Secure Synopsis compilation for January-2025

General Studies-2

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

Q. "The exclusion of the creamy layer from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes reservation is essential to achieve real equality". Critically analyze. (10 M)

Introduction

India's reservation policy aims to address historical injustices and uplift the marginalized. However, growing disparities within Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) highlight the need to exclude the creamy layer, ensuring the benefits reach the most deserving.

Body

Relevance of excluding the creamy layer

1. **Equitable distribution of benefits**: Ensures that socio-economically weaker SCs/STs, who face greater systemic barriers, receive reservation benefits.
    - **Eg:** A **2023 Ministry of Social Justice report** indicated that urban SCs/STs dominate education and employment benefits compared to their rural counterparts.
2. **Addressing intra-group inequality**: Creamy layer exclusion reduces concentration of benefits among wealthier SCs/STs, fostering equality within the community.
    - **Eg: The Supreme Court in Jarnail Singh vs. Lachhmi Narain Gupta (2018)** highlighted the need to address such disparities to achieve substantive equality.
3. **Alignment with constitutional equality**: Articles **14 (equality before law)** and **16 (equal opportunity)** advocate fair distribution of affirmative action benefits.
    - **Eg**: **The principle of equity was upheld** in the **Indra Sawhney (1992)** judgment, which introduced the creamy layer for OBCs.
4. **Prevention of privilege perpetuation**: Creamy layer exclusion ensures that a small elite within SCs/STs does not monopolize benefits.
    - **Eg: Studies (NITI Aayog, 2022) found that reservation** benefits in government jobs were largely cornered by second-generation beneficiaries.
5. **Promoting grassroots development**: Targets the most deprived and brings real upliftment at the community level.
    - **Eg:** The **Tamil Nadu sub-classification policy** (2021) ensured equitable representation of marginalized sub-castes within SCs.

Challenges in excluding the creamy layer

1. **Complex criteria formulation**: Unlike OBCs, socio-economic advancement in SCs/STs is harder to assess due to persistent caste-based discrimination.
    - **Eg: Justice Gavai (2024) emphasized that SC/ST creamy** layer criteria must differ from OBC frameworks to reflect historical and social realities.
2. **Potential socio-political backlash**: Excluding the creamy layer may lead to resistance from upwardly mobile sections within SCs/STs.
    - **Eg:** Protests in **Bihar (2023)** against the creamy layer concept for SC/ST reservations reflected fears of losing benefits.
3. **Administrative challenges**: Implementing exclusion in rural and tribal areas is difficult due to lack of updated socio-economic data.
    - **Eg:** The **2022 Ministry of Tribal Affairs report** highlighted the absence of granular data on tribal incomes and education levels.
4. **Persistence of social stigma**: Even economically advanced SCs/STs may face caste-based discrimination, limiting their opportunities.
    - **Eg:** Discrimination against **SC/ST candidates in IITs and IIMs** was reported as recently as **2023**.
5. **Dilution of affirmative action goals**: Excluding the creamy layer may weaken the broader intent of reservation, which addresses structural inequities.
    - **Eg: Scholars argue that caste remains a stronger marker** of disadvantage than income, unlike other categories.

Conclusion

Excluding the creamy layer within **SCs/STs is a critical step toward achieving substantive equality while aligning with constitutional principles of justice**. Moving forward, a clear framework, robust data collection, and inclusive policymaking will be essential to balance historical injustices with equitable distribution of benefits.

Q. Analyze the broader implications of the Supreme Court's ruling that maintenance proceedings and restitution of conjugal rights are independent. How does this strengthen the legal protections for women in matrimonial disputes? (10 M)

Introduction

The Supreme Court's ruling that maintenance proceedings and restitution of conjugal rights (RCR) are independent ensures **financial autonomy** for women and prevents the misuse of legal provisions to coerce them into unwanted marital obligations. This landmark interpretation reinforces the principles of **gender justice** and **constitutional equality**.

Body

Broader implications of the ruling

1. **Financial independence safeguarded**: Women can secure maintenance without being compelled to comply with RCR decrees, preventing destitution.
    - **Eg**: The **SC ruling (2025)** upheld a woman's right to maintenance under **Section 125 CrPC**, emphasizing its independence from RCR compliance.
2. **Protects against coercion**: Women are not forced to return to potentially abusive or unfavorable marital conditions for financial survival.
    - **Eg**: **Tripura HC (2017)** held that restrictions under **Section 125(4) CrPC** have been substantially diluted to protect women's dignity.
3. **Empowers autonomy and dignity**: By separating financial rights from marital obligations, the ruling upholds personal **autonomy** and the right to live with **dignity**.
    - **Eg**: In **Saroj Rani v. Sudarshan Kumar Chadha (1984)**, the SC ruled that RCR should not undermine individual liberty and freedom.
4. **Challenges patriarchal misuse**: Discourages the use of RCR as a tool for harassment or control by spouses, ensuring fair legal recourse for women.
    - **Eg**: The **2023 SC interpretations** clarified that maintenance cannot be denied merely based on non-compliance with RCR.
5. **Aligns with constitutional principles**: Reinforces **Articles 14 (Equality)**, **15 (Non-discrimination)**, and **21 (Right to Life and Dignity)**, ensuring protection against arbitrary denial of maintenance.
    - **Eg**: The SC's reliance on **Article 21** in the 2025 ruling guarantees the right to financial support independent of marital compliance.

Strengthening legal protections for women

1. **Recognizes maintenance as a statutory right**: Maintenance is treated as an **unconditional statutory entitlement** under **Section 125 CrPC**, distinct from other marital disputes.
    - **Eg**: The **Shah Bano Case (1985)** reinforced the obligation of maintenance as a fundamental right to ensure a dignified life.
2. **Prevents economic exploitation**: Women gain access to resources irrespective of their marital choices, reducing dependence on husbands.
    - **Eg**: In the **2025 SC judgment**, maintenance was upheld as independent of compliance with RCR decrees to safeguard women's financial security.
3. **Strengthens judicial sensitivity**: Courts prioritize **women's welfare** and rights over procedural technicalities, ensuring equitable justice in matrimonial disputes.
    - **Eg**: The **Jharkhand HC's 2023 decision**, which denied maintenance, was overturned by the SC for giving undue weightage to RCR decrees.
4. **Promotes gender-sensitive legal frameworks**: Shifts focus from marital obligations to **individual rights**, ensuring fairer matrimonial dispute resolution mechanisms.
    - **Eg**: The **National Commission for Women (2022)** highlighted the importance of judicial reforms to safeguard women's financial and personal rights.
5. **Prevents misuse of RCR provisions**: Addresses potential misuse of RCR to control or harass women, protecting their legal and personal rights.

- **Eg**: The SC emphasized in **2025** that courts must examine **"just cause"** for a woman's refusal to return, ensuring fairness in maintenance rulings.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's ruling marks a progressive step toward ensuring **financial independence** and **personal dignity** for women in marital disputes. By safeguarding maintenance as a statutory right, it strengthens **gender-sensitive legal protections**, aligning with constitutional values and promoting **social justice**.

Q. Examine the legal and constitutional framework governing enemy property in India and analyze its implications for property rights under the Constitution. (10 M)

Introduction

Enemy property refers to the assets left behind by individuals who migrated to enemy nations during conflicts. The legal and constitutional framework governing such properties reflects a delicate balance between **national security interests** and **property rights**, raising critical legal and human rights considerations.

Body

Legal and constitutional framework governing enemy property

1. **Enemy Property Act, 1968**: This act provides for the vesting, preservation, and control of enemy properties by the Custodian of Enemy Property for India (CEPI), prohibiting inheritance or transfer.
    - **Eg:** Properties belonging to individuals who migrated to **Pakistan and China** after the wars of **1962, 1965, and 1971**.
2. **Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2017**: This amendment expanded the definition of "enemy" to include legal heirs and successors, ensuring continued government control and restricting transfer of such properties.
    - **Eg:** The amendment barred Indian legal heirs from claiming ownership of enemy properties.
3. **Defence of India Act, 1962**: Initially empowered the government to seize enemy properties during wartime for national security purposes.
    - **Eg:** The act was invoked after the **Sino-Indian War of 1962**, resulting in property confiscation.
4. **Constitutional basis under Article 300A**: Post the **44th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1978**, the right to property became a constitutional right rather than a fundamental right, allowing the state to acquire property through lawful means.
    - **Eg:** The **K.T. Plantation Case (2011)** reaffirmed that deprivation of property must follow due process.

5. **Judicial interpretations**: Courts have upheld the government's power to control enemy properties, emphasizing the need to balance public interest with individual rights.
    - **Eg:** The **Supreme Court in Raja M.A. Amir Mohammad Khan v. Union of India (2005)** upheld the validity of enemy property laws.

Implications for property rights under the Constitution

1. **Erosion of inheritance rights**: The 2017 amendment denies legal heirs of former owners their right to inherit enemy properties, raising concerns over the **right to equality (Article 14)**.
    - **Eg:** Several legal heirs have challenged the denial of their inheritance rights in courts.
2. **Impact on Article 300A**: Though the right to property is protected under this article, enemy property laws override it, allowing the state to take possession without compensation.
    - **Eg:** In **Union of India v. Raja Mohammed Amir (2018),** the SC upheld the government's authority under the Enemy Property Act.
3. **Principle of Eminent Domain**: The government's ability to seize enemy properties without compensation contradicts the broader principle of **public purpose with fair compensation.**
    - **Eg:** Unlike land acquisition laws, no compensation is provided to erstwhile owners.
4. **Rule of law concerns**: The indefinite vesting of enemy property with the custodian raises concerns about arbitrary state action and potential misuse.
    - **Eg:** Critics argue that the **long-standing confiscation** contradicts the intent of temporary wartime measures.
5. **Legal uncertainty and economic impact**: The lack of clarity in ownership rights discourages investments and affects property transactions, impacting the broader economy.
    - **Eg:** The estimated value of enemy properties in India stands at **₹1 lakh crore (2023),** with many under legal disputes.

Conclusion

While the enemy property laws are justified in terms of **national security**, a balance must be maintained to ensure **due process, transparency, and adherence to constitutional principles** to prevent infringement on individual rights and enhance trust in governance.

Q. "Individuals should have the freedom to choose secular inheritance laws". Analyze this in the context of Article 25 and its implications for personal laws in India. (10 M)

Introduction

Freedom to choose secular inheritance laws aligns with the principles of **individual autonomy**, **equality**, and the **constitutional commitment to secularism**. Article 25 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of conscience and protects the right to choose or not follow any religion, making the case for such legal flexibility.

Body

Significance of allowing freedom to choose secular inheritance laws

1. **Ensures equality**: Secular inheritance laws provide a gender-neutral and religion-neutral approach, upholding equality before law under **Article 14**.
    - **Eg:** The **Indian Succession Act, 1925**, ensures equal inheritance rights, unlike personal laws that may prioritize certain genders.
2. **Protects individual autonomy**: Empowering individuals to choose secular laws enhances their freedom of conscience, safeguarded under **Article 25**.
    - **Eg:** A petitioner like Safiya P.M. (2025) who rejects religious inheritance norms can ensure her rights through secular statutes.
3. **Reinforces secularism**: By allowing individuals to opt for secular laws, the state strengthens its commitment to the **basic structure doctrine** of secularism.
    - **Eg:** The **Kesavananda Bharati case (1973)** upheld secularism as an essential feature of the Constitution.

Balancing religious freedom and constitutional rights

1. **Freedom of conscience**: Article 25 ensures the right to believe or not believe, enabling individuals to reject personal laws in favor of secular ones.
    - **Eg:** The court in **Shayara Bano v. Union of India (2017)** ruled against practices like instant triple talaq that violated individual rights.
2. **Reasonable restrictions**: Article 25 permits religious freedom, subject to public order, morality, and health, justifying the need for secular alternatives in areas like inheritance.
    - **Eg:** This principle was applied in **Bijoe Emmanuel v. State of Kerala (1986)** to protect individual conscience.
3. **Gender equality under Article 15**: Many personal laws, like **Sharia inheritance laws**, discriminate against women, which secular statutes like the Indian Succession Act can address.
    - **Eg:** Women inherit only one-third of a property under Sharia law but are entitled to equal shares under secular laws.
4. **Judicial precedents for reform**: Courts have expanded the scope of personal laws to ensure they align with constitutional values.
    - **Eg: Vineeta Sharma v. Rakesh Sharma (2020)** upheld daughters' rights to Hindu joint family property.

5. **Administrative reforms**: The adoption of secular inheritance laws requires provisions in official forms for individuals to declare "no religion" or "secular choice."
    - **Eg:** The judiciary may recommend changes similar to those suggested in Safiya P.M.'s petition (2025).

Implications for personal laws in India

1. **Uniformity in inheritance laws**: Secular laws promote uniformity, reducing disparities across communities.
    - **Eg:** Article 44's **Uniform Civil Code (UCC)** envisions a legal framework applicable to all citizens.
2. **Challenges to traditional norms**: Religious groups may resist reforms as interference in faith-based practices, complicating implementation.
3. **Social justice for vulnerable groups**: Secular laws ensure equitable inheritance rights for marginalized sections, including women and non-believers.
    - **Eg:** Petitioners like Safiya P.M. seek secular laws to ensure equitable property division despite religious constraints.
4. **Judicial role in reform**: Courts need to actively interpret personal laws in alignment with constitutional values to fill legislative gaps.
    - **Eg:** Judicial activism in cases like **Daniel Latifi v. Union of India (2001)** upheld fair treatment under the Muslim Women Act.
5. **Strengthening secularism**: Adoption of secular laws reinforces the secular character of the state, ensuring fairness and inclusivity in civil rights.

Conclusion

Allowing individuals to choose secular inheritance laws aligns with **constitutional values of equality, gender justice, and secularism**. Legislative reforms, coupled with judicial oversight and administrative changes, can bridge gaps in personal laws and uphold the rights of citizens, ensuring **a more inclusive and equitable legal framework**

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.

Q. "The independence of the judiciary is the cornerstone of a vibrant democracy". Evaluate the factors impacting judicial autonomy in India and suggest measures to restore public confidence in the justice delivery system. (15 M)

Introduction

An independent judiciary is fundamental to a **vibrant democracy** as it ensures **impartial justice, checks and balances, and the protection of constitutional rights.** It upholds the **rule of law** and acts as a safeguard against the arbitrary use of power by the executive and legislature.

Body

The independence of the judiciary as the cornerstone of a vibrant democracy

1. **Upholding constitutional supremacy**: The judiciary ensures that all laws and actions comply with the Constitution, maintaining democratic integrity.
    - **Eg:** In the **Kesavananda Bharati case (1973),** the Supreme Court upheld the **basic structure doctrine**, reinforcing judicial independence.
2. **Ensuring checks and balances**: It acts as a check on the executive and legislature, preventing overreach and protecting citizens' rights.
    - **Eg:** In the **Maneka Gandhi case (1978),** the court expanded the interpretation of Article 21 to safeguard personal liberty.
3. **Protection of fundamental rights**: The judiciary acts as the guardian of fundamental rights, ensuring equal treatment and justice for all.
    - **Eg:** The **Navtej Singh Johar case (2018)** decriminalized homosexuality, strengthening personal freedoms.
4. **Dispute resolution and public trust**: A fair and impartial judiciary fosters public confidence, ensuring disputes are resolved without bias.
    - **Eg:** The Supreme Court's intervention in the **Ayodhya verdict (2019)** was crucial in maintaining social harmony.
5. **Promoting democratic values**: Judicial decisions reinforce democratic values such as secularism, equality, and justice, contributing to societal progress.
    - **Eg:** The Supreme Court's ruling in the **Shayara Bano case (2017)** abolished instant triple talaq, ensuring gender justice.

Factors impacting judicial autonomy in India

1. **Executive interference**: Excessive influence by the executive in judicial appointments and transfers affects impartiality.
    - **Eg:** The controversy surrounding the delay in judicial appointments despite recommendations by the **Collegium system (2024).**
2. **Lack of transparency in appointments**: The opaque Collegium system has raised concerns about favouritism and lack of accountability.
    - **Eg:** The **National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC)** was struck down by the Supreme Court in **2015**, citing judicial independence concerns.
3. **Judicial overburden and pendency**: A massive backlog of cases limits the judiciary's effectiveness, impacting public trust.
    - **Eg:** As per **National Judicial Data Grid (2024),** over **4.5 crore** cases are pending across all courts in India.
4. **Political pressures and populist influences**: Courts sometimes face indirect political pressures in sensitive cases, affecting their neutrality.
    - **Eg:** The delay in adjudicating politically sensitive cases such as **electoral bond transparency (2023).**
5. **Inadequate infrastructure and resources**: Poor court infrastructure, lack of technological advancement, and manpower shortages hinder judicial efficiency.
    - **Eg:** The **Justice B.N. Srikrishna Committee (2019)** highlighted the need for financial autonomy and better resource allocation in courts.

Measures to restore public confidence in the justice delivery system

1. **Judicial accountability and transparency**: Implementing a structured mechanism to ensure transparency in appointments and judicial conduct.
    - **Eg:** The Law Commission of India recommended a **Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill** to regulate judicial ethics.
2. **Strengthening the appointment process**: A reformed **NJAC-like mechanism** with a balanced role for judiciary, executive, and civil society to ensure merit-based appointments.
    - **Eg:** The **2nd ARC Report** recommended a more inclusive and transparent judicial appointment process.
3. **Reducing judicial backlog**: Expediting case disposal through alternate dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms and digitization of court processes.
    - **Eg:** The government's **E-Courts Project Phase III (2023)** aims to enhance digitization and ease access to justice.
4. **Ensuring financial independence**: Granting financial autonomy to the judiciary to enable better management of resources without executive dependence.
    - **Eg:** Recommendations of the **14th Finance Commission** suggested greater budgetary allocation to improve judicial efficiency.
5. **Strengthening lower judiciary**: Enhancing training, infrastructure, and recruitment processes at the district and subordinate court levels to improve judicial efficiency.

- **Eg:** The **All India Judicial Service (AIJS)** proposal aims to create a merit-based selection system for lower judiciary appointments.

Conclusion

Judicial independence is the **bedrock of democracy**, ensuring fair governance and citizen rights. Strengthening institutional frameworks through **reforms, transparency, and resource augmentation** is essential to restoring public faith in the judiciary and reinforcing democratic values.

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

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

Q. "Hate speech against women in politics erodes their representation and participation in democracy". Analyze its impact and propose actionable solutions to combat this challenge. (15 M)

Introduction

Hate speech targeting women in politics reflects **deep-rooted gender biases**, creating a hostile environment that deters their participation in public life. This undermines both **gender equality** and the **democratic principle of inclusive representation**, eroding trust in institutions and leadership.

Body

Hate speech against women in politics and its effects on democracy

1. **Discourages political participation**: Persistent abuse creates a hostile political environment, deterring women from entering politics.
    - Eg: **Amnesty International report (2022)** highlights that Indian women politicians receive, on average, 113 abusive tweets daily.
2. **Reinforces gender stereotypes**: Misogynistic remarks question women's competence and leadership, perpetuating patriarchal norms.
    - Eg: Remarks like **"dented-painted protestors" (2012)** trivialized women's participation in political protests.
3. **Erodes leadership credibility**: Hate speech delegitimizes women leaders, undermining their public image and decision-making authority.

    - Eg: **Ramesh Bidhuri's remarks on Atishi Marlena** demeaned her professional standing and credibility.
4. **Undermines inclusive democracy**: By excluding women, hate speech reduces diversity and equity in political representation.
    - Eg: Despite electoral progress, women's representation in the **17th Lok Sabha** stands at only **14.94% (2024 Election Commission data)**.
5. **Increases vulnerability to violence**: Online and offline threats escalate to physical violence, making women feel unsafe in public roles.
    - Eg: The **Kathua rape case-related hate speech (2018)** targeted women activists with threats of violence.

Impact on democracy

1. **Weakens democratic debate**: Hate speech shifts political discourse from policy issues to personal attacks, trivializing governance discussions.
    - Eg: **2022 UP Assembly elections** saw debates dominated by misogynistic remarks rather than developmental issues.
2. **Reduces diversity in policymaking**: Fewer women in politics limit diverse perspectives, especially on social and gender-sensitive issues.
    - Eg: Increased women's representation in **Panchayati Raj Institutions** led to better focus on education and sanitation (World Bank report, 2021).
3. **Normalizes intolerance**: The absence of accountability for hate speech creates societal acceptance of discrimination.
    - Eg: Institutional inaction on misogynistic comments like **"temptress" remarks during election rallies** emboldens offenders.
4. **Undermines electoral fairness**: Hate speech disrupts free and fair elections, especially by influencing public perception of female candidates.
    - Eg: **Character assassinations** during the **2019 Indian general elections** highlighted systemic gender biases.
5. **Erodes trust in institutions**: Public perception of institutional silence on hate speech reduces confidence in their impartiality.
    - Eg: Criticism of lack of strict action on misogynistic online abuse by the **NCW (2023)** reflects gaps in institutional response.

Actionable solutions

1. **Strengthening legal provisions**: Amend laws like the **Indian Penal Code** to include gender-specific hate speech provisions.
    - Eg: Implement the **267th Law Commission Report (2017)** to criminalize hate speech based on gender and sexual identity.
2. **Enforcing party-level accountability**: Mandate political parties to penalize candidates for hate speech during campaigns.
    - Eg: Norway's model of **party-led disciplinary mechanisms** ensures accountability for gender-based hate speech.

3. **Regulating digital platforms**: Collaborate with tech companies to implement AI-driven tools for detecting and moderating hate speech.
    - Eg: **Twitter's updated moderation policies (2023)** have shown success in curbing abusive language online.
4. **Public awareness campaigns**: Educate citizens about the societal harms of misogynistic hate speech through mass media initiatives.
    - Eg: **Google's #SheLeads campaign** encourages gender-sensitive online behavior and counteracts abuse.
5. **Empowering women politicians**: Provide legal, technical, and emotional support to women leaders to combat hate speech.
    - Eg: **UN Women's capacity-building workshops** include strategies for managing online abuse and advocating gender equity.

Conclusion

Hate speech against women in politics undermines **democracy, inclusivity, and governance**. A **holistic approach** combining legal, institutional, and societal efforts is essential to protect women leaders and uphold the ideals of democratic participation.

Q. "A structured Parliamentary calendar is vital to strengthen democracy and legislative oversight". Discuss the merits and challenges of implementing an annual schedule for the Indian Parliament. (15 M)

Introduction

A predictable parliamentary calendar is crucial for ensuring **legislative efficiency, accountability, and public trust** in a democracy. With the declining number of sittings, institutionalizing a structured schedule can enhance oversight and policy scrutiny.

Body

Structured parliamentary calendar strengthens democracy and legislative oversight

1. **Enhanced accountability:** A fixed schedule allows MPs to plan better, scrutinize government actions, and ensure regular questioning of the executive.
    - **Eg:** The decline in Parliament sittings from **125 days in the 1950s to around 60 days now (PRS Legislative Research, 2023)** has weakened government accountability.
2. **Effective legislative scrutiny:** A structured calendar ensures bills undergo thorough examination rather than being rushed through limited sittings.
    - **Eg:** The **Farm Laws (2020)** were passed without adequate discussion, leading to **widespread protests** and eventual **repeal**.
3. **Strengthening parliamentary committees:** A predictable schedule allows committees to meet consistently and perform in-depth analysis of policies.

    - **Eg:** The **Standing Committee on Defence (2021)** flagged **underutilization of funds**, citing lack of legislative oversight.
4. **Boosting public engagement:** Citizens can anticipate and participate in democratic processes better with a known legislative calendar.
    - **Eg:** Increased **viewership of Sansad TV** has shown greater **public interest in parliamentary debates.**
5. **Resource optimization:** Ministries and stakeholders can align their inputs efficiently, improving governance and policy outcomes.
    - **Eg:** The **Ministry of Finance** can better prepare for **pre-budget discussions**, ensuring a more **responsive fiscal policy.**

Merits of implementing an annual parliamentary calendar

1. **Improved legislative quality:** More preparation time enables MPs to study bills, consult stakeholders, and provide well-informed inputs.
    - **Eg:** The **Data Protection Bill, 2023**, was **re-drafted multiple times** due to feedback from **stakeholders and MPs.**
2. **Balanced workload:** Distribution of business across the year prevents last-minute rushes and enhances policy focus.
    - **Eg:** In **2023**, the **Monsoon Session passed 20 bills in 10 days**, raising concerns over **superficial scrutiny.**
3. **Alignment with fiscal cycles:** A fixed schedule allows better alignment with budget cycles, ensuring deeper scrutiny of government expenditures.
    - **Eg:** The **CAG reports** can be discussed more comprehensively, improving **financial accountability.**
4. **Timely debate on national issues:** Dedicated time ensures regular debates on crucial issues like climate change, healthcare, and economic reforms.
    - **Eg:** The **COVID-19 crisis response** was delayed due to **irregular parliamentary sittings.**
5. **Reduced disruptions:** Predictability may reduce adjournments and walkouts, fostering better legislative engagement.
    - **Eg:** The lack of a pre-decided calendar led to **disruptions during the 2022 Winter Session**, affecting productivity.
6. **Encourages constructive opposition:** A structured schedule helps opposition parties prepare better, ensuring meaningful debates rather than political posturing.
    - **Eg:** The opposition had inadequate time to scrutinize the **Citizenship Amendment Act (2019)** before its passage.
7. **Harmonization with state legislatures:** A fixed national schedule can help in better synchronization with state legislative sessions.
    - **Eg:** Many MPs are also state legislators, leading to **scheduling conflicts.**

Challenges in implementing an annual parliamentary calendar

1. **Flexibility issues:** A rigid calendar may hinder the Parliament's ability to respond to urgent national and global crises.
    - **Eg:** The sudden enactment of emergency **COVID-19 relief laws in 2020** required flexibility in session planning.
2. **Political unwillingness:** Governments may resist structured sittings to avoid prolonged scrutiny and public debates.
    - **Eg:** The opposition often accuses the ruling party of adjourning Parliament to avoid discussions on sensitive issues such as **price rise and unemployment.**
3. **Coordination challenges:** Synchronizing the legislative agenda with government policy decisions and committee schedules may prove difficult.
    - **Eg:** The delay in presenting the **Personal Data Protection Bill (2022)** due to policy recalibrations highlights this challenge.
4. **Administrative feasibility:** Logistical challenges in organizing multiple sessions, including security, staff coordination, and infrastructure requirements.
    - **Eg: Security arrangements** during the **Winter Session 2023** strained administrative resources.
5. **Executive prerogative:** Article **85 of the Constitution** provides the executive discretion to summon sessions, making legal enforcement of a fixed calendar challenging.
    - **Eg:** The **President summons sessions** on the advice of the **Council of Ministers**, making it an **executive prerogative.**
6. **Increased financial burden:** More sittings could lead to higher operational costs and administrative expenditures for Parliament.
    - **Eg:** The **budget allocation** for Parliament infrastructure may need **significant enhancement.**
7. **Diverse legislative priorities:** The varying nature of legislative demands across different sectors may not align with a fixed schedule.
    - **Eg:** Urgent issues such as **natural disasters or geopolitical tensions** require dynamic legislative responses.

Conclusion

A structured parliamentary calendar can enhance governance, policy scrutiny, and democratic accountability. However, its implementation should balance **predictability with flexibility**, ensuring that Parliament remains responsive to evolving national needs while upholding its constitutional responsibilities.

Q. Should India provide parliamentary representation to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) to address their unique concerns, or are existing institutional mechanisms sufficient? (10 M)

Introduction

With over **32 million NRIs** contributing to India's economy and global influence, the demand for parliamentary representation has gained momentum. However, such a move must align with constitutional provisions and practical realities.

Body

Should India provide parliamentary representation to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) to address their unique concerns?

Arguments For	Arguments Against
1. Democratic inclusion: NRIs contribute significantly to India's economy and should have a say in governance.	**1. Constitutional challenge:** Representation in Parliament is based on territoriality under **Article 81**, which excludes non-residents.
- **Eg:** NRIs contributed over **$107 billion in remittances in 2022**, the highest globally (World Bank).	- **Eg:** In **Mohinder Singh Gill vs. Chief Election Commissioner** the Supreme Court dealt with the territorial principle for Rajya Sabha elections.
2. Diaspora engagement: Representation can enhance India's global outreach and soft power.	**2. Dual allegiances:** NRIs may have conflicting interests due to their citizenship in foreign countries.
- **Eg:** The **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas** helps connect NRIs with India's development goals.	- **Eg:** The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated in 2024 that dual citizenship concerns pose governance challenges.
3. Successful global models: Countries like **Italy and France** provide legislative seats to their diaspora.	**3. Operational challenges:** Conducting elections across multiple countries is logistically challenging.
- **Eg:** Italy reserves **12 seats** in Parliament for overseas citizens under its **1988 reform.**	- **Eg:** India has over **5 million NRIs in the Gulf region**, making electoral logistics complex.
4. Protection of rights: NRIs face property disputes, legal issues, and taxation problems needing legislative backing.	**4. Existing provisions:** Government bodies such as **MEA and state NRI departments** already address grievances.
- **Eg:** The Kerala government's **NORKA Roots** resolves NRI property disputes.	- **Eg:** The **MADAD Portal** of MEA provides legal assistance and grievance redressal for NRIs.
5. Political engagement: Encourages emotional and political connectivity with their homeland.	**5. Voting rights exist:** NRIs can vote in home constituencies under the **Representation of the People Act, 1950.**
- **Eg:** NRI participation in Indian elections increased by **30% in 2019**, reflecting their interest.	- **Eg:** In 2021, the Election Commission proposed **e-postal ballots** for NRIs to enhance participation.

Are existing institutional mechanisms sufficient?

Yes, they are sufficient	No, they are not sufficient
1. Grievance redressal: Institutions like the **MEA and Indian embassies** provide robust support to NRIs.	**1. Limited policy influence:** NRIs lack a direct say in shaping policies affecting their interests.
- **Eg:** Over **50,000 cases** have been resolved via the **MADAD portal** since 2015.	- **Eg:** The 2023 Standing Committee on External Affairs recommended enhanced diaspora consultation.
2. Voting rights exist: NRIs can vote in their native constituencies, ensuring political participation.	**2. Geographical barriers:** Many NRIs cannot travel to India to vote, limiting electoral participation.
- **Eg:** The Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 2010, granted voting rights to NRIs.	- **Eg:** In 2019, only **25,000 NRIs** exercised their voting rights out of 1.1 million eligible voters.
3. Dedicated NRI institutions: State-level bodies cater to their unique concerns and needs.	**3. Rising diaspora challenges:** Increasing cases of fraud, exploitation, and passport issues require legislative intervention.
- **Eg: Punjab NRI Commission** handles cases related to fraud and land disputes.	- **Eg:** NORKA in Kerala reported a **20% increase** in legal disputes in 2024.
4. Diplomatic channels: Embassies and missions regularly engage with the diaspora to resolve issues.	**4. Lack of legislative voice:** Existing mechanisms focus on redressal but lack formal representation in policymaking.
- **Eg:** The Indian Embassy in UAE has an NRI helpdesk handling employment grievances.	- **Eg:** Countries like France and Portugal allow diaspora MPs to contribute to legislative processes.
5. Economic contributions recognized: Government schemes and investment policies cater to NRIs.	**5. Contribution deserves representation:** NRIs contribute significantly to the economy and should have a voice in governance.
- **Eg:** The Indian government offers investment schemes such as **NRE/FCNR deposits** for NRIs.	- **Eg:** In 2022, the UAE-based Indian Business Council requested NRI representation in economic policy forums.

Conclusion

Instead of direct parliamentary representation, India should focus on **strengthening institutional mechanisms**, **such as improving digital voting options, creating advisory diaspora councils, and enhancing grievance redressal frameworks**. A balanced approach will ensure diaspora concerns are addressed while maintaining constitutional integrity.

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.

Q. "India's transition from Planning Commission to NITI Aayog reflects a shift from centralized planning to cooperative federalism". Evaluate the success and shortcomings of NITI Aayog in fostering cooperative federalism. (15 M)

Introduction

The transition from the **Planning Commission (1950-2014)** to **NITI Aayog (2015)** signified a paradigm shift from centralized, top-down planning to a participatory model of **cooperative federalism**. This change aimed to empower states, foster competitive governance, and enhance data-driven policymaking.

Body

India's transition from Planning Commission to NITI Aayog

1. **Increased state participation**: Unlike the Planning Commission, NITI Aayog integrates states into policymaking through its **Governing Council**, promoting a collaborative approach.
    - **Eg:** The **Governing Council meetings** involve Chief Ministers and Lieutenant Governors to address national and state-level issues collaboratively.
2. **Focus on competitive federalism**: Encourages healthy competition among states to improve governance outcomes and foster innovation.
    - **Eg: Ease of Doing Business rankings** incentivize states like **Andhra Pradesh** and **Gujarat** to implement pro-investment policies.
3. **Decentralized fiscal autonomy**: The abolition of the Planning Commission's fund allocation role has allowed states to prioritize their developmental needs.
    - **Eg:** Post **14th Finance Commission**, states' share in central taxes increased from 32% to **42%**, giving them more fiscal flexibility.
4. **Agility in planning**: Transition to shorter planning cycles and outcome-based governance enables dynamic responses to emerging challenges.
    - **Eg: Three-year action plans** were introduced to replace rigid five-year plans, ensuring adaptability to policy needs.
5. **Knowledge-driven governance**: Acts as a think tank, leveraging data and technology to inform decision-making and policy formulation.
    - **Eg: India Innovation Index** provides actionable insights for states to strengthen innovation ecosystems.

Successes of NITI Aayog in fostering cooperative federalism

1. **Collaborative policymaking**: Promotes joint ownership of policies by engaging states in national initiatives.
    - **Eg:** The formulation of the **National Education Policy (2020)** involved consultations with all states and stakeholders.
2. **Reducing regional disparities**: Targets backward regions through initiatives like the **Aspirational Districts Programme**, focusing on education, health, and infrastructure.
    - **Eg: Dahod district in Gujarat** saw a 30% improvement in institutional deliveries due to this program.
3. **Promoting competitive governance**: Develops indices and rankings to motivate states toward better performance and reforms.
    - **Eg: SDG Index (2023)** highlighted Kerala as the top performer, encouraging others to emulate its strategies.
4. **Facilitating crisis response**: Coordinates Centre-state actions during emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic.
    - **Eg:** NITI Aayog's **COVID-19 task force** played a key role in managing vaccine distribution and healthcare logistics.
5. **Localized policy interventions**: Customizes solutions to state-specific challenges through focused programs.
    - **Eg:** The **SATH-Education initiative** helped transform school education in states like **Jharkhand** and **Madhya Pradesh**.

Shortcomings of NITI Aayog in fostering cooperative federalism

1. **Absence of financial authority**: Lacks fund allocation powers, reducing its influence on state-level development projects.
    - **Eg:** States often disregard recommendations like the **agriculture reforms agenda**, citing lack of financial incentives.
2. **Over-centralization of planning**: Concentration of financial planning in the Ministry of Finance undermines the consultative spirit of cooperative federalism.
    - **Eg:** Critics argue that the **National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)** lacks adequate state representation in its formulation.
3. **Inadequate institutional capacity**: Dependence on temporary consultants and lateral hires weakens institutional memory and long-term vision.
    - **Eg:** NITI Aayog's **26 verticals** operate with limited permanent professional staff, affecting policy depth and continuity.
4. **Tokenistic state consultations**: Allegations of insufficient engagement with states undermine trust and ownership.
    - **Eg:** The demands for **special status by Andhra Pradesh** remain unresolved despite repeated consultations.
5. **Gap in long-term vision**: Absence of structured long-term plans hampers coherence in achieving national goals.
    - **Eg:** The promised **15-year vision document** remains unpublished, reducing clarity on India's development roadmap.

6. **Limited impact in addressing inequalities**: Despite initiatives, inter-state disparities in income, healthcare, and education persist.
    - **Eg: Bihar** and **Uttar Pradesh** continue to rank low on indices like **SDG performance**, highlighting persistent regional imbalances.

Conclusion

NITI Aayog has contributed significantly to fostering cooperative and competitive federalism through policy innovation and collaboration. However, addressing its operational and structural limitations—such as enhancing financial authority, institutional capacity, and long-term planning—will be vital to achieving India's developmental aspirations for 2047.

Q. Examine the evolving role of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor in Indian polity. How does the perceived deviation from constitutional norms by these offices affect democratic governance and the principles of federalism? (15 M)

Introduction

The offices of Governor and Lieutenant Governor (LG) were established under the Constitution to act as neutral and apolitical constitutional authorities, ensuring federal balance and supporting democratic governance. However, instances of **perceived overreach or partisanship** have raised concerns about their role in fostering trust and harmony in Centre-State relations.

Body

Evolving role of Governor and LG in Indian polity

1. **Constitutional framework**: Governors and LGs are mandated to act as bridges between the Centre and the States/UTs, with their powers and functions enshrined in **Articles 154, 163, 164, 239, and 239AA**.
    - **Eg:** The **Sarkaria Commission (1988)** emphasized neutrality and suggested that Governors be selected from outside active political circles.
2. **Expanded discretionary powers**: The use of discretionary powers, such as withholding assent to bills or delaying Assembly sessions, has grown, often seen as exceeding constitutional intent.
    - **Eg:** In **Tamil Nadu (2023)**, the Governor delayed assent to critical bills, leading to political tensions.
3. **Role in Union Territories**: LGs in UTs like Delhi have significant executive powers, often leading to friction with elected governments due to overlapping jurisdictions.
    - **Eg:** The **Government of NCT of Delhi v. Union of India (2018)** judgment clarified the limited discretionary powers of the LG.

4. **Shifts in political dynamics**: With increasing political polarization, Governors are often perceived as aligning with the ruling party at the Centre, impacting their impartiality.
    - **Eg:** Allegations of bias in handling political crises, such as in **Maharashtra (2022)**, have been widely debated.
5. **Judicial interventions**: Courts frequently step in to resolve disputes arising from perceived deviations in the Governor's role, leading to a constitutional burden.
    - **Eg:** The **Madras High Court (2023)** had to intervene in the Governor's delay in acting on Assembly resolutions.

Impact of perceived deviation on democratic governance

1. **Erosion of institutional neutrality**: Alleged partisanship undermines the constitutional authority of Governors and LGs, reducing public trust in these offices.
    - **Eg:** The **West Bengal Governor-CM conflicts (2022)** exemplified this erosion, impacting the state's governance.
2. **Disruption of legislative processes**: Delays in assenting to bills or summoning sessions hinder the functioning of elected governments.
    - **Eg:** Delays in clearing the **Kerala Lok Ayukta Amendment Bill (2023)** affected timely governance.
3. **Undermining democratic values**: Excessive intervention in state politics diminishes the authority of elected governments, undermining the people's mandate.
    - **Eg:** The **Karnataka Speaker controversy (2023)** showcased disruptions caused by gubernatorial interventions.
4. **Increased political polarization**: The perceived bias of Governors fosters political tension, making cooperative governance difficult.
    - **Eg:** Frequent clashes between the LG and Delhi government have hindered administrative efficiency.
5. **Diminished federal spirit**: Centralized control through Governors weakens federal principles and collaborative policymaking.
    - **Eg:** The **Punjab Governor-CM disputes (2023)** led to delays in critical Centre-State cooperative programs.

Impact on federalism

1. **Strained Centre-State relations**: Persistent conflicts over gubernatorial actions create mistrust and friction between the Centre and opposition-ruled States.
    - **Eg:** The **Rajasthan political crisis (2020)** highlighted the challenges in federal relations.
2. **Weakened cooperative federalism**: The perception of partisanship limits effective collaboration between Centre and States, crucial for national development.
    - **Eg: Disputes in water-sharing agreements**, like the **Cauvery water issue**, reflect the lack of facilitation by Governors.

3. **Overlapping roles**: The dual responsibility of LGs in Union Territories creates administrative bottlenecks.
    - **Eg: Conflicts in Puducherry (2019)** showcased the challenges in LG-CM coordination.
4. **Increased judicial dependency**: Regular disputes involving Governors lead to over-reliance on courts for conflict resolution, diverting judicial focus from core issues.
    - **Eg: Frequent petitions from state governments** regarding gubernatorial actions.
5. **Partisan narratives in governance**: Overreach fosters political narratives that may overshadow developmental goals, disrupting federal objectives.
    - **Eg:** The **Manipur governance issues (2023)** highlighted selective gubernatorial attention.

Way Forward

1. **Transparent appointment process**: Implementing **Punchhi Commission (2010)** recommendations for a consultative mechanism in Governor appointments to ensure impartiality.
2. **Codifying roles and responsibilities**: Clearly defining the discretionary powers of Governors and LGs to avoid ambiguities and reduce overreach.
3. **Judicial review mechanism**: Establishing a specialized body to address disputes between Governors/LGs and state governments to reduce judicial burden.
4. **Strengthening cooperative federalism**: Encouraging dialogue-based mechanisms like the **Inter-State Council** to resolve Centre-State conflicts amicably.
5. **Ensuring accountability**: Introducing regular performance reviews and public disclosures of gubernatorial actions to uphold transparency and neutrality.

Conclusion

The role of Governors and LGs must align with the constitutional mandate to serve as facilitators of democracy and custodians of federalism. Ensuring neutrality, accountability, and collaborative governance will uphold the sanctity of these offices and strengthen India's federal structure. **Institutional reforms and adherence to constitutional norms are key to restoring public trust.**

Q. What are the constitutional and institutional mechanisms to ensure accountability of judges in India? Analyze their effectiveness in dealing with instances of controversial public remarks by judges. (15 M)

Introduction

Judicial accountability ensures that judges uphold constitutional values and maintain public trust in the judiciary. However, instances of controversial remarks by judges expose gaps in the effectiveness of current accountability mechanisms.

Body

Constitutional and institutional mechanisms for judicial accountability

1. **Impeachment under Article 124(4):** Provides for the removal of judges for proven misbehavior or incapacity through a two-thirds majority in Parliament.
    - Eg: Justice **V. Ramaswami (1993)** was the first judge against whom impeachment proceedings were initiated, though it failed due to lack of consensus.
2. **In-house procedure:** The judiciary's internal mechanism allows senior judges to investigate complaints against their peers.
    - Eg: Justice **P.D. Dinakaran** was investigated for alleged corruption under this mechanism, though he resigned before any conclusive action.
3. **Supreme Court Collegium:** Oversees appointments, transfers, and ethical conduct, which includes counseling judges for inappropriate behavior.
    - Eg: The **Collegium counselled Justice Shekhar Yadav** following his controversial public remarks.
4. **Restatement of Values of Judicial Life (1997):** Serves as a code of conduct for judges, ensuring their actions reflect dignity and impartiality.
    - Eg: These values were cited when Justice **C.S. Karnan** was held guilty of contempt by the Supreme Court in 2017.
5. **Judicial privilege under law:** Protects judges' remarks during judicial functions, safeguarding their independence but limiting external accountability.
    - Eg: Remarks by judges during proceedings in the **Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi case** were shielded from external scrutiny.

Effectiveness of these mechanisms

Successes:

1. **Preserving judicial independence:** Internal mechanisms prevent political interference in judicial matters.
    - Eg: In the **Justice C.S. Karnan case**, the judiciary acted independently to hold him accountable for contempt of court.
2. **Timely Collegium interventions:** In cases of controversial conduct, the Collegium has acted to mitigate damage to public trust.
    - Eg: The **Collegium intervened in Justice Shekhar Yadav's case**, emphasizing the need for restraint in public remarks.
3. **Prevention of external pressure:** Mechanisms like in-house procedures uphold judicial autonomy while addressing ethical breaches.
    - Eg: The resignation of Justice **Soumitra Sen** in 2011 before impeachment demonstrated judicial autonomy.

Challenges:

1. **Ineffectiveness of impeachment:** High thresholds make impeachment rare and politically influenced.
    - Eg: The impeachment motion against **Justice V. Ramaswami** failed despite evidence, as political differences influenced the outcome.
2. **Opaque in-house procedures:** Internal reviews often lack transparency, leading to skepticism about fairness.
    - Eg: In the **Justice Dinakaran case**, the lack of disclosure about the inquiry created doubts about impartiality.
3. **Limited enforceability of ethical codes:** The **Restatement of Values of Judicial Life** is advisory, not legally binding, limiting its impact.
    - Eg: Despite ethical guidelines, remarks by judges like Justice **Markandey Katju** have drawn criticism without accountability.
4. **Insufficient focus on extra-judicial conduct:** Mechanisms focus on judicial performance, not non-judicial actions like controversial speeches.
    - Eg: Justice Shekhar Yadav's comments on **Uniform Civil Code** revealed the lack of a robust framework for handling such actions.
5. **Lack of independent oversight:** Accountability largely depends on self-regulation, which can appear biased or ineffective.
    - Eg: In cases like **Justice Arun Mishra's praise of the executive**, public perception of bias weakened trust in judicial impartiality.

Way forward

1. **Codify judicial ethics:** Transform the **Restatement of Values** into enforceable guidelines with clear consequences for violations.
    - Eg: The **Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct** (adopted globally) could serve as a model for India.
2. **Enhance transparency in in-house mechanisms:** Make inquiry outcomes public to build trust, as done by the **UK Judicial Conduct Investigations Office**.
    - Eg: UK's transparency in reporting judicial complaints ensures public confidence.
3. **Establish an independent oversight body:** Create a **National Judicial Accountability Commission** with representation from judiciary, legislature, and civil society.
    - Eg: Canada's **Canadian Judicial Council** handles complaints independently, balancing independence with accountability.
4. **Reform the impeachment process:** Streamline procedures to make impeachment less politicized and more efficient.
    - Eg: The **US Senate process** for judicial impeachment ensures a clear and impartial procedure.
5. **Regular training for judges:** Conduct workshops on constitutional ethics, secularism, and the implications of public remarks to reinforce judicial impartiality.
    - Eg: The **National Judicial Academy** can develop courses on public conduct for judges.

6. **Strengthen Collegium transparency:** Publish reasons for appointments, transfers, and disciplinary actions to improve public confidence.
    - Eg: The Supreme Court's **2019 decision to publish Collegium resolutions** is a step toward greater transparency.

Conclusion

Existing mechanisms **have upheld judicial independence but require reforms to address contemporary challenges like extra-judicial conduct**. Strengthening transparency, codifying ethics, and introducing independent oversight will ensure accountability while preserving judicial integrity and public trust.

Q. "Despite the constitutional provisions, the appointment of ad-hoc judges has remained largely underutilized." Analyze the reasons for this underutilization and suggest reforms to enhance judicial capacity through this mechanism.

Introduction

The provision of **Article 224A** of the Constitution, which allows the appointment of retired High Court judges on an ad-hoc basis, remains underutilized despite mounting judicial pendency. Strengthening its implementation can help alleviate the burden on the judiciary and improve access to justice.

Body

Underutilization of ad-hoc appointment provisions

1. **Limited past implementation:** Despite being a constitutional provision, ad-hoc judges have been appointed only on rare occasions.
    - **Eg: Justice Suraj Bhan** was appointed to the **Madhya Pradesh High Court in 1972** to hear election petitions, but no significant appointments followed.
2. **Judicial reluctance:** High Courts hesitate to invoke Article 224A, fearing it might be viewed as a stopgap rather than a long-term solution.
    - **Eg:** The **Supreme Court's 2021 ruling** emphasized its use only when **regular vacancies exceed 20%**, discouraging frequent reliance.
3. **Bureaucratic delays:** The complex multi-tiered approval process delays timely appointments.
    - **Eg:** Approval requires **the President's consent**, routing through **the Chief Minister, Union Law Minister, and Supreme Court collegium**, leading to prolonged delays.
4. **Concerns over judicial independence:** There is apprehension that frequent ad-hoc appointments might compromise judicial impartiality.
    - **Eg: Former judges may face conflicts of interest**, particularly if they presided over politically sensitive cases earlier.

5. **Preference for arbitration and tribunals:** Retired judges often opt for more lucrative opportunities in tribunals and arbitration panels.
    - **Eg: The International Arbitration Market** attracts many retired judges, offering **better remuneration and flexible working hours.**

Reasons for underutilization

1. **Lack of institutional framework:** Absence of structured processes for monitoring and evaluating the efficiency of ad-hoc judges.
    - **Eg:** The **2021 Supreme Court guidelines** recommended a panel of retired judges, but implementation remains patchy across states.
2. **Resistance from bar associations:** Lawyers often resist temporary appointments, fearing inconsistency in decision-making.
    - **Eg: Bar Councils in states like Uttar Pradesh** have raised concerns about disrupting the continuity of cases.
3. **Ambiguity in tenure and jurisdiction:** Unclear guidelines on duration and responsibilities discourage potential candidates.
    - **Eg:** Judges appointed under **Article 224A lack clarity** on the types of cases they can preside over and the duration of their tenure.
4. **Financial constraints:** State governments often hesitate to allocate funds for additional judicial appointments.
    - **Eg:** In **several states, budget constraints** have limited infrastructure support for newly appointed ad-hoc judges.
5. **Political considerations:** Delays in appointments due to potential political influence or reluctance to appoint judges perceived to be unfavourable.
    - **Eg: Concerns of favouritism and bias** have delayed appointments in sensitive cases, as seen in high-profile corruption cases.

Reforms to enhance judicial capacity through ad-hoc appointments

1. **Simplification of the appointment process:** Streamlining procedures by reducing bureaucratic delays and enhancing coordination among stakeholders.
    - **Eg:** A **dedicated nodal agency** under the Supreme Court could oversee the quick processing of such appointments.
2. **Incentives for retired judges:** Offering better financial packages and professional benefits to attract qualified retired judges.
    - **Eg: Enhanced pension benefits** and access to **research support** can encourage participation.
3. **Fixed tenure and structured responsibilities:** Clearly defining the roles and duration of service for ad-hoc judges.
    - **Eg: A standard tenure of 2-3 years** with specific case categories to ensure clarity and accountability.
4. **Capacity-building initiatives:** Training programs to familiarize retired judges with the latest legal developments and digital courtroom procedures.

- **Eg:** The **National Judicial Academy** can conduct refresher courses on evolving legal frameworks.

5. **Periodic review mechanism:** Setting up committees to monitor and assess the impact of ad-hoc appointments regularly.
    - **Eg: Judicial audit mechanisms** can review their effectiveness in clearing case backlogs annually.
6. **Increased public awareness:** Sensitizing stakeholders about the potential benefits of utilizing ad-hoc judges to strengthen the justice delivery system.
    - **Eg: Public outreach initiatives** through judicial conferences and legal awareness programs.

Conclusion

Effective utilization of ad-hoc judges requires procedural reforms, better incentives, and active engagement with stakeholders. If implemented efficiently, **Article 224A** can play a **significant role in ensuring access to timely justice and reducing** the pendency of cases in Indian courts.

Q. "The governance of higher education institutions should be free from political influence to ensure academic excellence". Discuss the challenges and possible reforms in the context of the Governor's role as Chancellor. (15 M)

Introduction

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in fostering **innovation, critical thinking, and national development.** However, political interference in their governance affects their **autonomy, quality, and credibility,** necessitating reforms to safeguard academic excellence.

Body

Need for political neutrality in higher education governance

1. **Academic autonomy:** Political interference undermines the freedom of institutions to frame their own policies and academic agenda.
    - **Eg:** The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** emphasizes **institutional autonomy** as a key pillar of academic excellence.
2. **Merit-based leadership:** Freeing governance from political influence ensures appointments based on qualifications rather than political affiliations.
    - **Eg:** The **University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines** stress the importance of **merit** in appointing Vice-Chancellors.
3. **Research and innovation:** An apolitical environment fosters **independent research** and innovation without fear of ideological bias.
    - **Eg:** Countries like **Germany** and the **UK** have independent **university governance models** promoting innovation-driven research.
4. **Global competitiveness:** Politicization hinders **global collaborations** and rankings, affecting India's standing in higher education indices.

- **Eg:** India ranks low in the **QS World University Rankings**, with a need for improved governance practices.

5. **Financial autonomy:** Political interference often leads to **fund misallocation** and delays, impacting infrastructure and research capabilities.
    - **Eg:** Delays in fund disbursal under **centrally-sponsored schemes** due to political conflicts between Center and State governments.

Challenges in the context of the Governor's role as Chancellor

1. **Conflict with state governments:** Governors, appointed by the Centre, often clash with State governments on **appointments and policy matters.**
    - **Eg:** Delays in the appointment of Vice-Chancellors in opposition-ruled States such as **West Bengal** and **Tamil Nadu.**
2. **Lack of accountability:** Despite wielding significant powers, Governors are **not directly accountable** to the public or State Legislatures.
    - **Eg:** Governors' unilateral actions in universities without State consultation, leading to **administrative paralysis.**
3. **Bureaucratic inefficiencies:** Lack of coordination between the Chancellor (Governor) and State higher education departments creates inefficiencies.
    - **Eg:** Redundant **bureaucratic layers** in implementing higher education policies at the State level.
4. **Political appointments:** Governors often appoint individuals with **political affiliations** rather than academic credentials, compromising quality.
    - **Eg:** The **Sarkaria Commission** highlighted the **politicization of the Governor's office** in non-constitutional functions.
5. **Erosion of federalism:** Central control over State universities undermines the principles of **cooperative federalism** and decentralization.
    - **Eg: Tamil Nadu** and **Kerala** governments have introduced Bills to remove the Governor as Chancellor, pending **Presidential assent.**

Possible reforms

1. **Decentralized governance model:** State universities should have greater autonomy with **eminent academicians** as Chancellors instead of Governors.
    - **Eg: Telangana's model** of appointing distinguished scholars as Chancellors.
2. **Clear delineation of roles:** Defining statutory and constitutional roles of Governors to prevent overreach into university affairs.
    - **Eg:** Recommendations of the **M.M. Punchhi Commission (2010)** on limiting the Governor's discretionary powers.
3. **Strengthening legislative oversight:** State university laws should mandate **legislative scrutiny** of key appointments and regulations.
    - **Eg:** The President's role in **Central universities** involves **parliamentary oversight** over university policies.

4. **Transparent appointment processes:** Instituting independent **selection committees** to ensure merit-based appointments.
    - **Eg:** The **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2002)** advocated for a neutral appointment process.
5. **Greater stakeholder participation:** Enhancing the role of **faculty, students, and alumni** in decision-making processes for improved governance.
    - **Eg: UK's university councils** involve student and faculty representation in governance.

Conclusion

Ensuring the political neutrality of higher education governance requires **structural reforms, greater transparency, and stakeholder participation** to foster academic excellence and institutional integrity. Moving towards a decentralized and academic-driven governance model can align India's higher education system with **global best practices**

Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.

Q. "The narrowing gender gap in voter turnout is a sign of India's maturing democracy". Do you agree? Substantiate your view. (15 M)

Introduction

The narrowing gender gap in voter turnout in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections highlights India's progress in fostering inclusivity in its democratic processes. Yet, deeper analysis reveals both the potential and limitations of this trend in achieving true democratic maturity.

Body

The narrowing gender gap as a sign of India's maturing democracy

1. **Increased voter awareness and participation**: Higher female turnout demonstrates increased political awareness and agency among women, challenging patriarchal norms.
    - **Eg:** In 2024, **15 out of 28 States and UTs**, including Bihar, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand, reported higher female voter turnout than males.
2. **Impact of women-centric welfare policies**: Government initiatives targeting women's welfare have incentivized their political participation.
    - **Eg:** Schemes like **Ujjwala Yojana** (LPG connections) and **Jan Dhan Yojana** (financial inclusion) directly empowered over **200 million women**, motivating them to vote.
3. **Enhanced voter outreach initiatives**: The Election Commission's campaigns have bridged gender gaps, particularly in underrepresented regions.
    - **Eg: SVEEP programs** in tribal areas of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand saw significant increases in women's voter turnout during the 2024 elections.

4. **Judicial and constitutional mandates**: Legal provisions like **Article 325** ensure non-discriminatory voter registration, fostering inclusivity.
    - **Eg:** Judicial interventions like the **Lily Thomas case (2013)** strengthened mechanisms for equitable participation.
5. **Global alignment with democratic norms**: India is progressing toward global trends of gender parity in voter turnout, strengthening its democratic image.
    - **Eg: The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)** data shows that countries with higher female voter turnout also witness greater policy inclusivity.

Counterview: Factors limiting maturity in democracy

1. **Low representation in legislatures**: Higher female turnout has not translated into proportional representation in legislative bodies.
    - **Eg:** In 2024, **women constituted only 13.6% of Lok Sabha MPs**, compared to the global average of **26.7%** .
2. **Structural distortions from migration**: Male out-migration for work skews turnout data, making high female turnout more a result of absenteeism than empowerment.
    - **Eg: States like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh** face high out-migration, with **Bihar's male turnout dropping significantly in 2024**.
3. **Cultural and urban disparities**: Urban areas still see lower female participation due to mobility and societal constraints.
    - **Eg: States like Gujarat and Maharashtra** reported **male-dominant turnout patterns**, reflecting urban gender disparities.
4. **Lack of decision-making autonomy**: Patriarchal norms continue to limit women's independent decision-making in voting.
    - **Eg:** According to **NFHS-5 (2020-21)**, nearly **40% of women in rural areas** lack autonomy in household decisions, including voting.
5. **Policy gaps in inclusivity**: Women with disabilities, migrant workers, and first-time voters face systemic barriers in accessing electoral processes.
    - **Eg:** Only **32% of polling booths** in 2024 met full accessibility guidelines for disabled voters, as per Election Commission data.

What needs to be done

1. **Legislative reforms for representation**: Implement **33% reservation for women in legislatures** to convert participation into representation.
    - **Eg:** The **Women's Reservation Bill** aims to ensure gender balance in parliamentary representation.
2. **Migration-sensitive voting mechanisms**: Develop systems like remote voting or proxy voting to ensure equitable participation.
    - **Eg: The Election Commission's pilot on remote voting machines** in 2024 shows promise for migrant inclusivity.
3. **Targeted voter education campaigns**: Focus on promoting autonomy and informed decision-making among women.

- **Eg: SVEEP 2024** saw localized campaigns in tribal regions, increasing women's turnout significantly.

4. **Socio-economic empowerment**: Strengthen policies that address education, health, and employment disparities for women.
    - **Eg: Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao** combined with **vocational training** for women can create long-term empowerment.
5. **Enhanced electoral infrastructure**: Improve voting facilities for marginalized women, including those with disabilities and in remote areas.
    - **Eg:** The EC's **Accessible Elections Guidelines 2024** aim to address these barriers systematically.

Conclusion

While the narrowing gender gap in voter turnout signifies India's democratic progress, **sustained efforts are essential to address structural inequalities and ensure that increased participation** leads to true representation and empowerment, thereby fulfilling the ideals of a mature democracy.

Q. "The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is a vital instrumentality for ensuring free and fair elections". Critically examine the implications of frequent MCC imposition on governance and development. (15 M)

Introduction

The Model Code of Conduct (MCC), formulated by the **Election Commission of India (ECI)**, plays a crucial role in ensuring free, fair, and transparent elections by maintaining a level playing field for all stakeholders.

Body

Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is a vital instrumentality for ensuring free and fair elections

1. **Ensures electoral fairness**: Prevents misuse of government machinery by prohibiting partisan use of resources.
    - Eg: **2019 General Elections**, actions against violations by political leaders for misuse of public platforms.
2. **Promotes transparency**: Encourages ethical behavior by political parties and candidates during campaigns.
    - Eg: **Social media guidelines** issued by the ECI to regulate online campaign practices.
3. **Minimizes undue influence**: Restricts announcement of new schemes, laying of foundation stones, or other populist measures during elections.
    - Eg: Stay on **budgetary announcements** during elections as seen in state elections of **2022**.

4. **Prevents hate speech**: Curtails divisive rhetoric and hate speech during campaigns.
    - Eg: Actions under MCC led to warnings against communal statements by political leaders in **Bihar Assembly Elections 2020**.
5. **Enhances voter confidence**: Ensures that elections are conducted impartially, strengthening public faith in democracy.
    - Eg: Voter confidence survey by **ADR 2023** highlighted MCC as a significant factor for credible elections.

Implications of frequent MCC imposition on governance and development

On governance

1. **Policy paralysis**: Halts new policies or welfare scheme announcements, delaying decision-making.
    - Eg: Pending implementation of **development projects in poll-bound states like Karnataka (2023)** due to MCC.
2. **Administrative inefficiency**: Diverts administrative personnel and resources to election duties, reducing efficiency in core governance.
    - Eg: Reports by **CAG** highlighted delays in ongoing projects due to manpower reallocation.
3. **Impact on service delivery**: Routine government functions like healthcare or education delivery may get disrupted.
    - Eg: Postponement of state health campaigns in **poll-bound Uttar Pradesh (2022)** due to MCC restrictions.
4. **Budget implementation delays**: Impacts execution of fiscal policies and disrupts financial planning cycles.
    - Eg: Delays in **state budgets** during elections in **Punjab (2022)**.

On development

1. **Stalled developmental projects**: Prohibition of new project launches or inaugurations hampers progress.
    - Eg: Halt on major road infrastructure projects in **Rajasthan (2023)** during elections.
2. **Uncertainty in economic activities**: MCC-induced delays may affect investor sentiment and disrupt economic cycles.
    - Eg: Industrial investments in **Andhra Pradesh** witnessed slowdown during simultaneous local body and general elections.
3. **Inequitable resource distribution**: Ongoing schemes face scrutiny, delaying fund releases in poll-bound areas.
    - Eg: Allocation under **PMAY-G scheme (2022)** halted in certain districts during elections.
4. **Disruption in public engagement**: MCC's restrictions on government interactions hinder responsiveness to citizen demands.

- Eg: Denial of urgent municipal approvals in **Delhi Municipal Elections 2022**.

What can be done

1. **Rationalizing MCC duration**: Minimize the duration of MCC by streamlining the election process.
    - Eg: **Law Commission recommendations (2018)** advocate for staggered elections within a fixed time frame.
2. **Strengthening digital governance**: Use technology to maintain essential service delivery during MCC enforcement.
    - Eg: Implementation of **e-Governance platforms like UMANG** to ensure uninterrupted citizen services.
3. **Differentiated approach**: Allow ongoing developmental activities and essential schemes with strict monitoring mechanisms.
    - Eg: **Standing Committee on Personnel and Public Grievances (2022)** recommended differentiated MCC rules for welfare programs.
4. **Clear exemptions for critical sectors**: Essential projects like healthcare, education, and disaster management should have automatic exemptions under MCC.
    - Eg: **COVID-19 vaccination drive (2021)** continued uninterrupted during election periods.

Conclusion

While MCC ensures fairness in elections, its frequent imposition necessitates reforms to minimize disruptions to governance and development. Balancing **democratic integrity** with **administrative efficiency** is key to sustaining India's democratic framework and developmental trajectory.

Q. "Fake narratives and disinformation pose a significant threat to electoral processes". Discuss the strategies that Election Management Bodies can adopt to counter the growing menace of misinformation in elections. (10 M)

Introduction

Fake narratives and disinformation weaken electoral democracy by manipulating public perception, influencing voter behaviour, and undermining trust in institutions.

Body

Threats posed by fake narratives and disinformation to electoral processes

1. **Erosion of public trust:** False narratives create doubts about election integrity, leading to reduced faith in democratic institutions.
    - **Eg:** In the **2020 US Presidential elections**, widespread disinformation regarding mail-in ballots led to public distrust and protests (Source: Pew Research, 2021).

2. **Voter suppression:** Misinformation misguiding voters on election dates and procedures results in reduced participation.
    - **Eg:** During the **2019 Indian General Elections**, fake WhatsApp messages falsely claimed that voting machines were faulty, discouraging participation (Source: ECI Report, 2020).
3. **Incitement of electoral violence:** Disinformation targeting communities can escalate tensions and provoke violence.
    - **Eg:** In the **2017 Kenyan elections**, fake news spread on social media led to violent clashes between ethnic groups (Source: UNDP, 2018).
4. **Foreign interference:** External actors manipulate electoral narratives to influence outcomes and weaken democracies.
    - **Eg:** Russia used social media disinformation to influence the **2016 US elections**, shaping voter perceptions (Source: US Intelligence Report, 2017).
5. **Distortion of voter choices:** Misleading content about candidates or parties can misinform voters and polarize electorates.
    - **Eg:** In the **2022 Brazilian elections**, viral WhatsApp messages spread false corruption allegations against candidates (Source: BBC, 2022).
6. **Challenges to EMB credibility:** Persistent disinformation undermines the neutrality and effectiveness of electoral institutions.
    - **Eg:** During the **2020 Bihar Assembly elections**, fake news regarding EVM tampering eroded public trust despite ECI clarifications (Source: ECI, 2021).

Strategies to counter the menace of misinformation

1. **Strengthening legal frameworks:** Enforcing stringent laws to combat misinformation and penalize offenders.
    - **Eg:** India's **IT Rules 2021** require social media platforms to take down harmful election-related content within 36 hours (Source: MeitY).
2. **Collaboration with social media platforms:** Coordinating with platforms to identify and remove false election-related content.
    - **Eg:** During the **2019 Indian elections**, ECI worked with Facebook and Twitter to tackle viral fake news (Source: ECI Annual Report, 2020).
3. **Voter education initiatives:** Public awareness campaigns to help citizens recognize and report fake news.
    - **Eg:** The **'Check the Facts' campaign** in Indonesia educated voters on verifying election-related news (Source: Indonesian Election Commission).
4. **Use of AI and data analytics:** Leveraging AI to track and curb disinformation campaigns before they spread.
    - **Eg:** The EU used AI tools to monitor social media and detect misinformation in the **2019 European Parliament elections** (Source: European Commission).
5. **Fact-checking units:** Establishing dedicated EMB fact-checking teams to counter false claims proactively.
    - **Eg:** India's **PIB Fact Check Unit** collaborates with ECI to debunk viral election-related misinformation (Source: PIB, 2023).

6. **Rapid response helplines:** Creating dedicated portals and helplines for citizens to report election-related fake news.
    - **Eg:** ECI's **cVIGIL app** enables citizens to report fake news and violations in real time (Source: ECI Annual Report, 2022).

Conclusion

Election Management Bodies must adopt a multi-dimensional strategy involving legal, technological, and educational interventions to safeguard electoral integrity and enhance public trust in democratic processes.

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

Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

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

Q. "The Right to Education Act focuses on inclusivity and the right to a fear-free learning environment". Critically analyze the current challenges in realizing these provisions on the ground. (15 M)

Introduction

The Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, is a landmark legislation aimed at promoting **inclusive education and a fear-free learning environment** for children aged 6-14. However, its effective realization is hindered by systemic and operational challenges.

Body

The Right to Education Act focuses on inclusivity and the right to a fear-free learning environment

1. **25% reservation for weaker sections**: Provides economically weaker sections (EWS) and disadvantaged groups access to private schools.
    - Eg: **Bombay High Court (2024)** struck down Maharashtra's exemption for private schools from providing RTE quota admissions as unconstitutional.
2. **Prohibition of discrimination**: Ensures no denial of admission based on caste, gender, or disability.
    - Eg: **Section 9 of the Act** mandates schools to admit children even without age proof or other documentation.

3. **Child-friendly pedagogy**: Promotes holistic learning through activities, exploration, and discovery.
    - Eg: **Chapter V of the Act** prescribes teaching in the mother tongue and discourages rote learning.
4. **Fear-free environment**: Mandates a safe and supportive atmosphere free from punishment or harassment.
    - Eg: **Section 17** prohibits corporal punishment and mental harassment, aiming to reduce dropout rates.
5. **Infrastructure inclusivity**: Requires schools to ensure barrier-free access for children with disabilities.
    - Eg: As per the **2010 RTE Rules**, all schools must provide ramps, assistive devices, and inclusive seating arrangements.

Challenges in realizing these provisions

1. **Inconsistent implementation of neighborhood schools**: Poor establishment and operational issues hinder accessibility.
    - Eg: **Karnataka RTE Report (2024)** highlights the closure of 2,500 government schools in the past decade due to low enrollment.
2. **Teacher shortages**: High vacancies and lack of qualified teachers impact education quality.
    - Eg: According to the **2024 ASER Report**, 30% of sanctioned teacher posts remain vacant in government schools nationwide.
3. **Complex application processes**: Procedural hurdles and lack of awareness among marginalized families.
    - Eg: **Chandrasekaran's study in Tamil Nadu (2024)** found 50% of applications rejected due to minor technical errors like address mismatches.
4. **Delayed reimbursements for private schools**: Government delays discourage private institutions from admitting EWS students.
    - Eg: **Tamil Nadu private schools (2024)** reported pending reimbursements for over two academic years.
5. **Exclusionary amendments**: Exemptions for religious institutions weaken the Act's universal applicability.
    - Eg: The **2012 Amendment** excluded madrasas and pathshalas from RTE provisions under Articles 29 and 30.
6. **Fear of detention policy**: Amendments enabling detention in Classes 5 and 8 create stress and increase dropouts.
    - Eg: **Delhi Government (2024)** amended rules to detain low-performing students, reducing promotion rates.

What can be done?

1. **Strengthen neighbourhood schools**: Address teacher shortages, enhance infrastructure, and improve resource allocation.

    - Eg: **Kerala's government schools**, which maintain high-quality infrastructure and sufficient teachers, serve as a successful model.
2. **Simplify admission processes**: Use technology and awareness campaigns to reduce procedural barriers.
    - Eg: **Maharashtra's online RTE portal (2024)** streamlined applications, reducing rejection rates by 20%.
3. **Ensure timely reimbursements**: Establish strict timelines for compensating private schools for EWS admissions.
    - Eg: **Budget 2024-25** increased RTE reimbursements by 15%, aiming to resolve delays in states like Tamil Nadu.
4. **Expand coverage to excluded institutions**: Amend the Act to remove exemptions for religious and other schools.
    - Eg: The **RTE Forum's 2023 recommendations** advocated universal application of the Act to all educational institutions.
5. **Enhance teacher training and quality**: Focus on inclusive teaching methods and professional development.
    - Eg: **NIPUN Bharat Mission (2021)** prioritizes teacher capacity-building for foundational learning.
6. **Increase public awareness and community participation**: Educate parents and local bodies about RTE provisions.
    - Eg: **UNICEF's awareness drive in Jharkhand (2023)** led to a 30% rise in EWS enrollments under RTE.

Conclusion

While the RTE Act has established a framework for equitable and inclusive education, challenges in implementation persist. With **robust reforms, accountability mechanisms, and universal access**, it can fulfill its promise of ensuring quality education for all children.

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. "India's legal framework on medical negligence focuses more on punishment than systemic reform, undermining patient safety". Examine. (10 M)

Introduction

India's approach to medical negligence prioritizes **punitive measures** over systemic reforms, as reflected in **Section 106 of the Bhartiya Nyaya Samhita (BNS)**, which focuses on imprisonment and penalties. This undermines patient safety by discouraging transparency, systemic learning, and preventive measures in healthcare.

Body

Punitive focus in India's legal framework

1. **Criminalization of professional lapses**: Medical negligence is treated on par with criminal acts, ignoring intent or systemic failures.
    - Eg: **Section 304A of the IPC and Section 106 of the BNS** penalize negligence with imprisonment, creating a fear-driven environment.
2. **Judicial emphasis on deterrence**: Courts often focus on assigning blame rather than exploring systemic gaps.
    - Eg: The **Dr. Jacob Mathew v. State of Punjab (2005)** judgment emphasized restraint in criminal prosecution but did not emphasize systemic reform.
3. **Neglect of root cause analysis**: The absence of mechanisms like **mandatory root cause analysis (RCA)** shifts the focus from learning to blame.
    - Eg: The **National Patient Safety Implementation Framework (2018-2025)** remains underfunded and poorly executed.
4. **Underdeveloped patient safety infrastructure**: Limited implementation of initiatives like **Kayakalp and NQAS** reflects a lack of focus on building systemic safeguards.
    - Eg: The **ICMR's exclusion of patient safety in priority research areas** highlights systemic neglect.

5. **Insurance-based safety nets for doctors**: Instead of systemic reforms, measures like the **PPLSSS by the Indian Medical Association** focus on mitigating penalties for doctors rather than preventing errors.

Impact on patient safety

1. **Discourages reporting of medical errors**: Fear of punishment prevents healthcare professionals from reporting adverse events, hindering transparency.
    - Eg: A study by the **World Health Organization (2020)** highlighted that punitive environments lead to significant underreporting.
2. **Failure to address systemic challenges**: Issues like understaffing, poor infrastructure, and inadequate training remain unaddressed, perpetuating errors.
    - Eg: **Rural hospitals** face diagnostic delays due to resource constraints, leading to unintended errors.
3. **Erodes trust in healthcare**: The punitive focus undermines the doctor-patient relationship, reducing public trust in the healthcare system.
    - Eg: Instances of **mob violence against doctors** have increased due to perceived negligence.
4. **Stifles innovation in care delivery**: Fear of litigation limits experimentation and adoption of new medical practices, impacting healthcare quality.
    - Eg: Resistance to **robotic surgeries** due to concerns about accountability in case of errors.
5. **Overburdened legal system**: The focus on litigation increases the judiciary's workload without resolving core patient safety issues.
    - Eg: The **Consumer Protection Act (CPA)** sees thousands of pending medical negligence cases, as per **2023 NCRB data**.

What needs to be done

1. **Implement mandatory root cause analysis (RCA):** Introduce a legal mandate for **RCA** in every case of medical error to identify systemic gaps and improve patient safety.
    - Eg: The **United Kingdom's NHS Patient Safety Framework** mandates RCA for adverse events.
2. **Strengthen patient safety frameworks:** Expand funding and integration for initiatives like **National Patient Safety Implementation Framework (2018–2025)** and include **patient safety research** in ICMR's priority areas.
    - Eg: Increase the adoption of **Kayakalp and NQAS** standards with rigorous monitoring.
3. **Establish cross-disciplinary expertise:** Allow dual-professional qualifications (medical and legal) to enable better adjudication of negligence cases and promote fair justice.
    - Eg: Revisit the **Dr. Haniraj L. Chulani v. Bar Council of Maharashtra and Goa (1996)** judgment.

4. **Encourage a no-fault compensation system:** Introduce a **no-fault compensation model** where patients receive timely compensation without attributing personal blame, promoting transparency in reporting errors.
    - Eg: **New Zealand's Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC)** provides compensation while focusing on systemic improvements.

Conclusion

India must shift its focus from **punitive measures** to **systemic reforms**, emphasizing root cause analysis, patient safety frameworks, and dual-professional expertise. Moving forward, adopting a **preventive and learning-oriented model** will ensure a safer and more transparent healthcare system while restoring public trust.

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

Q. Analyze the disparity in access to digital infrastructure between government and private schools. Suggest measures to bridge this gap effectively. (10 M)

Introduction

The disparity in digital infrastructure between government and private schools reflects systemic inequities in India's education sector. **While private schools have adapted to technological advances, government schools often lack** the resources to meet the demands of digital learning, especially post-COVID-19.

Body

The disparity in access to digital infrastructure

1. **Limited access to computers and Internet**: A significant proportion of government schools lack digital facilities, unlike private schools.
    - **Eg:** Only **43.5% of government schools** have functional computers compared to **70.9% of private schools**, as per **UDISE+ 2024**.
2. **Urban-rural digital divide**: Rural government schools are disproportionately affected by poor Internet connectivity and inconsistent electricity supply.
    - **Eg:** In **Chhattisgarh**, less than **20% of rural government schools** have Internet access, whereas most private schools in urban Raipur are fully equipped.
3. **Budgetary constraints**: Government schools face funding gaps for ICT (Information and Communication Technology) facilities, unlike private schools that rely on higher fees.

- **Eg:** The **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan** allocated only **₹1,000 crore** for ICT infrastructure in 2024, insufficient to meet the needs of over **10 lakh government schools**.

4. **Lack of assistive technologies**: Government schools rarely cater to differently-abled students, while private schools offer specialized tools.
    - **Eg:** Only **30% of government schools** have assistive technologies for visually impaired students, as per the **UNESCO Report, 2023**, compared to **60% in private schools** in states like **Kerala**.

Impact of the disparity

1. **Learning outcome gaps**: Private schools outperform government schools due to better access to digital tools.
    - **Eg: ASER 2022 found that students** in private schools scored **45% higher** in digital literacy tests than those in government schools.
2. **Increased dropouts**: Lack of access to online resources leads to disengagement and dropouts, especially among marginalized students.
    - **Eg:** In **Odisha**, **dropout rates in government** schools rose by **35% during the pandemic**, as online classes were inaccessible to most students.
3. **Inequality in competitive opportunities**: Government school students are disadvantaged in tech-based assessments and career opportunities.
    - **Eg:** Over **80% of students qualifying for coding competitions** in 2024 came from private schools with strong digital programs (Source: **NITI Aayog**).
4. **Widening socio-economic divides**: The digital disparity reinforces structural inequalities, hindering upward mobility for students in government schools.
    - **Eg: Students in private schools** in **Delhi NCR** access virtual labs, while many government schools still lack basic computers.

Measures to bridge this gap effectively

1. **Enhanced public investment**: Increase funding for digital infrastructure under programs like **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan** to meet ICT needs.
    - **Eg:** Kerala's **Hi-Tech School Project** equipped **45,000 classrooms** with laptops, projectors, and high-speed Internet, significantly improving learning outcomes.
2. **Public-private partnerships (PPPs)**: Collaborate with private firms for resources, expertise, and training.
    - **Eg: Microsoft's Project Sangam** partnered with the **Andhra Pradesh government** to train **10,000 teachers** in digital tools, benefiting over **1 lakh students**.
3. **Broadband expansion for rural schools**: Ensure high-speed Internet access under the **BharatNet project** for all government schools.
    - **Eg:** By 2024, **75,000 rural schools** were connected to broadband through BharatNet, enabling digital classrooms in remote areas.

4. **Inclusive digital policies**: Provide assistive technologies for differently-abled students and subsidized devices for underprivileged learners.
    - **Eg:** Under the **Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan**, Tamil Nadu introduced **braille-enabled devices** and screen readers in government schools for visually impaired students.

Conclusion

Bridging the digital divide between government and private schools requires targeted funding, innovative partnerships, and inclusive policies. **A robust digital education ecosystem can empower students across socio-economic strata**, ensuring equitable access to quality education in India.

Q. "Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is crucial to bridging the healthcare gaps in rural India". Critically analyze the role of PPPs in addressing healthcare inequities and suggest measures to enhance their effectiveness. (15 M)

Introduction:

India's rural healthcare faces a critical gap, with a **shortage of 83% specialist doctors** at Community Health Centres (NITI Aayog, 2023). PPPs provide an opportunity to combine public funding with private expertise to improve accessibility and quality.

Body

Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is crucial to bridging the healthcare gaps in rural India

1. **Improved healthcare infrastructure:** PPPs enable the establishment of hospitals, diagnostic centers, and clinics in underserved regions.
    - **Eg:** The **National Dialysis Program** under PPP ensures affordable dialysis services in district hospitals.
2. **Affordable access to specialized care:** Through subsidized private services, rural populations gain access to specialized healthcare.
    - **Eg: Chiranjeevi Yojana (Gujarat)** reduced maternal mortality by involving private doctors in childbirth services.
3. **Training and capacity building:** PPPs train local healthcare workers, enhancing rural healthcare delivery.
    - **Eg: Apollo Telehealth** partnered with state governments to train healthcare workers in telemedicine technology.

The role of PPPs in addressing healthcare inequities

Positive aspects:

1. **Efficient resource utilization:** PPPs combine public funds with private sector efficiency, ensuring cost-effective services.
    - **Eg: Maharashtra's Hirkani Project** improved neonatal care in tribal regions through private collaboration.
2. **Expanded healthcare coverage:** Private partnerships extend quality care to previously inaccessible rural areas.
    - **Eg: Karuna Trust** operates over 30 PHCs in Karnataka through PPP, ensuring primary care access.
3. **Reduction in out-of-pocket expenditure:** Subsidized services in PPP models reduce the financial burden on rural households.
    - **Eg:** Health services under **Ayushman Bharat** in PPP hospitals have reduced costs for beneficiaries.
4. **Introduction of innovative solutions:** PPPs bring in advanced technology and innovation to address rural challenges.
    - **Eg:** AI-driven diagnostics by **Niramai Health Analytics** (PPP with Karnataka Govt.) detect breast cancer early.
5. **Boost to public healthcare system:** PPPs strengthen existing government infrastructure by filling skill and resource gaps.
    - **Eg:** Private sector-managed CT scan facilities in government hospitals across Rajasthan.

Negative aspects

1. **Profit-driven motives:** Private entities often prioritize profitability over inclusivity and service quality.
    - **Eg:** Overcharging under PPP hospitals in Rajasthan highlighted by **CAG Report (2021)**.
2. **Limited rural focus:** Private investments tend to favor semi-urban areas, neglecting remote and tribal regions.
    - **Eg:** NITI Aayog (2022) reported low PPP penetration in northeastern states.
3. **Accountability concerns:** Weak monitoring systems allow deviations from service agreements.
    - **Eg:** Poor management in PPP-run PHCs in **Madhya Pradesh**, flagged by local audits (2020).
4. **Unequal partnerships:** Private dominance often marginalizes public objectives, leading to inequities.
    - **Eg:** Limited public oversight in the **Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)** implementation.
5. **Affordability issues:** Costs of advanced diagnostics and procedures under PPPs can still be unaffordable for marginalized communities.
    - **Eg:** High costs reported for PPP dialysis services in **Odisha (2021)**.

Measures to enhance the effectiveness of PPPs

1. **Robust monitoring mechanisms:** Establish clear accountability frameworks and regular audits.
    - **Eg:** Adopt a **performance-based funding model**, similar to **UK's NHS PPPs**.
2. **Incentivizing rural focus:** Provide tax breaks and subsidies to encourage private investment in underserved regions.
    - **Eg:** Tax incentives under **National Health Policy (2017)** for rural healthcare investments.
3. **Affordability through regulation:** Cap prices for services and drugs provided under PPP schemes.
    - **Eg:** Implement Ayushman Bharat pricing ceilings in all PPP healthcare facilities.
4. **Capacity building of rural healthcare workers:** Train mid-level healthcare providers and paramedics to support PPP initiatives.
    - **Eg: Bridge Program in Healthcare (2023)** for rural nurses in PPP-operated PHCs.
5. **Leverage technology:** Promote AI, telemedicine, and digital health records to improve efficiency.
    - **Eg:** Scale up the **National Digital Health Mission**, integrating private providers.

Conclusion

Public-Private Partnerships, when aligned with equity and inclusivity, can be transformative for India's rural healthcare. By addressing governance gaps, expanding rural outreach, and leveraging technology, PPPs can fulfill the **National Health Policy (2017)** vision of **universal healthcare for all by 2030**.

Q. "Brain drain versus brain circulation is a defining challenge for emerging economies". Discuss the socio-economic implications of India's brain drain and suggest policy measures to retain and attract talent. (15 M)

Introduction

The migration of skilled professionals, often termed **brain drain**, limits the potential of emerging economies to harness local talent. However, **brain circulation**, where professionals return with global expertise and capital, offers a pathway to economic transformation.

Body

Brain drain versus brain circulation as a defining challenge

1. **Loss of intellectual capital**: Emerging economies lose their brightest minds to developed nations offering better opportunities.

- **Eg:** Over **5,60,000 skilled Indians** migrated to OECD countries in **2022** (International Migration Outlook, 2022).

2. **Global competition for talent**: Developed nations, such as the U.S. and Canada, attract top talent with high salaries, research opportunities, and quality living conditions.
    - **Eg: Canada granted 2,26,000 permanent residencies to Indians** in the past decade.
3. **Brain circulation advantage**: Nations like **China** experience a return of emigrants with capital and expertise, boosting innovation.
    - **Eg:** China's **Shenzhen region** witnessed a surge in returnees contributing to **quantum computing advancements** (Michio Kaku, 2024).

Socio-economic implications of India's brain drain

1. **Loss of innovation and patents**: The outflow of skilled talent reduces India's ability to contribute to original ideas and global patents.
    - **Eg:** India files fewer patents per capita compared to nations like **South Korea and the U.S.** (World Intellectual Property Organization, 2023).
2. **Dependence on remittances**: While remittances boost foreign reserves, they cannot substitute the innovation-driven economy lost due to brain drain.
    - **Eg:** India received **$100 billion in remittances in 2022**, the highest globally (World Bank, 2022).
3. **Imbalance in workforce quality**: The exodus of skilled professionals leads to a domestic talent gap, especially in advanced fields like AI and biotechnology.
    - **Eg:** India faces a shortage of **1.5 million AI professionals**, according to the **NASSCOM Report, 2024**.
4. **Widening inequality**: Regions with higher migration rates, like Kerala, benefit from remittances, while others lag in economic gains.
    - **Eg:** Over **2 million Malayalis** work in the Gulf, creating disparities in regional development (Economic Survey of Kerala, 2023).
5. **Impact on research and academia**: Top researchers migrating abroad weakens India's global academic standing and innovation capabilities.
    - **Eg:** Over **50% of IIT graduates** settle abroad, contributing to foreign institutions.

Policy measures to retain and attract talent

1. **Improved research funding**: Increase funding for R&D, creating opportunities for innovation.
    - **Eg:** Establish **national innovation hubs** similar to China's **Zhongguancun Science Park** to boost local entrepreneurship.
2. **Tax and regulatory incentives**: Offer tax breaks and simplified regulations to attract start-ups and entrepreneurs.

- **Eg:** The **Startup India Initiative** has incentivized over **80,000 registered startups** (Ministry of Commerce, 2023).

3. **Quality of life improvements**: Enhance urban infrastructure, healthcare, and housing to retain skilled professionals.
    - **Eg:** Programs like **Smart Cities Mission** must integrate work-life balance initiatives for professionals.
4. **Global collaboration opportunities**: Foster collaborations between Indian institutions and global universities to enable talent exchange.
    - **Eg:** The **GIAN Initiative** facilitates academic exchanges with leading global faculty.
5. **Reintegration schemes**: Introduce policies to encourage expatriates to return with expertise and investments.
    - **Eg: China's Thousand Talents Plan** has attracted **7,000+ expatriates** with global experience.
6. **Focus on innovation-driven education**: Modernize higher education to align with global standards and reduce the urge to migrate for studies.
    - **Eg:** Reform engineering curricula to match **MIT and Stanford-level research opportunities**.

Conclusion

Addressing the challenge of brain drain requires a shift from remittance dependency to creating a **knowledge and innovation-based economy**. By fostering policies that attract, retain, and circulate talent, India can ensure sustainable growth and global competitiveness

Q. "A robust industry-academia collaboration is critical for addressing the employability challenges of Indian graduates". Discuss in light of the UGC's recent skill-oriented education initiatives. (15 M)

Introduction

India, with its **youth population of over 600 million**, faces an employability challenge, as only **51.25% of graduates** are deemed employable (Economic Survey 2023-24). Strengthening **industry-academia collaboration** can bridge this gap, aligning education with the dynamic needs of the job market.

Body

Industry-academia collaboration is critical for employability

1. **Skill alignment with market needs**: Industry partnerships ensure curricula are relevant to the skills demanded by employers.
    - **Eg:** Collaboration with **TCS and Infosys** has enhanced IT skills in universities.

2. **Real-time application of knowledge**: Internships, live projects, and apprenticeships expose students to practical challenges.
    - **Eg:** AICTE's internship portal facilitates industry placements for engineering students.
3. **Promoting innovation and entrepreneurship**: Joint research initiatives foster a culture of innovation among students.
    - **Eg:** The **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** has promoted industry-driven start-ups from HEIs.
4. **Reducing skill gaps**: Regular interaction with industry experts helps in identifying gaps and upgrading academic programs.
    - **Eg:** Partnerships under **NEP 2020** have initiated curriculum overhauls for emerging fields like AI and green energy.
5. **Global employability**: Collaborations with multinational corporations prepare graduates for global standards.
    - **Eg: Wheebox India Skills Report 2025** highlighted India's growing global talent pool in technology and healthcare.

UGC's recent skill-oriented education initiatives

1. **Skill-based programs in HEIs**: Introduction of modular and multidisciplinary courses focusing on industry-relevant skills.
    - **Eg:** Skill-oriented certificates and diplomas launched in fields like renewable energy and data science.
2. **Micro-credentials for niche expertise**: Short, stackable courses allow targeted learning for specific skills.
    - **Eg:** UGC's guidelines propose **credit-based modular certifications** aligned with industry needs.
3. **Industry collaboration for curricula design**: Courses co-created with industry to ensure alignment with job market requirements.
    - **Eg:** Tie-ups with **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** for advanced manufacturing programs.
4. **Internships and apprenticeships**: Focus on experiential learning through industry-linked opportunities.
    - **Eg:** AICTE's apprenticeship initiative connects HEI students with over **500+ companies**.
5. **Credit-based lifelong learning**: Flexible credit systems enable working professionals to upskill.
    - **Eg:** Integration with **NEP 2020's Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)** for skill enhancement.

Pros and cons of UGC's initiatives

Pros	Cons
1. Increased employability: Industry-relevant skills prepare graduates for diverse sectors. **Eg:** IT and healthcare graduates reported higher employability indices (Wheebox, 2025).	**1. Lack of trained faculty**: Educators often lack the industry exposure needed to impart practical skills. **Eg:** Rural HEIs face acute faculty skill gaps.
2. Lifelong learning opportunities: Micro-credentials encourage professionals to upskill. **Eg: Credit-based certifications in data analytics** are in high demand.	**2. Infrastructure challenges**: Many HEIs lack modern labs and facilities for hands-on learning. **Eg:** Semi-urban institutions struggle with outdated equipment.
3. Multidisciplinary approach: Integration of skills across disciplines enhances adaptability. **Eg:** Renewable energy courses blend engineering and management skills.	**3. Unequal access**: Rural and marginalized students face barriers to participation in high-cost programs.
4. Industry involvement: Collaborative design ensures alignment with emerging technologies. **Eg:** AICTE collaborations with tech companies for robotics courses.	**4. Resistance to change**: Traditional universities may resist shifting from theory-heavy curricula to skill-based systems.
5. Global competitiveness: Enhanced employability positions Indian graduates for international opportunities. **Eg:** Indian tech talent is increasingly absorbed by **Gulf and EU nations**.	**5. Rapid obsolescence**: Fast-changing technologies may render some skill courses outdated.

Conclusion

To achieve **global workforce integration** by 2035, India must prioritize industry-academia collaboration, strengthen faculty training, and improve infrastructure. A **dynamic curriculum, equitable access, and sustained investments** will transform India's graduates into globally competitive professionals, realizing the true potential of the **demographic dividend**.

Q. "A holistic approach is essential to address the ecology of trauma surrounding survivors of sexual violence". Examine the need for inclusive mental health interventions. (10 M)

Introduction

Sexual violence impacts survivors at multiple levels—psychological, social, and systemic. Addressing the **"ecology of trauma"** requires a holistic and inclusive approach that caters to the survivor's immediate and long-term needs while addressing societal and institutional barriers.

Body

Holistic approach is essential to address trauma surrounding survivors of sexual violence

1. **Interpersonal trauma and support systems**: Survivors require support to rebuild trust and relationships, often disrupted by the trauma.
    - Eg: **National Mental Health Survey (2015-16)** highlighted the role of family support in trauma recovery.
2. **Community engagement**: Trauma interventions must include sensitizing communities to reduce stigma and encourage survivors to seek help.
    - Eg: **Tulir NGO** works on raising awareness about child sexual abuse to create safe community spaces.
3. **Institutional sensitivity**: Police, healthcare, and judicial systems must adopt trauma-informed approaches to reduce secondary victimization.
    - Eg: The **Justice Verma Committee (2013)** emphasized reforms in police behavior towards sexual assault survivors.
4. **Cultural and context-specific interventions**: Addressing unique cultural and social barriers faced by survivors is critical to fostering recovery.
    - Eg: In rural India, survivors face ostracism, necessitating **community reintegration programs** tailored to local contexts.

The need for inclusive mental health interventions

1. **Access to trauma-informed care**: Survivors need mental health professionals trained in **rape trauma syndrome** and PTSD.
    - Eg: Chennai's **Sneha NGO** provides trauma-informed therapy to survivors of sexual violence.
2. **Intersectionality in care**: Inclusive policies must address the needs of marginalized groups like Dalits, LGBTQ+ persons, and children.
    - Eg: The **POCSO Act (2012)** ensures child-specific protections, though implementation gaps persist.
3. **Integrated helplines and outreach**: A national helpline offering psychological support can provide immediate intervention.
    - Eg: Similar to **Cyber Crime Helpline**, a dedicated sexual violence counseling helpline can aid survivors.
4. **Public-private partnerships (PPPs)**: Collaborations with NGOs and private entities can scale counseling services and awareness programs.

- Eg: The **One-Stop Centre Scheme (2015)**, run by the government, coordinates with NGOs for survivor assistance.

5. **Long-term rehabilitation programs**: Mental health interventions must extend beyond immediate care to long-term support for recovery.
    - Eg: Psychotherapy for PTSD survivors often requires **years of follow-up care** for full rehabilitation.
6. **Integration with legal and social services**: Counselling must complement legal aid and vocational training to ensure holistic recovery.
    - Eg: The **Nirbhaya Fund** supports such integrative survivor services but requires enhanced implementation.

Conclusion

A trauma-informed, inclusive mental health framework **is not only critical for survivors' recovery but also essential for creating a society where survivors feel safe and empowered.** Building this framework demands sustained collaboration across stakeholders, backed by robust institutional reforms.

Q. To what extent has the National Health Mission contributed to India's achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to health? Illustrate with examples. (10 M)

Introduction

The **National Health Mission (NHM)** has significantly contributed to India's health-related **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-3)** by improving healthcare accessibility, reducing mortality rates, and addressing communicable and non-communicable diseases through targeted interventions.

Body

Success of NHM in Achieving SDGs

1. **Reduction in maternal and child mortality:** NHM initiatives have helped in reducing **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** and **Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR).**
    - Eg: **MMR declined from 130 (2014-16) to 97 (2018-20) per lakh live births** (Source: Sample Registration System).
2. **Expansion of healthcare workforce:** NHM facilitated a significant increase in healthcare professionals, ensuring better service delivery.
    - Eg: **Over 12 lakh additional healthcare workers** engaged between **2021-24**, including ASHAs, ANMs, and CHOs.
3. **Universal immunization coverage:** NHM initiatives have improved vaccination rates, reducing vaccine-preventable diseases.
    - Eg: **97.98% Measles-Rubella vaccination coverage** under **Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 5.0**.

4. **Tackling communicable diseases:** NHM has been instrumental in reducing TB and malaria incidences.
    - Eg: **TB incidence reduced from 237 per lakh (2015) to 195 (2023)** under the **National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP)**.
5. **Strengthening primary healthcare:** NHM has expanded health infrastructure, especially at the grassroots level.
    - Eg: Establishment of **1.72 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AAMs)** by FY 2023-24.
6. **Digital health interventions:** NHM has integrated digital solutions to ensure better healthcare tracking and delivery.
    - Eg: The **U-WIN platform** launched in 2023 for real-time vaccination tracking across 65 districts.
7. **Focus on non-communicable diseases (NCDs):** NHM addresses rising NCDs through targeted screening and treatment programs.
    - Eg: **2.61 crore individuals screened** under the **National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission**.

Challenges in Achieving SDGs

1. **Inadequate healthcare infrastructure:** Despite progress, gaps remain in healthcare facilities, particularly in rural areas.
    - Eg: **Rural areas face a shortage of specialists** at district hospitals, impacting service delivery.
2. **Shortage of skilled healthcare workforce:** High vacancy rates persist in specialist positions, affecting quality healthcare delivery.
    - Eg: **30% shortfall in specialist doctors** in CHCs (Source: RHS 2022).
3. **Financial constraints:** NHM relies heavily on public funding, often facing budgetary shortfalls and irregular fund flow.
    - Eg: The NHM budget allocation remains below the recommended **2.5% of GDP** target by the **National Health Policy, 2017**.
4. **Disease burden persistence:** Non-communicable diseases and emerging infections continue to challenge healthcare systems.
    - Eg: Rising cases of **diabetes and hypertension** despite screening initiatives.
5. **Regional disparities:** Healthcare outcomes vary significantly across states, with poorer states lagging in key indicators.
    - Eg: **MMR in Assam (195) remains high**, compared to the national average of 97.

Conclusion

The NHM has made substantial progress in advancing India's health-related SDGs through targeted interventions and improved healthcare access. However, **addressing infrastructure gaps, financial sustainability, and workforce shortages** will be key to ensuring long-term success and equitable healthcare for all.

Q. Despite being a demand-driven scheme, MGNREGS faces persistent budgetary constraints. Discuss the impact of underfunding on its implementation and suggest measures to address these challenges. (10 M)

Introduction

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), aimed at providing guaranteed wage employment to rural households, is facing persistent **budgetary shortfalls**, affecting its core objectives of poverty alleviation and rural development. In **Financial year 2024-25 the government had allocated ₹86000 crore** for the programme, despite facing a deficit, no additional funds have been allocated for this "demand driven" scheme.

Body

Impact of underfunding on MGNREGS implementation

1. **Delayed wage payments:** Budget shortfalls result in delayed wage disbursements, violating the statutory provision of timely payment under Section 3(3) of the MGNREGA Act.
    - **Eg:** As of January 2025, the Union Rural Development Ministry reported pending wages worth **₹4,315 crore**, causing hardship to rural workers.
2. **Artificial suppression of demand:** Inadequate fund allocation discourages proactive demand registration by workers, undermining the scheme's core principle of being demand-driven.
    - **Eg:** The **Parliamentary Standing Committee (2024)** observed that low allocation leads to a cascading effect on employment opportunities.
3. **Project disruptions:** Shortages in funds for material components delay infrastructure projects, hampering local development and asset creation.
    - **Eg:** A delay of **₹5,715 crore** in material payments has led to reluctance among vendors, impacting project completion rates.
4. **Erosion of worker trust:** Frequent funding shortages erode confidence among beneficiaries, leading to a decline in participation and affecting rural livelihoods.
    - **Eg:** A recent survey by **Azim Premji University** found that wage payment delays forced many rural workers to seek alternative employment.
5. **Increased liabilities on states:** Budgetary constraints force state governments to bridge financial gaps, straining their fiscal capacity and limiting the scheme's effectiveness.
    - **Eg:** In FY 2023-24, states had to cover delayed payments, leading to fiscal imbalances in rural development budgets.

Measures to address budgetary challenges in MGNREGS

1. **Timely supplementary allocations:** Introduce an automatic fund release mechanism based on real-time demand to ensure continuous financial flow.

    - **Eg:** In **FY 2020-21**, the allocation was revised from **₹61,500 crore to ₹1,11,500 crore**, addressing increased demand due to reverse migration.
2. **Decentralized fund planning:** Empower Gram Panchayats to plan and allocate resources effectively based on actual demand patterns.
    - **Eg:** The **CAG report (2023)** highlighted the need for better financial autonomy at local levels to improve fund utilization.
3. **Utilization audits:** Implement robust monitoring systems to track fund usage, prevent leakages, and ensure accountability in expenditures.
    - **Eg:** The Social Audit Mechanism under **Section 17 of MGNREGA Act** should be strengthened for better oversight.
4. **Integration with financial inclusion schemes:** Leverage digital platforms such as Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and Aadhaar-linked payments to ensure faster wage disbursal.
    - **Eg:** The introduction of **Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS)** for MGNREGS wages has reduced transaction delays.
5. **Increased budgetary allocation:** A demand-driven scheme like MGNREGS requires dynamic budgeting that adjusts to economic conditions and seasonal variations.
    - **Eg:** Experts recommend an annual allocation of at least **₹1.2 lakh crore**, considering inflation and rising rural distress.

Conclusion

Ensuring the effective functioning of MGNREGS requires **adequate and timely funding**, improved planning, and greater transparency to uphold its objective of providing livelihood security to rural households. A strategic approach to **financial sustainability and decentralized governance** can make the scheme more robust and impactful.

Q. "Game-based learning is increasingly being recognized as an alternative pedagogical" tool. Critically evaluate its impact on enhancing cognitive development in students. (15 M)

Introduction

Game-based learning integrates interactive, problem-solving, and experiential elements into education, making learning **more engaging and effective**. It is increasingly seen as an **alternative pedagogical tool** that enhances **conceptual understanding and skill development**.

Body

Game-based learning as an alternative pedagogical tool

1. **Active learning over passive learning**: Unlike traditional rote learning, game-based methods promote engagement and participation.

- **Eg: Pralay board game (India Science Festival 2025)** uses climate-related scenarios to teach environmental policy.

2. **Personalized and adaptive learning**: Games adjust difficulty levels based on a student's progress, catering to individual learning speeds.
    - **Eg: Khan Academy's adaptive game modules** help students grasp math concepts at their own pace.
3. **Experiential and scenario-based learning**: Games simulate real-life situations, enhancing practical understanding of abstract subjects.
    - **Eg: Assassin's Creed used in history lessons** to teach ancient civilizations and battles.
4. **Encourages interdisciplinary learning**: Many educational games integrate multiple subjects, bridging gaps between disciplines.
    - **Eg: Microscopya game (University of California, 2024)** combines **biology, chemistry, and physics** for cell biology learning.
5. **Enhances student motivation and retention**: Game-based formats **increase** curiosity and competition, leading to higher knowledge retention.
    - **Eg: A 2021 study (Digital Learning Innovations Journal)** found **56% higher retention rates** in students using game-based learning over traditional methods.

Positive impact of game-based learning on cognitive development

1. **Improves problem-solving and critical thinking**: Games require strategic decision-making, fostering higher-order cognitive skills.
    - **Eg: Climaze (Inspired by Monopoly, 2025)** helps students **analyze climate change solutions** through decision-based learning.
2. **Develops decision-making and adaptability**: Players assess risks and rewards, enhancing their ability to make informed choices.
    - **Eg: PaGamO learning model** showed a **20% improvement in student decision-making speed** (Digital Learning Journal, 2021).
3. **Enhances memory and recall**: Interactive gameplay helps students retain complex information better than passive learning.
    - **Eg: Students playing cell biology games** performed **30% better in recall tests** than those using textbooks (2023 study, UC San Diego).
4. **Encourages social interaction and teamwork**: Multiplayer and cooperative games develop communication, leadership, and collaboration skills.
    - **Eg: Turtle Survival Alliance's biodiversity game** promotes **team-based conservation strategies**.
5. **Reduces learning anxiety and boosts engagement**: Game-based learning creates a low-pressure environment, encouraging risk-taking and experimentation.
    - **Eg: Delhi-based biodiversity educator Peeyush Sekhsaria** found that **interactive snake awareness board games** led to better learning outcomes than traditional lectures.

Negative impact on cognitive development

1. **Reduces deep analytical thinking**: Over-reliance on gamified learning can lead to **quick thinking but weaker deep analytical skills**.
    - **Eg: CBSE's AI curriculum (2024)** found students using **game-based learning struggled more with complex, multi-layered questions**.
2. **Creates dependency on instant rewards**: Frequent in-game rewards **may reduce intrinsic motivation**, making students reliant on external validation.
    - **Eg: Duolingo's gamified learning model** has been criticized for **focusing on streaks and points rather than deep language mastery**.
3. **May promote rote learning in disguised forms**: Some games focus more on speed than conceptual depth**,** limiting deeper cognitive engagement.
    - **Eg: Multiple-choice question-based game models** often lead to **guesswork rather than critical reasoning** (UNESCO Report, 2023).
4. **Cognitive overload and distraction**: Excessive gaming bombards students with too much information**,** affecting retention and focus.
    - **Eg: A 2023 study (National Institute of Mental Health, USA)** found students using **hyper-stimulating educational games struggled with sustained attention** in traditional classrooms.
5. **Limited transferability of skills**: Skills learned in game environments do not always translate well into real-world applications**.**
    - **Eg: A study by Harvard Education Review (2023)** found that students excelling in **finance simulation games** often **failed to apply budgeting principles in real life**.

Conclusion

Game-based learning enhances cognitive development, but digital accessibility, curriculum alignment, and implementation challenges must be addressed. **A balanced approach**, integrating **traditional and game-based methods**, is crucial to **maximizing its educational potential**.

Q. Despite consistent policy efforts, India's foundational literacy and numeracy levels remain a concern. Critically analyze the shortcomings in India's primary education system and suggest reforms based on global best practices. (10 M)

Introduction

Despite initiatives like **NEP 2020** and **NIPUN Bharat Mission**, **ASER 2024** reveals **persistent gaps in foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN)**. These gaps hinder long-term learning and **widen socio-economic inequalities**, necessitating **systemic reforms**.

Body

Shortcomings in India's primary education system

1. **Overemphasis on rote learning:** Curriculum prioritizes memorization over conceptual understanding, stunting problem-solving skills.
    - **Eg: ASER 2024** highlights that **only 52.5% of Class 5 students in Tamil Nadu** can read Class 2 level text.
2. **Inadequate teacher training:** Teachers lack exposure to **modern pedagogical techniques**, affecting student engagement and comprehension.
    - **Eg: Justice J.S. Verma Committee (2012)** flagged **poor teacher education** as a key issue in India's schooling system.
3. **High student-teacher ratio:** Overcrowded classrooms reduce individual attention, impacting learning outcomes.
    - **Eg: RTE Act, 2009** prescribes **30:1 for primary schools**, but **Bihar reports 50:1** (UDISE+, 2023).
4. **Learning losses due to COVID-19:** The pandemic **exacerbated existing gaps** in foundational skills, especially in rural areas.
    - **Eg: Maharashtra's reading level in Class 5 fell to 56.8% in 2022** but has only slightly recovered (ASER 2024).
5. **Digital divide and lack of infrastructure:** Unequal access to technology limits learning opportunities, particularly in rural areas.
    - **Eg: NITI Aayog (2023)** found **only 26% of rural households** have internet access for digital learning.
6. **Poor assessment techniques:** Standardized exams fail to test critical thinking and application-based learning.
    - **Eg:** Finland's education system uses **continuous assessment** rather than one-time exams.
7. **Gap between private and government schools:** Private schools outperform government schools, widening inequality in learning outcomes.
    - **Eg:** ASER 2024 shows **private school students in Tamil Nadu surpass government peers in FLN**.

Reforms Based on Global Best Practices

1. **Shift from rote learning to conceptual understanding:** Introduce **project-based and experiential learning** methods.
    - **Eg: Finland's education model** emphasizes **creativity and problem-solving** over rote memorization.
2. **Enhanced teacher training programs:** Implement **continuous, in-service teacher training** with emphasis on **modern pedagogy**.
    - **Eg: Japan's Lesson Study model** allows teachers to **collaborate and refine teaching methods**.
3. **Improved student-teacher ratio:** Increase **recruitment and retention** of quality educators to improve learning outcomes.
    - **Eg: Cuba maintains a 20:1 ratio**, ensuring **personalized instruction** for students.

4. **Strengthening digital infrastructure:** Expand **EdTech solutions** and **provide subsidized internet access** in rural areas.
    - **Eg: Singapore's Smart Nation initiative** integrates **technology in early education**.
5. **Adopting skill-based assessments:** Replace **high-stakes exams with continuous skill-based assessments**.
    - **Eg: Finland's sampling-based national assessment** evaluates **policy effectiveness, not student ranking**.
6. **Encouraging early childhood education:** Strengthen **pre-primary education** to build strong FLN skills from an early age.
    - **Eg: OECD reports** show countries with **universal pre-school access** (like Sweden) have **higher literacy rates**.
7. **Public-private partnerships (PPP) for school improvement:** Engage **private entities** to enhance **learning resources and teaching methods**.
    - **Eg: Delhi Model Schools** have improved infrastructure and learning outcomes through **PPP models**.

Conclusion

Addressing India's FLN crisis requires a **systemic shift from rote learning to conceptual education**, **teacher capacity building**, and **digital inclusivity**. **Leveraging global best practices** can ensure **equitable, high-quality primary education**, setting the foundation for **India's long-term human capital growth**.

Q. "Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) represent not only a health challenge but also a governance failure". Critically examine India's approach to combating NTDs and suggest policy reforms for their effective elimination. (15 M)

Introduction

Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) continue to persist due to **weak healthcare infrastructure, poor surveillance, and low community participation**. While India has made progress in eliminating some NTDs, several others remain endemic, indicating governance lapses in **disease control, policy implementation, and funding**.

Body

NTDs represent not only a health challenge but also a governance failure

1. **Inadequate healthcare access**: Marginalized communities lack **primary healthcare facilities**, delaying diagnosis and treatment.
    - **Eg: Lymphatic Filariasis** remains endemic in **345 districts across 20 states** despite multiple elimination deadlines (MoHFW, 2024).
2. **Poor disease surveillance and data accuracy**: Weak tracking systems lead to **underreporting and misdiagnosis**.

- **Eg: Kala-azar Post-Kala-Azar Dermal Leishmaniasis (PKDL)** cases are often missed, leading to disease recurrence (DNDi, 2024).

3. **Fragmented policy implementation**: Multiple agencies work in silos, affecting coordination and efficiency.
    - **Eg: NVBDCP** oversees vector-borne diseases, while rabies is managed under **animal health policies**, leading to gaps.
4. **Low public awareness and community participation**: Many affected populations **do not seek timely treatment** due to stigma and misinformation.
    - **Eg: Leprosy cases** continue to be reported, despite India declaring elimination in **2005** (MoHFW, 2023).
5. **Funding constraints and policy inconsistency**: Public health spending on **preventive care remains low** (<2% of GDP).
    - **Eg:** WHO's **NTD Roadmap 2030** requires sustained investment, but India's **Mass Drug Administration (MDA)** faces poor compliance.

India's approach to combating NTDs: Successes and failures

Successes	Failures
1. Elimination of some NTDs	**1. Leprosy cases persist despite elimination claims**
Eg- India eradicated **yaws (2015)**, **guinea worm (2000)**, and **trachoma (2017)** (MoHFW, 2017).	Eg- **1.2 lakh cases of leprosy were reported in 2022** (MoHFW, 2023), showing continued transmission.
2. Significant reduction in Kala-azar cases	**2. Incomplete elimination of Kala-azar**
Eg- Kala-azar cases reduced from **44,533 (2007) to 438 (2024)** (MoHFW, 2024).	Eg- **Bihar still reported 242 cases in 2024**, indicating poor post-treatment surveillance (ICMR, 2024).
3. Expansion of Mass Drug Administration (MDA) for Lymphatic Filariasis	**3. Low community participation in MDA programs**
Eg- Lymphatic Filariasis MDA covered **130+ districts in 2023** (MoHFW, 2023).	Eg- WHO reported **poor compliance and drug acceptance rates** in endemic districts (WHO, 2024).
4. Introduction of dengue vaccine	**4. Rising dengue cases despite control measures**
Eg- **Takeda's Dengue vaccine approved**, and Indian vaccines (Bharat Biotech, Serum Institute) are in the pipeline (ICMR, 2024).	Eg- Dengue cases increased from **1.6 lakh (2019) to 2.9 lakh (2023), deaths tripled** (MoHFW, 2024).
5. Strengthening of rabies prevention programs	**5. High rabies mortality due to lack of post-exposure treatment**

Successes	Failures
Eg- **Expanded animal vaccination efforts** under National Rabies Control Program (MoHFW, 2023).	Eg- India still records **20,000+ rabies deaths annually** due to lack of access to post-bite vaccines (WHO, 2023).
6. Digital surveillance initiatives	**6. Weak post-treatment monitoring**
Eg- **E-Nikshay platform strengthened TB tracking, similar models planned for NTDs** (MoHFW, 2023).	Eg- Lack of active follow-up for **Lymphatic Filariasis and Kala-azar** (ICMR, 2024).

Policy reforms for effective elimination

1. **Strengthening primary healthcare systems**: Expand **diagnostic facilities and trained workforce** in endemic areas.
    - **Eg:** Strengthen **Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs)** under Ayushman Bharat to include NTD screening.
2. **Enhancing disease surveillance and data accuracy**: Implement **AI-driven real-time monitoring** of NTD cases.
    - **Eg:** Use **digital platforms like Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP)** to track outbreaks.
3. **Community-led interventions**: Increase awareness and behavioral change programs to improve treatment-seeking behavior.
    - **Eg:** Strengthen **ASHA workers' role** in identifying and reporting cases in rural areas.
4. **Integrated vector control strategy**: Strengthen inter-agency coordination for **vector management and public health interventions**.
    - **Eg:** Link **animal vaccination programs with human disease surveillance** for better rabies control.
5. **Sustained financial investment**: Increase funding for **preventive healthcare and vaccine research**.
    - **Eg:** Allocate dedicated NTD funds under **National Health Mission (NHM)** to support elimination efforts.

Conclusion

India's NTD elimination targets can be met with **robust governance, sustained funding, and community participation**. Strengthening **surveillance, vaccination programs, and health infrastructure** is key to achieving **WHO's 2030 elimination roadmap** and ensuring **NTD-free India**.

Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

Q. How can India balance the dual challenge of undernutrition in vulnerable populations and rising overnutrition in affluent groups through targeted policy interventions? (10 M)

Introduction

India faces a dual burden of malnutrition, with undernutrition persisting among vulnerable populations and overnutrition rising among affluent groups. Addressing this requires **targeted, evidence-based interventions** to ensure **nutritional equity and sustainable health outcomes**.

Body

Addressing undernutrition among vulnerable populations

1. **Strengthening food-based social security programs**: Expand and improve ICDS, Poshan Abhiyaan, and PM-POSHAN with increased dairy and protein-based supplementation.
    - **Eg: Telangana's Arogya Lakshmi scheme** provides pregnant women with milk, eggs, and nutritious meals.
2. **Expanding direct nutrition supplementation**: Enhance access to fortified foods, micronutrient supplementation, and biofortified crops for malnourished children and women.
    - **Eg: FSSAI's Eat Right India movement (2023)** promotes fortified staples like **iron-fortified rice and iodized salt**.
3. **Improving affordability and access to nutritious food**: Subsidize essential protein-rich foods like milk, eggs, and pulses for low-income households through PDS and state-level nutrition schemes.
    - **Eg: Gujarat and Karnataka provide milk powder through ICDS and mid-day meals**.
4. **Leveraging community-based nutrition awareness programs**: Mobilize Anganwadi workers, SHGs, and civil society organizations to promote balanced diets and nutritional awareness.
    - **Eg: Maharashtra's Poshan Maah (2024)** targeted maternal nutrition through village-level campaigns.
5. **Ensuring targeted maternal and child nutrition**: Strengthen maternal and child health programs to break the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition.
    - **Eg: National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5, 2021)** revealed that **35.5%** of children under five in India are stunted, necessitating urgent interventions.

Tackling overnutrition and unhealthy dietary patterns in affluent groups

1. **Regulating high-fat, high-sugar processed foods**: Introduce front-of-pack warning labels, higher taxation on unhealthy foods, and restrict junk food marketing targeting children.
    - **Eg: Chile's food labeling law (2016)** reduced the purchase of sugary drinks by **24% within a year**.
2. **Encouraging balanced dietary habits through public campaigns**: Use media, social influencers, and school-based nutrition programs to promote healthier food choices.
    - **Eg: UK's Change4Life campaign** successfully reduced sugar and fat consumption among children.
3. **Promoting dietary diversity and moderation**: Educate households about portion control, mindful eating, and balanced meals through nutrition literacy programs.
    - **Eg**: India's Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI) campaigns emphasize **"Eat Right India" and "Thoda Kam Namak, Thoda Kam Cheeni"**.
4. **Integrating lifestyle modifications in healthcare policies**: Encourage preventive healthcare, fitness programs, and dietary counseling in urban areas.
    - **Eg: National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-**Communicable Diseases (NPCDCS) focuses on lifestyle diseases caused by overnutrition.
5. **Regulating school and workplace nutrition**: Implement healthy canteen policies, workplace nutrition awareness, and incentives for healthy eating habits.
    - **Eg: Delhi's 2023 school policy bans junk food** near school premises, encouraging nutritious alternatives.

Conclusion

India's nutrition strategy must **bridge the gap between undernutrition and overnutrition** through **policy-driven, behaviorally informed interventions**. A comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach is essential to achieving a nutritionally secure India.

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. Examine how the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, strengthens the legal framework for data governance in India. What are the broader implications for individual privacy and state accountability? (10 M)

Introduction

The **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**, is a landmark legislation aimed at ensuring robust data governance in India, striking a balance between safeguarding individual privacy, fostering innovation, and ensuring state accountability.

Body

Strengthening the legal framework for data governance

1. **Explicit roles for data fiduciaries and principals**: Clearly defines responsibilities of entities collecting data (fiduciaries) and rights of individuals (principals).
    - **Eg:** Data fiduciaries are required to provide notices in **22 Indian languages** to ensure **informed consent** (DPDP Rules, 2025).
2. **Mandating consent-based data processing**: Requires verifiable, revocable, and informed consent for all data collection and processing.
    - **Eg:** Citizens can withdraw consent or request data correction through **multilingual platforms**, enhancing accessibility for all.
3. **Data Protection Board as a digital-first institution**: Establishes a grievance redressal mechanism accessible digitally to all citizens.
    - **Eg:** The **'born digital' Data Protection Board** enables complaint adjudication without requiring citizens' **physical presence**.
4. **Proportional financial penalties**: Introduces graded penalties to ensure fairness while fostering compliance across entities.
    - **Eg:** A **₹250 crore penalty cap** for significant fiduciaries deters non-compliance (Section 25 of the Act).

Implications for individual privacy

1. **Strengthened Right to Privacy**: Aligns with the **Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)** judgment, recognizing privacy as a fundamental right.
    - **Eg:** Citizens can withdraw consent, update, or erase their data under **Section 7**, ensuring their privacy is upheld.
2. **Protection of children's data**: Mandates verifiable parental consent and safeguards for minors.
    - **Eg:** Fiduciaries must use **parental consent mechanisms** for processing children's data, as per **Section 9** of the Act.
3. **Prevention of misuse and breaches**: Requires data fiduciaries to report breaches within **72 hours** to the Data Protection Board.
    - **Eg:** Technical safeguards mandated by the **DPDP Rules, 2025**, help mitigate the risks of **data theft and breaches**.
4. **Increased citizen autonomy**: Empowers individuals to exercise data rights like access, withdrawal, and correction in their preferred language.
    - **Eg: Online links provided by fiduciaries** allow individuals to exercise these rights effectively, enhancing **digital empowerment**.

Implications for state accountability

1. **Responsible state data handling**: Limits the state's discretion in data usage while ensuring proportional collection.
    - **Eg:** Data collection for welfare schemes follows **Justice B.N. Srikrishna Committee recommendations** for minimal and lawful data usage.
2. **Transparent cross-border data transfer**: Regulates sensitive data transfers to balance national interests with global competitiveness.
    - **Eg:** Restrictions on **sensitive data exports** under the Act ensure **national security priorities** are met.
3. **Accountable grievance mechanisms**: Ensures transparent and efficient handling of complaints via the Data Protection Board.
    - **Eg:** Citizens can submit grievances using the **MyGov platform**, fostering trust and accessibility.
4. **Promoting innovation with minimal compliance burdens**: Supports startups with reduced operational hurdles while imposing stricter norms on significant fiduciaries.
    - **Eg:** Simplified compliance processes for **startups** as outlined in the **Economic Survey, 2024-25**, promote ease of doing business.

Conclusion

The **DPDP Act, 2023**, sets a strong foundation for protecting privacy, enabling ethical data practices, and fostering a transparent digital ecosystem. **By aligning individual rights, innovation, and state responsibility, it positions India as a leader** in digital democracy while ensuring inclusivity, security, and accountability for its citizens.

Q. "Digital health initiatives are transforming governance in the public health sector". Analyze how interoperability and standardization can enhance the effectiveness of health services and governance in India. (15 M)

Introduction

India's digital health initiatives are revolutionizing public health governance by leveraging technology to enhance accessibility, efficiency, and accountability, ensuring better healthcare outcomes for all.

Body

Digital health initiatives transforming governance in the public health sector

1. **Decentralized healthcare governance:** Digital health platforms empower local governments to monitor and address healthcare challenges at the grassroots level.
    - **Eg:** The integration of **e-Sanjeevani with Health & Wellness Centers (HWCs)** under the National Health Mission enables local-level teleconsultation services, strengthening primary healthcare.

2. **Enhanced policy monitoring and evaluation:** Digital dashboards provide real-time data analytics for better policy formulation and targeted interventions.
    - **Eg:** The **Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) portal** tracks maternal and child health indicators, helping policymakers monitor progress towards SDG 3 targets.
3. **Streamlined beneficiary identification and targeting:** Digital records ensure accurate identification and targeted healthcare service delivery to beneficiaries, reducing leakages and fraud.
    - **Eg:** The **Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) ID** helps authenticate patients and track health services utilized across states.
4. **Reduced administrative burden:** Automation of healthcare processes reduces paperwork, speeds up service delivery, and enhances coordination between stakeholders.
    - **Eg:** The **Online Registration System (ORS)** under ABDM facilitates online appointment booking and electronic medical record storage in public hospitals.
5. **Strengthened emergency response mechanisms:** Digital systems improve preparedness and response to health emergencies through better data availability and resource mobilization.
    - **Eg:** The **Aarogya Setu app** played a critical role in contact tracing and health advisories during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interoperability can enhance the effectiveness of health services and governance in India

1. **Continuity of patient care:** Seamless exchange of patient data across different healthcare facilities ensures uninterrupted treatment and improved clinical outcomes.
    - **Eg:** The **Unified Health Interface (UHI)** enables interoperability across hospitals, diagnostic centers, and pharmacies, ensuring patients can access their health data nationwide.
2. **Integrated health service delivery:** Connecting various healthcare services across the public and private sectors allows for coordinated and comprehensive patient care.
    - **Eg:** The **National Digital Health Mission (NDHM)** integrates Ayushman Bharat with private hospitals and insurance providers for efficient healthcare delivery.
3. **Optimized resource allocation:** Interoperability enables better tracking of resources such as hospital beds, medical equipment, and workforce availability, improving efficiency in crisis management.
    - **Eg:** The **CoWIN platform** integrated vaccination data across states and private healthcare providers, ensuring efficient vaccine distribution and tracking.
4. **Facilitation of health insurance claims:** A standardized interoperable system enables smoother processing of claims by integrating insurers, hospitals, and regulatory bodies.

- **Eg:** The **PM-JAY scheme** uses interoperable health records to expedite the settlement of insurance claims, reducing turnaround time for beneficiaries.

5. **Public health surveillance and disease tracking:** Interoperability between laboratories, hospitals, and government agencies enhances early detection and containment of diseases.
    - **Eg:** The **Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP)** leverages interoperable data from various health sources to monitor outbreaks and trends effectively.

Standardization can enhance the effectiveness of health services and governance in India

1. **Uniformity in medical records management:** Standardized formats for health data ensure consistency across healthcare providers, improving efficiency in diagnosis and treatment.
    - **Eg:** The adoption of **Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR)** standards under ABDM ensures structured and uniform storage of medical records.
2. **Enhanced regulatory compliance:** Standardized protocols help enforce uniform healthcare delivery standards, improving quality and patient safety across public and private institutions.
    - **Eg:** The **Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010**, mandates uniform standards for healthcare facilities to ensure minimum service quality.
3. **Benchmarking and performance evaluation:** Standardized health data collection allows for objective performance evaluation of healthcare institutions and programs.
    - **Eg:** The **NITI Aayog Health Index** ranks states based on standardized indicators, enabling targeted interventions and policy corrections.
4. **Simplified data exchange and analytics:** Standardization facilitates seamless data analysis and reporting, supporting evidence-based policymaking and targeted healthcare interventions.
    - **Eg:** The use of standardized **ICD-10 coding system** in health records helps track disease patterns and improve epidemiological research.
5. **Increased efficiency in procurement and supply chain management:** Standardized healthcare processes and protocols improve supply chain efficiency, ensuring timely availability of medicines and equipment.
    - **Eg:** The **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)** portal standardizes procurement processes for healthcare equipment across government hospitals, enhancing transparency and cost-efficiency.

Conclusion

Interoperability and standardization are vital in building a robust, efficient, and inclusive digital healthcare ecosystem, ensuring **equitable access, enhanced governance, and improved health outcomes** for all citizens. Their successful implementation will propel

India towards achieving **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** and strengthen its position as a leader in digital healthcare innovation.

Q. Why is transparency crucial for effective revenue management in state governments? Suggest policy-level interventions to enhance accountability. (10 M)

Introduction

Transparency in revenue management is essential to ensure **fiscal prudence, prevent corruption, and enhance public trust**, ultimately leading to effective governance and optimal resource utilization.

Body

Importance of transparency in revenue management

1. **Prevention of revenue leakages:** Transparent processes help track revenue flows and curb corruption.
    - **Eg:** The **Chhattisgarh liquor scam** highlighted revenue losses due to opaque financial dealings (ED, 2025).
2. **Enhanced fiscal discipline:** Clear financial reporting ensures responsible budgeting and expenditure management.
    - **Eg:** The **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003**, mandates transparent fiscal planning.
3. **Improved public trust and participation:** Transparency enables citizens to hold the government accountable for revenue utilization.
    - **Eg:** The **Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005**, empowers citizens to seek details of government revenues.
4. **Better intergovernmental fiscal relations:** Transparency fosters cooperative federalism by ensuring clarity in revenue-sharing mechanisms.
    - **Eg:** The **15th Finance Commission Report (2021)** emphasized transparent fiscal transfers to states.
5. **Efficient resource allocation:** Transparent revenue management ensures funds are directed toward priority sectors efficiently.
    - **Eg:** The use of **Public Financial Management System (PFMS)** has improved fund tracking in welfare schemes.

Policy-level interventions to enhance accountability

1. **Strengthening digital governance:** Implementing AI-based tracking and blockchain for real-time monitoring of revenue collection.
    - **Eg:** The adoption of **GSTN (Goods and Services Tax Network)** improved tax compliance and reduced evasion.

2. **Legislative reforms:** Strengthening financial accountability laws to include stringent penalties for mismanagement.
    - **Eg:** Amendment to the **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013**, to cover revenue-related misconduct more effectively.
3. **Capacity building and training:** Enhancing skills of officials in revenue administration to promote efficiency and ethical governance.
    - **Eg:** The **Mission Karmayogi** initiative focuses on skill enhancement of public servants in financial management.
4. **Social audits and citizen engagement:** Institutionalizing public audits to foster accountability and participatory governance.
    - **Eg:** The **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** mandates social audits to ensure transparency in fund allocation.
5. **Independent oversight mechanisms:** Strengthening institutions like the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) to conduct real-time audits.
    - **Eg:** The CAG's audit of the **Uttar Pradesh Excise Department (2023)** uncovered revenue shortfalls due to irregularities.

Conclusion

Ensuring transparency in revenue management through **technological, legal, and participatory approaches** can lead to efficient governance and fiscal sustainability, paving the way for **inclusive economic development.**

Role of civil services in a democracy.

India and its neighborhood- relations.

Q. Examine the impact of cross-border terrorism on the India-Pakistan peace process. What measures can India adopt to counter this challenge diplomatically? (10 M)

Introduction

Cross-border terrorism is a key destabilizing factor in **India-Pakistan relations**, consistently undermining peace efforts, trust, and regional stability. Its implications span security, diplomacy, and development, necessitating a calibrated response.

Body

Impact of cross-border terrorism on the India-Pakistan peace process

1. **Erosion of trust in diplomacy**: Terror attacks fuel mistrust and derail confidence-building measures.

- **Eg:** The **Mumbai attacks (2008)** led to a breakdown of the **Composite Dialogue Process**, halting bilateral discussions.

2. **Disruption of regional stability**: Cross-border terrorism heightens tensions and risks escalation into military conflict.
    - **Eg:** The **Pulwama attack (2019)** led to the **Balakot airstrikes**, escalating military tensions between the two nuclear-armed nations.
3. **Global scrutiny and isolation**: Terror incidents spotlight South Asia as an unstable region, affecting foreign investments and global partnerships.
    - **Eg:** Pakistan was placed on the **FATF grey list** for financing terror groups like **Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)** and **Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)**.
4. **Economic implications**: The security focus drains financial resources, hindering socio-economic development in both nations.
    - **Eg:** Increased defense spending after the **Uri attack (2016)** diverted funds from critical infrastructure projects.
5. **Undermining people-to-people ties**: Terrorism stalls cultural and social exchanges, vital for reducing hostility and building goodwill.
    - **Eg:** Post the Pulwama attack, cross-border initiatives like the **Kartarpur Corridor** faced delays in progress.

Measures India can adopt to counter this challenge diplomatically

1. **Strengthening international alliances**: Use platforms like the **UN, FATF**, and **Interpol** to hold Pakistan accountable for harboring terror groups.
    - **Eg:** India's diplomacy led to the **UN designation of Masood Azhar (2019)** as a global terrorist, isolating Pakistan internationally.
2. **Engaging key global players**: Partner with influential nations to apply diplomatic pressure on Pakistan.
    - **Eg:** India's **strategic partnership with the US** under the **2+2 dialogue framework** includes counterterrorism as a core pillar.
3. **Using regional forums**: Advocate for collective counterterrorism strategies through platforms like **SAARC**, **SCO**, and **ASEAN**.
    - **Eg:** At the **SCO Summit (2023)**, India emphasized the need for regional cooperation against terrorism.
4. **Exposing Pakistan's role with evidence**: Share intelligence and evidence of state-sponsored terrorism with global institutions to build pressure.
    - **Eg:** India submitted dossiers at the **UNGA (2019)** detailing Pakistan's involvement in the Pulwama and Uri attacks.
5. **Exploring backchannel diplomacy**: Maintain covert communication channels to address specific issues and reduce escalations.
    - **Eg:** The **LoC ceasefire agreement (2021)** was achieved through sustained backchannel efforts despite public hostility.

Conclusion

Cross-border terrorism remains a significant hurdle in India-Pakistan relations. A **dual strategy of global pressure and regional engagement**, coupled with evidence-based diplomacy, can help India counter this challenge effectively. Long-term peace depends on sustained efforts to ensure accountability and reduce regional instability.

Q. Analyze the strategic importance of Afghanistan for India in the context of its location and regional dynamics. Examine the challenges posed by the Taliban regime and suggest measures to strengthen India's role in Afghanistan's stability and reconstruction. (15 M)

Introduction

Afghanistan's **geopolitical significance** as a gateway to Central Asia and its shared history with India make it pivotal for India's security and regional aspirations. However, the Taliban regime poses new challenges to this strategic relationship.

Body

Strategic importance of Afghanistan for India

1. **Gateway to Central Asia**: Afghanistan provides access to energy-rich Central Asia and trade routes bypassing Pakistan.
    - **Eg:** India's investments in **Chabahar Port** aim to connect to Afghanistan via the **Zaranj-Delaram Highway**.
2. **Regional stability and counterterrorism**: A stable Afghanistan is critical to India's security to prevent the spread of terrorism.
    - **Eg:** The rise of **ISIS-K** and support for terror groups like **LeT** and **JeM** poses a threat to Indian interests.
3. **Energy and connectivity projects**: Afghanistan is a key player in regional energy projects like **TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline)**.
    - **Eg:** India has invested in Afghanistan's energy infrastructure, including the **Salma Dam**.
4. **Soft power and cultural ties**: Afghanistan has historically been a recipient of India's educational, cultural, and medical assistance.
    - **Eg:** The construction of Afghanistan's **Parliament building** in 2015 is a symbol of India's goodwill.

Challenges posed by the Taliban regime

1. **Terrorism and security threats**: Taliban's ties with **Pakistan's ISI** and extremist groups jeopardize India's national security.
    - **Eg:** The **Kandahar IC814 hijacking** in 1999 demonstrated risks of Taliban-backed operations.

2. **Growing influence of China and Pakistan**: Taliban's reliance on Chinese investments and Pakistan's strategic depth undermine India's position.
    - **Eg:** China's **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** in Afghanistan gives Beijing leverage in the region.
3. **Humanitarian and governance crisis**: The Taliban's inability to provide governance leads to instability, impacting India's developmental projects.
    - **Eg:** India suspended its projects in Afghanistan post-2021 due to security concerns.
4. **Loss of democratic progress**: Taliban's regressive policies towards women and minorities counter India's advocacy for democracy.
    - **Eg:** India emphasized inclusive governance during its **UN Security Council** engagements on Afghanistan.

Measures to strengthen India's role

1. **Rebuild developmental projects**: Restart infrastructure, education, and healthcare initiatives to retain goodwill.
    - **Eg:** Reopening projects like **Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health** can strengthen ties.
2. **Enhanced diplomatic engagement**: Maintain dialogue with Taliban leaders while pushing for an inclusive government.
    - **Eg: Meetings between Indian officials and Taliban** representatives since **2021** reflect cautious engagement.
3. **Leverage multilateral forums**: Collaborate with organizations like **UN, SCO**, and **regional partners** to address shared concerns.
    - **Eg:** Joint efforts with **Iran and Central Asian countries** can counterbalance Chinese influence.
4. **Counterterrorism cooperation**: Push for strict actions against terror groups operating from Afghan soil.
    - **Eg:** India's focus on counterterrorism was reiterated during its presidency at the **UN Security Council in 2021**.
5. **Invest in people-centric programs**: Increase scholarships, cultural exchanges, and medical aid to foster strong ties with the Afghan populace.
    - **Eg:** India continues to offer scholarships under the **ICCR program** for Afghan students.

Conclusion

A stable Afghanistan is crucial for India's security and regional aspirations. By balancing diplomatic engagement with developmental and security measures, India can not only safeguard its interests but also contribute to a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan.

Q. Analyze the implications of India's border management policies on its bilateral relations with Bangladesh, considering recent developments. (10 M)

Introduction

India's border management policies aim to address **cross-border issues** such as **security, smuggling, and trafficking**. However, their implementation often creates **diplomatic challenges**, particularly with **Bangladesh**, a critical neighbor in India's foreign policy.

Body

Positive implications on bilateral relations

1. **Enhanced border security cooperation**: Initiatives like **joint patrolling by BSF and BGB** ensure better coordination and reduced cross-border crimes.
    - Eg: **BGB-BSF DG-Level Talks (2024)** discussed joint strategies against trafficking and smuggling.
2. **Crime reduction through fencing**: **Fencing construction** along sensitive areas minimizes illegal activities like **cattle smuggling**.
    - Eg: **Tripura sector fencing projects (2022)** led to a decline in cross-border crimes by **40%**, as per the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
3. **Strengthening institutional frameworks**: Regular engagement through **bilateral agreements** fosters trust and dialogue between the two nations.
    - Eg: **Land Boundary Agreement (2015)** resolved the long-standing **enclave issue** and promoted better relations.

Negative implications on bilateral relations

1. **Tensions over unauthorized fencing**: **Lack of consultation** on border projects creates mistrust and opposition from Bangladesh.
    - Eg: Allegations of **unauthorized construction** at five locations by BSF (**January 2025**).
2. **Civilian casualties**: Incidents of **cross-border killings by BSF** escalate tensions and damage goodwill.
    - Eg: **Killing of a Bangladeshi citizen at Sunamganj (2025)** led to diplomatic protests.
3. **Perceived inequality in agreements**: Claims of **unequal border agreements** undermine the spirit of cooperation.
    - Eg: Bangladesh criticized **past border agreements (2010–2023)** as biased during the **January 2025 diplomatic exchange**.
4. **Impact on local communities**: **Resistance from border residents** to fencing projects affects bilateral trust and implementation.
    - Eg: Protests by locals in **Sylhet against fencing initiatives (December 2024)**.

What can be done

1. **Improved consultation mechanisms**: Enhance **bilateral communication** to avoid unilateral actions like unauthorized fencing.
    - Eg: Institutionalizing **pre-construction dialogue** under the **BGB-BSF framework**.
2. **Minimizing civilian casualties**: Adopt **non-lethal methods** and stricter **SOPs for BSF personnel** to prevent cross-border violence.
    - Eg: Deployment of **non-lethal weapons** along sensitive border areas as per **ECI recommendations**.
3. **Community engagement**: Actively involve **local communities in border management** to address grievances and build trust.
    - Eg: Use of **community liaison groups** under **India-Bangladesh border area programs**.
4. **Strengthen bilateral agreements**: Address **perceived inequalities** through updates and inclusivity in future border pacts.
    - Eg: Revisiting terms of the **Land Boundary Agreement** to address current challenges.

Conclusion

India's border management policies must align with the principles of **security, diplomacy, and inclusivity** to maintain strong bilateral ties with **Bangladesh**. A **cooperative and consultative approach** is essential to foster **mutual trust and regional stability**.

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

Q. Analyze the potential implications of U.S.-Iran tensions on India's energy security and strategic interests in the West Asian region. (10 M)

Introduction

The escalating U.S.-Iran tensions, marked by sanctions and regional instability, profoundly impact **India's energy security** and **strategic interests in West Asia**, a region vital for India's economy and geopolitical strategy.

Body

Implications on India's energy security

1. **Reduction in affordable oil supplies**: Iran was a key supplier of cheap crude, but U.S. sanctions have forced India to rely on costlier alternatives.
    - Eg: **In 2018**, India imported 10% of its oil from Iran, which fell to zero in **2019** due to sanctions.

2. **Increased vulnerability to price shocks**: Instability in the Gulf, especially in the Strait of Hormuz, raises global crude prices, directly impacting India.
    - Eg: **17.5 million barrels of oil per day**, constituting 30% of global oil trade, transit through the Strait of Hormuz.
3. **Shift in trade patterns**: India is diversifying its energy partners but faces logistical and cost challenges.
    - Eg: **India's agreement with Russia in 2023** for increased oil imports faced logistical hurdles, making Iranian supplies more viable.
4. **Delay in energy projects**: Sanctions have slowed progress on crucial energy investments.
    - Eg: The **Farzad-B gas field project**, signed in **2000**, has yet to be operationalized due to U.S.-Iran conflicts.

Strategic implications in West Asia

1. **Challenges for Chabahar port**: Sanctions impede development of the Chabahar port, a critical project for India's connectivity to Afghanistan and Central Asia.
    - Eg: Despite **sanctions exemptions for Chabahar (2020)**, financial restrictions delay full operationalization.
2. **Strained regional diplomacy**: India must balance ties with Iran and U.S.-aligned nations like Israel and Saudi Arabia.
    - Eg: India maintained neutrality during **Israel-Hamas tensions (2024)** while pursuing engagements with Iran.
3. **Diaspora safety concerns**: Regional instability endangers **8 million Indians** in Gulf nations and their $40 billion in remittances annually.
    - Eg: **Indian evacuation operations (2020)** during Gulf conflicts showcased the risks to expatriates.
4. **Geopolitical ramifications**: Escalating conflicts in the region disrupt India's investments and energy security strategies.
    - Eg: **Yemen's Houthi conflict** has threatened oil infrastructure critical for India's imports.

Way forward

1. **Diversify energy sources**: Expand partnerships with nations like Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Russia to reduce dependency.
    - Eg: **India-UAE energy MoU (2023)** focuses on renewable and conventional energy cooperation.
2. **Strengthen regional partnerships**: Leverage multilateral frameworks like the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** for trade and connectivity.
    - Eg: INSTC ensures access to **Central Asia via Iran**, reducing reliance on Gulf transit routes.

3. **Expand energy storage and renewables**: Enhance strategic petroleum reserves and focus on renewable energy development.
    - Eg: India's **strategic petroleum reserves (SPR)** capacity rose to **5.33 million tonnes (2024)**, providing buffer against price shocks.
4. **Engage in regional diplomacy**: Use platforms like the **India-UAE-France trilateral dialogue** to mediate and ensure regional stability.
    - Eg: India's **balanced role in Yemen peace talks (2023)** showcased its diplomatic credibility in the Gulf.

Conclusion

Navigating U.S.-Iran tensions requires India to adopt a **multi-pronged approach** that ensures energy diversification, strengthens regional partnerships, and bolsters strategic autonomy to safeguard its interests amidst shifting geopolitics.

Q. "The lack of a multilateral mechanism in South Asia is a major hindrance in countering China's influence". Suggest a framework for regional cooperation to address common security concerns. (15 M)

Introduction

South Asia's absence of a cohesive multilateral mechanism limits its capacity to collectively counter China's strategic and economic advances, leaving individual nations to navigate challenges alone.

Body

The lack of a multilateral mechanism in South Asia

1. **Political fragmentation**: Deep-seated rivalries, especially **India-Pakistan conflicts**, prevent the region from forming a unified front.
    - **Eg**: The **suspension of SAARC summits since 2014** due to unresolved political disputes.
2. **Bilateral over regional engagement**: Nations prefer bilateral agreements with China, weakening their collective bargaining power.
    - **Eg**: **Nepal-China Trade and Transit Agreement (2016)** and similar pacts bypass regional consensus.
3. **Economic asymmetry**: Smaller nations rely on China for economic assistance, further discouraging regional collaboration.
    - **Eg**: **Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port deal (2017)** demonstrated China's financial leverage in South Asia.
4. **Institutional vacuum**: Unlike Southeast Asia's **ASEAN** or **Mekong River Commission**, South Asia lacks robust institutions for shared challenges like water and trade.

- **Eg**: Absence of regional mechanisms to address China's hydropower projects on the **Brahmaputra**.

A major hindrance in countering China's influence

1. **Strategic encirclement**: China's **String of Pearls strategy** places India under geopolitical pressure, controlling critical maritime infrastructure.
   - **Eg**: Chinese-operated **Gwadar Port (Pakistan)** and **Hambantota Port (Sri Lanka)** enhance its Indian Ocean presence.
2. **Unilateral control over resources**: China's upstream projects on transboundary rivers create strategic vulnerabilities for downstream countries.
   - **Eg**: The **Yarlung Zangbo dam project** could disrupt water and silt flow to India and Bangladesh.
3. **Economic dependency**: Nations increasingly depend on China's **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** for infrastructure funding, reducing regional autonomy.
   - **Eg**: **CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor)** strengthens China's foothold in South Asia.
4. **Weak collective response**: Lack of a unified platform hampers South Asia's ability to counter China's actions diplomatically or strategically.
   - **Eg**: **ASEAN's joint stance on the South China Sea** contrasts with South Asia's disunity.

Framework for regional cooperation to address common security concerns

A. Strengthening regional institutions

1. **Revive and reform SAARC**: Focus SAARC on non-political areas like water sharing, disaster management, and trade.
   - **Eg**: SAARC **Disaster Management Centre (2016)** is a successful model for collaborative action.
2. **Establish a South Asia Security Council**: Create a dedicated forum to address regional security issues, including border disputes and maritime security.
   - **Eg**: Inspired by **ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)** for conflict resolution.

B. Economic integration

3. **South Asia Development Bank**: Set up a regional bank to fund infrastructure projects, reducing dependency on Chinese investments.
   - **Eg**: Similar to the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** model.
4. **Boost regional connectivity**: Expedite projects like the **BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement** for seamless trade and transport.
   - **Eg**: The **Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal initiative** is key to countering China's economic corridors.

C. Resource and water management

5. **Transboundary water commission**: Form a South Asia River Management Commission to manage shared rivers and counter China's unilateral projects.
    - **Eg**: Modelled after the **Mekong River Commission**, ensuring equitable water use.
6. **Joint flood mitigation strategies**: Establish regional early warning systems for disasters caused by Chinese dam activities.
    - **Eg**: India's **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** expertise can be scaled regionally.

D. Maritime and border security cooperation

7. **South Asian Maritime Alliance**: Create a regional pact for maritime security, monitoring Chinese naval activities in the Indian Ocean.
    - **Eg**: Align with the **Quad framework** for enhanced security coordination.
8. **Joint military exercises**: Conduct regular regional military drills to build interoperability and trust.
    - **Eg**: Expand participation in **Milan Naval Exercises (2023)**.

E. Diplomatic coordination

9. **Track-II diplomacy and confidence building**: Engage civil society and think tanks to foster regional trust and address political challenges.
    - **Eg**: Initiatives by the **Observer Research Foundation (ORF)** in Track-II dialogues.

Conclusion

South Asia must transcend its bilateral focus and adopt a collaborative framework to counter China's influence effectively. Strengthened regional institutions, integrated economic initiatives, and coordinated security mechanisms are vital for a resilient and unified South Asia.

Q. "India's Act East Policy integrates cultural diplomacy, connectivity, and strategic interests". Discuss. (15 M)

Introduction

India's **Act East Policy (AEP)**, launched in **1991**, goes beyond economic integration to incorporate **cultural diplomacy, strategic partnerships, and connectivity projects** aimed at fostering ties with Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific.

Body

Cultural diplomacy

1. **Promotion of shared heritage**: India emphasizes its shared **civilizational linkages** with Southeast Asia through Buddhism, Hinduism, and ancient trade routes.
    - Eg: **ASEAN-India Cultural Exchange Program** promotes mutual understanding through arts, language, and festivals.
2. **Soft power initiatives**: Institutions like the **Nalanda University** act as academic bridges, reflecting India's historical influence.
    - Eg: Nalanda's collaboration with ASEAN countries in academic exchanges.
3. **Diaspora engagement**: Over **9 million people of Indian origin** in ASEAN serve as cultural ambassadors strengthening ties.
    - Eg: Regular **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas** hosted in ASEAN nations.

Connectivity

1. **Physical infrastructure projects**: India focuses on connecting with ASEAN through **road, rail, and maritime projects**.
    - Eg: **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway**, expected to be fully operational by **2027**.
2. **Maritime connectivity**: Developing the **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project** to facilitate trade via Myanmar.
    - Eg: **Sittwe Port in Myanmar**, operationalized in **2023**, enhances India's access to ASEAN markets.
3. **Digital connectivity**: Collaborations in technology and fintech under the **ASEAN-India ICT Cooperation Program**.
    - Eg: India's **Digital India program** aiding Southeast Asian nations in e-governance.

Strategic interests

1. **Countering China's influence**: India's engagement strengthens its presence in Southeast Asia, providing a counterbalance to **China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.
    - Eg: India's **free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific vision** aligns with ASEAN's outlook on the Indo-Pacific.
2. **Defence collaboration**: Regular joint military exercises and defense agreements bolster strategic ties.
    - Eg: **SIMBEX** naval exercise with Singapore.
3. **Energy security**: India collaborates with ASEAN for sustainable energy and reducing dependence on fossil fuels.
    - Eg: Investments in **renewable energy projects** in ASEAN under the International Solar Alliance.

Challenges associated

1. **Slow implementation of projects:** Delays in executing critical projects like the **Trilateral Highway** hinder progress.
2. **China's geopolitical pressure**: India faces competition from China's economic and military influence in the region.
3. **Funding constraints**: High costs and resource constraints limit India's ability to meet ASEAN's infrastructure needs.
4. **Differing priorities**: ASEAN nations' varied strategic priorities sometimes dilute collective engagement.

Way forward

1. **Prioritize project execution**: Streamline and fast-track connectivity projects to strengthen physical and economic integration.
    - Eg: Early completion of the **Trilateral Highway** by ensuring multi-stakeholder collaboration.
2. **Enhance maritime cooperation**: Leverage **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)** vision to bolster maritime security and trade.
    - Eg: Joint development of **blue economy projects** with ASEAN.
3. **Strengthen multilateral forums**: Enhance India's participation in **ASEAN-led platforms** like the East Asia Summit and RCEP negotiations.
    - Eg: Utilize **ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership** to push trade reforms.
4. **Expand cultural outreach**: Boost people-to-people ties through education and tourism exchange programs.
    - Eg: Increase **ASEAN scholarships** under the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

Conclusion

India's Act East Policy holds transformative potential to foster regional stability, economic prosperity, and cultural harmony. By addressing challenges and enhancing partnerships, it can serve as a **cornerstone of India's Indo-Pacific vision**, driving global peace and development.

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

Q. How do current climate governance mechanisms fail to reflect the socio-economic priorities of the Global South? Suggest alternatives to make these mechanisms more inclusive. (10 M)

Introduction

Global climate governance has often favoured developed nations, sidelining the **socio-economic needs of the Global South**, which faces immediate threats from climate change. This imbalance has perpetuated inequality and hindered sustainable development.

Body

Failures of current climate governance mechanisms

1. **Mitigation focus over adaptation**: Policies emphasize reducing emissions over funding adaptation measures, neglecting the immediate needs of vulnerable nations.
    - **Eg:** The Global South, like **Small Island States**, struggles with rising sea levels, while adaptation funding remains only **21% of total climate finance** (UNEP Adaptation Gap Report 2023).
2. **Inadequate climate finance**: Developed nations have failed to deliver the promised $100 billion annually, delaying key projects in developing nations.
    - **Eg:** Only **$83 billion was mobilized in 2020**, leading to stalled climate action in resource-constrained regions (OECD Climate Finance Report 2022).
3. **Inequitable carbon pricing**: Policies like carbon taxes disproportionately affect fossil fuel-dependent economies in the Global South, increasing trade barriers.
    - **Eg:** The **EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism** negatively impacts exports from countries like **India and Brazil**.
4. **Technology transfer barriers**: High costs and restrictive patents prevent developing nations from accessing critical clean energy technologies.
    - **Eg: African nations face delays** in deploying **solar and wind energy technologies** due to prohibitive licensing costs.
5. **Dominance of G7 in governance**: The agenda is dictated by developed nations, limiting the voice of the Global South in decision-making.
    - **Eg:** The **Paris Agreement rules** were finalized without adequately addressing the needs of vulnerable countries.

Alternatives for making mechanisms more inclusive

1. **Binding climate finance commitments**: Mandate predictable and adequate funding from developed nations to bridge the existing financial gap.
    - **Eg:** Proposals at **COP29 (2024)** called for a **$300 billion facility** to support adaptation projects in vulnerable regions.
2. **Localized adaptation frameworks**: Empower regional solutions tailored to address unique vulnerabilities in the Global South.
    - **Eg:** India's **State Action Plans on Climate Change** under the **NAPCC** focus on specific regional needs like water and agriculture.
3. **Focus on just transition**: Integrate equity and economic justice into climate policies to balance development needs with environmental goals.
    - **Eg:** The **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** of **72 countries** now emphasize **just transition** as a core principle.
4. **Affordable technology transfer**: Simplify global patent regulations to ensure the availability of low-cost, clean energy technologies.
    - **Eg:** The **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** promotes affordable solar energy solutions in developing nations.

5. **Equitable representation in decision-making**: Rebalance global platforms to give greater influence to the Global South in climate negotiations.
    - **Eg:** Strengthen forums like **BRICS** to counter G7-dominated narratives and prioritize sustainable development in emerging economies.
6. **Dedicated adaptation funds**: Establish robust funding mechanisms specifically for adaptation projects in the most vulnerable regions.
    - **Eg:** Scaling up the **Adaptation Fund**, which has supported projects in **South Asia and Africa**, can address urgent needs.

Conclusion

To ensure **inclusive and equitable climate governance**, mechanisms must prioritize the **realities of the Global South** by focusing on **justice, representation, and access to resources**. A collaborative framework led by emerging economies can drive sustainable global progress.

Q. Analyze the role of the Indo-US nuclear deal in countering China's increasing dominance in the global nuclear technology space. How can this collaboration contribute to India's diplomatic outreach? (10 M)

Introduction

The **Indo-US nuclear deal (2008)** marked a turning point in India's global integration in civil nuclear technology. As China aggressively advances its nuclear exports, particularly in small modular reactors (SMRs), the Indo-US nuclear partnership offers India a strategic pathway to counter Beijing's dominance while strengthening its own global influence.

Body

Role of Indo-US nuclear deal in countering China's dominance

1. **Access to advanced nuclear technologies**: The deal grants India access to **light water reactor (LWR)** technology, addressing its technological limitations and enabling global competitiveness.
    - **Eg:** The planned construction of **six Westinghouse reactors in Andhra Pradesh** enhances India's global standing in nuclear energy.
2. **Competitive manufacturing of nuclear components**: Joint Indo-US ventures empower India to co-produce critical nuclear components, including **small modular reactors (SMRs)**, at cost-effective scales.
    - **Eg:** Collaboration under the **iCET initiative** focuses on SMR production, countering China's leadership in this space.
3. **Boosting global clean energy leadership**: The deal supports India's clean energy transition, offering a counter-narrative to China's coal-heavy energy diplomacy.

- **Eg:** India's goal of **22 GW nuclear capacity by 2031** underscores its commitment to clean energy solutions (Source: Department of Atomic Energy).

4. **Countering China in the Global South**: India can leverage its partnership with the US to offer cost-efficient nuclear solutions to developing nations, challenging China's SMR exports.
    - **Eg:** China's **Hualong One reactors** have been exported to Kenya and Pakistan, necessitating India's competitive presence.
5. **Strategic alignment with democracies**: The deal strengthens India's alignment with democratic powers like the US, enhancing its role in multilateral frameworks like **Quad** and **G7**.
    - **Eg:** The **2024 Quad Summit** prioritized nuclear collaboration to counterbalance China's regional ambitions.

How the collaboration contributes to India's diplomatic outreach

1. **Enhancing nuclear credibility**: The partnership bolsters India's reputation as a responsible nuclear power, aligning with **IAEA** standards and advancing its case for **NSG membership**.
    - **Eg:** India's involvement in the **IAEA SMR Development Initiative (2023)** highlights its growing leadership in nuclear diplomacy.
2. **Strengthening energy partnerships with the Global South**: By offering affordable nuclear solutions, India can deepen its ties with developing nations, strengthening **South-South Cooperation**.
    - **Eg:** Plans to export **SMRs to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka** boost India's regional influence.
3. **Providing alternatives to Chinese projects**: Indo-US collaboration allows India to present itself as a viable alternative to China's nuclear exports in Africa and Southeast Asia.
    - **Eg:** Proposed nuclear energy projects in **Vietnam and Indonesia** enhance India's diplomatic outreach.
4. **Promoting sustainable energy leadership**: By leveraging nuclear collaboration, India can position itself as a leader in global energy transition efforts, addressing climate challenges.
    - **Eg:** India's clean energy leadership was showcased at **COP28**, emphasizing nuclear energy's role in reducing carbon emissions.
5. **Deepening Indo-US strategic ties**: The partnership strengthens India's position as a key US ally, showcasing its ability to counter China's influence globally.
    - **Eg:** The **US-India iCET initiative** has prioritized nuclear energy as a core area of cooperation.

Conclusion

The Indo-US nuclear deal is more than an energy agreement**; it is a strategic tool to counter China's growing nuclear dominance while bolstering India's global leadership**. By leveraging this partnership, India can enhance its technological prowess, deepen ties with the Global South, and emerge as a key player in the clean energy revolution and global diplomacy.

Q. How does Pravasi Bharatiya Divas serve as a platform to engage the Indian diaspora? Examine its impact on India's global soft power. (10 M)

Introduction

The **Indian diaspora**, at **32 million strong** (MEA, 2022), acts as a bridge between India and the world. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) honors this connection and strengthens diaspora engagement for India's growth.

Body

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas as a platform to engage the Indian diaspora

1. **Policy dialogue and feedback mechanisms**: Provides a direct platform for the diaspora to voice concerns and offer insights into policies impacting them.
    - **Eg: 2023 PBD in Indore** saw discussions on global trade and India's role in the "Amrit Kaal" vision.
2. **Recognition of contributions**: The **Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards** highlight achievements in diverse sectors, motivating more diaspora involvement.
    - **Eg:** Awardees in **2023** included global contributors in education, healthcare, and philanthropy.
3. **Investment and entrepreneurship opportunities**: PBD invites the diaspora to contribute to India's economic growth through investment summits and business networking.
    - **Eg:** The **2025 PBD in Bhubaneswar** highlighted Odisha's industrial potential and NRIs' involvement in the **Odisha Startup Policy**.
4. **Youth engagement for future collaboration**: Dedicated sessions like **Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas** focus on reconnecting diaspora youth with Indian culture and policies.
    - **Eg:** The 2025 PBD encouraged youth to explore heritage through the **Pravasi Bharatiya Express** initiative.
5. **Showcasing cultural and historical connections**: Curated exhibitions and cultural events deepen the diaspora's sense of belonging.
    - **Eg:** The **Mandvi to Muscat exhibition (2025)** depicted historical migration and its impact on global connections.

Impact on India's global soft power

1. **Cultural diplomacy through heritage promotion**: PBD strengthens India's image as a cultural powerhouse by celebrating its diversity and historical contributions.
    - **Eg:** The **Vishwaroop Ram - Legacy of Ramayana exhibition (2025)** attracted international attention to India's shared cultural ethos.
2. **Diaspora as goodwill ambassadors**: Diaspora members act as informal representatives of India, strengthening bilateral and multilateral ties.
    - **Eg:** Gulf nations' engagement with Indian-origin business leaders supports economic ties and cultural exchanges.
3. **Strengthening technological leadership**: The diaspora contributes to innovation and India's global reputation as a technology hub.
    - **Eg:** Indian-origin CEOs like **Sundar Pichai (Google)** and **Satya Nadella (Microsoft)** exemplify this leadership.
4. **Boosting sustainable development initiatives**: The diaspora aids in achieving India's SDG commitments, particularly in climate resilience and green energy.
    - **Eg:** Collaborative green projects with diaspora-driven organizations under the **Pravasi Teertha Darshan Yojana**.
5. **Elevating India's image as an inclusive nation**: PBD projects India as a nation that values its diaspora, reinforcing the idea of shared progress.
    - **Eg:** Launch of **Pravasi Bharatiya Express (2025)** for cultural and religious tourism strengthens ties with diaspora communities.

Conclusion

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is not just a celebration of heritage but a strategic initiative to harness diaspora potential. It exemplifies India's vision for a **globalized yet rooted identity** in its quest for becoming a **Viksit Bharat**.

Q. "The Russia-Ukraine war poses new challenges to India-Russia relations, especially in protecting Indian nationals". Discuss the diplomatic steps India can take to address such concerns. (10 M)

Introduction

The Russia-Ukraine war has presented new challenges for India-Russia relations, requiring careful balancing of **historical ties with Russia** and the safety of Indian nationals. The recruitment and casualties of Indians in the Russian military highlight this growing concern.

Body

Challenges to India-Russia relations due to the Russia-Ukraine war

1. **Safety concerns for Indian nationals**: Recruitment of Indian nationals into the Russian military exposes them to physical harm and diplomatic complexities.
    - Eg: The death of a **Kerala youth in January 2025** in the Russian military and injuries to another.

2. **Pressure on India's neutral stance**: Protecting Indian nationals in Russia while maintaining a neutral stance on the war increases diplomatic tensions.
    - Eg: India's **abstentions at the UN General Assembly** on resolutions condemning Russia faced global scrutiny.
3. **Erosion of diaspora security**: Indians residing in conflict zones face risks, complicating evacuation and support.
    - Eg: The **Operation Ganga evacuation (2022)** showed the challenges of ensuring diaspora safety during crises.
4. **Risk to bilateral goodwill**: Persistent demands for Indian nationals' discharge from the Russian military could strain long-standing strategic ties.
    - Eg: India's **diplomatic requests to Russia** for the safe return of Indian nationals.
5. **Economic and strategic complications**: The war affects India's dependence on Russian energy imports while navigating Western sanctions.
    - Eg: India's **purchase of discounted Russian oil** was criticized by Western countries.

Diplomatic steps India can take to address these concerns

1. **Strengthened consular engagement**: Proactively engage with Russian authorities to ensure safe repatriation and support for affected Indian nationals.
    - Eg: The **Indian embassy in Moscow** facilitated communication with families of the deceased and injured in 2025.
2. **Awareness campaigns for nationals abroad**: Issue targeted advisories to Indian citizens about the risks of foreign military recruitment.
    - Eg: Advisories issued during the **Middle East conflicts** to prevent similar challenges.
3. **Utilizing bilateral mechanisms**: Leverage historic ties to address citizen safety concerns without straining diplomatic goodwill.
    - Eg: India-Russia **Inter-Governmental Commission (2024)** could include citizen safety in discussions.
4. **Humanitarian advocacy**: Advocate the use of **international humanitarian law** to protect civilians in war zones, including Indian nationals.
    - Eg: Referencing the **Geneva Conventions** to demand non-combatant protections.
5. **Regional multilateral engagement**: Propose mechanisms in organizations like **SCO** for coordinated diaspora safety measures during conflicts.
    - Eg**: Using India's influence in SCO** to create frameworks for **citizen safety in conflict zones**.

Conclusion

India's approach to the Russia-Ukraine war must prioritize the safety of its nationals while maintaining its **long-standing strategic ties with Russia**. Proactive diplomacy, leveraging

international platforms, and strengthening consular mechanisms are essential to navigate these emerging challenges effectively.

Q. What are the key areas of cooperation between India and the European Union in trade and technology, and how do they contribute to strengthening bilateral economic ties? (10 M)

Introduction

India and the European Union (EU) share a strategic economic partnership aimed at enhancing trade and technology cooperation. Strengthening these ties is crucial to **achieving sustainable development, securing supply chains, and driving innovation** in both economies.

Body

Key areas of cooperation between India and the EU

1. **Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations:** Ongoing discussions aim to remove trade barriers, enhance market access, and create a level playing field.
    - **Eg:** India and the EU resumed FTA negotiations in **2022**, focusing on sectors such as **pharmaceuticals and services (Ministry of Commerce, 2024).**
2. **Critical raw materials partnership:** Collaboration to ensure a stable supply of essential minerals for key industries like electronics and renewable energy.
    - **Eg:** India and the EU signed a **Critical Raw Materials Partnership in 2023**, focusing on securing lithium and rare earth elements.
3. **Green energy and sustainability:** Joint efforts in renewable energy, circular economy, and climate-resilient infrastructure to achieve carbon neutrality.
    - **Eg:** India's **National Hydrogen Mission** and the EU's **Green Deal** align to promote clean energy solutions.
4. **Digital transformation:** Cooperation in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and data governance to harness the potential of emerging technologies.
    - **Eg:** The establishment of the **India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC)** in **2022** to facilitate digital policy alignment.
5. **Standards harmonization:** Alignment of regulatory standards to ease trade facilitation and promote seamless business operations.
    - **Eg: Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and European Committee for Standardization (CEN**) are working on mutual recognition agreements.
6. **Investment and innovation collaboration:** Encouraging EU investments in India's priority sectors, including healthcare, manufacturing, and infrastructure.
    - **Eg:** The EU is India's **third-largest trading partner**, with bilateral trade reaching **€120 billion in 2023 (DGFT, 2024).**

Contribution to strengthening bilateral economic ties

1. **Trade diversification:** Expanding economic opportunities for Indian businesses while offering the EU a reliable alternative manufacturing hub.
    - **Eg:** India's expanding **textile and pharmaceutical exports** to the EU have increased by **18% in 2023.**
2. **Supply chain resilience:** Joint efforts help reduce dependency on other economies, ensuring stable and diversified supply chains.
    - **Eg:** Collaboration in **semi-conductor production** aims to make both economies more self-reliant.
3. **Employment generation:** Enhanced cooperation leads to the creation of skilled jobs and facilitates capacity building for India's workforce.
    - **Eg:** The **EU-India Skill Partnership Initiative** supports skill development in high-demand sectors.
4. **Technological advancement:** Partnerships foster the transfer of cutting-edge technology, boosting innovation in key sectors.
    - **Eg:** India's tech startups benefit from collaborations in **AI and blockchain technologies** with European firms.
5. **Sustainable economic growth:** Joint initiatives support long-term economic development through investment in green technologies and digital infrastructure.
    - **Eg:** The India-EU partnership in **renewable energy projects** promotes sustainable urban development.
6. **Geopolitical alignment:** Closer trade and technology cooperation enhance India's strategic positioning in global trade negotiations and economic diplomacy.
    - **Eg:** India's engagement with the EU strengthens its influence in **multilateral forums like the WTO and G20.**

Conclusion

India-EU cooperation in trade and technology presents vast opportunities to **strengthen economic ties, boost innovation, and enhance global competitiveness.** A balanced approach focusing on **mutual growth, sustainability, and strategic partnerships** will further solidify this relationship.

Q. BRICS nations have initiated discussions on alternatives to the US dollar in global trade. Discuss the opportunities and challenges this poses for India's foreign policy. (15 M)

Introduction

BRICS countries, comprising over **40% of the global population and 25% of global GDP**, are exploring alternatives to the US dollar to reduce reliance on a dollar-dominated financial system. These efforts are driven by geopolitical compulsions and the need for economic sovereignty.

Body

BRICS discussions on alternatives to the US dollar in global trade

1. **Local currency trade settlements**: Initiatives to settle international trade in national currencies aim to bypass the dollar.
    - **Eg:** In 2022, **India and Russia** began settling bilateral trade in INR and rubles via **Vostro accounts**, enabling smoother payments amid Western sanctions on Russia.
2. **BRICS currency proposal**: Discussions for a common currency aim to reduce trade vulnerabilities.
    - **Eg:** At the **2023 BRICS Summit in Johannesburg**, Brazilian President Lula proposed creating a BRICS currency to enhance trade flexibility and reduce dollar dependence.
3. **New financial mechanisms**: BRICS has created institutions to support trade diversification and reduce reliance on dollar-based financial systems.
    - **Eg:** The **New Development Bank (NDB)**, headquartered in Shanghai, funds development projects using alternative currencies to the USD.
4. **Curbing dollar dominance**: US sanctions have amplified efforts to diversify global trade mechanisms.
    - **Eg: After the US removed Russia from SWIFT** in 2022, Russia and China increased trade settlements in yuan, influencing BRICS discussions.

Opportunities this poses for India's foreign policy

1. **Economic sovereignty**: Reducing dollar reliance mitigates vulnerabilities to sanctions and global currency fluctuations.
    - **Eg:** US sanctions on **Iran and Russia** disrupted energy imports; trade in INR helped India secure critical oil supplies.
2. **Internationalization of the rupee**: Trading in INR can bolster the rupee's global standing, reducing forex volatility.
    - **Eg: In 2022, RBI permitted 17 countries**, including Germany and UAE, to settle trade in INR, promoting rupee acceptance.
3. **Geopolitical flexibility**: Diversifying trade mechanisms strengthens India's negotiating power in a multipolar financial order.
    - **Eg:** At the **2024 Kazan Summit**, India supported BRICS financial integration while clarifying its non-confrontational stance toward the US.
4. **Strengthening South-South cooperation**: Promoting financial alternatives aligns with India's leadership in the Global South.
    - **Eg: BRICS-Africa partnerships** on trade mechanisms showcase India's commitment to empowering developing nations.
5. **Reduced US policy impact**: Shielding trade from Federal Reserve policies helps stabilize domestic markets.
    - **Eg: US interest rate hikes in 2023** led to capital outflows, emphasizing the need for diversified trade currencies.

Challenges this poses for India's foreign policy

1. **Geopolitical pressure from the West**: De-dollarisation could strain India's relations with Western allies like the US.
    - **Eg:** In 2025, President Donald Trump threatened **100% tariffs on BRICS nations** discussing alternative currencies, complicating India's economic ties with the US.
2. **Dominance of the Chinese yuan**: China's economic power could skew BRICS initiatives in its favor, undermining India's financial autonomy.
    - **Eg: 90% of Russia-China trade** is settled in yuan, highlighting concerns over China's growing influence.
3. **Low global rupee acceptance**: Limited adoption of INR in global trade challenges its role as a reliable currency.
    - **Eg: As of 2024, INR constitutes less than 1% of global forex reserves**, compared to 60% for USD (IMF data).
4. **Economic asymmetry in BRICS**: Disparities in economic size and financial policies among members complicate consensus.
    - **Eg: China's GDP is nearly 5 times larger** than India's, influencing its dominance in BRICS financial frameworks.
5. **Logistical and technical barriers**: Building robust alternatives to the dollar requires significant infrastructure and coordination.
    - **Eg:** The proposed **BRICS Payment System** to bypass SWIFT is still under discussion, limiting its immediate impact.
6. **Risk of trade instability**: Transitioning to new financial mechanisms without established trust could disrupt existing trade flows.
    - **Eg: Global exporters still prefer USD** due to its stability and liquidity, making alternatives less viable.

Conclusion

India must pursue a **pragmatic foreign policy** by supporting BRICS initiatives to enhance financial resilience while maintaining constructive ties with the US and Western economies. Strengthening INR-backed trade and investing in robust payment infrastructure will ensure strategic autonomy and economic security in a multipolar financial world.

Q. "ASEAN's centrality is crucial for maintaining regional stability in the Indo-Pacific".Analyze the challenges ASEAN faces in sustaining its centrality amidst US-China rivalry and suggest how India can support ASEAN in this regard. (15 M)

Introduction

ASEAN, as a cornerstone of regional multilateralism, plays a pivotal role in maintaining **peace, stability, and inclusivity** in the Indo-Pacific amidst intensifying geopolitical rivalries.

Body

ASEAN's centrality is crucial for maintaining regional stability in the Indo-Pacific

1. **Platform for multilateral dialogue**: ASEAN serves as a neutral ground for dialogue among major powers, mitigating tensions and promoting diplomacy.
    - **Eg:** The **East Asia Summit** and **ASEAN Regional Forum** facilitate engagement among the US, China, and other stakeholders.
2. **Economic integration**: Through initiatives like the **ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)**, ASEAN drives regional trade and economic stability.
    - **Eg:** ASEAN accounted for **7.4% of global GDP in 2022** (World Bank).
3. **Rule-based regional order**: ASEAN's emphasis on international law ensures stability and deters unilateralism in the region.
    - **Eg: ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP)** advocates respect for UNCLOS in the South China Sea.
4. **Balancing power rivalries**: ASEAN's centrality ensures a balanced approach to US-China competition without alienating either power.
    - **Eg:** ASEAN's dialogue partnerships with both the **US** and **China** facilitate balanced engagement.
5. **Humanitarian and environmental leadership**: ASEAN addresses transnational issues like disaster management and climate change, crucial for regional resilience.
    - **Eg:** The **ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER)** has been instrumental in addressing crises.

Challenges ASEAN faces in sustaining its centrality amidst US-China rivalry

1. **Geopolitical polarization**: The intensifying rivalry between the US and China pressures ASEAN to take sides, threatening its neutrality.
    - **Eg:** China's assertiveness in the **South China Sea** and US's Indo-Pacific strategy often divide ASEAN members.
2. **Internal divisions**: Differing national priorities among member states hinder consensus-building and collective action.
    - **Eg:** Cambodia's pro-China stance has impeded ASEAN's unified response on maritime disputes.
3. **Economic vulnerabilities**: Heavy economic dependence on both the US and China exposes ASEAN to trade disruptions and coercive policies.
    - **Eg:** US-China trade war affected ASEAN's export markets, particularly in **Vietnam** and **Thailand**.
4. **Erosion of multilateral processes**: Reduced US commitment to ASEAN-centric platforms, especially during Trump's tenure, undermines ASEAN's influence.
    - **Eg:** The US did not appoint an ASEAN ambassador during **Trump's administration** (2016–2020).
5. **Non-traditional security threats**: Issues like climate change, cyber threats, and pandemics require multilateral responses, straining ASEAN's limited institutional capacity.

- **Eg:** COVID-19 exposed gaps in **ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework** implementation.

How India can support ASEAN in sustaining its centrality

1. **Strengthening regional connectivity**: India can boost infrastructure and digital connectivity through initiatives like the **India-ASEAN Connectivity Plan**.
    - **Eg:** The **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway** facilitates better integration with ASEAN.
2. **Defending a rules-based order**: India's commitment to UNCLOS aligns with ASEAN's principles for a stable Indo-Pacific.
    - **Eg:** India's support for **ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific** reinforces its maritime policies.
3. **Expanding economic engagement**: India can deepen trade ties by enhancing the **ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement (AIFTA)**.
    - **Eg:** ASEAN is India's **fourth-largest trading partner**, with bilateral trade reaching **$100 billion in 2022**.
4. **Strengthening defence cooperation**: India can enhance joint military exercises and defence dialogues with ASEAN.
    - **Eg: MILAN naval exercises** and the **India-ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting** bolster security cooperation.
5. **Promoting multilateralism**: India's active participation in ASEAN-led platforms like the **East Asia Summit** and **ADMM-Plus** strengthens ASEAN's centrality.
    - **Eg:** India's role in the **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)** complements ASEAN's economic recovery goals.

Conclusion

ASEAN's centrality is indispensable for a peaceful and stable Indo-Pacific, but sustaining it requires greater collective resilience and balanced engagement with major powers. India, with its **Act East Policy** and shared commitment to multilateralism, can play a key role in ensuring ASEAN remains a vital player in shaping the region's future amidst growing global complexities.

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

Q. Analyze the financial and structural challenges that the WHO is likely to face following the US withdrawal. How can emerging economies, including India, play a more proactive role in bridging these gaps? (15 M)

Introduction

The withdrawal of the **United States from the World Health Organization (WHO)** poses significant financial and structural challenges, **impacting global health programs and**

multilateral cooperation. Emerging economies, including **India**, have a crucial role in ensuring continuity and equitable health governance.

Body

Financial Challenges Following the US Withdrawal

1. **Funding shortfall:** The loss of US contributions significantly affects WHO's budget, reducing its operational capacity.
    - Eg: The US accounted for **22.5% of assessed contributions** and **13% of voluntary contributions**, totaling around **USD 494 million** in 2023 (**WHO Report, 2024**).
2. **Increased dependence on unpredictable voluntary funding:** With assessed contributions stagnant, WHO may have to rely more on voluntary funding from uncertain sources.
    - Eg: **Private donors like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** now contribute nearly **10% of WHO's budget**, raising concerns over undue influence.
3. **Resource allocation challenges:** Reduced funding can impact the equitable distribution of resources, especially in low-income countries.
    - Eg: Cuts to WHO programs could affect **malaria control efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa**, where WHO plays a vital role in providing medicines and diagnostics.
4. **Disruptions in pandemic preparedness funding:** WHO's ability to finance future health emergencies may weaken, delaying rapid response capabilities.
    - Eg: The US exit could stall the development of the **Pandemic Treaty**, aimed at strengthening global cooperation on outbreak response.
5. **Impact on ongoing health programs:** Reduced funding could hinder progress in combating communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria.
    - Eg: WHO's **Global TB Program**, which receives significant US funding, may face setbacks in achieving its targets for **2030 under SDG-3**.

Structural Challenges Following the US Withdrawal

1. **Loss of technical expertise:** US institutions like the CDC provided crucial technical assistance in disease surveillance and outbreak response.
    - Eg: The withdrawal could impact WHO's ability to monitor **emerging infectious diseases**, such as **avian influenza and antimicrobial resistance.**
2. **Weakened global coordination:** The absence of US leadership may affect global policy coordination and hinder multilateral decision-making.
    - Eg: The absence of the US in the **Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA)** could slow down international response to health threats.
3. **Shift in geopolitical influence:** The exit of the US may allow other powers, particularly China, to exert greater influence over WHO's policy decisions.

- Eg: China's increased financial contributions could steer focus towards **Asia-centric health priorities,** potentially sidelining African and Latin American needs.

4. **Operational disruptions:** Programs relying heavily on US funding and expertise may face implementation challenges, affecting healthcare delivery.
    - Eg: WHO's **Essential Medicines Program**, which guides procurement policies in developing countries, may experience gaps in execution.
5. **Challenges in research collaborations:** Reduced participation of US institutions could slow progress in medical research and innovation.
    - Eg: Collaborations between WHO and top US universities, such as **Harvard and Johns Hopkins**, in vaccine development may be affected.

Emerging Economies, Including India, Can Bridge These Gaps

1. **Increased financial contributions:** India and other emerging economies can enhance their funding commitments to support WHO's initiatives.
    - Eg: India recently increased its contribution to WHO by **25% in 2023**, focusing on **universal immunization programs** under Mission Indradhanush.
2. **Leveraging multilateral platforms:** Countries can utilize forums like G20 and BRICS to collectively address health funding and policy challenges.
    - Eg: India led discussions on **global health financing** at the **G20 Health Working Group** in 2023.
3. **Expanding South-South cooperation:** Strengthening regional health collaborations to share resources and expertise can mitigate the impact.
    - Eg: India's **Vaccine Maitri initiative** provided **COVID-19 vaccines to over 90 countries**, strengthening global health ties.
4. **Promoting indigenous healthcare models:** Emerging economies can offer cost-effective and scalable healthcare solutions to WHO.
    - Eg: India's **AYUSH system** provides affordable preventive care models that WHO can adopt in low-resource settings.
5. **Public-private partnerships:** Governments can collaborate with the private sector to bridge financial and technological gaps.
    - Eg: India's **partnership with Serum Institute of India**, a leading vaccine producer, can support WHO's global immunization goals.

Conclusion

The US withdrawal from **WHO presents financial and structural challenges, but it also offers an opportunity for emerging economies to assume a leadership role in global health** governance by increasing financial contributions, fostering partnerships, and advocating for equitable health policies.