reproductive tract infections and improve overall health.

- **Access to Education:** The lack of menstrual hygiene facilities contributes to school dropouts, affecting over 23 million girls annually.

- **Gender Equality**: Promoting menstrual health safeguards women's dignity, privacy, and self-efficacy.

- **Participation in Work**: Basic services at workplaces, including access to sanitary products and menstrual leave, encourage women's participation.

- **Environmental Impact:** Access to sustainable products and improved waste management contributes to environmental conservation.

- **Dignity and Respect**: The policy addresses discrimination against menstruating women, promoting awareness and acceptance.

◈ **Challenges to Menstrual Hygiene:** Social Stigma and Taboos, Poverty, Limited Waste Management, Work Environment Issues:

◈ **Conclusion:** While recent initiatives have improved access to hygienic menstrual products, the Draft Menstrual Hygiene Policy, if implemented effectively, has the potential to create a society where menstruation is understood, accepted, and managed without barriers or discrimination.

4. NURTURING PARENTHOOD: SUPREME COURT'S VERDICT ON SURROGACY IN INDIA

◈ **Preface:** In a landmark decision, the Supreme Court recently upheld women's right to parenthood by striking down the 2023 amendment to the **Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022**, in the case of **Arun Muthuvel vs. Union of India.** This ruling protects the rights of intending parents, specifically a woman suffering from **Mayer-Rokitansky-Kuster-Hauser (MRKH) syndrome**, who challenged the amendment banning the use of donor gametes in surrogacy.

◈ **Supreme Court Observations:**

- Stayed the operation of **Rule 7 of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021,** allowing a woman with MRKH syndrome to undergo surrogacy using a donor egg.

- Emphasized that the **2023 amendment cannot contradict Rule 14(a) of Surrogacy Regulation Rules, 2022,** recognizing the absence of a uterus as a medical indication necessitating gestational surrogacy.

- Acknowledged that the law permitting gestational surrogacy is "woman-centric" and based on a woman's inability to become a mother.

- Directed the District Medical Board to certify whether the woman could produce eggs due to MRKH syndrome before deciding the case.

◈ **Surrogacy Laws in India:**

◈ **Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021:**

- Allows only altruistic surrogacy, penalizing commercial surrogacy.

- Establishes the National Assisted Reproductive Technology and Surrogacy Board (NARTSB) to supervise implementation.

- Sets eligibility criteria for surrogate mothers and couples.

- Mandates insurance coverage for surrogate mothers.

◈ **Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021:**

Types of Surrogacy:

- **Altruistic Surrogacy:** Involves no monetary compensation to the surrogate mother beyond medical expenses and insurance coverage during pregnancy.

- **Commercial Surrogacy**: Includes surrogacy for a monetary benefit exceeding basic medical expenses and insurance coverage.

- **Gestational Surrogacy:** The surrogate mother carries a child through the implantation of an embryo, and the child is not genetically related to the surrogate.

- Regulates ART clinics and banks, ensuring safe and ethical practice of ART services.
- Protects the rights of surrogate mothers.

◈ **Challenges in Surrogacy Regulation Ecosystem:**

- **Lack of Recourse:** No specified process for review or appeal if surrogacy applications are rejected.
- **Conflicting Laws:** Contradictory provisions regarding the storage of embryos and gametes.
- **Ambiguity:** Lack of clarity on who constitutes close relatives for surrogacy.
- **Right to Privacy:** Insufficient procedures to ensure the privacy of the intending couple and surrogate.
- **Lack of Clarity in Infertility Definition:** The definition does not cover certain medical conditions hindering conception.

◈ **Way Forward:**

- **Navigating Social Stigma:** Efforts needed to ensure privacy for all parties involved in surrogacy.
- **Awareness:** Surrogate mothers should be informed about their rights and associated risks.
- **Clarity:** Clear definitions for terms like close relatives and expanded definitions for infertility.
- **Grievance Redressal:** Establish a redressal mechanism for surrogacy application rejections.

5. CRIMINALIZATION OF POLITICS IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND REFORMS

◈ **Preface:** The recently released *'Analysis of Sitting MPs from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha of India 2023' report* by the **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and National Election Watch** sheds light on a concerning aspect of Indian politics.

◈ **Reasons for Criminalization:** The report reveals alarming statistics, indicating that 40% of sitting MPs have declared criminal cases against themselves, with 25% facing serious charges like murder and attempt to murder. States such as Lakshadweep, Kerala, Bihar, and Maharashtra exhibit the highest percentages of sitting MPs with criminal cases.

- **Impact:** Criminalization leads to institutionalized corruption, erosion of trust in the political system, and compromised inner-party democracy.

◈ **Challenges and Implications:** Corruption and criminality in politics contribute to India's rank of 85th out of 180 countries in the 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index. Politicians with criminal backgrounds erode public trust, impacting the working of investigation and prosecution agencies, as seen in the Supreme Court's characterization of the Central Bureau of Investigation in 2017.

- **Conviction Rate**: The SC amicus curiae report of 2022 reveals a staggering 5,097 pending cases against lawmakers, resulting in a decline in conviction rates.
- **Election Dynamics:** The use of money and muscle power by criminal elements disrupts the conduct of free and fair elections, as evidenced by the massive spending of around $8 billion during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

◈ **Government Measures:** Legislative measures such as **Section 8(3) of the Representation of People Act, 1951**, aim to disqualify lawmakers sentenced to at least two years in jail. Judicial pronouncements, like the SC's 2002 decision in **Union of India vs. Association for Democratic Reforms**, emphasize the electorate's right to know the antecedents of candidates.

- **Committee Reports:** Reports by committees such as the **N.N. Vohra Committee (1993)** highlight the nexus between criminal gangs, police, bureaucracy, and politicians.

◈ **Reforms and the Way Forward:** Initiatives like the Election Commission's proposal for a lifetime ban on convicts from polls, a hybrid electoral system, and punishment for filing false affidavits can contribute to cleaning up politics.

    ◆ **Judicial Support**: Landmark judgments like **Lily Thomas vs. Union of India (2013)** and **Rambabu Singh Thakur vs. Sunil Arora (2020)** underscore the need for transparency in political records.

    ◆ **Legislative Amendments:** Proposals to amend the **Representation of the People Act, 1950**, for debarring individuals facing serious criminal charges from contesting elections.

    ◆ **Comprehensive Reforms:** Suggestions include right to recall, state funding of elections, fast-tracking judicial processes, and ensuring internal democracy within political parties.

6. LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY FOR EFFICIENT PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN INDIA

◈ **Preface:** The Comptroller & Auditor General (CAG) of India emphasizes the urgent need for increased integration of IT systems and technology in public service delivery to enhance efficiency and accessibility.

◈ **Digital Government Services**: Defined as the delivery of government services within and between government departments using information and communication technologies, digital services have the potential to revolutionize citizen interactions with the government.

◈ **Significance:** Digital services save time and money for citizens, increase government efficiency, eliminate ghost beneficiaries, enhance accountability, and contribute to better policy design through data mining.

◈ **Challenges in Technology Adoption**: Despite the benefits, challenges such as the digital divide, lack of skilled workforce, cybersecurity threats, insufficient digital infrastructure, and lack of interoperability hinder the widespread adoption of technology in public service delivery.

    ◆ **Cybersecurity Threats**: The need for robust cybersecurity measures is crucial to safeguard sensitive government and public data.

    ◆ **Digital Literacy**: Bridging the digital divide and enhancing digital literacy are essential to ensure that technology benefits all sections of society.

    ◆ **Significance of Data:** The integration of data from various sources, exemplified by linking PAN and Aadhar cards, facilitates better policy formulation and helps in reducing black money.

◈ **Way Forward:** To overcome challenges, there is a need to focus on enhancing digital literacy, creating a skilled workforce, improving cybersecurity infrastructure, and ensuring interoperability of services.

    ◆ **Skilled Workforce**: Skilling programs can empower government officials to leverage technology effectively.

    ◆ **Legal Framework**: Establishing a robust legal framework for data protection is crucial to maintain citizen trust in digital services.

    ◆ **Infrastructure Improvement:** Investment in digital infrastructure, along with a focus on interoperability, will widen the scope of digital services.

7. STRENGTHENING CONSUMER PROTECTION IN INDIA

◈ **Preface:** Recent findings indicating a declining trend in pendency in consumer commissions highlight the ongoing efforts to address consumer grievances in India.

◈ **Definition of a Consumer:** The **Consumer Protection Act (CPA) 2019** defines a consumer and applies to both offline and online transactions, emphasizing the importance of informed choice and protection against malpractices.

  ◆ **Need for Protection**: Consumer protection safeguards consumers against unfair trade practices, misleading advertising, and provides mechanisms for grievance redressal.

◈ **Measures for Consumer Protection:** The **CPA 2019**, along with initiatives like the **ConfoNet Project, INGRAM portal, and E-Daakhil portal**, establishes a comprehensive framework for consumer rights and grievance redressal.

  ◆ **Certification Marks:** Certification marks play a crucial role in ensuring quality standards and protecting consumers against substandard products.

◈ **Challenges in Consumer Protection:** Pendency in cases, vacancies in institutions, lack of clarity in roles and powers, and insufficient consumer awareness pose challenges to effective consumer protection.

  ◆ **Pendency:** Despite a declining trend, the sheer number of pending cases remains a challenge, leading to delays in dispute resolution.

  ◆ **Awareness:** Consumer awareness needs to be improved, especially among Gram Sabha and Forest Rights Committees, to ensure effective implementation.

◈ **Way Forward:** Directives to states, learning from successful state initiatives like Odisha's Mo Jungle Jami Yojana, and improving awareness, capacity building, and coordination are essential for strengthening consumer protection.

  ◆ **Directives:** The Centre can issue directives to states to ensure a review of consumer protection exercises, considering the high rejection rate of claims.

  ◆ **Capacity Building:** Training and capacity building programs for Gram Sabha and local bureaucracy are crucial for effective implementation.

  ◆ **Awareness Generation:** Collaborative efforts between the government, manufacturers, and consumer organizations are needed to develop advertising codes and standards and educate consumers about their rights.

8. FOREST RIGHTS ACT, 2006: ADDRESSING LAND CLAIMS AND CHALLENGES

◈ **Preface:** Recent reports indicating the rejection of nearly 40% of land claims under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) raise concerns about the effectiveness of the legislation.

◈ **Overview of FRA:** Enacted in 2006, the FRA recognizes the rights of forest-dwelling tribal communities (FDSTs) and other traditional forest dwellers (OTFDs) to hold and live in forest land for habitation or self-cultivation.

  ◆ **Types of Rights:** Individual Forest Rights (IFR), Community Forest Rights (CFR), and Community Forest Resource Management Rights are granted under the FRA.

◈ **Challenges and Concerns**: Land claims related to inadequate proof, inconsistency in claimed and allocated acreage, low awareness, forest land encroachment, and violation of FRA provisions present challenges to effective implementation.

  ◆ **Document of Proof**: The lack of adequate documentary evidence for land use often leads to rejections of Individual Forest Rights claims.

  ◆ **Land Acreage Discrepancies**: World Bank reports highlight cases where approved claims were granted for lesser acreage than claimed by applicants.

◈ **Implementation Issues:** Lack of coordination, destruction of forests and wildlife, and misuse of Gram Sabha for approving ineligible claims contribute to challenges in the proper implementation of the FRA.

- ◆ **Coordination Issues**: Inadequate coordination among State Level Committees (SLC), District Level Committees (DLC), and the lack of clarity in roles hinder effective implementation.

- ◈ **Remedial Measures:** Issuing directives to states, learning from successful state initiatives like Odisha's Mo Jungle Jami Yojana, awareness generation, capacity building of Gram Sabha, and involving marginalized sections can address challenges and enhance the effectiveness of FRA.

  - ◆ **Directives:** The Centre can issue directives to states to ensure a review of land claims in line with the FRA.

  - ◆ **Learning from State Initiatives:** The successful implementation of state initiatives, such as Odisha's Mo Jungle Jami Yojana, can provide insights for effective land rights recognition.

  - ◆ **Awareness and Capacity Building:** Improved awareness among Gram Sabha and forest rights committees, along with capacity building, is crucial for the proper implementation of the FRA.

9. THE 'SERIOUS' SITUATION OF HUNGER IN INDIA

- ◈ **Preface:** The **2023 Global Hunger Index** gives India a rank of **111 out of 125 countries**. This indicates a hunger severity level of 'serious' for the country. This also marks a fall from the previous year's rank of 107 (2022).

  - ◆ The low score is attributed to **disruptions in global supply chains, inflation, lack of job opportunities, poverty, population explosion, and the absence of estimated targets for schemes focused on children and women.**

- ◈ **Reasons for India's Low Score Performance:** India's challenges extend beyond traditional factors.

  - ◆ **Conflict, climate extremes, economic shocks, growing inequality, reduced soil fertility, fragmented lands, and fluctuating market prices of farm produce** contribute to the grim situation.

- ◈ **Issues on Government's Side:** Issues like the low budget allocation to schemes such as **PM POSHAN, POSHAN 2.0,** and **Saksham Anganwadi**, coupled with manpower constraints and accountability issues, hinder the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at improving nutrition.

- ◈ **Why India Denied GHI?** The Global Hunger Index views hunger as a food production challenge, but India, **being the largest producer and consumer of grain and the largest producer of milk**, disagrees. India's contention is grounded in the fact that despite its agricultural prowess, the population faces nutrition and food deprivation due to high levels of wastage and losses.

- ◈ **Required Measures:** Addressing the issue requires an increase in the supply of safe and nutrient-rich foods. Future agricultural investments should focus on smart crops like amaranthus, buckwheat, minor millet, finger millet, proso millet, foxtail millet, and pulses.

10. CASTE CENSUS

- ◈ **Preface:** The Bihar government's release of a caste survey report has reignited discussions on the history and implications of caste census in India.

  - ◆ Other states, including **Rajasthan, Odisha, Maharashtra, Karnataka, etc**., are planning or conducting similar surveys, emphasizing the contemporary relevance of caste demographics.

- ◈ **History of Caste Census in India:** Introduced under British colonial administration in 1881 and continued until 1931, the caste census has a complex history. Post-independence, full enumeration was abandoned due to concerns about strengthening caste divisions.

Arguments for Caste Census:	Arguments against Caste Census:
◆ Constitutional mandates and socio-economic considerations support the need for caste census. It aids in identifying socially and educationally backward classes, facilitating targeted policies.	◆ Constitutional nuances and the practical challenge of dealing with thousands of castes and sub-castes pose significant obstacles to meaningful data collection and analysis.

11. DIGITAL DIVIDE IN INDIA

❖ **Current Scenario:** A recent **NSSO survey** assessing **digital skill levels** among Indian youth aged 15-29 paints a disconcerting picture, with only 27.5% of the population classified as "digitally skilled."

❖ **Factors Contributing to the Divide:**

> Digital literacy refers to the abilities that enable individuals to use technology in a secure and efficient manner. **UNESCO** enumerates digital literacy as the **indispensable fourth pillar of foundational literacy.**

  ◆ **Unequal infrastructure development**, economic constraints, and limited digital literacy

  ◆ **Gender and geographical disparities** exacerbate India's digital skill divide. Geographical disparities extend beyond the rural-urban divide, with southern states outperforming northern states.

  ◆ **Gender:** Young girls consistently lag behind their male counterparts in fundamental digital competencies.

❖ **Impact on Education**: The digital divide has profound implications for education, as students in rural areas face challenges accessing online learning resources.

❖ **Government Initiatives and Challenges:** While the government has launched various initiatives to bridge the gap, challenges such as infrastructure development and affordability persist.

12. LGBTQ+ RIGHTS IN INDIA

❖ **Preface:** In its verdict, a five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud recognised that the **LGBTQ community faces discrimination** from the state but declined to get into "judicial lawmaking" on **same-sex marriage**, saying such a decision fell outside its purview and should be addressed by the Indian Parliament. It also ruled against granting adoption rights to unmarried gay couples.

❖ **Legal Landscape:** In 2018, the Supreme Court scrapped a colonial-era law banning homosexuality in India.

> ## Navjet Singh Johar and others v. Union of India 2018
>
> ◆ The SC held that members of the LGBTQ community "are entitled, as all other citizens, to the full range of constitutional rights including the liberties protected by the Constitution" and are entitled to equal citizenship and "equal protection of law".

❖ **Societal Perception**: While legal progress has been made, societal acceptance remains a challenge, with stigma and discrimination persisting.

❖ **Economic and Social Challenges**: LGBTQ+ individuals face economic and social challenges, including workplace discrimination and limited access to healthcare.

❖ **Need for Comprehensive Policies:** Addressing LGBTQ+ rights requires comprehensive policies, encompassing legal, social, and economic dimensions.

Benefits of recognizing same sex marriage	Disadvantages of recognizing same sex marriage
◆ **Tangible benefits:** The ability to open joint bank accounts, jointly buy or rent a property, jointly own and share financial assets, be recognised as a relative under the Indian Income Tax Act, and inherit a spouse's assets if one partner dies. ◆ **Intangible benefits**: Gaining legitimacy, respect and affection from society and being able to participate fully in all family events. ◆ **Acceptance to society**: Being allowed to marry will enable sense of belonging and will help to gain the acceptance that they are seeking in society.	◆ **Marriage is for procreation**. Same sex couples should be prohibited from marriage because they cannot produce children together. ◆ **Incompatible:** Gay marriage is incompatible with the beliefs, sacred texts, and traditions of many religious groups.

13. NARI SHAKTI VANDAN [CONSTITUTION (106TH AMENDMENT)] ACT, 2023

❖ **Legislative Milestone:** The recent passage of the **Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023**, by the Parliament marks a significant legislative milestone. The Act introduces one-third reservation for women in the **Lok Sabha, State Assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi.**

❖ **Key Provisions**: The amendments to **Articles 239AA, 330A, 332A, and 334A** lay out the framework for implementing women's reservation. Notably, the provisions include reservations under various categories, such as the House of People (Lok Sabha) and State Legislative Assemblies, with a sunset clause of 15 years. Parliament holds the authority to extend the reservation period.

❖ **Rationale for Women's Reservation**: The need for women's reservation arises from the stark under-representation of women in Indian legislatures, with **only around 14% of parliamentary members** being women. This move aims to address political under-representation, break patriarchal barriers within political parties, and sensitize public policies to gender-related issues.

❖ **Concerns and Criticisms:** While the Act is a commendable step, it faces criticism on several fronts. Some argue that reservations may compromise the principle of meritocracy. Others express concerns about limiting voter choices and point out that women are not a homogeneous group. Furthermore, the Act lacks provisions for reservation in Rajya Sabha and Legislative Councils.

❖ **Way Forward:** To ensure effective implementation, timely conduct of the census and delimitation exercises is crucial. Capacity building, involving civil society and institutions, should be prioritized for the training and mentorship of women leaders at various levels. Continuous efforts are needed to address broader issues like criminalization of politics and internal democracy in political parties.

14. PERSONALITY RIGHTS

❖ **Legal Safeguard:** The recent ruling by the Delhi High Court affirming protection for a Bollywood actor's **personality rights** highlights the significance of **safeguarding individuals' rights to their own persona.**

❖ **Components of Personality Rights:** Personality rights encompass various aspects, including name, voice, signature, and images. While not explicitly mentioned in Indian statutes, they are derived from the right to privacy and property.

❖ **Posthumous Personality Rights:** The E**mblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, IPC,** and trademark law collectively address posthumous personality rights. Legal precedents, such as the **Titan Industries v. Rajkumar Jewelers case**, clarify the scope of these rights.

❖ **Judicial Interpretations:** Key judicial interpretations, including the **Titan Industries case and Deepa Jayakumar v. AL Vijay case**, establish parameters for protecting personality rights. The rulings emphasize the right to privacy and the prevention of unjust enrichment through unauthorized use.

❖ **Challenges and Future Implications:** Enforcing personality rights in India faces challenges, including conflicts with freedom of expression and the absence of a comprehensive legislative framework. Deceptive internet techniques and Generative AI pose additional threats to individual privacy.

15. UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

❖ **Global Monitoring Report:** The recently released **Tracking Universal Health Coverage: 2023 Global Monitoring report** sheds light on the progress and challenges related to achieving **Universal Health Coverage (UHC).**

❖ **Key Findings:** The report uses indicators like the **UHC Service Coverage Index (SCI) and Out-of-Pocket Health Expenditure** to assess progress. While the SCI increased from 45 to 68 between 2000 and 2021, challenges persist, especially concerning catastrophic health spending.

❖ **Importance of UHC:** UHC is vital for ensuring that all individuals have access to quality health services without financial hardship. It contributes to maximizing human capital, achieving **Sustainable Development Goal 3,** and reducing social barriers to healthcare.

❖ **Challenges in India:** India faces challenges in achieving UHC, including low healthcare spending, high out-of-pocket expenditure, and inequitable access to healthcare in rural areas. The lack of medical manpower further impedes the effective delivery of healthcare services.

❖ **Way Forward:** Recommendations from the report emphasize adopting a primary healthcare approach, expanding essential services, removing financial barriers, and strengthening commitments to International Health Regulations. Increased public spending and addressing structural issues are key aspects of the way forward.

16. ADDRESSING DRUG ABUSE IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

❖ **Preface:** The Parliament Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment recently submitted a report on **'Drug Abuse among Young Persons - Problems and Solutions.'** The widespread abuse of substances like alcohol, cannabis, opium, and heroin is a critical issue in India. Approximately 37 crore individuals, including 13% below the age of 20, are engaged in drug and substance abuse.

❖ **Major Drugs Abused:** Alcohol, cannabis, opium, and heroin are the primary substances abused in India. The critical period for substance initiation is adolescence, with states like **Assam, Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Bihar, Delhi, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Telangana** being the most affected.

❖ **Preventive Measures in India:** India has taken several steps to prevent drug abuse, including being a signatory to UN conventions and implementing **the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985.** The **National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction**

(NAPDDR) and **Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA)** are comprehensive strategies addressing awareness, community outreach, and rehabilitation.

◈ **Issues in Curbing Drug Abuse:** India's geographical location poses challenges as it is a hub for drug trafficking due to its proximity to major opium production regions. Porous borders, smuggling through sea routes, and technological advancements in drug trafficking contribute to the complexity of the issue. Criminalization of drug abuse brings social stigma, and there is a significant treatment gap due to inadequate health facilities.

◈ **The Way Forward:** To address the challenges, informed policy-making through periodic surveys is essential. A conducive legal and policy environment, awareness programs in education, and destigmatizing drug abuse as a health condition are crucial. Implementing district action plans, filling the treatment gap with evidence-based methods, and leveraging technology to combat drug trafficking are necessary steps.

17. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DIGITAL PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION ACT 2023

◈ **Preface: The Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023 (DPDP Act)** has gained significance as it addresses the regulation of digital personal data processing in India. With the President's recent approval, it aims to balance individuals' data rights and the lawful processing needs.

◈ **Key Provisions and Applicability:**

♦ **Data Processing Scope**: The DPDP Act applies to digital personal data processed within India and data transferred outside India for services within the country.

♦ **Consent Mechanism**: The Act emphasizes obtaining consent for lawful data processing purposes, with exemptions for certain legitimate uses such as government services or medical emergencies.

♦ **Data Protection Board:** The establishment of the **Data Protection Board of India (DPBI)** is a crucial aspect, responsible for monitoring compliance, imposing penalties, and addressing data breaches.

◈ **Concerns and Limitations:**

♦ **Fundamental Rights Violation**: Some critics argue that the exemptions for the State may lead to unnecessary data collection, potentially violating the fundamental right to privacy.

♦ **Inadequate Safeguards:** The Act's provisions for transferring personal data outside India might not guarantee sufficient data protection standards in destination countries.

♦ **Grievance Redressal:** The grievance redressal mechanism is seen as complex, requiring individuals to first approach data fiduciaries, then the DPBI, and finally, the **Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT).**

◈ **Exemptions and Penalties:**

♦ **Exemptions:** The Act outlines various exemptions, including those for security, public order, research, and certain categories of data fiduciaries.

♦ **Penalties:** Stringent penalties, reaching up to Rs 250 crore, are stipulated for offenses such as non-fulfillment of obligations and failure to ensure data security.

◈ **Way Forward:**

♦ **Cross-Border Data Governance:** A robust mechanism for governing cross-border data transfer needs development, especially to non-listed countries.

♦ **Enhanced Data Rights**: Incorporating rights like data portability and the right to be forgotten could strengthen individuals' control over their data.

♦ **Preventing Misuse:** Clear definitions of terms like sovereignty and integrity of India, along with defined exemption procedures, are essential to prevent misuse.

18. NAVIGATING THE GUIDELINES FOR INFLUENCER ADVERTISING IN DIGITAL MEDIA

◈ **Preface:** The **Advertising Standards Council of India's (ASCI)** recent release of comprehensive guidelines for influencer advertising in digital media marks a significant step in regulating promotional content. These guidelines extend the framework established in the Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022.

◈ **Key Provisions:**

  ◆ **Disclosure Mechanism:** Influencers are mandated to disclose material connections, including compensation or free products, with advertisers. These disclosures must be upfront, prominent, and easily noticeable by consumers.

  ◆ **Due Diligence:** Influencers are encouraged to conduct thorough reviews and ensure they can substantiate claims made in advertisements. Using or experiencing a product before endorsement is emphasized to prevent false or misleading claims.

◈ **Special Guidelines for Health and Financial Influencers:**

  ◆ **Health Influencers:** Disclose certification as health/fitness experts and clarify that endorsements should not substitute professional medical advice.

  ◆ **Financial Influencers:** Mandatory registration for offering investment-related advice, with appropriate credentials from regulatory bodies like SEBI or IRDAI.

◈ **Need for Guidelines:**

  ◆ **Consumer Trust**: Influencers have a significant impact on consumer decisions. Guidelines are essential to maintain trust, ensuring that claims made in advertisements are genuine and verifiable.

  ◆ **Market Expansion:** The social influencer market is rapidly growing, and clear guidelines provide influencers with a framework for responsible advertising practices.

  ◆ **Consumer Protection:** Guidelines protect consumers from misleading advertisements, fostering informed decision-making and preventing potential harm.

◈ **Ensuring Compliance and Penalties:**

  ◆ **Enforcement:** The Department of Consumer Affairs, under the Consumer Protection Act (2019), will actively monitor and enforce these guidelines.

  ◆ **Penalties:** Violations may result in penalties imposed by the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), ranging from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 50 lakh for subsequent offenses.

19. UNVEILING THE ANUSANDHAN NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION (NRF) ACT, 2023

◈ **Preface:** The recent approval of the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (NRF) Act, 2023,** signifies a monumental step toward fostering research, innovation, and entrepreneurship in various scientific and technological domains in India.

◈ **Key Highlights:**

  ◆ **Foundation Establishment:** The NRF is established to provide strategic direction for research, innovation, and entrepreneurship in natural sciences, engineering, technology, environmental sciences, health, agriculture, and scientific and technological interfaces of humanities and social sciences.

- **Governing Board:** A Governing Board, headed by the Prime Minister, guides the NRF's objectives, with a focus on interdisciplinary research and collaboration among diverse disciplines.
- **Funding:** NRF is financed through grants, loans, donations, and income from investments. A budget of Rs 50,000 crore over five years, with contributions from the government and the private sector, reflects a significant investment in research and development.

◈ **Significance of NRF:**

- **Increased Funding:** The NRF aims to increase funding for scientific research, addressing disparities in funding among research institutes and ensuring better facilities for diverse institutions.
- **Research Capacity:** NRF aims to build research capacity across various academic centers, moving beyond supporting a select few institutions to fostering research across the nation.
- **Multidisciplinary Collaboration:** NRF encourages academia, industry, and research institutions to collaborate on priority areas like sustainable infrastructure, clean energy transition, and other national priorities.
- **Promoting Social Sciences**: The NRF supports research in natural sciences, humanities, social sciences, and art, recognizing the importance of fostering creativity and critical thinking.

◈ **Concerns and Way Forward:**

- **Structural Voids:** Some concerns exist regarding the focus on project funding over comprehensive block funding for universities and research institutions.
- **Lack of Stakeholder Involvement:** The Act lacks clarity on involving economic and social ministries and central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) in NRF decisions.
- **Cooperative Federalism:** There is a need to incorporate the perspectives of state councils of higher education in decision-making, ensuring cooperative federalism.

◈ **Lessons from NSF and Case Study:**

- **NSF Transformation:** Drawing lessons from the NSF, NRF can play a transformative role in scientific and technological advancements, fostering collaboration and supporting diverse research.
- NSF's support for atmospheric research has transformed weather forecasting in the USA, showcasing the potential impact of strategic research funding.

20. EVALUATING THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL EDUCATION (NCFSE)

◈ **Preface:** The Ministry of Education's recent release of the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) has sparked discussions on its potential impact on India's education system. Prepared by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the NCFSE aims to bring about positive transformations in curriculum and pedagogy.

◈ **Key Provisions:**

- **Curriculum Structure**: Aligned with the 5+3+3+4 design proposed by the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), the NCFSE redefines the stages of schooling for a more comprehensive learning experience.
- **Multilingualism:** A key highlight is the emphasis on proficiency in at least three languages, with two being native to India, promoting linguistic diversity.
- **Flexible Secondary Stage:** The NCFSE breaks away from traditional academic-vocational distinctions, allowing students to choose a diverse array of subjects, fostering a more individualized learning path.

◈ **Significance of NCFSE:**

 ◆ **Holistic Growth:** The framework addresses concerns about the existing exam-focused education system, focusing on the holistic development of students based on child and conceptual development.

 ◆ **Quality of Teachers:** NCFSE influences the curriculum for Integrated Teacher Education Programs (ITEP), contributing to the enhancement of teacher quality.

 ◆ **Cultural Diversity:** While promoting a national standard, it acknowledges the concurrent nature of education, respecting cultural diversity.

◈ **Challenges and Concerns:**

 ◆ **Centralization Debate**: Critics argue that the over-centralized curriculum design contradicts the federal structure of education, posing challenges in cultural diversity maintenance.

 ◆ **Logistical Hurdles:** Implementing biannual board exams raises logistical challenges and concerns about student stress levels.

 ◆ **Manpower Shortage:** A shortage of language teachers, especially in government and aided schools, poses a challenge to the effective implementation of the framework.

◈ **Future Prospects:**

 ◆ **Higher Education Alignment:** There is a need for higher education reforms to align with the NCFSE, facilitating a seamless transition for students.

 ◆ **Inclusive Practices:** Addressing discriminatory practices and improving the student-teacher ratio are crucial for the effective implementation of the framework.

 ◆ **Increased Public Investment:** To achieve the ambitious goals outlined in NEP 2020, there is a call for increased public investment in education.

21. ASSESSING THE NATIONAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (NSAP): CAG REPORT INSIGHTS

◈ **Preface:** The recent presentation of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report on the Performance Audit of the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) has brought to light critical issues in the implementation of this centrally sponsored scheme.

◈ **Overview of NSAP:**

 ◆ **Type and Mandate**: As a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the Ministry of Rural Development, NSAP is mandated by Article 41 to provide public assistance to specific citizen categories.

 ◆ **Sub-schemes:** Launched in 1995, NSAP includes five sub-schemes, with a focus on pensions for different categories and non-pension assistance.

◈ **Key Issues Highlighted:**

 ◆ **Implementation Challenges:** The report points to partial implementation in some states, especially in demand-driven modes, impacting universal coverage objectives.

 ◆ **Beneficiary Identification:** Persistent reliance on the BPL list for identifying beneficiaries, coupled with inadequate Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities, raises concerns about delayed coverage and exclusion.

 ◆ **Disbursement Challenges:** NSAP's non-full compliance with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) standards results in financial mismanagement, including over-payments and diversion of funds.

◈ **Recommendations by CAG:**

 ◆ **Beneficiary Data Management:** CAG calls for specific measures to weed out ineligible beneficiaries and enhance the verification/authentication of beneficiary data.

- ◆ **Financial Management:** Urgent measures are recommended to avoid idling and diversion of NSAP funds, emphasizing timely payments and avoiding inadmissible expenditures.

- ◆ **System-based Checks:** CAG proposes the implementation of system-based checks to prevent overpayments, short payments, multiple payments, and delays in pension disbursement.

- ◈ **Way Forward:**

  - ◆ **Digital Integration:** The CAG's recommendations highlight the need for integrating pension disbursements with Aadhaar/biometric authentication to streamline the process.

  - ◆ **Social Audit and Grievance Redressal:** Establishing robust social audit and grievance redressal mechanisms is crucial for ensuring transparency, accountability, and beneficiary satisfaction.

22. STRENGTHENING MULTI-STATE CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES: THE NEED FOR AMENDMENT

- ◈ **Preface:** The Multi-State Co-operative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002, was recently amended through the Multi-State Co-operative Societies (Amendment) Bill, 2023, to enhance the functioning of co-operative societies operating across state boundaries.

- ◈ **Key Provisions and Objectives:**

  - ◆ **Application:** The Act applies to all co-operative societies operating across state borders.

  - ◆ **Registration:** MSCS are registered under the Act through a Central Registrar appointed by the Central Government.

  - ◆ **Internal Governance:** Societies can formulate bye-laws for internal governance.

  - ◆ **Reorganization:** Central Registrar can prepare schemes for amalgamation or reorganization of co-operative banks with approval from the RBI and in accordance with the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

- ◈ **Amendments and Key Features:**

  - ◆ **Co-operative Election Authority:** The Bill proposes the establishment of a Co-operative Election Authority by the central government for conducting elections to the boards of MSCS.

  - ◆ **Amalgamation and Division:** Co-operative societies registered under state laws can merge into existing MSCS.

  - ◆ **Rehabilitation Fund:** A fund is established to revive sick MSCS, funded by societies in profit.

  - ◆ **Restriction on Government Shareholding:** Government shares in MSCS cannot be redeemed without shareholder approval.

  - ◆ **Redressal Mechanism:** Co-operative Ombudsman appointed by the central government for dispute resolution.

  - ◆ **Inclusive Board Composition:** The amendment mandates the inclusion of one Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe member and two women members on the board.

- ◈ **Need for Amendment:**

  - ◆ **Consistency with Constitutional Amendment:** Aligning the MSCS Act with the Constitution (Ninety-Seventh) (Amendment) Act, 2011, incorporating Part IX-B.

  - ◆ **Strengthening Governance:** Plugging loopholes and enhancing governance in MSCS based on cooperative principles.

  - ◆ **Reforms for Ease:** Streamlining registration processes, promoting active membership, and ensuring transparency.

- ◆ **Reviving Sick Societies:** Dedicated fund for reviving financially distressed MSCS.

- ◈ **Conclusion:** Efforts for successful reorganization of MSCS require capacity-building, technology adoption, and member support. The amendments aim to foster a more robust and transparent co-operative sector contributing to economic development.

23. EMPOWERING CITIZENS THROUGH A RIGHT-BASED APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

- ◈ **Preface:** The Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023, signifies a shift towards a right-based approach to development, emphasizing minimum guaranteed income and employment opportunities.

- ◈ **Key Provisions and Objectives:**

  - ◆ **Minimum Guaranteed Income:** The bill proposes providing a minimum guaranteed income through guaranteed wages or pensions, aligning with constitutional principles.

  - ◆ **Employment Opportunities:** A focus on creating employment opportunities in both urban and rural areas.

  - ◆ **Constitutional Alignment:** The bill is in line with Article 38(2) and Article 41 of the Directive Principles of State Policy, emphasizing minimizing inequalities and the right to work.

- ◈ **Right-Based Approach to Development:**

  - ◆ **Human Rights Perspective:** A rights-based approach views development as the realization of fundamental human rights, expanding people's choices and capabilities.

  - ◆ **Inclusive Development:** Recognizing the poor and vulnerable groups as active participants in development, not passive recipients.

  - ◆ **Rights-Based Initiatives:** Examples include the MGNREGA Act and RTI Act, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and citizen participation.

- ◈ **Need for a Right-Based Approach:**

  - ◆ **People's Participation:** Acknowledges citizens as active agents in their development rather than mere beneficiaries.

  - ◆ **Inclusive Development:** Provides preferential treatment for disadvantaged groups, promoting equitable development.

  - ◆ **Government Accountability:** Strengthens the capacity of duty-bearers to fulfill their obligations, fostering a culture of accountability.

  - ◆ **Poverty Reduction:** A tool for breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

- ◈ **Challenges and Solutions:**

  - ◆ **Development Costs:** Mass distribution of welfare goods may have high costs; balancing with long-term developmental initiatives is crucial.

  - ◆ **Technology Constraints:** Lack of data protection legislation hinders effective utilization of technological interventions.

  - ◆ **Beneficiary Aversion:** Cumbersome documentation requirements and inclusion-exclusion errors need correction.

- ◈ **Way Forward:**

  - ◆ **Autonomy to Financial Institutions:** Monitoring government expenditures for better channeling towards productive uses.

  - ◆ **Eliminating Leakage:** Streamlining identification measures and policy corrections to plug corruption during distribution.

- ◆ **Data-Based Policy:** Collecting disaggregated data for better program targeting and ensuring data protection.

- ◆ **Grievance Redressal:** Incorporating effective complaint mechanisms to address issues and maintain public trust.

- ◆ **Periodical Reviews:** Conducting regular reviews to rectify shortcomings hindering welfare scheme goals.

24. TACKLING GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS: WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME'S IMPERATIVE ROLE

- ◈ **Preface:** The World Food Programme (WFP) grapples with the challenge of addressing the global food crisis, as more than 345 million people face heightened food insecurity in 2023 due to various factors.

- ◈ **Global Food Crisis Overview:**

  - ◆ **Acute Rise in Hunger:** The number of acutely hungry people has more than doubled since 2020, attributed to COVID-19, conflicts, the Russia-Ukraine war, and economic decline.

  - ◆ **Funding Shortfall:** WFP struggles with a funding shortfall as the cost of delivering food assistance has increased by 44%, outpacing available funding.

  - ◆ **Logistics Challenges:** Remote and difficult-to-access areas, exacerbated by climate change and natural disasters, pose logistical hurdles.

- ◈ **WFP's Role and Solutions:**

  - ◆ **Efficient Logistics Management**: Investment in advanced logistics systems, technology, and local partnerships for optimized food delivery.

  - ◆ **Empowering Local Communities**: Collaborating with local communities for active involvement in food security initiatives, fostering sustainability.

  - ◆ **Better Coordination:** Improved collaboration with humanitarian organizations, UN agencies, and local governments for efficient resource allocation.

  - ◆ **Data Analysis:** Utilizing technological innovations for data collection and processing to incorporate affected people's perspectives into solutions.

- ◈ **WFP's Initiatives in India:**

  - ◆ **Transforming Public Distribution System:** Innovations like 'Annapurti'—automatic grain dispensers aimed at checking malpractices.

  - ◆ **Fortification of Government-Distributed Food:** Introducing multi-micronutrient fortification of school meals to enhance nutritional value.

  - ◆ **Food Insecurity Mapping:** Using Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping software to identify and target India's most food-insecure areas.

- ◈ **Way Forward:**

  - ◆ **Collaborative Efforts:** Continued cooperation with local and international partners for effective humanitarian responses.

  - ◆ **Technological Innovation:** Ongoing investment in technology to enhance data-driven decision-making and program effectiveness.

  - ◆ **Community Empowerment:** Strengthening local capacities and ensuring the active participation of affected communities in the formulation of solutions.

25. URBANIZATION AND AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS: NAVIGATING CHALLENGES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

◈ **Preface:** The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI), 2023, highlights the impact of urbanization on agri-food systems, emphasizing both opportunities and challenges.

◈ **Key Findings from SOFI 2023:**

♦ **Increased Hunger:** The report notes a rise in hunger, with 122 million more people facing food insecurity since 2019 due to various factors.

♦ **Nutrition Challenges:** Stunting, wasting, and overweight issues persist, affecting 22.3%, 6.8%, and 5.6% of children, respectively.

♦ **Urbanization's Influence**: Urbanization has transformed how, where, and what food is produced, supplied, and consumed.

◈ **Urbanization's Impact on Agri-Food Systems:**

♦ **Diverse Food Choices:** Urbanization leads to increased household consumption of diverse foods, including more processed items.

♦ **Better Linkages:** Improved infrastructure results in better midstream and downstream food supply chain linkages, benefiting rural producers.

♦ **Employment Opportunities:** Urbanization creates diverse employment opportunities along the food value chain.

◈ **Adverse Consequences and Measures:**

♦ **High Cost of Nutritious Foods:** Affordability issues of nutritious foods for the poor, contributing to malnutrition.

♦ **Exclusion of Small Farmers:** Formalization of value chains may exclude small farmers, leading to income loss.

♦ **Land Use Changes:** Urban expansion altering land use and threatening peri-urban agricultural livelihoods.

◈ **Strategies for Sustainable Development:**

♦ **Leveraging Connectivity:** Policy approaches should leverage connectivity between urban, peri-urban, and rural areas.

♦ **Infrastructure Investments:** Public investments in infrastructure, public goods, and capacity enhancements to ensure food security.

♦ **Governance Mechanisms**: Cross-sectoral governance mechanisms and institutions to address the complex nature of agri-food systems.

26. STRENGTHENING GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL MECHANISMS: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

◈ **Preface:** The Grievance Redressal Assessment & Index (GRAI) for the year 2022 has been launched, aiming to improve the quality of public grievance redressal. This initiative, conceptualized by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), is part of the 10-step Centralized Public Grievance Redressal and Management System (CPGRAMS) reforms. The index evaluated 89 Central Ministries and Departments, showing an improvement in the average disposal time from 32 days in 2021 to 27 days in 2022.

◈ **Key Dimensions of GRAI 2022:**

♦ **Efficiency:** The index measures the speed and effectiveness of grievance redressal mechanisms.

- ◆ **Feedback:** It assesses the responsiveness of organizations to feedback from aggrieved individuals.

- ◆ **Domain:** Evaluation of the coverage and inclusiveness of the grievance redressal system.

- ◆ **Organizational Commitment:** An analysis of the commitment of organizations to address grievances.

- ◈ **Challenges in Existing Grievance Redressal Systems:**

  - ◆ **Low Awareness:** A significant challenge is the low awareness among citizens regarding the existence of redressal mechanisms in government departments.

  - ◆ **Overburdening Judiciary:** Internal systems for grievance redressal are often inefficient, leading to an overburdening of the judiciary.

  - ◆ **Non-Uniformity:** Variations exist across ministries in terms of frameworks, processes, and capacity for handling grievances.

- ◈ **CPGRAMS 10-Step Reforms:**

  - ◆ **Universalization of CPGRAMS 7.0:** Expanding the reach of the grievance redressal system.

  - ◆ **Use of AI in CPGRAMS:** Incorporating artificial intelligence to enhance efficiency.

  - ◆ **Grievance Redressal Index:** Introduction of an index to evaluate and rank ministries and departments.

  - ◆ **Feedback Call Centre:** Establishing a mechanism for receiving and responding to feedback.

  - ◆ **Monthly Progress Reports**: Regular reporting on the progress of grievance redressal.

- ◈ **Strengthening Grievance Redressal Mechanisms:**

  - ◆ **Identifying Grievance-Prone Areas:** Conducting work audits to identify areas susceptible to corruption and grievances.

  - ◆ **Citizen Awareness**: Undertaking widespread publicity through various media channels to inform citizens of their rights.

  - ◆ **Attitudinal Change in Civil Servants:** Encouraging an attitudinal shift through recognition of good work and effective suggestions.

27. REGULATING OTT PLATFORMS FOR RESPONSIBLE DIGITAL CONTENT

- ◈ **Preface:** The regulation of Over The Top (OTT) platforms has gained prominence, with the Digital Publisher Content Grievances Council recommending punitive action on an OTT platform under the Information Technology Rules (2021). OTT platforms, offering movies and TV shows over the internet, have seen a surge in viewership, with India's OTT viewership projected to rise to 50 million by the end of 2023.

- ◈ **Key Aspects of OTT Regulation:**

  - ◆ **Existing Laws:** OTT content is subject to laws such as the Information Technology Act 2000, Indian Penal Code 1861, and the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986.

  - ◆ **Information Technology Rules 2021:** The government introduced rules empowering the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to regulate content on OTT and online platforms.

  - ◆ **Self-Classification of Content**: Platforms are required to self-classify content into age-based categories with parental locks.

  - ◆ **Co-Regulation Approach:** India adopts a light-touch co-regulation model, with self-regulation at the industry level and oversight at the ministry level.

◈ **Grievance Redressal Mechanism for OTT:**

  ◆ **Three-Level Mechanism:** OTT platforms are mandated to establish a three-level grievance redressal mechanism, including a Grievance Redressal Officer, a self-regulatory body, and an oversight mechanism by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

  ◆ **Self-Regulatory Bodies:** These bodies, headed by retired judges or eminent persons, oversee content standards and address grievances.

  ◆ **Oversight Mechanism:** The Ministry formulates an oversight mechanism, ensuring transparency and accountability.

◈ **Future Considerations:**

  ◆ **National Broadcasting Policy:** There is a growing need for a comprehensive national broadcasting policy to standardize mechanisms, regulations, and tariffs across various broadcasters, including OTTs.

  ◆ **Awareness Campaigns:** OTT industry associations should conduct periodic campaigns to raise awareness about the grievance redressal mechanism.

  ◆ **Regular Auditing:** Independent bodies should conduct periodic audits to ensure the efficacy of access controls, age verification mechanisms, and grievance redressal details.

28. ADVANCING SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH DECENT WORK

◈ **Preface:** The International Labour Organization (ILO) has released a report titled 'Advancing Social Justice,' emphasizing the importance of promoting decent work to achieve social justice. Social justice, characterized by fairness, equality, and the empowerment of individuals, is intertwined with the concept of decent work, defined by the ILO as productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity.

◈ **Dimensions of Social Justice and Decent Work:**

  ◆ **Poverty and Inequality:** Decent work helps eliminate poverty and inequality by ensuring a living wage and social protection.

  ◆ **Improving Living Standards:** It contributes to material well-being, higher living standards, and access to quality education and healthcare.

  ◆ **Dignity and Social Inclusion**: Decent work fosters dignity, social inclusion, and enables individuals to shape their own lives.

◈ **Challenges in Achieving Social Justice:**

  ◆ **Persistent Injustices:** Despite efforts, millions still live in extreme poverty, engage in child labor, and face modern slavery.

  ◆ **Labour Market Insecurity:** Over 4 billion people globally lack social protection, and over 60% of the workforce is in the informal economy.

  ◆ **Rising Inequality:** Gender pay gaps, coupled with discrimination based on race, disability, and migrant status, contribute to increasing inequality.

  ◆ **Weakening Social Contracts:** Disaffection and polarization within societies undermine solidarity.

◈ **Strategies for Attaining Social Justice:**

  ◆ **Ensuring Access to Decent Work:** Creation of jobs through public and private investment, with a focus on rural diversification and women's access to productive resources.

  ◆ **Trust in Public Institutions:** Governments, employers, and workers must engage in social dialogue to shape joint solutions and rebuild trust.

◆ **Fair Transition to Technology:** Attention to data privacy, AI bias, and a fair transition to technology to prevent discrimination.

◆ **Global Coalition for Social Justice:** Multilateral cooperation and policy coherence on a global scale to elevate social justice as a policy imperative.

29. CHALLENGES IN COMBATING INTERNET SHUTDOWNS

❖ **Preface:** The issue of internet shutdowns has garnered attention, with the Supreme Court seeking compliance with its judgment in Anuradha Bhasin's case (2020), challenging the suspension of mobile, landline, and internet services during the revocation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.

❖ **Reasons for Internet Shutdowns:** Anuradha Bhasin's case proposed guidelines, emphasizing that indefinite suspension of internet services is impermissible. The Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Service) Rules, 2017, allows temporary shutdowns on grounds of public emergency for up to 15 days.

❖ **Challenges:** The subjective nature of defining emergencies and the lack of clear criteria for proportionality in suspensions pose challenges. The impact on freedom of speech, expression, and trade is a constitutional concern.

❖ **Governance and Legal Aspects:** The article explores the governance and legal dimensions of internet shutdowns, emphasizing the need for adherence to the rule of law.

◆ **Role of the Judiciary:** The Supreme Court's intervention highlights the judiciary's role in upholding constitutional rights during such shutdowns.

◆ **Compliance with Guidelines:** Analyzing compliance with the proposed guidelines, the article delves into the importance of judicial review in ensuring adherence to constitutional principles.

❖ **Impact on Society:** Internet shutdowns affect various sectors, from communication to business and education. Examining the social implications sheds light on the urgency of addressing this issue.

◆ **Economic Impact:** Disruptions in online activities can lead to economic losses, impacting businesses and livelihoods.

◆ **Educational Disruption:** The shutdowns hinder access to online education, exacerbating educational inequalities.

❖ **Future Directions:** To mitigate the challenges associated with internet shutdowns, the article proposes future directions for governance and policy.

◆ **Legislative Reforms:** Advocating for reforms in the existing legal framework, the article suggests clearer criteria for declaring emergencies and proportionate suspension durations.

◆ **Technological Alternatives:** Exploring technological alternatives to blanket shutdowns, the article emphasizes the need for targeted measures to address specific concerns.

30. REFORMING PRISONS: MODEL PRISONS ACT 2023 AND BEYOND

❖ **Preface:** The Ministry of Home Affairs has introduced the 'Model Prisons Act 2023' to replace the outdated Prisons Act of 1894. This marks a crucial step toward addressing the shortcomings in the management and administration of prisons in India.

❖ **Challenges in the Current System:** The article delves into the challenges faced by the current prison system, including High undertrial populations, overcapacity issues, difficulties in obtaining bail, vacancies in prison officials, and incidents of violence within prisons.

- ◆ **Undertrial Statistics:** Over 77% of jail inmates are undertrials, it emphasizes the need for expedited adjudication processes.
- ◆ **Overcrowding and Safety Concerns:** Due to the high occupancy rates and incidents of violence, there is need of modernizing prisons for better security and living conditions.

- ❖ **Proposed Reforms in the Model Prisons Act 2023:** Model Prisons Act 2023, the article explores measures aimed at encouraging good conduct, reformation and rehabilitation, and enhancing safety and security.
  - ◆ **Parole and Furlough:** Discussing the provisions for granting parole and furlough, the article evaluates their potential impact on rehabilitation.
  - ◆ **Vocational Training and Skill Development:** Emphasizing the importance of reformation, the article explores the provisions for vocational training and skill development.

- ❖ **Constitutional Perspective:** The constitutional aspects of prison management, emphasis the state's responsibility and the role of the Model Prisons Act as a guiding document for states.
  - ◆ **State Responsibilities:** The state is responsible in monoging and administrating prisons.

- ❖ **Ensuring Human Rights:** The Model Prisons Act aims to ensure that individuals in prison are treated with dignity and their human rights are safeguarded.

31. ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL POLYCRISIS: COMBATING CHILD MARRIAGE

- ❖ **Preface:** UNICEF's analysis highlights the impact of multiple crises, including conflict, climate shocks, and the aftermath of COVID-19, on the progress made in ending child marriage globally.

- ❖ **UNICEF's findings:** Emphasizing that while global child marriage rates have decreased slightly to 19%, approximately 640 million girls and women have experienced child marriage, with India still accounting for one-third of the world's child brides.

- ❖ **Reasons for Child Marriages:** The article investigates the underlying causes of child marriages, including gender inequality, social norms, poverty, lack of education, and safety concerns, providing a comprehensive understanding of the issue.
  - ◆ **Gender Inequality:** Exploring the role of gender norms and discrimination, the article discusses how these factors contribute to child marriages.
  - ◆ **Educational Barriers:** Analyzing the impact of limited access to education, the article underscores the importance of addressing educational disparities to prevent child marriages.

- ❖ **Initiatives and Legislative Measures:** Highlighting ongoing initiatives like the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme, and parliamentary considerations to raise the age of marriage for women, the article discusses the role of legislation in combating child marriage.
  - ◆ **Legal Framework:** Explaining the key provisions of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, the article emphasizes the legal measures in place to prevent child marriages.
  - ◆ **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao:** Discussing the government's flagship scheme, the article explores how it aims to address factors linked to child marriage.

- ❖ **Future Directions:** The article suggests future directions, emphasizing the importance of continued legislative efforts, awareness campaigns, and targeted interventions to combat child marriage and achieve SDG targets.
  - ◆ **Legislative Reforms:** Advocating for continuous legislative efforts, the article discusses the potential impact of raising the legal age of marriage for women.
  - ◆ **Community Engagement:** Emphasizing the role of community engagement, the article underscores the importance of grassroots efforts in preventing child marriages.

32. MODERNIZING LAND RECORDS IN INDIA: A PATH TO CONCLUSIVE TITLING

- ❖ **Preface:** The National Generic Document Registration System (NGDRS) and Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) are integral components of India's Land Records Modernization. With 28 states/UTs adopting NGDRS and 26 adopting ULPIN, the initiative aims to streamline property transactions and enhance transparency.

- ❖ **NGDRS Overview**: Initiated by the Department of Land Resources, NGDRS is a configurable application facilitating online property transactions. It aims at One Nation One Software, empowering citizens for online land purchases, and providing a single platform for all stakeholders in the registration process.

- ❖ **ULPIN Significance:** ULPIN, a 14-digit identifier developed by the National Informatics Centre, ensures standardization, easy record sharing, and transparency. Its basis on land coordinates and cadastral maps minimizes disputes, protects government land, and ensures efficient land management.

- ❖ **Move towards Conclusive Land Titling:** The land records modernization program strives to shift from Presumptive Titles to Conclusive Titles. Presently, property ownership relies on presumptive titling (Record of Rights), lacking a state guarantee. This shift aims to resolve land disputes, enhance standardization, and offer clear land titles.

- ❖ **Challenges and Need for Modernization**: Land disputes account for 66% of civil suits, with an average dispute pendency of 20 years. Varying land record management systems, manual record-keeping, and administrative challenges necessitate a modernized approach.

- ❖ **Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP):** Launched in 2016, DILRMP focuses on developing an Integrated Land Information Management System (ILIMS) for standardized land records across states. Efforts like SVAMITVA Scheme use drone technology for mapping and providing legal ownership cards.

- ❖ **Conclusion:** Land record modernization should culminate in conclusive land titling, addressing legacy issues. The adoption of advanced technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain can further enhance the system's efficiency.

33. REGULATING ONLINE GAMING IN INDIA: NAVIGATING THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

- ❖ **Preface:** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's recent amendments to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 reflect an effort to enhance due diligence in the realm of online gaming and combat the spread of fake or misleading information related to government affairs.

- ❖ **Key Features of the Rules on Online Gaming:** The amended rules bring clarity to the online gaming ecosystem, introducing clear definitions for "online games" and "online gaming intermediaries (OGI)." The rules emphasize the role of intermediaries in ensuring the legitimacy of online games, especially those involving real money.

- ❖ **Due Diligence by OGI:** Intermediaries are now required to make reasonable efforts to avoid hosting, publishing, or sharing online games that could harm users. The verification of games by a designated Self-Regulatory Body (SRB) adds an extra layer of scrutiny, safeguarding users from potentially harmful content.

◈ **Additional Obligations on OGI:** The rules impose additional obligations on OGIs involved in real-money online games, including displaying a mark of verification by the SRB, informing users about withdrawal or refund policies, obtaining KYC details, and restricting third-party credit or financing.

◈ **Concerns with Regulation:** Despite the positive steps, concerns exist regarding the definition of "game of skill" versus "game of chance." The absence of clear definitions and guidelines may pose challenges in enforcing regulations and determining the legality of certain online games.

◈ **Regional Variances:** Online gaming regulations fall under state jurisdiction, resulting in varying legal frameworks across states. The recent ban on Online Real Money games in states like Tamil Nadu raises questions about the need for a more uniform approach to regulation.

◈ **Way Forward:** While the amended rules provide essential clarity, effective regulation of online gaming demands collaboration among stakeholders, including state and union governments. Acknowledging the industry's size and importance is crucial for a comprehensive regulatory framework.

34. MENACE OF FAKE NEWS

◈ **Introduction:** Artificial intelligence is automating the creation of fake news, spurring an explosion of web content mimicking factual articles that instead disseminates false information about elections, wars and natural disasters.

   ◆ **Social media's evolution as a distributor of news** has had serious consequences for what counts as journalism and what gets conflated with the truth.

   ◆ The Asia-Pacific region has experiences a 1530% surge in deepfake cases from 2022 to 2023 amid a growing trend in sophisticated scams.

◈ **Amendment to IT Rules: Social media platforms and other intermediaries** on the Internet are now required to make sure that **"fake news"** articles about the Union Government which are not declared by the **Press Information Bureau (PIB),** are taken down from **their platforms** when they are alerted to such posts.

◈ **Causes for Rise in Fake News:** Increasing usage of internet and social media, lack of checking authenticity, No codes of practice for social media.

◈ **Measures to tackle fake news:**

   ◆ Education and Awareness

   ◆ Strict Regulation

   ◆ An ombudsman Institution to deal with the credibility of news sources

   ◆ Legislation to Curb Fake News

   ◆ Accountability of Social Media

> Spreading misinformation or disinformation is a crime under both the Indian Penal Code and the Information Technology Act, 2000.
> ◆ Sections under IT Act, 2000- Section 67 and Section 69.
> ◆ Sections under IPC sections: Section 153A, Section 292, Section 295A, Section 499, Section 500, Section 503, Section 504, Section 505, Section 505 (1)
> ◆ Section 54 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005
> ◆ Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023

35. FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY (FLN)

◈ **Preface:** In the recent release of the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) report by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EACPM), alarming trends in the overall state of FLN among children aged below ten years were revealed. The report, prepared by the Institute

for Competitiveness, compared states on 36 indicators across five key domains, linking them with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

◈ **Key Findings:** The FLN report highlighted disparities among states, with Punjab leading in literacy proficiency. However, 42% of Indian students met the global minimum proficiency in literacy, and 37% partially met the global minimum proficiency in mathematics. Gender disparities were noted, with higher percentages of girls underperforming compared to boys. Telugu and Mizo showcased better proficiency, while Tamil, Konkani, Assamese, and Bodo languages struggled.

◈ **Challenges and Solutions:**

   ◆ **Challenges** in achieving FLN included historical neglect, discrepancies in FLN understanding between the National Education Policy (NEP) and NIPUN Bharat Mission, language preferences in private schools, teacher shortages, digital divides, pandemic-induced learning losses, malnutrition, and poor infrastructure.

   ◆ **Solutions** involve promoting familiar language as a medium of instruction, emphasizing interpersonal interactions, recruiting skilled teachers, improving internet access, providing catch-up opportunities for pandemic-affected students, enhancing nutrition knowledge, and upgrading infrastructure.

◈ **Way Ahead:** To achieve universal FLN, the report suggests incorporating children's nutrition education, improving internet penetration, offering catch-up opportunities, and focusing on school infrastructure. Smart initiatives like Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 aim to improve nutritional outcomes among children and mothers, while future policies should prioritize efficient school infrastructure projects.

36. PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS (PVTGS)

◈ **Introduction:** The announcement of the **Pradhan Mantri PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups) Development Mission (PMPDM)** in the **2023-24 Union Budget** has brought attention to the socio-economic development of these groups. PVTGs face challenges across various domains, necessitating targeted efforts for their upliftment.

◈ **PVTG Mission and Need:** The PMPDM, part of the **'Reaching the Last Mile' initiative**, allocates ₹15,000 crore over three years to empower PVTGs with essential facilities like safe housing, clean drinking water, education, nutrition, roads, telecom connectivity, and livelihood. PVTGs, facing challenges in literacy, demographic trends, economic livelihoods, cultural erosion, political representation, environmental impacts, and more, require focused initiatives for their holistic development.

◈ **Historical Context and Initiatives**: PVTGs, identified based on specific criteria, have faced challenges related to socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors. Over the years, various initiatives like the **Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957,** Community Development Programs, Tribal Development Blocks, and others have aimed at their development.

◈ **Challenges and Other Initiatives:** Challenges include social, demographic, economic, cultural, politico-administrative, and environmental/ecological factors. Additional programs and schemes like the **Forest Rights Act (FRA)** and **Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act (PESA)** have been introduced but face operational challenges.

◈ **Way Forward**: The PMPDM's success relies on fair implementation, extensive surveys for accurate data, updating PVTG lists, and recognizing their habitat rights. Other recommendations include recognising women in PVTGs, implementing international conventions, and ensuring fair land allocation.

37. MANUAL SCAVENGING

◆ **Introduction:** The recent use of robotic technology in Kerala to clean manholes highlights the persisting issue of manual scavenging in India. The dehumanizing practice involves manually handling human excreta, posing serious health risks and violating human rights.

◆ **Manual Scavenging:** Manual scavenging involves cleaning and handling human excreta manually, primarily based on caste-based occupation in India. Despite its prohibition in 1993, the practice continues, affecting an estimated 58,098 individuals.

◆ **Reasons for Persistence:** The challenges in eradicating manual scavenging include the informal economy, weak laws, ineffective implementation, water scarcity, restoration and rehabilitation complexities, lack of voice among manual scavengers, and absence of mechanization in cleaning septic tanks.

◆ **Way Ahead for Eradication:** Eliminating manual scavenging requires addressing both demand and supply aspects. Scientific waste disposal, replicating successful models like the Kerala initiative, behavioral change through awareness campaigns, and ensuring affordability and financing for rehabilitation are essential.

38. URBANIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

◆ **Introduction:** Urbanization, the process of increasing population concentration in cities and towns, has profound effects on the environment. As urban areas expand, they influence ecosystems, air and water quality, biodiversity, and overall environmental sustainability.

◆ **Urbanization's Environmental Impact:** The rapid growth of urban areas contributes to deforestation, habitat loss, and fragmentation. Increased demand for resources leads to air and water pollution, waste generation, and energy consumption. Urban heat islands, loss of green spaces, and alteration of natural landscapes are also consequences of urbanization.

◆ **Infrastructure Development:** Urbanization necessitates infrastructure development, including roads, buildings, and transportation systems. While this supports economic growth, it often comes at the expense of natural habitats and biodiversity. Sustainable urban planning is crucial to balance development and environmental conservation.

◆ **Climate Change and Urbanization:** Urban areas are both contributors to and victims of climate change. Emissions from industries and transportation in cities contribute to global warming. Simultaneously, cities are vulnerable to climate-related events such as extreme weather, floods, and heatwaves.

◆ **Smart Urbanization and Sustainable Practices:** Implementing smart urbanization practices involves adopting sustainable technologies, green building designs, efficient waste management, and promoting public transportation. Balancing economic development with environmental conservation is key to achieving long-term urban sustainability.

39. THE RISE OF DIGITAL CURRENCIES: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

◆ **Introduction:** The global financial landscape is witnessing a significant transformation with the rise of digital currencies. From decentralized cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin to central bank-backed digital currencies (CBDCs), these innovations bring both opportunities and challenges to the world of finance.

◈ **Opportunities of Digital Currencies**: Digital currencies offer benefits such as faster and cheaper cross-border transactions, financial inclusion by providing banking services to the unbanked, transparency through blockchain technology, and potential for innovation in the financial sector.

◈ **Challenges and Risks**: Concerns surrounding digital currencies include regulatory uncertainties, risks of cyber-attacks and fraud, potential for money laundering and illicit activities, and the

◈ **Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs**): CBDCs, issued by central banks, aim to provide a stable and regulated form of digital currency. They present opportunities for more efficient monetary policies, reduced transaction costs, and enhanced financial stability, but their implementation requires careful consideration.

◈ **Global Trends and Regulatory Framework**: The global landscape for digital currencies varies, with some countries embracing innovation while others express caution. Establishing a coherent regulatory framework is essential to harness the benefits of digital currencies while mitigating risks.

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