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INSTA SECURE SYNOPSIS **MAINS MISSION 2023**

GS- II

JUNE 2023



NOTE: Please remember that following ‘answers’ are NOT ‘model answers’. They are NOT synopsis too if we go by definition of the term. What we are providing is content that both meets demand of the question and at the same time gives you extra points in the form of background information.



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Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Without a proper data protection framework in place, there is a risk of encroaching upon citizens' fundamental right to privacy without any means of accountability.

Analyse. (250 words)

Difficulty level: Tough

Reference: [Indian Express](#)

Why the question:

The article emphasizes the need to expedite the implementation of a data protection policy in light of the challenges faced during the rollout of the CoWIN platform in India.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about need and significance of protection of personal data of the people in India.

Directive:

Analyse – When asked to analyse, you must examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them in a summary.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by writing about fundamental right to privacy, especially in the light of recent events.

Body:

First, write about the evolution towards data protection law since SC judgement of 2017 – Just Sri Krishna committee, JPC on the draft law etc, Withdrawal of personal data protection bill.

Next, write about why protecting personal data is important? – Data protection regulations ensure the security of individuals' personal data and regulate the collection, usage, transfer, and disclosure of the said data and how without a law it renders fundamental right to privacy ineffective.

Conclusion:

Conclude writing a way forward.

Introduction

Data protection is the process of protecting data and involves the relationship between the collection and dissemination of data and technology. It aims to strike a balance between individual privacy rights while still allowing data to be used for myriad purposes. The sheer volume of people's data on the internet and the advancements in technologies such as **Artificial intelligence, Data mining and machine learning** poses a **threat of abuse and misuse of data**.

Body

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Data protection in India

- Several countries have dedicated law for data protection like Japan's Act on Protection of Personal Information. **European Union has also adopted General Data Protection Regulation 2018.**
- India does not have any dedicated legal framework for data protection. Presently some acts cover the data protection in general.
 - Sec 43A of Information Technology Act 2000 protects user data from misuse but it is applicable to only corporate entities and not on government agency. Also, the rules are restricted to sensitive personal data only — medical history, biometric information among other things.
 - Other acts like Consumer Protection Act 2015, Copyrights Act 1957 among others also attempt to protect the personal information.
- The need for a more **robust data protection legislation came to the fore in 2017** post the Supreme Court's landmark judgment in **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd) v. Union of India** that established the **right to privacy as a fundamental right.**
- In 2018, a draft version of the bill was prepared by a committee headed by **retired Justice B N Srikrishna**. Recently, the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Electronics and Information Technology.

Need for Data Protection in India

India has around **40 cr internet users and 25cr social media users** who spend significant time online. The **average cost for data breach in India has gone up to Rs. 11.9 crore, an increase of 7.9% from 2017**. Moreover, in the **KS Puttaswamy case**, the Supreme Court has declared Data Privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21. Hence it becomes all the more significant to ensure data protection. **The reasons are as follows:**

- **Data Export:** Most of the data storage companies are based abroad. Especially the e-commerce companies that have exabytes of data on Indians. They also export data to other jurisdiction making it difficult to apply Indian laws.
- **Data Localization:** Enforcing data localization has faced backlash from many private entities and their home governments. There hundreds of private players are involved in data dynamics which makes it difficult to apply uniform data protection framework.
- **User Consent:** Generally, the application using pre-ticked boxes on consent while asking users regarding the acceptance to the terms and conditions.
- **Privacy Breach:** It is usually difficult to trace the perpetrator invading the data privacy.
- **Privacy laws:** Currently, the usage and transfer of personal data of citizens is regulated by the Information Technology (IT) Rules, 2011, under the IT Act, 2000. However, this are applicable only to private entities and not on government agency.
- **Data ownership:** As per TRAI guidelines, individuals own the data, while the collectors and data processors are mere custodians of data who are subject to regulations.

Conclusion

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Considering the data privacy as the fundamental right of a citizen and economic downturns of the potential breaches in data, government need to reconsider the above pending issues. A robust Personal data protection law is the need of the hour. Due importance needs to be given on public awareness, better implementation and regulation and efficient grievance redressal as well.

Although there is no specific time limit for Governors to decide on Bills, they cannot misuse their power to indefinitely obstruct or delay the functioning of a democratically elected government. Examine. (250 words)

Difficulty level: Tough

Reference: [The Hindu](#)

Why the question:

The article discusses the issue of Governors delaying or obstructing the passage of Bills in India.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about role of governor in giving/withholding assent to bills passed by state legislature.

Directive word:

Examine – When asked to ‘Examine’, we must investigate the topic (content words) in detail, inspect it, investigate it and establish the key facts and issues related to the topic in question. While doing so we should explain why these facts and issues are important and their implications.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by giving context about article 200.

Body:

First, write in detail about the various options with the Governor with respect to a bill passed by the state legislature.

Next, write about the drawbacks on indefinitely sitting on the bill (pocket veto) and issues arising from such action.

Next, write about the possible solutions to the above issue.

Conclusion:

Conclude by writing a way forward.

Introduction

The makers of the Constitution of India did not anticipate that the office of the Governor, meant to “**preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the law**”, would metamorphose into the most controversial constitutional office rendering the constitutional praxis rugged.

On his/ her discretion, the Governor can reserve a bill passed by the state legislature for president’s assent. However, situations are mentioned in Article 200, when he will reserve the bill, yet he can use, discretion regarding this matter. Governor has discretion to refuse to sign to an ordinary bill passed by the state legislature.

Body

Governor’s power to reserve bills for consideration of the President

Article 200 of the Indian Constitution deals with the powers of the Governor with regard to assent given to bills passed by the State legislature and other powers of the Governor such as reserving the bill for the President’s consideration.

According to Article 200, when a Bill, passed by the Legislature of a State, is presented to the Governor, he has the following options:

Ordinary Bills

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When a bill is sent to the governor after it is passed by state legislature, he can:

- Give his assent to the bill, or
- Withhold his assent to the bill, or
- Return the bill (if it is not a money bill) for reconsideration of the state legislature.

However, if the bill is passed again by the state legislature with or without amendments, the governor has to give his assent to the bill or

- **Reserve the bill for the consideration of the president.** In one case such **reservation** is **obligatory**, that is, where the bill passed by the state legislature endangers the position of the state high court. **When the governor reserves a bill for the consideration of the President, he will not have any further role in the enactment of the bill.**
 - If the bill is returned by the President for the reconsideration of the House or Houses and is passed again, the bill must be presented again for the presidential assent only.
 - If the President gives his assent to the bill, it becomes an act.
 - This means that the assent of the Governor is no longer required.

Options before the President:

When a Bill is reserved by a Governor for the consideration of the President, **the President shall declare either that he assents to the Bill or that he withholds assent therefrom** Provided that:

1. Where the Bill is not a Money Bill, the President may direct the Governor to return the Bill to the House or, as the case may be, the Houses of the Legislature of the State together with such a message as is mentioned in the first proviso to **article 200**.
2. When a Bill is so returned, the House or Houses shall reconsider it accordingly within a period of six months from the date of receipt of such message and, if it is again passed by the House or Houses with or without amendment, it shall be presented again to the President for his consideration.
3. It is not mentioned in the constitution whether it is obligatory on the part of the President to give his assent to such a bill or not.

Critical analysis of such powers of Governor

- **Delays in granting assent:** The governors sometimes sat over the Bills without giving assent or returning the Bills for an indefinite period, even though the Constitution required it to be done as soon as possible.
 - The **governors were also taking months together to reserve the Bills** for the assent of the President even though it was to be done immediately.
 - This **erodes the authority of the legislatures** and the governors, though heads of the state executive, are appointed by the Union government.



- **Exceptional situations:** In addition to above illustrated powers, the governor can also reserve the bill if it is of the following nature:
 - **Ultra-vires**, that is, against the provisions of the **Constitution**.
 - **Opposed** to the **Directive Principles of State Policy**.
 - **Against** the **larger interest** of the country.
 - Of grave **national importance**.
 - Dealing with **compulsory acquisition of property** under Article 31A of the Constitution.
- **Case studies**
 - **Tamil Nadu Assembly in September, 2021** passed a bill seeking **exemption** for students from the state from the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (**NEET**) required for undergraduate medical college admissions.
 - This Bill has been with Governor since then without rejection or acceptance.
 - Indecision can prove costly.
 - **Manipur Speaker had not decided on defection**, until Supreme Court forced him and bound him by giving a time frame. Justice can be denied in such cases to those who are affected.
- **Against the spirit of Constitution:** Withholding of assent, though an option, is not normally exercised by Governors because it will be an extremely unpopular step.
 - Besides, withholding assent to a Bill by the Governor, an appointee of the President, neutralises the entire legislative exercise by an elected legislature enjoying the support of the people.

Conclusion

Giving assent to a Bill passed by the legislature is a normal constitutional act performed by the Governor. But of late, even such normal acts have become a source of confrontation between State governments and the Governors. The conduct of Governors in certain States follows a definite pattern which causes a great deal of disquiet to elected governments as well as to those who have faith in the constitutional order. Thus, it falls to the Supreme Court to fix a reasonable time frame for Governors to take a decision on a Bill passed by the Assembly in the larger interest of federalism in the country.

[Present a critical assessment of the current state of Indian democracy, highlighting the need for safeguarding democratic values, protecting institutions, and fostering an inclusive and participatory political system. \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Tough

Reference: [The Hindu](#), [Insights on India](#)

**Why the question:**

The linked article discusses the state of democracy in India.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about various issues in Indian democracy, need to safeguarding its crucial aspects and ways to do so.

Structure of the answer:**Introduction:**

Start by defining democratic form of government and its features in brief.

Body:

First, write about the current state of Indian democracy and various issues in it – erosion of democratic values, the concentration of power, and the diminishing space for dissent. Write about its impact by citing examples and statistics.

Next, write about the measures that are needed to counter the above.

Conclusion:

Conclude by writing a way forward.

Introduction

The current state of Indian democracy presents both strengths and challenges that warrant a critical assessment. While India is the world's largest democracy and has a history of holding regular elections, there are several areas where democratic values need safeguarding and institutional protection.

Body**Various issues plaguing Indian democracy and inclusive measures needed to safeguard democracy**

- **Erosion of democratic values:** India has witnessed instances of **rising intolerance, religious polarization, and social divisions** that threaten the democratic fabric of the country. There have been concerns **about curbs on freedom of expression, attacks on dissent, and attempts to suppress voices critical of the government.**
 - **Eg: Delhi Riots, treatment of women Olympic wrestling champion during protest against sexual harassment.**
 - Safeguarding democratic values requires a commitment to inclusivity, pluralism, and respect for the rights and dignity of all individuals.
- **Weakening of institutions:** The independence and effectiveness of democratic institutions, **such as the judiciary, media, and election commission, have been subject to scrutiny.**
 - There have been instances where the impartiality and autonomy of these institutions have been questioned, undermining their ability to act as checks and balances on executive power.
 - Strengthening and protecting these institutions is vital to ensure the proper functioning of democracy.
 - **Eg: Use of CBI/ED against political opponents of the ruling government Raid on BBC channel after running a program that criticised the government.**
- **Political polarization:** India has experienced growing political polarization along various lines, including ideology, religion, and regionalism. This polarization often hampers



constructive dialogue, compromises decision-making, and undermines the spirit of consensus-building, leading to a fragmented political landscape.

- **Eg: Caste based polarisation for vote bank politics.**
- **Communal and religious tensions:** India is a diverse country with multiple religions and ethnicities. However, incidents of religious tensions, communal violence, and discrimination continue to challenge the social fabric of the nation. Ensuring harmony, promoting interfaith dialogue, and addressing the root causes of such tensions are vital for the strength of Indian democracy.
- **Dynastic politics and concentration of power:** Dynastic politics, where political power is concentrated within a few families, is a persistent issue in Indian democracy. This phenomenon can lead to a lack of internal party democracy, limited opportunities for new leaders to emerge, and reduced accountability.
- **Corruption and ethical challenges:** Corruption remains a significant concern in Indian democracy, affecting various sectors and levels of governance. High-profile corruption scandals, lack of transparency in political funding, and ethical challenges among public officials undermine the credibility of institutions and erode public trust.
- **Inequality and social exclusion:** India faces persistent challenges related to economic inequality, social exclusion, and caste-based discrimination. The unequal distribution of resources, limited access to education and healthcare, and marginalization of disadvantaged communities hinder the principles of equal opportunity and social justice in a democratic society. **Eg: Migrant crisis during Covid-19 lockdown showed the exclusionary policies affecting millions in India.**
- **Weak implementation of policies and governance issues:** Although India has implemented several progressive policies, the challenge lies in effective implementation and last-mile delivery. Bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and a lack of accountability often hamper the execution of well-intended initiatives, resulting in a gap between policy intent and outcomes.
- **Gender inequality and women's representation:** Despite constitutional guarantees of gender equality, women in India continue to face significant challenges, including gender-based violence, unequal representation in politics, and limited access to resources and opportunities. Enhancing women's empowerment and addressing gender disparities are essential for a truly inclusive democracy.
 - **Eg: Women's Labour force participation is 32.8% which is very low for world's most populous nation.**

Measures needed

- **Electoral reforms:** While India conducts regular elections, there is a need for comprehensive electoral reforms. **Issues such as the influence of money and muscle power, lack of transparency in campaign financing, and the role of criminal elements** in politics need to be addressed. Enhancing transparency, accountability, and fairness in the electoral process will promote a more inclusive and representative democracy.



- **Inclusive participation and representation:** Despite India's diversity, there are ongoing challenges in ensuring adequate representation and participation of marginalized communities, including women, religious minorities, and disadvantaged groups. Efforts should be made to address these gaps by promoting equal opportunities, encouraging political participation, and empowering marginalized sections of society.
- **Strengthening local governance:** While India has a decentralized system of governance, there is a need to strengthen local institutions and empower local governments. Strengthening grassroots democracy can enhance citizen participation, ensure better delivery of public services, and foster a sense of ownership and accountability.
- **Social and economic inequalities:** Addressing social and economic inequalities is crucial for a truly inclusive democracy. India continues to grapple with issues such as poverty, unequal access to education and healthcare, and the digital divide. Bridging these gaps and ensuring a more equitable distribution of resources will help create a conducive environment for democratic participation and social cohesion.

Conclusion

In summary, while India's democracy has made significant strides, it faces challenges that require attention and action. Safeguarding democratic values, protecting institutions, and fostering an inclusive and participatory political system are essential for India's continued democratic progress. It demands a collective effort from all stakeholders to uphold the principles of democracy, promote inclusivity, and address the existing gaps and inequalities within the Indian democratic framework.

Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

What are the roles and responsibilities of the speaker of Lok Sabha? Comment on the constitutional importance of the speaker's non-partisan behaviour. (250 words)

Difficulty level: Easy

Reference: [Times of India](#)

Why the question:

The article highlights a statement made by Lok Sabha Speaker, Om Birla, emphasizing the importance of in-depth debates for passing legislations.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the powers of Speaker and importance of his office and his non-partisan behaviour.

Directive word:

Comment— here we must express our knowledge and understanding of the issue and form an overall opinion thereupon.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by mentioning Article 93 of the Indian Constitution.

Body:

First, in detail enumerate the various roles and personalities of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha in the functioning of our parliamentary democracy.

Next, write about the functions performed by the speaker and about his non-partisanship.

Conclusion:

Conclude by summarising.



Introduction

The **Speaker** is the **presiding officer of the Lok Sabha** (House of the People), the lower house of the Parliament of India. The speaker is elected generally in the very first meeting of the Lok Sabha following general elections. Serving for a term of five years, the speaker chosen from sitting members of the Lok Sabha (House of the People), and is by convention a member of the ruling party or alliance.

Body

Functions and powers of Lok Sabha speaker:

- Speaker of Lok Sabha is basically the **head of the house and presides over the sittings of Parliament and controls its working.**
- The constitution has tried to ensure the independence of Speaker by charging his salary on the consolidated Fund of India and the same is not subject to vote of Parliament.
- While debating or during general discussion on a bill, the members of the parliament have to address only to the Speaker.
- Whenever there is a **joint sitting of both houses of Parliament (Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha)**, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha presides over this meeting.
- In the normal circumstances the Speaker does not cast his vote over any matter in Lok Sabha. But whenever there is a tie on votes between the ruling party and opposition, the Speaker at that time can exercise his vote.
- It is the Speaker who decides the agenda of various discussions.
- The speaker has the power to adjourn or suspend the house/meetings if the quorum is not met.
- The Speaker ensures the discipline and decorum of the house. If the speaker finds the behaviour and a member of Parliament is not good, he/she can punish the unruly members by suspending.
- The **Speaker decides whether a bill brought to the house is a money bill or not.** In the case **Speaker decides some bill as a money bill, this decision cannot be challenged.**
- Speaker is the **final and sole authority** to allow different types of motions and resolutions such as **No Confidence Motion, Motion of Adjournment, Censure Motion**
- The Speaker of Lok Sabha does not leave the office just after dissolution of the assembly. He continues to be in the office till the newly formed assembly takes its first meeting and elects the new Speaker.

Importance of office of Speaker:

- The office of the Speaker occupies a **pivotal position in our parliamentary democracy.**
- It has been said of the office of the Speaker that while the members of Parliament represent the individual constituencies, the **Speaker represents the full authority of the House itself.**
- **She symbolizes the dignity and power of the House over which she is presiding.**



- In the Lok Sabha, as in the United Kingdom, the Speaker is the supreme authority; she has vast powers and it is his primary duty to ensure the orderly conduct of the business of the House.
- Every textbook of constitutional law points out the two essential qualities of a Speaker: **Independence and impartiality**.
- GV Mavlankar, the first Speaker, observed: **“Once a person is elected Speaker, he is expected to be above parties, above politics. In other words, he belongs to all the members or belongs to none. He holds the scales of justice evenly, irrespective of party or person”**.
- Pandit Nehru referred to the Speaker as **“the symbol of the nation’s freedom and liberty” and emphasised that Speakers should be men of “outstanding ability and impartiality”**.
- MN Kaul and SL Shakhder, in their book Practice and Procedure of Parliament, refer to him as **the conscience and guardian of the House**.
- As the principal spokesperson of the Lok Sabha, **the Speaker represents its collective voice and speaks for the House as a whole**.
- Her unique position is illustrated by the fact that **she is placed very high in the Warrant of Precedence in our country**, standing next only to the President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister.
- In India, through the Constitution of the land, through the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha and through the practices and conventions, adequate powers are vested in the office of the Speaker to help her in the smooth conduct of the parliamentary proceedings and for **protecting the independence and impartiality of the office**.
- The Constitution of India provides that the Speaker’s salary and allowances are not to be voted by Parliament and are to be charged on the Consolidated Fund of India.
- Therefore, it is expected that the **holder of this office of high dignity has to be one who can represent the House in all its manifestations**.

However, there have been many instances when the **Speaker’s office has been in the dock**:

- **Appointment and tenure**: The structural issues regarding the manner in which the Speaker is appointed and his tenure in office. Usually, the speaker is from the ruling party and this makes it a more of a political liability on speaker to favour his party.
- **Lack of Tenure security**: With no security in the continuity of office, the Speaker is dependent on his or her political party for re-election. This makes the Speaker susceptible to pulls and pressures from her/his political party in the conduct of the proceedings of the Lok Sabha.
- **Anti-defection law**: In recent times, there are number of instances where the role of speaker has been criticized for decision on membership of MLAs under the anti-defection law and their ruling have been challenged in courts. The Tenth Schedule says the Speaker’s/Chairperson’s decision on questions of disqualification on ground of defection shall be final and can’t be questioned in courts. It was anticipated that giving Speakers the



power to expel legislators would prevent unnecessary delays by courts and make anti-defection law more effective.

- **Discretionary power:** There are various instances where the Rules vest the Speakers with unbridled powers such as in case of declaration of bill as money bill (Lok Sabha Speaker). This discretionary power comes under criticism when **Aadhar bill was introduced in Lok Sabha as Money Bill**.
- **Referral to DSRCs:** The Speaker is also empowered to refer the Bill to a **Standing Committee**. As per prevailing practice house members or speaker usually refers all important bills to the concerned **Departmentally Related Standing Committees** for examination and report. But in recent time speaker uses its discretionary power to pass many important bills on day after introduction of bill without proper discussion and references.
- **Increased disruptions:** Frequent disruptions reduced the time required for important discussions and compel speaker to allocate less time for discussion. This often questions the impartiality of speaker as he allegedly provides more time to ruling party. Also, it is alleged that speaker took harsh punishment against the disrupting member of opposition compared to government
- **Elections:** The position of the Indian Speaker is paradoxical. They contest the election for the post on a party ticket. Yet they are expected to conduct themselves in a non-partisan manner, while being beholden to the party for a ticket for the next election.
- **Political Aspirations:** The position is often used to woo the political parties by favouring them to harbour political ambitions. The need for re-election also skews incentives for the Speaker. The fear of losing the position in case of not favouring their political parties also pushes them to compromise neutrality.

Measures needed to ensure Speaker's impartiality:

- The **Page Committee, headed by V.S. Page**, suggested that if the Speaker had conducted himself or herself in an impartial and efficient manner during the tenure of his or her office, he or she should be allowed to continue in the next Parliament.
- Anyone seeking the office of the Speaker might be asked to run for election on an independent ticket.
- Any Speaker should be barred from future political office, except for the post of President, while being given a pension for life.
- Following the **UK model of Speaker** where the Speaker elect compulsorily resigns from the party membership. This will ensure neutrality of the office.
- The Speaker should be allowed to recommend a range of disciplinary actions like cuts in salary, reduction in speaking time for the member based on the recommendation of the parliamentary committee.
- The Speaker can arrange informal sessions with the members who frequently disrupt the house. He can try to resolve their grievances if any with respect to the conduct of the house.



- **A code of ethics for MPs** must be formed to clearly define cases for suspension and dismissals.
- Power must be given to speaker to form a parliamentary committee to recommend removal of MPs regularly disrupting the house. The decision of the committee must be subject to judicial review.
- **Ethics committee of Lok Sabha** need to be given more mandate like other mature democracies

Conclusion:

The office of the Speaker in India is a **living and dynamic institution** which deals with the actual needs and problems of Parliament in the performance of its functions. It is in her that the responsibility of conducting the business of the House in a manner befitting the place of the institution in a representative democracy is invested.

The founding fathers of our Constitution had recognized the importance of this office in our democratic set-up and it was this recognition that guided them in establishing this office as one of the prominent and dignified ones in the scheme of governance of the country smoothly.

Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure

Fiscal federalism plays a vital role in the effective functioning of a federal system of government. The Indian government should take proactive steps to address issues related to fiscal federalism and implement measures to enhance the autonomy of states in financial matters. Discuss. (250 words)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [Live Mint](#)

Why the question:

The Sixteenth Finance Commission (16th FC) is likely to be appointed soon. It is a good time to reflect on some challenging issues of fiscal federalism that the 16th FC may have to face.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the evolution of fiscal federalism in India, issues in it and measures needed to overcome the issues.

Directive:

***Discuss** – This is an all-encompassing directive – you must debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You must give reasons for both for and against arguments.*

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by defining fiscal federalism in India.

Body:

First, give a brief about the development of fiscal federalism in India since independence.

Next, write about the various issues with respect to fiscal federalism in India – opacity, GST issues, FRMBA, impact of the pandemic etc.

Next, write about the measures needed to rectify the above.

Conclusion:

Conclude with a way forward.

Introduction



While fiscal federalism in India has a long history, its practice has grown increasingly opaque over the years. Serious attention is required to improve its principles and practices. The India of today, notably through its governance “matrix”, economic development, institution-building and multilateral relations, are vastly different from the India that drafted its constitution in 1950. India is going through a transition in its intergovernmental relations. Boundaries based on linguistic factors and administrative convenience are blurring, given changes brought on by innovation and migration. Socio-economic trends such as technological change, rising mobility and market integration will affect the future of fiscal federalism in India.

Body

Development of fiscal federalism in India

- Broadly speaking, with the evolution of fiscal federalism in India, there has been marked stability in its process and procedures.
- The annual budgetary processes of both the central and federal governments are independent exercises and must pass through the Parliament or state legislature.
- The Finance Commission, which was first constituted in 1951, performs the functions broadly enshrined in Article 280 of the Indian Constitution.
- For most of the post-independence era, the existence of the Planning Commission injected centralising dependence in more ways than one.
 - The Planning Commission became a parallel institution for the transfer of resources from the Union of States.
- While the focus of the Finance Commission remained on the revenue account, the Planning Commission was concerned predominantly with the capital account.
- Successive Finance Commissions commented on this as being inconsistent with the spirit of the Constitution in the devolution of resources.
- There were other developments, like the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution in 1992 giving status to Panchayat Raj institutions and Urban Local Bodies with specific functions assigned to them under the 11th and 12th schedules.
- The Fourteenth Finance Commission decided that 42% of NDP (net divisible pool) should go to the subnational governments by way of devolution, or net proceeds of taxes, and the balance should go to the central government. In addition, after projecting the likely growth rates of individual subnational governments and their likely buoyancy in appropriate cases, a revenue deficit grant under Article 275 was given.

Various issues regarding fiscal federalism in India

- GST: States have lost the autonomy to decide the tax rates of subjects that fall within the State List.



- Previously, state governments used to fix tax rates by taking into account their spending requirements, revenue base, etc.
- The inability of states to fix tax rates to match their development requirements implies greater dependence on the centre for funds.
- Cess and surcharges: Another emerging challenge is that cesses and surcharges are becoming a disproportionate proportion of the overall divisible revenue, with non-tax revenues being kept outside the divisible pool.
 - These are worrisome issues, and there should be some mechanism to ensure that the basic spirit of the devolution process should not be undercut by clever financial engineering or by the manipulation of methods that makes them technical and legally tenable, but perhaps not morally so.
- Increasing dependency on Centre: The dependency of states on the Centre for revenues has increased, with the share of the revenue from own sources declining from 55% in 2014-15 to 50.5% in 2020-21.
 - While part of this is inherent in India's fiscal structure, wherein states are the big spenders and the Centre controls the purse strings, the situation has been exacerbated by the introduction of the GST.
 - Barring a few exceptions, such as petroleum products, property tax, and alcohol excise, indirect taxes have, to a large degree, been subsumed under the GST regime, eroding the ability of states to raise their own revenues.
- Shortfall in devolution: Adding to state woes is the significant divergence in past periods between the amount of GST compensation owed and the actual payments made, including for states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand that need greater fiscal support.
 - Even before Covid-19 hit, 11 states estimated a revenue growth rate below the estimated 14% level, implying higher amounts will be owed as GST compensation.
 - With the bulk of the states' GST coming from goods such as electronics, fashion, and entertainment — all of which have been impacted by the pandemic — these revenues are likely to decline further.

Measures needed

To sum up, for a large federal country of a mind-boggling diversity, India's ability to fight Covid-19 pandemic largely rests on how well it manages its Centre-state relation.

- When compared with other large federal countries such as the US, the country has done very well to minimize the frictions and provide a sense of direction to the states.
- However, tackling Covid-19 as seen from the experience of other countries would require a differential and agile response across states and the Centre has at best to play the role of a mentor in providing leadership and resource support.
- The rigid approach as evident in lockdown phase would prove a major hurdle. States must be cleared their dues and be given ample fiscal space to ensure economy is revived.



- States must be allowed to lead in terms of reviving economy, generating income support, jobs while contain the virus at the same time.
- The next big change will come when the current Centre-state relationship gets redefined in a way that enables the 28 states to become federal in the true sense – as self-sustaining economic territories in matters of energy, water, food production and waste recycling.
- Our economic geography of production, transport and communication has to change – it has to become distributive rather than being focused towards the Centre.
- Centrally distributed funds will need to be directed specifically to build the capacities of each state.
 - The instruments will enable them to embark on a sustainable economic recovery whose base is widely distributed across the various panchayats and districts of each state.
 - Driving distributive recovery will be energy, transport, supply chains, public administration, rule of law, agriculture and rural development.
- a buoyant tax system can ease the battle for resources in our federal system, and hopefully minimize the mistrust that has grown in recent years between the Centre and states.
- The 15th Finance Commission has thus recommended a slew of fiscal reforms to increase the tax-to-GDP ratio, especially through an overhaul of the goods and services tax.
- In short, the real cooperative federalism which the Centre has been espousing for many years is now put on test and the Centre must ensure states are given full cooperation to battle the challenge.

Conclusion

It is important now to rethink the design and structure of a genuine fiscal partnership, which should not merely be a race to garner more resources, but a creative attempt to move towards a vibrant Indian value chain that can catapult India's growth rate closer to the quest for double-digit growth. Times of economic slowdown must be viewed anecdotally as they are transient in nature and cannot impair India's vision, both with regard to its potential and its historical compulsions. It is necessary to recast the ideology in a more contemporary context; only then will the practice become more transparent, and India will benefit from congruence between its precepts and practice.

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Examine the challenges in laying the foundation for a future-ready Digital India. Suggest measures to bridge the digital divide and ensure inclusive digital transformation. (250 words)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [The Hindu](#)

Why the question:

The article discusses the importance of building a strong foundation for a future-ready Digital India.

Key Demand of the question:

Telegram: <https://t.me/insightsIAStips>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpoccbCX9GEIwaile4HLjwA>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/insightsonindia>



To write about the challenge for future ready digital India and steps needed to overcome it.

Directive word:

Examine – When asked to ‘Examine’, we must investigate the topic (content words) in detail, inspect it, investigate it and establish the key facts and issues related to the topic in question. While doing so we should explain why these facts and issues are important and their implications.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by giving context.

Body:

First, write about the challenges in the above – Policy frameworks, Infrastructure, Digital literacy and empowerment etc.

Next, write about the measures to bridge the digital divide – Infrastructure development, Digital literacy and skill development, Inclusive policies and affordability etc.

Conclusion:

Conclude by writing a way forward.

Introduction

Internet connectivity is critical for making the Digital India project inclusive, and widespread use of optical fibre in the remotest corners of the country is vital to ensure that no one is left behind in this endeavour. **With over 117 crore telecom users and more than 82 crore internet subscribers, India is one of the fastest-growing markets** for digital consumers. A 2019 McKinsey study rated India as the **second-fastest digitising economy**. Digital infrastructure, which seamlessly integrates with physical and traditional infrastructure, is critical to India’s growth story and the country’s thrust towards self-reliance.

Body

India’s Digital India progress

- India is pioneering the concept of digital public goods that enhance the **ease, transparency and speed with which individuals, markets and governments interact** with each other.
- Built **on the foundation of Aadhaar and India Stack**, modular applications, big and small, are transforming the way we **make payments (UPI revolution), withdraw our PF, get our passport and driving licence and check land records**, to name just a few activities.
- Children have **access to QR-coded textbooks across state boards** and languages, the economically disadvantaged have **access to the public distribution system** and beneficiaries of government schemes have money transferred directly into their bank accounts.
- There is an **opportunity for India to embark on digital diplomacy** — to take its made-in-India digital public goods to hundreds of emerging economies across the world.
- This could be a **strategic and effective counter to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**. But India needs to bring transformation in its technological, startup and innovation ecosystem.

Challenges for future ready Digital India

- **Digital Divide:** The digital divide takes form in rich-poor, male-female, urban-rural etc segments of the population.



- The gap needs to be narrowed down, then only the benefits of digitization would be utilized equally.
- There are many roadblocks in the way of its successful implementation like **digital illiteracy, poor infrastructure, low internet speed, lack of coordination among various departments, issues pertaining to taxation** These challenges need to be addressed in order to realize the full potential of this programme.
- **Slow adoption** of new technologies. For example, Banking sector most vulnerable to cloning of magnetic strip debit/credit cards.
- **Piracy**: Rampant use of **unlicensed** and pirated software that are easy targets for malware. E.g.: Saposhi attack leading to Denial of Service.
- **Import dependence**: Majority of electronic devices from cellphones to equipments used in power sector, defense and other critical infrastructure puts India into a vulnerable situation.
- **Lack of uniform security protocol** and standards used across various electronic devices.
- **Security Issues**: There is a cybersecurity challenge in ensuring end-to-end protection of data throughout the whole ecosystem.
 - While channels and databases used by the Government for transmission and storage are usually secure, other players in the ecosystem may not possess the requisite expertise or security to prevent and respond to breaches.
 - **The alleged breach of the Aadhar database is a case in point.**

Measures to bridge the digital divide

- To bridge the digital divide, there is a need to accelerate execution of digital India initiative.
- Meaningful collaborations with the private sector, technological innovations and following a consistent focused approach towards the larger objective are necessary.
- **Utilisation of multiple modes of transactions** such as Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD), Unified Payment Interface (UPI), Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), and Point-of-Sale (POS) machines, need to be strengthened.
- India also needs **easing of regulations to allow interoperability of wallets** to ensure easy transfer of funds for merchants as well as for consumers.
- There is a need to enhance and develop **robust rural digital infrastructure** and ecosystem.
- Focus must also be on **enhancing the digital literacy through various platforms** especially media.

Conclusion

Noting that digital literacy is an important force for good governance and transparency, India has tried to bridge the digital divide gap by enacting some programmes like Digital India, efforts to make India a cashless economy, Pradhan Mantri Grameen Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) aimed at spreading digital literacy among the rural population. Govt in states are trying to address these issues through various schemes in conjugation with Central govt's Digital India programme and



PMDISHA. Multi-pronged approach (spreading across various ministries and departments) is needed to address these issues.

The Production-linked Incentive (PLI) scheme has succeeded in attracting investments and incentivizing domestic and foreign companies to set up or expand their manufacturing units in India. However, continuous refinement, monitoring, and addressing the associated challenges will be crucial in realizing the desired outcomes of the scheme. Analyse. (250 words).

Difficulty level: Tough

Reference: [Live Mint](#)

Why the question:

The article highlights the ongoing debate between the PLI scheme and trade policy and tariffs as strategies to boost India's manufacturing sector. It emphasizes the need for a nuanced approach that combines targeted incentives with a conducive trade policy to effectively promote manufacturing growth and competitiveness.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the performance of Production-linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, its successes and limitations.

Directive word:

Analyse – When asked to analyse, you must examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them in a summary.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by giving context of Production-linked Incentive (PLI) scheme.

Body:

First, write about the various sectors for which PLI scheme was launched and its major features – electronics, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, and textiles. Eligible companies are provided with financial incentives based on incremental sales of goods produced in India, for a period of five years. The scheme aims to make India a global manufacturing hub, increase production of quality goods, create employment opportunities, and reduce dependence on imports.

Next, write about the successes and limitations of the above.

Conclusion:

Conclude by writing a way forward to overcome the limitations.

Introduction

Production-linked Incentive (PLI) scheme was conceived to scale up domestic manufacturing capability, accompanied by higher import substitution and employment generation. With an outlay of over Rs 2 lakh crore, the PLI scheme, launched in March 2020, initially targeted manufacturing mobile phones, electrical components and medical devices, and was later extended to 14 manufacturing sectors.

PLI scheme is an initiative of the government to boost the local production of domestic industries by providing them incentives. The government provides incentives on incremental sales from products manufactured in domestic units.

Body

Performance of the scheme



- The Production-linked Incentive (PLI) scheme has been a game changer.
- It has not only transformed India into a manufacturing hub but has also curtailed its burgeoning trade deficit in electronics and other manufactured goods
- mobile phone exports rose from “nearly zero” in 2015-'16 to Rs 45,000 crore in 2021-'22. The total production of mobile phones has increased from six crore units in 2014-'15 to 31 crore units in 2021-'22
- Electronics manufacturing attracted a massive investment and its exports have grown rapidly by over 55 per cent annually.

Shortcomings

- Ex RBI Governor Rajan said the schemes are actually subsidising imports and leading to items being resold domestically at a higher price.
- While the current corpus for IT hardware PLI is Rs 7,350 crore, spread over 4 years, members of the industry has told the financial daily that it wants the corpus to be expanded to up to 20,000 crore rupees.
- According to the report, the industry believes that additional incentives are needed to make India more attractive than China and Vietnam.
- A December 2022 report by Credit Suisse highlighted that capital expenditure growth due to various production-linked incentive sectoral schemes varies drastically.
- The highest annual incremental increase in capital expenditure by Production-Linked Incentive scheme companies will be in speciality steel (processed steel for advanced use) at 17%, followed by textiles (14%) and automobiles (10%).
- Similar is the case of investment: major investments under the Production-Linked Incentive schemes will come from sectors such as automobiles and speciality steels (\$5.1 billion each), followed by textiles (\$2.3 billion) and pharmaceuticals (\$1.9 billion).
- In most other sectors, the capital investment is modest, at less than \$1 billion.
- The Credit Suisse report also highlighted challenges such as the lack of experience, poor access to technology, and the relatively small balance sheets of many players that have signed up for the scheme.
- Besides, across sectors, only a handful of firms have been able to meet the threshold to qualify for government incentives. For instance, under the Production-Linked Incentive scheme for information technology hardware, of the 14 eligible firms, only two or three companies met their first-year targets for the financial year ending March 2022.
- Companies have blamed either the low incentives and the continued global supply chain disruptions.
- This points to a couple of other structural problems associated with the schemes. To start with, in many sectors, there are so many eligible companies that the division of the corpus leads to an insignificant allocation to individual companies.



- Next is the inability of the schemes to distinguish between boosting general manufacturing and boosting the manufacturing of critical materials and parts to build supply chain resilience.
- Further, the government remains slow to address hurdles in developing India's manufacturing ecosystem.
- This includes problems of infrastructure and logistics, such as last-mile connectivity, especially to Tier-1 and tier-2 towns that have a potential to grow, ease of doing business beyond big cities, and physically safe conditions for operations.

Conclusion

To pull off something on the scale of China's transformation, the Indian government will have to take these criticisms seriously and work to make its schemes more effective. The decision-making apparatus needs to be agile and responsive so that it can align processes, structures and policies with the desired outcomes of the schemes.

Critics of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) argue that it gives the state extensive powers, which can potentially be misused and violate the fundamental freedoms of citizens. Comment. (250 words)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [The Hindu](#), [Insights on India](#)

Why the question:

The article discusses the misuse of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in Telangana. The author argues that the UAPA has been used to target political opponents and activists, and that the law has been used in a discriminatory manner against Muslims.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) tilted the balance in favour of the State violating the fundamental freedoms of citizens and a balanced opinion on it.

Directive word:

Comment– here we must express our knowledge and understanding of the issue and form an overall opinion thereupon.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Start by writing about the aims of UAPA.

Body:

In the first part, write about the major features of UAPA and its need.

Next, write about the criticism of UAPA – draconian law that has been used to target political opponents and activists, silence dissent and to suppress legitimate political activity etc.

Conclusion:

Conclude with a balanced opinion on the issue.

Introduction

UAPA was passed in 1967. It aims at effective prevention of unlawful activities associations in India. Unlawful activity refers to any action taken by an individual or association intended to disrupt the territorial integrity and sovereignty of India.



Body

About the UAPA Act

- Originally enacted in 1967, the UAPA was amended to be **modelled as an anti-terror law in 2004 and 2008.**
- In August 2019, Parliament cleared the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2019 to designate individuals as terrorists on certain grounds provided in the Act.
- In order to deal with the terrorism related crimes, it **deviates from ordinary legal procedures and creates an exceptional regime where constitutional safeguards of the accused are curtailed.**
- Between 2016 and 2019, the period for which UAPA figures have been published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), a total of 4,231 FIRs were filed under various sections of the UAPA, of which 112 cases have resulted in convictions.
- This frequent application of UAPA indicates that it is often misused and abused like other anti-terror laws in the past in India such as POTA (Prevention of Terrorism Act) and TADA (Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act).

Criticism of UAPA Act

- **Vague Definition of Terrorist Act:** The definition of a “terrorist act” under the UAPA substantially differs from the definition promoted by the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism.
 - According to Special Rapporteur to call an offence a “terrorist act”, three elements must be cumulatively present:
 - The means used must be deadly;
 - The intent behind the act must be to cause fear amongst the population or to compel a government or international organisation to do or refrain from doing something; and
 - The aim must be to further an ideological goal.
 - UAPA, on the other hand, **offers an overbroad and ambiguous definition of a “terrorist act” which includes the death of, or injuries to, any person, damage to any property, etc.**
- **Denial of Rights:** The major problem with the UAPA lies in its Section 43(D)(5), which **prevents the release of any accused person on bail if, police have filed the chargesheet that there are reasonable grounds** for believing that the accusation against such person is prima facie true.
 - The effect of Section 43(D)(5) is that once the police elect to charge an individual under the UAPA, **it becomes extremely difficult for bail to be granted. Bail is a safeguard and guarantee of the constitutional right to liberty.**



- **Pendency of Trial:** Given the state of justice delivery system in India, the rate of pendency at the level of trial is at an average of 95.5 per cent.
 - This means that trials are completed every year in less than 5 per cent cases, signifying the reasons for long years of undertrial imprisonment.
- **State Overreach:** It also includes **any act that is “likely to threaten” or “likely to strike terror in people”, giving unbridled power to the government** to brand any ordinary citizen or activist a terrorist without the actual commission of these acts.
 - It gives the state authority vague powers to detain and arrest individuals who it believes to be indulged in terrorist activities.
 - Thus, the state gives itself more powers vis-a-vis individual liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the constitution.
- **Undermining Federalism:** Some experts feel that it is against the federal structure since it neglects the authority of state police in terrorism cases, given that ‘Police’ is a state subject under 7th schedule of Indian Constitution.

Conclusion

Drawing the line between individual freedom and state obligation to provide security is a case of classical dilemma. It is up to the state, judiciary, civil society, to strike a balance between constitutional freedom and the imperative of anti-terror activities.

[Local body elections play a crucial role in the democratic governance of India. However, these elections are plagued by several issues that hinder their effectiveness and inclusivity. In light of this, critically examine the challenges faced during local body elections in India and propose comprehensive strategies to address them. \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [The Hindu](#)

Why the question:

The article discusses the significance of local body elections in West Bengal and highlights the need for peaceful and fair elections at the grassroots level.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the issues with local body election in India and ways to resolve them.

Directive word:

Critically examine – When asked to ‘Examine’, we have to look into the topic (content words) in detail, inspect it, investigate it and establish the key facts and issues related to the topic in question. While doing so we should explain why these facts and issues are important and their implications. When ‘critically’ is suffixed or prefixed to a directive, one needs to look at the good and bad of the topic and give a fair judgment.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Briefly explain the significance of local body elections in India.

Body:

First, write about the Issues in Local Body Elections in India -Lack of awareness and voter education, Low voter turnout, Limited knowledge about candidates and inadequate representation and inclusivity etc.

Next, write about the steps to counter issues in local body elections.

**Conclusion:**

Suggest a way forward.

Introduction

Local Self Government is the management of local affairs by such local bodies who have been elected by the local people. The local self-Government includes both rural and urban government. It is the third level of the government. **There are 2 types of local government in operation – panchayats in rural areas and Municipalities in urban areas.**

Body**Local body elections plagued by issues**

- **Lack of voter awareness:** Many citizens, especially in rural areas, lack awareness about the importance of local body elections, the roles and responsibilities of local representatives, and the impact of their votes. This leads to low voter turnout and undermines the democratic process.
- **Political violence:** Local body elections often suffer from significant political interference, with political parties attempting to influence the outcomes by promoting their candidates or engaging in unethical practices. This can result in unfair competition and undermine the principles of free and fair elections.
 - **Eg: In West Bengal Opposition parties have not been able to file nominations in about 50 of the 341 blocks of the State amid reports of the intimidation of candidates.**
- **Money power and corruption:** Local body elections in India are notorious for the influence of money power. Candidates, especially those backed by major political parties, often engage in bribery and other corrupt practices to secure votes. This marginalizes genuine candidates who lack financial resources and hampers the representation of the people's true choice.
- **Caste and identity politics:** Local body elections frequently witness the exploitation of caste and identity-based divisions. Candidates often leverage these divisions to secure votes along caste or religious lines, leading to polarization and a distortion of the democratic process. This undermines the focus on development and governance issues.
- **Inadequate infrastructure and logistics:** Elections require substantial infrastructure and logistical support, such as polling booths, ballot papers, electronic voting machines, and adequate security measures. In many cases, these arrangements are inadequate or poorly managed, leading to confusion, delays, and voter disenfranchisement.
 - **Eg: The State government and the SEC do not have enough resources at their disposal to conduct the mammoth exercise across the State on a single day**
- **Women's underrepresentation:** Local body elections often witness low representation of women candidates and elected representatives. Despite reservation quotas for women, there are challenges in implementing them effectively, and deep-rooted patriarchal norms and social barriers still limit women's participation and influence in local governance.
 - **Pati Panchayat is rampant all over India where women are only the mouthpiece of their male counterparts.**



- **Lack of accountability:** Once elected, local body representatives may lack mechanisms for accountability to their constituents. This can result in poor governance, corruption, and neglect of local issues. Inadequate oversight and monitoring mechanisms exacerbate this problem.
 - **The elected candidates are often illiterate and there is no substantial outcome.**

Strategies to address the issues

- Increasing voter awareness through civic education and outreach programs.
- Strengthening regulatory bodies to curb political interference and ensure fair elections.
- Implementing effective measures to reduce money power and corruption, such as transparent campaign financing and stricter enforcement of election expenditure limits.
- Promoting social inclusion and discouraging identity-based politics through public discourse and awareness campaigns.
- Enhancing infrastructure and logistical arrangements to ensure smooth and efficient elections.
- Encouraging greater participation of women through affirmative action, awareness campaigns, and capacity-building programs.
- Establishing robust mechanisms for monitoring and holding local body representatives accountable for their actions and performance.

Conclusion

It is important for government bodies, civil society organizations, and citizens to collaborate in addressing these challenges and strengthening the democratic fabric of local body elections in India.

Value Addition

- **Rural Local Governments:**
 - Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) is a system of rural local self-government in India.
 - PRI was constitutionalized through the **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992** to build democracy at the grass roots level and was entrusted with the task of rural development in the country.
 - This act has added a new Part-IX to the Constitution of India. This part is entitled as 'The Panchayats' and consists of provisions from **Articles 243 to 243 O.**
 - In addition, the act has also added a new Eleventh Schedule to the Constitution. This schedule contains 29 functional items of the panchayats. It deals with Article 243-G.
 - In its present form and structure PRI has completed 30 years of existence. However, a lot remains to be done in order to further decentralization and strengthen democracy at the grass root level.



- **Urban Local Governments:**
 - **Urban Local Governments** were established with the purpose of democratic decentralisation.
 - There are **eight types of urban local governments in India** – Municipal Corporation, Municipality, Notified Area Committee, Town Area Committee, Cantonment Board, township, port trust, special purpose agency.
 - At the Central level the subject of ‘urban local government’ is dealt with by the following three Ministries.
 - The Ministry of Urban Development was created as a separate ministry in 1985 (now Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs).
 - Ministry of Defense in the case of cantonment boards.
 - Ministry of Home Affairs in the case of Union Territories.
 - The 74th Amendment Act pertaining to urban local government was passed during the regime of P.V. Narsimha Rao’s government in 1992. It came into force on 1st June, 1993.
 - Added Part IX -A and consists of provisions from articles 243-P to 243-ZG.
 - Added 12th Schedule to the Constitution. It contains 18 functional items of Municipalities and deals with Article 243 W.

[India and the United States share certain common interests and have been strategic partners in various areas. However, it is important to recognize that their interests may not always align perfectly. Analyse. \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [The Hindu](#)

Why the question:

The article explores the evolving relationship between India and the United States. It suggests that while India’s interests may align with those of the United States, they are not necessarily identical.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the scope of India–United States (US) relations – in spheres of defence, technology, etc. Alignment of the above relations and their divergence.

Directive word:

Analyse – When asked to analyse, you must examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them in a summary.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by giving context regarding the growth of the India-U.S relationship in the recent past.

Body:

In the first part, write about the US as India’s most comprehensive strategic partner, and cooperation between the two extends across multiple areas such as trade, defense, multilateralism, intelligence, cyberspace, civil nuclear energy, education, and healthcare.

Next, write about how even though in all these spheres they cooperate and are parallel in ideologies but not the same as both have diverged aspirations, and are based on different ideologies. Cite examples to substantiate.

**Conclusion:**

Conclude by writing a balanced opinion.

Introduction

India USA have seen **ascendance of relationship in the 21st century, which was crystallised by 2008 India Nuclear Civil Nuclear Agreement**. Various factors, including LPG reforms, rise of China, increasing influence of Indian community in USA are the factors behind this. Also, the shared values of democracy, rule of law, human rights, religious freedom bind the countries together.

The Prime Minister of India is on an official state visit to the USA, where he will lead the 9th International Day of Yoga celebrations from the auspices of UN Headquarters in New York.

Body**India and USA relations aligned with each other**

- **Security:** Combat terrorism and weapons of mass destruction Protect global commons like sea routes and sea lanes of communication.
 - **Eg: India has mentioned Taiwan issue** in public for the first time while **USA has been passing through South China sea and Taiwan straits** to protect freedom of navigation in high seas.
- **Global cooperation:** International Cooperation through platforms like UN, ASEAN, G-20, IMF, Quad. Quad security dialogue has been initiated to reign in China's dominance in the region.
- **Defence cooperation:** Defence agreements like **LEMOA, COMCASA, Industrial Security Agreement and BECA**; Bilateral military exercises like **Yudh Abhyaas, Vajra prahar, etc have been taking place every year**.
- **Space cooperation:** Indo-US science and technology cooperation agreement; **Joint Microwave remote sensing satellite named NISAR**.
- **Diaspora and people to people ties:** Strength of Indian diaspora in US is around 4.5 million which is around 1% of its population. Indian diaspora is a source and agent of soft power, an effective public diplomacy tool and is acknowledged for its work ethos, discipline, non-interference and peaceful living with the locals.

Divergences and friction areas

- **Tariffs war:** Since 2018 both countries were engaged in tariffs war. E.g. In 2018, the US imposed additional tariffs of 25% on steel and 10% on aluminium imports from various countries, including India. **India's refusal to remove the 20% tariffs on ICT products** caused the trade deal between India and USA to delay which remains still pending.
- **WTO disputes:** India USA are involved in WTO disputes on issues like, **Capping prices of medical devices by India, greater Indian market access for American agriculture** and dairy products etc.
- **IPR:** India is also on **U.S.'s "Priority Watch List"** which identifies countries posing challenges to American intellectual property rights. Also, The US wants India to strengthen patent regulations, and to ease the limitations American companies investing in India face.



- **USA tensions with Iran, Russia:** Putting unilateral curbs on Russian and Iranian imports into **India through CAATSA would impinge on India's relations with Iran, Russia**, both relations in which India has strong stakes.
- **Divergence of interests in Afghanistan:** In the backdrop of Afghan Peace deal, U.S. left Afghanistan. Decades of work was scrapped as Taliban took over and freedom of people and the developmental work India did is hampered.

Conclusion

Despite the differences in some areas, the upward trajectory in India USA relations indicates a sense of greater nuance to the need for institutionalisation of bilateral ties — towards not only graduating the bilateral dynamic away from over-dependence on chemistry between the top political leadership, but also design frameworks in a manner that maximise convergences between the two countries.

The changing geopolitics, and increased Chinese aggression necessitates closer cooperation between India USA. Thus, the relationship is two-sided. Just as India benefited from US inputs during Doklam and recent India China standoff, the US has benefited from Indian defence spending.

[The decision to introduce a UCC is ultimately a matter of political, social, and constitutional considerations. It requires a careful balance between ensuring equality, protecting individual rights, respecting cultural diversity, and fostering social harmony. Critically analyse. \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [The Hindu](#)

Why the question:

The article reports that the Law Commission of India has called for new suggestions and inputs on the issue of implementing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC). The Commission has requested individuals, stakeholders, and organizations to submit their views and opinions on the matter.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about analyse the debate regarding introduction of the Uniform civil code.

Directive word:

Critically analyze – When asked to analyse, you must examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them in a summary. When 'critically' is suffixed or prefixed to a directive, one needs to look at the good and bad of the topic and give a balanced judgment on the topic.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by defining Uniform Civil Code (UCC) as per article 44.

Body:

First, explaining the aims and objectives behind UCC in India.

Next, discuss in detail the arguments for UCC in India – Mentioned in DPSP, uniformity of laws, achieving equality, simplification of law, progressive measure etc.

Next, discuss in detail the arguments against the UCC in India – Lack of consensus, against cultural diversity, right of minorities, tribal customs etc.

Conclusion:

Conclude by giving a balanced opinion regarding UCC.

Introduction

Telegram: <https://t.me/insightsIAStips>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpoccbCX9GEIwaile4HLjwA>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/insightsonindia>



A Uniform Civil Code is one that would provide for **one law for the entire country**, applicable to **all religious communities in their personal matters** such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc. It proposes to replace the personal laws based on the scriptures and customs of each major religious community in the country with a common set of laws governing every citizen.

Article 44 of the Constitution lays down that the **state shall endeavor to secure a Uniform Civil Code for the citizens throughout the territory of India.**

Body

Background

- The 22nd Law Commission of India has initiated a new consultation process on the Uniform Civil Code (**UCC**) and invited views of general public as well as recognised religious organisations on the same.
- The commission has given 30 days from the date of notice to present their views and feedback.
- The previous 21st Law Commission had said UCC is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage in the country

UCC helps in achieving the following

- **Promotion of secularism:** One set of laws to govern the personal matters of all citizens irrespective of religion is the cornerstone of true secularism. A **secular republic needs a common law** for all citizens rather than differentiated rules based on religious practices. It would help **end gender discrimination on religious grounds** and strengthens the secular fabric of the nation.
- **Protection of Vulnerable & Women's Rights:** It will protect the vulnerable sections of society. Women have been denied via personal laws in the name of socio cultural-religious traditions. Therefore, UCC could bring all communities together to ensure Women the Right to a dignified life and control over their life as well as body.
- **Gender justice:** The rights of women are usually limited under religious law, be it Hindu or Muslim. Many practices governed by religious tradition are at odds with the fundamental rights guaranteed in the Indian Constitution. Courts have also often said in their judgements that the government should move towards a uniform civil code including the judgement in **the Shah Bano case.**
- **Prevents religion-based discrimination:** Personal laws differentiate between people on grounds of religion. A unified law having the same provisions regarding marital affairs would provide justice to those who feel discriminated against.
- **Ending unjust customs and traditions:** A rational common and unified personal law will help eradicate many evil, unjust and irrational customs and traditions prevalent across the communities. For example, Law against Manual scavenging. It might have been a custom in the past but in a mature democracy like India, this custom cannot be justified.
- **Indian laws do follow a uniform code in most civil matters** –Indian Contract Act, Civil Procedure Code, Sale of Goods Act, Transfer of Property Act, Partnership Act, Evidence Act



etc. States, however, have made hundreds of amendments and therefore in certain matters, there is diversity even under these secular civil laws.

- Justice Prathiba M Singh of Delhi HC stated that the modern Indian society was gradually becoming homogenous, the traditional barriers of religion, community and caste are slowly dissipating and thus UCC ought not to remain a mere hope.
- **Eases Administration:** UCC would make it easy to administer the huge population base of India.

Challenges facing the passage of UCC:

- **Violation of fundamental rights:** Religious bodies oppose uniform civil code on the ground that it would be interference into religious affairs which would violate fundamental rights guaranteed under article 25 of the constitution.
- **Reduces diversity:** It would reduce the diversity of the nation by painting everyone in one colour. Tribals have their unique customs and traditions as per their culture. Replacing their customs and traditions with a unified law may lead to the identity crisis of the tribals. This may further lead to social tension.
- **Communal politics:** It would be a tyranny to the minority and when implemented could bring a lot of unrest in the country.
- **Threat to Multiculturalism:** Indian society has a unique identity in the form of its being multiculturalism, and unified law might do away with these unique characteristics of this nation.
- **Affects Majority as well:** For example, even Hindus themselves have separate Hindu laws for themselves. Thus, it is not merely a question for minorities but it also affects the majority.
- **Lacking Political Will:** Bigger issues have been resolved by the BJP Government like Ayodhya Dispute, repeal of Article 370, so with adequate will from the political community, UCC could also be implemented
- **Sensitive and tough task:** Such a code, in its true spirit, must be brought about by borrowing freely from different personal laws, making gradual changes in each, issuing judicial pronouncements assuring gender equality, and adopting expansive interpretations on marriage, maintenance, adoption, and succession by acknowledging the benefits that one community secures from the others. This task will be very demanding time and human resource wise. The government should be sensitive and unbiased at each step while dealing with the majority and minority communities. Otherwise, it might turn out to be more disastrous in a form of communal violence.
- **Time is not yet suitable for this reform:** Considering a major opposition from Muslim community in India over this issue overlapping with controversies over beef, saffronization of school and college curriculum, love jihad, and the silence emanating from the top leadership on these controversies, there needs to be given sufficient time for instilling confidence in the community. Otherwise, these efforts towards common will be counterproductive leaving minority class particularly Muslims more insecure and vulnerable to get attracted towards fundamentalist and extremist ideologies.



Way forward

- Major sensitization efforts are needed to reform current personal law reforms which should first be initiated by the communities themselves.
- Current institutions need to be modernized, democratized and strengthened for this change. Sincere efforts towards women empowerment have to be taken for all women of all religions.
- UCC can only emerge through an evolutionary process, which preserves India's rich legal heritage, of which all the personal laws are equal constituents.
- The social transformation from diverse civil code to uniformity shall be gradual and cannot happen in a day. Therefore, the government must adopt a piecemeal approach and no knee-jerk decisions.
- There is need for deliberations and discussions among members of various communities to reach a common ground.

Conclusion

The guiding principles of the Constitution itself visualize diversity and have tried to promote uniformity among peoples of different denominations. A uniform law, although highly desirable but may be counterproductive to the unity and integrity of the nation. Hence, only those elements of customs and traditions should be brought into a unified law that causes injustice to individuals. In a democracy and rule of law, a gradual progressive change and order must be brought about.

[Explain the key policy changes recommended by the Reserve Bank of India \(RBI\) in its report to achieve net zero emissions by 2070 in India. How can these policy measures contribute to combating climate change and promoting sustainable economic growth? \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Tough

Reference: [Live Mint](#)

Why the question:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released a report emphasizing the need for urgent policy changes in order for India to achieve net zero emissions by 2070.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the major recommendation of RBI to achieve net zero while balancing growth and steps needed to achieve them.

Directive word:

Explain – Clarify the topic by giving a detailed account as to how and why it occurred, or what is the context. You must be defining key terms wherever appropriate and substantiate with relevant associated facts.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Briefly mention the significance of achieving net zero emissions by 2070.

Body:

First, write about the RBI recommendation to Key Policy Changes for Achieving Net Zero Emissions – Transitioning to a Low-Carbon Economy, promoting renewable energy sources, Encouraging energy efficiency measures and Supporting electric mobility and clean transportation etc.



Next, write about the contribution of the above to Combating Climate Change and Sustainable Growth – Climate Change Mitigation and Promoting sustainable practices across sectors etc.

Conclusion:

Conclude by writing a way forward.

Introduction

In the Report on Currency and Finance, the RBI has highlighted various concerns associated with achieving desired growth rate while controlling the emission targets.

As per the report, if India wants to become a developed country by 2047-48, **its GDP growth rate should be 9.6% per annum up to 2047-48.**

Body

About RBI report

- As per the RBI report, India can – **a)** increase the level of energy efficiency i.e., reduce the energy used per unit of GDP and **b)** increase the greenness of energy i.e., reduce emissions per unit of energy.
- At present, **India's energy efficiency** has been improving at 2.3% per annum over the last 10 years. However, it needs to be accelerated to 5%.
- Similarly, **the share of green energy** in primary energy has to be increased to 70% – 82% of the total by 2070.

Policy recommendation by RBI to achieve net zero emissions by 2070

- **Prioritizing Areas:** As per the RBI report, India needs to intervene in some major areas which needs to be implemented over the next 10 years.
 - **Shifting power generation away from coal-based** thermal power towards solar, wind and other green sources is the one of the priority areas because this will lead to almost half of the reduction in emissions.
- **Phasing down coal-based power plants:** As per the RBI report, the govt. should ensure that no new coal-based thermal power plants will be set up after a certain period.
 - Phasing down coal-based power plants may also lead to phasing out coal mines, which can have implications on employment and state finances. India needs to prepare itself for such challenges.
- **Investments:** Raising the **share of green energy to 70% or 82% of total energy** by 2070 will involve massive investments in building **electricity generation, storage and transmission capacity** and also in developing infrastructure for green hydrogen.
 - Since a large part of investments will be taken by the private sector, there is a need for a policy environment that will encourage such investment.
- **Carbon tax or cap-and-trade system:** The RBI report highlights the issue of imposing such a system. The **Electricity Amendment Act** makes provision for introducing a cap-and-trade system. However, whether an **explicit carbon tax** would be better needs to be carefully examined.



- Moreover, either option **would raise the cost of coal to users and this would be reflected in the price** of coal-based electricity.
- Such mechanisms might **enhance the competitiveness of green electricity without implementing mandatory renewable purchase obligations** on discoms.
- However, despite such concerns, a big advantage of carbon taxation is that it raises revenue.
- Since both the central and state governments do not have enough fiscal space for the transitions, carbon taxation will provide required resources.

Conclusion

Improvements in energy efficiency are critical to reduce emissions. Therefore, there is a need to switch to more energy-efficient systems and implement more energy-efficient building designs.

[The imposition of the Sedition law in India has been a subject of significant controversy and debate. While the intention behind the law is to protect national security and maintain public order, it has been criticized for its potential misuse and infringement on free speech rights. Analyse. \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [Indian Express](#)

Why the question:

The article provides an overview of the Law Commission's report on the Sedition law in India. The report suggests that the sedition law should be used restrictively and proposes several recommendations for its amendment.

Key Demand of the question:

To discuss the issues related to the implementation of the Sedition law in India and address the demands for its reform.

Directive word:

Analyse – When asked to analyse, you must examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them in a summary.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by giving context of section 124A of IPC.

Body:

In the first part, write about the objectives behind sedition law.

Next, in detail write about the various issues within the sedition law – potential misuse and infringement on freedom of speech, interpretation raises concerns, suppressing legitimate criticism and targeting of activists, journalists, and political opponents etc

Next, write about the need of sedition law in the present day. Write recommendations by law commission.

Conclusion:

Conclude by stating a balanced opinion on the issue.

Introduction

According to the **Section 124A of IPC**, Sedition is an act that brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the Government established by



law in India by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise. Colonial administrators used sedition to lock up people who criticised the British policies.

Recently, The Law Commission of India has recommended the retention of the 153-year-old colonial law on sedition in India..

Body

Background

- The section 124A of Indian Penal Code is a pre- independence provision, which covers sedition charges against government.
- Various verdicts by Indian Judiciary have led to re-interpretation and re-examination of 'sedition' in light of Article 19 of the Constitution.
- There has been an effort to strike a balance between right to free speech and expression and power of State to impose reasonable restrictions (Article 19(2)).
- In 1962, the Supreme Court in **Kedar Nath Singh vs. State of Bihar** upheld Section 124A and held that it struck a "correct balance" between fundamental rights and the need for public order.
- The court had significantly reduced the scope of Sedition law to only those cases where there is incitement to imminent violence towards overthrow of the state.
- Further, the Court held that it is not mere against government of the day but the institutions as symbol of state.

Should sedition be scrapped?

- **Against democratic norms:** It stifles the democratic and fundamental right of people to criticize the government.
- **Inadequate capacity of State Machinery:** The police might not have the "requisite" training to understand the consequences of imposing such a "stringent" provision.
- **Possibility of Misuse:** It has been used arbitrarily to curb dissent. In many cases the main targets have been writers, journalists, activists who question government policy and projects, and political dissenters.
- **The draconian nature** of this law as the crime is non-bailable, non-cognisable and punishment can extend for life—it has a strong deterrent effect on dissent even if it is not used.
- **Used to gag press:** The press should be protected so that it could bare the secrets of government and inform the people. Only a free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government.

Arguments in favour of Section 124A

- **Not really a draconian law:** Now after the Supreme Court directions, its jurisdiction has been narrowed down. It can be applied only on grounds laid down by the court.
- **Application is a part of reasonable restrictions:** It is provided under the Article 19 (2).



- **Does not really curb free speech:** One can use any kind of strong language in criticism of the government without inviting sedition. However, such dissent should not be turned into some kind of persuasion to break the country.
- **Threats to unity and integrity of nation** due to presence of anti-national elements and divisive Forces such as naxals, separatists who are receiving support from inside and outside the country.
- **Mere misuse cannot be a ground of repeal,** rather provisions should be made where such misuse is eliminated.

Conclusion

The guidelines of the SC must be incorporated in Section 124A as well by amendment to IPC so that any ambiguity must be removed. Only those actions/words that directly result in the use of violence or incitement to violence should be termed seditious. The state police must be sufficiently guided as to where the section must be imposed and where it must not. Need to include provisions where the government can be penalized, if it misuses the section. This will ensure that section 124 A of IPC strikes a balance between security and smooth functioning of state with the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression.

Role of civil services in a democracy.

The civil service is the engine room of modern government as they play a crucial part in making policies that reflect the needs of the public. Discuss. (250 words)

Difficulty level: Easy

Reference: [Insights on India](#)

Why the question:

The question is part of the static syllabus of General studies paper – 2

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the roles played by civil services in the modern government and its role in making policies which are public centric.

Directive:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you must debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You must give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Start by mentioning the role of civil services in the modern day.

Body:

First, in detail, write about the roles performed by the civil services which makes it the engine room of modern government – basis of government, policy making & implementation, services to people, continuity in administration etc.

Next, write about the role of civil services in people centric policies. Substantiate with examples.

Conclusion:

Conclude by summarising.

Introduction

The role of Civil Servants across the domains of policy making and policy implementation is critical to the development process. They assist in identifying major policy areas such as preparing



major **policy proposals, analysing various alternatives and solutions to societal problems requiring urgent attention, dividing the major policies into sub-policies, determining program of action and** suggesting modification in the existing policy on the basis of its experience on the implementation front.

Body

Civil service as engine room of modern government

- They **engage in collection of relevant data and information** in order to identify core issues. The type of information required, the extent of substance in the information so collected and assimilation of the information is the task of the Civil Servants.
 - They then assist the government in terms of **providing relevant data for substantiating policy proposals.**
- Owing to their enormous administrative expertise and capability of the civil services, they are privy to various problems and issues facing the country.
 - Their knowledge and experience so acquired is then put to use by **assuming the role of the 'think-tank' of the government.**
 - The Civil Servants **assist the political executive in identifying policy issues** by suggesting the nature of problems and the need for taking them up for consideration at higher levels.
- The civil service engages itself in **examining the issue taken up for policy formulation**, it frames and reframes policy proposals keeping in view its viability, future prospects, resources available, acceptability, etc.
 - It is also the responsibility of the civil services to **analyze policy proposals in relation to the provisions of the Constitution**, the laws framed by the Parliament, and other existing rules and regulations.
 - In this way the civil services **help in framing sound and effective policies.**
- Civil servants are responsible for implementing the laws and policies of government. **By carrying out laws, it regulates the behaviour of the people in society.**
 - The ideals and objectives of government may be very popular, the plans for national development may be extremely progressive and the resources of the country may be abundant, but without civil services, not much can be achieved.
 - An efficient civil service can **avoid waste, correct errors, limit the consequences of incompetence or irresponsibility** while implementing laws and public policies

Various roles and responsibilities

- Setting **right developmental goals and priorities** in areas of education, health, communications etc. Formulation and implementation of strategies and programmes for the development and modernisation of the nation. E.g., Formulation of plans at district, state and national levels.



- Creation of **new administrative organisations** and improving the capacity of the existing ones for the developmental purposes.
- To **develop agriculture**, civil servants have to properly **manage community resources** such as land, water resources, forests, wetlands and wasteland development. E.g. the District **Collector of Dewas, Umakant Umrao helped the farmers** in Madhya Pradesh to fight against drought by **constructing over 16,000 ponds**.
- To **facilitate industrial development**, infrastructural facilities such as roads, electricity, communications, market centres etc. have to be provided. In these countries, the civil service manages government owned business, industrial enterprises and public utility services. **IAS officer Ritu Maheshwari**, installed **new electricity smart meters** to tackle the prevalent electricity theft in Kanpur.
- Development and mobilisation of natural, human and financial resources and their proper utilization for accomplishing developmental objectives. **P Narahari**, as district collector in Madhya Pradesh, worked towards building a barrier-free environment that ensures that **people with disabilities can move about safely and independently**.
- Securing the **support of the people for developmental activities** by involving them in the process of development by creating appropriate attitude towards the socio-economic changes that are taking place in society. **IAS Officer, Smita Sabharwal, popularly known as ‘the people’s officer’, launched a campaign called “Fund Your City”** in Warangal. She appealed to residents to help her build the infrastructure of Naxal-affected areas, which resulted in the construction of traffic junctions and foot over-bridges.

Conclusion

The citizen has become the focal point of the administrative and development discourse. As one of the foremost agents of governance, the Civil Services form the connecting bridge between state and the society. This interface is critical to both administration of programs and acquiring inputs as feedback.

This gains currency especially since policy areas are interlinked in multiple ways and citizen has become the core focus. Most government programs are today managed by the civil services and allow citizens access to quick and personalized grievance redressal mechanisms. Hence, they assume importance particularly in terms of eliminating the gulf between expectations of the electorate and the outcomes of government initiatives.

[One of the most troublesome governance issues is that of frequent transfers of civil servants. Do you think a fixed tenure for civil servants is the way forward to ensure continuity in administration leading to good governance? \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [Insights on India](#), [Insights on India](#)

Why the question:

The question is part of the static syllabus of General studies paper – 2.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the issue of frequent transfers of civil servants and if fixed tenure can lead to good governance.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Telegram: <https://t.me/insightsIAStips>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpoccbCX9GEIwaile4HLjwA>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/insightsonindia>



Start by giving context.

Body:

First, write about the drawbacks and impact associated with the frequent transfer of civil servants. Next, write about the advantages of having a fixed tenure of the civil servants in a particular posting – continuity, impartial decision making, insulation from pressure, increased efficiency etc. Next, write about the disadvantages of having a fixed tenure of the civil servants – complacency, shrinking accountability etc.

Conclusion:

Conclude by stating your opinion on the above issue and way forward to achieve continuity.

Introduction

An analysis of the executive record (ER) sheets of thousands of IAS officers reveals that the frequent transfers in service are normal. But, frequent transfers have an adverse impact on their morale. This will lead to a decline in productivity and efficacy. **Eg: IAS Ashok Khemka** has been transferred more than 50 times. **Pradeep Kasni** has been transferred 65 times.

Body

Frequent transfer of civil servant: Background

- The **Civil Services Survey report** noted: frequent transfers has been a concern for most respondents as it **adversely affected** job satisfaction, children's education, and family togetherness and placed officers at the mercy of corrupt influences.
- A Central government database on transfers of Indian Administrative Services (IAS) officers who sit atop the bureaucracy in the Centre and in states shows that the average duration of their posting in the last five years was **464 days**.
- The good part about this reading is that over the last 20 years, this number has improved the most in the last five years, and this improvement has been both at the Centre and in states.
- The bad reading is that a bureaucrat is **still averaging only about 15 months** in a posting, which is a considerable distance away from the standard of three to five years that is commonly spoken of in organizational and human resource contexts.
- The **analysis of the SUPREMO (Single User Platform Related to Employees Online) database** of the Department of Personnel and Training, Government of India, shows that the average posting spell of civil servants in India is only about 15 months.
- Job transfers are a huge matter for governments and their employees, a source of constant worry for employees and apparent dissatisfaction for governments.

Fixed tenure advantages to civil servants for good governance

- Many respondents suggested a **fixed tenure of at least 2 to 3 years** for all civil servants (except officers of suspect integrity) to ensure **accountability and maximise their impact on the job**.
- While **fixed tenures have not materialised**, the **reduction in the last five years** in the number of transfers, and a corresponding increase in average tenures across both Centre and states, is a silver lining.



- But true, and lasting gains, calls for systemic reforms, and that is not visible at the moment. The **undermining of transfer guidelines** has been a major shortcoming of personnel administration in India. **The Second Administrative Reforms Commission** has highlighted it.
- The Fifth Pay Commission had recommended that no premature transfer should be allowed and that there should be fixation of a minimum tenure for each post. This would ensure **longevity in schemes and reforms and impact at grassroots level** in case of reforms taken.
- Less transfers also mean, more **motivation to show real progress by civil servants** and thus working towards betterment and welfare of people.

Conclusion

Good governance and better administration of development is often offered as a plausible solution to conflict management. At the heart of this solution are public administrators. Civil servants, no matter how dedicated, innovative and efficient they may be, need a stability of tenure to govern well.

A healthy working relationship between Ministers, MPs, MLAs and civil servants is critical for good governance. Therefore, the state needs to take every stakeholder of governance in confidence.

Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

[Discuss the significance of reimagining public libraries as inclusive spaces. What are the challenges in achieving inclusivity in library services, and what strategies can be adopted to overcome them? 250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [Indian Express](#)

Why the question:

The article emphasizes the importance of transforming public libraries into inclusive spaces. It highlights the significance of public libraries in providing access to information and the need to cater to diverse communities.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the significance of public libraries and steps needed to make them inclusive.

Directive word:

***Discuss** – This is an all-encompassing directive – you must debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You must give reasons for both for and against arguments.*

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Start by giving context.

Body:

First, write about the importance of Inclusive Public Libraries – public libraries play a crucial role in providing access to information and fostering a culture of reading, promote equal access to knowledge and information, serve as community hubs, fostering social interaction and engagement etc,

Next, in detail, write about the challenges in Creating Inclusive Libraries -Financial constraints and limited resources, Lack of awareness about the importance of inclusivity in library services,



Accessibility issues for individuals with disabilities and Language barriers and the need for multilingual resources etc.

Next, write about the strategies needed to overcome the above challenges.

Conclusion:

Conclude by writing a way forward.

Introduction

Public libraries are a dying space in the era of fast content consumption. With the technological advances there is overwhelming content in social media that has led to books and libraries becoming irrelevant.

Traditional libraries should evolve beyond mere repositories of books and become vibrant hubs that embrace technological advancements, offer various resources, and foster a sense of belonging for all individuals.

Body

Challenges in making public libraries inclusive

- **Accessibility:** One significant challenge is ensuring physical accessibility for individuals with disabilities.
 - Retrofitting older library buildings to accommodate wheelchair ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms **can be costly and require structural modifications.**
 - Additionally, creating inclusive spaces for individuals with visual impairments or hearing impairments may involve **implementing assistive technologies or providing sign language interpretation services.**
- **Digital Divide:** In today's digital age, access to technology and the internet is crucial. However, the **digital divide poses a challenge in making public libraries inclusive.** Some individuals, particularly those from marginalized communities or low-income backgrounds, may lack access to computers, internet connectivity, or digital devices.
 - Bridging this divide may require providing computers and Wi-Fi access in libraries, as well as offering digital literacy programs to help individuals navigate online resources effectively.
- **Language and Cultural Diversity:** Public libraries serve diverse communities with individuals who may speak different languages or come from various cultural backgrounds. Overcoming language barriers and catering to diverse cultural needs can be challenging.
 - Libraries may need to **invest in multilingual collections, employ staff who speak different languages,** and provide resources and programs that reflect the cultural diversity of their communities.
- **Funding Constraints:** Adequate funding is essential to support the transformation of public libraries into inclusive spaces. However, **many libraries face financial constraints, limiting their ability to invest in new technologies,** resources, and accessibility enhancements. Securing funding through grants, partnerships, or advocacy efforts becomes crucial to address these challenges.



- **Community Engagement:** Encouraging community participation and engagement can be a challenge. Libraries need to actively involve community members, seek their input, and understand their needs and preferences. Building trust and fostering a sense of ownership among diverse **community groups requires outreach efforts, collaboration with local organizations, and creating programming that reflects the interests of different demographics.**
- **Changing Perceptions:** Shifting the perception of libraries from traditional book repositories to dynamic, inclusive spaces may encounter resistance. Some individuals may still view libraries as quiet, solitary spaces primarily for reading, rather than as community hubs that promote collaboration, social interaction, and diverse learning experiences. Communicating the benefits and opportunities that inclusive libraries offer is crucial in changing these perceptions.

Strategies to make inclusive public libraries

- While physical books remain significant, libraries should **expand their collections to include digital content, multimedia resources**, and other forms of media to cater to changing reading habits and interests.
 - This adaptation would enable libraries to engage a wider audience and offer resources that align with the diverse preferences and needs of the community.
- It is important to ensure **accessibility** in public libraries, particularly for **marginalized groups**. This involves **addressing physical barriers, such as wheelchair ramps and sign language services**, as well as offering resources and programs that cater to the needs of individuals with **disabilities or those who speak languages** other than the dominant one.
- Integrating **cultural and community-specific materials to foster inclusivity and create a sense of representation** for all library users is a must.
- Public libraries are community spaces that **facilitate social interactions and connection**. Libraries should strive to provide welcoming environments that encourage collaboration, discussion, and learning.
- This can be achieved by incorporating **flexible spaces, hosting diverse programs and events, and embracing technology to enable digital participation** and virtual engagement.

Conclusion

There is a need for reimagining public libraries as inclusive spaces that go beyond conventional book collections. By embracing technological advancements, diversifying resources, ensuring accessibility, and fostering community engagement, libraries can evolve into vibrant and relevant institutions that serve the needs of their communities and promote the right to read for all.

[Despite India's promising demographic dividend, why does the issue of unemployment persist? In light of this, what valuable lessons can India learn from other countries that have experienced similar transitions in the past? \(250 Words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [Indian Express](#)

**Why the question:**

While India enjoys a demographic advantage with a younger population, experts raise concerns about the lack of education and skills leading to joblessness.

Key Demand of the question:

To write the issues concerning the utilization of demographic dividend in India and lessons that we can learn from other countries.

Structure of the answer:**Introduction:**

Begin by giving data about demographic dividends and unemployment in India.

Body:

Give reasons for persisting unemployment e.g., the gap between the skills possessed by job seekers and the requirements of the job market; the slow pace of economic growth and job creation; there is a lack of adequate infrastructure and investment, which hampers the growth potential of many industries; India's informal sector, faces challenges such as low productivity, lack of social security, and limited access to credit.

Briefly give what the government is doing in this regard.

Next, suggest what India can learn from other countries in this regard e.g., countries like South Korea and Germany have successfully implemented skill development programs and vocational training systems that bridge the gap between education and industry requirements.

Conclusion:**You can conclude by saying:**

By investing in skill development, infrastructure, and social safety nets, India can learn from the experiences of other countries and create an environment conducive to job creation and economic growth.

Introduction

In a jobless growth economy, unemployment remains stubbornly high even as the economy grows. This tends to happen when a relatively large number of people have lost their jobs, and the ensuing recovery is insufficient to absorb the unemployed, under-employed, and those first entering the workforce. Jobless growth of the Indian economy is a **"5C" problem: a Complicated Condition Created by Combinations of Causes.**

Body**Causes of unemployment in India**

- **Jobless growth:** There is mounting concern that future growth could turn out to be jobless due to de-industrialization, de-globalization, the fourth industrial revolution and technological progress. As per the **NSSO Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-18, India's labour force participation rate for the age-group 15-59 years is around 53%, that is, around half of the working age population is jobless.**
- **Asymmetric demography:** The growth in the working-age ratio is likely to be concentrated in some of India's poorest states and the demographic dividend will be fully realized **only if India is able to create gainful employment opportunities** for this working-age population.
- **Lack of skills:** Most of the new jobs that will be created in the future will be highly skilled and lack of skill in Indian workforce is a major challenge. India may not be able to take advantage of the opportunities, due to **low human capital base and lack of skills.**



- **Low human development parameters:** India ranks 130 out of 189 countries in UNDP's Human Development Index, which is alarming. Therefore, **health and education parameters need to be improved substantially** to make the Indian workforce efficient and skilled.
- **Informal nature of economy in India** is another hurdle in reaping the benefits of demographic transition in India.

Valuable lessons that India can learn from other countries

- countries like South Korea and Germany have successfully implemented skill development programs and vocational training systems that bridge the gap between education and industry requirements.
- **Building human capital:** Investing in people through **healthcare, quality education, jobs and skills** helps build human capital, which is key to supporting economic growth, ending extreme poverty, and creating a more inclusive society.
- **Skill development** to increase employability of young population. India's labour force needs to be empowered with the right skills for the modern economy. Government has established the **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)** with the overall target of skilling/ upskilling 500 million people in India by 2022..
- **Education:** Enhancing educational levels by properly investing in primary, secondary and higher education. India, which has almost 41% of population below the age of 20 years, can reap the demographic dividend only if with a better education system. Also, **academic-industry collaboration** is necessary to synchronise modern industry demands and learning levels in academics.
 - Establishment of **Higher Education Finance Agency (HEFA)** is a welcome step in this direction.
- **Health:** Improvement in healthcare infrastructure would ensure higher number of productive days for young labourforce, thus increasing the productivity of the economy.
 - Success of schemes like **Ayushman Bharat** and National Health Protection scheme (**NHPS**) is necessary. Also nutrition level in women and children needs special care with effective implementation of **Integrated Child Development (ICDS)** programme.
- **Job Creation:** The nation needs to **create ten million jobs per year** to absorb the addition of young people into the workforce. Promoting businesses' interests and entrepreneurship would help in job creation to provide employment to the large labourforce.
 - India's improved ranking in the **World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index** is a good sign.
 - Schemes like **Start-up India** and **Make in India**, if implemented properly, would bring the desired result in the near future.
- **Urbanisation:** The large young and working population in the years to come will migrate to urban areas within their own and other States, leading to rapid and large-scale increase in urban population. How these migrating people can have access to basic amenities, health and social services in urban areas need to be the focus of urban policy planning.



- Schemes such as **Smart City Mission** and **AMRUT** need to be effectively and carefully implemented.

Conclusion

India is on the right side of demographic transition that provides golden opportunity for its rapid socio-economic development, if policymakers align the developmental policies with this demographic shift.

To reap the demographic dividend, proper investment in human capital is needed by focussing on education, skill development and healthcare facilities.

Value-addition

Steps taken by government in recent times

- **Dedicated Shram Suvidha Portal:** That would allot Labor Identification Number (LIN) to units and allow them to file online compliance for 16 out of 44 labor laws.
- **Random Inspection Scheme:** To eliminate human discretion in selection of units for inspection, and uploading of inspection reports within 72 hours of inspection mandatory.
- **Universal Account Number:** Enables 4.17 crore employees to have their Provident Fund account portable, hassle-free and universally accessible.
- **Apprentice Protsahan Yojana:** Government will support manufacturing units mainly and other establishments by reimbursing 50% of the stipend paid to apprentices during first two years of their training.
- **Revamped Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana:** Introducing a Smart Card for the workers in the unorganized sector seeded with details of two more social security schemes.
- **The National Career Service** is being implemented as a mission mode project to provide various job-related services information on skills development courses, internships etc

Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

[Examine the key challenges faced by startups in establishing effective governance frameworks and suggest measures to overcome them. \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [Indian Express](#)

Why the question:

The article discusses the importance of addressing governance issues in startups for their long-term sustainability and growth.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the challenges faced by the startup in their governance structure and measures needed to overcome them.

Directive word:



Examine – When asked to ‘Examine’, we must investigate the topic (content words) in detail, inspect it, investigate it and establish the key facts and issues related to the topic in question. While doing so we should explain why these facts and issues are important and their implications.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by defining governance in context with start ups.

Body:

First, write about the key challenges in establishing governance frameworks – Founders’ dominance and decision-making, Lack of regulatory clarity and guidance, Limited resources and expertise etc. Next, write about the measures that are needed to overcome the same – Establishing independent boards and committees, Strengthening disclosure and reporting mechanisms, Collaboration between regulators, investors, and startups etc.

Conclusion:

Conclude with a way forward.

Introduction

A startup defined as an entity that is headquartered in India, which was opened less than 10 years ago, and has an annual turnover less than ₹100 crore. Today Startups are being widely recognised as important engines for growth and jobs generation. Through innovation and scalable technology, startups can generate impactful solutions, and thereby act as vehicles for socio-economic development and transformation.

Body

key challenges faced by startups in establishing effective governance frameworks

- Many Indian founders have a technical background and lack business knowledge.
- Finding the right investor and raising funds is difficult Information gap exists between those who provide solutions and those who are supposed to use them.
- Startups are at a disadvantage compared to large companies in terms of market penetration.
- The [present regulatory framework in which startups](#) operate is widely seen as difficult, inefficient and unpredictable.

Measures needed

- Startup founders have to realise that good corporate governance and financial propriety are key to the success of a business: there is no escape from them.
- By indulging in non-compliance and financial irregularities, even if out of ignorance, they are only queering the pitch for future startups.
- The shift in global focus is on promoting women entrepreneurs and fostering an inclusive and innovative environment. Efforts are also being made by diverse stakeholders in the Indian startup ecosystem to elevate domestic policies in concurrence with global trends.
- The role of the state government becomes very important in developing the necessary infrastructure and support to foster the startup ecosystem. Due to the given constraints of infrastructure and supporting services, India needs to build upon low-cost and high-impact solutions.



- Although there has been an increase in angel and venture capital funding, the amount invested must be augmented. It is crucial that the ecosystem is well integrated to connect startups to fund houses and other stakeholders.
- While it is important to elucidate overarching features of the ecosystem, this report delves deeper into the role of states and India's federal structure in both building the ecosystem as well as closely monitoring futuristic measures that can aid India's growth story.

Conclusion

Startups in India are witnessing a golden chapter in the history of Indian entrepreneurship. However, still the Indian government has a crucial role to play in positioning India as the **Tech Garage of the World**. It should act as a catalyst, and bring together the synergies of the private sector with the aim of innovating for India and the world. Recognising the startup sector with a dedicated observational day will definitely help build awareness about the sector and also draw great talent and investment into this sector.

[Good governance requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that addresses the key pillars of good governance along with making optimal use of new technologies.](#)

[Discuss. \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [Indian Express](#), [Insights on India](#)

Why the question:

The article emphasizes the importance of effective governance beyond the implementation of technology.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about good governance and its various dimensions and measures needed to achieve it.

Directive word:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you must debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You must give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by defining good governance.

Body:

First, elaborate up on the various pillars of good governance – transparency, accountability, participation, rule of law, and efficiency etc. Write about the role of technology.

Next, discuss in detail various dimensions of good governance in India – administration, g-governance, finances, infrastructure, welfare and people's happiness etc.

Next, suggest reforms to achieve it.

Conclusion:

Conclude by stressing on the importance of good governance to India.

Introduction

The **World Bank** defines governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. **Governance** is defined as the



exercise of power or authority by political leaders for the well-being of their country's citizens or subjects. A great deal about governance is the proper and effective utilization of resources.

The **World Bank** defined **Good Governance** as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development"..

Body

Good governance has 8 major characteristics. 'It is **participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law**. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society.

Major Features of Good Governance:

- **Participation**
 - People should be able to voice their own opinions through legitimate immediate organizations or representatives.
 - This includes men and women, vulnerable sections of society, backward classes, minorities, etc.
 - Participation also implies freedom of association and expression.
- **Transparency**
 - Information should be accessible to the public and should be understandable and monitored.
 - It also means free media and access of information to them.
- **Rule of Law**
 - Legal framework should be enforced impartially, especially on human rights laws.
 - Without rule of law, politics will follow the principle of matsya nyaya i.e. law of fish which means the strong will prevail over the weak.
- **Responsiveness**
 - This implies that processes and institutions should serve all stakeholders within a reasonable time frame.
- **Consensus oriented**
 - Consensus oriented decision-making ensures that even if everyone does not achieve what they want to the fullest, a common minimum can be achieved by everyone which will not be detrimental to anyone.
- **Accountability**
 - Good governance aims towards betterment of people, and this can not take place without the government being accountable to the people.



- Governmental institutions, private sectors, and civil society organizations should be held accountable to the public and institutional stakeholders.
- **Effectiveness and Efficiency**
 - Processes and institutions should be able to produce results that meet the needs of their community.
 - Resources of the community should be used effectively for the maximum output.
- **Equity and Inclusiveness**
 - Good governance assures an equitable society.
 - People should have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.

Leveraging technology for good Governance

Legislation

- Technology-centric solutions can ensure work continuity in law-making institutions even when meetings can't be held physically.
- These online meetings of legislative bodies will help in the furtherance of debate and deliberation on important issues.
- The establishment of e-legislature will help in reducing the frequent use of ordinances.
- Following this, Virtual parliament has been set up in the democracies like the UK, New Zealand, etc.
- The use of ICT platforms will enable proper functioning of parliamentary committees.
- Also, the added advantage could be that the committee could get to hear a wide range of stakeholders who might otherwise find it difficult to appear in person before the committees.

Judiciary

- By adopting initiatives like **e-courts** judiciary may reduce the backlog of cases.

Executive

- Many state governments have adopted Information Technology to automate processes like **Digital Land Record management, Treasury management etc.**

Participative democracy

- There is an unprecedented opportunity for community collective choice, whereby citizens who are affected by a set of governing rules can help to select and frame policy, rank spending priorities, and can, in partnership with their local government representatives,
- Such Mechanism may help in strengthening **Social audit**. For example, citizens can directly give suggestions to the government on **myGOV platform**.

Steps required to promote Good Governance in India



- There is imperative need to strengthen and widen the national public information infrastructure through developing information networks for wider access of digital information through wider use of information technologies.
- Changing the mindset of the government employees is important. This will be addressed to organizing programmes for orientation, training and capacity building.
- States may be advised to establish an independent public grievance redressal authority to deal with complaints of delay, harassment and corruption.
- Use of technology is critical in engendering good governance: Some examples abound in Government already, and many more are possible.
- There are startups such as Avantari and ai which use artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML) to create “mass personalization” in advertising and communication.
- Good governance is also the responsibility of enlightened citizens who should give some thought to complex trade-offs like these and not just only demand good governance but also contribute to it.
- To ensure sustainable human development, actions must be taken to work towards this ideal with the aim of making it a reality.

Conclusion:

Good governance is significant in public institutions to conduct and manage public affairs and resources to guarantee human rights in free of abuse and corruption, and with due regard for the rule of law. Good governance is thus, a function of installation of positive virtues of administration and elimination of vices of dysfunctionalities. It makes the government work effective, credible and legitimate in administrative system and citizen-friendly, value caring and people-sharing.

India and its neighborhood- relations.

To rebalance India-Nepal relations, both countries need to engage in constructive dialogue, foster trust, and address the concerns of each other. Analyse. (250 words)

Difficulty level: Easy

Reference: [Live Mint](#) , [Indian Express](#)

Why the question:

t's encouraging to see the positive notes struck by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepal counterpart Pushpa Kamal Dahal, also known as Prachanda. The two countries have seen ties strain in recent years, but the visible cordiality between the two leaders suggests a definitive thaw in the proverbial ice.

Key Demand of the question:

To bring out the changing landscape of Indo-Nepal relation in light of recent developments between the two countries and need for rebalancing in their ties.

Directive word:

Analyse – When asked to analyse, you must examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them in a summary.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

In brief, give a historical perspective of Indo-Nepal relations.

**Body:**

Present a timeline that depicts major events between India and Nepal and highlights the controversies around their relations. Elaborate upon the recent boundary issue as well the internal strife being witnessed in Nepal.

Discuss the underlying factors responsible for unchanging perspectives for each other. Bring out their impacts on the relations of the both countries. Discuss ties at different levels between the two – people to people ties, government to government ties, the China factor etc.

Bring out the present picture of the Indo-Nepal ties.

Conclusion:

Mention a way forward to recalibrate the ties and ensure mutual prosperity between the two countries.

Introduction

Nepal is an important neighbour of India and occupies special significance in its foreign policy because of the geographic, historical, cultural and economic linkages/ties that span centuries. India and Nepal share similar ties in terms of Hinduism and Buddhism with Buddha's birthplace Lumbini located in present day Nepal. Over the past few years, we have been witness to the deteriorating India-Nepal relations. Reserves of goodwill which India had accumulated is fast depleting in Nepal.

Recently, Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda's visited India and signed many bilateral agreements. During the visit, India and Nepal announced **a series of projects focusing on highways, I-ways, and trans-ways**, aiming to strengthen ties between the two countries.

Body**Need of a rebalancing [India Nepal ties](#)**

- Nepal shares borders with 5 Indian states- Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Sikkim and Bihar and with free movement of people and thereby acting as an important point of cultural and economic exchange in India-Nepal relations.
- Nepal unveiled a new political map that claimed strategically important land **Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh of Uttarakhand** as part of its sovereign territory.
- The misunderstanding created during the **constitution framing / Madhesi agitation** changed the entire gamut of relations between India and Nepal.
- **Internal Security** is a major concern for India; Indo-Nepal border is virtually open and lightly policed which is exploited by terrorist outfits and insurgent groups from North Eastern part of India eg. supply of trained cadres, fake Indian currency.
- Nepal over the years has witnessed **chronic political instability**, including a 10-year violent insurgency, damaging Nepal's development and economy.
- There is **anti-India feeling among certain ethnic groups** in Nepal which emanates from the perception that India indulges too much in Nepal and tinkers with their political sovereignty.
- The **establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and China** and its growing influence in Nepal has resulted in declining traditional leverage of India in Nepal.
- Overtime trust deficit has widened between India-Nepal because of the Indian reputation for delaying implementation of various projects.



- The Mahakali agreement has remained in limbo for over two decades. In 2008, the collapse of Koshi’s embankment unleashed massive flooding, highlighting India’s failure to take precautionary measures and its refusal to take responsibility.

Areas of Cooperation in the India-Nepal Relationship:

	Examples
Unique India-Nepal Ties	The relationship between India and Nepal has been unique due to factors such as social, religious, and community exchanges, inter-marriages, and peaceful coexistence along their 1,770-kilometer border.
Economic Interdependencies	India is Nepal’s as its largest trade partner, highest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) , transit for third-country trade, a major supplier of petroleum, and one of the top sources of inward remittances.
Defence Cooperation	India assists in modernizing Nepal Army through equipment supply and training. Joint military exercises (e.g., Surya Kiran), disaster assistance, and bilateral visits. Recruitment of Nepalese soldiers in Gorkha regiments of the Indian Army.
Connectivity	Construction of integrated check posts and hydroelectric projects (see examples above).
Power Cooperation	Cross-border transmission lines to supply power from India to Nepal (see examples above)
Educational, People-to-People, and Cultural Exchanges	Visa-free entry for citizens of both countries. Nepalese citizens living and working in India. Promoting people-to-people exchanges through agreements and initiatives. Cultural centres, sister city agreements, and alumni networks.
Multilateral Partnership	BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal), BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), Non-Aligned Movement, and SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) etc.

Challenges in India-Nepal Relationship:

Challenges	Examples




Boundary Issues	The ongoing dispute over areas like Kalapani and Susta . Limited progress in resolving the dispute. Tensions escalated with the publication of new Indian and Nepali maps .
Treaty Revision	Nepal's request to revise the 1950 Friendship treaty was perceived as unequal. Lack of progress in initiating talks or accepting EPG recommendations.
China's Influence	Nepal's increased engagement with China, including infrastructure agreements. Joining the Belt and Road Initiative. Concerns over Chinese interference in Nepali politics.
Connectivity Issues	Nepal seeking air connectivity, particularly through specific airports in India. Dependence on Indian permission for international flights. Infrastructure projects constructed by Chinese companies but requiring Indian viability.
Economic Factors	Transition to formal economy in India impacting informal trade arrangements. Difficulty in doing business with India compared to China. The decline in Indian investments was replaced by Chinese investments
Terrorism	Porous and poorly patrolled borders enabled the smuggling of weapons, ammunition, and counterfeit currency. Pose security risks to India from terrorist organizations and insurgent groups operating in India's northeast.
Trust Issues	Growing trust gap due to the slow pace of project implementation by India. Perception of India's interference in Nepal's politics. Challenges in maintaining trust and political sovereignty.

Way forward

- **On border issue:**
 - The two countries have managed to settle about 98% of the common border.
 - More than 8,500 boundary pillars have been installed reflecting the agreed alignment.
 - As both countries are laying claim to the same piece of land, the time has come for both countries to sit for talks to solve this issue.
- **Completion of the ongoing process of updating the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship:**
 - India must recognise that as in all other developing economies, Nepal's aspirational young population is also looking beyond the open Indian border for opportunities, and its desire to turn his "land-locked" country into a "land-linked" country with a merchant navy must be considered positively.




- People-to-people inter-dependence must lead the relationship along with civil society and business-commercial level interactions.
- India's major foray should be in innovation and technology transfer, multidisciplinary dialogues, educational and technical institutions, local and global migration management and skills and capacity-building.
- India needs to finish the infrastructure projects on time for instance Pancheswar project has been pending for over 20 years now.
- Nepal could be the fountainhead of climate change knowledge and connect to India's larger dynamics of the management of the ecology of hills and mountains.
- Effective delivery on the pending projects, the remaining ICPs, the five railway connections, postal road network in the Terai and the petroleum pipeline so that connectivity is enhanced and the idea of 'inclusive development and prosperity' assumes reality.
- Negotiate diplomatically to resolve the boundary dispute with Nepal under the aegis of **international law on Trans-Boundary Water Disputes**. In this case, **boundary dispute resolution between India and Bangladesh** should serve as a model for this.
- India should maintain a policy of keeping away from the internal affairs of Nepal, while at the same time, in the spirit of friendship, India should guide the nation towards a more inclusive democracy.
- With its immense strategic relevance in the Indian context as Indian security concern, stable and secure Nepal is one requisite which India can't afford to overlook.
- India needs to formulate a comprehensive and long-term Nepal policy.
- India should stop looking at Nepal purely through a security prism, and at bilateral relations only as transactional and part of a zero-sum game with China.
- Focus on working towards **multifaceted relationships** to the advantage of both nations.




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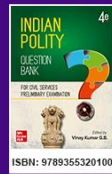
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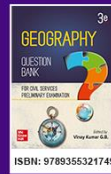
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ISBN: 9789355320025



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Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

[Analyse the strategic partnership pact between India and Egypt and its implications for bilateral relations. Discuss the key areas of cooperation, challenges, and prospects for future collaboration. \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Tough

Reference: [The Hindu](#)

Why the question:

The article highlights the signing of a strategic partnership pact between India and Egypt, signed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the implications of strategic partnership between India and Egypt.

Directive word:

Analyse – When asked to analyse, you must examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them in a summary.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Briefly explain the strategic partnership pact between India and Egypt.

Body:

First, write about the Key areas of cooperation – Trade and economic collaboration, Cultural and people-to-people exchanges etc.



Next, write about the Challenges and hurdles in the above geopolitical dynamics, Economic constraints, Cultural differences and communication gaps etc.

Next, write about the prospects for future collaboration.

Conclusion:

Conclude with a way forward in regards to this strategic partnership.

Introduction

India and Egypt have a long history of contact dating back to the time of Emperor Ashoka. They shared relations during the rule of Ptolemy II.

The Government has pushed to enhance India's bilateral relationships with the Middle-East nations with a renewed vigour over the last decade, indicating strategic importance of the region to India's interests. Outreach to Egypt is a part of this approach.

Body

India-Egypt Strategic partnership pact

- The two nations are strategic partners with broadly four elements: **political, defence, and security; economic engagement; scientific and academic collaboration; cultural and people-to-people contacts.**
- India and Egypt on Sunday signed an agreement on a strategic partnership as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held bilateral talks with President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in Cairo.
 - In total four agreements were signed between 24th June to 25th June 2023.
- **Green and renewable collaboration** will be an important part of future partnership with Egypt because of the importance that the two sides attach to clean energy.
- Three Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) in the fields of **agriculture, archaeology and antiquities, and competition law** were also signed

Key areas of cooperation

- **The India-Egypt Bilateral Trade Agreement** has been in operation since March 1978 and is based on the Most Favoured Nation clause. Bilateral trade has expanded rapidly in FY2021-22, amounting to **US\$ 7.26 billion registering a 75% increase compared to FY 2020-21**. India's exports to Egypt during this period amounted to **US\$ 3.74 billion**. Egypt's exports to India have touched **US\$ 3.52 billion**.
- Egypt has faced economic challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of the **Russia-Ukraine war on its food supply and foreign exchange reserves.**
 - In April 2022, Egypt announced inclusion of India in the **list of accredited wheat suppliers to Egypt and ended a long Non-Tariff Barrier.**
 - However, a ban on wheat exports from India limited the trade, **an initial shipment of 61,500 metric tons of wheat was cleared by India for Egypt in May 2022.**
 - **India has provided assistance by allowing wheat shipments to Egypt.**



- Egypt's foreign debt is over **\$163 billion (43% of the GDP)** and its net foreign assets are minus **\$24 billion**.
- They have collaborated on **fighter aircraft development and training**. Both countries operate **French Rafale fighter jets**. **Exercise Cyclone-I – first ever exercise between Indian Army and Egyptian Army was held in Jaisalmer recently**.
- **Space cooperation** is an emerging vertical of cooperation in India-Egypt Relationship. Joint Working Group meetings and discussions between **ISRO and NARSS (National Authority for Remote Sensing and Space Sciences)** have been held, since **2008**.

Challenges

- Egypt is being seen as getting close to China. The Egyptian President has visited China **seven times in the past eight years**, including for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics.
- **China-Egypt trade is more than double of India-Egypt bilateral trade**. Chinese investments outnumber India's investments.
- Chinese influence over Egypt is not a good development from Indian perspective.
- Egypt is facing domestic economic instability. The Government is **battling high inflation of 21%**, which has resulted in historically high prices of commodities and daily-use items.
- **Forex reserves are also in bad shape**. Prolonged economic instability may lead to mass discontent and movement similar to 2011 revolution.
- A new regime (like that came to power in 2013) may not be in India's strategic interests.

Future prospects

- India and Egypt had lead the way in establishing NAM in the 1950s. Amidst geopolitical **uncertainties of present times, India and Egypt should collaborate** to strengthen the South-South Cooperation and call for a **rules-based global order**.
- India's invitation to Egypt is a welcome step in this regard. Both countries can act as voice of Global South. India PM had remarked in 2015 that India and Egypt should work together to **reform the UN Security Council**.
- India should **scale-up its investments in Egypt**. Egypt is a gateway to both Arab World and Africa. Closer economic ties with Egypt can pave way for greater investments and cooperation with African nations.
- India should look to expand the **scope of defense relationship from bilateral exercises to joint development/manufacturing projects**. Egypt can be a potential destination for India's defense exports.
- India and Egypt should enhance cooperation to counter terrorism and radicalism.

Conclusion



Egypt holds strategic importance for India. Both nations have shared a strong relationship since ancient times. India and Egypt were the leading countries for the NAM. However, the India-Egypt relationship had witnessed a phase of inactivity and passiveness after the 1990s. There is need to renew the relationship with a new vigour. India and Egypt should collaborate to strengthen the voice of Global South at the global level and push for a rules-based global order in a multipolar world.

NATOs (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) expansion into the Asia-Pacific could lead to a power struggle between NATO and China, further exacerbating existing tensions in the region. What should be India's response to the above development? (250 words)

Difficulty level: Tough

Reference: [Indian Express](#)

Why the question:

The article discusses the increasing influence of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) in the Asia-Pacific region.

Demand of the question:

To write about potential implications of NATO's involvement in Asia and Pacific and suggest India's response to it.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Start with brief background of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Body:

First, briefly discuss the origins of NATO during the cold war.

Next, write about the role of NATO and its present-day situation – in the ongoing Ukraine crisis and with respect to China. Write about the growing influence of NATO in the Asia Pacific region. Mention the potential implications of the above.

Next, write about India's approach to this to ensure balanced and inclusive approach to security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific, rather than the dominance of any one military alliance.

Conclusion:

Conclude by writing a way forward.

Introduction

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a military alliance established by the **North Atlantic Treaty (also called the Washington Treaty) of April, 1949, by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations** to provide collective security against the **Soviet Union**.

There are 30 member countries of NATO

Body

Origins of NATO during cold war

- After World War II in 1945, western Europe was **economically exhausted and militarily weak** (the western Allies had rapidly and drastically reduced their armies at the end of the war).
- In 1948 the United States launched the **Marshall Plan**, which infused massive amounts of economic aid to the countries of western and southern Europe on the condition that they cooperate with each other and **engage in joint planning to hasten their mutual recovery**.



- As for military recovery, **under the Brussels Treaty of 1948, the United Kingdom, France, and the Low Countries—Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg—concluded a collective–defense agreement called the Western European Union.**
 - It was soon recognized, however, that a more formidable alliance would be required to provide an adequate military counterweight to the Soviets.
 - In March 1948, following a virtual communist coup d'état in Czechoslovakia in February, the three governments began discussions on a multilateral collective-defense scheme that would enhance Western security and promote democratic values.
 - These discussions were eventually joined by France, the Low Countries, and Norway and in April 1949 resulted in the North Atlantic Treaty.
- **In 1955, when the Cold War was gaining momentum,** the Soviet Union signed up socialist republics of **Central and Eastern Europe to the Warsaw Pact (1955).** The Pact, essentially a political-military alliance, was viewed as a direct strategic counterweight to NATO.

Growing influence of NATO in Asia Pacific

- In what is going to be the first of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region (“Indo-Pacific” in American lingo), a **NATO liaison office will open in Tokyo next year.**
- Last month, Britain and Japan signed a **new strategic partnership and agreed to “deepen” collaboration between NATO and Tokyo.**
- During the Shangri-La summit, British Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said having such an office in Japan is “in the interests of NATO”.
- In addition, NATO plans to further strengthen collaboration with its four major partners in the Asia-Pacific region—**Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea,** a recent report in Nikkei Asia said.
- The alliance will **formulate an Individually Tailored Partnership Program with all four countries**—an upgrade to a higher form of partnership.
- Its details will be thrashed out during the forthcoming NATO summit in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, on July 11 and 12, which all four leaders are expected to attend.

Implications on India

- A NATO overreach to the Asia-Pacific will pose a major challenge to New Delhi’s much-touted **“strategic autonomy”.**
- The push to transform Quad into a security alliance focusing on China will also have the same effect.
- India has resisted being drawn into rival blocs over Ukraine until now.
- Its refusal to take sides has brought the country under intense questioning in the West.
- Having moved on from its traditional non-alignment, **New Delhi now boasts of “multi-alignment” as its new foreign policy mantra.**



- A prolonged invasion could lead India to tussle more with Washington as the United States pushes harder for neutral states to come off the sidelines
- Although an Asian NATO remains a pie in the sky for now, an extended war over Ukraine will force India and the Asia-Pacific nations to bear the brunt of increasing big-power rivalry in the region.

Conclusion

Beijing has been condemning such efforts, warning against the establishment of an “Asia-Pacific version of NATO” and making clear its opposition to any foreign military involvement in the region. With tensions simmering and power dynamics in flux, the establishment of a NATO liaison office in Japan will prove to be a major flashpoint in the ongoing geopolitical struggle for influence in the Indo-Pacific.

[By actively engaging in SAARC, India can promote economic opportunities, stability, connectivity, and regional cooperation, ultimately benefiting not only India but the entire South Asian region. Critically Analyse. \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [Insights on India](#)

Why the question:

The question is part of the static syllabus of General studies paper – 1.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the future of SAARC amidst current uncertainties and to argue for its revival.

Directive word:

Critically analyse – When asked to analyse, you must examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them in a summary. When ‘critically’ is suffixed or prefixed to a directive, one needs to look at the good and bad of the topic and give a balanced judgment on the topic.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by giving context of SAARC and its present-day scenario.

Body:

In the first part, bring out the current uncertainties which forebode a bleak future for SAARC – Crisis in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Indo-Pak equation, Covid crisis etc.

Next, mention as to why India should take the lead in reviving SAARC. It will ensure integrated, connected, secure and prosperous South Asia, and lead economic, technological, cultural, and social development’ of the region.

Conclusion:

Conclude with a way forward and diplomatic steps needed to re-engage and revive SAARC.

Introduction

SAARC was mooted in 1985, which created the hope that trade, cultural activity and intellectual exchange would gradually diminish the political legacies of Partition by nourishing a regional fraternity. The dream is still relevant, but [SAARC](#) has remained incapable of responding to the



unabated rise of identity-based aggression and violence. Along with this, a remarkable degree of indifference to others' woes has grown.

Body

The Future of SAARC remains bleak:

- The region is beset with **unsettled territorial disputes, as well as trans-border criminal and subversive activities.**
- It remains a **theatre for ethnic, cultural, and religious tensions and rivalries.**
- A current rise in **ultra-nationalism** is taking place against the backdrop of a bloody history of repeated inter-state wars and myriad intra-state conflicts.
- **Nuclear-armed neighbours India and Pakistan are at loggerheads.**
- **Cross-border terrorism** has again made the region, as former US President Bill Clinton once deemed it, "the world's most dangerous place."
- Allowing SAARC to become dysfunctional and irrelevant greatly distorts our ability to address the realities and mounting challenges facing SAARC nations.
- The failure of South Asian nations to act in accord will plunge South Asia into a perilous theatre of discord and escalating tensions with jihadi militias at the forefront, placing the entire region in turmoil.

SAARC is imperative for South Asian countries:

- SAARC is needed as **institutional scaffolding to allow for the diplomacy and coordination** that is needed between member-states in order to adequately address the numerous threats and challenges the region faces.
- Though SAARC's charter prohibits bilateral issues at formal forums, **SAARC summits provide a unique, informal window** — the retreat — for leaders to meet without aides and chart future courses of action.
- The coming together of leaders, even at the height of tensions, in a region laden with congenial suspicions, misunderstandings, and hostility is a significant strength of SAARC that cannot be overlooked.
- SAARC members are among the top troop-contributing countries to UN peacekeeping missions. With the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, a [joint peacekeeping force from the SAARC region](#) under the UN aegis could be explored to fill the power vacuum that would otherwise be filled by terrorist and extremist forces.

Reviving SAARC is in India's interests:

- **India** should take the **lead and work with its neighbors to slash the tariff and non-tariff barriers.**
- SAARC should also seek **free and preferential trading arrangements** with other regional bodies, notably the EU and the ASEAN. It should also remain fully focused on the **SAARC social charter to spread out its reach to the common man.**



- There is a need to focus on small politics instead of big politics to resolve conflict in conflicting regions. This would mean that they focus on **economic cooperation and other small ways that can create cooperation and more peace**
- SAARC cannot be effective unless it places itself on a managerial position to achieve regional order, forcing all the members to act mutually in making the region a '**zone of peace**' and the center for world business.
- All countries should come together to sort out their differences, either multilaterally or bilaterally. It's not necessary to sort out the differences but despite that, it is necessary to work with the differences like that of India-China, Japan and China, Russia and Japan.
- The **bilateral issues** between member nations should be resolved. Bilateral Issues between India- Pakistan, India- Sri Lanka, Pakistan- Afghanistan etc. must be improved with serious engagement and collaboration – working together to bring peace and stability as a common good in the region.
- Information on terrorism, trafficking, smuggling etc. must be shared and joint exercises must be conducted to build mutual trust and capability.
- SAARC needs to work on **Improving infrastructure and regional connectivity** – Collaboration in scientific research, universities exchange programs, tourism etc. will have a positive effect on relations among countries.

Conclusion:

SAARC has the potential to transform the South Asian Region. Mutual mistrust and non-cooperation should not be allowed to undermine this potential. Deeper regional economic integration will create greater interdependence with India acquiring the central role, which, in turn, would serve India's strategic interests too. SAARC should function as an autonomous institution by which driving principles, strategic actions, and rules of law can be implemented in a way that is relevant to both, its own members and other rising powers.

Value addition:

Background of SAARC:

- SAARC was set up in **1985** and today it has **8 members**: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Srilanka. Afghanistan joined SAARC only in 2007.
- SAARC member nations cooperate on a range of issues from **agriculture, economy, poverty alleviation, S&T and culture to encourage people to people contact.**
- SAARC aims at integration of south Asian nations for undertaking **collective efforts to achieve common objective of regional stability and prosperity.**
- **Despite geographical contiguity and historical and cultural links, the SAARC region remains the most disconnected regions in the world.**



[India's position as a major emerging economy and a regional power in Asia, combined with Africa's increasing economic potential, creates a mutually beneficial opportunity for collaboration. Analyse. \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [Indian Express](#), [Insights on India](#)

Why the question:

The article discusses the importance of holding the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit during Delhi's presidency of the G20.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the cooperation needed between India and Africa for mutual benefits in the current times.

Directive word:

Analyse – When asked to analyse, you must examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them in a summary.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by giving context.

Body:

First, briefly discuss the ties between India-Africa from the past to the present.

Next, In the 21st century, Africa has transformed from a lost continent to a continent of hope.

Subsequently, in recent years, Africa occupies a central place in the Indian government's foreign and economic policy.

Next, write about how in the current world of rising challenges, India and Africa can work towards addressing them.

Conclusion:

Conclude by writing a way forward.

Introduction

Africa is considered a foreign policy priority by India. The Indian government has designed a forward-looking strategy to deepen India-Africa relations further. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has revived consultations with the 15-member Caribbean community and the eight-member SICA of Central America. He has recently been to South Africa and Namibia and last month to Uganda, Ethiopia and Mozambique. This shows the strategic importance of Africa for India in the current geopolitical situation.

After three India Africa Forum Summits in 2008, 2011 and 2015, the fourth has been considerably delayed due to the pandemic. This upset the scheduling of summits that the African Union had envisaged. Now that the AU is holding summits with its partners, it is time for India to hold IAFS IV during its G20 presidency in 2023.

Body

Importance of India-Africa relations

- **Resource rich region:** Africa is very resource-rich and has moved from being an underdeveloped continent to having several fast-growing economies, and new democracies.
- **Economic Growth:** The economic growth of the continent that is estimated to be 3.2 per cent in 2018. It also houses six of the world's fastest growing economies as per world bank estimates. Additionally, several African countries have been providing incentives to attract foreign investors and partners in growth thus providing an opportunity for India.



- **Reform in global institutions:** India's ambition to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council makes it imperative that it engages with all 54 countries of the continent.
- **Investment opportunities for private sector:** A number of Indian multinationals already have significant interests and investments in the region, with strategic sectors including agribusiness, pharmaceuticals, information and communications technology (ICT), and energy.
 - Africa has emerged as an important market for Indian goods and services, as well as a vital element in India's quest for strategic minerals and other natural resources needed to feed its burgeoning economy.
 - India can also unleash massive possibilities in digital penetration in the continent.
- **Convergence of interest:** Two partners are aligned on the outstanding issues at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and are in favor of multilateral trading systems.
 - At the **Bali Ministerial in 2013 too, Africa and India had united in seeking an interim mechanism for safeguarding minimum support prices** to farmers against WTO caps till a permanent solution is found and adopted.
- **Cooperation to tackle terrorism:** India strongly advocated stepped-up cooperation through intelligence exchange and training with 54 African countries.
 - There's a **convergence of interest for reforming the Security Council**. It is imperative for both sides to speak in "one voice" for Security Council reforms.
- **Peace keeping operation:** India is the largest contributor to UN-mandated peacekeeping and other operations in Africa, with more than 30,000 personnel involved in 17 of 22 total missions in the region since 1960.
- India provides a useful model for African nations of democratic development. India is increasingly responding to **requests from African governments to share its democratic experience, offering training on electronic voting systems**, parliamentary procedures, federal governance, and an independent judicial system to strengthen the rule of law.

India-Africa relations so far

- **Economic:** Trade between India and Africa has increased more than eight-fold from US\$7.2 billion in 2001 to **US\$63 billion in 2017-18**. It further has the potential to grow threefold to \$150 billion in next five years.
 - India is the fifth largest country investing in the continent, with investments over the past 26 years amounting to \$54 billion.
- **People to people contact:** There has been a welcome surge in people-to-people contacts as large numbers of African entrepreneurs, medical tourists, trainees and students have started coming to India and Indian experts and entrepreneurs have headed there.
- **Business-to-business:** Indian businesses are active across geographic spaces and sectors in Africa like agri-business, engineering, construction, film distribution, cement, plastics, and ceramics manufacturing, etc.



- **Asia-Africa Growth Corridor:** It is an economic cooperation agreement **between India and Japan** that envisages closer engagement between Asia and Africa for “**sustainable and innovative development**” and will be anchored to four pillars.

Conclusion and way forward

- Development partnership guided by Africa’s priorities with focus on building local capacity and create local opportunities.
- Harnessing India’s experience with the digital revolution to support Africa’s development; improve delivery of public services; extend education and health etc.
- Partnership on improving agriculture, addressing climate change, strengthening cooperation and mutual capabilities in combating terrorism and extremism; keeping cyberspace safe and secure etc.
- Work together to ensure that Africa does not once again turn into a theatre of rival ambitions, but becomes a nursery for the aspirations of Africa’s youth.

[To ensure deeper collaboration among the BRICS nations, they need to navigate the challenges posed by great power competition and diverging interests. Analyse. \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [Indian Express](#), [Insights on India](#)

Why the question:

The article discusses the potential for the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) to expand their collaboration and influence on the global stage.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the issues among the BRICS countries in the present day and measures needed to overcome them.

Directive word:

Analyse – When asked to analyse, you must examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them in a summary.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by giving aims and objectives of BRICS.

Body:

In the first part, write about the various issues among the BRICS member countries which has brought them at a crossroad. Mention the current limitations of the BRICS bloc and hindrances to achieve its potential.

Next, mention the course corrections that are required – the role of trade and connectivity that can lead to collective economic benefits to the BRICS countries especially in the face of global economic turmoil, political consultation, deeper engagement over key areas etc.

Conclusion:

Conclude with a way forward and diplomatic steps needed to be taken in this regard.

Introduction



BRICS is the acronym coined for an association of five major emerging national economies that have similar economic development. The five countries are Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Together, BRICS accounts for about 40% of the world's population and about 30% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product), making it a critical economic engine.

It's an emerging investment market and global power bloc. For India, BRICS is strategic especially in times where there is lot of geopolitical flux.

Body

Challenges within BRICS

- **Varied Political Structures and values:** While Brazil, India and South Africa are democratic, China and Russia are not.
 - Structure of financial systems, levels of income, education, inequality, health challenges also differ substantially within BRICS which makes it hard for them to speak with a unified voice and to co- ordinate action.
- **Different geopolitical agenda:** The Brasilia declaration notes shared perceptions on global economic and financial governance. However, their interpretation by each country depends on its national interest in specific circumstances.
 - on expansion of the UN Security Council, BRICS exposed its disunity yet again by sticking to the formulation that refuses to go beyond China and Russia supporting the “aspiration” of Brazil, India and South Africa “to play a greater role in the UN”.
 - Also the China-Pak axis will always be a hindrance for India to fully cooperate with China. China's rejection of NSG membership to India is an example.
- **Diverging long-term economic goals of member countries:** Though the five nations have greatly increased their combined economic heft since the turn of the century, the share is imbalanced.g. Brazil, Russia and South Africa's shares of global output have actually shrunk since 2000.
 - Despite their combined population accounting for 40% of humanity, intra-BRICS trade still makes up just 15% of world trade.
 - Brazil also took India to WTO dispute resolution wrt sugar production.
- **Ukraine crisis with Russia:** The primary agenda of BRICS was rebalancing an international system dominated by the West.
 - However, the Ukraine crisis could act as a distraction from that primary agenda.
 - The geopolitical considerations of its members can come in the way of attaining the grouping's original goal.

Overcoming the problems

- **Create institutional arrangement:** Challenging the economic might of the West in the near future might be close to impossible. Despite the group comprising China, India and Russia, intra-BRICS trade accounts for less than 20 per cent of global trade.



- BRICS is far from having its own payment mechanisms, international messaging systems or cards.
- The Ukraine crisis should drive home the need to create institutional arrangements that can cushion against similar financial turbulence in the future.
- Recalibrate structure and expand: BRICS requires a recalibration of its structure and agenda. Creating financial mechanisms and technological institutions could turn BRICS into a G20 for developing nations.
- - It's time to revisit the idea of expanding the grouping by inviting new members.
 - This could also impart new vigour to the BRICS's developmental goals.
- Economic cooperation between India and China: Economic cooperation between India and China is vital for the success of any future BRICS endeavour. The border conflict has created a mistrust of China in India.
- **South-south cooperation:** We need to expand south-south cooperation to share experiences on food and agriculture production and make expanded efforts to share India's experiences for countries in Africa and Asia.
- In the current situation, New Delhi is unlikely to take an anti-West stance.
- India, unlike China, is neither a UN Security Council member nor does it have major sticking points with the West. At the same time, India is not a part of the Western camp.
- That does open up the possibility of New Delhi taking a more proactive position in BRICS. The two powers need to come together for the sake of global governance reform.

Conclusion

The Ukraine crisis could be an occasion for the leaders of BRICS nations to commit themselves to the original goal of the bloc. It's an opportunity they shouldn't let go of. A significant amount of convergence on economic issues is required for BRICS to work as a strong multilateral body that will have a significant effect on global governance.

Value Addition

About BRICS and areas of cooperation

- **Economic Cooperation:** *There are rapidly growing trade and investment flows between BRICS countries as well as economic cooperation activities across a range of sectors.*
 - *Agreements have been concluded in the areas of **Economic and Trade Cooperation; Innovation Cooperation, Customs Cooperation; strategic cooperation between the BRICS Business Council, Contingent Reserve Agreement and the New Development Bank.***
- **Reform of multilateral institutions:** *BRICS was founded on the desire to **end the domination** of the western world over institutions of global governance (**IMF, World Bank, UN**) and **strengthen multilateralism.***



- **Combat Terrorism:** Terrorism is an international phenomenon impacting all parts of the world. Recent developments in Afghanistan stress the need to bridge the gap between rhetoric and action.
 - In this context, BRICS is attempting to shape its counter-terrorism strategy by crafting the **BRICS Counter-Terrorism Action Plan**.
 - It contains specific measures to fight radicalisation, terrorist financing and misuse of the Internet by terrorist groups.
- **Promoting technological and digital solutions for the Sustainable Development Goals:** This will help to improve governance and will also prove beneficial in the current situations e.g. **Global pandemic response**.
- **Expanding people-to-people cooperation:** This will improve gradually once all the travel restrictions are eased.

Significance of BRICS

- Economically, militarily, technologically, socially and culturally, BRICS nations represent a powerful bloc.
- 40 per cent of the world's population: They have an estimated combined population of 3.23 billion people, which is over 40 per cent of the world's population.
- 25 per cent of global GDP: They account for over more than a quarter of the world's land area over three continents, and for more than 25 per cent of the global GDP.
- Two fastest growing large economies: The grouping comprises two of the fastest-growing nations, India and China.
- It has proved its mettle to an extent by establishing the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingency Reserve Arrangement (CRA).

Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

[A wider connection with the Indian diaspora would be a major benefit for India. It would boost the economy, attract foreign investment, and promote soft power.](#)

[Analyse. \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Tough

Reference: [Indian Express](#), [Insights on India](#)

Why the question:

The article discusses Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the United States and highlights the significance of the Indian-American diaspora in strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the significance of Indian diaspora.

Directive:

Analyse – When asked to analyse, you must examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them in a summary.

**Structure of the answer:****Introduction:**

Start by giving a statistic related to Indian diaspora abroad.

Body:

First, write in detail about the importance of diaspora- boost the economy by attracting foreign investment and facilitating knowledge transfer. Additionally, it highlights that engaging with the diaspora would enhance India's soft power by promoting its cultural and intellectual contributions abroad. Cite examples and statistics to substantiate.

Next, in detail, write about the issues faced by the Indian diaspora and cite examples of statistic to substantiate.

Next, write the need to have a coherent policy towards Indian diaspora and its components.

Conclusion:

Conclude by writing a way forward.

Introduction

The Indian diaspora has grown and become more influential in the past 2 decades. India now has the world's largest diaspora, a new study on **international migration by the United Nations** has reported. More than **30 million persons of Indian origin** live abroad, a number greater than the combined populations of Zimbabwe and Kuwait. 285 people of Indian origin in various positions of leadership such as Heads of state and governments, senators, state leaders and members of parliaments.

Body

The swiftly growing diaspora is an asset to India. The common perception of NRIs and Diaspora is that they are a product of brain-drain, migrants due to better life conditions in developed countries etc. However, in reality they are a boon to India. Their presence length and breadth varies across the countries of the world.

- **High Achievers:**
 - From Google CEO Sundar Pichai to Nobel laureate scientist Har Gobind Khorana and Microsoft CEO Sathya Nadella to world's one among the leading music conductors Zubin Mehta, the list of NRIs and their contribution to the world goes endlessly.
- **Influential Positions:**
 - A diaspora estimated at **over 30 million people** fills **mainstream roles and responsibilities** in their adopted countries, helping shape the destiny of these countries.
 - The President of Singapore, Governor-General of New Zealand and prime ministers of Mauritius and Trinidad and Tobago were all of Indian descent.
- **Pressure groups:**
 - When people of Indian origin are held in **high esteem, respect for and understanding of the country go up.**
 - The **influential Indian diaspora** affects not just the popular attitude, but also government policies in countries where they live, to the benefit of India.



- India benefits tremendously through these people in luring large multinational companies as well as entrepreneurial ventures.
- **Example:** lobbying for the **US-India Civilian Nuclear Agreement Bill** in 2008
- **Entrepreneurs across globe:**
 - Between 1995 and 2005, **over a quarter of immigrant-founded engineering and IT companies in the United States** were started by Indians, according to a study by Duke University and the University of California.
 - And Indian expats owned an **estimated 35 per cent of the country's hotels**. About **800 companies** are owned by Indians in the **UK**.
 - These help in providing jobs and livelihoods to many people across world.
- **Remittances:**
 - A **World Bank report** released last year said, India was the largest remittance-receiving country in the world, with an estimated \$69 billion in 2015.
- **Soft Power:**
 - The spread of Yoga, Ayurveda, Indian spiritualism, Bollywood, Indian cuisine across the world has made India famous.
 - It has even led to **revival of many lost relationships** with many countries.
 - **Example:** Central Asian countries like Kazakhstan and Middle Eastern countries.
- **Humanitarian Assistance:**
 - There are many instances where diaspora has stood up for their Indian kins in times of disaster.
 - **Example:** during the recent Kerala floods, immense help in the form of men, material and money from diaspora was given. *Indian diaspora residing in China's Shanghai has contributed Rs. 32.13 lakh to the Chief Minister's distress relief fund for Kerala floods.*

Asset in Disguise

- The Diaspora population bring technical and domain expertise to domestic start-ups and often **act as angel investors**.
- Diaspora Indian faculty abroad **volunteer time and resources** to help faculty on Indian campuses improve the quality of education — as in the case of member institutions of the Indo Universal Collaboration of Engineering Education.
- This was reflected in advancing projects whether through government arrangements or private commercial deals related to Make in India, Skill India, Digital India, Start Up India as well as those aimed at improving our infrastructure and transportation links and fostering all round sustainable development in urban or energy sectors.
- The diaspora can step up and act as Indian '**ambassadors**', as it is insufficient and ineffective for a country or its missions abroad to rely only on press releases to change public opinion.



- The diaspora can provide the **requisite strategic impulse**, which makes it all the more important to unlock their potential.

Conclusion

In recent times, the government has laid a strong foundation by making diplomacy people-centric with government's constant interaction with the Indian diaspora. The Indian diaspora is the bridge between their nation and India where they can grow simultaneously for betterment of their citizens. The diaspora can provide the **requisite strategic impulse**, which makes it all the more important to **unlock their potential**.

[Continuation and adherence to the Black Sea Grain Initiative are crucial to sustain its positive effects on food security and stability in the agricultural market across the world. Discuss. \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com)

Why the question:

UN Secretary-General expresses concerns over Russia potentially withdrawing from the Black Sea grain deal by July.

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the Black Sea Grain Initiative and its efficacy in preventing escalating food prices.

Directive word:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you must debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You must give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by giving context about the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

Body:

First, write about the major features of the Black Sea Grain Initiative – to provide for a safe maritime humanitarian corridor for Ukrainian exports, commercial ships are required to register directly with the JCC and its importance.

Next, write about the potential and the shortcomings of the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

Conclusion:

Conclude by writing a way forward.

Introduction

In a move that allayed concerns about yet another disruption to global food supply chains, **Russia re-joined the Black Sea Grain deal**. The reversal came a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that Moscow would suspend, but not end, its involvement in the deal. The Black Sea Grain deal **endeavours to tackle escalating food prices emanating from supply chain disruptions because of Russian actions** in the world's 'breadbasket'.

UN Secretary-General expresses concerns over Russia potentially withdrawing from the Black Sea grain deal by July 2023.

Body

About the Black Sea Grain Initiative and its importance



- **The deal, brokered by the United Nations (UN) and Turkey, was signed in Istanbul on July 27 this year.**
- Initially stipulated for a period of 120 days, with an option to extend or terminate thereafter in November, the deal was to provide for **a safe maritime humanitarian corridor for Ukrainian exports (particularly for food grains) from three of its key ports, namely, Chornomorsk, Odesa and Yuzhny/Pivdennyi.**
- The central idea was to **calm markets by ensuring an adequate supply of grains**, thereby limiting food price inflation.
- **Ukraine is among the largest exporters of wheat, maize, rapeseed, sunflower seeds and sunflower oil, globally.**
 - Its access to the deep-sea ports in the Black Sea enables it to **directly approach Russia and Europe along with grain importers from the Middle East and North Africa.**
 - Russia's action in the East European country has now disturbed this route, earlier used to ship 75% of its agricultural exports – precisely what the initiative sought to address.
- The deal put in place a Joint Coordination Centre (JCC), comprising senior representatives from Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and the UN for oversight and coordination.
- **All commercial ships are required to register directly with the JCC to ensure appropriate monitoring, inspection and safe passage.**
- Inbound and outbound ships (to the designated corridor) transit as per a schedule accorded by the JCC post-inspection. This is done **so as to ensure there is no unauthorised cargo or personnel onboard.** Following this, they are allowed to sail onwards to Ukrainian ports for loading through the designated corridor.
- All ships, once inside the Ukrainian territorial waters, are subject to the nation's authority and responsibility.
- Moreover, in order to avoid provocations and untoward incidents, it is mandated that monitoring be done remotely.
- No military ships or unmanned aerial vehicles can approach the corridor closer than a pre-decided distance agreed upon by the JCC. This too would require consultation with the parties and authorisation of the JCC.

Role in preventing escalation of prices

- As per the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, **approximately 9.8 million tonnes of grains have been shipped since the initiative was commenced.**
- The UN Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) Food Price Index, which assesses the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities, **fell for the sixth consecutive month in a row this October.**
- Following the **fifth consecutive month of decline, the supply situation in markets was seen to be easing, with the potential for further price drop**



- People hoarding the grain in the hope of selling it for a sizeable profit owing to the supply crunch were now obligated to sell.
- The initiative has also been credited for **having made a “huge difference” to the global cost of living crisis.**
- About 44% of the shipments, which include corn, wheat, rapeseed, and sunflower oil among others, reached high-income countries (including Spain, Netherlands and Italy among others), 28% reached low and middle-income countries (Egypt, Iran, Sudan and Kenya among others) and 27% reached upper-middle income countries (Turkey, China and Bulgaria among others).
- It is important to note here that certain countries here may be re-exporters of a certain grain— thus, the indicator might only reflect the first point of export.

Conclusion

As Ukraine typically accounted for about 10% of global wheat exports before the war, the effect on global markets is akin to back-to-back droughts over three years in a major wheat-producing region, and it likely means that global stocks will not recover for at least another year. This initiative can be the solution to the current price volatility but then again, it alone cannot solve the escalating prices.

Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.
[What are Multilateral Development Banks \(MDBs\)? India needs to actively engage with MDBs to address key development challenges, promote sustainable development, and harness the resources and expertise of these institutions for India’s benefit. Analyse. \(250 words\)](#)

Difficulty level: Moderate

Reference: [Indian Express](#)

Why the question:

The article discusses India’s upcoming presidency of the G20 and the opportunities it presents for strengthening multilateral development banks (MDBs).

Key Demand of the question:

To write about the need for reforms in various MDBs.

Directive word:

Analyse – *When asked to analyse, you must examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them in a summary.*

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by defining MDBs with examples.

Body:

First, in brief, write about the major aspects of global economy that these MDBs deal with.

Next, using facts and figures to substantiate, give the successes and limitations of MDBs— voting rights, dominance by global north, foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world etc.

Next, suggest possible reforms that are needed in the MBDs.

Conclusion:

Conclude with a way forward.



Introduction

Multilateral development banks (MDBs) are financial institutions that provide loans, grants and technical assistance to developing countries for their economic and social development. MDBs include the **World Bank Group**, the **Asian Development Bank**, the African Development Bank the **Inter-American Development Bank**, etc. MDBs have been instrumental in supporting the **development of both low-income and middle-income countries** (LICs and MICs) by addressing issues such as **poverty reduction, infrastructure development, human capital formation, etc.**

Body

Role of Multilateral Development Banks

- **Supporting the Implementation of the SDGs:**
 - The **SDGs(sustainable development goals)** are a set of 17 global goals that aim to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure peace and prosperity for all.
 - MDBs can **help developing countries align their national policies and strategies with the SDGs**, mobilize resources and partnerships, monitor and evaluate progress, and address gaps and challenges.
 - MDBs can also **support cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, human rights, governance, etc.**, that are essential for achieving the SDGs.
- **Provide Concessional Finance and Grants:**
 - Providing concessional finance and grants to
 - Low-income countries (LICs) and fragile and conflict-affected states (FCS) face multiple challenges such as **low growth, high debt, weak institutions, social unrest, violence, etc.**, that **hinder their development** prospects and increase their vulnerability to shocks.
 - MDBs can **provide concessional loans and grants** to these countries to help them meet their basic needs, build resilience, promote stability, and foster economic transformation.
 - MDBs **can also leverage their convening power and influence** to mobilize additional support from other donors and partners for LICs and FCS.
- **Promoting Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity:**
 - Middle-income countries (MICs) are a diverse group of countries that have **achieved significant progress in reducing poverty** but still **face persistent inequalities** and social exclusion.
 - MDBs can help MICs address these **challenges by supporting policies and programs that enhance productivity**, competitiveness, **innovation, diversification**, etc., as well as those that improve access to quality education, health, social protection, infrastructure, etc., for all segments of society.
 - **MDBs can also help MICs tackle emerging issues such as climate change, urbanization, digitalization**, etc., that have implications for their development trajectories

India and its engagement with MDB's

- India, as a leader and partner of the Global South, has a stake and a **role in shaping the reforms of MDBs** to make them more responsive and effective in addressing these issues and opportunities.
- India is also a **major borrower and beneficiary of MDBs**, especially the World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank.



- India has received loans and grants from these institutions for various sectors such as infrastructure, health, education, agriculture, etc.
- India is also a contributor and shareholder of MDBs.
- India has **provided capital and resources to these institutions** to support their operations and lending capacity.
- India has also **participated in their governance and decision-making** processes.

Reforms needed

- The current legal and institutional framework of MDBs is **outdated and inadequate** to deal with the rapid changes and complexities of the digital ecosystem.
 - The current framework was established after World War II to address the post-war reconstruction and development needs of the less developed countries.
 - The **current framework** does **not reflect the contemporary realities** and aspirations of the developing countries, especially those of the Global South.
- **To Enhance their Relevance and Performance in Supporting Developing Countries:**
 - The **current operation strategies** and business models of MDBs are **not optimal for meeting the diverse and evolving needs** of developing countries in pursuing inclusive and sustainable development.
 - The current strategies and models **do not leverage the full potential of MDBs to mobilize resources and partnerships**, foster policy dialogue and alignment, monitor and evaluate progress, and address gaps and challenges.
 - The **current strategies and models do not diversify their portfolio of instruments and modalities** to provide tailored and flexible solutions for different contexts and sectors.
 - The current strategies and models do not support innovation and technology transfer for development solutions, especially for adaptation and resilience.
- **To Improve their Governance and Accountability:**
 - The current governance structure of MDBs is **not representative and responsive to the needs and interests of their shareholders** and stakeholders.
 - The current structure **does not reflect the changing balance of power** and influence among developed and developing countries in the global economic order.
 - The current structure **does not ensure effective participation and voice** of developing countries in decision-making processes.
 - The current structure **does not ensure transparency and disclosure of MDBs' operations** and impacts.

Conclusion and wayforward

- Reforming MDBs is a crucial and timely initiative that holds out the promise of not only upgrading the current legal regime but also redefining the contours of how technology is regulated in India.
- Reforming MDBs is likely to have far-reaching implications for the digital ecosystem and its stakeholders in terms of opportunities and challenges.
- Reforming MDBs requires extensive consultations and deliberations among various stakeholders to ensure that it is inclusive, participatory and future proof.
- India has a key role and responsibility in reforming MDBs to make them more relevant and effective for the development of the Global South.



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