CONTENT

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IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE

1. ELECTIONS & TECHNOLOGY

CONTEXT: The integration of technology in the electoral process has been a significant advancement in modern democracies. It touches upon various aspects, from voter registration to vote counting, aimed at enhancing the efficiency, transparency, and integrity of elections. With advancements in digital technology, elections are witnessing transformative changes that promise to enhance democratic processes and address longstanding electoral challenges. *But it has risks too.*

Impact of Technology on India's Electoral Landscape

➤ **Digital Campaigning:** Indian political parties are increasingly leveraging digital platforms (**Google, Meta and WhatsApp**) for extensive campaigning efforts. Platforms like Google and Meta have seen a surge in political advertising in the early months of 2024.

➤ **Role of Social Media:** Social networks play a pivotal yet controversial role in shaping political narratives. "Diffuse actors," lacking formal affiliations, wield significant influence by amplifying political speech on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. However, the **transparency of their activities remains a concern.**

➤ **Challenges with Content Moderation:** Meta has faced scrutiny for its approach to curbing **hate speech, misinformation, and inflammatory content**

➤ **Emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI):** The advent of low-cost and user-friendly generative AI tools poses novel challenges for India's electoral integrity. These tools empower users to create **sophisticated fake audiovisual content** impersonating **candidates, officials, or media outlets**. Such deceptive content spreads rapidly across social media, potentially inciting violence or undermining electoral fairness.

India presents a challenging environment for social media platforms and messaging apps, so companies need to urgently adopt effective steps to respect human rights in India.

Positives of Technology in Elections	Negatives of Using Technology in Elections
◉ **Reduced Electoral Fraud (**ballot stuffing and manipulation**)** with technologies like **electronic voting machines, blockchain** ◉ **Improved Voter Registration Accuracy with e**lectronic voter registration systems (Aadhaar-linked voter IDs) ◉ **Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS)** and mobile voting apps improve access for service voters, citizens abroad, and those with disabilities or in remote areas. ◉ **Technology streamlines election management tasks**, from nominations to result dissemination, reducing errors and operational costs ◉ **Social media boost voter engagement** by facilitating voter education, outreach, and mobilization efforts	◉ **Deep fake technology** poses threats by circulating misleading videos of political figures. ◉ **Misuse of personal data for micro-targeting**, exemplified by incidents like the *Cambridge Analytica scanda*l, undermines election integrity and erodes public trust. ◉ **Cybersecurity risks** can compromise voter data, disrupt infrastructure, and manipulate results, underscoring the need for robust cybersecurity measures such as encryption and audits. ◉ **Disparities in digital literacy** and access can disenfranchise rural and underprivileged voters

FACT BOX:

Government authority to block online content

◉ By the end of 2022, roughly two-thirds of the Indian population were using smartphones, and by 2026, it is predicted the country will be home to one billion smartphone users.

◉ The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** forbids "any activity which may aggravate existing differences or create mutual hatred or cause tension between different castes and communities, religious or linguistic."

◉ The **IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**, ostensibly aimed at curbing misuse of social media, including to spread "fake news," in fact enhance government control over online platforms.

India's human rights obligations pertaining to elections

◉ India is subject to human rights obligations under international human rights treaties and customary law and is **obligated to conduct elections fairly and freely**, including by ensuring that citizens are able to vote without undue influence or coercion.

◉ India is also obligated to secure other rights when it comes to elections. These include the **rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and privacy; the right of people to run for public office with the freedom to convey their ideas; and the obligation to ensure that voters are able to vote free of abusive or manipulative interference.**

◉ India is party to the:

- ➤ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- ➤ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- ➤ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: **Evaluate the impact of virtual voting on the Electoral process in India. Suggest measures to address the challenges associated with the implementation of e-technologies in the Elections.**

2. FOREIGN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (FHEIS) IN INDIA

CONTEXT: With the Indian government opening up the education sector to Foreign Higher Educational Institutions (FHEIs), there are expectations of enhanced quality, innovation, and international collaboration in higher education. However, this move also brings challenges and concerns regarding regulation, quality assurance, and the impact on domestic institutions.

Significance of FHEIs in India:

➤ **Quality Enhancement**: FHEIs are expected to bring global best practices, advanced curricula, and innovative teaching methodologies to India. Their presence can elevate the overall quality of higher education in the country.

➤ **International Collaboration**: The entry of FHEIs fosters international collaboration in research, faculty exchange, and student mobility. This global engagement can enhance the academic and research capabilities of Indian institutions.

➤ **Diverse Opportunities**: FHEIs offer diverse and specialized courses that may not be available in domestic institutions. This diversity expands the educational choices for Indian students and aligns with global job market requirements.

➤ **Economic Benefits**: The establishment of FHEIs can attract foreign investment and create job opportunities in the education sector. Additionally, it can reduce the outflow of Indian students seeking higher education abroad, thereby retaining talent and financial resources within the country.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Regulation and Quality Assurance**: Ensuring that FHEIs adhere to Indian regulatory standards and maintain high-quality education is a significant challenge. The absence of a robust regulatory framework can lead to the proliferation of substandard institutions.

➤ **Impact on Domestic Institutions**: The presence of FHEIs may create competitive pressures on domestic institutions, particularly those that are not well-funded. This competition can exacerbate inequalities within the higher education sector.

➤ **Affordability and Access**: FHEIs are often associated with high tuition fees, which can limit access for economically disadvantaged students. Ensuring affordability and inclusivity in education remains a critical concern.

➤ **Cultural and Social Integration**: The integration of foreign education models and values with Indian cultural and social contexts can pose challenges. Balancing global standards with local relevance is essential for the success of FHEIs in India.

FACT BOX:

Current State of India's Higher Education System:

⊙ India has **25% of the world's students**. With over 58,000 higher education institutions, India has the world's second-largest higher education system. In 2021-22 alone, nearly 2,400 new institutions were added.

⊙ **Enrollment:** There's been a 4.5% increase in student enrollment compared to the previous year, totaling 4.33 crores.

⊙ **Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER)** for females has been higher than males since 2018-19, thanks to various government schemes empowering women. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to raise the GER to 50% by 2035, a 40% increase from current levels.

⊙ **Pupil-teacher ratio (PTR)** in universities and colleges remains at 24:1.

Government Initiatives for Higher Educat ion in India:

- ⊙ **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** to revamp the education system, focusing on holistic development, flexibility, and multidisciplinary learning. **Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Program (EQUIP):** to enhance access, inclusion, quality, excellence, and employability in higher education.

- ⊙ **Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme (TEQIP):** to improve the quality of technical education through long-term projects implemented in phases.

- ⊙ **Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA):** A Centrally Sponsored Scheme aimed at providing strategic funding to eligible state higher educational institutions.

- ⊙ **University Grants Commission (UGC)** regulates higher education in India, **All India Council for Technical Education, Medical Council of India, Bar Council of India (BCI),** and other statutory bodies specific to different fields of study.

Others:

- ⊙ Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF) Scheme
- ⊙ Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC)
- ⊙ e-PG Pathshala
- ⊙ National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS)
- ⊙ Swayam
- ⊙ Institute of Eminence (IoE) Scheme
- ⊙ Scheme for Higher Education Youth in Apprenticeship and Skills (SHREYAS)

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: The quality of higher education in India requires major improvements to make it internationally competitive. Do you think that the entry of foreign educational institutions would help improve the quality of technical and higher education in the country? Discuss. **(2015)**

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Evaluate the potential impact of allowing Foreign Higher Educational Institutions (FHEIs) to establish campuses in India. What measures should be taken to ensure that their presence benefits the overall higher education ecosystem in the country?

3. EDUCATION AND STATE RIGHTS

CONTEXT: In recent times, controversies have engulfed key exams like NEET-UG, allegations of paper leaks, and irregularities have surfaced. Similarly, the UGC-NET exam was cancelled post conduct, while NEET-PG and CSIR-NET have been postponed. These incidents highlight a crucial debate: the balance between federalism and centralized governance, particularly in 'education'.

▣ Background and Constitutional Shifts

- ➤ Originally, education was **solely under the purview of state legislatures** as a **State subject** in the Constitution. However, during the **Emergency in 1976**, through the **42nd Constitution Amendment**, it was moved to the **Concurrent List.** This amendment expanded the powers of both state assemblies and Parliament, but granted Parliament supremacy in case of conflict.

- ➤ The shift placed education alongside other subjects like forests and weights & measures, diluting state autonomy. This move was based on recommendations to consolidate governance and ensure uniform standards across the nation. However, it sparked debates about federal principles and state rights.

Impact of Centralisation

➤ Centralizing education under the Concurrent List means **both the Union and states can legislate, but once Parliament acts, states cannot enact laws without Presidential assent** if they conflict with Union laws. This setup has implications, particularly in areas like admissions policies.

⊙ **For instance**, the introduction of **NEET for medical admissions** standardized the process nationwide but curtailed states' ability to tailor admissions to local needs.

➤ States argue that such centralization **ignores their educational investments and unique regional requirements, impacting diversity and state-specific educational goals.**

➤ Critics argue that while a **Concurrent List is necessary for national issues**, subjects like education, crucial for local development and identity, should revert to the State List. This shift, they contend, would empower states to innovate, preserve diversity, and cater education to grassroots needs effectively.

➤ Education is not merely about imparting knowledge but also about preserving cultural identity and linguistic diversity.

FACT BOX:

⊙ 'Education' was originally a **State subject** in the Constitution.

⊙ In 1976 (during Emergency) by **42nd Constitution Amendment**, it was shifted to the Concurrent List (List III under Article 246).

⊙ Now, both state Assemblies and the Parliament have the power, with Parliament having supremacy over state Assemblies.

⊙ This is why the **National Education Policy (NEP), or the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET)**, which are brought in by the Union government, take precedence over state governments' own policies.

⊙ The **42nd Constitutional Amendment Act** brought a lot of changes in the Seventh Schedule, which took away some important entries in the State List.

➤ The fields of legislation under Entry 11 (Education), 19 (Forest), 20 (Wild animals and birds) and 29 (Weights and measures) of List II were shifted to List III.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the constitutional and federalism issues surrounding the centralization of education in India, particularly in light of recent controversies and policy shifts. Analyze the implications of education being moved from the State List to the Concurrent List through the 42nd Constitution Amendment Act, 1976.

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4. SOCIAL STOCK EXCHANGE

CONTEXT: The Social Stock Exchange (SSE) is a novel concept aimed at providing a platform for social enterprises and voluntary organizations to raise capital. It is designed to bridge the gap between investors looking to make a social impact and social enterprises needing funds to scale their operations. In India, the SSE aims to facilitate access to capital for non-profit and for-profit social enterprises, thereby promoting social welfare and sustainable development.

⊙ **Need for SSE:** The UNDP estimates that India requires US**D 1 trillion annually to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030,** and has a **funding gap of USD 560 billion per year**. The government alone may not be able to address this gap.

➤ SSE, here, can offer a platform to involve the private sector and **High Net Worth Individuals (HNIs)** in filling this gap, making it a crucial instrument for financing sustainable development in the country.

Significance of Social Stock Exchange:

➤ **Access to Capital**: SSE provides social enterprises with access to a larger pool of capital from impact investors, philanthropists, and mainstream investors. This funding is crucial for scaling social impact initiatives.

➤ **Enhanced Visibility**: Listing on an SSE increases the visibility and credibility of social enterprises, attracting more stakeholders and supporters. This visibility can lead to increased funding and partnerships.

➤ **Standardized Reporting**: SSEs typically require social enterprises to adhere to standardized reporting and impact assessment frameworks. This ensures transparency and accountability in the use of funds and the measurement of social impact.

➤ **Inclusive Growth**: By channeling capital towards social enterprises, SSEs contribute to inclusive growth and development. They address social challenges in areas like education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Regulatory Oversight**: Establishing a robust regulatory framework for SSEs is critical to prevent misuse of funds and ensure investor protection. Clear guidelines and oversight mechanisms are necessary for the successful operation of SSEs.

➤ **Impact Measurement**: Measuring and reporting social impact in a standardized and transparent manner is challenging. Social enterprises need to develop robust impact assessment methodologies to demonstrate their social value.

➤ **Market Development**: The concept of SSE is relatively new, and developing a vibrant market requires awareness and capacity building among social enterprises and investors. Building trust and confidence in the SSE ecosystem is essential.

➤ **Balancing Profit and Impact**: For-profit social enterprises listed on SSEs must balance financial returns with social impact. This balance can be challenging to maintain, especially in competitive markets.

Government's Role: The Government plays the key role of the market maker and influencer:

➤ Demand side ecosystem – social organisations

➤ Supply side ecosystem – investors,

➤ and Infrastructure – the SSE and its intermediaries

However, for both investors and stock exchanges, finding the right investment and the right instrument is a complex task. To ensure that this is done correctly, the **government-appointed SSE regulator (the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI))** has set up an **Advisory Committee** to help create the ecosystem, to guide those involved and to oversee the functioning of the SSEs.

FACT BOX

⊙ SSEs are trading platforms that allow **social businesses and non-profits** to raise capital by **attracting ethical investors** willing to invest in organisations that have a dual **corporate and social mission.**

⊙ SSE operates on the **National Stock Exchange (NSE)** platform and regulated by **Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI).**

Other sources of funding in social sector: corporate social responsibility (CSR), philanthropy, government funding and retail charity

5. FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY & NUMERACY (FLN)

CONTEXT:

- One in every five children born worldwide originates from India. However, there is a big obstacle that lurks underneath this figure: foundational literacy and numeracy (basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics), which is still out of reach for more than 50 million Indian children.

- According to UNESCO, this educational divide has far-reaching effects, and good quality FLN has the ability to pull 171 million people out of poverty globally, with more than half of them living in India.

- **Policy Changes:** India made two significant policy changes in response to these urgent problems.

  - **National Education Policy 2020** stressed FLN's crucial role, providing the groundwork for the revolutionary NIPUN Bharat program.

  - **NIPUN Bharat** aims to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy for all children aged 3-9 by 2026-27

- **Significance of FLN:**

  - **Educational Foundation**: FLN is essential for building a strong educational foundation. Children who achieve proficiency in reading, writing, and arithmetic in the early grades are more likely to succeed academically and pursue higher education.

  - **Economic Impact**: Proficiency in FLN contributes to improved learning outcomes, higher productivity, and better economic prospects. It equips children with the skills needed for gainful employment and economic independence.

  - **Social Development**: FLN is crucial for social development, as it enables individuals to participate effectively in society, make informed decisions, and access essential services. Literacy and numeracy skills empower individuals to navigate daily life and contribute to community development.

  - **Addressing Inequities**: Ensuring universal FLN helps bridge educational and socio-economic disparities. It provides all children, regardless of their background, with an equal opportunity to succeed and improve their quality of life.

- **Challenges and Concerns:**

  - **Teacher Training**: Effective implementation of FLN programs requires well-trained teachers. Many teachers lack the necessary skills and training to teach foundational literacy and numeracy effectively. Continuous professional development and support are essential.

  - **Curriculum and Pedagogy**: Developing age-appropriate and engaging curricula that cater to diverse learning needs is challenging. Innovative pedagogical approaches and teaching aids are needed to make learning enjoyable and effective.

  - **Infrastructure and Resources**: Adequate infrastructure and resources, such as classrooms, learning materials, and digital tools, are necessary for successful FLN implementation. Many schools, particularly in rural areas, face resource constraints.

o **Monitoring and Evaluation**: Robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating FLN programs are essential to track progress and identify areas for improvement. Data-driven decision-making can enhance program effectiveness and outcomes.

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PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

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Q: **The crucial aspect of the development process has been the inadequate attention paid to Human Resource Development in India. Suggest measures that can address this inadequacy. (2023)**

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PRACTICE QUESTION

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Q: **Analyze the role of foundational literacy and numeracy in achieving the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. What challenges must be addressed to ensure universal FLN by Grade 3 in India?**

6. PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS (PVTGS)

CONTEXT: **In a bid to promote inclusivity and generate grassroots impact, Union Budget 2023 had allocated ₹15,000 crore for the development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) under the PM Janjati Adivasi Nyay Maha Abhiyaan (PM-JANMAN). Out of over 700 Scheduled Tribes, the PVTGs make up 75 of those communities and are located in 18 states and the Union Territory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.**

Significance of PVTG Welfare:

➤ **Cultural Preservation**: PVTGs have unique cultures, traditions, and lifestyles that contribute to the cultural diversity of India. Preserving their cultural heritage is essential for maintaining the country's rich social fabric.

➤ **Social Inclusion**: Ensuring the welfare of PVTGs promotes social inclusion and equity. Targeted interventions help bridge the gap between PVTGs and mainstream society, fostering a sense of belonging and participation.

➤ **Sustainable Development**: Addressing the needs of PVTGs through sustainable development practices ensures their long-term well-being. This includes improving access to healthcare, education, and livelihood opportunities while respecting their traditional way of life.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Geographical Isolation**: Many PVTGs live in remote and inaccessible areas, making it difficult to deliver essential services and infrastructure. This isolation hampers their access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

➤ **Low Literacy and Education Levels**: PVTGs have significantly lower literacy and education levels compared to other tribal groups. This educational gap limits their ability to engage with modern economic activities and improves their living conditions.

➤ **Healthcare Access**: PVTGs face severe health challenges due to inadequate access to healthcare services, malnutrition, and prevalent diseases. Traditional healthcare practices may not always address modern health issues, leading to high morbidity and mortality rates.

➤ **Economic Vulnerability**: PVTGs rely heavily on subsistence agriculture, forest produce, and traditional crafts. Limited access to markets, credit facilities, and skill development programs perpetuates their economic vulnerability.

➤ **Policy Implementation**: Despite various welfare schemes and policies, effective implementation remains a challenge. Lack of awareness, bureaucratic delays, and inadequate infrastructure often hinder the reach and impact of these programs.

FACT BOX

About PVTGs in India:

- PVTGs are tribal communities that show either a declining or stagnant population, use of pre-agrarian technology, economic backwardness, low literacy etc.
- There are 75 such communities which are spread over 18 States and Union Territories.
  - **Major distribution**: The highest number of PVTGs are found in Odisha (15), followed by Andhra Pradesh (12), Bihar and Jharkhand (9), Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh (7), Tamil Nadu (6) and Kerala and Gujarat (5 each).
- **Other initiatives for tribals:** Janjatiya Gaurav Divas, Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, PM PVTG Mission

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: Discuss the role of the National Commission for Backward Classes in the wake of its transformation from a statutory body to a constitutional body. (2022)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Evaluate the effectiveness of government policies and schemes in addressing the challenges faced by Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India. What additional measures can be taken to ensure their sustainable development and social inclusion?

7. THE CITIZEN'S CHARTER

CONTEXT: In 1997, India adopted the concept of Citizens' Charter. The concept was first implemented in the United Kingdom by the Conservative Government of John Major in 1991 as a national Programme.

- **The Citizen's Charter** is a commitment document by government organizations, outlining service standards, quality assurances, grievance redressal mechanisms, and transparency to citizens. Originating from the UK in 1991 and adopted in India in 1997, it aims to enhance public service delivery and accountability.
  - In 2011, the government also introduced the Right of Citizens for Time Bound Delivery of Goods and Services and Redressal of their Grievances Bill, 2011 (Citizens Charter) in the Lok Sabha. However, the bill lapsed due to the dissolution of the Lok Sabha in 2014.

Key elements include:

- **Commitment:** Clearly defined objectives to align policies with citizen needs.
- **Implementation:** Designing live interfaces for citizen-government interactions.
- **Monitoring and Review:** Mechanisms for evaluation and improvement of charter effectiveness.

- In India, ministries and departments appoint nodal officers to ensure charter compliance. The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances coordinates these efforts. Despite challenges, the charter aims to bridge citizen-government relations by aligning administration with public needs.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: The Citizen's Charter is an ideal instrument of organisational transparency and accountability, but it has its own limitations. Identify the limitations and suggest measures for greater effectiveness of the Citizen's Charters. (2018)

Q: **Though Citizens' charters have been formulated by many public service delivery organizations, there is no corresponding improvement in the level of citizens' satisfaction and quality of services being provided Analyse. (2013)**

Q: **Discuss the significance of Citizen's Charter in enhancing governance accountability and public service delivery in India.**

8. REGULATION OF FAKE NEWS

CONTEXT: **According to World Economic Forum's 2024 Global Risk Report, false information is one of the major threats for the mankind. Disinformation is defined as situations where the author has purposefully sought to mislead their audience. Misinformation describes information which is spread out of genuine belief, but can be just as harmful – like is sometimes the case with conspiracy theories.**

Significance of Regulating Fake News:

➤ **Protecting Democracy**: Fake news can distort democratic processes by spreading false information, manipulating public opinion, and undermining trust in democratic institutions. Regulating fake news is essential to protect the integrity of elections and democratic governance.

➤ **Public Safety**: Fake news can lead to public panic, social unrest, and violence. Ensuring accurate information is critical for maintaining public safety and social stability.

➤ **Health and Well-being**: During health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, fake news can spread misinformation about medical treatments, vaccines, and health guidelines, endangering public health.

➤ **Economic Impact**: Fake news can impact markets, businesses, and consumer behavior. Ensuring accurate information is vital for economic stability and consumer confidence.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Defining Fake News**: Defining and identifying fake news is challenging, as it can be subjective and context-dependent. A clear and objective framework is necessary to regulate fake news effectively.

➤ **Freedom of Speech**: Balancing the regulation of fake news with the protection of freedom of speech is a critical concern. Over-regulation can lead to censorship and stifle legitimate expression and dissent.

➤ **Technological Solutions**: Technological solutions, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, can help detect and prevent the spread of fake news. However, these technologies are not foolproof and can face ethical and practical challenges.

➤ **Global Cooperation**: Fake news is a global issue that requires international cooperation and collaboration. Cross-border regulations, information sharing, and joint initiatives are essential to address the problem effectively.

Laws Governing Fake News:

⊙ There is **no specific law against fake news in India**. Free publication of news flows from **Article 19** of the Constitution guaranteeing freedom of speech.

⊙ **Press Council of India**, a regulatory body, can warn, admonish or censure the newspaper, the news agency, the editor or the journalist or disapprove the conduct of the editor or the journalist if it finds that a newspaper or a news agency has violated journalistic ethics.

- ◉ **News Broadcasters Association (NBA**) represents the private television news and current affairs broadcasters. The self-regulatory body probes complaints against electronic media.
- ◉ **Indian Broadcast Foundation (IBF)** also looks into the complaints against contents aired by channels.
- ◉ **Broadcasting Content Complaint Council (BCCC)** admits complaints against TV broadcasters for objectionable TV content and fake news.
- ◉ **IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023** aim to tackle the dissemination of false or misleading information through the introduction of fact-checking units.
- ◉ **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS):** It criminalizes the dissemination of false and misleading information that could harm communal harmony.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: **Evaluate the effectiveness of current regulatory frameworks in combating fake news in India. What additional measures can be taken to enhance the accuracy of information and protect democratic processes?**

9. E-COMMERCE PROMOTION AND REGULATION

CONTEXT: **E-commerce has transformed the retail globally, offering convenience, wider reach, and competitive prices to consumers. In India, the e-commerce sector has seen exponential growth, driven by increasing internet penetration, smartphone usage, and digital payments. However, this rapid expansion also brings challenges related to regulation, consumer protection, data privacy, and fair competition.**

⬧ Significance of E-commerce:

- ➤ **Economic Growth**: E-commerce contributes significantly to economic growth by creating jobs, fostering entrepreneurship, and enabling access to markets for small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
- ➤ **Consumer Convenience**: E-commerce platforms offer consumers a wide variety of products and services at competitive prices, along with the convenience of shopping from anywhere at any time.
- ➤ **Market Access**: E-commerce provides a platform for local artisans, farmers, and small businesses to reach national and international markets, promoting inclusive growth.
- ➤ **Innovation and Competition**: The e-commerce sector drives innovation in logistics, payment solutions, and customer service, enhancing overall market efficiency.

⬧ Challenges and Concerns:

- ➤ **Regulatory Framework**: The rapid growth of e-commerce necessitates a robust regulatory framework to address issues such as unfair trade practices, counterfeit products, and compliance with tax laws. Ensuring a level playing field for all market players is crucial.
- ➤ **Consumer Protection**: Protecting consumers from fraudulent activities, ensuring the quality of products, and addressing grievances effectively are significant challenges. Clear guidelines and effective enforcement mechanisms are needed.
- ◉ **Data Privacy and Security**: E-commerce platforms collect vast amounts of consumer data. Ensuring data privacy, preventing breaches, and protecting consumer information are critical concerns.
- ◉ **Fair Competition**: Dominance by a few large players can stifle competition and innovation. Regulations are needed to prevent anti-competitive practices and ensure fair competition.

FACT BOX

- Currently valued at $70 billion, India's online shopping makes up approximately 7 per cent of the country's total retail market.
- With a staggering 881 million users, India boasts the world's second-largest internet user base.
- The quick commerce market within India's hyperlocal mobility sector is forecasted to experience exponential growth, reaching a market size of USD 5.5 billion by 2025.
- **Government schemes' shaping India's digital economy:** Jan Dhan Yojana, BharatNet Project, and the implementation of Goods & Service Tax (GST)

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: Implementation of information and Communication Technology (ICT) based Projects / Programmes usually suffers in terms of certain vital factors. Identify these factors, and suggest measures for their effective implementation. (2019)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the regulatory challenges faced by the e-commerce sector in India. How can the government balance the need for regulation with the promotion of innovation and growth in this sector?

10. INTERNET IN INDIA'S TRIBAL VILLAGES

CONTEXT: The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is planning to collaborate with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to deploy V-SAT stations on a pilot basis for around 80 tribal villages in Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Maharashtra to bring Internet services there.

e-Governance in India's remote regions

- In the remotest villages of India, the implementation of e-governance initiatives has emerged as a crucial necessity to bridge the gap between rural communities and government services.

- The collaboration with ISRO will see the government set up **V-SAT (very small apperture terminal) stations** for these 80 villages that are geographically remote and have difficult terrain, challenges that have kept them out of reach of connectivity for the longest time.

- This pilot project would be monitored so that it could be scaled up to other similar tribal villages in other States as well, adding the goal is also to help with e-governance in these remote areas.

Important e-Governance initiatives:

Digital India Mission , Digi-Locker, Mobile Seva, myGov.in

e-Governance empowering remote villages

- **Challenges:** With limited access to traditional administrative facilities, such as government offices and banks, remote villages often face challenges in accessing essential services and information.

- **Objective:** E-governance initiatives aim to address these challenges by leveraging digital technologies to provide efficient and accessible government services directly to the doorsteps of rural citizens.

- Through the establishment of digital infrastructure, including internet connectivity and digital service centers, villagers can now access a range of services such as applying for government schemes, obtaining certificates, and accessing information on entitlements and benefits.

➤ This transformation has had a significant impact on rural communities, empowering them with greater access to government services, enhancing transparency and accountability in governance, and fostering socio-economic development in the remotest corners of the country.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: "The emergence of Fourth Industrial Revolution (Digital Revolution) has initiated e-Governance as an integral part of government". Discuss (2020)

Q: e-governance in not only about utilization of the power of new technology, but also much about critical importance of the 'use value' of information. Explain. (2018)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the significance of e-governance initiatives in empowering remote tribal villages in India.

11. RIGHT TO REPAIR

CONTEXT: The Department of Consumer Affairs of India (DoCA) has launched the Right to Repair Portal India to provide consumers with access to repair information for their products and reduce e-waste.

- ◉ **"Right to repair"** advocates that the individual who purchases a product must own it completely.

- ◉ This implies that apart from being able to use the product, consumers must be able to repair and modify the product the way they want to.

- ◉ **Monopoly on repair processes infringes the customer's' "right to choose"** recognised by the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019.**

In *Shamsher Kataria v Honda Siel Cars India Ltd (2017)*, for instance, the Competition Commission of India ruled that restricting the access of independent automobile repair units to spare parts by way of an end-user license agreement was anti-competitive.

Significance of Right to Repair:

- ➤ **Consumer Rights**: The right to repair ensures that consumers have the freedom to repair and modify their own devices, promoting autonomy and reducing dependence on manufacturers.

- ➤ **Environmental Sustainability**: Encouraging repairs instead of replacements reduces electronic waste, conserves resources, and minimizes the environmental impact of manufacturing new products.

- ➤ **Economic Benefits**: Repair industries can create jobs and stimulate local economies. Affordable repair options can also save consumers money compared to purchasing new products.

- ➤ **Innovation and Competition**: The right to repair promotes competition by breaking down monopolistic practices where manufacturers restrict access to repair information and parts. This fosters innovation and improves product quality.

Challenges and Concerns:

- ➤ **Manufacturer Resistance**: Manufacturers often resist the right to repair, citing concerns about intellectual property, safety, and quality control. Overcoming this resistance requires balanced regulations that protect both consumer rights and legitimate business interests.

- ➤ **Regulatory Framework**: Developing a robust regulatory framework that ensures access to repair information and parts while maintaining safety and quality standards is crucial.

- ➤ **Awareness and Advocacy**: Raising awareness about the benefits of the right to repair and advocating for legal reforms are essential for the movement's success.

➤ **Technical Challenges**: Some products are inherently complex and difficult to repair. Ensuring that repair information and parts are accessible without compromising safety and functionality is a significant challenge.

FACT BOX

Status of 'repair laws' in India

⊙ In accordance with the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**, monopoly on repair processes infringes the customer's **"right to choose".**

⊙ The right to repair has been partially acknowledged in India in the Consumer disputes jurisprudence.

International practices

⊙ Under the Australian Consumer Law consumers have a right to request that certain goods be repaired if they break too easily or do not work properly.

⊙ The **Massachusetts Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act, 2012** requires automobile manufacturers to provide spare parts and diagnostics to buyers and even independent third-party mechanics.

⊙ The UK also introduced the path-breaking **"right to repair"** in 2021 that makes it legally binding on manufacturers to provide spare parts.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: **Analyze the potential benefits and challenges of implementing the Right to Repair in India. What measures can be taken to balance consumer rights with manufacturers' interests?**

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12. NUTRITION CRISIS IN ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND WOMEN

CONTEXT: **A recent report by the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) has highlighted alarming trends in global hunger, exacerbated by recent global crises and climate impacts. The report coincides with the United Nations' review of progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 2 during its High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.**

⬙ **Situation in India:**

➤ As per the **2023 Global Hunger Index,** India is ranked 111 out of 125 countries and falls into the *serious* category of hunger.

➤ India has by far the highest number of **'zero-food' children** at 6.7 million (67,00,000), accounting for almost half of all 'zero-food children' across 92 countries

➤ According to the **UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2022 Report'**, 224.3 million people, or 16 per cent of India's population, are undernourished with 53 per cent of reproductive-age women also being anemic.

➤ According to the "**State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021**" report, around 9.8% of the Indian population is undernourished.

⊙ **Causes:** The compounding impacts of have exacerbated social and economic inequalities and slowed or reversed previous progress in reducing hunger in many countries.

➤ Climate change

➤ Conflicts

➤ Economic shocks (Unemployment, poverty)

➤ Food wastage

➤ Global pandemic

➤ Russia-Ukraine war

⊙ **Key Initiatives in India**: National Food Security Act, 2013; Mid-Day Meal Scheme; Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana; National Nutrition Mission (Poshan Abhiyan)

Recommendations for Policy Action:

⊙ **Redirect Public Procurement:** Support sustainable small-scale producers through government purchasing policies.

⊙ **Shift Subsidies:** Invest in infrastructure for 'territorial markets' to enhance their capacity and reach.

⊙ **Protect Local Markets:** Safeguard local food systems from corporate dominance through policy interventions.

⊙ **Promote Sustainable Practices:** Encourage biodiverse farming and diverse diets to ensure food security and environmental sustainability.

FACT BOX

What is Zero Hunger?

⊙ **Sustainable Development Goal 2** aims to achieve **"zero hunger".** It aims to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

⊙ To measure the success of achieving this, the UN outlines five targets to indicate our progress towards **Zero Hunger:**

➤ Access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food year-round

➤ End malnutrition in all its forms

➤ Increase agricultural productivity

➤ Sustainable food systems and agricultural resilience

➤ Diversified crops and seeds

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: How far do you agree with the view that the focus on lack of availability of food as the main cause of hunger takes the attention away from ineffective human development policies in India? (2018)

Q: Hunger and Poverty are the biggest challenges for good governance in India still today. Evaluate how far successive governments have progressed in dealing with these humongous problems. Suggest measures for improvement. (2017)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the impact of government nutrition programs on the health and well-being of adolescent girls and women in India. What additional measures are needed to address the persistent nutrition crisis?

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13. INDIA'S ZERO FOOD CHILDREN

CONTEXT: In a study conducted to assess the number of children aged six-23 months who have not consumed any food over a 24-hour period, India has disturbingly ranked high. With 19.3 per cent of children classified as 'zero-food,' India ranked third globally, following west African countries Guinea (21.8 per cent) and Mali (20.5 per cent).

◘ **Scope of the problem**

➤ India has by far the highest number of 'zero-food' children at 6.7 million (67,00,000), accounting for almost half of all 'zero-food children' across 92 countries in the survey.

➤ The problem of such extreme food deprivation is severe among children in U.P.

➤ The states of Uttar Pradesh (28.4%), Bihar (14.2%), Maharashtra (7.1%), Rajasthan (6.5%), and Madhya Pradesh (6%) account for nearly two-thirds of the total zero-food children in India.

◘ **Root cause of the issue**

➤ Alongside **poverty and marginalisation** in economic backgrounds, it's rapid **urbanisation and nuclearised families** that have contributed to such a large number of 'zero food children' in the India's most populous State.

➤ Women from underprivileged economic backgrounds work to sustain their families, resulting in their having **insufficient time to complement breastfeeding** for children above six months of age

➤ Most women are **not aware** of the government's schemes (e.g.,- **Poshan Abhiyan** targeting holistic development and adequate nutrition for children, pregnant women and mothers, and primarily focused on children in the 0-6 years age group)

➤ There is need to introduce solid or semisolid foods to a child's diet -- as breastfeeding alone is not sufficient to provide children with nutrition, which, in turn might hinder their growth and development.

FACT BOX

Share of food

⊙ According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the share of other food contributing to calorific requirements should be about 50% for children aged nine to 11 months (that is, 300 out of 700 Kcal/day), while the share of breastmilk should be greater than other food for children aged six-eight months (that is, 400 out of 600 Kcal/day).

PRACTICE QUESTION:

Q: **India ranks prominently among countries with a high prevalence of 'zero-food' children, particularly in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Discuss the root causes behind this issue and evaluate the effectiveness of existing government schemes in addressing childhood malnutrition. Suggest measures to mitigate this challenge.**

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14. LAND RECORDS MODERNIZATION IN INDIA

CONTEXT: **In recent years, India has taken proactive steps to digitize land records under the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP) to create an integrated land management system. As of December 2023, 95% of the Record of Rights had been computerised, 68% of cadastral maps had been digitised, 94.95% of computerization of registration and 87.48% of the integration of sub registrar offices with land records had been completed.**

◘ **Need of Land Records Modernization:**

➤ **Affected investment**: More than 9.3 million people are affected by land conflicts in a total area spanning 3.9 million hectares. This has an impact on investments worth USD 372 billion. Digitization will decrease the extensive backlog of land dispute cases, thereby reducing the burden of litigation.

➤ **Transparency and Accountability:** Modernized land records ensure transparency in land transactions and ownership, reducing fraud and corruption. It enhances public trust and accountability in land administration.

➤ **Dispute Resolution**: Accurate and updated land records help in the quick resolution of land disputes, reducing the burden on the judiciary and improving access to justice.

➤ **Economic Development**: Clear land titles facilitate investment, credit access, and infrastructure development. It promotes economic activities and enhances the value of land as a financial asset.

➤ **Urban and Rural Planning**: Modernized land records support better urban and rural planning, helping in efficient land use and sustainable development.

▣ Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Data Accuracy**: Ensuring the accuracy and completeness of land records is a significant challenge. Historical inaccuracies, outdated records, and incomplete data can undermine the effectiveness of modernization efforts.

➤ **Technological Integration**: Integrating technology in land records management requires substantial investment, technical expertise, and infrastructure. Ensuring seamless integration and interoperability of systems is crucial.

➤ **Capacity Building**: Building the capacity of government officials and staff to manage and maintain digital land records is essential. Training and skill development programs are needed to ensure effective implementation.

⦿ **Legal and Policy Framework**: Developing a robust legal and policy framework to support land records modernization is necessary. This includes addressing issues related to data privacy, ownership rights, and dispute resolution.

FACT BOX

⦿ Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP): DILRMP is a Central Scheme with 100 per cent funding. The programme is slated to be fully implemented by March 2026, with completion of basic digitisation of Record of Rights (RoRs) and Cadastral Maps and integration of the two, computerisation of Sub Registrar Offices (SROs), and integration of SROs and Revenue Offices by March 2024.

⦿ Bhu-Aadhaar or the Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) project seeks to assign a 14-digit alpha-numeric number to land parcels in India based on the geo-coordinates of the land parcel.

⦿ National Generic Document Registration System (NGDRS): It is a uniform system to address the diversity prevailing across States with regards to registration of deeds/documents.Records of Rights: The rights have been transliterated in all the 22 scheduled languages mentioned in the Constitution to address the problem of linguistic barriers in land governance in the country.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Evaluate the impact of the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP) on land administration in India. What challenges need to be addressed to ensure the success of land records modernization?

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15. REGULATION OF ONLINE GAMING

CONTEXT: The online gaming sector in India has experienced rapid growth, with a 28% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) between FY20 and FY23, and projections indicating further expansion to Rs 33,243 crore by FY28. While the industry offers significant economic potential and entertainment value, it also raises concerns (addiction, financial fraud, data privacy, regulation)

Significance of Regulating Online Gaming:

- ➤ **Consumer Protection**: Regulation ensures that consumers are protected from fraudulent activities, unfair practices, and addiction-related issues. It promotes responsible gaming and safeguards consumer interests.

- ➤ **Economic Growth**: The online gaming industry contributes to economic growth by generating revenue, creating jobs, and fostering innovation. Effective regulation can support sustainable industry growth.

- ➤ **Data Privacy and Security**: Online gaming platforms collect and process vast amounts of personal data. Ensuring data privacy and security is critical to protect users from breaches and misuse of information.

- ➤ **Fair Competition**: Regulation helps maintain a level playing field by preventing monopolistic practices and ensuring fair competition among gaming platforms. It encourages innovation and improves service quality.

Challenges and Concerns:

- ➤ **Regulatory Framework**: Developing a comprehensive regulatory framework that addresses the diverse aspects of online gaming, including licensing, taxation, consumer protection, and anti-addiction measures, is crucial.

- ➤ **Addiction and Mental Health**: Online gaming addiction can lead to adverse mental health outcomes, particularly among young people. Implementing measures to prevent and address gaming addiction is essential.

- ➤ **Financial Risks**: Online gaming involves financial transactions, which can expose users to risks such as fraud, money laundering, and excessive spending. Ensuring secure payment systems and financial safeguards is necessary.

- ➤ **Enforcement and Compliance**: Effective enforcement of regulations requires coordination among various stakeholders, including government agencies, industry players, and consumer groups. Ensuring compliance and monitoring is a significant challenge.

FACT BOX

- ◉ The India Gaming Market is estimated to be USD 3.49 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach USD 7.24 billion by 2029, exhibiting a robust CAGR of 15.68% during the forecast period (2024-2029).
- ◉ India's substantial youth population, evolving IT infrastructure, and increased adoption of mobile devices and high-speed internet are driving this growth.
- ◉ The integration of cutting-edge technologies like Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and the metaverse into console and computer games further propels the industry.

Regulation

- ◉ **Online gaming platform as a 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.
- ◉ These platforms will also be treated as '**reporting entities** under the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, of 2002.**
- ◉ They will be required to report suspicious transactions to the Financial Intelligence Unit India.
- ◉ Online gaming is a **state subject (Schedule 7)**

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: How do pressure groups influence Indian political process? Do you agree with this view that informal pressure groups have emerged as more powerful than formal pressure groups in recent years? (2017)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the regulatory challenges faced by the online gaming industry in India. What measures can be taken to ensure consumer protection and promote responsible gaming?

16. GLOBAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR CRYPTO-ASSET ACTIVITIES

CONTEXT: At the recent G20 Summit, India emerged as a leading advocate for standardizing regulatory frameworks for crypto assets on a global scale, championing international collaboration to address the inherently cross-border nature of crypto assets and the imperative to mitigate the macro-financial implications associated with them.

Significance of Regulating Crypto-Assets:

➤ **Financial Stability**: Unregulated crypto-asset activities can pose risks to financial stability due to their volatility, potential for systemic risk, and lack of oversight. Regulation helps mitigate these risks and ensures market stability.

➤ **Consumer Protection**: Ensuring that consumers are protected from fraud, theft, and misleading information is essential. Regulation provides a framework for safeguarding consumer interests and promoting transparency.

➤ **Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Counter-Terrorism Financing (CTF)**: Crypto-assets can be used for illicit activities due to their pseudonymous nature. Regulatory measures are needed to prevent money laundering, terrorist financing, and other illegal activities.

➤ **Innovation and Growth**: A balanced regulatory framework promotes innovation by providing clarity and certainty to market participants. It encourages the growth of legitimate crypto-asset activities and fosters trust in the market.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Regulatory Harmonization**: Achieving global regulatory harmonization is challenging due to differing national approaches and priorities. Coordination among countries is necessary to address cross-border issues and ensure consistent regulation.

➤ **Technological Complexity**: The evolving and complex nature of crypto-assets requires regulators to stay informed and adapt to new developments. Building regulatory capacity and expertise is essential.

➤ **Balancing Regulation and Innovation**: Striking a balance between regulating crypto-assets to protect consumers and financial stability, while fostering innovation and growth, is a delicate task. Over-regulation can stifle innovation, while under-regulation can lead to risks.

➤ **Jurisdictional Issues**: Crypto-assets operate across borders, making it difficult to enforce regulations and address jurisdictional challenges. International cooperation and legal frameworks are needed to manage these issues.

Countries worldwide are making significant strides.

➤ **Markets in Crypto-assets (MiCA),** the EU-wide regulation, will come into effect this year. MiCA, once put into action, will have a broad scope of application within the crypto asset ecosystem.

➤ **Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC),** the leading global financial center in the **Middle East, Africa, and South Asia (MEASA) region**, enacted the world's first Digital Assets Law.

Q: Has the Indian governmental system responded adequately to the demands of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization started in 1991? What can the government do to be responsive to this important change? (2016)

Q: Evaluate the challenges and opportunities in developing a global regulatory framework for crypto-asset activities. What measures can be taken to ensure financial stability and consumer protection while fostering innovation?

17. MOTHER TONGUE IN FOUNDATIONAL EDUCATION

CONTEXT: The National Curriculum Framework of 2022 emphasizes the importance of teaching children in their mother tongue until the age of eight. According to Section 29(f) of Chapter V in the Right to Education Act of 2009, it clearly states that the medium of instruction should, as much as possible, be in the child's mother tongue.

Positive Aspects of Higher Education in Regional Language

- **Subject-Specific Improvement**: Several studies in India and other Asian countries suggest a positive impact on learning outcomes for students using a regional medium rather than the English medium.
  - Performance in science and math, in particular, has been found to be better among students studying in their native language compared to English.

- **Higher Rates of Participation**: Studying in the native language results in higher attendance, motivation, increased confidence for speaking up among students, and improved parental involvement and support in studies due to familiarity with the mother tongue.
  - Poor grasp of English has been tied by many educationists to dropout rates at the premier engineering education institutions as well as poor performance of some students.

- **Additional Benefits for the Less-Advantaged:** This is especially relevant for students who are first-generation learners (the first one in their entire generation to go to school and receive an education) or the ones coming from rural areas, who may feel intimidated by unfamiliar concepts in an alien language.

- **Increase in Gross-Enrolment Ratio (GER):** This will help provide quality teaching to more students and thus increase Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education.

- **Promotes Linguistic Diversity:** It will also promote the strength, usage, and vibrancy of all Indian languages.
  - This way, private institutions too will be motivated to use Indian languages as a medium of instruction and/or offer bilingual programmes.
  - It would also help prevent language-based discrimination.

Associated Challenges:

- **Insignificant for Institutions with Pan-India Admissions:** A regional language focus is not meaningful in a scenario where the institutes see entrants from across the country such as IITs.

- **Availability of Quality Material in Regional Languages**: Another challenge is the availability of study material such as textbooks and scholarly literature.

- ◉ Also, quality control of these translations will be of utmost importance to keep semantic irregularities at bay.
  - ➤ **Availability of Faculty:** Given the English-medium legacy of higher education in India, attracting and retaining quality teachers who are willing and able to teach in regional languages will be a challenge.
  - ➤ **Maintaining Pace with Global Standards**: Delivering technical courses in regional languages may prevent students from competing in global labour and education markets, where fluency in English yields a distinct edge.
  - ◉ A lack of opportunities for Indian students at the international level may prove counterproductive to the NEP, 2020's aim of bridging the gap between elites and the rest.
  - ◉ It also goes against the vision of promoting the internationalization of education.

> The language policy of India is basically embodied in **Part XVII of the Indian Constitution** along with the **8th schedule** in reference to **articles 344 and 351** (which specify the languages of India for purposes mentioned in these 2 articles), and the articles concerning Fundamental Rights regarding language, education, and culture, etc.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: **The quality of higher education in India requires major improvements to make it internationally competitive. Do you think that the entry of foreign educational institutions would help improve the quality of technical and higher education in the country? Discuss. (2015)**

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: **Analyze the benefits and challenges of using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in foundational education in India. What measures can be taken to effectively implement this approach and enhance learning outcomes?**

18. DRUG ABUSE IN INDIA

CONTEXT: The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has reported a significant increase in global drug use, highlighting the need for a comprehensive strategy to address the issue. The UNODC report reveals that global drug users numbered 292 million in 2022, marking a 20% increase over the past decade.

◻ Implications for Gender Equality and Social Stability

- ➤ **Gender Disparities in Treatment**: The significant barriers faced by women in accessing treatment for drug use disorders underscore the need for gender-sensitive approaches in health care and rehabilitation.
- ➤ **Impact on Young People**: Evidence-based prevention programs are crucial, especially for young people, to equip them with the knowledge and skills to avoid drug use.
- ➤ **Empowerment of Organized Crime**: Drug trafficking fuels organized crime, which diversifies into other illegal economies, such as wildlife trafficking, financial fraud, and illegal resource extraction, exacerbating social instability.

◻ Challenges and Concerns:

- ➤ **Stigma and Awareness**: Stigma associated with drug abuse prevents individuals from seeking help. Raising awareness and promoting understanding are essential for encouraging treatment and support.

- **Access to Treatment**: Limited access to affordable and effective treatment and rehabilitation services is a significant barrier. Expanding and improving these services is crucial.

- **Enforcement and Regulation**: Strengthening enforcement against drug trafficking and ensuring effective regulation of controlled substances are necessary to reduce drug availability and misuse.

- **Comprehensive Approach**: Addressing drug abuse requires a comprehensive approach that includes prevention, education, treatment, and rehabilitation. Coordination among various stakeholders is essential for success.

Strategies for Addressing Drug Use and Its Consequences

- **Comprehensive Strategy Needed**: A multifaceted approach involving prevention, treatment, and law enforcement is essential to tackle the issue effectively.

- **Law Enforcement and Health Rights**: Strengthening law enforcement to disrupt criminal networks must be balanced with upholding human rights and providing health services to those struggling with addiction.

- **Decline in Global Opium Production**: A significant decline in opium production, particularly in Afghanistan (95% decrease in 2023) and Myanmar (36% increase), has long-term implications for global drug markets and treatment services.

Efforts to combat drug problem:

- **Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substance (NDPS) Act, 1985:** It prohibits a person from producing, possessing, selling, purchasing, transporting, storing, and/or consuming any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance.

  - The NDPS Act has since been amended thrice – in 1988, 2001 and 2014.

  - The Act extends to the whole of India and it applies also to all Indian citizens outside India and to all persons on ships and aircraft registered in India.

- **Nasha Mukt Bharat**: The 'Nasha Mukt Bharat', or Drug-Free India Campaign which focuses on community outreach programs.

- **National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR)** is an umbrella scheme of the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJ&E) under which financial assistance is provided to State Governments/ Union Territory (UT) Administrations for Preventive Education and Awareness Generation.

- **Global stance:** India is signatory of the following international treaties and conventions to **combat the menace of Drug Abuse:**

  - United Nations (UN) Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961)

  - UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971)

  - UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988)

  - UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) 2000

Types of Drugs:

In 2016, **6 drug types accounted for nearly all drug trafficking offenses:**

- Methamphetamine: 33.6%
- Cocaine: 19.8%
- Marijuana: 17.6%
- Heroin: 14.4%
- Crack: 8.1%
- Oxycodone: 2.8%
- Other: 3.7%

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: **Evaluate the impact of drug abuse on public health and social stability in India. What measures can be taken to prevent and treat drug abuse effectively?**

19. PVTG WELFARE

CONTEXT: With the 2021 Census indefinitely delayed, the government's attempt at using the PM Gati Shakti portal to estimate the total population of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) across the country is hitting one wall after another.

Why the information is crucial? The information on population is crucial to the implementation of the government's Rs 24,000 crore PM-JANMAN package for PVTGs. This data is needed for accurate gap assessment and to sanction certain infrastructure projects that have a population criteria that need to be met.

Significance of PVTG Welfare:

➤ **Social Inclusion**: Ensuring the welfare of PVTGs is crucial for promoting social inclusion and equity. It addresses historical injustices and ensures that no community is left behind in the development process.

➤ **Health and Nutrition**: PVTGs often suffer from poor health and malnutrition. Targeted health interventions and nutritional support are essential for improving their well-being.

➤ **Education and Livelihoods**: Enhancing educational opportunities and livelihood support for PVTGs can lead to sustainable development and economic empowerment. It helps break the cycle of poverty and marginalization.

➤ **Cultural Preservation**: PVTGs have rich cultural heritage and traditional knowledge. Preserving their cultural identity and promoting community participation in development initiatives are important for their well-being.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Access to Services**: PVTGs often live in remote and inaccessible areas, limiting their access to healthcare, education, and other essential services. Improving infrastructure and service delivery is crucial.

➤ **Resource Constraints**: Limited resources and funding for PVTG welfare programs hinder their effectiveness. Ensuring adequate allocation and efficient use of resources is necessary.

➤ **Policy Implementation**: Effective implementation of policies and schemes targeting PVTGs requires coordination among various government agencies and community organizations. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are essential.

➤ **Community Participation**: Involving PVTGs in the planning and implementation of welfare programs ensures that interventions are relevant and culturally appropriate. Empowering communities enhances the sustainability of development efforts.

About Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)

◉ Tribal communities who are technologically backward, who have stagnant or declining population growth, extremely low level of literacy, and a subsistence level of economy are declared as PVTG.

◉ PVTGs have low health indices and largely reside in isolated, remote, and difficult areas in small and scattered hamlets/habitats.

• There are 75 PVGTs in 18 states and one Union Territory.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: Examine the role of NGOs in the development of marginalized communities in India. How can their participation be made more effective? (2016)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the challenges faced by Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India. What measures can be taken to ensure their welfare and promote inclusive development?

20.'BAIGA' TRIBAL GROUP GETS HABITAT RIGHTS

CONTEXT: The Baiga Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) became the second to get habitat rights in the Chhattisgarh, after the Kamar PVTG.

What are habitat rights?

- ➤ Habitat rights recognition provides the community concerned rights over their
  - ◉ customary territory of habitation
  - ◉ socio-cultural practices
  - ◉ economic and livelihood means
  - ◉ intellectual knowledge of biodiversity and ecology
  - ◉ traditional knowledge of use of natural resources
  - ◉ protection and conservation of their natural and cultural heritage
- ➤ These rights safeguard and promote traditional livelihood and ecological knowledge passed down through generations.
- ➤ They also help converge different government schemes and initiatives from various departments to empower PVTG communities to develop their habitats.

About Baiga PVTG

- ◉ The Baiga community primarily resides in Rajnandgaon, Kawardha, Mungeli, Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi (GPM), Manendra-Bharatpur-Chirmiri, and Bilaspur districts of the state.
- ◉ The community also lives in the adjacent districts of Madhya Pradesh.
- ◉ A total of 19 Baiga villages with a population of 6,483 people (2,085 families) have been given the habitat rights.

What does 'habitat' mean, under what law are such rights granted?

- ➤ Habitat rights are given to PVTGs under **section 3(1) (e) [rights including community tenures of habitat and habitation for primitive tribal groups and pre-agricultural communities]** of The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 also known as the Forest Rights Act (FRA).
- ➤ According to **Section 2(h) of FRA,** "Habitat includes the area comprising the customary habitat and such other habitats in reserved forests and protected forests of primitive tribal groups and pre-agricultural communities and other forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes."

How powerful are these rights?

- ➤ Forest Rights have **legal protection** under the **Forest Conservation Act**, the **Land Acquisition law of 2013,** and even the **SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities. Act.**
- ➤ Grant of habitat rights under the Forest Rights Act provide an **additional layer of legal protection.**
- ➤ If any kind of development activity is hampering their habitat rights, the tribal group concerned can take up the matter with the administration under the Forest Rights Act, and if not resolved, **the matter can be taken to court.**

How many PVTG have recognised habitat rights?

- ➤ Out of 75 PVTG in India, only three have habitat rights.
- ➤ The Bharia PVTG in Madhya Pradesh was the first, followed by the Kamar tribe and now the Baiga tribe in Chhattisgarh.

Q: Discuss the significance of habitat rights granted to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) under the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

21. DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE (DPI)

CONTEXT: India has made several efforts to pioneering role in Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and its transformative impact on governance, technology, and society.

What is digital public infrastructure (DPI)??

➤ DPI is a digital network that enables countries to safely and efficiently deliver economic opportunities and social services to all residents.

➤ DPI can be compared to roads, which form a physical network that connects people and provides access to a huge range of goods and services.

◉ **A strong DPI has three foundational systems:**

➤ Identity (like Aadhaar)

➤ Payments (like UPI)

➤ Data exchange (account aggregators and DigiLocker)

◉ **India's Unique Approach to DPIs:** India's approach to DPIs is characterized by several key principles:

➤ **Public Interest:** DPIs are developed and implemented with the public interest at the core.

➤ **Openness and Interoperability:** DPIs are based on open standards and interoperability platforms, enabling seamless integration with various services.

➤ **Data Privacy and Security:** Data protection and privacy are paramount considerations in the design and implementation of DPIs.

➤ **Innovation and Collaboration:** India encourages innovation and collaboration between the public and private sectors to develop and enhance DPIs.

Bouquet of services

◉ Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

◉ JAM (Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar and Mobile number) trinity

◉ Covid-19 vaccination platform Co-WIN and the National Health Stack. Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA)

◉ National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR)

◉ Digital products: Digital Locker, electronic KYC (eKYC), and on-demand digital signature (e-Sign), FASTag

Significance of Digital Public Infrastructure:

➤ **Service Delivery:** DPI enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery by enabling seamless interactions between citizens and government agencies.

➤ **Economic Growth:** By providing a reliable and accessible digital infrastructure, DPI supports economic activities, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

➤ **Inclusion:** DPI promotes digital inclusion by ensuring that all citizens, including those in remote and underserved areas, have access to essential services and opportunities.

➤ **Transparency and Accountability:** DPI facilitates transparency and accountability in governance by providing real-time data and reducing opportunities for corruption.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Digital Divide:** Ensuring that all citizens have access to digital infrastructure and services is a significant challenge.

➤ **Data Privacy and Security**: Protecting the privacy and security of personal data is crucial as digital systems become more integrated and pervasive.

➤ **Interoperability**: Ensuring that different digital systems and platforms can work together seamlessly requires standardization and coordination.

➤ **Sustainability**: Developing and maintaining robust digital infrastructure requires significant investment and technical expertise.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: **Implementation of information and Communication Technology (ICT) based Projects/Programs usually suffers in terms of certain vital factors. Identify these factors, and suggest measures for their effective implementation. (2019)**

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: **Discuss the importance of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in enhancing public service delivery and economic growth in India. What measures can be taken to address the challenges associated with DPI?**

22. AI IN HEALTHCARE

Context: **India's healthcare sector is actively adopting AI-driven solutions, especially in diagnostics, to enhance accuracy and efficiency. With a substantial pool of data scientists, engineers, and healthcare professionals, India is positioned to lead in AI-driven healthcare solutions, potentially adding USD 1 trillion to its economy by 2035.**

Role/ Applications of AI in healthcare:

➤ Medical Research AI can be used to analyse and identify patterns in large and complex datasets faster and more precisely than has previously been possible.

⊙ It can also be used to search the scientific literature for relevant studies, and to combine different kinds of data for example, to aid drug discovery.

⊙ Researchers have developed an AI 'robot scientist' called Eve which is designed to make the process of drug discovery faster and more economical.

➤ **Clinical Care:** AI has the potential to aid the diagnosis of disease. Using AI to analyse clinical data, research publications, and professional guidelines could also help to inform decisions about treatment.

➤ **Precision Medicine**: Genetics and genomics look for mutations and links to disease from the information in DNA. With the help of AI, body scans can spot cancer and vascular diseases early and predict the health issues people might face based on their genetics.

➤ **Diagnosis:** It is estimated that more than 80% of the health data is unstructured, making it invisible to current systems, according to a PWC report. Unlike humans, AI decisions are all evidence-based and free of cognitive biases or overconfidence, enabling rapid analysis and vastly reducing even eliminating misdiagnosis.

➤ **Monitoring of Chronic Conditions**: Conditions like diabetes, cholesterol, fertility issues and cardiac heath are managed by regular monitoring and lifestyle changes. Connected POC devices help generate a lot of data about the user's body parameters.

Concerns with Artificial Intelligence in healthcare:

➤ **Cultural Acceptance:** Patients often seek assurance from doctors physically present. This creates aversion to technology diagnosing. Elderlies are found to be more averse to adopting new technology.

➤ **Data Safety/ Privacy:** AI systems can challenge privacy through real time collection and use of a multitude of data points that may or may not be disclosed to an individual in the form of a notice with consent taken. Hackers can exploit AI solutions to collect private and sensitive information such as Electronic Health Records.

➤ **Liability:** In case of error in diagnosis malfunction of a technology, or the use of inaccurate or inappropriate data the question arises of who the liability would fall upon the doctor or the software developer.

➤ **Malicious use of AI**: While AI has the potential to be used for good, it could also be used for malicious purposes. For example, there are fears that AI could be used for covert surveillance or screening.

➤ **Effects on patients**: Concerns have been raised about a loss of human contact and increased social isolation if AI technologies are used to replace staff or family time with patients.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: Public health system has limitations in providing universal health coverage. Do you think that the private sector could help in bridging the gap? What other viable alternatives would you suggest? (2015)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of integrating AI in healthcare in India. What measures can be taken to ensure ethical, secure, and effective implementation of AI technologies in the healthcare sector?

23. DECENTRALISED AUTONOMOUS ORGANISATIONS (DAO)

CONTEXT: With the push towards decentralisation and more conversations around it, Decentralised Autonomous Organisations (DAO) seems like a good use case for people who do not want to function via traditional organisational structures.

Decentralised Autonomous Organisations (DAOs) are entities governed by smart contracts on blockchain platforms, enabling decentralized and automated decision-making processes without the need for traditional management structures. DAOs have the potential to revolutionize governance, finance, and various sectors by promoting transparency, inclusivity, and efficiency.

Significance of DAOs:

➤ **Transparency and Accountability**: DAOs operate on blockchain technology, ensuring transparent and immutable records of transactions and decisions, enhancing accountability.

➤ **Decentralization**: DAOs remove centralized control, distributing power among stakeholders, fostering democratic decision-making, and reducing the risk of corruption.

➤ **Efficiency**: Automated processes and smart contracts streamline operations, reducing the need for intermediaries and minimizing administrative costs and delays.

➤ **Inclusivity**: DAOs can enable broader participation by allowing stakeholders from different geographic locations to contribute and vote on decisions.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Regulatory Uncertainty**: The legal status and regulatory framework for DAOs are still evolving, creating uncertainty and potential risks for participants.

➤ **Security Risks**: DAOs are susceptible to cybersecurity threats, including hacks and vulnerabilities in smart contracts, which can lead to significant financial losses.

➤ **Governance Issues**: Ensuring effective governance mechanisms within DAOs, such as decision-making processes, conflict resolution, and accountability, can be challenging.

➤ **Adoption and Awareness**: Promoting the adoption of DAOs requires raising awareness and understanding among potential users and stakeholders, including businesses, governments, and the general public.

DAO	Traditional Organisation
No hierarchies	Historically hierarchical
Changes require voting from stakeholders	Changes are made top-down
Votes are tallied and the outcome is implemented without any intermediaries involved.	In the case of voting, the internal team tallies and dictates the outcome of the voting.
Services offered are handled automatically in a decentralised way	Centrally controlled
Transparent and fully public	Governance activity is private and limited to the public

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: **Analyze the potential benefits and challenges of Decentralised Autonomous Organisations (DAOs) in India. What measures can be taken to promote their adoption and ensure effective governance?**

24. DRONE SECTOR IN INDIA

CONTEXT: **With the vision of realising the goal of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, the Central Government has approved the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for drones and drone components. The Central Government has taken several other initiatives for the growth of the drone sector and to make the country a global drone hub by 2030.**

Significance of the Drone Sector:

➤ **Agriculture**: Drones can enhance agricultural productivity through precision farming, crop monitoring, and efficient use of resources.

➤ **Logistics**: Drones offer innovative solutions for logistics and delivery services, particularly in remote and inaccessible areas.

➤ **Surveillance and Security**: Drones play a crucial role in surveillance, border security, and disaster management, providing real-time data and enhancing response capabilities.

➤ **Healthcare**: Drones can facilitate the delivery of medical supplies and emergency services, improving healthcare access in rural and remote regions.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Regulatory Framework**: Developing a comprehensive regulatory framework that ensures safety, privacy, and security is essential for the widespread adoption of drones.

➤ **Technological Advancements**: Continuous research and development are required to improve drone technology, including battery life, payload capacity, and navigation systems.

➤ **Public Acceptance**: Ensuring public acceptance and addressing concerns related to privacy, security, and potential misuse of drones are crucial for their integration into society.

➤ **Infrastructure**: Developing the necessary infrastructure for drone operations, including landing and charging stations, is important for their efficient use.

Fact Addition

• **Government Initiatives**: The Government of India has introduced the Drone Rules, 2021, to regulate the use of drones and promote their safe and efficient integration into various sectors. The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for drones aims to boost domestic manufacturing and innovation.

• **Global Comparisons**: Countries like the United States and Japan have advanced drone sectors with robust regulatory frameworks, significant investments in technology, and widespread applications in agriculture, logistics, and surveillance.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: **Analyze the potential benefits and challenges of the drone sector in India. What measures can be taken to promote the safe and efficient integration of drones into various sectors?**

25. URBAN FLOODING AND GOVERNANCE

CONTEXT: **Cities like Delhi are grappling with the devastating impacts of urban flooding. Inadequate urban planning and insufficient infrastructure further exacerbate the problem, leaving low-lying areas dangerously exposed to flood during the monsoon seasons. This highlights the importance of adopting sustainable urban development methods and effective governance that embrace water-sensitive design and infrastructure.**

Effective governance to the rescue

➤ **Ensuring sustainable water resource management** requires a combination of financial, human, skilling, and regulatory frameworks, as well as individual initiatives.

➤ **Moreover, raising awareness about the ecological and cultural significance** of water bodies can foster a sense of responsibility and encourage community participation in their preservation and protection.

➤ **Collaboration with government officials and communities** is vital for promoting accountability and meeting the requirements of the local community.

➤ **Strengthening local governance** and establishing a single body in charge of flood control streamlines operations and allows for a more prompt response.

◉ Through effective governance, cities can redefine their urban landscapes, implement necessary measures, and create a more resilient future.

📄 **FACT BOX**

Government Measures for Urban Flooding

- **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) 2.0 Scheme**: It provides for rainwater harvesting through storm water drains into water body (which is not receiving sewage/effluent) & creation/ strengthening of storm water drains around water body.
- **Other measures:** Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA), Amrit Sarovar Mission, Atal Bhujal Yojana, Model Building Bye Laws (MBBL), 2016

How other countries are developing water-sensitive cities.

- Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) in **Australia**
- Low Impact Development (LID) /Green Infrastructure (GI) in the **United States**
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) in the **United Kingdom**
- Decentralized Rainwater/ Storm water Management (DRWM) in **Germany**
- Sound Water Cycle on National Planning (SWCNP) in **Japan**
- Smart Watergy City, U-Eco City (SWC) in **South Korea**
- Low Impact Urban Design and Development (LIUDD) in **New Zealand**
- Sponge Cities in **China**
- **Netherlands and Japan** employ advanced flood management systems such as sea walls, floodgates, and extensive drainage networks
- Tokyo notably using massive underground water tanks and tunnels to divert floodwaters.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the role of effective governance in mitigating urban flooding in Indian cities like Delhi.

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2

GOVERNMENT POLICIES & INTERVENTIONS

1. KRISHI SAKHI CONVERGENCE PROGRAMME

> **CONTEXT:** Prime Minister Modi recently honored over 30,000 women from Self Help Groups (SHGs) by granting them certificates as Krishi Sakhis. This initiative underscores the government's commitment to rural empowerment, particularly acknowledging women's pivotal role in agriculture.

About the Krishi Sakhi Convergence Programme (KSCP):

- ➤ The Krishi Sakhi Convergence Programme (KSCP) is a joint initiative led by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Rural Development.**

- ➤ It aims to enhance the skills and contributions of rural women in agricultural activities and related businesses.

- ➤ **Training and Certification**: KSCP focuses on training rural women, termed Krishi Sakhis, as Para-extension Workers. These women undergo comprehensive training for 56 days, covering various aspects such as soil health, integrated farming systems, livestock management, and agroecological practices.

- ➤ **Extension of 'Lakhpati Didi' Programme**: KSCP is an extension of the government's ambitious 'Lakhpati Didi' initiative, which aims to empower women by creating opportunities for economic self-sufficiency.

  - ◉ The programme aligns with the goal of **elevating rural women to the status of proficient para-extension workers.**

Significance of Krishi Sakhis as Para-extension Workers:

- ➤ **Utilization of Expertise**: Leveraging their existing knowledge and experience in agriculture, Krishi Sakhis serve as trusted community resources. They play a crucial role in disseminating agricultural best practices and promoting sustainable farming techniques among rural communities.

➤ **Income Generation**: After completing the certification course and passing a proficiency test, Krishi Sakhis can earn between Rs 60,000 to Rs 80,000 annually as para-extension workers. This income opportunity not only supports their livelihoods but also strengthens the rural economy.

➤ **Expansion and Implementation**: The programme is currently operational in 12 states across India, including Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and others. Plans are underway to expand it to additional states in subsequent phases, aiming for broader coverage and impact.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Examine the significance of the Krishi Sakhi Convergence Programme (KSCP) in enhancing rural women's role in agriculture and rural development.

2. ASPIRATIONAL BLOCK PROGRAMME (ABP)

CONTEXT: The Aspirational Block Programme (ABP) is an initiative aimed at transforming underdeveloped blocks in India by improving key development indicators across health, education, agriculture, and infrastructure sectors. The program focuses on data-driven governance, convergence of schemes, and collaborative efforts to accelerate development and reduce regional disparities.

Significance of ABP:

➤ **Holistic Development**: The ABP aims to achieve holistic development by addressing multiple dimensions of well-being, including health, education, livelihoods, and infrastructure.

➤ **Data-Driven Governance**: The program leverages data and technology to identify gaps, track progress, and ensure evidence-based decision-making.

➤ **Convergence and Collaboration**: ABP promotes the convergence of existing government schemes and fosters collaboration among various stakeholders, including state governments, district administrations, and development partners.

➤ **Reducing Disparities**: The program targets the most underdeveloped blocks, aiming to reduce regional disparities and promote inclusive growth.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Coordination and Implementation**: Effective coordination among multiple stakeholders and seamless implementation of the program are crucial for its success.

➤ **Resource Allocation**: Ensuring adequate and timely allocation of financial and human resources is essential for achieving desired outcomes.

➤ **Monitoring and Evaluation**: Developing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress, identify challenges, and course-correct is important for sustained impact.

➤ **Community Engagement**: Involving local communities and ensuring their participation in the planning and implementation process is vital for the success of the program.

FACT BOX

◉ **Government Initiatives**: The Government of India has launched the Aspirational Block Programme as an extension of the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP). The program focuses on improving governance, ensuring effective service delivery, and promoting sustainable development.

◉ **Global Comparisons**: Similar initiatives in countries like Brazil and South Africa have successfully addressed regional disparities and promoted inclusive development through targeted interventions and collaborative efforts.

Q: Skill development programmes have succeeded in increasing human resources supply to various sectors. In the context of the statement analyse the linkages between education, skill and employment. (2023)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the role of the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) in addressing regional disparities in India. How can the learnings from ADP be applied to the Aspirational Block Programme (ABP)?

3. REVISION IN MGNREGA WAGES & ISSUE OF WAGE DISPARITY

CONTEXT: The central government has announced a three to 10 percent increase in wage rate for unskilled workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) for the financial year 2024-25.

Issue of disparity in wages under MGNERAGA

➤ Last year, the **Parliamentary panel** had stressed on the need to address the issue of disparity in wages under MGNREGA. It had asked the ministry to explore the possibility of making **wages uniform** across the country.

➤ It said, "Disparity of wages and non-increase in wages commensurately with inflation is perhaps the most discouraging aspect for labourers to undertake MGNREGA works."

➤ The issue of divergence between wage rates under MGNREGA is on account of the fact that the states **do not follow a uniform policy of wage revision** for **minimum agricultural wage**. In 2023-24, the lowest wages were in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh at Rs 221, while the highest was in Haryana at Rs 357.

➤ Drawing on inflation data, together with the rural monthly wage index published by the **Indian Labour Bureau, the Ministry of Finance** has observed negative trends in the purchasing power of rural Indian wages in recent years.

⊙ Thus, in its Economic Survey 2022-23, the Ministry highlighted a n**egative growth in real rural wages** (that is, rural wages adjusted for inflation) due to elevated inflation between April and November 2022.

The 'actual' outcome of wage disparity

➤ **Inadequate labour protection:** Although people in rural areas are more likely to be in employment than those in urban ones, they also tend to have jobs that can put them at risk of experiencing inadequate labour protection as well as low pay.

➤ **Insufficient wage to cover inflation**: The increase in wage rate may be insufficient to meet the increase in cost of basic goods, which have risen due to spike in inflation in the last few years.

o **Decline in the number of MGNREGA household employment demands:** The household employment demand has decreased from 8.05 crore in 2021-22 to 6.20 crore in 2023-24.

FACT BOX

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

⊙ The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was passed in 2005, and the demand-driven scheme guarantees 100 days of unskilled work per year for every rural household that wants it.

- The wage rates are notified annually as mandated in the Act. It is the amount to be paid to unskilled workers per day for the work done under the scheme.
- Currently, there are close to **14.34 crore active workers under MGNREGS** and the average per day rate for unskilled work is around Rs 235 per day, as per the rural development ministry.

Social Protection

- Social protection is broadly understood as measures to reduce poverty and vulnerability by reducing people's exposure to risks and enhance their capacity to manage those risks, including those associated with **unemployment, exclusion, sickness, disability, and old age.**

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the issues of wage disparity under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and its implications on rural livelihoods. What measures should the government undertake to address these disparities effectively?

UPSC PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: 'Poverty Alleviation Programmes in India remain mere show pieces until and unless they are backed by political will'. Discuss with reference to the performance of the major poverty alleviation programmes in India. (2017)

4. INDIA'S AADHAAR PROGRAMME AND DECENTRALISATION

CONTEXT: The Moody's Investors Services' has cautioned against the Centralized ID systems such as Aadhar in India, as they pose security and privacy threats.

About

- In a report on "Decentralized Finance and Digital Assets" issued, Moody's acknowledged Aadhaar is the world's largest digital ID program that assigns unique numbers over 1.2 billion Indian residents using biometric and demographic data.

> In August, the government extended its deadline for switching to Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS) for MGNREGA beneficiaries for the fifth time, pushing it to December 31, 2023.

- The Aadhaar system enables access to public and private services, with verification via fingerprint or iris scans and alternatives like One-Time Passcodes (OTPs).

- However, it faces hurdles, including the burden of establishing authorization and concerns about biometric reliability.

Concerns:

- A single entry controlling users' ID credentials can dispose of user data for internal or third-party profiling purposes.

> The Supreme Court determined that the Aadhaar Act is a reasonable exception to the right to privacy because it serves a legitimate state goal and is proportionate.

- Aadhar faces hurdles, including burden of establishing authorization.

- The system often results in service denials, and the reliability of biometric technologies, especially for manual laborers in hot, humid climates, is questionable.

- **Need for decentralized system:**

  - ➤ The multiple significant security flaws that have plagued Aadhaar's operations and made the system vulnerable to data leaks have been among the technology's most serious detractors.

  - ➤ Almost 200 official government websites unintentionally exposed personal Aadhaar information in 2018, and the issue got so bad that one could easily access thousands of government databases containing confidential information by just Googling it.

- **Related Judgments:**

  - ➤ The case of *Justice Puttaswamy and Others v. Union of India and Others* was brought in 2018 by the Supreme Court's constitutional bench, which rendered a 4:1 majority decision rejecting this claim challenging the validity of the Aadhar card.

  - ➤ The Bench invalidated **Section 57 of the Aadhaar Act,** which mandates the use of an Aadhaar for verification by private businesses and permitted businesses and people to demand an Aadhaar in payment for goods and services, which was also repealed.

FACT BOX

Aadhar ID system in India:

- The UIDAI is a statutory authority established on 12th July 2016 by the Government of India under the jurisdiction of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**, following the provisions of the Aadhaar Act 2016.

- The UIDAI is mandated to assign a **12-digit unique identification (UID) number (Aadhaar)** to all the residents of India.

- The Aadhaar card includes demographic information like the citizen's name, father's or mother's name, date of birth, sex, and address, as well as biometric information like a photograph, fingerprints, and information about the iris (eye).

- The central government of India controls and manages Aadhar cards.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: Two parallel run schemes of the Government, viz the Aadhar card and NPM, one of voluntary and the other as compulsory, have led to debates at national levels and also litigations. On merits, discuss whether or not both schemes need run concurrently. Analyse the potential of the schemes to achieve development benefits and equitable growth. (2014)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the implications of India's Aadhaar programme on privacy and security concerns. Evaluate the need for decentralization in digital identity systems, considering both the benefits and challenges of Aadhaar.

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5. ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) ECOSYSTEM

CONTEXT: During the presentation of the Interim Budget 2024-25, the government announced plans to expand the electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem. The government set aside Rs 2,671 crore for the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles in India (FAME India) scheme.

- ❑ **Challenges to transitioning to electric mobility**

  - ➤ **Lack of charging infrastructure:** The key barrier on the path of adoption of EV or Hybrid Vehicles is the lack of public charging infrastructure in India. The highest number of EV charging stations was in Delhi (1845) and then in Maharashtra (660) followed by Uttar Pradesh (406).

  - ➤ **Expensive affair**: EV often cost 15 – 20% more than their conventional counterparts, making affordability a major roadblock for individuals and communities with limited financial resources.

  - ➤ **Higher power requirement for heavy vehicles:** Fast-charging means power levels of 50-350 kW for cars and up to 1,000 kW for heavy-duty vehicles.

  - ➤ Anxiety over the distance that can be travelled per battery charge is a cause for concern.

> The global electric vehicle (EV) sector is booming with an anticipated annual growth rate of 15.9% up to 2035 when sales are expected to reach 51.6 million units.

- ❑ **Government Interventions:**

  - ➤ **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) scheme II**, provides incentives for EV manufacturers and buyers (subsidies, tax rebates, preferential financing, and exemptions from road tax and registration fees)

  - ➤ **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP),** sets out the target to achieve 6-7 million sales of hybrid and electric vehicles year on year from 2020 onwards by providing fiscal incentives.

  - ➤ **National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage** seeks to create a comprehensive ecosystem for the adoption of EVs and support the establishment of Giga-scale battery manufacturing plants in India.

  - ➤ **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme** provides incentives for the manufacturing of electric vehicles and components.

  - ➤ **Go Electric campaign** aims to create awareness on the benefits of EVs and EV charging infrastructure.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: **"The emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Digital Revolution) has initiated e-Governance as an integral part of government." Discuss. (2020)**

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: **Analyze the potential benefits and challenges of the Electric Vehicles (EVs) Policy in India. What measures can be taken to promote the adoption of electric vehicles and ensure the development of necessary infrastructure?**

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6. PRADHAN MANTRI KISAN SAMMAN NIDHI (PMKISAN) SCHEME

CONTEXT: The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PMKISAN) Scheme is an initiative by the Government of India to provide direct income support to small and marginal farmers. The scheme aims to supplement farmers' income, ensuring financial stability and enabling them to meet their agricultural and household needs.

- ❑ **Significance of PMKISAN Scheme:**

  - ➤ **Income Support**: The scheme provides direct income support to small and marginal farmers, helping them manage agricultural expenses and household needs.

➤ **Poverty Alleviation**: By providing financial assistance, the scheme aims to alleviate poverty among farmers and improve their living standards.

➤ **Agricultural Investment**: The financial support enables farmers to invest in agricultural inputs, enhancing productivity and sustainability.

➤ **Rural Development**: The scheme contributes to rural development by promoting agricultural growth and supporting the livelihoods of farmers.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Identification and Coverage**: Ensuring accurate identification and coverage of eligible beneficiaries is crucial for the success of the scheme.

➤ **Timely Disbursement**: Ensuring timely and efficient disbursement of funds to beneficiaries is necessary to meet their financial needs.

➤ **Monitoring and Evaluation**: Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the impact of the scheme and address challenges is important.

➤ **Awareness and Outreach**: Raising awareness about the scheme and its benefits among farmers is crucial for increasing participation.

Major Agriculture Welfare Scheme

Central Sector Schemes	
Pradhan Mantri Kisan MaanDhan Yojana (PM-KMY)	◉ **Launched:** 2019 ◉ **Aim:** providing security to vulnerable farmer families. ◉ It operates as a contributory scheme, where small and marginal farmers (SMFs) can opt to become members by paying monthly subscriptions to the Pension Fund, with matching contributions from the Central Government. ◉ Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) serves as the pension fund manager for PMKMY.
Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)	◉ **Launched in:** 2016 ◉ **Objective:** To provide a straightforward and cost-effective crop insurance solution. ◉ **Coverage and Purpose:** The scheme aims to offer comprehensive risk protection for crops, safeguarding farmers against all non-preventable natural risks from pre-sowing to post-harvest stages.
Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF)	◉ It was launched as part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Package. ◉ **Objective:** to address existing infrastructure gaps and stimulate investment in agricultural infrastructure. ◉ Project Eligibility and Benefits: ◉ Each entity can avail the scheme's benefits for up to 25 projects located in different LGD codes. ◉ Eligible beneficiaries include a wide range of stakeholders such as farmers, agri-entrepreneurs, start-ups, cooperative societies, self-help groups, joint liability groups, and various other entities involved in agriculture and related activities.
National beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM)	◉ **Launched in:** 2020 under Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan ◉ **Objective:** overall promotion and development of scientific beekeeping & to achieve the goal of "Sweet Revolution".
Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS)	◉ ISS offers concessional short-term agricultural loans to farmers engaged in crop husbandry and allied activities such as animal husbandry, dairying, and fisheries.

Centrally Sponsored Schemes

- Rastriya Krishi Vikas Yojana Detailed Project Report based schemes (RKVY- DPR)
- Soil Health Card (SHC)
- Rainfed Area Development (RAD)
- Per Drop More Crop (PDMC)
- Micro Irrigation Fund (MIF)
- Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)
- Sub-Mission on Agriculture Mechanization (SMAM)
- Agro-forestry
- National Food Security Mission (NFSM)
- Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)
- National Bamboo Mission (NBM)
- Digital Agriculture

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: **Performance of welfare schemes that are implemented for vulnerable sections is not so effective due to absence of their awareness and active involvement at all stages of policy process. Discuss. (2019)**

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: **Discuss the impact of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PMKISAN) Scheme on the livelihoods of small and marginal farmers in India. What measures can be taken to address the challenges and enhance the effectiveness of the scheme?**

7. THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF LPG PRICE HIKES

CONTEXT: **India's rural household faces various challenges regarding the adoption of LPG as a cooking fuel, despite government initiatives to promote its use. Most important barrier is "high cost of LPG cylinders". Thus, the reliance increases on the solid cooking fuels like wood and coal. The impact of high cost of LPG is not limited to usage of solid fuels, but it has implications for socio-ecological well-being.**

Challenges with Solid Cooking Fuels:

- High refill costs, complicated application processes, lack of doorstep delivery, and ineffective grievance redressal mechanisms **are significant challenges.**
- Gender norms, systemic factors, and limited awareness **about the benefits of LPG worsen these issues.**
- Ease of access to fuel sources **determines the choice of cooking fuel.**
- **Most households are unfamiliar with the concept of** household air pollution.

Socio-ecological effects

- **Health issues:** Many rural households in India face barriers to adopting LPG due to its high cost, leading to around 750 million people relying on solid cooking fuels like wood, dung, coal, and charcoal. However, these fuels pose health risks and have socio-economic and environmental impacts.

- ➤ **Economic constraints:** Despite having LPG connections, many households still resort to using fuelwood due to economic constraints.

- ➤ **Socio-ecological crises:** The rising price of LPG could lead to socio-ecological crises in areas where alternatives to fuelwood are scarce.

- ➤ **Climate Change**: Solid fuel combustion releases greenhouse gases and particulate matter, contributing to climate change and local air pollution, exacerbating environmental challenges.

- ➤ **Social Inequity:** LPG price hikes disproportionately affect marginalized communities and exacerbate social inequalities, as they may lack the financial resources to cope with increased fuel costs.

- ➤ **Sustainability Challenges:** LPG price hikes may hinder efforts to promote clean cooking solutions and achieve sustainability goals, undermining progress towards environmental conservation and public health improvement.

- ➤ **Equity Perspective:** LPG price hikes may exacerbate disparities in access to clean cooking fuels, particularly impacting women and economically weaker sections of society.

FACT BOX

Government Initiatives to Promote LPG:

The government has introduced several schemes to encourage the use of LPG, such as the

- ◉ Rajiv Gandhi Gramin LPG Vitrak scheme
- ◉ 'PAHAL' scheme for direct benefit transfers
- ◉ Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)
- ◉ Despite these efforts, the price of LPG in India remains high compared to other countries.
- ◉ Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)
  - ➤ Since its launch in 2016, the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) has helped increase access to LPG for low-income households.
- ◉ The scheme provides LPG connections, a gas stove, and a 14.2 kg cylinder to deprived households.

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8. KRISHI SAKHI CONVERGENCE PROGRAMME

CONTEXT: Prime Minister Modi recently honored over 30,000 women from Self Help Groups (SHGs) by granting them certificates as Krishi Sakhis. This initiative underscores the government's commitment to rural empowerment, particularly acknowledging women's pivotal role in agriculture.

About the Krishi Sakhi Convergence Programme (KSCP):

- ➤ KSCP is a joint initiative led by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Rural Development.**

- ➤ It aims to enhance the skills and contributions of rural women in agricultural activities and related businesses.

- ➤ **Training and Certification**: KSCP focuses on training rural women, termed Krishi Sakhis, as Para-extension Workers. These women undergo comprehensive training for 56 days, covering various aspects such as soil health, integrated farming systems, livestock management, and agroecological practices.

- ➤ **Extension of 'Lakhpati Didi' Programme**: KSCP is an extension of the government's ambitious 'Lakhpati Didi' initiative, which aims to empower women by creating opportunities for economic self-sufficiency.

- The programme aligns with the goal of **elevating rural women to the status of proficient para-extension workers.**

Significance of Krishi Sakhis as Para-extension Workers:

- ➤ **Utilization of Expertise**: Leveraging their existing knowledge and experience in agriculture, Krishi Sakhis serve as trusted community resources. They play a crucial role in disseminating agricultural best practices and promoting sustainable farming techniques among rural communities.

- ➤ **Income Generation**: After completing the certification course and passing a proficiency test, Krishi Sakhis can earn between Rs 60,000 to Rs 80,000 annually as para-extension workers. This income opportunity not only supports their livelihoods but also strengthens the rural economy.

- ➤ **Expansion and Implementation**: The programme is currently operational in 12 states across India, including Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and others. Plans are underway to expand it to additional states in subsequent phases, aiming for broader coverage and impact.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: How does Krishi Sakhi Convergence Programme (KSCP) contribute to sustainable agricultural practices and economic self-sufficiency among women? Evaluate its potential impact on rural development.

9. SMART CITIES MISSION

CONTEXT: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has extended the deadline for the Smart Cities Mission till March 2025, allowing cities to complete ongoing projects, which account for around 10% of the total projects.

Concept of Smart Cities:

The concept of smart cities emerged after the 2009 financial crash. It aimed to integrate urban centres with advanced communication networks and infrastructure.

- ➤ In India, the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) was initiated in 2015, aiming to develop 100 cities.

- ➤ Need of smart cities in India (unprecedented urban expansion):

- ➤ By 2030 India will be home to 60 cities with a population of more than 1 million and 6 megacities with a population of more than 10 million.

- ➤ Significant challenges hindering urban development and economic growth:

  - Poor local governance

  - Inadequate infrastructure and services

  - Outdated urban planning

  - Megacities (Delhi, Mumbai) are regarded as the economic engines of India, and yet every year, heavy rainfall lasting a couple of hours or days causes havoc there.

  - Slums

- **Smart Cities' Report Card (Progress so far):** As of July, 2024, the 100 cities involved in the Smart Cities Mission have successfully completed 7,188 projects, which accounts for 90% of the total projects planned. These projects amount to Rs 1,44,237 crore. Additionally, 830 more projects worth Rs 19,926 crore are nearing completion.

Challenges

- ➤ Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) lack core competence, trained manpower and finances for completion of urban infrastructure projects.

- ➤ Local challenges related to land, labor etc., has also led to slowdown in progress.

➤ Irregularities in implementation of works such as redoing of same work again & duplication of work, project cost higher than the market rate, frequent dropping of projects after finalization of proposals, etc.

➤ Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs): SPVs face uncertainty as they won't receive further funding for operations, including Integrated Command and Control Centers (ICCCs).

➤ SPVs can't initiate new projects with Mission funding since the original Smart Cities Mission period ended in June 2021.

▣ Solution:

➤ Information and communication technology, sensors, geospatial, IoT, AI and blockchain are crucial to tackle the emerging problems in the city and maintain law and order through detailed data analysis.

➤ Geospatial visualization, HD maps, and interactive 3D models and dashboards are also of great help.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: What are 'Smart Cities'? Examine their relevance for urban development in India. Will it increase rural-urban differences? Give arguments for 'Smart Villages' in the light of PURA and RURBAN Mission. (2016)

Q: Discussion the various social problems which originated out of the speedy process of urbanization in India. (2013)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Evaluate the progress, challenges, and future prospects of India's Smart Cities Mission (SCM). Discuss the role of smart urban infrastructure in addressing the country's urbanization challenges and promoting sustainable development.

10. HOUSING CRISIS OF INDIA

CONTEXT: **Amidst the diverse issues facing the nation, one recurrent issue is the housing crisis in India. With million homeless individuals, and concerns persisting even among those with homes regarding quality, congestion, and insufficient amenities and infrastructure, housing emerges as a pressing concern for the public.**

▣ Status of India's Housing Crisis

➤ India has about 1.7 million homeless people, as per the 2011 Census. Even those with homes face issues like **poor quality, overcrowding, and lack of amenities**.

➤ A **2012 government report** estimated a need for around 18.78 million more houses in India.

➤ A **2020 study by ICRIER** found that India's urban housing shortage increased by **54%** from 2012 to reach **29 million** in 2018.

➤ This shortage includes **homeless individuals, inadequate housing, obsolete homes, and crowded households.**

▣ Reasons for the Crisis:

➤ Inadequate housing conditions, reduced land entitlements, rapid urbanization. Issues like high land costs, escalating construction material prices, and lack of affordable housing options contributed to the problem.

➤ India's housing crisis in India reflects **systemic challenges in urban planning**, infrastructure development, and policy implementation.

- **Impact of Housing Shortage:**

  ➤ **Urban congestion and the proliferation of slums** are direct consequences of the housing shortage.

  ➤ **Slum dwellings** account for a significant portion of the urban population

  ➤ Significance of the sector for Economy

  ➤ Housing is important for the Indian economy.

  ➤ The **real estate sector** is responsible for about 50% of the economic output in the country.

  ➤ The **Ministry of Statistic**s notes that more than one-third of all gross fixed capital formation in 2021-22 could be attributed to housing and building construction.

FACT BOX

- **Affordable housing:** The government defines affordable housing as properties with an area no bigger than 60 square meters, priced at a maximum of Rs 45 lakh.
- **Fundamental:** The Supreme Court has ruled that the right to housing is a fundamental part of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Government Interventions

- The Housing for All schemes (2015-22): Under it, there are two wings- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin) and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)**

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: What is the meaning of the term 'tax expenditure'? Taking the housing sector as an example, discuss how it influences the budgetary policies of the government. (2013)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: "India's housing crisis in India reflects systemic challenges in urban planning". Comment

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11. NATIONAL LOGISTICS POLICY (NLP)

CONTEXT: Logistics is an integral part of the supply chain process that ensures the efficient flow and storage of goods and services from the point of origin to the point of consumption. India's National Logistics Policy (NLP) is considered a game changer in the transportation sector.

- **Significance of NLP:**

  ➤ **Infrastructure:** National Logistics Policy (NLP), introduced in 2022, aims to create an integrated logistics ecosystem and efficient multimodal logistics infrastructure. As a result, India has climbed from the 44th to the 38th position out of 139 nations in 2023.

  ➤ **E-Commerce**: The rapid growth of India's e-commerce sector, projected to reach USD 120 billion by 2026, hinges on an efficient logistics network.

  ➤ **Global race:** The NLP is not only about domestic improvements but also about enhancing India's position in global trade.

  ➤ **Economic Growth**: A robust logistics ecosystem supports economic growth by facilitating trade, enhancing supply chain efficiency, and creating job opportunities.

☐ **Challenges and Concerns:**

➤ **Infrastructure Gaps**: Addressing infrastructure gaps, particularly in rural and remote areas, is crucial for creating an integrated logistics network.

➤ **Regulatory Hurdles**: Streamlining regulatory processes and reducing bureaucratic hurdles are necessary to promote ease of doing business.

➤ **Technology Adoption**: Encouraging the adoption of technology and digital solutions among logistics players, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs), is important.

➤ **Coordination and Implementation**: Ensuring effective coordination and implementation among various stakeholders, including central and state governments and private sector players, is essential.

FACT BOX

⊙ **Government Initiatives**: The NLP includes initiatives such as the creation of logistics parks, multimodal transport hubs, and digital logistics platforms. The policy aims to reduce logistics costs from 14% of GDP to 8-10% of GDP.

⊙ **Global Comparisons**: Countries like Germany and Singapore have developed advanced logistics ecosystems that enhance supply chain efficiency, reduce costs, and promote economic growth, providing valuable lessons for India.

FACT BOX

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National Logistics Policy

⊙ **Introduced in:** 2022

⊙ National Logistics Policy's goal is to drive economic growth and enhance the country's business competitiveness

⊙ **National Logistics Policy (NLP)** has the following goals:

➤ Reduce the logistics cost from 16% of GDP to a global average of 8% by 2030.

➤ Improve efficiency across all sectors of the economy.

➤ Create a modern infrastructure system with a world-class standard.

➤ Make the logistics industry more efficient.

➤ Boost economic growth.

➤ Provide employment opportunities.

➤ Make Indian products more competitive in the global market.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the importance of the National Logistics Policy (NLP) in promoting economic growth and competitiveness in India. What measures can be taken to address the challenges and ensure the successful implementation of the policy?

12. DIGITAL ADVERTISEMENT POLICY 2023

CONTEXT: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting approved a "Digital Advertisement Policy, 2023" that aims to regulate and promote digital advertising practices in India by ensuring transparency, accountability, and consumer protection.

Significance of Digital Advertisement Policy 2023:

- **Consumer Protection**: The policy aims to protect consumers from misleading and deceptive advertisements, ensuring that they receive accurate and truthful information.

- **Data Privacy**: By regulating the collection and use of consumer data for digital advertising, the policy enhances data privacy and security.

- **Transparency and Accountability**: The policy promotes transparency and accountability in digital advertising practices, reducing the risk of fraud and unethical behavior.

- **Fair Competition**: The policy ensures a level playing field for advertisers by promoting fair competition and preventing monopolistic practices in the digital advertising space.

Challenges and Concerns:

- **Implementation and Enforcement**: Ensuring effective implementation and enforcement of the policy requires robust regulatory mechanisms and collaboration among stakeholders.

- **Balancing Innovation and Regulation**: Striking a balance between promoting innovation in digital advertising and ensuring consumer protection is crucial.

- **Public Awareness**: Raising awareness among consumers and advertisers about the policy and its implications is necessary for its success.

- **Technical Challenges**: Addressing technical challenges related to data collection, storage, and usage in the digital advertising ecosystem is important.

FACT BOX

Digital Advertisement Policy 2023

- **The Policy** lays down the requirements for empanelling websites, mobile applications, digital audio platforms, streaming platforms and social media platforms so that they can display government advertisements.

- It empowers the **Central Bureau of Communication (CBC)** to undertake campaigns in the **Digital Media** space.

- It prohibits any data fiduciary from directing targeted ads at children, that is, individuals under the age of 18 years.

Central Bureau of Communication (CBC)

- **Set-up in:** 2017

- CBC is a unit of the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.**

- The CBC has the mandate of providing 360 degrees communication solutions to Ministries, Departments, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), and autonomous bodies.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Analyze the potential benefits and challenges of the Digital Advertisement Policy 2023 in regulating digital advertising practices in India. What measures can be taken to ensure effective implementation and consumer protection?

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13. DRAFT NATIONAL MENSTRUAL HYGIENE POLICY, 2023

CONTEXT: In 2023, India made significant progress by drafting the 'National Menstrual Hygiene Policy,' recognizing menstruation as a natural process that requires serious attention. The policy identifies prisoners as a key group with limited access to menstrual hygiene facilities, marking a positive step. However, it lacks a concrete action plan to improve menstrual hygiene management in prisons and fails to involve the Ministry of Home Affairs, a crucial stakeholder in prison management.

Need to ensure menstrual hygiene in prisons

Ensuring menstrual hygiene in prisons is not just a matter of public health; it is also a societal issue reflecting on the broader aspects of equity, dignity, and human rights.

➤ **Gender Equality and Human Rights**: Access to menstrual hygiene is a fundamental human right. Denying this access in prisons perpetuates gender inequality and violates the dignity of incarcerated women.

➤ **Health and Well-being**: Poor menstrual hygiene can lead to various health issues, including infections and mental health problems. By ensuring proper menstrual hygiene in prisons, the government can significantly improve the overall health and well-being of incarcerated women.

➤ **Reducing Stigma**: Addressing menstrual hygiene openly helps in reducing the stigma associated with menstruation. It promotes a more inclusive and understanding society where natural biological processes are recognized and respected.

➤ **Fighting Period Poverty**: Menstrual hygiene management in prisons is a critical aspect of the broader fight against period poverty.

Issues/Challenges

➤ The availability of sanitary napkins has been inconsistent across different prisons in the country.

➤ The quality of sanitary napkins has also been unsatisfactory.

➤ Many States have not implemented provisions (supplying adequate water and washroom facilities for female prisoners).

➤ Overcrowding and poor socio-economic conditions further exacerbate the struggle of incarcerated women to secure basic necessities (water, sanitary napkins, detergent, and soap).

Necessary Actions

➤ **Adherence to Standards**: The government must ensure basic menstrual hygiene standards for women in prisons. The uneven implementation of the Model Prison Manual 2016 across states needs immediate attention.

➤ **Collaboration**: Health authorities and prison administrators should work together to develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure access to adequate menstrual hygiene facilities.

➤ **Research and Evidence**: Conducting research to understand the current state of menstrual hygiene within prisons is essential for informed policy-making and implementation.

FACT BOX

Women in Prisons

◎ According to the **National Crime Records Bureau**, there are 23,772 women in Indian prisons.

◎ Of them, 77% are in the reproductive age group (18-50 years) and are likely to be regular menstruators.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the importance of the Draft National Menstrual Hygiene Policy, 2023, in promoting menstrual health and hygiene in India. What measures can be taken to address the challenges and ensure the effective implementation of the policy?

14. FINANCIAL HARDSHIP IN TB TREATMENT PROGRAMME

CONTEXT: A recent survey sheds light on the significant financial challenges faced by TB patients in India. The survey, encompassing 1,482 TB patients across four states, reveals alarming levels of economic hardship resulting from delays in diagnosis and the long course of TB treatment.

Key-findings of the Study

- **Financial Strain:** TB patients experience the severe financial strain, with delays in diagnosis and loss of income during treatment contributing to substantial economic burdens.

- **Catastrophic Costs:** Between 30% to 61% of study participants faced catastrophic costs, defined as **out-of-pocket expenses** exceeding 20% of pre-TB annual household income. These costs pose a significant threat to the financial stability of TB-affected households.

- **Pre-Diagnosis Delay:** Over half of the participants faced catastrophic costs even before commencing TB treatment due to delays in diagnosis. The average delay of seven to nine weeks from symptom onset to treatment initiation significantly contributed to financial burdens.

- **Recommendations:** The survey recommends
  - intensifying private sector engagement
  - improving rapid diagnosis
  - implementing community awareness campaigns
  - expanding health insurance coverage for pre-treatment expenses
  - safeguarding TB patients from income loss

- How 'cost' is a determining factor in TB treatment? TB treatment in India often imposes a significant financial burden on patients and their families due to various factors, including medical expenses, loss of income, and associated costs. Patients face a range of other recurring costs including the costs of accommodation, transport to healthcare facilities and consultations, multivitamins, and loss of income due to missed work

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Case Study

- In 2022, Tamil Nadu launched **India's first special TB care model**, known as the **Tamil Nadu-Kasanoi Erappila Thittam (TB death-free project)**.
- This initiative aimed to reduce deaths among TB patients aged 15 and above by 30%.
- The program assessed newly diagnosed TB patients to identify those with severe malnutrition or respiratory issues, referring them for hospitalization when needed.
- One in four patients assessed were found to be severely undernourished.
- Scaling up such initiatives could help prevent TB-related deaths.
- **National and international initiatives:**
  - National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP)
  - National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Tuberculosis Elimination (2017-2025)
  - The Nikshay Ecosystem (National TB information system)
  - Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY- financial support)
  - TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign
  - TB Free India Campaign
  - Tribal TB Initiative

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15. ELECTRIC MOBILITY PROMOTION SCHEME-2024

CONTEXT: The Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme-2024 aims to accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in India by providing incentives, developing infrastructure, and promoting research and development. The scheme focuses on reducing carbon emissions, enhancing energy security, and promoting sustainable urban mobility.

Significance of Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme-2024:

➤ **Environmental Sustainability**: The scheme aims to reduce carbon emissions and air pollution by promoting the use of electric vehicles, contributing to environmental sustainability.

➤ **Energy Security**: By reducing dependence on fossil fuels, the scheme enhances energy security and reduces the country's oil import bill.

➤ **Economic Growth**: The development of the EV industry creates new business opportunities, generates employment, and promotes economic growth.

➤ **Technological Innovation**: The scheme encourages research and development in electric mobility technologies, fostering innovation and competitiveness.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Infrastructure Development**: Developing adequate charging infrastructure and ensuring its accessibility is crucial for the success of the scheme.

➤ **High Initial Costs**: Addressing the high initial costs of EVs and providing financial incentives to make them affordable for consumers is necessary.

➤ **Battery Technology**: Improving battery technology, including enhancing battery life, reducing costs, and ensuring safe disposal, is important for the widespread adoption of EVs.

➤ **Consumer Awareness**: Raising awareness about the benefits of electric vehicles and promoting their adoption among consumers is essential.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Analyze the potential benefits and challenges of the Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme-2024 in promoting the adoption of electric vehicles in India. What measures can be taken to address the challenges and ensure the effective implementation of the scheme?

16. HOLISTIC PROGRESS CARD (HPC)

CONTEXT: The National Council for Educational and Research Training (NCERT) has introduced a new "holistic" report card that incorporates feedback from parents, classmates, and even self-evaluation by students to track their overall progress regularly.

About Holistic Progress Card (HPC)

➤ PARAKH, a standard-setting body under the NCERT, has devised the Holistic Progress Card (HPC) for foundational stage (Classes 1 and 2), preparatory stage (Classes 3 to 5) and middle stage (Classes 6 to 8) and is currently working on developing one for the secondary stage.

➤ The HPC is aligned with the recommendations of the **National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE).**

➤ This attempt aims to move away from traditional evaluation methods that rely on marks and grades awarded by school teachers

- **Significance of Holistic Progress Card:**

  - **Comprehensive Assessment**: The HPC provides a well-rounded assessment of students' progress, including academic performance, co-curricular activities, and personal development.

  - **Individualized Learning**: By identifying students' strengths and areas for improvement, the HPC promotes individualized learning and targeted interventions.

  - **Holistic Education**: The HPC encourages a holistic approach to education, focusing on the overall development of students rather than just academic achievements.

  - **Parental Engagement**: The HPC facilitates better communication between schools and parents, promoting parental engagement in their children's education.

- **Challenges and Concerns:**

  - **Implementation and Training**: Ensuring effective implementation of the HPC and providing training for teachers and school staff to use the system is crucial.

  - **Standardization**: Developing standardized assessment criteria and ensuring consistency in evaluations across different schools is important.

  - **Data Privacy**: Ensuring the privacy and security of students' data collected through the HPC is essential.

  - **Continuous Monitoring**: Establishing mechanisms for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the HPC's effectiveness in promoting holistic education is necessary.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: **"'Earn while you learn' scheme needs to be strengthened to make vocational education and skill training meaningful." Comment. (2021)**

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: **Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of implementing the Holistic Progress Card (HPC) in Indian schools. What measures can be taken to ensure its effective implementation and promote holistic education?**

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17. SWAYAM PLUS PLATFORM

CONTEXT: **The Ministry of Education launched the SWAYAM Plus platform, an upgraded version of the existing Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) portal. The new platform aims to facilitate a comprehensive digital ecosystem for learners, educators, and industry professionals.**

- **Significance of SWAYAM Plus Platform:**

  - **Access to Quality Education**: The platform provides access to high-quality educational resources and courses, enhancing learning opportunities for students across the country.

  - **Digital Literacy**: By promoting online learning, the platform enhances digital literacy and prepares students for the digital age.

  - **Skill Development**: The platform offers a variety of courses on different subjects, including vocational training and skill development programs, promoting employability.

  - **Inclusive Education**: SWAYAM Plus promotes inclusive education by providing resources in multiple languages and formats, catering to diverse learning needs.

- **Challenges and Concerns:**

  - **Digital Divide**: Ensuring equitable access to digital infrastructure and resources, particularly in rural and underserved areas, is crucial for the success of the platform.

> ➤ **Content Quality and Relevance**: Maintaining the quality and relevance of educational content and ensuring it aligns with curricular standards is important.

> ➤ **User Engagement**: Encouraging active engagement and utilization of the platform by students and educators requires continuous support and motivation.

> ➤ **Technical Support**: Providing technical support and training for users to effectively navigate and use the platform is necessary.

FACT BOX

About SWAYAM:

- ⊙ **Launched in:** 2017
- ⊙ Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) aims to provide one integrated platform and portal for online courses.
- ⊙ This covers all higher education subjects and skill sector courses.
- ⊙ The objective is to ensure that every student in the country has access to the best quality higher education at the affordable cost.
- ⊙ SWAYAM has the largest enrolment base, with the total enrollment increasing from 31 lakh in 2017 to more than 72 lakh by the end of 2023.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Analyze the potential benefits and challenges of the SWAYAM Plus platform in enhancing digital learning and skill development in India. What measures can be taken to address the challenges and ensure the effective implementation and utilization of the platform?

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18. PRADHAN MANTRI ANUSUCHIT JAATI ABHYUDAY YOJANA

CONTEXT: The Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojna is a scheme aimed at the socio-economic development of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in India. The scheme focuses on providing financial assistance, educational opportunities, and skill development to promote the overall well-being and upliftment of SC communities.

▣ Significance of Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojna:

> ➤ **Socio-Economic Upliftment**: The scheme aims to improve the socio-economic status of SCs by providing financial assistance for education, housing, and entrepreneurship.

> ➤ **Educational Opportunities**: By offering scholarships and support for higher education, the scheme promotes educational attainment and skill development among SC students.

> ➤ **Employment and Entrepreneurship**: The scheme encourages entrepreneurship and employment opportunities by providing training and financial support for business ventures.

> ➤ **Social Inclusion**: The scheme promotes social inclusion by addressing discrimination and ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities for SCs.

▣ Challenges and Concerns:

> ➤ **Awareness and Outreach**: Ensuring that the benefits of the scheme reach the intended beneficiaries and raising awareness about the available opportunities is crucial.

➤ **Implementation and Monitoring**: Effective implementation and monitoring mechanisms are necessary to track progress and address challenges in the scheme's execution.

➤ **Resource Allocation**: Adequate allocation of financial and human resources is essential to support the various components of the scheme.

➤ **Sustainability**: Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the scheme's benefits and creating lasting impact requires continuous support and evaluation.

FACT BOX

Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana (PM-AJAY)

◉ Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana (PM-AJAY) is a merged scheme of the three Centrally Sponsored Schemes, namely

➤ Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY)

➤ Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCA to SCSP)

➤ Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojna(BJRCY)

◉ **Aim:** To reduce poverty in the SC communities through the generation of additional employment opportunities through skill development, income-generating schemes and other initiatives and to improve socio-economic developmental indicators by ensuring adequate infrastructure and requisite services in the SC-dominated villages.

Scheduled Caste

◉ Scheduled castes are **sub-communities** within the framework of the **Hindu caste system** (*Brahma, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra*) who have historically faced deprivation, oppression, and extreme social isolation in India on account of their perceived 'low status'.

◉ The 2011 Census places the number of scheduled castes in India at 16.6 percent of the total population, or approximately 166,635,700 people.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: **Analyze the impact of the Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojna on the socio-economic development of Scheduled Castes in India. What measures can be taken to enhance the effectiveness and reach of the scheme?**

19. MPLADS E-SAKSHI MOBILE APPLICATION

CONTEXT: **The government launched the MPLADS e-SAKSHI Mobile Application for revised fund flow procedure under MPLAD Scheme.**

◧ **Significance of MPLADS e-SAKSHI Mobile Application:**

➤ **Transparency and Accountability**: The application enhances transparency and accountability by providing real-time updates on MPLADS projects, ensuring that funds are utilized effectively.

➤ **Project Monitoring**: The application allows for efficient monitoring of project progress, helping to identify and address issues promptly.

➤ **Public Participation**: The application promotes public participation by providing citizens with access to information on MPLADS projects and enabling them to report issues and provide feedback.

➤ **Efficiency Improvement**: The application streamlines the project management process, reducing

delays and ensuring timely completion of projects.

- **Challenges and Concerns:**

  - **Digital Infrastructure**: Ensuring reliable digital infrastructure and connectivity to support the use of the application is crucial.

  - **User Engagement**: Encouraging active engagement and utilization of the application by MPs, officials, and citizens requires continuous support and motivation.

  - **Data Security and Privacy**: Ensuring the security and privacy of data collected through the application is essential.

  - **Capacity Building**: Providing training and capacity-building programs for users to effectively navigate and use the application is necessary.

FACT BOX

- The MPLADS is a scheme that was set up by the Centre in 1993 to enable MPs to recommend developmental works for creation of assets and amenities in sectors such as **drinking water, primary education, public health, sanitation and roads.**
- Each MP is entitled to Rs 5 crore annually, released in two equal instalments.
- This means that the MPs have Rs 25 crore at their disposal, which are to be spent over five years.

PYQ

Q: Reforming the government delivery system through the Direct Benefit Transfer Scheme is a progressive step, but it has its limitations too. Comment. (2022)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the MPLADS e-SAKSHI Mobile Application in enhancing the transparency and accountability of the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS). What measures can be taken to ensure its effective implementation and utilization?

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20. GROW REPORT AND PORTAL

CONTEXT: The NITI Aayog's GROW (Growth, Resources, Opportunities, and Welfare) Report and Portal is an initiative aimed at providing comprehensive data and insights on India's socio-economic development. The portal focuses on enhancing data-driven decision-making and promoting transparency in governance.

- **Significance of GROW Report and Portal:**

  - **Data-Driven Decision Making**: The portal provides policymakers, researchers, and the public with access to comprehensive data and insights, supporting informed decision-making.

  - **Transparency and Accountability**: By making data and reports publicly accessible, the portal promotes transparency and accountability in governance and development programs.

  - **Resource Allocation**: The insights from the GROW Report help in the efficient allocation of resources to various sectors, ensuring targeted interventions and optimizing developmental outcomes.

  - **Monitoring and Evaluation**: The portal supports the monitoring and evaluation of government programs and policies, facilitating continuous improvement and impact assessment.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Data Accuracy and Reliability**: Ensuring the accuracy, reliability, and timeliness of data provided on the portal is crucial.

➤ **Digital Literacy**: Promoting digital literacy and ensuring that users can effectively navigate and utilize the portal is important.

➤ **Data Privacy and Security**: Protecting the privacy and security of data collected and shared through the portal is essential.

➤ **Sustainability and Updates**: Ensuring the sustainability of the portal and regularly updating the data and reports to reflect the latest developments is necessary.

FACT BOX

GROW Report and Portal

⊙ Greening and Restoration of Wasteland with Agroforestry (GROW) report and portal aims to **facilitate restoration projects for achieving national commitments of Land Degradation Neutrality and restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030**, as well as creating an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

Agroforestry in India

⊙ Currently, agroforestry covers **8.65% of India's total geographical area**, totalling about 28.42 million hectares.

⊙ The Union Budget of Government of India (FY-2022-23) has underlined the promotion of agroforestry and private forestry as a priority.

⊙ India, the seventh-largest country globally, faces issues like increased build-up areas, degraded land, and imbalanced resources.

⊙ Approximately **16.96% of the Total Geographical Area (TGA)** is wasteland, requiring transformation for productive use. Geospatial technologies and GIS are employed to map and prioritize these wastelands for agroforestry interventions

⊙ India, the pioneer of the **National Agroforestry Policy in 2014**, aims to enhance productivity, profitability, and sustainability through this agroecological land use system. Agroforestry integrates trees, crops, and livestock, addressing food, nutrition, energy, employment, and environmental challenges.

⊙ This aligns with global commitments like the **Paris Agreement, Bonn Challenge, UN Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD), Doubling Farmers Income, Green India Mission** and more.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Analyze the potential benefits and challenges of the NITI Aayog's GROW Report and Portal in promoting data-driven decision-making and transparency in governance. What measures can be taken to ensure its effective implementation and utilization?

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21. SPORTS GOVERNANCE AND POLICY

CONTEXT: **India achieved a historic milestone at the Asian Games held in Hangzhou, China, clinching a total of 107 Medals (28 Gold, 38 Silver, 41 Bronze Medals). The success in Asian Games was followed by the triumph of the Indian contingent in the Asian Para Games which finished with historic 111 Medals including 29 Gold Medals, surpassing all previous records. The biggest haul for India came from athletics, with the Indian contingent securing 55 Medals including 18 Gold Medals.**

- ◉ **Various Government bodies** are responsible for formulating and implementing sports policies, providing financial support for infrastructure development, and talent identification programs.

  - ➤ **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS)** is the central government body steering sports policies, funding, and infrastructure development.

  - ➤ **Sports Authority of India (SAI),** as the apex national sports organization, manages training centres, talent identification, and financial support for athletes.

  - ➤ **The Indian Olympic Association (IOA)** oversees India's participation in international multi-sport events.

  - ➤ **National Sports Federations (NSFs)** govern specific sports disciplines, collaborating with governmental and international bodies.

  - ➤ **The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)** governs cricket, and the **All India Football Federation (AIFF)** manages football.

  - ➤ **The National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)** oversees anti-doping efforts, while the National Institute of Sports (NIS) offers coaching and training.

- ◉ **Challenges:** Lack of adequate infrastructure and facilities; corruption and nepotism; gender disparities; underrepresentation and exclusion of marginalized communities

▣ ## Measures to enhance sports governance:

- ➤ Implementing transparency measures (independent audits, anti-corruption initiatives)

- ➤ Promoting gender equality in decision-making roles and addressing disparities in sports funding.

- ➤ Substantial investments in grassroots sports development, talent identification, and tailored training programs

- ➤ Encouraging private sector engagement.

- ➤ Integrating sports into the education system, harnessing technology for efficient management, and conducting nationwide awareness campaigns are vital components.

- ➤ Maintaining a dynamic legal framework and establishing robust athlete support systems

Case Studies

- ◉ Models such as **Australia's "Sport 2030" plan** or the **UK's "Sporting Future"** provide valuable insights into the crafting of effective policy frameworks aimed at bolstering grassroots development, talent identification, and infrastructure enhancement.

- ◉ **Khelo India Youth Games**, with their focus on identifying and nurturing sporting talent at the grassroots level, demonstrate the positive impact of government-led initiatives.

Government Initiatives to Promote Sports:

Fit India Movement, Khelo India, SAI Training Centers Scheme, Sports Talent Search Portal, National Sports Awards Scheme, Target Olympic Podium

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PYQ

Q: **An athlete participates in Olympics for personal triumph and nation's glory; victors are showered with cash incentives by various agencies, on their return. Discuss the merit of state sponsored talent hunt and its cultivation as against the rationale of are ward mechanism as encouragement. (2014)**

MAINS QUESTION

Q: **Discuss the role of various government bodies in promoting sports governance and policy in India. Highlight the challenges faced and measures needed to enhance the sports ecosystem.**

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3

REPORTS & INDICIES

1. REPORT ON 'NATIONAL POLICY ON CHILD LABOUR'

CONTEXT: Despite significant efforts to stop child labour, the evil still persists in the country, with out-of-school children being more likely to engage in child labour.

Child labour statistics for India:

➤ Every 1 in 10 child labourers worldwide is from India.

➤ Girls are the most affected.

➤ Child labour is most prevalent in five regions (census 2011) namely, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Where are these child labourers deployed?

➤ Bonded labour, child soldiers, and trafficking.

➤ Industrial labour: In brick kilns, carpet weaving, garment making, domestic service, food and refreshment services (such as tea stalls), agriculture, fisheries and mining.

➤ Sexual exploitation

➤ In Child pornography

Factors responsible for Child labour	Consequences associated
⊙ Poverty ⊙ Social norms condoning them ⊙ Lack of decent work opportunities for adults and adolescents, ⊙ Migration and emergencies	⊙ Risks of contracting occupational diseases like skin diseases, diseases of the lungs, weak eyesight, TB etc. ⊙ Vulnerability to sexual exploitation at the workplace ⊙ Deprived of education. ⊙ Threat to National Economy

	◉ Child labour in the informal sector
	◉ Disguised child labour

◌ Policy interventions against Child labour in India:

➢ **Child Labour Act (Prohibition and Regulation) 1986**: It prohibits children under the age of 14 years to be working in hazardous industries and processes.

➢ **Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Act 2016**: It prohibits the employment of children below 14 years in all employment and with the provisions for the prohibition on employment of adolescents (14-18 Years) in scheduled hazardous occupations and processes.

➢ **The Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2017**:The Rules provide a broad and specific framework for the prevention, prohibition, rescue and rehabilitation of child and adolescent workers.

  ◉ It also clarifies on issues related to helping in family and family enterprises and the definition of family with respect to children, specific provisions have been incorporated into rules.

➢ Policy interventions such **Right to Education Act 2009 and Mid-Day Meal Scheme** have paved the way for children to be in schools along with guaranteed wage employment (unskilled) for rural families.

➢ **Constitutional Provisions for Child Upliftment: Article 21 A (Right to Education), Article 24** (Prohibition of employment of children in factories)

<div style="background:red;color:white;text-align:center">**PRACTICE QUESTION**</div>

Q: Analyze the potential benefits and challenges of the National Policy on Child Labour in addressing the issue of child labor in India. What measures can be taken to ensure the effective implementation and impact of the policy?

2. ALL INDIA SURVEY ON HIGHER EDUCATION (AISHE)

CONTEXT: The Survey provides comprehensive data on various aspects of higher education in India. The survey covers enrollment, infrastructure, faculty, research output, and financial aspects of higher education institutions.

India Rankings 2023 of higher education institutions

◌ On the basis of Field:

➢ The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Madras in Chennai remained the best educational institution in overall rankings for the fifth consecutive term.

➢ The Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru ranked as the best university in the country for eight years in a row.

➢ Miranda House, Delhi is ranked the best college.

➢ Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad is the top management institute.

➢ National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER), Hyderabad is ranked number one for pharmaceutical studies.

➢ The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi is ranked the best medical college, and Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences, Chennai is the top dental college.

➢ National Law School of India University, Bengaluru is ranked the best law college in the country.

➢ IIT-Madras has also been ranked the best engineering college for the eighth consecutive year (from 2016 to 2023).

On the basis of Research Capability:

➤ IISc Bengaluru stood first in 'Research Institutions'

➤ IISc is followed by the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Jamia Millia Islamia University as the second and third best universities, respectively.

In Agriculture sector:

➤ Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi remained at the top in 'Agriculture and Allied Sectors'.

➤ IIT-Kanpur topped the 'Innovation' category.

➤ IISc, Bengaluru and IIT-Delhi are ranked the second and third best institutes in the overall category.

➤ Hindu College, Delhi and Presidency College, Chennai are ranked the second and third best colleges, respectively.

Issues in Education System and Remedial Measures:

Limited Funds and Redistribution:

➤ **Issue:** Lack of adequate resources like manpower, infrastructure, and funds hampers educational quality and accessibility.

➤ **Remedy:** Government needs to allocate sufficient resources at both provincial and national levels to address educational needs. Redistribution of resources to ensure equitable access to education is vital.

Autonomy for Education Institutions:

➤ **Issue:** Excessive administrative control restricts the autonomy of educational institutions, hindering innovation and quality.

➤ **Remedy:** High-performing institutions should be granted autonomy in operations, including syllabus revision and reforms. Collaboration between state and central governments is crucial for implementing measures to reduce control over top-ranked institutions.

Expensive Higher Education:

➤ **Issue:** Privatization and profit-driven models have led to high costs of professional and technical education, limiting accessibility.

➤ **Remedy:** Government can establish entities offering education loans at lower interest rates or with longer repayment tenures. Private institutions should offer more scholarships to economically and socially weaker sections to enhance affordability.

Obsolete Curriculum:

➤ **Issue:** Current curriculum focuses on general education, failing to prepare students adequately for real-life challenges.

➤ **Remedy:** Align curriculum with international standards, introduce multidisciplinary institutions with flexible credit systems, and allow students to choose courses freely.

Archaic Academic Structure:

➤ **Issue:** Assessment methods and evaluation criteria are outdated and not in line with international standards.

➤ **Remedy:** Embrace continuous evaluation and formative assessment models, prioritize practical and vocational courses, and streamline education areas for better assessment.

Inferior Primary Education Infrastructure:

➤ **Issue**: Inadequate infrastructure leads to high dropout rates, wasting potential human resources and causing financial strain.

> ➤ **Remedy:** Focus on skill development and vocational education at the middle school level, preparing students for the job market. Early vocation-based courses can instill the importance of education in families and alleviate financial burdens.

Regulation of Higher Education

◉ The **42nd Amendment to the Constitution** in 1976 shifted Education to the Concurrent List.

◉ The University Grants Commission (UGC) regulates higher education in India, All India Council for Technical Education, Medical Council of India, Bar Council of India (BCI), and other statutory bodies specific to different fields of study.

◉ These regulatory bodies set standards, provide accreditation and ensure quality in higher education.

Government Initiatives for Higher Education in India:

◉ **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**: Launched in 2020, NEP aims to revamp the education system, focusing on holistic development, flexibility, and multidisciplinary learning.

◉ **Swayam**: An online platform offering free courses from school to postgraduate level, launched to promote digital learning and increase access to quality education.

◉ **SWAYAM PRABHA**: A group of 32 DTH channels transmitting high-quality educational content, aimed at reaching remote areas and disadvantaged groups.

◉ **Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Program (EQUIP):** Aims to enhance access, inclusion, quality, excellence, and employability in higher education.

◉ **Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme (TEQIP):** Aims to improve the quality of technical education through long-term projects implemented in phases.

◉ **Institute of Eminence (IoE) Scheme**: Empowers higher educational institutions to become world-class teaching and research institutions.

◉ **Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA**): A Centrally Sponsored Scheme aimed at providing strategic funding to eligible state higher educational institutions.

◉ **Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF) Scheme**: Designed to improve research quality in higher educational institutions by attracting top talent into research.

◉ **Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC):** Facilitates academic and research collaborations between Indian institutions and top institutions worldwide.

◉ **e-PG Pathshala:** Provides high-quality, interactive e-content across various subjects under the National Mission on Education through ICT (NME-ICT).

◉ **Surveys and Rankings:**

> ➤ National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)

> ➤ All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)

◉ **Vocational Education:**

> ➤ National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS)

> ➤ Scheme for Higher Education Youth in Apprenticeship and Skills (SHREYAS)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2020-2021 in promoting data-driven policy-making and development in the higher education sector. What measures can be taken to enhance the effectiveness and impact of the survey?

3. ANNUAL STATUS OF EDUCATION REPORT (ASER), 2023

CONTEXT: The 18th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023 titled 'Beyond Basics' was recently released by NGO Pratham. This report focuses on various aspects of education and skills among students in rural India.

About:

ASER is an annual survey conducted by citizens across rural India since 2005. It aims to assess school enrollment and learning levels among children aged 5-16.

Key Highlights of ASER 2023:

➤ **Enrollment Rates:** Overall, 86.8% of 14-18-year-olds are enrolled in schools. However, enrollment varies significantly by age, with 3.9% of 14-year-olds and 32.6% of 18-year-olds not enrolled. Most students in this age group are in Arts/Humanities streams.

➤ **Vocational Training**: Only 5.6% of youth are involved in vocational training. This is more common among college-level students (16.2%) and typically involves short courses.

➤ **Basic Abilities**: About 25% of youth struggle to read a Class II level text fluently in their regional language. Over half have difficulty with division problems (3-digit by 1-digit).

➤ **Language and Arithmetic Skills**: Females generally outperform males in reading, while males excel in arithmetic and English reading. Only 57.3% can read sentences in English, with most understanding their meanings.

➤ **Digital Awareness and Skills:** Nearly 90% of youth have access to a smartphone at home, but there's a significant gap between males (43.7%) and females (19.8%) owning their own smartphone. Males also tend to perform better in digital tasks.

➤ **Foundational Numeracy Skills**: More than 50% of students struggle with basic division and mathematical tasks related to everyday calculations like budget management and interest rates.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Analyze the potential benefits and challenges of the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2022 in improving the quality of education in rural India. What measures can be taken to enhance the effectiveness and impact of the report?

4. LOGISTICS PERFORMANCE INDEX 2023

CONTEXT: India has improved its ranking in the World Bank's Logistic Performance Index 2023 by six places, owing to significant investments in both soft and hard infrastructure as well as technology, which has led to an improvement in the country's port performance.

Key-highlights of the Report

➤ Singapore and Finland are the most efficient and highest ranked LPI countries.

➤ **India's ranking:** According to the report, India's rank in the index of 139 countries has risen to 38 from 44 in 2018.

  ◎ **International shipments**: In 2023, India's ranking for international shipments improved significantly, moving up from 44 in 2018 to 22.

  ◎ **Logistics competence and equality:** The country also climbed four places to rank 48 in logistics competence and equality.

- **Timeline:** In terms of timelines, India saw a significant improvement, moving up 17 places in the rankings.

- **Tracking and tracing**: Additionally, India improved three places in tracking and tracing, now ranking at 38.

Logistics Industry in India

- India's logistics sector is estimated to account for about 14.4% of GDP. The unorganised sector amounts to over 90% of the logistics sector.

  - The average logistics cost per GDP among BRICS countries was 11%. However, in the case of India, the cost share per GDP was 14%.

- The sector is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 15.5% between FY2019 and FY2024.

- The sector employs around 22 million people and is expected to create another 1.2 million jobs by 2025.

Government Scheme to improve India's logistics sector

- **National Logistics Policy**: It is a comprehensive effort to address issues of high cost and inefficiency by laying down an overarching interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral and multi-jurisdictional framework for the development of the entire logistics ecosystem.

- **PM GatiShakti – National Master Plan for muti-modal connectivity:** It aims to give further boost and complementarity with the launch of the National Logistics Policy.

- **Other Related Initiatives to Logistics:**

  - Multi-Modal Logistics Parks

  - Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) Report

  - Dedicated Freight Corridor

  - Sagarmala Projects

  - Bharatmala Project

  - Multimodal Transportation of Goods Act, 1993

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) 2023 in assessing and improving the efficiency of logistics and supply chain performance in India. What measures can be taken to enhance India's ranking in the index?

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5. DECLINE OF POVERTY IN INDIA

CONTEXT: Recent research by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) has highlighted a significant decline in poverty in India, despite challenges posed by the pandemic. According to the study titled 'Rethinking Social Safety Nets in a Changing Society', poverty has decreased from 21.2% in 2011-12 to 8.5% in 2022-24.

What is Poverty?

- Poverty goes beyond income scarcity, encompassing challenges like poor health, inadequate education, unsafe living conditions, and vulnerability to violence.

- The NITI Aayog currently measures poverty through **Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).** The MPI captures overlapping deprivations (dimensions of poverty) in health, education and living standards.

- **Multidimensional Poverty**: Measures multiple deprivations in daily life such as poor health, lack of education, inadequate living standards, disempowerment, poor quality of work, the threat of violence, and living in areas that are environmentally hazardous, among others.

- **Multidimensionally poor:** An individual who is deprived of one-third or more of the weighted indicators.

- **Extreme Multidimensional Poverty:** Any person deprived of one-half or more of the weighted indicators.

Key-findings of the Report

- Poverty declined significantly between 2004-2005 and 2011-12 (from a headcount ratio of 38.6 to 21.2), and it continued to decline between 2011-12 and 2022-24 (from 21.2 to 8.5) despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

- **Responsible factors for decline in poverty:** Economic growth played a crucial role in this positive trend. Even amidst pandemic difficulties, poverty continued to decrease, underscoring the resilience of India's economic fabric.

- **Challenges:** As India progresses towards equitable development, adapting social protection programs becomes crucial.

- **Required measures:** The research emphasizes that traditional strategies for chronic poverty may need revision, as economic growth shifts the focus towards addressing transient factors like **natural disasters, health crises, and changes in employment opportunities.**

How poverty impacts India?	Benefits of reducing Poverty
- Less number of people getting resources. - Growth inclination as rich becomes richer and poor becomes poorer - Low income generation - Drop in standard of living conditions - Cheap labour and man-power available - Gender inequality - Low rate of education	- Enhanced Quality of Life (health, education, and living standards) - A more skilled and healthy workforce, potentially boosting productivity, innovation - Empowerment of Marginalized Communities - Higher Consumer Demand - Increased school attendance and educational attainment - Greater social cohesion - Increased awareness and capacity for environmental stewardship

FACT BOX

Poverty Line

- The poverty line recommended by the **Tendulkar Committee Report** was set to Rs 447 and Rs 579 for rural and urban areas, respectively, but varied between states for 2004-2005. These poverty thresholds were subsequently adjusted by **The Planning Commission** to Rs 860 and Rs 1,000 for 2011-12.

- So far, 6 Official Committees have estimated the number of people living in poverty.
  - The working group of 1962
  - V N Dandekar and N Rath (1971)
  - Y K Alagh (1979)
  - D T Lakdawala (1993)

> ► Suresh Tendulkar (2009)
> ► C Rangarajan (2014)

Government Measures to eliminate poverty:

- ◎ **October 17** is observed as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.
- ◎ **National Food for Work Programme:** The National Food for Work Programme was launched on November 14, 2004 in 150 most backward districts of the country with the objective to intensify the generation of supplementary wage employment.
- ◎ **Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY):** SGSY, launched in April 1999, aims at bringing the assisted poor families (Swarozgaris) above the poverty line by organizing them into Self Help Groups (SHGs) through a mix of Bank credit and Government subsidy.
- ◎ **Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY):** SGRY, launched in 2001, aims at providing additional wage employment in all rural areas and thereby food security and improve nutritional levels. The SGRY is open to all rural poor who are in need of wage employment and desire to do manual and unskilled work around the village/habitat. The programme is implemented through the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).
- ◎ **Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY):** PMGY launched in 2000-01 envisages allocation of Additional Central Assistance (ACA) to the States and UTs for selected basic services such as primary health, primary education, rural shelter, rural drinking water, nutrition and rural electrification.
- ◎ **Rural Employment Generation Programme (REGP):** To create self-employment opportunities in rural areas and small towns, it is being implemented by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC).
- ◎ **Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY):** The objective is making available self-employment opportunities to the educated unemployed youth by assisting them in setting up any economically viable activity.

PYQ

Q: "The incidence and intensity of poverty are more important in determining poverty based on income alone." In this context, analyze the latest United Nations Multidimensional Poverty Index Report. (2020)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in addressing poverty in India. What measures can be taken to ensure the effective implementation and impact of the MPI?

6. ANNUAL NESDA REPORT

CONTEXT: The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) recently published the 'Annual NeSDA Way Forward Report 2023'. This report assesses the progress and challenges of e-governance across states and Union Territories (UTs) in India using the National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment (NeSDA) Framework.

◻ Key Highlights of the Annual NeSDA Way Forward Report 2023:

- ◎ **E-Services Mapped:**
  - ◎ As of December 2023, there were 16,487 e-Services mapped on the NeSDA Way Forward Dashboard, indicating widespread digital service delivery across various sectors.

- ◉ Jammu & Kashmir leads with 1,117 e-services, followed by Tamil Nadu (1,101), Madhya Pradesh (1,010), and Kerala (911).
- ➤ **Sector-wise Distribution:**
- ◉ The sector of Local Governance & Utility Services has the highest number of e-services.
- ◉ The tourism sector achieved the highest saturation of mandatory e-services in 23 out of 36 States/UTs.
- ➤ **Mandatory Service Saturation:** The saturation of mandatory e-services has increased significantly, reaching 76% in NeSDA Way Forward 2023, up from 48% in NeSDA 2019 and 69% in NeSDA 2021.

FACT BOX

National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment (NeSDA):

- ◉ NeSDA is a framework developed by DARPG to evaluate the delivery of e-services by states/UTs and Central Ministries. It benchmarks their performance across seven sectors, including Local Governance & Utility Services, Social Welfare, Finance, Labour & Employment, Education, Environment, and Tourism.

Government Initiatives to Promote E-Governance in India:

- ◉ **MyGov Initiative:** A platform for citizen engagement and participatory governance.
- ◉ **National Scholarships Portal (NSP):** Provides a single-window for various scholarships schemes.
- ◉ **Darpan Portal:** Monitors and evaluates the performance of NGOs receiving government grants.
- ◉ **DigiLocker:** Offers a secure digital storage space for citizens to store their documents.
- ◉ **National Center of Geo-informatics**: Facilitates the use of geospatial technology in governance.
- ◉ **National e-Governance Plan**: Aims to make government services accessible to the common man through common service delivery outlets.

PYQ

Q: "E-governance is not only about utilization of the power of new technology, but also much about critical importance of the 'use value' of information." Explain. (2018)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the Annual NeSDA Report in promoting effective e-governance services in India. What measures can be taken to enhance the quality, accessibility, and responsiveness of e-governance platforms?

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7. CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX (CPI), 2023

CONTEXT: In the recently released Corruption Perceptions Index, 2023 by the Transparency International India's standing in the Corruption Perceptions Index remained relatively stable at 93 out of 180 countries.

2022 vs 2023

- ➤ In 2022, India secured the 85th position with an overall score of 40.
- ➤ However, in 2023, the country's score slightly dropped to 39, signaling concerns about corruption levels.

- The Corruption Perceptions Index utilizes a scale of 0 to 100, with 0 representing high corruption and 100 indicating a very clean environment.

- The report notes that India's modest fluctuation in scores doesn't permit firm conclusions regarding any significant change.

- However, it highlights a narrowing civic space leading up to the elections, emphasizing the potential threats to fundamental rights posed by recent legislative actions, such as the telecommunication bill.

Significance of the CPI:

- **Transparency and Accountability**: The CPI highlights the importance of transparency and accountability in public sector governance, encouraging countries to adopt effective anti-corruption measures.

- **Global Benchmarking**: The index enables countries to benchmark their performance against global standards, identifying areas where improvements are needed.

- **Policy Formulation**: The insights from the CPI support evidence-based policy formulation to combat corruption and enhance governance.

- **Public Awareness**: The CPI raises public awareness about the levels of corruption and promotes advocacy for anti-corruption initiatives.

Challenges and Concerns:

- **Data Accuracy and Perception**: Ensuring the accuracy and reliability of data used in the CPI, which is based on perceptions, can be challenging.

- **Implementation of Measures**: Implementing effective anti-corruption measures requires strong political will and resources.

- **Cultural and Institutional Barriers**: Addressing cultural and institutional barriers to transparency and accountability is crucial.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation**: Establishing robust mechanisms to monitor progress and evaluate the impact of anti-corruption initiatives is necessary.

FACT BOX

Corruption Perception Index (CPI)

- **Released by:** Transparency International (TI).
- The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is the leading global indicator of public sector corruption, providing an annual snapshot of the relative degree of corruption in 180 countries and territories.
- It uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.
- A country with a higher score has a higher rank.

PYQ

Q: "In the integrity index of Transparency International, India stands very low. Discuss briefly the legal, political, economic, social, and cultural factors that have caused the decline of public morality in India." (2016)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2023 in addressing corruption in India. What measures can be taken to enhance transparency and accountability in public sector governance?

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4

LAWS & BILLS

1. DIGITAL MARKETS ACT (DMA)

CONTEXT: The European Union is investigating Apple, Google, and Meta for potential violations of the new Digital Markets Act, which aims to curb the power of big tech companies and create a more level playing field for smaller businesses.

About Digital Markets Act (DMA)

➤ The DMA is a groundbreaking **European law** aiming to prevent large online platforms that connect consumers with **content, goods, and services** from abusing their market power.

➤ The DMA aims to ensure contestable and fair markets in the digital sector.

➤ It regulates gatekeepers, which are large digital platforms that provide an important gateway between business users and consumers, whose position can grant them the power to create a bottleneck in the digital economy.

➤ The European Commission believes that keeping the big internet companies in check can lead to **more competition and choice, greater innovation, better quality, and lower prices**

India's IT Rules:

- India's IT Rules announced last year make the social media intermediary and its executives liable if the company fails to carry out due diligence.
- **Rule 4 (a)** states that significant social media intermediaries — such as Facebook or Google — must appoint a **chief compliance officer (CCO),** who could be booked if a tweet or post that violates local laws is not removed within the stipulated period.
- India's Rules also introduce the need to publish a monthly compliance report.
- They include a clause on the need to trace the originator of a message — this provision has been challenged by WhatsApp in Delhi High Court.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the Digital Markets Act (DSA) in creating a safer and more accountable online environment.

2. DIGITAL PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION ACT 2023

CONTEXT: The Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023 aims to establish a comprehensive legal framework for data protection and privacy in India. The act seeks to regulate the processing of personal data, ensuring the protection of individuals' privacy rights.

What is the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023?

- **India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDPA)** is a comprehensive privacy and data protection law that recognizes the right of individuals, referred to as data principals, to protect their personal data during the processing of that data for lawful purposes.

- The law culminates a seven-year journey that began when the Indian Supreme Court ruled the right to privacy was protected under the **Constitution of India in 2017.**

- The DPDPA includes provisions regarding consent, legitimate uses, breaches, data fiduciary and processor responsibilities, and individuals' rights over their data.

- A person is defined as individual, undivided family, company, firm, association, the state and every **"artificial juristic person."**

- The law doesn't apply to paper data unless it's digitized or data collected for personal, artistic and journalistic use.

Significance of the Act:

➤ **Data Privacy and Protection**: The act aims to ensure the privacy and protection of individuals' personal data, addressing concerns about data breaches and misuse.

➤ **Regulatory Framework**: It establishes a regulatory framework for data processing, setting out the rights and obligations of data controllers and processors.

➤ **Promoting Trust**: By ensuring data privacy and protection, the act seeks to promote trust in digital services and encourage the adoption of digital technologies.

➤ **Global Alignment**: The act aligns India's data protection standards with global best practices, facilitating international data flows and cooperation.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Implementation and Compliance**: Ensuring effective implementation and compliance with the new regulations can be challenging for businesses and organizations.

➤ **Balancing Privacy and Innovation**: Balancing the need for data privacy with the promotion of innovation and technological development is crucial.

➤ **Data Security**: Ensuring robust data security measures to protect against data breaches and cyber threats is essential.

➤ **Public Awareness and Education**: Promoting public awareness and education about data privacy rights and responsibilities is important for the act's success.

Global data protection models

- **European Union (EU) model**: The EU's GDPR imposes stringent requirements on organizations to ensure the careful safeguarding of personal data and demands evidence of such protection.

- **United States (US) model**: The US model emphasizes safeguarding an individual's personal privacy from government intrusion.

- **China model:** The Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL) introduces enhanced rights for data principals in China, aiming to curb the improper usage of personal data.

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023 in ensuring data privacy and protection in India. What measures can be taken to ensure effective implementation and compliance with the new regulations?

3. ANUSANDHAN NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION (NRF) ACT, 2023

CONTEXT: The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (NRF) Act, 2023 aims to establish the National Research Foundation to promote research and innovation in various fields. The act seeks to enhance India's research capabilities and foster a culture of scientific inquiry and technological development.

About ANRF

- Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) is a new research funding agency with an outlay of Rs 50,000 crore over the next five years.
- ANRF aims to consolidate research funding previously managed by the **Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB).**
- It will foster research and innovation across India's universities, colleges, and laboratories in natural sciences, engineering, health, agriculture, and more and enhance the country's Research and Development (R&D) capabilities.

Structure and Leadership:

- ▶ **Governing Board (15 members)**: Headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as President, with Ministers of Science & Technology and Education as Vice Presidents. Includes Secretaries from key departments and advisors.
- ▶ **Executive Council:** Chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser, consisting of Secretaries from various ministries and CEOs.
- The ANRF is a move to provide a high-level strategic direction for research, innovation and entrepreneurship in the fields of natural sciences, including mathematical sciences, engineering and technology, environmental and earth sciences, health and agriculture, and have long-term effect and outcomes for each citizen.

Comparison with SERB Act, 2008:

	SERB Act, 2008	**Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) Act**
Funds	SERB funded solely by the government.	ANRF seeks contributions from both government and private sources
Governance	Chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology	Led directly by high-level officials
Scope	Promoting basic research in Science and Engineering	ANRF expands beyond natural sciences to include mathematics, humanities, social sciences, and art, aiming to address national priorities like clean energy and sustainable infrastructure

Participation	Hard for private research organisations to contribute to NRF funding body.	Aims to involve Government institutions, colleges, Universities, higher educational institutions and private sector organisations

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: **Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (NRF) Act, 2023 in promoting research and innovation in India. What measures can be taken to ensure effective implementation and impact of the NRF?**

4. MEDICAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY (MTP) ACT

CONTEXT: **The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act regulates the conditions under which pregnancies can be terminated in India. The act aims to provide safe and legal access to abortion services, ensuring the health and rights of women.**

About the Act

- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 2021 allows all women in India (married and unmarried) to abort a foetus up to 20 weeks of pregnancy and 24 weeks for women under special conditions.

- The MTP Act allows for abortion after 24 weeks only if there is a threat to the woman's life or if there is a foetal anomaly. "Rule 3B" of Rules annexed to the MTP Act, which was amended in 2021, specifies seven categories of women who are eligible for termination between 20-24 weeks.

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971 and its Rules of 2003 prohibit unmarried women who are between 20 weeks to 24 weeks pregnant to abort with the help of registered medical practitioners.

  ➤ survivors of sexual assault or rape or incest

  ➤ minors

  ➤ those who have a change of marital status during the ongoing pregnancy (widowhood and divorce)

  ➤ women with physical disabilities

  ➤ mentally ill women

  ➤ women carrying a malformed foetus that has a substantial risk of being incompatible with life

  ➤ and women with pregnancy in humanitarian settings or disasters or emergencies as may be declared by the government

- But several high courts and the Supreme Court in the past have used their discretionary powers and have given orders to terminate late-term pregnancies.

Arguments in favour of Abortion	Arguments Against abortion
- Abortion is deemed acceptable as the foetus is not a person. - The mother has a right to life and it supersedes the rights of the foetus to choose whether or not it remains connected to her body. - It may be ethical for a mother to have an abortion to defend herself from the danger to her mental or physical health than continuing with the pregnancy would cause.	- Abortion deprives the foetus of a potential 'future like ours'. - It deprives one of all the experiences, enjoyments, opportunities that would make up their future personal life. - Killing an innocent human being is a moral wrong.

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act in ensuring safe and legal access to abortion services in India. What measures can be taken to address access, awareness, and stigma related to abortion?

5. SURROGACY (REGULATION) RULES IN INDIA 2024

CONTEXT: In February 2024, significant amendments were introduced to India's Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, aiming to expand access to surrogacy services under specified conditions. Here's a simplified breakdown of the recent changes and the current regulations surrounding surrogacy in India:

◘ Key-highlights:

➤ **Eligibility Criteria for Surrogacy:** The Surrogacy (Regulation) Act of 2021 specifies that only married couples and single women, aged between 35 to 45 years, are eligible for surrogacy services. This excludes single men, same-sex couples, and unmarried couples from accessing surrogacy.

➤ **Nature of Surrogacy Allowed:** Commercial surrogacy remains prohibited in India. Only altruistic surrogacy, where the surrogate mother does not receive monetary compensation beyond medical expenses and insurance coverage, is permitted.

➤ **Amendments Allowing Donor Gametes:** The recent amendment allows the use of donor gametes (egg or sperm) for married couples in cases where one partner has a medical condition that necessitates it. This amendment aims to accommodate couples facing infertility issues that require donor assistance for successful surrogacy.

➤ **Emphasis on Biological Relatedness and ARTs:** The Surrogacy (Regulation) Act emphasizes the use of Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) like In-Vitro Fertilisation (IVF), ensuring at least one gamete is from the intending parents. This reinforces the importance of biological relatedness between the child and intending parents.

➤ **Surrogacy vs Adoption:** The law distinguishes surrogacy from adoption, prioritizing the right to a biologically related child through surrogacy over adoption.

Legal Challenges and Supreme Court Controversy

◉ The eligibility criteria based on marital status are currently under scrutiny in the Supreme Court of India.

◉ This legal challenge questions whether all individuals, regardless of marital status, should have access to surrogacy services.

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2024 in promoting ethical practices and protecting the rights of surrogate mothers and children in India. What measures can be taken to ensure effective implementation and compliance with the amended rules?

6. TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT 2023

CONTEXT: The Telecommunications Act, 2023 aims to amend and consolidate the law relating to development, expansion and operation of telecommunication services and telecommunication networks; assignment of spectrum and for matters connected therewith.

Scope of the Act

➤ The Telecommunications Act, 2023 also seeks to repeal existing legislative framework like Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and Indian Wireless Telegraph Act, 1933 owing to huge technical advancements in the telecom sector and technologies.

➤ Guided by the following principles, the Act aims to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat (Developed India).

⊙ Samavesh (Inclusion)

⊙ Suraksha (Security)

⊙ Vriddhi (Growth)

⊙ Tvarit (Responsiveness)

Significance of the Act:

➤ **Modernized Regulation**: The act aims to modernize the regulatory framework for the telecommunications sector, ensuring it keeps pace with technological advancements.

➤ **Efficiency and Transparency**: It seeks to enhance the efficiency and transparency of telecommunications services, promoting fair competition and consumer protection.

➤ **Innovation and Competition**: The act encourages innovation and competition in the telecommunications sector, fostering a dynamic and competitive market.

➤ **Consumer Rights**: It emphasizes the protection of consumer rights, ensuring access to high-quality and affordable telecommunications services.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Implementation and Compliance**: Ensuring effective implementation and compliance with the new regulations can be challenging for telecommunications companies.

➤ **Balancing Regulation and Innovation**: Balancing the need for regulation with the promotion of innovation and technological development is crucial.

➤ **Infrastructure Development**: Ensuring the development and maintenance of robust telecommunications infrastructure is essential.

➤ **Monitoring and Enforcement**: Establishing robust mechanisms to monitor and enforce the provisions of the act is necessary.

Fact Addition

⊙ The Telecom industry in India is the second largest in the world with a subscriber base of 1.091 bn as of April 2024.

⊙ The Telecom sector is the 4th largest sector in terms of FDI inflows, contributing 6% of total FDI inflow, and contributes directly to 2.2 Mn employment and indirectly to 1.8 Mn jobs.

⊙ **Components:** Infrastructure, Equipment, Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MNVO), White Space Spectrum, 5G, Telephone service providers and Broadband.

⊙ **Important Schemes:**

➤ National optical fibre mission

➤ National digital communication policy 2018

➤ PM-WANI scheme

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the Telecommunications Act 2023 in modernizing the regulatory framework for the telecommunications sector in India. What measures can be taken to ensure effective implementation and compliance with the new regulations?

7. POST OFFICE ACT, 2023

CONTEXT: The recently passed Post Office Act, 2023 introduces significant changes aimed at modernizing India's postal services. Key provisions include empowering the Director General of Postal Services to regulate charges independently and enhancing interception powers for national security and law enforcement purposes.

Key Highlights:

- **Director General's Authority:** Empowered to set service charges without parliamentary approval.
- **Interception Powers**: Allows authorities to intercept postal items in emergencies and for security reasons.
- **Digital Addressing**: Mandates digital codes for precise mail delivery.

Concerns:

- **Lack of Safeguards**: Absence of clear procedural safeguards for interception activities.
- **Undefined Grounds**: Vague definition of 'emergency' raises misuse concerns.
- **Liability Issues**: Inadequate provisions for service lapses and unauthorized actions.

Recommendations:

- Implement robust safeguards for interception procedures.
- Define and restrict grounds for interception to prevent misuse.
- Ensure accountability and penalties for postal service violations.

In conclusion, while the Act modernizes postal services, addressing these concerns is crucial to protect privacy and uphold consumer rights effectively.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the Post Office Act, 2023 in modernizing the regulatory framework for postal services in India. What measures can be taken to ensure effective implementation and compliance with the new regulations?

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5

INSTIUTIONS

1. LOKPAL

CONTEXT: The Office of Lokpal is an anti-corruption ombudsman institution in India, established under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013. The Lokpal is responsible for investigating and prosecuting cases of corruption involving public officials, including the Prime Minister, Ministers, and Members of Parliament.

Significance of the Office:

➤ **Anti-Corruption Efforts**: The Lokpal plays a crucial role in India's anti-corruption efforts by investigating and prosecuting cases of corruption involving high-level public officials.

➤ **Transparency and Accountability**: It promotes transparency and accountability in governance by holding public officials accountable for corrupt practices.

➤ **Public Trust**: The institution aims to restore public trust in government institutions by addressing corruption and ensuring justice.

➤ **Independent Functioning**: The Lokpal operates independently of the government, ensuring impartiality in its investigations and actions.

Challenges and Concerns:

➤ **Implementation and Effectiveness**: Ensuring the effective implementation and functioning of the Lokpal can be challenging due to bureaucratic and political hurdles.

➤ **Coordination with Agencies**: Promoting coordination and cooperation with other anti-corruption agencies and law enforcement bodies is essential.

➤ **Resource Allocation**: Ensuring adequate resources and staffing for the Lokpal to carry out its functions effectively is necessary.

➤ **Public Awareness**: Raising public awareness about the role and functions of the Lokpal and encouraging citizens to report corruption is important.

FACT BOX

Lokpal

⊙ The term "Lokpal" was coined by L.M.Singhvi in 1963.

⊙ The concept of a constitutional ombudsman was first proposed in parliament by Law Minister Ashoke Kumar Sen in the early 1960s.

⊙ The first Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) recommended the enacting of the Office of a Lokpal.

⊙ Forty five years after its first introduction and after ten failed attempts, the Lokpal Bill was finally enacted in India on 18 December 2013.

⊙ The Act was passed in 2013.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the Office of Lokpal in combating corruption and promoting transparency and accountability in governance in India. What measures can be taken to ensure the effective functioning and impact of the Lokpal?

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2. NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (NHRC)

CONTEXT: The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) has extended the deferral of the National Human Rights Commission of India's (NHRC) status for another year, raising concerns about India's adherence to international human rights standards and the NHRC's effectiveness.

▣ Challenges Faced by NHRC:

➤ **Continued Deferral:** Despite efforts to lift the deferral, the NHRC's status remains deferred by the GANHRI, indicating persistent doubts about India's compliance with the Paris Principles.

➤ **Allegations of Government Influence:** The NHRC's credibility is questioned due to concerns about government influence, highlighted by controversial appointments and ongoing vacancies within the commission.

➤ **Impact of NHRC's Brochure:** The NHRC's brochure, 'Human Rights 75', raised eyebrows for its mention of the Manusmriti, a text associated with discrimination, raising questions about the commission's approach to human rights principles.

▣ Concerns Over NHRC's Approach to Human Rights:

➤ **Reference to Manusmriti:** The NHRC's reference to the Manusmriti in its brochure 'Human Rights 75' has raised eyebrows, as the text is seen as a source of discrimination and violence by many historically disadvantaged Indians.

➤ **Need for Clarification:** The mention of the Manusmriti calls for clarification from Justice Mishra, as it seems to conflict with the foundational values of the Indian Constitution.

➤ **Adherence to Paris Principles:** The GANHRI's decision is believed to be influenced by doubts about India's adherence to the Paris Principles, which provide international benchmarks for National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs).

FACT BOX

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is a statutory body established under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.
- The NHRC is responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights in India, investigating violations and recommending measures to prevent future violations.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q: **"Though the Human Rights Commissions have contributed immensely to the protection of human rights in India, yet they have failed to assert themselves against the mighty and powerful. Analyzing their structural and practical limitations, suggest remedial measures." (2021)**

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in protecting and promoting human rights in India. What measures can be taken to enhance the effectiveness and independence of the NHRC?

3. IRDAI INTRODUCES NEW RULES TO SPEED UP HEALTH INSURANCE CLAIMS

CONTEXT: Delays in settling health insurance claims by insurance companies or third-party administrators (TPAs) have often caused significant stress for patients and their families. To address these issues, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has introduced new rules to streamline the health insurance claim process.

The Need for New Rules

- ➤ Policyholders have frequently faced long waiting times for their health insurance claims to be processed, even when pre-approval was already given before hospital admission.
- ➤ This delay not only causes inconvenience but also imposes extra financial burdens on patients who have to pay for additional nights in the hospital due to claim processing delays.
- ➤ These issues highlight the need for a more efficient and timely claim settlement process.

Insurance Sector

- The Indian Insurance market is expected to reach $200 BN by 2027.
- India is **9th largest Life Insurance Market** globally.
- Insurance density in India has increased from $ 11.1 in 2001 to $ 91 in 2021 (Life insurance- $ 69, Non life insurance – $ 22)
- **Insurance penetration in India** has been steadily increasing (from 2.7% in 2000 to 4.2% in 2021)
  - ➤ **Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY** is the largest health assurance scheme in the world and is funded by the Government.

About the New Rules

- ➤ **Time Limit for Approving Cashless Claims:** IRDAI has mandated that insurers must grant final authorisation within three hours of receiving the discharge request from the hospital. If there is any delay beyond three hours, the additional amount charged by the hospital will be borne by the insurer from the shareholder's fund.
- ➤ **Immediate Processing in Case of Death:** In the event of a policyholder's death during treatment, the insurer is required to:

- Immediately process the claim settlement request.
- Ensure the immediate release of the mortal remains (dead body) from the hospital.
- ➤ **Striving for 100% Cashless Claims:** IRDAI has directed insurers to achieve 100% cashless claim settlement in a timely manner.
- ➤ **Digital Pre-Authorisation Process:** Insurers must provide a pre-authorisation process through digital means.

📄 FACT BOX

Jurisdiction: Ministry of Finance

- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) is an **autonomous and statutory body** which is responsible for managing and regulating insurance and re-insurance industry in India.
- It was constituted under an **Act of Parliament in 1999.**

PRACTICE QUESTION:

Q: Discuss the recent regulatory changes introduced by IRDAI to streamline the health insurance claim process in India.

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4. NATIONAL STARTUP ADVISORY COUNCIL (NSAC)

CONTEXT: Upon completion of two year term of the 'National Startup Advisory Council' (NSAC), the Council has been reconstituted.

🗐 NSAC's Role

- ➤ The Central Government had constituted the NSAC to advise the Government on measures required to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and startups in the country resulting in sustainable economic growth and large-scale employment opportunities.
- ➤ NSAC is playing an important role in identifying areas of interventions for expansion of startup ecosystem and ideating and nurturing national programs under Startup India initiative.
- ➤ Programs such as **MAARG, National Mentorship Program, Incubator Capacity Development Program, Adoption of NavIC Grand Challenge, Startup Champions 2.0** etc. are some of the programs ideated and incubated by NSAC.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of the National Startup Advisory Council (NSAC) in fostering innovation and promoting entrepreneurship in India. What measures can be taken to enhance the effectiveness and impact of NSAC's initiatives?

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5. INDIA'S ONE AIRSPACE IDEA

CONTEXT: India is planning a major move to unify its four Flight Information Regions (FIRs) in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai, into one continuous airspace in Nagpur and have harmonized Air Traffic Management from Nagpur which has a unique central location in the country.

Persistent Challenges in air traffic management

- **Inefficient air traffic management** exacerbates congestion issues and compromises flight safety. India's airspace is fragmented, with multiple air traffic control (ATC) authorities responsible for different regions, leading to coordination challenges and suboptimal routing.

- **Skies are already capacity-crunched** and are set to become even more so with the advent of new airspace users such as **electric vertical take-off and landing aircrafts (eVTOLs).**

- **Managing increased volume of airborne vehicles** efficiently, while maintaining or even enhancing safety and avoiding congestion, represents a significant challenge.

Impact of the move

- The single continuum **Flight Information Region (FIR)** would yield a lot of benefits in terms of safety, efficiency, user satisfaction, reduced carbon footprint and optimum manpower utilization.

- **Indian Single Sky Harmonized Air Traffic Management at Nagpur (ISHAN)** is expected to reduce separations (between flights) and have more fuel-efficient flight paths for aircraft.

- The unification aims to streamline and enhance air traffic management (ATM) operations in the region.

- If this plan is implemented, the air traffic controllers of every area control would not be required to coordinate for domestic flights flying above 25,000 ft (flights in the upper airspace) as they would all be handled by **Air traffic controllers (ATCOs)** in Nagpur.

- The ATCOs in every region or airport would then only work to guide the flights approaching or taking off from an airport until it enters the upper space which is referred to as 'Area control' in aviation parlance".

FACT BOX

India's Airspace

- India is the major air navigation service provider in the Asia-Pacific region and controls over 2.8 million square nautical miles.

- This quantum of airspace is controlled by India through four flight information regions (**Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chenna**i) with a sub-FIR at Guwahati.

- India is sharing its Flight Information Regions (FIR) with 12 neighbouring countries.

- **Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** is the regulatory body for Civil Aviation in India.

- The **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** is the statutory body which is responsible for creating, upgrading, maintaining and managing civil aviation infrastructure in India.

- It also takes care of **Air Traffic Management (ATM) and Communication Navigation Surveillance (CNS) of Indian Airspace.**

Rights over Airspace

- **Article 1** of the **Convention on International Civil Aviation**, with regards to sovereignty of Airspace states that *'every State has complete and exclusive sovereignty over the airspace above its territory'.*

- Further, the territory of any state includes **12 nautical miles of territorial waters** off the coastline.

- Airspace which is not within any country's territorial limit is considered as **'International Airspace'.**
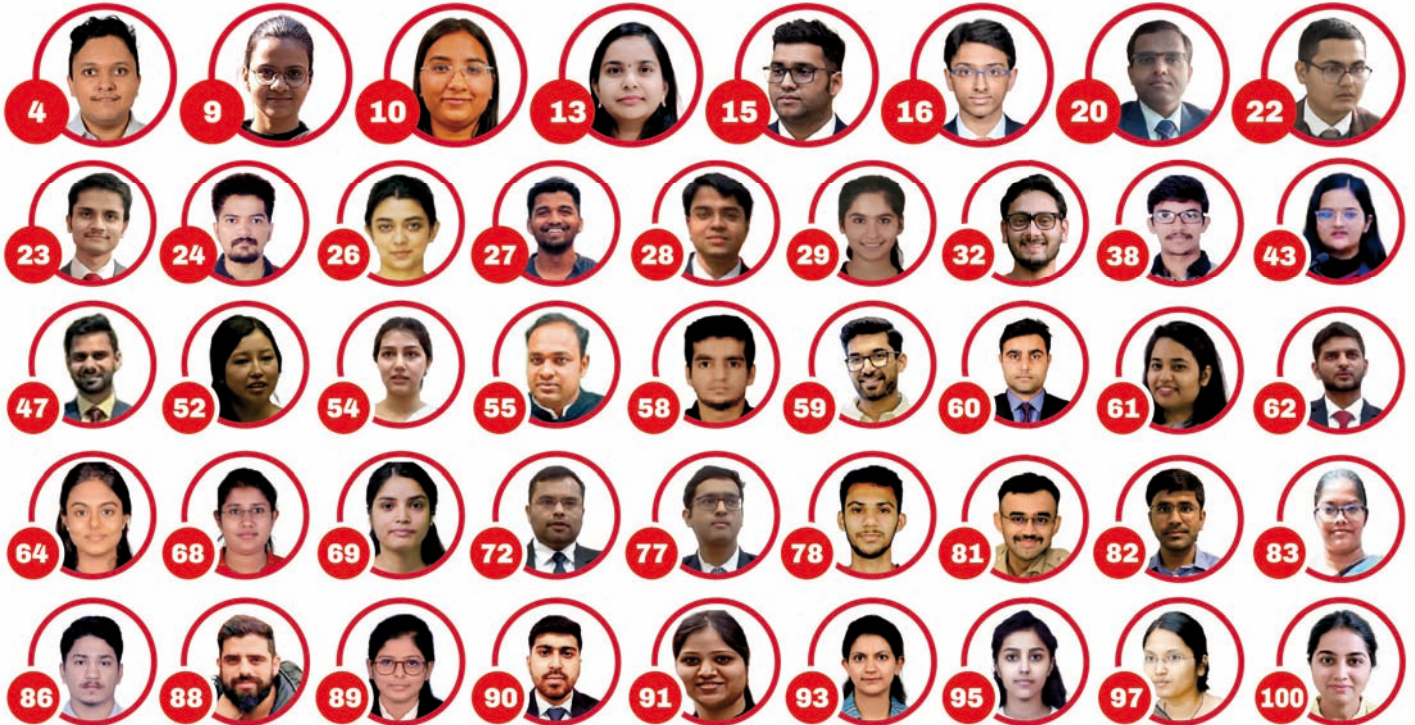

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q: **India is planning a major reform in its airspace management by unifying four Flight Information Regions (FIRs) into a single airspace centered in Nagpur. Discuss the potential benefits of this initiative and the challenges it aims to address.**

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