Secure Synopsis compilation for November 2024

General Studies-2

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

Q. Discuss the significance of the basic structure doctrine in preserving the essence of the Indian Constitution. Provide judicial pronouncements to illustrate its application. (10 M)

Introduction

The **basic structure doctrine** acts as the constitutional safeguard, ensuring that while the Indian Constitution evolves, its fundamental essence remains inviolable.

Body

Significance of the basic structure doctrine in preserving the constitution's essence

1. **Limitation on amending power**: Prevents Parliament from altering core principles under Article 368, maintaining constitutional integrity.

    - E.g.: **Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973)** established the doctrine to protect the Constitution's basic framework.
2. **Protection of fundamental rights**: Ensures rights like **equality (Article 14)** and **freedom of speech (Article 19)** remain protected against arbitrary amendments.
    - E.g.: **IC Golaknath v. State of Punjab (1967)** emphasized that fundamental rights cannot be amended by Parliament.
3. **Balance of powers**: Maintains equilibrium between Parliament, Executive, and Judiciary, ensuring democratic checks and balances.
    - E.g.: **Minerva Mills v. Union of India (1980)** ruled that limiting judicial review violates the basic structure.
4. **Safeguarding democratic principles**: Prevents changes to key democratic tenets like **secularism and federalism**, preserving the Constitution's secular character.
    - E.g.: **SR Bommai v. Union of India (1994)** highlighted that secularism is part of the Constitution's basic structure.
5. **Ensuring judicial independence**: Protects the judiciary's independence, preventing political influence over judicial appointments.
    - E.g.: **NJAC judgment (2015)** struck down the NJAC Act, emphasizing judicial independence as essential to the basic structure.

Recent Judicial pronouncements illustrating its application

1. **Independence of judiciary**: Recent rulings stress the judiciary's autonomy as integral to the basic structure, ensuring it remains free from executive interference.
    - E.g.: **SC Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India (2016)** reaffirmed judicial independence, especially in appointments.
2. **Federalism and state autonomy**: Reinforced the importance of federal principles by protecting state rights within the Union framework.
    - E.g.: **Government of NCT of Delhi v. Union of India (2018)** upheld Delhi's legislative powers under Article 239AA.
3. **Protection of individual rights**: The basic structure supports individual liberties, even as social frameworks evolve.
    - E.g.: **Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018)** decriminalized Section 377, protecting the right to dignity under the Constitution's core values.
4. **Personal liberty and due process**: Reaffirmed the right to privacy as intrinsic to personal freedom and dignity.
    - E.g.: **K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)** recognized privacy as fundamental, upholding the doctrine's protection of individual rights.
5. **Constitutional morality and equality**: Basic structure doctrine reaffirms principles of equality and inclusion as foundational.
    - E.g.: **Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala (2018)** (Sabarimala case) upheld gender equality, underlining secular and egalitarian principles.

Conclusion

The basic structure doctrine not only preserves India's democratic ethos but also ensures constitutional resilience against potential distortions, reinforcing India's democratic foundation for future generations.

Q. "The Constitution is a living document that adapts to the needs of its time". Discuss the relevance of this judicial philosophy in balancing constitutional continuity and change, with examples. (15 M)

Introduction

The Indian Constitution adapts to the dynamic needs of society, ensuring relevance while maintaining its foundational principles. Judicial pronouncements, such as in the **Kesavananda Bharati (1973)** and **Puttaswamy (2017)** cases, emphasize its evolving nature.

Body

Constitution as a living document

1. **Amendment mechanism for flexibility**: **Article 368** enables timely amendments to meet evolving challenges while preserving constitutional integrity.
    - Eg: The **GST Amendment (2016)** addressed economic unification needs.
2. **Judicial reinterpretation for contextual application**: Courts expand constitutional provisions to address emerging issues without altering core values.
    - Eg: **Right to Privacy (2017)** interpreted Article 21 to include data privacy in a digital age.
3. **Directive Principles as evolving goals**: Non-justiciable Directive Principles provide scope for progressive laws and policies.
    - Eg: **Maternity Benefits Act Amendment (2017)** enhanced women's workplace rights, reflecting Article 42.

Relevance in balancing continuity and change

1. **Preservation of basic structure**: The judiciary ensures that amendments do not erode core principles like federalism, secularism, and democracy.
    - Eg: **Kesavananda Bharati case (1973)** restricted Parliament's powers to alter the Constitution's basic structure.
2. **Inclusion of emerging rights**: Dynamic interpretation of rights ensures inclusivity and relevance.
    - Eg: **Navtej Singh Johar (2018)** decriminalized Section 377, recognizing LGBTQ+ rights under Articles 14 and 21.
3. **Adapting to societal transformation**: The Constitution supports reforms aligning with changing societal norms and values.
    - Eg: **Sabarimala judgment (2018)** upheld women's entry into temples under Article 25.

4. **Economic adaptability**: The Constitution accommodates economic policy shifts while safeguarding public welfare.
    - Eg: **Privatization of PSUs**, upheld by courts, balances Article 39(b) goals with economic liberalization.
5. **Technological advancements**: It accommodates challenges posed by digital governance and privacy concerns.
    - Eg: **Aadhaar judgment (2018)** regulated Aadhaar use, balancing welfare benefits and individual privacy.
6. **Strengthening participatory democracy**: Reforms enhance democratic inclusivity and participation.
    - Eg: **Lowering the voting age (61st Amendment, 1989)** strengthened youth engagement in democracy.
7. **Federal adaptability**: Evolving interpretations of federalism address emerging needs in center-state relations.
    - Eg: **S.R. Bommai (1994)** curtailed misuse of Article 356, reinforcing cooperative federalism.

Challenges in adapting the Constitution

1. **Overuse of amendments**: Frequent amendments risk undermining constitutional sanctity.
    - Eg: Ordinances during **COVID-19** bypassed parliamentary scrutiny, raising concerns over executive overreach.
2. **Judicial overreach**: Activism can blur the separation of powers between the judiciary, executive, and legislature.
    - Eg: Criticism of judiciary-led policymaking in environmental approvals.
3. **Political polarization**: Amendments reflecting political motives may compromise neutrality.
    - Eg: Debate over the **Citizenship Amendment Act (2019)** raised concerns over equality.
4. **Implementation gaps**: Even progressive laws often fail due to weak implementation.
    - Eg: Limited enforcement of **POSH Act, 2013** hampers workplace safety.
5. **Balancing tradition with modernity**: Resistance to judicial decisions challenging deep-seated traditions creates friction.
    - Eg: Backlash against the **Triple Talaq judgment (2017)** among certain sections.

Conclusion

The Constitution's adaptability ensures it remains the cornerstone of India's democracy, capable of addressing emerging challenges while preserving its foundational ethos. By fostering **institutional resilience, judicial prudence, and participatory reforms**, India can ensure that its Constitution evolves in harmony with societal aspirations, safeguarding justice, liberty, and equality for future generations.

Q. "The Preamble serves as a guide to interpret the Constitution and its amendments". Discuss its significance in shaping India's democratic, social, and economic ethos. (15 M)

Introduction

The **Preamble of the Indian Constitution** encapsulates its ideals of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. As a guiding document, it provides clarity in interpreting constitutional provisions and amendments, ensuring that the governance framework aligns with these foundational principles.

Body

The preamble serves as a guide to interpret the constitution and its amendments

1. **Basic structure doctrine**: The Preamble helps ensure that constitutional amendments respect the **basic structure** and uphold constitutional integrity.
    - **Eg**: In **Kesavananda Bharati Case (1973)**, the Court held that amendments must conform to the Preamble's vision of justice, liberty, and equality.
2. **Resolving ambiguities**: It provides **context for judicial interpretations** when provisions are contested or unclear.
    - **Eg**: In **Golak Nath Case (1967)**, the Court referred to the Preamble to affirm the supremacy of fundamental rights over amendments.
3. **Aligning amendments with core values**: Ensures that amendments adhere to secularism, socialism, and other constitutional ideals.
    - **Eg**: In **S.R. Bommai Case (1994)**, the Court struck down state actions violating the secular nature envisioned by the Preamble.
4. **Interpreting rights and DPSPs**: The Preamble helps balance the relationship between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy.
    - **Eg**: In **Minerva Mills Case (1980)**, the Court used the Preamble to uphold the harmony between rights and state obligations.

Role of the preamble in shaping India's democratic ethos

1. **Strengthening participatory democracy**: It enshrines the **democratic principle**, ensuring inclusive governance through equal participation.
    - **Eg**: Increased voter turnout in **2024 elections** reflects growing alignment with democratic ideals of the Preamble.
2. **Safeguarding electoral integrity**: The Preamble's emphasis on justice and equality ensures free and fair electoral practices.
    - **Eg**: In **People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) Case (2003)**, the Court upheld the right to information about candidates for informed voting.
3. **Reinforcing federalism**: The Preamble balances national unity with autonomy of states, guiding cooperative federalism.

- **Eg**: The GST Council's functioning aligns with federal principles envisaged in the Preamble.

Role of the preamble in shaping India's social ethos

1. **Secularism and religious harmony**: Guides the state to ensure religious freedom and regulate religious practices that conflict with equality.
    - **Eg**: The **Shah Bano Case (1985)** strengthened secular principles by ensuring gender justice within personal laws.
2. **Equality of opportunity**: Reflects the vision of an egalitarian society by supporting affirmative action for marginalized groups.
    - **Eg**: **103rd Amendment (2019)** introduced a 10% EWS quota to address economic inequality among unreserved groups.
3. **Empowerment through education**: Promotes universal education to reduce social inequalities.
    - **Eg**: The **Right to Education Act (2009)** operationalizes the Preamble's equality and justice ideals.
4. **Fraternity and national unity**: Promotes inclusive nation-building by emphasizing shared identity and collective progress.
    - **Eg**: **Abolition of Article 370 (2019)** was framed as promoting fraternity and integration in line with the Preamble's ethos.

Role of the preamble in shaping India's economic ethos

1. **Addressing income inequality**: Guides redistributive measures to ensure equitable economic opportunities for all citizens.
    - **Eg**: Programs like **MGNREGA** and **PM Garib Kalyan Yojana** work to bridge income disparities.
2. **Balancing socialism with reforms**: Reflects the shift toward inclusive growth by fostering public welfare while encouraging private enterprise.
    - **Eg**: Post-1991 economic reforms maintained welfare schemes like **Public Distribution System (PDS)** to address inequality.
3. **Preventing wealth concentration**: Supports policies that align with Article 39(c) to curb wealth centralization.
    - **Eg**: **Windfall Tax (2022)** on oil companies ensured equitable redistribution during a global energy crisis.
4. **Sustainable economic development**: Promotes inclusive growth while addressing environmental sustainability.

Conclusion

The Preamble serves as a **compass for interpreting amendments and governance**, ensuring alignment with constitutional ideals. By upholding its principles, India can navigate modern challenges while fostering an inclusive, just, and progressive society.

Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.

Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries.

Q. In comparison to the United States Constitution, assess how the Indian Constitution's federalism differs in terms of powers allocated to the Union and the states. What challenges arise from this distinctive model? (15 M)

Introduction

India's federalism, with a unitary bias, was designed to balance national unity with regional diversity, unlike the U.S., where federalism emphasizes state autonomy.

Body

Differences in federal structure between India and the United States

1. **Nature of federalism**: India follows a **quasi-federal** system, prioritizing unity, while the U.S. has **dual federalism** with strong state sovereignty.
    - **E.g.**: **S.R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994)** emphasized India's unitary tilt, especially during emergencies.
2. **Power distribution**: In India, **Union, State, and Concurrent Lists** define power, with residual powers to the Union, unlike the U.S., where states hold residual powers.
    - **E.g.**: **Article 246** gives Union exclusive control over 97 subjects, asserting central dominance.
3. **Constitutional flexibility**: India's amendments need only a **special majority**, while U.S. amendments require **three-fourths state ratification**.
    - **E.g.**: **42nd Amendment (1976)** centralized power further by amending concurrent subjects.
4. **Financial autonomy**: India's fiscal structure assigns more revenue powers to the Union, creating state dependency, unlike the financially autonomous U.S. states.
    - **E.g.**: **GST Act (2017)** reduced states' control over indirect taxes, affecting fiscal federalism.

5. **Judicial intervention**: Indian courts actively interpret federalism under **Article 131**; in contrast, U.S. federalism leaves states more freedom in judicial matters.
    - **E.g.**: **Keshavananda Bharati Case (1973)** upheld federalism as a basic structure, curtailing arbitrary Union actions.

Challenges arising from India's distinctive model

1. **Centralization of power**: A unitary bias limits **state autonomy** and innovation in governance.
    - **E.g.**: During **COVID-19**, central directives constrained state-led health policies.
2. **Fiscal dependency**: Limited revenue powers force states to rely heavily on Union funding, reducing local financial independence.
    - **E.g.**: **15th Finance Commission** noted over **40% of state revenue** is from central taxes.
3. **Concurrent jurisdiction disputes**: Shared powers in the **Concurrent List** lead to conflicts often resolved in favor of the Union.
    - **E.g.**: **Farm Laws (2020)**, where agricultural legislation led to federal-state friction.
4. **Political friction**: Frequent use of **Article 356** (President's Rule) historically increased tensions, affecting cooperative federalism.
    - **E.g.**: Misuse of **President's Rule** led to S.R. Bommai judgment, restricting its arbitrary use.
5. **Limited devolution of powers**: Although intended to decentralize, actual powers and finances at local levels remain constrained.
    - **E.g.**: **Sarkaria Commission emphasized deeper devolution** but implementation remains partial.
6. **Executive dominance**: Union's influence over states often challenges judicial and legislative independence.
    - **E.g.**: **National Disaster Management Act (2005)** allowed direct central intervention during crises, limiting state discretion.

What can be done

1. **Judicial safeguards**: The **basic structure doctrine** secures federalism, limiting unilateral amendments.
    - **E.g.**: **Keshavananda Bharati (1973)** established federalism as part of the Constitution's basic structure.
2. **Finance commissions**: Improved financial recommendations can enhance state revenue autonomy and balance.
    - **E.g.**: **15th Finance Commission** suggested increasing devolution to states for more fiscal balance.
3. **Niti Aayog**: Promotes cooperative federalism by involving states in policy-making, unlike the former Planning Commission.

- **E.g.**: **Aspirational Districts Program** encourages state-led initiatives in developmental programs.

4. **Inter-state council**: Under **Article 263**, it mediates state disputes, fostering cooperative federalism.
    - **E.g.**: Regular discussions on **river water disputes** reduce state conflicts.

Conclusion

India's quasi-federalism, though inclined toward centralization, has built-in mechanisms for cooperative federalism. To strengthen this model, **reforms promoting fiscal autonomy, balanced power distribution, and local empowerment** are essential for an equitable federal future.

Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Q. Discuss the role of the Speaker in ensuring the effective functioning of Parliament. What challenges does the Speaker face in maintaining impartiality? (10 M)

Introduction

The **Speaker of the Lok Sabha** plays a pivotal role in maintaining the dignity and orderly conduct of parliamentary proceedings. Tasked with the impartial management of legislative debates, the Speaker ensures that the essence of parliamentary democracy is upheld.

Body

Role of the speaker in Parliament

1. **Ensuring order and discipline**: The Speaker preserves order during debates and enforces decorum among members.
    - **E.g.**: In the **2023 monsoon session**, the Speaker maintained control amid heated discussions on sensitive national issues.
2. **Conducting proceedings**: The Speaker decides the agenda, allocates time for debates, and facilitates voting.
    - **E.g.**: **Article 93** empowers the Speaker to adjourn or suspend the House if necessary for maintaining order.
3. **Upholding minority rights**: Ensures fair participation of both the ruling party and opposition members, allowing constructive criticism.
    - **E.g.**: During **Question Hour**, the Speaker ensures that Opposition questions are addressed, promoting transparency.

4. **Deciding on disqualification**: Under the **Tenth Schedule**, the Speaker is responsible for determining disqualifications under the Anti-Defection Law.
    - **E.g.**: The **Karnataka MLAs' case (2019)** highlighted the Speaker's role in ensuring party loyalty while upholding legislative stability.
5. **Protecting parliamentary privileges**: The Speaker safeguards the privileges of Parliament and its members, ensuring freedom in legislative actions.
    - **E.g.**: In 2018, a **Privilege Motion** was moved against the media for misreporting, underlining the Speaker's protective authority.

Challenges faced by the speaker in maintaining impartiality

1. **Political affiliations**: Often affiliated with the ruling party, which can raise concerns about potential bias in decision-making.
    - **E.g.**: In the recent **Anti-Defection Law cases**, questions of bias in favour of the ruling party surfaced.
2. **Intense political pressures**: Political pressures can impact decisions on floor management and allocation of speaking time.
    - **E.g.**: Allocation of time during **budget sessions** often reflects perceived partiality, leading to Opposition criticism.
3. **Judicial review**: Supreme Court rulings allow certain Speaker decisions to be reviewed, challenging the finality of Speaker's authority.
    - **E.g.**: **Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu (1992)** allowed judicial review of Speaker's decisions on disqualifications.
4. **Delayed decision-making**: Prolonged delays in important decisions, such as disqualification, can impact parliamentary credibility.
5. **Limited jurisdiction over Rajya Sabha**: The Speaker's authority is confined to the Lok Sabha, leading to inconsistencies in procedures between the two Houses.
    - **E.g.**: **Differences in handling disruptions** often reflect varying standards of discipline between **Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha**.

Conclusion

The Speaker's role is crucial to India's democratic framework, but **reforms enhancing impartiality and minimizing political influence** can strengthen this office, ensuring fair and effective parliamentary functioning.

Q. Examine the role of the Rajya Sabha in India's federal system. How does it act as a representative body for the states, and what challenges does it face in fulfilling this role? (15 M)

Introduction

The **Rajya Sabha** serves as India's federal council, designed to represent the interests of states and ensure a balance between **regional priorities and national unity** within the parliamentary framework.

Body

Role of Rajya Sabha in India's federal system

1. **Federal representation**: Provides states a platform in national law making, balancing federal and unitary interests.
    - **E.g.**: **Article 80** allows states to elect Rajya Sabha members based on state population, ensuring diverse representation.
2. **Legislative review**: Acts as a revisionary chamber, where it reassesses, bills passed by Lok Sabha, focusing on state interests.
    - **E.g.**: Rajya Sabha's **rejection of the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Bill** demonstrated its role in legislative scrutiny.
3. **Constitutional amendments**: Safeguards federal principles by participating in amendments that affect state powers and interests.
    - **E.g.**: **42nd and 44th Amendments** witnessed debates protecting federal features of the Constitution.
4. **Checks on executive authority**: Acts as a check on executive decisions by reviewing bills, particularly those impacting state autonomy.
    - **E.g.**: **Debates on Article 370's abrogation** highlighted its function in discussing state-specific matters.
5. **National and state integration**: Serves as a forum to integrate state perspectives with national policies, fostering a collaborative federal structure.
    - **E.g.**: **Finance Commission discussions** on central-state allocations reflect Rajya Sabha's federal integration role.

Rajya Sabha as a representative body for states

1. **Indirect state representation**: Elected by state legislatures, members bring state interests to the national stage.
    - **E.g.**: **Rajya Sabha members from north-eastern states** raise local developmental concerns, such as infrastructure needs.
2. **Platform for regional concerns**: Provides states a voice in matters affecting their unique issues, such as resource allocation and autonomy.
    - **E.g.**: **Debates on the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act** highlighted state resource concerns post-bifurcation.
3. **Expresses state-specific interests**: Reflects state grievances on national policy impacts, ensuring that laws consider regional perspectives.
    - **E.g.**: Representation of **water-sharing issues** by southern states shows advocacy for regional concerns.
4. **Moderation of majoritarian views**: Allows minority state views to balance national legislation, protecting against majoritarian policies.
    - **E.g.**: **GST discussions** saw regional leaders advocating for state fiscal autonomy within a uniform tax framework.

5. **Representation in financial bills**: Though limited, Rajya Sabha discusses financial policies affecting states, providing feedback on fiscal matters.
    - **E.g.**: Deliberations on **Finance Bill provisions** allow members to voice state economic concerns.

Challenges in fulfilling its federal role

1. **Influence of party politics**: Members often follow party lines rather than state interests, diluting genuine state representation.
    - **E.g.**: Party whips influence Rajya Sabha members' positions on sensitive state issues, impacting objective representation.
2. **Restricted role in financial legislation**: Lacks authority to amend money bills, limiting its say in matters crucial to state finances.
    - **E.g.**: **GST implementation** side lined Rajya Sabha's role, impacting state-specific revenue concerns.
3. **Lack of direct accountability**: Indirect election by MLAs reduces public accountability, potentially weakening alignment with state issues.
    - **E.g.**: Nomination under **Article 80** sometimes overlooks regional representation in favour of political appointments.
4. **Limited influence in national security Bills**: On matters concerning national security, regional perspectives may be overlooked.
    - **E.g.**: Discussions on national policies like **CAA** saw limited input from affected border states.
5. **Political appointments over merit**: Nominations based on political considerations rather than state needs weaken its federal character.
    - **E.g.**: Recent **corporate appointments** have been criticized for side-lining regional representation.

Conclusion

The Rajya Sabha is fundamental in preserving India's federalism, **yet overcoming challenges like party influence and expanding its financial role** can enhance its effectiveness as a true representative of state interests within the federal system.

Q. How does the National Youth Parliament Scheme (NYPS) enhance democratic awareness among the youth and contribute to strengthening India's parliamentary democracy? (10 M)

Introduction

The **National Youth Parliament Scheme (NYPS)** empowers youth with insights into parliamentary processes and constitutional values, fostering an informed and engaged citizenry essential for a thriving democracy.

Body

Enhancing democratic awareness among the youth

1. **Understanding parliamentary processes**: NYPS provides hands-on exposure to the functioning of Parliament through mock sessions.
    - **Eg**: Since its inception in **2019**, over **1,00,000 students** have participated, simulating debates and legislative practices.
2. **Promotion of constitutional values**: It educates participants on fundamental rights, duties, and the ethos of the **Indian Constitution**.
    - **Eg**: Activities on **Samvidhan Diwas** reinforce the values of justice, equality, and liberty.
3. **Civic engagement through inclusivity**: NYPS 2.0 ensures participation beyond educational institutions, allowing **individuals and informal groups** to engage actively.
    - **Eg**: **Features like quizzes on "Bharatiya Democracy** in Action" promote self-learning for all citizens.
4. **Cultivating leadership and debating skills**: The scheme encourages critical thinking and public speaking among youth.
    - **Eg**: Programs under **Kishore Sabha** and **Tarun Sabha** develop leadership qualities in school and college students.
5. **Digital outreach for self-learning**: The portal provides training modules and video tutorials to make democratic processes accessible to youth in remote areas.
    - **Eg**: **NYPS portal** bridges the gap between youth and democratic institutions.

Contribution to strengthening India's parliamentary democracy

1. **Increased public accountability**: By educating youth, NYPS builds a generation of citizens who can demand greater transparency and accountability.
    - **Eg**: Participants of **Youth Parliament sessions** in 2024 raised key issues like electoral reforms and social inclusion.
2. **Strengthening participatory democracy**: NYPS engages citizens across socio-economic strata, promoting inclusive decision-making processes.
    - **Eg**: **Group participation under NYPS 2.0** allows diverse citizens to simulate legislative debates.
3. **Building a pipeline of future leaders**: It nurtures leadership potential and political awareness, creating a talent pool for governance.
    - **Eg**: **Alumni of youth parliaments** have taken active roles in local self-governance and civil society organizations.
4. **Promoting respect for dissent and dialogue**: NYPS fosters democratic habits like debate and consensus-building, crucial for a vibrant democracy.
    - **Eg**: **Model Youth Parliament debates simulate** real-world complexities of policymaking.

5. **Cultural transformation towards active citizenship**: It instills pride in India's democratic traditions, motivating citizens to participate in electoral and legislative processes.
    - **Eg**: **Increased voter turnout** among youth in **2024 General Elections** was linked to NYPS awareness campaigns.

Conclusion

The **National Youth Parliament Scheme** combines education, digital innovation, and inclusivity to empower youth as active participants in India's democracy. Expanding its reach and integrating civic education into mainstream curricula can further strengthen the democratic framework for future generations.

Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.

Q. Discuss the significance of delimitation under the Representation of People's Act and its impact on democratic representation in India. (10 M)

Introduction

Delimitation, the process of redrawing electoral boundaries, ensures **equitable representation** and reflects **demographic realities**, upholding India's democratic principles under **Article 82** and the **Representation of People's Act, 1950**.

Body

Significance of delimitation

1. **Ensures proportional representation:** Balances representation in Lok Sabha and state legislatures based on population changes.
    - **Eg. Post-1971 census, seats were frozen** until **2026** to address regional disparities.
2. **Reduces regional imbalances:** Equitably allocates representation to underrepresented regions.

    - **Eg. Representation disparities** between **Uttar Pradesh** and **Northeastern states**.
3. **Strengthens democracy:** Upholds the principle of **"one person, one vote"** by ensuring constituency sizes are comparable.
    - **Eg.** Delimitation Commission 2002 revised boundaries to address voter disparities.
4. **Promotes inclusivity:** Ensures **reserved seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs)** are adjusted as per their population growth.
    - **Eg.** Post-2008 Delimitation Commission, **47 SC** and **84 ST seats** were revised.
5. **Adapts to urbanization:** Reflects migration and demographic shifts due to **urbanization** and economic changes.
    - **Eg.** Increased urban constituencies in **states like Maharashtra** post-2008.

Impact on democratic representation

1. **Improves representational fairness:** Constituencies represent voters proportionately, ensuring equal voting power.
    - **Eg.** Reduction of **disparities in voter populations** between constituencies like **Delhi** and **Bihar**.
2. **Strengthens federalism:** Balances representation across states to avoid domination by populous states.
    - **Eg. Freezing the seat allocation since 1971** has protected **South Indian states** with slower population growth.
3. **Empowers marginalized groups:** Increases their participation in legislative processes.
    - **Eg.** Enhanced **SC/ST reservation allocations** in states like Rajasthan and Gujarat post-delimitation.
4. **Challenges of frozen delimitation:** Constituency boundaries do not account for population changes after 1971.
    - **Eg. Delhi NCR constituencies face overrepresentation** compared to rural constituencies.

Challenges in delimitation

1. **Political sensitivity:** Fear of loss of power among states due to shifts in representation.
    - **Eg.** Concerns raised by **southern states** over the **2026 delimitation review**.
2. **Inadequate population data:** Dependence on outdated census figures affects accurate delimitation.
    - **Eg. Lack of a timely census** post-**2011** hinders equitable adjustments.
3. **Lack of public awareness:** Limited understanding of delimitation processes and implications affects stakeholder participation.

4. **Ineffective execution:** Bureaucratic delays and legal challenges hinder timely delimitation.

Conclusion

Delimitation is a cornerstone of India's democratic framework, balancing representation and inclusivity. As India approaches the **2026 review**, adopting a **scientific, transparent approach** and addressing regional disparities will strengthen its **representative democrac**

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

Q. Examine the constitutional duties and responsibilities of the Attorney General of India. How do they contribute to maintaining constitutional governance? (10 M)

Introduction

The **Attorney General of India, appointed under Article 76**, is the highest law officer of the country. Their duties encompass advising the government on legal matters and ensuring the actions of the state adhere to constitutional principles, thereby upholding the rule of law and governance.

Body

Constitutional duties and responsibilities of the Attorney General

1. **Advising the government**: The Attorney General provides legal advice to the Government of India on constitutional and statutory matters as mandated by **Article 76(2)**.
    - **Eg**: **Advised on the abrogation** of **Article 370 (2019)**, ensuring its legal validity.
2. **Representation in courts**: Represents the Union Government in constitutional and other significant cases before the Supreme Court and High Courts as per **Article 76(1)**.
    - **Eg**: Represented the government in the **Kesavananda Bharati case (1973)** and the **Citizenship Amendment Act case (2020)**.
3. **Participation in Parliament**: As per **Article 88**, the Attorney General can participate in parliamentary proceedings without voting rights, ensuring their legal expertise guides legislative debates.
    - **Eg**: **Contributed to discussions** during the **Judges' Appointment Bill (2014)** debate.
4. **Guardian of public interest**: Acts to uphold public interest by ensuring that executive actions comply with constitutional norms and judicial decisions.

- **Eg**: **Defended the constitutionality** of **Aadhaar Act (2018)** in protecting welfare schemes.

5. **Legal coordination**: Coordinates with other legal officers like the Solicitor General and Additional Solicitors General to ensure effective representation of the government's legal position.
    - **Eg**: **Collaborated during** the **Sabarimala review petition (2019)**.

Contribution to maintaining constitutional governance

1. **Ensuring adherence to the Constitution**: Provides guidance to the government to ensure that policies and actions align with constitutional mandates, safeguarding democratic principles.
    - **Eg**: **Assisted the government** in defending **reservation for economically weaker sections (EWS) under Article 15(6) and Article 16(6)**.
2. **Safeguarding the rule of law**: By representing the government in key cases, the Attorney General ensures that executive actions remain within constitutional bounds.
    - **Eg**: **Represented the government** in the **Delhi government vs. LG power dispute case (2018)** under **Article 239AA**.
3. **Promoting legislative accountability**: Their participation in Parliament under **Article 88** ensures that laws are constitutionally valid and robust.
    - **Eg**: **Provided critical legal** insights during debates on **Farm Laws (2020)** and their repeal.
4. **Resolving constitutional crises**: Plays a key role in mediating disputes between states and the union or between different branches of the government, ensuring smooth functioning.
    - **Eg: Resolved legal challenges** related to the **COVID-19 lockdown (2020)** under the framework of **Article 256**.
5. **Balancing rights and governance**: Ensures a balance between the government's need to govern effectively and citizens' constitutional rights under **Part III (Fundamental Rights)**.
    - **Eg**: **Advised during restrictions** on internet access in **Jammu & Kashmir (2020)**, balancing governance with **Article 19(1)(a)**.

Conclusion

The Attorney General plays a vital role in preserving constitutional governance by acting as a **bridge between the executive, legislature, and judiciary**. Empowering this office with more autonomy and transparency can further enhance its contribution to safeguarding India's constitutional values and democracy.

Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

Q. "The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has been instrumental in providing free legal aid, yet its outreach remains limited". Critically analyze its achievements and the gaps in its functioning. (15 M)

Introduction

The **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)**, established under the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987**, aims to fulfill the constitutional mandate of **Article 39A** by providing free legal aid to the marginalized. While its initiatives have significantly expanded access to justice, gaps in outreach and implementation hinder its full potential.

Body

Achievements of NALSA

1. **Provision of free legal aid:** Ensures legal assistance to economically weaker and socially disadvantaged sections.
    - **Eg.** In 2022, NALSA provided free legal aid to over **1 crore beneficiaries** (Source: NALSA Annual Report 2022).
2. **Success of Lok Adalats:** Promotes alternative dispute resolution to reduce pendency and litigation costs.
    - **Eg.** Lok Adalats resolved **45 lakh cases** in 2022, easing the burden on courts.
3. **Special focus on vulnerable groups:** Implements schemes for **women, children, tribal communities, and differently-abled individuals.**
    - **Eg.** The **Legal Services to Victims of Trafficking Scheme, 2022**, has focused on the rehabilitation of trafficking survivors.
4. **Legal awareness campaigns:** Raises awareness about legal rights and services through community programs and digital platforms.
    - **Eg.** The **Pan India Legal Awareness and Outreach Campaign (2021)** reached over **7 crore people** in rural and urban areas.
5. **Collaboration with judiciary and NGOs:** Works with grassroots organizations to strengthen the legal aid ecosystem.

Gaps in NALSA's functioning

1. **Limited rural and tribal outreach:** Legal services are concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural and remote regions underserved.
    - **Eg.** As per **PRS Legislative Research 2022**, over **65% of rural populations** remain unaware of legal aid services.
2. **Resource constraints:** Inadequate funds and infrastructure limit the effectiveness of NALSA's initiatives.
    - **Eg.** In FY 2022-23, only **60% of allocated funds** were utilized (Source: CAG report).
3. **Shortage of trained personnel:** Insufficient numbers of trained legal aid advocates and paralegal volunteers.
    - **Eg.** Only **15,000 active volunteers** across India as of 2023 (Source: NALSA statistics).

4. **Awareness gap among beneficiaries:** Many eligible individuals remain unaware of their legal rights or NALSA's services.
    - **Eg.** A 2021 survey by **Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy** found that **70% of respondents** in rural Bihar were unaware of free legal aid.
5. **Uneven implementation across states:** State Legal Services Authorities vary in efficiency and effectiveness.
    - **Eg.** In 2023, Kerala SLSA resolved **80% of cases**, compared to only **30% in Bihar**.
6. **Urban bias in initiatives:** Legal aid services are often concentrated in metropolitan areas, neglecting marginalized rural populations.

Measures that can be taken

1. **Strengthen rural outreach:** Collaborate with **panchayats** and local NGOs to expand services in underserved areas.
    - **Eg.** Best practice: **South Africa's community-based paralegal system** offers a model for rural India.
2. **Technology integration:** Use digital platforms to bridge the awareness gap and streamline service delivery.
    - **Eg. Apps like** Nyaya Bandhu **and AI-based legal aid** chatbots can be leveraged to reach remote areas.
3. **Capacity building:** Train more legal aid lawyers and paralegal volunteers to enhance service quality.
    - **Eg. Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah Committee** emphasized the need for training programs and infrastructure development.
4. **Increase awareness campaigns:** Conduct targeted campaigns in regional languages to empower rural populations.
5. **Robust monitoring and evaluation:** Develop a feedback mechanism to track progress and ensure accountability.
6. **Improve fund allocation and utilization:** Enhance budgetary support and ensure timely implementation of schemes.

Conclusion

To fulfill its constitutional mandate, **NALSA must adopt innovative reforms and prioritize rural and tribal outreach**. **Strengthening grassroots implementation and leveraging modern technologies** will ensure access to justice for all, creating a truly inclusive legal aid framework.

Additional Info

Judicial precedence supporting legal aid

1. **Hussainara Khatoon vs. State of Bihar (1979):** Recognized free legal aid as a fundamental right under **Article 21**.
2. **Khatri vs. State of Bihar (1981):** Mandated the state to provide free legal aid to undertrials.

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

Development processes and the development industry —the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Q. Examine the challenges in the implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, and its implications for tribal welfare. (10M)

Introduction

The Forest Rights Act, 2006, **was a revolutionary step to correct historical injustices faced by forest-dwelling communities by recognizing their rights over forest land and resources**. However, its implementation remains fraught with challenges, undermining its objectives.

Body

Challenges in implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006

1. **Bureaucratic hurdles**: Complex procedures and lack of capacity in local authorities delay the recognition of claims.
    - **Eg.** As per the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2023)**, **50% of claims** have been rejected due to technical errors.

2. **Lack of awareness among stakeholders**: Many forest-dwelling communities are unaware of their rights under the Act.
    - **Eg.** The **2019 CAG Report** found that over **70% of tribal households** in Odisha were unaware of the Act's provisions.
3. **Conflicts in jurisdiction**: Overlapping authority between the forest department and local governance bodies creates implementation delays.
    - **Eg.** In **Madhya Pradesh**, approved claims are contested by the **forest department**, leading to unresolved disputes.
4. **Evictions despite pending claims**: Many tribal families face eviction despite valid or pending claims, violating due process.
    - **Eg.** The **Supreme Court (2019)** temporarily stayed the eviction of **11 lakh claimants**, citing procedural lapses.
5. **Resistance from conservation groups**: Environmentalists claim FRA threatens biodiversity in critical habitats.
    - **Eg.** Opposition to FRA implementation in **Ranthambore Tiger Reserve** is an example of such conflict.
6. **Political and administrative apathy**: Poor prioritization and insufficient allocation of resources hinder implementation.
    - **Eg.** The **NITI Aayog (2021)** reported **underutilization of FRA funds**, limiting outreach and capacity-building efforts.

Implications for tribal welfare

1. **Loss of livelihood**: Delayed or rejected claims deprive tribals of forest resources, impacting their traditional livelihoods.
    - **Eg.** In **Chhattisgarh**, displacement due to mining projects led to **loss of livelihoods** despite pending claims.
2. **Reinforcement of marginalization**: Denial of claims perpetuates socio-economic inequalities among tribal communities.
    - **Eg.** The **UNDP (2022)** observed **higher malnutrition rates** among displaced tribals in FRA-affected areas.
3. **Weakening of grassroots governance**: Bypassing Gram Sabhas undermines participatory governance and community decision-making.
    - **Eg.** The **K. Kasthuri Rangan Committee (2013)** noted frequent sidelining of **Gram Sabhas** in project clearances.
4. **Cultural erosion**: Displacement and non-recognition of rights disrupt the socio-cultural fabric of tribal communities.
    - **Eg.** Protests by Dongria Kondhs against **Vedanta Mining** in **Niyamgiri Hills** exemplify cultural loss concerns.

Conclusion

To ensure **tribal welfare**, it is essential to simplify claim procedures, strengthen Gram Sabhas, and improve coordination among stakeholders. Implementing **digital platforms for transparency**, building capacity, and fostering partnerships with civil society can help

achieve the dual goals of **justice and sustainable development** for forest-dwelling communities.

Q. "The success of welfare schemes depends not just on their design but also on the active participation of stakeholders". Critically analyze with suitable examples. (15 M)

Introduction

The success of welfare schemes depends on **efficient policy design** and **active participation of stakeholders, such as citizens, community groups, and local governments**, to ensure inclusivity and responsiveness to real needs.

Body

Role of well-designed welfare schemes

1. **Clear objectives and targeting:** Well-defined goals ensure schemes address specific needs effectively and prevent misuse.
    - **Eg: Ayushman Bharat (2018)**, aimed at providing free healthcare for 10 crore families, has significantly reduced out-of-pocket expenses for low-income households.
2. **Efficient resource allocation:** Proper planning ensures judicious use of resources, preventing delays and leakages.
    - **Eg:** The **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** system, implemented in 400+ schemes, has saved ₹1.78 lakh crore by eliminating middlemen (Economic Survey 2023).
3. **Accountability mechanisms:** Regular audits and transparency measures ensure credibility and reduce corruption.
    - **Eg:** The **PM-KISAN online portal**, with direct bank transfers, ensures real-time tracking of ₹6,000 annual income support to farmers.

Role of active stakeholder participation

1. **Community ownership:** Local involvement ensures schemes are tailored to specific needs, improving trust and outcomes.
    - **Eg: MGNREGA's participatory planning process**, where villagers identify priority projects, has improved rural infrastructure and livelihoods.
2. **Collaborations with NGOs:** Partnering with non-state actors improves outreach to marginalized groups.
    - **Eg:** Under the **Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN)** scheme, NGOs like Akshaya Patra have provided mid-day meals to over 20 lakh schoolchildren, reducing malnutrition.
3. **Involvement of local governments:** Decentralized execution ensures better accountability and last-mile delivery.

- **Eg:** Kerala's **Kudumbashree program**, run by women's self-help groups with Panchayat support, has significantly improved women's economic empowerment and poverty alleviation.

Challenges in stakeholder participation and scheme design

1. **Mismatch between policy design and ground realities:** Top-down schemes often fail to consider local needs, causing inefficiency.
    - **Eg: Swachh Bharat Mission** faced resistance in rural areas where open defecation was culturally normalized, highlighting a lack of behavioural change interventions.
2. **Exclusion of marginalized stakeholders:** Vulnerable groups often lack representation in scheme planning and implementation.
    - **Eg: Forest Rights Act (2006)** saw limited success in tribal areas due to inadequate consultation with tribal communities.
3. **Lack of awareness and capacity:** Beneficiaries and local authorities are often unprepared or unaware of their roles.
    - **Eg: Rural women entrepreneurs under MUDRA Yojana** reported low awareness of entitlements, as per the **RBI report (2022)**.
4. **Fragmentation in implementation:** Poor coordination among departments delays benefits to stakeholders.
    - **Eg: Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)** faced delays due to lack of synchronization between urban local bodies and state housing departments (Economic Survey 2022-23).

Solutions for effective welfare schemes

1. **Inclusive design:** Stakeholder consultations ensure policies address on-ground realities and marginalized voices.
    - **Eg:** The **Aspirational Districts Programme**, implemented in 112 districts, actively involves local governments to address regional disparities.
2. **Use of technology:** Digital tools improve targeting, transparency, and monitoring.
    - **Eg:** The **Aadhaar-enabled Public Distribution System (AePDS)** has reduced duplicate beneficiaries and saved ₹23,000 crore in food subsidy costs.
3. **Capacity building:** Training local officials and engaging citizens ensures effective execution.
    - **Eg:** The **15th Finance Commission** recommended higher grants to Panchayats for improving governance and service delivery at the grassroots level.

Conclusion

For welfare schemes to achieve their intended impact, **data-driven designs** must integrate **inclusive, stakeholder-driven approaches**, ensuring equitable, transparent, and efficient governance for holistic social development.

Q. "Custodial violence in India reflects systemic failures in ensuring accountability and justice". Discuss the challenges and suggest measures to reform the justice delivery system. (15 M)

Introduction

Custodial violence is a grave violation of human rights, undermining the **rule of law** and **public trust** in institutions. Despite **constitutional safeguards**, its persistence highlights **systemic failures** in accountability and justice.

Body

Custodial violence reflects systemic failures in accountability and justice

1. **Lack of police accountability**: Weak mechanisms to hold law enforcement accountable for custodial deaths and torture.
    - **Eg**: The **2021 NCRB report** recorded **88 custodial deaths**, but convictions remain negligible.
2. **Delays in justice delivery**: Prolonged investigations and trials discourage accountability.
    - **Eg**: In the **Suman Kale case**, charges are yet to be framed **17 years** after the incident.
3. **Inadequate legal safeguards**: Existing laws criminalize torture but fail to address systemic enforcement gaps.
    - **Eg**: India has not ratified the **UN Convention Against Torture (UNCAT)**.
4. **Limited oversight by independent bodies**: Agencies like **NHRC** lack adequate powers to enforce their recommendations.
    - **Eg**: NHRC reported over **1,700 custodial deaths in 2022**, but systemic reforms are lacking.
5. **Cultural and procedural biases**: Vulnerable groups, such as **marginalized communities**, are often disproportionately targeted.
    - **Eg**: Denotified tribes like the **Pardhis** are stigmatized as criminals despite legal denotification in **1952**.

Challenges in addressing custodial violence

1. **Opaque investigations**: Police often investigate their own personnel, leading to conflicts of interest.
    - **Eg**: **CID's delays** in **investigating custodial deaths** reflect weak institutional mechanisms.

2. **Lack of forensic infrastructure**: Poor-quality forensic reports hinder evidence collection and prosecution.
    - **Eg**: **Law Commission of India Report 2022** highlighted outdated forensic labs across states.
3. **Weak implementation of Supreme Court directives**: Guidelines from **D.K. Basu vs State of West Bengal (1997)** on arrest and custody procedures are often ignored.
    - **Eg**: **Reports show custodial deaths** where no **arrest records existed**.
4. **Underreporting of cases**: Fear of retaliation and lack of awareness deter victims and families from filing complaints.
    - **Eg**: A study by **Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (2023)** found that only **30% of custodial violence cases** are formally reported.
5. **Judicial delays**: Overburdened courts and procedural inefficiencies lead to delays in justice.
    - **Eg**: Over **4.7 crore cases** were pending in Indian courts as of **November 2024** (NCRB).

Measures to reform the justice delivery system

1. **Strengthen police accountability mechanisms**: Establish **independent complaint authorities** to investigate custodial violence cases.
    - **Eg**: Adoption of **Police Complaints Authorities** as recommended by the **Second ARC**.
2. **Ratify UNCAT and enact anti-torture legislation**: Enact a **comprehensive law against torture** to align with global standards.
    - **Eg**: **Prevention of Torture Bill, 2017** must be revisited and enacted.
3. **Improve forensic capacity**: Modernize **forensic labs** and ensure timely collection and processing of evidence.
    - **Eg**: Tamil Nadu's **integrated forensic labs model** offers a best-practice framework.
4. **Enhance NHRC powers**: Grant **NHRC enforcement powers** to implement its recommendations effectively.
    - **Eg**: A **2021 NHRC study** highlighted the need for **punitive powers** to curb non-compliance by state agencies.
5. **Mandatory CCTV surveillance**: Ensure **24/7 monitoring** in police stations and detention centers.
    - **Eg**: **Supreme Court (2020)** mandated installation of **CCTVs** in police stations across India.
6. **Training and sensitization**: Conduct regular **human rights training** for police personnel to eliminate custodial abuse.
    - **Eg: Maharashtra's Police Training Institute** incorporates **human rights modules** in its curriculum.
7. **Fast-track custodial violence cases**: Set up **dedicated fast-track courts** for swift trial and resolution of custodial violence cases.

- **Eg**: **Gujarat's Fast Track Court Model** has expedited sensitive criminal cases.

8. **Community policing initiatives**: Engage **civil society and communities** to bridge trust deficits and reduce abuse.
    - **Eg: Kerala's Janamaithri Suraksha Project** is an effective example of community policing.

Conclusion

Custodial violence erodes the rule of law and **undermines public trust** in governance. Comprehensive reforms in **accountability, legal safeguards**, and **institutional oversight** are essential to eliminate this menace and uphold the **fundamental rights** guaranteed by the **Constitution**.

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

Q. Assess the challenges and opportunities in bridging the skill gap to enhance India's human resource potential in the 21st century. (10 M)

Introduction

India's young workforce, constituting over **62% of the population in the working-age group** (Economic Survey 2023), presents a tremendous opportunity to harness the **demographic dividend**. However, bridging the skill gap remains a significant challenge to fully realizing this potential.

Body

Challenges in bridging the skill gap

1. **Mismatch between education and industry needs**: Outdated curricula and limited industry linkages result in unemployable graduates.
    - **Eg**: Reports by **India Skills 2023** indicate only **45% of graduates** are employable.
2. **Inadequate skilling infrastructure**: Lack of robust vocational training institutions and regional disparities in skilling opportunities hinder progress.
    - **Eg**: **NSDC data** reveals states like Bihar and Jharkhand have fewer skill development centers compared to Tamil Nadu or Maharashtra.

3. **Low participation of women**: Gender disparities in skill training programs reduce workforce diversity and potential.
    - **Eg**: **Female labour force participation** in India was just **19.2% in 2021** (World Bank).
4. **Technological disruption**: Rapid automation and digital transformation have made traditional skills obsolete.
    - **Eg**: The **WEF Future of Jobs Report (2023)** predicts over 40% of workers globally need reskilling.
5. **Informal sector challenges**: With over **80% of India's workforce in the informal sector**, skilling remains unregulated and uncoordinated.
    - **Eg**: Limited coverage of initiatives like **PMKVY** in informal jobs.

Opportunities in bridging the skill gap

1. **Government initiatives**: Programs like **Skill India Mission** and **PMKVY** aim to provide large-scale training and upskilling.
    - **Eg**: Over **1.2 crore people trained under PMKVY** since its launch.
2. **Technological leverage**: Advancements in AI, digital platforms, and e-learning offer scalable solutions to skill development.
    - **Eg**: The **DigiSaksham initiative** provides free digital skill training to youth.
3. **Global demand for skilled labour**: Opportunities in sectors like healthcare, IT, and green energy globally can be tapped by training workers.
    - **Eg**: India signed a **labour mobility agreement** with Germany in 2022 to export skilled labour.
4. **Private sector collaboration**: Partnerships between corporates and educational institutions can align training with industry demands.
    - **Eg**: **TCS iON** provides online skill certifications in collaboration with NSDC.
5. **Increased focus on women and marginalized communities**: Targeted schemes under **Article 15(4)** aim to enhance inclusivity in skilling.
    - **Eg**: The **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana** focuses on rural youth, including women.
6. **International best practices**: Learning from successful models like **Germany's dual training system** can improve skilling outcomes.
    - **Eg**: The **India-Germany partnership on vocational training** emphasizes hands-on industry experience.

Conclusion

Bridging the skill gap is pivotal to transforming India's demographic advantage into a global human resource powerhouse. A **synergized approach involving government, industry, and academia**, along with targeted reskilling and inclusive programs, will ensure India's workforce is future-ready in the 21st century.

Q. Discuss the reasons for inter-state disparities in educational outcomes in India and suggest measures to bridge this gap. (15 M)

Introduction

India's **federal structure**, coupled with its **socio-economic and cultural diversity**, has led to significant disparities in educational outcomes across states, posing challenges to achieving **SDG-4 (Quality Education)** and the constitutional vision under **Article 45** of universal and equitable education.

Body

Reasons for inter-state disparities

1. **Fiscal capacity differences**: States with higher revenue generation can invest more in education, whereas resource-poor states struggle to meet even basic requirements.
    - **Eg**: **Kerala's allocation of 6.5% of GSDP to education** stands in stark contrast to **Bihar's 4% (RBI report, 2022)**, leading to better infrastructure and teacher availability.
2. **Administrative inefficiencies**: States with weak institutional mechanisms often fail to implement central and state educational schemes effectively.
    - **Eg**: The underperformance of **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan** in **Uttar Pradesh** reflects poor governance and lack of oversight.
3. **Governance quality**: Proactive governance in some states has driven educational reforms, while others lag due to lack of political will or prioritization.
    - **Eg**: **Delhi's focus on school education** through infrastructure upgrades and teacher training significantly improved learning outcomes.
4. **Infrastructure gaps**: Poor access to quality schools, insufficient classrooms, and a lack of basic amenities like toilets and drinking water deter learning outcomes.
    - **Eg**: **ASER 2022 highlights** that **15% of schools in Jharkhand lack functional toilets**, directly affecting student attendance.
5. **Socio-cultural barriers**: Deep-rooted gender, caste, and regional biases lead to inequities in access and retention, especially in underdeveloped regions.
    - **Eg**: **Gender disparities** in literacy rates remain stark in **Rajasthan**, with **female literacy significantly below the national average**.
6. **Policy inconsistency**: States with well-planned and sustained education policies perform better, whereas frequent policy changes in some states create confusion.
    - **Eg**: **Andhra Pradesh's early focus on foundational literacy** has yielded better results compared to lagging states like **Madhya Pradesh**.
7. **Digital divide**: Limited digital infrastructure in rural and underdeveloped regions exacerbates educational disparities, particularly in the wake of online learning initiatives.
    - **Eg**: During the pandemic, **rural Odisha reported minimal access to online classes** (ASER 2021).

Measures to bridge the gap

1. **Enhanced fiscal devolution**: Increase state-specific grants for education through mechanisms like **15th Finance Commission recommendations**, ensuring funds are linked to measurable outcomes.
    - **Eg**: Performance-linked grants under **NITI Aayog's SEQI** framework could incentivize lagging states.
2. **National education benchmarks**: Establish uniform performance standards and track progress through tools like the **School Education Quality Index (SEQI)** developed by **NITI Aayog**.
    - **Eg**: **Kerala's consistent top performance in SEQI rankings** demonstrates how robust benchmarks can foster accountability.
3. **Expansion of digital infrastructure**: Strengthen digital education in rural areas through schemes like **PM eVIDYA**, integrating community resources for better reach.
    - **Eg**: Initiatives like **DigiShala** have improved e-learning opportunities in tribal and backward areas.
4. **Strengthening teacher quality**: Ensure regular capacity-building programs and retention incentives, as recommended by the **Kothari Commission**, to bridge learning disparities.
    - **Eg**: **Delhi's teacher training collaboration with Finland** has become a model for quality enhancement.
5. **Inter-state resource sharing**: Facilitate cross-state sharing of best practices and policy models between high-performing and low-performing states.
    - **Eg**: **Andhra Pradesh's adoption of Delhi's Happiness Curriculum** showcases a successful model of collaboration.
6. **Targeted interventions for marginalized groups**: Focus on improving access and outcomes for SC, ST, and female students through measures aligned with **Article 15(4)** and **Article 46** of the Constitution.
    - **Eg**: The expansion of **Eklavya Model Residential Schools** in tribal areas has improved educational access.
7. **Improving school infrastructure**: Leverage public-private partnerships (**PPP**) and corporate social responsibility (**CSR**) initiatives to fill critical gaps in school facilities and equipment.
    - **Eg**: **Karnataka's Adopt-a-School initiative** has successfully upgraded schools in underserved regions.
8. **Policy integration and convergence**: Synchronize efforts across **education, health, and nutrition sectors** to ensure holistic child development and learning outcomes.
    - **Eg**: The **Aspirational Districts Program**, focusing on convergence, has shown promise in backward areas.

Conclusion

Bridging inter-state disparities in education requires **strong federal cooperation, data-driven policy interventions, and innovative governance models**. A targeted focus on

equity, infrastructure, and digital access will pave the way for a more inclusive and skilled India by **India@2047**, fulfilling the vision of sustainable and equitable development.

Q. Analyze the role of the Pradhan Mantri Vidyalakshmi Scheme in enhancing educational access for marginalized sections. What are the implementation challenges, and what governance reforms can improve its effectiveness? (15 M)

Introduction

The **Pradhan Mantri Vidyalaxmi Scheme (PMVS)**, launched in **2024**, is a pivotal initiative aimed at removing financial barriers for students, especially from marginalized sections, to pursue higher education. By providing **collateral-free and guarantor-free loans** and offering interest subsidies, the scheme promotes equitable access to quality education and aligns with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.

Body

Role in enhancing educational access

1. **Financial support for marginalized groups**: Provides interest subvention and credit guarantees, enabling students from low-income families to access education loans without financial hurdles.
    - **Eg**: Full interest subvention on loans up to **₹10 lakh for students from families with incomes below ₹4.5 lakh**.
2. **Access to top-ranked institutions**: Focuses on students admitted to **860 NIRF-ranked higher education institutions**, ensuring they benefit from quality education.
    - **Eg**: **Includes central government** institutions and state HEIs.
3. **Seamless digital platform**: The scheme introduces a **one-stop portal** for students to apply for loans, ensuring transparency and efficiency.

- **Eg**: **Students can track loan approvals**, reducing delays caused by bureaucratic processes.

4. **Promotes inclusion for middle-income groups**: Covers students ineligible for other scholarships or subsidies, thereby filling a critical gap.
    - **Eg**: A **3% interest subsidy** for students from families earning up to **₹8 lakh annually** during the moratorium period.
5. **Building skilled human capital**: Prioritizes students pursuing technical and STEM courses, fostering the development of a skilled workforce.
    - **Eg**: Loans for courses in **engineering, medicine, and professional streams** are prioritized.

Implementation challenges

1. **Limited outreach and awareness**: Many marginalized communities, especially in rural and tribal areas, are unaware of the scheme due to inadequate dissemination of information.
    - **Eg**: **NITI Aayog (2023)** found that only **40%** of rural students in backward districts were aware of government education loan schemes.
2. **Exclusionary focus on top-ranked institutions**: By limiting benefits to NIRF-ranked HEIs, the scheme excludes many deserving students from lesser-known institutions.
    - **Eg**: **Students from private colleges** not in the top rankings are ineligible, even if financially constrained.
3. **Digital and procedural barriers**: Poor internet connectivity in remote areas limits access to the online portal, while the application process may be daunting for first-generation learners.
    - **Eg**: Students in regions like **Northeast India** face challenges in accessing and completing online applications.
4. **Bank reluctance and delays**: Banks are hesitant to extend loans due to rising NPAs, and procedural delays often discourage applicants.
    - **Eg**: **RBI data (2023)** indicates **that education loan NPAs** increased to **8.3%**, deterring aggressive participation.
5. **Inadequate grievance redressal mechanisms**: Students face difficulties resolving issues related to loan approvals or rejections, with no centralized helpdesk.
    - **Eg**: **Reports of delays in grievance resolution** discourage students from marginalized backgrounds.

Governance reforms for improved effectiveness

1. **Targeted awareness campaigns**: Conduct focused campaigns in rural and tribal areas to increase awareness of the scheme.
    - **Eg**: Use **PM Jan Dhan Yojana** networks and schools under the **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan** to educate students and parents.
2. **Wider institutional coverage**: Expand eligibility to include more private HEIs and regionally significant institutions, ensuring greater inclusivity.

3. **Bridging the digital divide**: Improve internet connectivity and create community access points in underserved areas to facilitate the application process.
    - **Eg**: **Establish internet kiosks** in **Aspirational Districts** under **BharatNet**.
4. **Simplifying procedures**: Streamline the online application process and provide guidance for first-time applicants through local helpdesks.
    - **Eg**: Train volunteers under the **Skill India Mission** to assist students in filling out loan applications.
5. **Strengthening grievance mechanisms**: Establish a robust and centralized grievance redressal system to address loan-related issues promptly.
    - **Eg**: A **24/7 helpline linked to the PMVS portal** can ensure real-time assistance.
6. **Periodic audits and impact assessments**: Monitor the scheme's implementation and publish annual reports to ensure transparency and identify areas for improvement.
    - **Eg**: **NITI Aayog** and the **Department of Higher Education** can jointly evaluate the scheme's progress.

Conclusion

The **Pradhan Mantri Vidyalaxmi Scheme** is a transformative initiative addressing the financial barriers to higher education for marginalized sections. By tackling **challenges such as limited outreach, procedural delays, and digital exclusion through targeted governance** reforms, the scheme can significantly contribute to building an equitable and skilled workforce, advancing the vision of **NEP 2020** and **Viksit Bharat**.

Q. "India remains the top contributor to stillbirths globally despite a declining stillbirth rate". Analyze the systemic gaps in maternal healthcare that contribute to this trend and suggest policy interventions to address them. (15 M)

Introduction

India, despite significant progress in reducing stillbirth rates, continues to lead globally in absolute numbers of stillbirths, contributing **23% of global stillbirths and 25% of neonatal deaths (Lancet, 2024)**. This highlights systemic healthcare gaps that persist, particularly in rural and underserved regions.

Body

India remains the top contributor to stillbirths globally despite a declining stillbirth rate

1. **Slow pace of decline**: India's stillbirth rate has declined from **29.8 per 1,000 births in 2000** to **12.2 in 2023**, yet it remains high compared to developed nations.
    - **Eg**: Global stillbirth rates average around **9 per 1,000 births** (WHO, 2023).
2. **Large absolute numbers**: India records over **3.4 lakh stillbirths annually**, driven by its large population and high birth rates.

- **Eg**: The **Global Burden of Disease (2021)** estimates 24.7 stillbirths per 1,000 births for gestations ≥20 weeks.

3. **Geographical disparities**: States like **Bihar, Uttar Pradesh**, and **Rajasthan** report much higher stillbirth rates due to poor healthcare access and socio-economic inequalities.

Systemic gaps in maternal healthcare contributing to stillbirths

1. **Inadequate antenatal care**: Limited access to timely and quality antenatal services, especially in rural areas, leads to undetected complications.
    - **Eg**: Only **51% of pregnant women** in rural areas receive the recommended four antenatal checkups (NFHS-5, 2021).
2. **Poor intrapartum care**: Lack of skilled birth attendants and poor labor management increase intrapartum complications.
    - **Eg**: Two-thirds of stillbirths occur during the antepartum period, and one-third during labor.
3. **Maternal health disorders**: Conditions like **anaemia, hypertension**, and **diabetes** remain underdiagnosed and untreated.
    - **Eg**: India has the highest prevalence of maternal anaemia, with **57% of pregnant women affected (NFHS-5, 2021)**.
4. **Socio-economic barriers**: Poverty, low literacy, and social stigmas prevent women from accessing timely maternal healthcare.
    - **Eg**: Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes report the lowest healthcare utilization rates.
5. **Data gaps**: Poor registration and documentation of stillbirths hinder targeted interventions and policy-making.
    - **Eg**: Only **47% of stillbirths** were registered in India in 2019.
6. **Limited healthcare infrastructure**: Rural and underserved regions face a shortage of healthcare facilities, medical professionals, and diagnostic tools, leading to delays in care.

Policy interventions to address stillbirths

1. **Strengthening antenatal care**: Ensure universal access to quality antenatal services with comprehensive health screenings and early interventions.
    - **Eg**: Scale-up initiatives like **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)** for timely check-ups.
2. **Improving intrapartum care**: Increase the availability of skilled birth attendants and upgrade delivery facilities in rural areas.
    - **Eg**: Expand programs like **LaQshya**, which aims to improve labor room care.
3. **Targeted nutritional programs**: Address maternal malnutrition and anaemia through community-level interventions and fortified foods.
    - **Eg**: **Poshan Abhiyan** has seen improvements but needs focused efforts on pregnant women.

4. **Stillbirth registration and audits**: Establish a robust stillbirth registry and mandate regular audits to analyze causes and design solutions.
    - **Eg**: Recommendations of the **Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP)** can guide implementation.
5. **Community awareness and education**: Empower women with knowledge about maternal healthcare, family planning, and the importance of timely medical interventions.
    - **Eg**: Promote programs like **Mission Parivar Vikas** in high-fertility districts.
6. **Enhanced healthcare funding**: Allocate more resources to maternal and child health under **Ayushman Bharat** for equitable access to quality care.
    - **Eg**: Increase health expenditure from the current **2.1% of GDP** to at least 3% as per **NITI Aayog recommendations**.

Conclusion

Addressing India's stillbirth burden requires a **multi-pronged approach**, integrating better antenatal and intrapartum care, robust data systems, and community-level awareness programs. Prioritizing maternal healthcare will not only reduce stillbirth rates but also contribute to achieving **UN SDG-3 goals** of ensuring health and well-being for all.

Q. How does the introduction of accelerated and extended degree programs by UGC reflects a student-centric approach in education? Evaluate the benefits and challenges of this initiative. (10 M)

Introduction

The **UGC's flexible degree programs empower students** to customize their educational timelines based on personal and academic circumstances. This initiative reflects a **shift from rigid structures to a learner-centric approach**, aligning with the goals of **NEP 2020**.

Body

Reflecting a student-centric approach

1. **Customizable learning pathways**: Students can choose accelerated or extended timelines based on their capabilities.
    - **Eg**: Students completing additional credits under accelerated programs can graduate in **2 years instead of 3**.
2. **Inclusivity for diverse learners**: Extended timelines help those with health, financial, or academic challenges.
    - **Eg**: Working students or women returning after a gap can complete degrees **without penalties**.
3. **Alignment with NEP 2020**: Promotes **flexibility, multidisciplinary learning, and inclusivity** in higher education.
    - **Eg**: NEP's emphasis on **modular structures** inspired this initiative.

Benefits of the initiative

1. **Encourages academic excellence**: High-performing students can graduate early and pursue further education or jobs.
    - **Eg**: Students can fast-track professional courses like **law or management**, enhancing **global competitiveness**.
2. **Supports personal challenges**: Students facing adversities like financial stress can extend their degree duration.
    - **Eg**: **Extended programs** may benefit **migrant students or those in disaster-affected regions**.
3. **Promotes interdisciplinary studies**: Allows students to pursue diverse interests during extended programs.
    - **Eg**: A **science student** can take elective courses in **AI or economics**, improving career prospects.
4. **Global alignment**: Matches flexible systems in countries like the **US and UK**, making Indian degrees more internationally recognized.
    - **Eg**: **UK universities** like **University College London** offer flexible completion options for undergraduate programs.
5. **Institutional autonomy**: Higher education institutions (HEIs) gain flexibility to adapt programs based on capacity and demand.
    - **Eg**: **Top universities** like **Delhi University** and **IITs** can design advanced frameworks for implementation.

Challenges of the initiative

1. **Implementation issues**: Curriculum redesign, resource allocation, and faculty training pose challenges for smaller institutions.
    - **Eg**: **Rural colleges with limited infrastructure** may struggle to implement **extended timelines effectively**.
2. **Risk of academic dilution**: Accelerated programs might compromise the depth of learning for speed.
    - **Eg**: A **3-year BA program completed in 2 years** may result in **inadequate subject mastery**.
3. **Disparities among institutions**: Well-funded HEIs may offer these options, but underfunded ones could lag behind.
    - **Eg**: **Government colleges** in **Tier 3 cities** may not have the resources to offer flexible structures.
4. **Complexities in degree equivalence**: Ensuring parity among standard, accelerated, and extended programs may confuse stakeholders.
    - **Eg**: **Employers might perceive** an **accelerated degree** as less credible than a conventional one.
5. **Stakeholder awareness**: Lack of clarity among students and parents may reduce acceptance initially.

- **Eg**: Awareness campaigns **by HEIs and UGC portals** are essential to drive understanding.

Conclusion

The **UGC's initiative is a bold step toward making higher education inclusive and flexible**, reflecting **global best practices**. Addressing **disparities in infrastructure** and creating **awareness among stakeholders** will be key to its successful implementation, fostering an education system that is both **equitable and future-ready.**

Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

Q. "Poverty is not merely an economic condition but a multidimensional challenge". Discuss (15 M)

Introduction

Poverty encompasses far more than income deprivation, affecting health, education, social inclusion, and human dignity, which India addresses through multiple targeted policies and programs.

Body

Multidimensional aspects of poverty

1. **Economic deprivation**: Insufficient income and job insecurity are primary aspects of poverty, impacting people's capacity for basic survival.
    - **Eg:** According to **NITI Aayog (2021)**, **22%** of India's population experiences income poverty.
2. **Health inequities**: Poor nutrition, limited healthcare access, and higher disease vulnerability are common among impoverished communities.
    - **Eg: NFHS-5 (2020-21)** reveals that **35.5%** of Indian children under five are stunted, with higher rates among economically disadvantaged groups.
3. **Educational barriers**: Limited access to quality education perpetuates poverty, as educational attainment is linked to economic mobility.
    - **Eg: ASER Report (2022)** shows that **over 27%** of rural youth lack basic reading skills, restricting employability.

4. **Social exclusion**: Discrimination based on caste, gender, or disability limits opportunities, marginalizing vulnerable populations.
    - **Eg: National Commission for Scheduled Castes (2021)** noted persistent educational and occupational disparities among **SCs and STs**.
5. **Housing and sanitation**: Poor living conditions and inadequate sanitation contribute to health issues and degrade human dignity.
    - **Eg: Swachh Bharat Mission (2022)** has improved sanitation for **700 million** people, but many low-income families still lack safe housing.

Impact on socio-economic sectors

1. **Health outcomes**: Poverty exacerbates health inequities, increasing public health costs and reducing workforce productivity.
    - **Eg:** The **Global Hunger Index (2023)** ranks India **107th**, indicating widespread undernutrition among low-income groups.
2. **Educational attainment**: Poverty-driven dropout rates lead to a cycle of poverty, where low education limits economic opportunities.
    - **Eg: UNESCO (2022)** data show that **over 12 million** Indian children are out of school, largely due to economic constraints.
3. **Gender disparities**: Poverty often affects women and children disproportionately, restricting their access to essential services and opportunities.
    - **Eg: World Bank (2021)** highlights that **42%** of Indian women live in poverty, impacting gender parity.
4. **Rural-urban migration**: Lack of rural opportunities pushes people toward cities, increasing urban poverty and straining infrastructure.
    - **Eg: Census data** (2011) show that **27%** of urban populations live in slums due to unplanned migration.
5. **Vulnerability to exploitation**: Impoverished individuals are often subject to forced labour, trafficking, and other forms of exploitation.
    - **Eg: National Human Rights Commission (2020)** noted rising exploitation in informal sectors, particularly during economic downturns.

Governmental and policy responses

1. **Health programs**: **Ayushman Bharat** and similar programs aim to ensure access to healthcare for low-income groups, tackling health-related poverty.
    - **Eg:** Ayushman Bharat (2021) has provided health coverage to over **24 crore** individuals below the poverty line.
2. **Educational reforms**: Programs like **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan** promote educational access, aiming to break the cycle of poverty through skill development.
    - **Eg: PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana** (2022) has trained over **12 million** youth from low-income backgrounds in vocational skills.

3. **Housing and sanitation**: **PM Awas Yojana** and **Swachh Bharat Mission** aim to address poor living conditions, providing dignified lives to impoverished communities.
    - **Eg: PMAY (2022)** enabled over **2 crore** low-income households to have pucca homes.
4. **Employment programs**: **MGNREGA** and other employment schemes provide sustainable livelihood sources to rural populations.
    - **Eg:** MGNREGA (2021) provided **100 days** of employment to **5 crore** rural households, alleviating poverty in rural regions.

Way forward

1. **Strengthen social security Nets**: Expand coverage and efficiency of **DBT** and social welfare schemes to ensure quick, direct assistance to the most vulnerable.
    - **Eg:** Increasing allocations to schemes like **PM Jan Dhan Yojana** can enhance financial inclusion and security.
2. **Invest in quality healthcare and education**: Improve access to affordable healthcare and quality education for low-income groups to break the intergenerational poverty cycle.
    - **Eg:** Expanding **Ayushman Bharat** and integrating **digital education** through **PM eVIDYA** can bridge accessibility gaps.
3. **Promote rural livelihood opportunities**: Strengthen rural development programs and skill-based employment to reduce migration and support local economies.
    - **Eg:** Scaling **PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana** in rural areas can help retain skilled workers locally.
4. **Enhance data-driven policy making**: Use data insights from initiatives like **Aspirational Districts Programme** to target multidimensional poverty in the most affected regions.
    - **Eg: NITI Aayog's** dashboard data helps tailor interventions based on district-specific needs.
5. **Focus on gender-inclusive policies**: Design policies that address the unique vulnerabilities of women in poverty, ensuring gender-equitable growth.
    - **Eg:** Enhancing **Women SHGs** through **DAY-NRLM** supports women-led micro-enterprises in rural areas.

Conclusion

An integrated, inclusive approach that combines economic policies with social and gender equity measures is essential for sustainable poverty alleviation. This holistic model will empower vulnerable sections, paving the way toward a resilient, equitable society.

Q. Evaluate the effectiveness of India's midday meal scheme in reducing hunger and improving educational outcomes. What steps can be taken to further enhance its impact? (10 M)

Introduction

The Midday Meal Scheme (MDMS) has made notable contributions to child welfare in India by addressing hunger and promoting educational outcomes among marginalized sections.

Body

Impact on Hunger	Positive Aspects	Negative Aspects
Enhanced Nutrition	MDMS provides essential calories and nutrients, reducing malnutrition among children.	Inconsistent quality in meal preparation in some states affects nutritional standards.
Reduction in Child Hunger	Regular meals reduce hunger, helping students focus better in class.	Occasional irregularities in meal distribution lead to missed meals in certain schools.
Community Empowerment	Encourages local participation, particularly by involving **women self-help groups**.	Limited resources in some areas affect the extent of community engagement in monitoring and management.
Promotion of Social Equity	MDMS helps integrate children from marginalized communities, promoting social harmony.	Cases of discrimination in meal distribution occasionally reported, especially in rural areas.
State-Specific Initiatives	States like **Tamil Nadu** and **Kerala** have added fortified foods to improve the scheme's effectiveness.	Implementation remains unequal, with some states showing slower progress due to logistical or financial issues.

Impact on Education	Positive Aspects	Negative Aspects
Increased Enrolment and Attendance	Free meals attract children to school, reducing dropout rates, especially among underprivileged groups.	Limited coverage of the scheme in remote areas may result in disparities in school attendance.
Improved Cognitive Development	Proper nutrition supports cognitive development, enhancing learning outcomes.	Inadequate food quality in some areas may hinder the full benefits of cognitive improvements.

Impact on Education	Positive Aspects	Negative Aspects
Support for Gender Parity	MDMS boosts female enrolment by easing household burdens, encouraging education for girls.	Certain areas still face social challenges, leading to lower participation of girls in the scheme.
Healthy Learning Environment	Nutritious meals contribute to a physically and mentally healthy school environment.	Occasional hygiene issues during food preparation impact the safety of the learning environment.
Encouragement for Continued Education	Improves morale and raises the likelihood of students pursuing secondary education.	Limited nutritional diversity sometimes fails to fully support older students' development.

Steps to enhance impact

1. **Strengthen quality and hygiene**: Enforce regular quality checks for food and ensure hygienic meal preparation in all schools.
    - **Eg: Kasturirangan Committee** recommends **inspections for meal quality** and hygiene.
2. **Diversify nutrition**: Introduce fortified foods and a wider variety of meal options to improve nutritional impact.
    - **Eg: Tamil Nadu added fortified rice to MDMS**, enhancing iron intake among students.
3. **Community monitoring mechanisms**: Empower local bodies and parents to monitor meal quality and distribution.
    - **Eg: Madhya Pradesh** involves parent committees for MDMS monitoring.
4. **Real-time digital tracking**: Implement digital tools to track meal distribution and attendance, reducing leakages.
    - **Eg: Chhattisgarh** launched **a real-time MDMS monitoring** app in 2021.
5. **Integration with health initiatives**: Link MDMS with health check-ups to address nutritional and health needs collectively.
    - **Eg: POSHAN Abhiyaan** is linked with MDMS in multiple states for integrated child health monitoring.

Conclusion

Enhancing the MDMS through community engagement, nutritional variety, and monitoring systems can maximize its impact on hunger and education, paving the way for a healthier, educated generation.

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

Q. "Accountability without transparency is incomplete". Analyze this statement in the context of governance in India. (10 M)

Introduction

Transparency is the **foundation for accountability**, as it empowers citizens to question and evaluate governance. Without transparency, accountability becomes merely symbolic, leading to inefficiency and mistrust in governance.

Body

Relationship between transparency and accountability

1. **Facilitates citizen oversight**: Transparency ensures information access, enabling citizens to hold the government answerable.
    - **Eg: RTI Act, 2005** allows citizens to question spending under schemes like **MGNREGA**, ensuring accountability.
2. **Prevents corruption and misuse of power**: Open processes deter corruption by making actions visible to the public.
    - **Eg: Social audits in Andhra Pradesh** under **MGNREGA** exposed misappropriation of funds (**Source: Ministry of Rural Development, 2021**).
3. **Strengthens participatory governance**: Transparency fosters citizen trust, encouraging active participation in policymaking.
    - **Eg:** Drafting of the **Digital India Act, 2023**, involved extensive public consultation to ensure inclusivity.
4. **Enables better institutional checks**: Transparency provides watchdog bodies with the tools to monitor effectively.
    - **Eg: Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** audits revealed irregularities in the **National Health Mission funds** (**2022**).

Challenges in governance when transparency is lacking

1. **Opaque financial mechanisms**: Lack of disclosure leads to doubts regarding fund utilization.
    - **Eg:** Concerns over non-transparency in **PM CARES Fund** usage (**2021**).

2. **Weak public service delivery**: Inadequate transparency leads to inefficiencies and delays in welfare programs.
    - **Eg:** Delays in **DBT for LPG subsidies** due to unclear grievance redressal mechanisms.
3. **Erosion of public trust**: Hidden processes weaken the citizen-government relationship.
    - **Eg:** Lack of clarity on the **data usage policies of Aadhaar** has raised public skepticism.
4. **Reduced institutional effectiveness**: Without transparency, agencies fail to function as effective accountability tools.
    - **Eg:** Ineffectiveness of **Lokayuktas** in states due to insufficient disclosure of case proceedings.

Steps to strengthen transparency and accountability

1. **Proactive disclosure**: Wider implementation of **Section 4 of the RTI Act** for automatic information sharing.
    - **Eg:** Maharashtra's **Suo-moto Disclosure System** has improved service delivery in rural areas.
2. **Integration of technology**: Digital platforms like **e-Governance** tools can enhance both transparency and monitoring.
    - **Eg: PRAGATI platform** ensures real-time monitoring of government projects.
3. **Strengthened grievance redressal mechanisms**: Expanding public grievance systems like **CPGRAMS** to ensure institutional accountability.
    - **Eg:** Over **21 lakh grievances** were redressed under **CPGRAMS in 2022** (**Source: DARPG**).
4. **Social accountability mechanisms**: Encourage mechanisms like public hearings and social audits.
    - **Eg: Jan Sunwai (public hearings)** in Rajasthan have improved the accountability of officials in rural development schemes.
5. **Legal and regulatory frameworks**: Strengthening anti-corruption laws and bodies.
    - **Eg:** The **Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014**, aims to protect those exposing corruption.

Conclusion

Transparency and accountability are **interdependent pillars** of good governance. Leveraging **digital tools, proactive disclosure**, and **citizen engagement mechanisms** can bridge governance gaps and foster a **trustworthy and responsive administration** in India.

Q. Discuss the importance of interoperability and standardization in the implementation of e-governance systems in India. (15 M)

Introduction

E-governance systems require **seamless integration** to enhance efficiency and accessibility. **Interoperability** ensures systems work together, while **standardization** creates uniformity, reducing redundancy and improving scalability, critical for effective governance in a diverse country like India.

Body

Importance of interoperability in e-governance

1. **Data integration and sharing**: Facilitates smooth information exchange across government departments.
    - **Eg: Aadhaar-enabled services** integrate with banks, ration shops, and welfare schemes to streamline operations.
2. **Improved citizen-centric services**: Enables hassle-free delivery of services on unified platforms.
    - **Eg:** The **UMANG app** integrates over 100 citizen services under one platform.
3. **Reduces duplication of efforts**: Eliminates repetitive data entry and ensures efficient resource utilization.
    - **Eg:** The **DigiLocker system** allows re-use of digital documents across government and private services.
4. **Fosters transparency and accountability**: Interoperable systems enable real-time monitoring and evaluation.
    - **Eg:** The **PRAGATI platform** integrates government projects for direct review by the Prime Minister.

Need for standardization in e-governance

1. **Uniformity across systems**: Ensures consistency and compatibility across states and institutions.
    - **Eg:** The **National e-Governance Standards Framework (NeST)** facilitates uniform adoption of technical standards.
2. **Cost efficiency and scalability**: Avoids duplication of infrastructure, reducing costs and enabling scalability.
    - **Eg:** Common Service Centres (**CSCs**) use standardized systems to deliver rural services.
3. **Enhanced security and reliability**: Standardized frameworks safeguard data integrity and system resilience.
    - **Eg:** The **Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture (DEPA)** ensures secure and standardized data-sharing protocols.

4. **Promotes inclusivity**: Common standards ensure services are accessible to diverse populations.
    - **Eg:** Standardized user interfaces in the **CoWIN platform** facilitated vaccination registration in multiple languages.

Challenges in achieving interoperability and standardization

1. **Fragmented IT infrastructure**: Legacy systems in various states lack integration capabilities.
    - **Eg:** Disparate e-portals for urban local bodies complicate property tax systems.
2. **Lack of technical expertise**: Inadequate skill sets among officials hinder implementation.
    - **Eg:** Slow adoption of the **e-Office platform** in many departments despite national push.
3. **Data privacy and security concerns**: Unified platforms increase the risk of data breaches.
    - **Eg:** Concerns over vulnerabilities in the **CoWIN database** during vaccine registration.
4. **Resistance to change**: Bureaucratic inertia slows adoption of new systems.
    - **Eg:** Limited transition to digital platforms like **GeM (Government e-Marketplace)** despite its efficiency.

Steps to enhance interoperability and standardization

1. **Enforce national frameworks**: Adopt mandatory compliance with **NeST** and open APIs.
    - **Eg: GSTN** integrates tax systems across states through standardized APIs.
2. **Capacity building**: Train officials in technical skills through platforms like **iGOT Karmayogi**.
    - **Eg:** The platform trained over **15 lakh government employees** in 2022.
3. **Integration of emerging technologies**: Leverage AI, blockchain, and IoT for secure and interoperable systems.
    - **Eg: Blockchain technology in Telangana's land records** ensures tamper-proof data sharing.
4. **Unified platforms**: Consolidate multiple services under one interface for ease of use.
    - **Eg: UMANG and DigiLocker** provide unified access to various services.

Conclusion

Interoperability and standardization are **essential for delivering efficient and inclusive e-governance services**. By addressing gaps in infrastructure, security, and capacity, India can build **a robust, citizen-centric governance ecosystem** aligned with the vision of **Digital India**.

Q. "Stricter laws are necessary to regulate social media and OTT platforms, but they must balance freedom of expression with societal and cultural sensitivities". Comment. (10 M)

Introduction

Social media and OTT platforms have democratized **information dissemination**, but the absence of effective regulation has led to issues like **misinformation, vulgar content, and cultural insensitivity**. Stricter laws are essential, but they must preserve **freedom of expression**, a cornerstone of democracy, while respecting **India's unique societal norms**.

Body

Stricter laws are necessary to regulate social media and OTT platforms

1. **Combatting misinformation and fake news**: Stricter laws are needed to curb the spread of **fake news**, which can incite violence and communal tensions.
    - **Eg**: During the **2020 Delhi riots**, fake videos on platforms like **Facebook and WhatsApp** escalated tensions.
2. **Preventing the spread of harmful and illegal content**: Regulation is crucial to tackle **vulgar, violent, and illegal content** that can harm public morality and order.
    - **Eg**: OTT platforms faced backlash for shows like **Tandav (2021)**, which were accused of hurting **religious sentiments**.
3. **Ensuring accountability of platforms**: Laws can mandate **platforms to take responsibility** for user-generated content and set up **grievance redressal mechanisms**.
    - **Eg**: The **IT Rules, 2021**, require compliance officers to address grievances within **15 days**.
4. **Protecting national security**: Stricter frameworks can address **cybersecurity threats** and misinformation campaigns by foreign entities.
    - **Eg**: During the **2019 Pulwama attack**, misinformation spread on platforms like **Twitter** incited public anger.
5. **Promoting digital hygiene and ethical content**: Regulations can encourage platforms to maintain **ethical standards** and ensure safe digital spaces.
    - **Eg**: The **German Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG)** mandates platforms remove unlawful content within **24 hours**.

Balancing freedom of expression with societal and cultural sensitivities

1. **Preserving democratic values**: Laws must ensure that **freedom of speech**, guaranteed under **Article 19(1)(a)** of the Constitution, is not stifled.
    - **Eg**: The Supreme Court in **Shreya Singhal vs Union of India (2015)** struck down Section 66A of the IT Act for being **vague and overbroad**.

2. **Avoiding over-censorship**: Excessive restrictions can lead to **chilling effects**, discouraging creativity and dissent.
    - **Eg**: The OTT series **Paatal Lok (2020)** faced complaints but also received praise for its **critical social commentary**.
3. **Accommodating diverse viewpoints**: Regulation must respect **India's pluralistic society** by balancing competing interests.
    - **Eg**: Controversies around content like **Sacred Games (2018)** highlighted differing perceptions of **artistic expression**.
4. **Promoting self-regulation with accountability**: Encouraging **platform-driven content moderation** can ensure cultural sensitivities without government overreach.
    - **Eg**: The **Digital Media Ethics Code (2021)** emphasizes self-regulation by OTT platforms through **grievance officers**.
5. **Maintaining proportionality in penalties**: Laws should impose **graded penalties** to prevent disproportionate punishment that might deter legitimate content creators.
    - **Eg**: Singapore's **Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (2019)** ensures **proportionate action** while addressing misinformation.

Conclusion

Striking a balance between **freedom of expression** and stricter regulation requires a **collaborative approach**, combining **societal consensus, self-regulation, and robust legislative measures**. Future frameworks should ensure **accountability without stifling creativity** while respecting India's **democratic ethos** and **cultural diversity**.

Role of civil services in a democracy.

India and its neighborhood- relations.

Q. What are the major areas of contention in India-Nepal relations? Analyze the steps that could be taken to mitigate these issues for a stable bilateral relationship. (10 M)

Introduction

India and Nepal share a **unique socio-cultural bond** and **strategic partnership**, but several issues have strained their relationship in recent years.

Body

Major areas of contention

1. **Border disputes**: The Kalapani-Limpiyadhura region remains a longstanding territorial issue affecting trust.
    - E.g.: **2020**, **Nepal released a new political map** including the disputed area, straining relations further.
2. **Water sharing issues**: Disputes over shared rivers like the Mahakali and Kosi impact local livelihoods and border relations.
    - E.g.: The **Mahakali Treaty (1996**) has faced implementation challenges, affecting both irrigation and flood control.
3. **Influence of third-party nations**: Nepal's growing proximity with **China** has introduced strategic concerns for India.
    - E.g.: Nepal signed a **Transport and Transit Agreement** with China in **2016**, reducing its dependency on India.
4. **Economic dependency and trade imbalance**: Nepal's heavy reliance on India for trade and energy resources sometimes leads to diplomatic friction.
    - E.g.: In **2015**, an **informal blockade by India** was perceived in Nepal as economic coercion.
5. **Political instability in Nepal**: Frequent changes in Nepal's political leadership hinder stable and consistent bilateral policy.
    - E.g.: **Since 2018, Nepal has had multiple changes** in government, affecting policy continuity with India.

Steps to mitigate issues

1. **Bilateral dialogue mechanism**: Regular dialogue platforms to address border and water issues will strengthen mutual trust.
    - E.g.: **Bilateral Technical Committee** meetings can expedite conflict resolution.
2. **Promote people-to-people ties**: Expanding educational and cultural exchange programs to foster mutual goodwill.
    - E.g.: India's **Bharat-Nepal Maitri** initiatives provide scholarships for Nepalese students.
3. **Economic cooperation and infrastructure development**: Joint projects in sectors like energy, trade, and infrastructure to reduce economic tensions.
    - E.g.: The **India-Nepal Petroleum Pipeline (2019)** has strengthened energy security in Nepal.
4. **Engage in multilateral platforms**: Collaboration in regional forums like **BIMSTEC** can promote a balanced approach towards security and development.
    - E.g.: **BIMSTEC's 2022 summit** encouraged cooperation on security, benefiting both countries.
5. **Strengthen border management**: Improved management of border activities and infrastructure to prevent disputes.
    - E.g.: **Nepal-India Border Infrastructure Project**, enhancing connectivity and safety.

Conclusion

For a **stable and prosperous relationship**, India and Nepal need to focus on **constructive engagement** and **mutual respect**. Effective diplomacy and cooperative projects can enhance bilateral relations, setting an example for regional harmony in South Asia.

Q. "India's foreign policy has transitioned from idealism to pragmatism over the decades". Discuss (15 M)

Introduction

India's foreign policy journey reflects a **shift from idealistic non-alignment** to a **strategically pragmatic multi-alignment** aimed at achieving national interests in a multipolar world.

Body

Initial Idealism in India's Foreign Policy

1. **Non-alignment and anti-colonial stance**: Emphasized independence from Cold War blocs, asserting sovereignty and neutrality.
    - E.g.: **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)**, co-founded by India in 1961, provided a platform for newly independent nations.
2. **Panchsheel principles**: Focused on peaceful coexistence and mutual respect as core diplomatic values.
    - E.g.: **1954 Panchsheel Agreement** with China promoted non-interference and territorial integrity.
3. **Global disarmament advocacy**: Called for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation on the global stage.
    - E.g.: India's **refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** in 1968, objecting to its discriminatory nature.
4. **Support for decolonization movements**: Advocated for freedom and racial equality across Asia and Africa.
    - E.g.: India's **support in the Bandung Conference (1955)** strengthened Afro-Asian unity against colonialism.
5. **South-South cooperation**: Promoted economic and technical collaboration among developing nations to achieve self-reliance.
    - E.g.: **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program** launched in 1964 to aid skill development in developing countries.

Shift to Pragmatism in the Post-Cold War Era

1. **Economic liberalization and global integration**: Reforms in 1991 signalled a shift to economic diplomacy and global market integration.

    - E.g.: India's **Look East Policy (1991)** fostered ties with ASEAN, enhancing trade and regional connectivity.
2. **Strategic autonomy and multi-alignment**: Pragmatic approach to balance relationships with major powers, focusing on sovereignty.
    - E.g.: The **Indo-US Nuclear Deal (2008)** represents strategic alignment without compromising autonomy.
3. **Increased engagement with multilateral institutions**: Strengthened role in platforms like WTO to align with global economic trends.
    - E.g.: **Joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995** enhanced India's global economic position.
4. **Diaspora diplomacy**: Leveraged the Indian diaspora for economic and soft power gains.
    - E.g.: **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (2003)** established to attract investments and boost cultural influence.
5. **Defense modernization and partnerships**: Developed defence collaborations to strengthen security capabilities.
    - E.g.: **Bilateral defence partnerships with Israel and France** boosted India's defence technology access.

Contemporary Foreign Policy – Pragmatism in a Multipolar World

1. **Act east policy**: A more assertive engagement with Southeast Asia for economic and security interests.
    - E.g.: **India-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2022)** expanded trade and defence ties.
2. **Neighbourhood first policy**: Focused on stable and cooperative relations with immediate neighbours.
    - E.g.: **Assistance to Sri Lanka during its economic crisis (2022)** demonstrates India's regional responsibility.
3. **Strategic partnerships and multi-alignment**: Balancing relations with major powers to retain strategic flexibility.
    - E.g.: **India's neutral stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict** highlights strategic autonomy.
4. **Climate and energy diplomacy**: Promotes renewable energy and sustainability collaborations.
    - E.g.: **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**, launched in 2015, positions India as a global leader in solar energy.
5. **Expanding role in global governance**: Active involvement in multilateral platforms like BRICS and SCO.
    - E.g.: **India's presidency of G20 (2023)** provides an influential platform for promoting development and sustainability.

Conclusion

India's pragmatic foreign policy today is a balanced approach to **safeguard its strategic interests while expanding global influence**. This adaptable stance reinforces India's role as a resilient actor in the evolving multipolar world.

Q. Evaluate the impact of the Taliban's return to power on India's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. What challenges and opportunities does it present? (10 M)

Introduction

The **Taliban's return to power in August 2021** has created significant shifts in **India's foreign policy**, particularly regarding its strategic, security, and economic interests in Afghanistan and the broader region.

Body

Impact on India's foreign policy

1. **Increased security threats**: The Taliban's return amplifies threats from **terror networks** like **Jaish-e-Mohammed** and **Lashkar-e-Taiba**, which may leverage Taliban's support against India, especially in Kashmir.
    - **E.g.: Intelligence reports indicate increased infiltration** attempts post-Taliban takeover in Afghanistan.
2. **Strategic setback**: India's **$3 billion investments** in Afghan development projects face uncertainty, as Taliban's alignment with **Pakistan** could limit India's influence.
    - **E.g.:** Key projects like the **Zaranj-Delaram Highway** and **Salma Dam** are now in a fragile state.
3. **Diplomatic marginalization**: With **Pakistan and China** gaining influence over Afghanistan, India faces challenges in maintaining its **diplomatic foothold**.
    - **E.g.:** India was **excluded** from key negotiations like the **Troika Plus**.
4. **Humanitarian engagement dilemma**: While maintaining a **non-recognition stance**, India continues humanitarian aid to avoid **humanitarian crises**, positioning itself as a responsible regional player.
    - **E.g.: India's provision of 50,000 metric tons of wheat** to Afghanistan in 2022 under UN's World Food Programme.

Challenges for India

1. **Terrorism and radicalization**: The Taliban's return could embolden terror groups, with concerns over **spill over effects** into **Kashmir** and increased radicalization across South Asia.
    - **E.g.:** Reports from the **UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team** highlight growing presence of **Al-Qaeda** in Afghanistan post-2021.

2. **Loss of regional leverage**: The **Chabahar Port**, a strategic project for accessing **Central Asia**, now faces uncertainty as Afghanistan under the Taliban regime may pivot towards **China-Pakistan routes**.
    - **E.g.: Chabahar's underutilization** amidst growing China-Pakistan economic influence.
3. **Diplomatic isolation**: India's **non-recognition of the Taliban regime** might isolate it diplomatically, as regional powers like **Russia, Iran, and China** engage more directly with the Taliban.
    - **E.g.: Russia's Moscow Format talks** included the Taliban but excluded India initially.
4. **Human rights dilemma**: India's stance on **human rights**—especially regarding **women's rights** and **freedom of expression**—in Afghanistan poses a challenge in determining the extent of engagement with the Taliban.
    - **E.g.:** Global concerns over Taliban's restrictions on **female education and employment** since taking power.

Opportunities for India

1. **Humanitarian diplomacy**: By continuing to provide **humanitarian aid**, India can maintain **soft power** influence, ensuring goodwill among the Afghan people, even without formal recognition of the Taliban.
    - **E.g.:** India's role in **sending medical supplies** and vaccines during the pandemic to Afghanistan.
2. **Regional engagement through sco**: By participating in the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)**, India can engage with Afghanistan diplomatically, leveraging multilateral platforms to counter Pakistan's and China's influence.
    - **E.g.:** India's active participation in **SCO's Afghanistan Contact Group**.
3. **Counterterrorism collaboration**: India can collaborate with other global powers, like the **USA**, **Russia**, and **Central Asian Republics**, to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a breeding ground for terrorism.
    - **E.g.: India's participation in FATF discussions aimed** at monitoring **terror financing** linked to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.
4. **Cultural and educational influence**: India's long-standing cultural ties and educational support to Afghan students continue to present an opportunity to maintain a **people-to-people connect**.
    - **E.g.: India's ongoing provision** of scholarships for **Afghan students**.

Conclusion

India's response to the Taliban's return requires a **strategic balance** of **security concerns** and **diplomatic pragmatism**, with a strong focus on **regional engagement** through multilateral forums and **counterterrorism** efforts. By maintaining **humanitarian goodwill** and closely monitoring geopolitical shifts, India can mitigate the challenges posed by the new regime in Afghanistan.

Q. "India has been a key player in SAARC, but the organization's effectiveness remains limited. Examine the factors that have hindered SAARC's success. How can India address these challenges while promoting regional cooperation within South Asia? (15 M)

Introduction

India, as a founding member of SAARC, has consistently driven initiatives for regional cooperation. However, despite India's efforts, the organization has **struggled to achieve its goals**, resulting in limited effectiveness over the years.

Body

India's role in SAARC and reasons for limited effectiveness

1. **Driving Economic and Regional Initiatives:** India has been central in pushing for economic cooperation, connectivity, and regional development within SAARC.
    - **Eg:** India was key in the **South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA)** agreement, aiming to boost intra-regional trade.
2. **Leadership in Regional Security Issues:** India has led SAARC's efforts to combat terrorism and cross-border threats, proposing multiple security cooperation initiatives.
    - **Eg:** India spearheaded the creation of the **SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism** in 1987.

However, despite these efforts, **SAARC's effectiveness remains limited** due to several challenges:

1. **Low Intra-Regional Trade:** Despite SAFTA, intra-SAARC trade remains below 5%, highlighting poor economic integration and limited success in realizing SAARC's economic potential.
    - **Eg: India's trade with ASEAN exceeds its trade with SAARC** countries, underlining the failure of SAARC to foster significant economic ties.
2. **Stalled Summits and Lack of Political Cohesion:** Key political differences, particularly between India and Pakistan, have disrupted summit-level engagements, leading to a stalled decision-making process.
    - **Eg:** The **2016 SAARC Summit was indefinitely postponed** due to tensions between India and Pakistan, signalling the breakdown of political cohesion.

3. **Over-reliance on Unanimity:** SAARC's decision-making process requiring consensus has slowed down initiatives, as disagreements between member states often halt progress.
    - **Eg:** The **SAARC Motor Vehicles Agreement** remains unimplemented due to Pakistan's objections, stalling regional connectivity efforts.

Factors Hindering SAARC's Success

1. **India-Pakistan Conflict:** Ongoing geopolitical tensions between India and Pakistan have frequently derailed SAARC's initiatives and limited its overall effectiveness.
    - **Eg:** The **Uri attack in 2016 led to India boycotting the SAARC** summit, causing further setbacks for regional cooperation.
2. **Economic Disparities:** Vast economic differences between SAARC members, particularly between India and smaller economies, have made achieving uniform economic cooperation challenging.
    - **Eg: India's GDP is over eight times larger than Pakistan's**, leading to imbalances in trade negotiations and expectations.
3. **Limited Implementation of Agreements:** SAARC agreements often face significant implementation delays due to lack of political will and capacity.
    - **Eg:** The **SAARC Food Bank**, meant to ensure food security, has had minimal practical impact due to underutilization.
4. **Dependence on External Aid:** Many SAARC countries depend on external powers like China for economic and strategic assistance, which has weakened SAARC's internal cooperation.
    - **Eg: Nepal and Sri Lanka's increasing reliance on Chinese infrastructure projects** have diluted SAARC's regional unity.
5. **Lack of Supranational Authority:** SAARC lacks a strong supranational body to enforce decisions or ensure compliance, making it ineffective in implementing regional policies.
    - **Eg:** Unlike the **European Union**, **SAARC does not have institutions** with the authority to enforce decisions or resolve disputes.

How India can address these challenges

1. **Enhancing Bilateral Cooperation within SAARC:** India can focus on strengthening bilateral ties with individual SAARC members, fostering trust and cooperation that could lead to greater multilateral success.
    - **Eg:** India's recent efforts with **Bangladesh on connectivity and trade** have improved bilateral cooperation despite SAARC's limited progress.

2. **Reforming SAARC's Structure:** India can lead efforts to reform SAARC's decision-making process, advocating for **majority-based decisions** instead of consensus, which often stalls progress.
    - **Eg:** India could **propose reforms similar to the BIMSTEC mechanism**, which has allowed greater flexibility in regional agreements.
3. **Encouraging Economic Integration:** India can push for deeper economic integration through enhanced trade facilitation, connectivity projects, and investment within the SAARC framework.
    - **Eg:** India's **BBIN initiative** with Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal on **transport connectivity** bypasses Pakistan's reluctance and demonstrates the potential of sub-regional cooperation.
4. **Promoting People-to-People Engagement:** India can leverage cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, and tourism to strengthen socio-cultural ties among SAARC nations.
    - **Eg:** India's **SAARC Scholarships for students** from member countries has fostered academic and cultural exchanges.
5. **Expanding Regional Connectivity:** India should continue investing in infrastructure projects that enhance connectivity across the region, facilitating trade and people-to-people contact.
    - **Eg:** The **India-Nepal Rail Link Project exemplifies India's commitment** to improving regional connectivity, even when SAARC-level initiatives stall.

Conclusion

India's pivotal role in SAARC, despite the organization's challenges, presents opportunities for reform. **By fostering bilateral cooperation, promoting regional integration, and pushing for structural reforms**, India can revitalize SAARC and enhance South Asia's prospects for stability and development.

Q1. Assess the impact of China's economic diplomacy in South Asia and how India can respond to safeguard its strategic interests. (10 M)

Introduction

China's **economic diplomacy** in South Asia, mainly through the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, has significantly altered the regional dynamics, posing strategic challenges to India's influence and security.

Body

China's economic diplomacy in south Asia

1. **Belt and road initiative (BRI):** China's BRI has expanded its infrastructure investments, thereby increasing its strategic footprint in South Asia.
    - **E.g.:** The **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**, with over **$62 billion** in investments, enhances China's influence in Pakistan.
2. **Debt-trap diplomacy:** China's economic assistance has led some South Asian nations into unsustainable debt, allowing China to extract strategic concessions.
    - **E.g.:** Sri Lanka's **Hambantota Port** was leased to China for **99 years** due to its inability to repay loans.
3. **Trade dominance:** China has become a dominant trade partner in the region, diminishing India's traditional economic ties with its neighbours.
    - **E.g.:** In 2023, China became **Bangladesh's largest trading partner**, with trade volume surpassing **$18 billion**.
4. **Strategic military cooperation:** China is expanding its military ties in South Asia, particularly with Pakistan and Nepal, impacting India's security calculus.
    - **E.g.:** China's **military assistance to Nepal** and defense collaborations with **Pakistan** raise concerns for India.
5. **Diplomatic engagement:** Through strategic forums and high-level engagements, China is strengthening its diplomatic presence in the region.
    - **E.g.:** The **China-South Asia Cooperation Forum** was initiated to deepen Beijing's ties with South Asian countries.

India's strategic response

1. **Neighbourhood first policy:** India is engaging its South Asian neighbors more proactively by providing economic aid and infrastructure support.
    - **E.g.:** India's **$1.4 billion credit line** to Sri Lanka in 2022 to counterbalance Chinese investments.
2. **SAGAR initiative:** India's **Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)** initiative focuses on enhancing maritime cooperation and regional security in the Indian Ocean.
    - **E.g.:** India's support to **Maldives under SAGAR for infrastructure projects** to counter China's maritime influence.
3. **Regional connectivity projects:** India is bolstering connectivity with South Asian nations through initiatives like the **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project** and the **BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement**.
    - **E.g.:** The development of **Chabahar Port** as a strategic alternative to China's Gwadar Port in Pakistan.
4. **Economic diplomacy:** India is intensifying trade and investment ties with South Asian nations to retain its economic leverage.
    - **E.g.:** India's trade with **Bangladesh** reached **$16 billion** in 2023, showcasing increased engagement.
5. **Leveraging multilateral platforms:** India is using platforms like **BIMSTEC** and **IORA** to enhance regional cooperation and counter China's influence.

- **E.g.: India's leadership** in **BIMSTEC** focuses on strengthening regional connectivity and economic growth.

Conclusion

India must proactively **expand its economic, diplomatic, and security engagements** in South Asia to maintain its strategic influence and effectively counterbalance China's growing presence.

Q. Assess the impact of China's economic diplomacy in South Asia and how India can respond to safeguard its strategic interests. (10 M)

Introduction

China's **economic diplomacy** in South Asia, mainly through the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, has significantly altered the regional dynamics, posing strategic challenges to India's influence and security.

Body

China's economic diplomacy in south Asia

6. **Belt and road initiative (BRI):** China's BRI has expanded its infrastructure investments, thereby increasing its strategic footprint in South Asia.
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Conclusion

India must proactively **expand its economic, diplomatic, and security engagements** in South Asia to maintain its strategic influence and effectively counterbalance China's growing presence.

Q. Examine the importance of India's relationship with ASEAN in enhancing regional stability and economic growth in Southeast Asia. (10 M)

Introduction

India's partnership with **ASEAN** is vital for promoting **regional stability** and **economic prosperity** in Southeast Asia, aligning with India's **Act East Policy** and commitment to a **free and open Indo-Pacific**.

Body

Regional stability

1. **Security and maritime cooperation**: India actively engages in **ASEAN-led forums** like the East Asia Summit (EAS) and ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) to promote maritime security.

- **E.g.:** In 2023, India **conducted joint maritime exercises** with ASEAN nations to ensure **freedom of navigation** and a **rules-based order** in the South China Sea.

2. **Counter-terrorism and anti-radicalization initiatives**: India and ASEAN collaborate on counter-terrorism through intelligence-sharing and capacity building.
    - **E.g.:** The **ASEAN-India Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism** provides anti-terrorism training to Southeast Asian countries to combat insurgency and radicalization.
3. **Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR)**: India has been a strong supporter of HADR initiatives with ASEAN, aiding regional stability in times of crisis.
    - **E.g.:** During Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar (2008) and recent COVID-19 aid, India has been quick to provide **humanitarian assistance** to ASEAN nations.
4. **Cybersecurity and digital cooperation**: India partners with ASEAN to address cyber threats, vital for the stability of digital economies.
    - **E.g.:** The **ASEAN-India Digital Work Plan** (2022) prioritizes cybersecurity frameworks to secure regional digital infrastructure.
5. **Peaceful nuclear cooperation**: India supports ASEAN's **Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone**, which bolsters the region's commitment to non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy.
    - **E.g.: India reaffirmed support for ASEAN's non-nuclear stance** in 2023 as part of its Indo-Pacific policy.

Economic growth

1. **Trade and investment expansion**: The **ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement (AIFTA)** has increased market access and strengthened economic integration, especially in sectors like pharmaceuticals, electronics, and agriculture.
    - **E.g.:** India-ASEAN trade reached **USD 110 billion in 2022**, with a goal of **USD 200 billion by 2025** (Source: Ministry of Commerce).
2. **Digital and technological partnerships**: India's IT expertise offers growth opportunities for ASEAN in sectors like **e-governance** and **fintech**, promoting inclusive digital economies.
    - **E.g.: India provided fintech solutions and digital payment** models to ASEAN, enhancing regional financial inclusion (ASEAN Digital Ministers' Meeting, 2023).
3. **Connectivity and infrastructure projects**: India's investments in connectivity projects like the **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway** promote regional trade and integration.
    - **E.g.:** The **Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project** enhances logistical links with ASEAN, boosting trade via Myanmar.
4. **Energy security and renewable cooperation**: India collaborates with ASEAN in the **International Solar Alliance** to promote renewable energy.

- **E.g.: India committed USD 1 billion** for solar energy projects in ASEAN nations to support regional clean energy goals (ISA, 2023).

5. **Tourism and cultural linkages**: Strong cultural ties bolster tourism, fostering people-to-people connectivity and economic growth.
    - **E.g.:** ASEAN countries received **500,000+ Indian tourists** in 2023, supporting local economies and cultural exchange (Ministry of Tourism).
6. **Blue economy partnerships**: India and ASEAN work together on fisheries, marine resources, and coastal management, contributing to sustainable economic growth.
    - **E.g.:** India's **Blue Economy Vision** has supported ASEAN projects on sustainable fishing practices in the Indo-Pacific.

Conclusion

India-ASEAN relations are a cornerstone for a **stable and prosperous Southeast Asia**. By **strengthening security cooperation and expanding economic ties**, both regions can build a resilient partnership, addressing common challenges and fostering sustainable growth for future generations.

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

Q. "India-Israel relations are evolving beyond defence cooperation into new dimensions". Evaluate the current status and potential of this relationship. (10 M)

Introduction:

India-Israel relations, which initially centered on defence cooperation, have diversified over recent years to encompass areas such **as technology, agriculture, water management, and innovation**. This evolution marks the emergence of a multi-dimensional partnership with strategic, economic, and developmental potential.

Body

Evolving dimensions of India-Israel relations

1. **Agricultural innovation:** Israel's expertise in advanced irrigation techniques and precision agriculture has significantly benefited India's agritech sector.
    - E.g., The **Indo-Israel Villages of Excellence (2022)** initiative aims to establish centers for sharing advanced agricultural practices to enhance productivity and water efficiency (MEA, 2022).

2. **Technology and cybersecurity cooperation:** India and Israel have strengthened collaboration in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and digital technology, supporting India's digital transformation and national security.
    - E.g., In **2020, Israel partnered with Indian companies to launch cybersecurity training programs**, addressing increasing cyber threats.
3. **Water resource management:** Israel's cutting-edge water conservation and desalination technologies are vital for water-scarce regions in India.
    - E.g., The **Jal Shakti Ministry collaborated with Israeli firms in 2021** to implement water conservation technologies in Rajasthan.
4. **Healthcare and pandemic response:** Both nations have collaborated on pandemic-related healthcare and diagnostics, boosting public health ties.
    - E.g., Israel provided rapid COVID-19 testing kits to India during the pandemic, showcasing strong healthcare collaboration (2020).
5. **Renewable energy partnership:** India and Israel are expanding cooperation in renewable energy, particularly in solar power and green hydrogen.
    - E.g., The **Green Hydrogen MoU (2021)** aligns with India's National Hydrogen Mission, setting the foundation for joint renewable energy ventures.

Potential of the India-Israel partnership

1. **Strengthening innovation and R&D:** Expanding collaboration in R&D sectors, including quantum computing and biotechnology, could significantly boost India's self-reliance in high-tech fields.
    - E.g., The **India-Israel Innovation Fund (2017)** has been instrumental in funding joint research and technological development initiatives.
2. **Boosting economic cooperation:** Enhanced trade in technology, agriculture, and innovation, along with a potential FTA, can deepen bilateral trade, currently valued at around $8.5 billion (MEA, 2023).
    - E.g., **Israel's increasing investments in Indian tech and agritech startups** highlight the strengthening economic ties.
3. **Educational and skill development partnerships:** Collaborations in higher education and skill development, particularly in emerging fields like AI, cybersecurity, and agritech, can help bridge skill gaps in India.
    - E.g., **Tel Aviv University's partnerships with Indian universities** have created joint courses focused on technology and innovation since 2021.
4. **Defence technology co-development:** Moving beyond buyer-supplier relations, co-development in defence technology can significantly advance India's defense manufacturing under "Make in India."
    - E.g., **DRDO's collaboration with Israeli defense firms** in UAV technology is aiding in the development of indigenous capabilities.
5. **Climate resilience and sustainability:** Israel's expertise in climate resilience—such as advanced water recycling and energy-efficient practices—can support India's adaptation to climate challenges.

- E.g., **Israel's water recycling model has been adopted in Maharashtra** to enhance water efficiency and support sustainable agriculture.

6. **Regional strategic impact:** India-Israel cooperation, particularly through the I2U2 grouping (India, Israel, UAE, USA), enhances India's strategic leverage in West Asia, advancing shared goals in trade, energy security, and stability.
    - E.g., The **I2U2 summit in 2022 focused on joint investments in infrastructure and renewable energy projects** in the region.

Conclusion:

India-Israel relations have matured into a comprehensive partnership, expanding into sectors that are crucial for both countries' development and strategic interests. **By leveraging these growing ties, India can further its innovation, self-reliance, and sustainability goals, setting the stage for a resilient, multifaceted partnership** in the coming years.

Q. Discuss how India's 'Look West' policy has evolved in recent years. What factors have driven this policy shift, and how does it impact India's economic and strategic interests in West Asia. (15 M)

Introduction:

India's 'Look West' policy, initially focused on energy security, has evolved into a broad **strategy that integrates defence, economic, and cultural dimensions**, underscoring India's proactive role in West Asia.

Body

Evolution of the 'look west' policy

1. **Strategic partnerships beyond oil:** Shifting from an oil-centric approach, India now focuses on a balanced relationship encompassing defence, technology, and investment.
    - E.g., **Long-term energy agreements with UAE and Saudi Arabia** and strategic defence cooperation agreements (MEA, 2023).
2. **Expanding economic ties:** The focus has moved to non-oil sectors, especially tech and infrastructure.
    - E.g., **India-UAE CEPA (2022)**, with a target to double bilateral trade by 2030 (Source: MEA).
3. **Enhanced diplomatic balance:** India's outreach to both GCC and non-GCC nations demonstrates an inclusive approach.
    - E.g., **PM's visits to both Saudi Arabia and Iran** reflect balanced diplomacy.

Factors driving the shift

1. **Geopolitical realignment:** The **Abraham Accords (2020)** have opened new opportunities with both Arab countries and Israel.

    - E.g., **The I2U2 alliance (India, Israel, UAE, USA)** marks India's growing regional influence.
2. **Diversified energy security:** India seeks stable energy partnerships, with investments also in renewables.
    - E.g., **India-Saudi Arabia green hydrogen initiatives** align with India's National Hydrogen Mission.
3. **Counter-terrorism needs:** Rising regional security threats make cooperation in defence and intelligence essential.
    - E.g., **India-UAE Joint Defence Cooperation (2017)** strengthens counter-terrorism and maritime security.
4. **Diaspora influence:** India's 9-million-strong diaspora enhances remittance flows and cultural ties.
    - E.g., **GCC remittances make up over 50%** of India's remittances (World Bank, 2022).

Impact on India's economic interests

1. **Expanding trade and investment:** Trade with West Asia constitutes over 16% of India's total trade, moving beyond oil to other sectors.
    - E.g., **Adani's partnership with Mubadala** reflects expanding non-oil investments.
2. **Securing energy supply and diversification:** Long-term energy deals with UAE and Saudi Arabia secure consistent supply and build resilience.
    - E.g., **India-Saudi Strategic Partnership Council** focuses on tech and energy projects.
3. **Infrastructure and connectivity gains:** Projects like Chabahar Port in Iran enhance India's connectivity with Central Asia.
    - E.g., **Chabahar Port** facilitates trade access to Afghanistan, positioning India strategically.

Impact on India's strategic interests

1. **Strengthening defence presence:** Partnerships with UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Oman boost defence capabilities and influence in the Indian Ocean Region.
    - E.g., **Desert Eagle exercises with UAE** underscore India's regional security role.
2. **Ensuring maritime security:** Joint efforts improve maritime safety in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean.
    - E.g., The **India-Bahrain MoU on Counter-Terrorism (2019)** enhances regional security.
3. **Balanced diplomacy:** India's neutral approach allows it to engage Iran, Israel, and GCC nations strategically.
    - E.g., **Continued trade with Iran** despite sanctions showcases diplomatic agility.

Conclusion

India's 'Look West' policy has adapted to meet both regional and global challenges, positioning India as a balancing power. Moving forward, **India could leverage these ties to enhance sustainable energy cooperation and further regional stability**, cementing its role as a key player in West Asia.

Q. Analze the economic and strategic significance of fostering strong India-Mediterranean relations. (10 M)

Introduction

The Mediterranean region, serving as a vital link between Europe, Asia, and Africa, offers immense potential for India in trade, energy, and geopolitics. With annual bilateral trade of **USD 80 billion** and the transformative **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)** in progress, fostering strong relations holds both economic and strategic significance.

Body

Economic significance

1. **Trade and economic integration**: The Mediterranean is a gateway for Indian exports to Europe, with major trading partners like Italy and Israel.
    - **Eg:** India's **bilateral trade with Italy** crossed **USD 16 billion in 2023**, with a focus on machinery, automotive parts, and textiles.
2. **Energy security**: Mediterranean nations are critical for India's energy imports, particularly liquefied natural gas (LNG) and fertilizers.
    - **Eg: Israel and Egypt** are key partners for LNG, while Morocco supplies over **20% of India's phosphates** for fertilizers.
3. **Investment and infrastructure collaboration**: Mediterranean countries provide investment opportunities in critical sectors such as renewable energy, ports, and logistics.
    - **Eg:** Indian companies like **Adani Ports** are exploring investments in Mediterranean ports, boosting maritime connectivity.
4. **Technology and innovation collaboration**: Mediterranean countries, like Israel, are leaders in water management, agriculture, and defence technologies.
    - **Eg:** The **India-Israel Innovation Bridge**, launched in **2017**, fosters technological exchanges in agriculture and cybersecurity.
5. **Diaspora contributions**: The Indian diaspora, especially in Italy (housing **40% of the Mediterranean diaspora**), plays a significant role in trade, remittances, and cultural diplomacy.
    - **Eg: Remittances from the region contribute** to India's foreign reserves.

Strategic significance

1. **Geopolitical influence**: The Mediterranean connects Europe, West Asia, and North Africa, making it central to India's **Act West Policy** and its efforts to counterbalance China's influence.
    - **Eg:** The **IMEC**, announced at the **G20 Summit (2023)**, strengthens India's position as a trade and connectivity hub.
2. **Defence collaboration**: Increasing joint military exercises and arms trade enhance India's defence preparedness and strategic presence.
    - **Eg:** The **India-Egypt Strategic Partnership (2023)** expanded military ties, including arms exports.
3. **Maritime security**: The Mediterranean is a critical chokepoint for global shipping. Strong ties help India secure its trade routes and collaborate on anti-piracy operations.
    - **Eg: Participation in the Blue Flag Naval Exercises** with Israel and Mediterranean partners.
4. **Stability amidst global conflicts**: India's engagement in the Mediterranean, particularly its diplomatic role in West Asia, helps manage tensions and advocate peace.
    - **Eg:** India's **balanced stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict**, supporting a ceasefire and a two-state solution.
5. **Regional connectivity**: Strengthening Mediterranean ties complements India's larger infrastructure and connectivity goals under the **IMEC**.
    - **Eg: Enhanced trade and logistics** with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Europe.

Conclusion

Fostering strong India-Mediterranean relations aligns with India's vision of a multipolar world, enhancing its economic and strategic resilience. Moving forward, integrating Mediterranean partnerships into **global value chains** and ensuring **maritime stability** can unlock shared prosperity and strengthen India's geopolitical footprint

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

Q. Evaluate the impact of the EU's Green Deal on India-EU cooperation in climate action and the renewable energy sector.(10 M)

Introduction

The **EU Green Deal** is a comprehensive plan aiming for a carbon-neutral Europe by 2050,

focusing on sustainable growth through green technology, clean energy, and environmental standards, while addressing climate change and promoting a circular economy.

Body

Positive impact on climate action and renewable energy sector

1. **Technological collaboration** – Opens access to EU's advanced renewable tech, aiding India's green energy goals.
    - E.g.: **EU-India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership** supports joint R&D.
2. **Investment in renewable projects** – EU Green Deal promotes investments in Indian renewable sectors like solar and hydrogen.
    - E.g.: **European Investment Bank** committed €1 billion to Indian solar projects in 2021.
3. **Policy alignment on climate goals** – Reinforces joint policy frameworks in climate action and sustainable finance.
    - E.g.: **India-EU Leaders' Meeting 2021** focused on green finance and sustainable development.
4. **Green financing access** – EU's Green Deal provides green finance initiatives that support India's renewable energy expansion.
    - E.g.: **Global Gateway Initiative** aims to fund sustainable infrastructure across South Asia.
5. **Promotes innovation in sustainable practices** – Encourages sustainable innovation and best practices in sectors like energy and waste.
    - E.g.: EU's focus on **circular economy** aligns with India's waste-to-energy goals.

Challenges for climate action and renewable energy sector

1. **Carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM)** – May impact India's exports, especially in carbon-heavy industries.
    - E.g.: India's **steel and cement exports** face potential tariffs under CBAM from 2026.
2. **Regulatory divergences** – Differing standards in climate and environmental regulations complicate collaborations.
    - E.g.: Variances in **biofuel standards** limit smooth policy integration.
3. **Uneven green financing access** – Green Deal funding may prioritize European projects, reducing support for Indian initiatives.
    - E.g.: India flagged financing concerns in the **2023 India-EU Trade and Technology Council**.
4. **Trade protectionism risks** – Stringent environmental standards under the Green Deal can create trade barriers.
    - E.g.: India's **textile exports** face stricter EU regulations, affecting competitiveness.
5. **Resource allocation issues** – EU priorities may overshadow Indian needs in green technology and infrastructure projects.
    - E.g.: Limited **EU-backed green infrastructure** projects in India due to competition within Europe.

Conclusion

To maximize the potential of the EU Green Deal for India-EU cooperation, both partners should establish a **bilateral green finance mechanism** and **harmonize regulatory standards, ensuring equitable access to technology and funding.** This approach can foster a resilient partnership, driving sustainable growth and setting a global benchmark for climate action.

Q. "The India-Russia relationship is rooted in historical defence ties, but it must adapt to modern economic and geopolitical realities". Discuss (15 M)

Introduction

The **India-Russia relationship** has long been anchored in a strong defence partnership, with Russia as India's primary arms supplier. However, in a rapidly changing global landscape, both nations must recalibrate their partnership to address new economic and geopolitical challenges.

Body

The India Russia relationship is rooted in historical defence ties

1. **Cold war alliance** – The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation (1971) solidified mutual defence ties, particularly against common threats.
    - E.g.: This alliance was crucial during the **1971 India-Pakistan War**.
2. **Key defence supplier** – Russia has supplied over **60% of India's defence imports** for decades, providing critical technologies like fighter jets, tanks, and submarines.
    - E.g.: **BrahMos missile**, a joint development, is a cornerstone of defence cooperation.
3. **Strategic technology transfer** – Russia enabled India to acquire high-end defence technology and expertise in areas where other countries imposed restrictions.
    - E.g.: Transfer of technology for **Sukhoi Su-30MKI** and **T-90 tanks**.
4. **Nuclear and space cooperation** – Russia played a pivotal role in India's nuclear energy and space sectors, further strengthening bilateral ties.
    - E.g.: Assistance in **Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant** and **Gaganyaan mission**.
5. **Multilateral platforms** – India and Russia share common goals in multilateral forums like BRICS and SCO, ensuring a stable regional security environment.
    - E.g.: **BRICS Summit** focuses on multipolarity and economic cooperation.

Need to adapt to modern economic and geopolitical realities

1. **Economic diversification** – Both countries need to expand economic ties beyond defence, tapping into sectors like energy, trade, and investment.
    - E.g.: **Bilateral trade** remains at $13 billion, far below potential.
2. **Shifting geopolitical alliances** – Russia's increasing alignment with **China** and India's growing ties with **the US** require recalibration to maintain strategic balance.
    - E.g.: **Russia-China cooperation**, particularly in Central Asia, poses challenges for India's influence.
3. **Emerging technologies** – Modernizing defence ties to include cooperation in cyber, AI, and advanced aerospace technology is critical.

- E.g.: India and Russia initiated **cybersecurity cooperation discussions** in 2022.

4. **Energy security and climate goals** – Russia's vast energy resources can support India's energy security, particularly through Arctic oil and gas exploration.
    - E.g.: **Sakhalin energy projects** have potential to supply LNG to India.
5. **Global sanctions and economic pressures** – Western sanctions on Russia have limited its economic partnerships, impacting bilateral trade growth.
    - E.g.: India's increased **import of Russian crude oil** at discounted rates post-Ukraine conflict.
6. **Investment in renewable energy** – Given Russia's expertise in nuclear and clean energy technologies, both nations could collaborate to meet global climate targets.
    - E.g.: Joint research on **hydrogen and nuclear energy** is under discussion.
7. **Strengthening institutional mechanisms** – Enhanced diplomatic and trade mechanisms could help better navigate the complexities of modern economic and geopolitical dynamics.
    - E.g.: Establishing a **bilateral trade facilitation desk** to streamline investment processes.

What needs to be done now

1. **Boost economic engagement** – Strengthen sectors like renewable energy, pharmaceuticals, and information technology to diversify bilateral economic cooperation.
    - E.g.: Establishing an **India-Russia Free Trade Agreement** to boost trade volumes.
2. **Invest in energy and arctic collaboration** – Expand cooperation in Arctic exploration and LNG projects, crucial for India's energy security and reducing dependence on the Middle East.
    - E.g.: **India's Arctic Policy 2022** encourages participation in Russian Arctic ventures.
3. **Joint ventures in emerging technologies** – Focus on AI, cybersecurity, and defence start-ups to enhance technological collaboration in line with modern defence needs.
    - E.g.: Proposed **India-Russia Innovation and Technology Center** for joint research.
4. **Expand multilateral cooperation** – Collaborate in forums like SCO, RIC, and BRICS to uphold regional stability and counterbalance global power shifts.
    - E.g**.: Leveraging the RIC framework** to address regional security concerns.
5. **Establish regular strategic dialogues** – High-level dialogues addressing current economic and security priorities would ensure adaptability in changing scenarios.
    - E.g.: Annual **India-Russia Strategic Economic Dialogue** for coordinated policy frameworks.

Conclusion

Adapting India-Russia ties to **modern realities requires a focus on economic diversification and emerging technologies, strengthening a relationship that balances tradition with innovation**. Through enhanced collaboration in sectors like energy, technology, and multilateral engagements, both nations can navigate evolving global challenges together.

Q. "India's approach to Africa is characterized by mutual respect, capacity building, and development partnerships". Discuss (15 M)

Introduction

India's partnership with Africa is grounded in **South-South cooperation**, prioritizing shared values of mutual respect, self-reliance, and sustainable development. This approach contrasts with other powers by focusing on building capacity and fostering long-term partnerships.

Body

India's approach to Africa

Mutual respect

India's engagement with Africa is based on the **sovereign equality** of nations, respecting Africa's agency in decision-making processes.

1. **Non-interventionist approach**: India supports Africa's developmental goals without intervening in its internal policies.
    - **E.g.:** India's non-interventionist stance in African Union-led peacekeeping missions, reinforcing Africa's leadership in its own security affairs.
2. **Representation in global platforms**: India supports permanent African representation in global forums like the **UN Security Council**.
    - **E.g.:** India's advocacy for Africa's UNSC representation in G4 meetings highlights its commitment to equal global representation.

Capacity building

India's focus on **capacity building** strengthens African institutions and human resources, facilitating self-reliance.

1. **Skill development initiatives**: Through the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)** program, India has trained thousands of African students in diverse fields.
    - **E.g.:** As of 2022, over **30,000 African professionals were trained under ITEC** (MEA Data).
2. **Education and research support**: Scholarships under the **Africa Scholarship Scheme** and establishment of centers for IT, agriculture, and engineering.
    - **E.g.: Pan African e-Network project, enabling tele-education and telemedicine**, operates in 54 African countries.
3. **Healthcare capacity building**: India supplies affordable medicines and trains African healthcare workers.
    - **E.g.:** In 2021, India provided **COVID-19 vaccines** under **Vaccine Maitri** to more than 40 African nations.

4. **Defense training**: Military training and capacity-building in African countries to enhance local security capacities.
    - **E.g**.: India's training of African cadets at the **National Defence Academy** and other military institutions.

Development partnerships

India's development partnership model emphasizes **sustainable infrastructure**, **energy access**, and **agricultural support** in Africa, aimed at economic empowerment.

1. **Infrastructure development**: Focus on building transport, energy, and digital infrastructure through concessional loans and grants.
    - **E.g.: Kampala-Malaba railway line** in Uganda, funded by India, facilitates regional trade.
2. **Agriculture cooperation**: Transfer of agricultural technology to improve productivity and food security in Africa.
    - **E.g.: 2023 Indo-African agriculture tech partnerships under ITEC**, enhancing African crop yield and resilience to climate change.
3. **Renewable energy initiatives**: Promoting renewable energy under the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**.
    - **E.g.:** India committed to providing **USD 1.5** billion credit for solar projects in Africa, supporting 27 member countries in clean energy transition (ISA 2022 report).
4. **Economic investments**: Indian businesses invest in African manufacturing, IT, and textile sectors, promoting local job creation.
    - **E.g.: Bharti Airtel's telecom operations in 14 African countries** have led to widespread mobile connectivity.

Challenges

1. **Competition with China**: India's influence in Africa faces challenges from **China's large-scale infrastructure projects** and financing.
2. **Funding constraints**: India's limited financial resources compared to other major players constrain the scope of projects in Africa.
3. **Logistical and connectivity barriers**: Inadequate connectivity and challenging logistics hinder the effectiveness of India's outreach in African countries.
4. **Regional instability and security risks**: Frequent conflicts and security risks in regions like the Horn of Africa can obstruct Indian investments and projects.
5. **Limited presence in resource-rich areas**: India's engagement is relatively limited in areas with high natural resources, such as the mineral-rich Central and West Africa.

Conclusion

To overcome these challenges, India could **explore trilateral partnerships** with countries like Japan and the U.S. in Africa, leverage **innovative financing mechanisms**, and **enhance**

diplomatic presence. A resilient and adaptable approach will enable India to strengthen this partnership, fostering growth and stability in both regions for decades to come.

Q. "The Indian diaspora is often termed as India's 'soft power' asset". Analyze the role of the Indian diaspora in advancing India's strategic interests globally. (10 M)

Introduction

The Indian diaspora, **one of the world's largest with over 32 million people**, serves as a dynamic force for advancing India's soft power, contributing significantly to economic, diplomatic, and cultural dimensions globally.

Body

Role of Indian diaspora in advancing India's strategic interests

1. **Economic contributions**: Significant remittances boost India's economy, reaching **$100 billion in 2022** (World Bank), supporting foreign exchange reserves.
    - E.g.: **Kerala heavily relies on remittances from the Gulf**, which constitute a large part of its economy.
2. **Business and investment networks**: Indian diaspora facilitates cross-border investments and trade partnerships with India, strengthening bilateral ties.
    - E.g.: **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)** encourages investments by diaspora entrepreneurs in Indian sectors like tech and manufacturing.
3. **Diplomatic leverage**: Diaspora influences foreign policies favorable to India, especially in key countries like the **USA and UK**.
    - E.g.: The **US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement** received diaspora support, strengthening strategic cooperation.
4. **Political influence in host countries**: Indian-origin leaders and politicians advocate for India's interests, creating a supportive environment in global policymaking.
    - E.g.: **Rishi Sunak's election as UK Prime Minister** has brought Indian interests closer to the UK government.
5. **Cultural ambassadors**: Diaspora preserves and promotes Indian culture, language, and traditions abroad, creating a favorable image of India.
    - E.g.: **International Yoga Day**, **promoted by the diaspora**, showcases Indian heritage globally.
6. **Strategic partnerships**: Through active engagement in global forums, diaspora acts as a bridge, fostering India's strategic relations.
    - E.g.: The **India-US Strategic Partnership Forum (IUSPF)**, led by prominent diaspora members, enhances mutual cooperation.

Government initiatives to leverage diaspora

1. **Overseas citizen of India card**: Provides a lifelong visa and residency rights, enabling greater diaspora engagement.
    - E.g.: The **OCI scheme has enrolled over 6 million** individuals as of 2023.
2. **Vande Bharat mission** : Assisted Indians abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic, strengthening ties with the diaspora.
    - E.g.: **Repatriated over 1.8 million Indians** from 70 countries in 2020-21.
3. **Consular services improvement**: Enhanced services for diaspora welfare and issue redressal through improved digital platforms.
    - E.g.: **MADAD portal, facilitating real-time grievance redressal** for overseas Indians.
4. **Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra**: Dedicated center to support diaspora engagement and welfare programs, promoting collaboration with government bodies.
    - E.g.: **PBD conferences have encouraged diasporic investment** in various state-led projects.
5. **Diaspora bonds**: Financial instruments that allow diaspora to contribute to nation-building by funding infrastructure and development projects.
    - E.g.: **India Development Bonds** raised funds in the 1990s, setting a precedent for future diaspora-backed bonds.

Challenges in maximizing diaspora potential

1. **Dual citizenship restrictions**: Limits the diaspora's full engagement and integration with Indian socio-political dynamics.
2. **Protection of rights abroad**: Many diaspora members in Gulf nations face issues of labour exploitation and lack of legal protections.
3. **Political divisions**: Diversity within the diaspora can lead to varied political opinions, sometimes affecting cohesive support for India.

Conclusion

The Indian diaspora remains a critical soft power asset, yet maximizing its potential **requires strengthened policies, comprehensive welfare measures, and enhanced cultural ties**. India must continue engaging its diaspora, fostering deeper bonds that align with global and national priorities.

Q. "The Ukrainian conflict has triggered shifts in global energy policies, creating both opportunities and challenges for India". Elucidate. (10 M)

Introduction

The **Ukrainian conflict** has disrupted global energy markets, causing price volatility, shifts in supply chains, and a renewed global focus on renewable energy, directly influencing India's energy strategies.

Body

Opportunities for India

1. **Energy supply diversification**: India increased imports of **discounted Russian crude oil**, boosting supply security and reducing import costs.
    - **Eg**: India imported over **1 million barrels/day of Russian oil in 2023**, making Russia its top oil supplier (Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas).
2. **Boost for renewable energy**: Rising fossil fuel prices pushed India to fast-track its **National Green Hydrogen Mission**, aiming for energy self-reliance.
    - **Eg**: India's renewable capacity expanded to **175 GW** in 2023, with a focus on solar and wind energy (MNRE data).
3. **Energy partnerships with emerging markets**: India leveraged the crisis to expand energy ties with **Latin America and Africa**, reducing dependence on traditional suppliers.
    - **Eg**: MoUs signed with **Guyana and Brazil** in 2023 to explore renewable energy investments.
4. **Strengthened position in global energy markets**: India became a vital energy player by acting as a mediator between oil-producing nations and consumer markets.
    - **Eg**: India's leadership in **OPEC+ dialogues** has gained prominence (IEA 2023 Report).
5. **Push for indigenous energy innovation**: Rising energy costs prompted India to invest in **domestic R&D for energy technologies**.
    - **Eg**: India launched the **Energy Storage Mission** in 2023 to boost battery manufacturing for renewables (Ministry of Science & Technology).

Challenges for India

1. **High energy import costs**: Increased global energy prices impacted India's fiscal deficit due to high reliance on imports.
    - **Eg**: India's crude oil import bill surged to **$125 billion** in FY 2022-23 (Ministry of Finance).
2. **Energy security risks**: Overdependence on a single supplier like Russia raises geopolitical risks.
    - **Eg**: EU sanctions on Russia disrupted some energy trade routes, affecting Indian shipments.
3. **Inflationary pressures**: Rising energy costs contributed to higher domestic inflation, affecting industrial productivity and household budgets.
    - **Eg**: Inflation peaked at **7.4% in April 2022**, primarily due to high fuel prices (RBI Report).
4. **Renewable technology transfer delays**: Western nations prioritized energy independence, slowing transfer of **green technologies** to developing nations.
    - **Eg**: India faced delays in acquiring advanced wind turbines from Europe in 2023.

5. **<u>Dependence on dollar-denominated energy trade</u>**: The crisis reinforced the challenge of conducting energy transactions in **local currencies**, exposing India to forex risks.
    - **Eg**: India's attempts to settle oil trade in **rupees with Russia** met with limited success in 2023 (Ministry of External Affairs).

Conclusion

The Ukrainian conflict presents India with an opportunity to diversify energy sources and expedite renewable transitions, but addressing geopolitical and fiscal challenges remains vital. Strengthening **energy partnerships** and fostering technological self-reliance will be key to navigating the evolving global energy landscape.

Q. Examine the role of CARICOM in advancing India's energy security and trade interests in the Western Hemisphere. Additionally, analyze how India can leverage this partnership to strengthen South-South cooperation. (15 M)

Introduction

India's partnership with **CARICOM (Caribbean Community)** represents an untapped opportunity for bolstering energy security and trade in the Western Hemisphere while fostering South-South cooperation. This aligns with India's **global developmental diplomacy** and efforts to diversify its energy and trade relations.

Body

Role of CARICOM in advancing India's energy security

1. **Access to renewable energy collaboration**: CARICOM nations are leading in renewable energy innovations like solar and wind energy.
    - **Eg**: **Barbados' Renewable Energy Framework** offers a model for India's energy collaboration in the Caribbean.
2. **Fossil fuel partnerships**: Several CARICOM members have significant petroleum reserves, creating avenues for energy trade.
    - **Eg**: **Guyana's new oil discoveries in 2022** have attracted Indian investments (Ministry of Petroleum).
3. **LNG trade potential**: CARICOM nations like **Trinidad and Tobago** are major exporters of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).
    - **Eg: India explored LNG supply agreements** during bilateral discussions in 2023.
4. **Strategic energy diversification**: Partnering with CARICOM reduces India's overdependence on the Middle East and Russia for energy.
    - **Eg: India-Guyana MoUs** in **hydrocarbon exploration** strengthen diversification (MEA 2023).

Role of CARICOM in advancing India's trade interests

1. **Market for pharmaceuticals**: CARICOM nations heavily rely on imported medicines, offering India a lucrative export opportunity.
    - **Eg**: Indian exports of **generic medicines** to CARICOM reached **$75 million in 2022** (Ministry of Commerce).
2. **Gateway to Latin American markets**: CARICOM's trade links with Latin America provide India access to a larger regional market.
    - **Eg**: Trade negotiations with **MERCOSUR** were discussed at the **India-CARICOM Summit 2022**.
3. **Export of services**: India's IT and knowledge economy can cater to CARICOM's development needs.
    - **Eg**: **TCS and Infosys** are exploring digital transformation projects in CARICOM nations.
4. **Agricultural technology exports**: CARICOM's agrarian economies require modern techniques, which India can provide.
    - **Eg**: India's **Krishi Vigyan Kendras** were proposed as knowledge-sharing hubs in the **2023 bilateral meet**.

Leveraging CARICOM partnership for South-South cooperation

1. **Climate change collaboration**: Both regions face vulnerabilities like rising sea levels and can collaborate on mitigation.
    - **Eg**: India supported CARICOM in **COP26 initiatives** for SIDS (Small Island Developing States).

2. **Developmental assistance**: India's **Lines of Credit (LoC)** can aid CARICOM's infrastructure and sustainable projects.
    - **Eg**: India extended a **$150 million LoC** for renewable energy in CARICOM (2023, EXIM Bank).
3. **Cultural diplomacy**: With a significant Indian diaspora in the Caribbean, leveraging soft power can enhance ties.
    - **Eg**: PM Modi highlighted Indian-Caribbean heritage during **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2023**.
4. **Multilateral coordination**: CARICOM can be India's ally in advocating **South-South trade equity** and climate justice.
    - **Eg**: India and CARICOM jointly supported equitable trade reforms at the **WTO Ministerial Conference 2022**.

Conclusion

The India-CARICOM partnership is a strategic enabler for energy and trade diversification, with potential to strengthen South-South cooperation. **By fostering development-driven diplomacy and energy collaboration,** India can bolster its global influence while advancing mutual benefits.

Important International institutions, agencies and fora - their structure, mandate.

Q. "The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have faced calls for reform to better address the needs of developing countries". Evaluate the effectiveness of these institutions in the current global economic landscape and suggest potential reforms. (15 M)

Introduction:

The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** and **World Bank**, created as part of the **Bretton Woods system in 1944**, were originally designed to stabilize the post-WWII global economy. However, these institutions now face criticism for inadequate responsiveness to developing countries' unique needs in today's complex economic landscape.

Body

Effectiveness in the current global economic landscape

1. **Financial assistance and debt relief:** While the IMF and World Bank provide crucial **financial stability and poverty reduction** programs, their conditionalities can stifle low-income countries' economic autonomy.
    - E.g.: **IMF's loan to Argentina (2022)** required strict fiscal consolidation, impacting social expenditure.

2. **Inadequate representation of developing nations:** With voting power skewed toward advanced economies, developing nations have limited influence on decision-making.
    - E.g.: **African nations** hold only around **4.5% of IMF voting power** despite being significant loan recipients, a point highlighted by the **Eminent Persons Group on Global Financial Governance (2018)**.
3. **Insufficient climate financing:** The World Bank's climate programs lack the scale and flexibility required for vulnerable nations.
    - E.g.: According to **UNDP Report (2023)**, climate finance needs in developing countries exceed $2.4 trillion annually, far beyond current provisions.
4. **Slow response in global health crises:** The IMF's role in global health response, such as COVID-19, has been limited, impacting low-income nations' access to emergency funding.
    - E.g.: **Funding delays for COVAX** hindered equitable vaccine access, especially in Africa.

Challenges faced by developing countries

1. **Stringent loan conditionalities:** IMF and World Bank conditionalities often demand austerity measures, impacting welfare and growth.
    - E.g.: **Zambia** reduced essential social spending to meet IMF conditions in **2021**.
2. **Limited targeted development focus:** A focus on macroeconomic stability over grassroots developmental needs has limited poverty reduction impact.
    - E.g.: **Sub-Saharan Africa** has seen slower poverty reduction due to generalized World Bank programs.
3. **Lack of digital economy support:** These institutions provide limited funding for digital and technological development, crucial for modern growth.
    - E.g.: **India and Brazil** called for more digital infrastructure funding at the **G20 Summit, 2023**.

Suggested reforms

1. **Reforming governance structure:** Increase the voting power of developing nations for more equitable decision-making.
    - E.g.: The **G24 Group of Developing Countries** has been pushing for increased shares since **2018**.
2. **Flexible, country-specific conditionalities:** Tailoring conditions to socio-economic realities can encourage sustainable, equitable growth.
    - E.g.: The **UN's 2030 Agenda** emphasizes aligning international loans with **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
3. **Increased climate finance with debt-for-climate swaps:** Scale up climate-targeted financing using debt-relief mechanisms.

- E.g.: The **Bridgetown Initiative (2022)**, proposed by Barbados, advocates for climate-based debt restructuring.

4. **Establishing a global health contingency fund:** A dedicated health fund within the IMF for pandemic response could mitigate future global health impacts.
    - E.g.: The **2023 WHO-IMF Collaborative Framework** called for a quick-response fund for future health crises.
5. **Expanding digital and technological funding:** A **Multilateral Digital Development Fund** aligned with the **UN Digital Cooperation Roadmap (2020)** could help countries leapfrog into the digital economy.
    - E.g.: World Bank's **Digital Economy for Africa** program shows promise but needs scaling.

Conclusion:

Reforming the IMF and World Bank through **enhanced representation, targeted loan flexibility, and expanded climate and digital funding** will ensure they meet the evolving needs of developing economies, ultimately strengthening global financial stability and inclusivity.

Q. "The World Trade Organization (WTO) faces a crisis of legitimacy". In light of this statement, examine the challenges faced by the WTO in enforcing global trade rules. (10 M)

Introduction:

The World Trade Organization (WTO), established in **1995**, **has been the central body for regulating global trade**, but it now faces critical challenges in maintaining its relevance and legitimacy amid rising protectionism and an outdated dispute resolution system.

Body

Crisis of legitimacy in the WTO

1. **Dispute resolution stalemate:** The **Appellate Body** has been non-functional since **2019** due to lack of consensus on appointing new members, stalling the appeals process.
    - E.g.: **US vs. China** tariff disputes remain unresolved, straining trust in WTO's role as an impartial arbiter.
2. **Rise of protectionist policies:** Major economies like the **US and China** have increasingly adopted protectionist measures, bypassing WTO's authority.
    - E.g.: **Section 301 tariffs** imposed by the US on Chinese goods without WTO approval highlights diminishing compliance.
3. **Outdated mandate:** The WTO lacks frameworks to address **digital trade, e-commerce, and environmental concerns**, limiting its adaptability to modern trade issues.

- E.g.: **Data localization laws** in countries like India and the EU face regulatory gaps due to lack of WTO guidelines.

4. **Consensus-based decision-making:** WTO's consensus requirement slows decision-making, particularly with a growing membership of **164 nations**, resulting in delays and inaction.
    - E.g.: The **Doha Development Round**, initiated in **2001**, remains incomplete due to lack of consensus among developed and developing countries.

Challenges in enforcing global trade rules

1. **Non-binding rulings:** WTO lacks the authority to enforce compliance with its rulings, often rendering its decisions ineffective.
    - E.g.: Despite WTO's rulings, **US tariffs on steel and aluminum** remain in place.
2. **Preferential trade agreements:** The rise of **Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs)**, like the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**, reduces reliance on WTO rules, fragmenting global trade norms.
    - E.g.: RCEP excludes WTO provisions on **intellectual property and dispute settlement**, undermining WTO's universality.
3. **Inequality in representation:** Developing countries often lack resources to defend their trade interests effectively within the WTO.
    - E.g.: **African countries** struggle to influence negotiations compared to major economies.
4. **Lack of flexibility for developing nations:** WTO rules are often seen as restrictive for developing countries needing flexibility for economic growth.
    - E.g.: **India** has faced criticism for its **food subsidy** programs, deemed non-compliant with WTO norms.
5. **Us-China rivalry:** Trade disputes between **US and China** frequently bypass WTO's dispute resolution, weakening its legitimacy as an impartial institution.
    - E.g.: Recent **US tariffs on Chinese imports** were imposed without WTO approval.

Recommendations and reforms

1. **Reforming the dispute resolution mechanism:** Experts recommend restoring the **Appellate Body** with structural changes to ensure quicker and binding resolutions.
    - E.g.: **Walker Process (2020)** proposed reforms for timely dispute settlements.
2. **Integrating digital and e-commerce rules:** The WTO needs to establish rules on **digital trade** and **e-commerce** to keep pace with evolving trade trends.
    - E.g.: The **Joint Statement Initiative** on e-commerce, involving **86 WTO members**, is a step towards this goal.
3. **Strengthening developing country participation:** Increased support for developing nations through **technical assistance and capacity-building** could enhance equitable representation.

    - E.g.: **Trade Facilitation Agreement (2017)** includes provisions supporting developing countries in trade.
4. **<u>Encouraging flexibility in trade policies</u>:** Allowing flexibility for developing economies in areas like **food security and subsidies** could make the WTO more inclusive.
    - E.g.: India's demand for **Public Stockholding for Food Security** has been supported by several developing countries.

Conclusion

The WTO's crisis of legitimacy underscores an urgent need for reforms to ensure it can respond to modern trade challenges and protect multilateral trade norms. Only by **embracing timely structural changes** can it remain a relevant institution in global trade governance.