



VAJIRAO IAS ACADEMY

India's Premier Coaching Institute for Civil Services (IAS/PCS)

Weekly **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



“Civil Service is not just a job; it is an opportunity, to do your bit for society and to contribute to nation-building. It is an opportunity to realise your potential and make a meaningful contribution in the emancipation of masses.”

Mr. Dilip Kumar

Director, Vajirao IAS Academy

Good Civil Servants ensure efficient and smooth governance. They are the backbone of the country and they have the power to make a difference in people's life.

We have set up extremely tough targets for ourselves. Now a day's, most of the students are well aware and focused about their aim. They just need a streak of guidance. We feel that we have done our bit in providing that blue streak of guidance and we are honoured to be a reason of smile on certain lips, proud to be your teacher, friend and guide.

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I. SIMPLIFY EDITORIAL

[1.1] The Panchayati Raj Movement in Crisis

Syllabus: Governance, [GS paper - 2]

Introduction

- The 73rd Constitutional amendment Act, 1992, was a major reform which introduced the Panchayati Raj System (PRS) that was aimed at bringing grassroots democracy to India. It gave constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) and thereby ensured local self governance, participation and representation of backward classes and masses.
- PRIs have played a major role in rural development, governance and have empowered a lot of people over a period of time. However, currently the system is facing severe challenges that are eroding its functioning. Factors such as shortage of administrative and financial powers, urbanization and change in priorities of governance had resulted in the disappearance of PC planning and Implementation.

Achievements of Panchayati Raj Institutions

PRIs have brought changes in rural governance for good:

- **Higher Political Activity:** Elections are now very contentious, with more local engagement.
- **Women's Empowerment:** 14 lakh plus elected women representatives in panchayats enabling gender equality.
- **Running of Welfare Schemes:** PRIs have played an effective role in Tapping rural development policies.
- **Decentralized decision-making:** PRIs allow local communities to decide what they want.
- **Financial Supports:** The State Finance Commissions Divert funds for PRIs enabling support to Local Development.
- Nevertheless, despite these accomplishments PRIs are facing severe challenges that pose a danger to their effectiveness.

Main Problems Facing Panchayati Raj Institution

Lack of Administrative Decentralization

- PRIs need control over local administration, but state governments have not fully devolved powers to them.

Weak Financial Autonomy

- PRIs, however, heavily depend on the Centrally Sponsored Schemes and as a result their space to decide is very less.
- The share of untied grants i.e. funds that PRIs can use in any way have come down from 85% to 60% under the 13th and 15th Finance Commissions, respectively, that is, 2010-15 and 2021-26.
- Limited financial control diminishes the local government efficiency and impacts the development projects.

Changing Welfare Delivery Mechanisms

- Today, the government goes by direct benefit transfer (DBT) on the lines of Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM).
- Though DBT increases efficiency, it circumvents PRIs and thereby considerably marginalises them in decision making and grievance redressal for beneficiaries.
- Illustration: The whole PM-KISAN scheme transfers funds directly into farmers' pockets instead of panchayats performing extraneous characteristics of rural welfare programs.

Impact of Rapid Urbanization

- In 1990, 75% of India's population inhabited rural India; now it's just sixty percent.
- As cities expand, policy and funds flow to cities and leave PRIs behind.

Political and Bureaucratic Interference

- PRIs many times are at the receiving end of political manipulation as state governments and politicians play a role in decision making for self enjoyment.
- Local leaders have little training and little administrative knowledge, which will lead to governance performance.

Limited Public Awareness and Participation

- Many rural citizens do not know the role of PRIs, and thus there is very low voter engagement and absence of accountability.

- Social audits and participation in decision making at the community level remains weak.

Ways to Strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions

Fulfill Full Administrative and Financial Autonomy

- The state government must devolve all 29 subjects of the eleventh schedule to PRIs.
- Boost untied grants so PRIs can on their own manage projects in local communities.

Use Digital Technology for Good Governance

- PRIs should use digital platforms in the planning and budgeting, as well as the delivery of services.
- Digital initiatives such as e-Gram Swaraj could be helpful in increasing transparency, citizen engagement.

Enhance the Urgency of Panchayats in the Agenda of the Rural Development

- PRIs should be into climate change adaptation, water saving and disaster reduction.
- Training Programs should be there to train the members of elected bodies on governance issues.

Increase Citizen Participation

- Conduct info-education campaigns for awareness about rights and duties of rural masses in the local governance.
- Promote social audits and participatory governance to ensure accountability.

Address Political Interference

- Enhance the State Electoral Commissions to guarantee free and fair PRI elections.
- Train local leaders on administration skills improvement.

Enhance the Functions of PRIs in Welfare Services

- Instead of sidestepping PRIs, bring them directly into direct benefit transfer schemes to increase local-level monitoring and responsibility.

Conclusion

- If effectively empowered then Panchayati Raj Institutions can act as the backbone of democracy and development of India.
- With 94 crore Indians still living in villages, strengthening PRIs is essential for inclusive governance and rural development.

Source: [*The Hindu*](#)

[1.2] Georgia and the Return of Colour Revolutions

Syllabus: International Relations, [GS Paper - 2]

Context

- In the early 21st century, several anti-government movements came about in the former Soviet states. Colour Revolutions were the name given because each movement was colour-coded.
- These revolutions sought to overthrow governments in favor of Russia to install democratic, Western-oriented leadership. But, long-term effects and external powers raise concerns with regards to what works and what achieves.

What are Colour Revolutions?

Such Colour Revolutions patrolled against corrupt regimes.

Some of the major ones were:

- Georgia's Rose Revolution (2003)
- Ukraine's Orange Revolution (2004)
- Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution (2005)

These risings were regarded as spontaneous by the people, however, they were bankrolled and strategically supported by Western companies such as National Endowment for Democracy (NED). This organization was created during the Cold War to support political American values.

Why are Colour Revolutions Important?

- From the West's view, these movements were steps toward democracy and crystallisation. However, Russia considered them as foreign meddling to undermine its influence.
- The British strategist B.H. Liddell Hart referred to this method as fighting on the other side of the hill. In place of the most direct type of military intervention, governments nudge political change from within.
- Russia worried that a similar uprising could take place within its own borders.
- The idea of Colour Revolutions shaped the agendas of regional politics in parts of West Asia, Africa and South Asia.
- Countries of Russia and China viewed these revolutions, when a human rights activist, along with his partisans namely a Politburo, without lynching candidates and without a fair trial orders the President and other members of his administration to resign, in order to fulfill the agenda of Western countries expressing discontent with not exerting influence over significant processes on their foreign policy agenda for as low a price as possible.

Challenges of Externally Supported Democracy

Although the first boost, Color Revolutions did not lead to real democratic achievements.

- **There was, however, corruption still present:** Many of the newly installed governments were corrupt like the governments they replaced.
- **Unrest also rose:** The promised democratic reforms did not fully materialize.
- **Georgia's Case:** The Rose Revolution has so far delivered Mikheil Saakashvili to the top. At first, he was regarded as a democrat, but later, his government was linked to corruption and authoritarianism. Which demonstrates how hard it's to uphold democratic values with a weak current framework.

Political Unrest in Georgia Today

- Recent elections saw the ruling Georgian Dream Party gain convincingly.
- The opposition candidate Salome Zourabichvili, the former president, refused to acknowledge the results and accused election fraud.
- Street protesters escalated, and the governing party accused Western-funded NGOs of interfering in Georgian politics.
- This development underscores the ongoing struggle within Georgia between those who supposedly want the country to have more contact with the West and those who are oriented towards Russia.

Russia's Role and the Changing Influence of Colour Revolutions

- Russian influence has been dented, but the country still has sway over the region.
- The efficacy of tactics adopted by the West to promote democracy are weakening.

- The US has its own domestic politics to contend with and is shifting its international priorities. So, Western-backed movements are not as strong today as they were.

Why is Georgia Important?

- Georgia is perfectly situated between Europe and Asia, and for that reason is a key strategic spot in world politics.
- It was traditionally exposed to foreign manipulation.
- Its long-term success hangs in the balance, depending on how much it manages to harmonise domestic governance with external forces.
- The fate of the land reflects the bigger geopolitical rivalries in post-soviet countries.
- The real issue, however, is whether Colour Revolutions will remain as effective in modern geopolitics or they will go out of fashion.

Conclusion

- Colour Revolutions intended to introduce democracy and always did not keep to expectations.
- The re-ignition of instability in Georgia underscores continuing rivalries between the West and Russia.
- With the transformation of global politics, soft power interventionism along the line of Colour Revolutions might not be effective.
- Post-Soviet states now have to find their own way in the political future, as external pressure is double-edged.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Critically analyze the impact of Colour Revolutions on post-Soviet states. Discuss their effectiveness in establishing democracy and their geopolitical implications.

[1.3] President's Rule and the Road Ahead

Syllabus: Governance, [GS Paper - 2]

Context:

The government decision to implement President's Rule in Manipur occurred on February 13 as an essential step in Indian politics.

- The state had endured ethnic violence throughout 21 months until Chief Minister N. Biren Singh resigned which led to the installation of President's Rule by the President of India.
- This development demonstrates that the state government has proved incapable of managing the rising violence or achieving stability between different population groups.

Reasons for Imposing President's Rule:

Multiple factors combined which forced the central government to enact President's Rule on Manipur. The prolonged ethnic conflict between Meitei and Kuki-Zomi-Hmar communities formed a deep religious and political division among locals.

Key reasons include:

- Citizens developed such distrust against state government leadership that it appeared to consistently show partiality in favor of the Meitei community. The widespread belief created additional ethnic tension between communities.
- Reports indicated that Biren Singh's previous government expressed favoritism towards Meitei ultra nationalist movements by turning away from complaints lodged by other communities.
- A lack of impartiality at the hands of law enforcement agencies around the state made conditions worse by allowing violence to grow more intense.
- The analysis of inflammatory speeches by the former Chief Minister through forensic examination weakened public trust in the governmental administration.
- Such circumstances demanded President's Rule in order to restore order throughout the region. President's Rule functions as an intermediary solution which fails to resolve the numerous complex problems affecting Manipur.

Challenges to Restoring Governance:

- Supporting the restoration of strong governance through presidential rule in Manipur faces different obstacles that must be addressed.
- The state finds itself in a difficult position because its power to enforce laws and ensure order continuously weakens. The government needs to show impartiality while acknowledging community concerns in order to reconstruct its authority.
- Law enforcement agencies of Manipur such as the Manipur police proved to be biased toward particular communities during their operations. The deployment of Capital Armed Police Forces through federal supervision serves as the essential step needed to establish trust between local people.
- Previous governing forces' support of Meitei majoritarian positions created a strong divide between tribal and Meitei communities. The current situation needs an inclusive government system which accepts all ethnic groups.

Debate on Manipur's Administrative Structure:

- The government proposes establishing a "hill state" status for Manipur as a solution because it would meet requirements of the Kuki-Zomi-Hmar groups. The proposal implements numerous obstacles for implementation.
- The hill region of Manipur receives constitutional safeguards through Article 371C of the Indian Constitution. Such changes to the existing political structure put tribal communities at high risk of growing disputes between each other.
- Under President's Rule the centralization of power should stay within limits to prevent immoral usage that supports majoritarian aims. The approach must work on promoting conflict resolution and inclusive governance.
- The absence of proper resolution from the government will strengthen calls for a separate administrative entity.
- The government needs to preserve cultural and constitutional rights of all communities during any administrative modifications that would avoid future unrest.

The Way Ahead:

Peaceful and stable governance in Manipur depends on adopting comprehensive strategic efforts.

Key steps include:

- To achieve inclusive governance the government should implement decentralization measures by giving tribal areas more self-governance power. Peaceful representation and resolved ancient complaints will result from this approach.
- An institutional audit performed thoroughly will reveal all gaps affecting governance alongside political representation and resource distribution.
- Security personnel must abide by federal oversight while enforcing the laws to prevent biases from affecting constitutional practices.
- The government needs to facilitate dialogue between ethnic leaders together with civil society and political representatives for creating mutual agreements.

Conclusion:

- President's Rule in Manipur offers essential challenges that simultaneously present important opportunities for addressing state affairs. The situation showcases both short-term administrative advantages and reveals the weak state agencies along with the BJP government's capabilities as a functioning authority.
- The government must pursue peace beyond its basic duty to maintain law order for peace to persist permanently. A focus on trust restoration should include equal government rule combined with fair democratic representation and safeguarding of constitutional rights. In order to resolve its present crisis and develop into a peaceful future the state needs to tackle underlying conflict factors while promoting inclusion through development.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

[1.4] Is consumption enough to drive growth?

Syllabus: Indian Economy, [GS Paper - 3]

Context:

- During recent years India encountered reduced economic expansion which further declined because of COVID-19.
- Different scholars now dispute whether economic growth requires only consumer spending because they question the equal importance of investments. The relationship between consumption investment and economic growth requires analysis in the Indian context.

Understanding Consumption-Driven Growth

- Keynesian economics developed the theory which consumption powers economic development. In the view of John Maynard Keynes economic activity depends on aggregate demand comprising four essential elements.
- Households spend their money on goods and services through their purchasing activities.
- Business investments focus on funding infrastructure development while acquiring machinery and conducting innovative activities.
- Public finances dedicated toward supporting welfare needs together with infrastructure maintenance and service delivery are classified as government spending.
- The total value of exported products surpasses imported products in this economic relationship.
- According to Keynes, people's increased spending leads to higher business production which creates employment and economic expansion.

How Consumption Drives India's Economy

- Consumer expenditure functions as the primary growth factor in India's economy since its inception. The thriving middle class segment in the country stands as an essential contributor by investing money into basic requirements and high-end products.
- Private consumption stands as the dominant driving force of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at more than 55% according to World Bank statistics which rank the country among the highest worldwide.
- Consumer spending sharply increases during Diwali festivals so sales in retail along with electronics and automobile sectors experience consistent growth. The expansion of production and job creation happens as a direct result of this.

Limitations of Consumption-Driven Growth

The exclusive use of consumption to boost growth brings forth several negative impacts.

- Economic growth based on consumption benefits primarily the wealthier population because they can outspend others. The gap between individuals at different income levels becomes increasingly wider because of this situation.
- The ability of people to spend money determines the level of unsustainable growth in an economy. A decrease in consumer spending occurs in economic slowdowns and employment loss and price increases which leads to a reduction in economic activity.
- Minimal Resource Allocation Occurs Because Focused Exclusively On Spending Neglects Future-Proof Development Of Fundamental Infrastructure And Educational And Healthcare Systems. The economy stands weaker because of this condition.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic numerous households lost their incomes and as a result their purchasing power fell. The level of vulnerability exposed how an economic system based on consumption can be easily affected.

Why Investment Matters for Sustainable Growth

- Long-term economic stability and development result from investment although short-term growth comes from consumption activities. The economy repeatedly receives benefits from investment made in infrastructure along with manufacturing as well as educational sectors.

The growth from investment brings following main advantages:

- Maximum productivity emerges when educational investments and skill enhancement programs upgrade employee performance. Infrastructure projects, especially roads with reliable power supply result in operational efficiency for businesses.
- Business investments in factories alongside technology and service development generate new job opportunities. As consumer spending improves through new job creation the economy experiences a productive expansion pattern.
- The stability of the economy benefits more from investment as it generates enduring value rather than relying on household income for consumption. Construction projects that establish highways generate employment during development but result in enhanced business efficiency and trade abilities after completion.
- The economic triumph of China stems from its substantial financial support toward infrastructure and manufacturing sectors and technology development combined with home market consumption growth.

The Indian Scenario: Balancing Consumption and Investment

- To support lasting economic growth India requires equilibrium between its investment and consumption rates. The future prosperity of the economy depends heavily on strategic investments into key domains despite consumer spending remaining crucial.
- The expansion of roads, railways and power systems will empower industries to expand their operations while creating better rural market access.
- Investment in education functions to prepare young Indian people for higher-paying occupations thus generating increased consumption alongside economic development.
- Delivering healthcare to the nation leads to improvements in individual productivity and reduced medical costs so people have extra money to buy additional goods.
- The Make in India and Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes are government programs that try to stimulate manufacturing investment from private companies. The National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) serves as another initiative that aims to increase infrastructure spending in the country.

Conclusion

- The economy of India heavily depends on consumer activity yet such factors alone do not provide sustainable long-term growth potential. Developing a solid economy needs the same level of attention as investing activities. The path to sustainable advancement requires a strategic combination between short-term consumption support and long-term investment development.
- To reach sustainable long-term growth with inclusion India's policymakers must invest in new infrastructure mainly along with education and healthcare facilities and industries. Through these investments the economy will gain permanent strength and create both job opportunities and increased market activity for future times.

Source: [*The Hindu*](#)

UPSC Mains Question:

Q. Consumption is a key driver of economic growth, but it cannot sustain long-term development without adequate investment. Discuss the need for a balanced approach in the context of the Indian economy.



2. DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

[2.1] Indians in Rural Areas suffer from Protein Deficiency

Syllabus - Health [GS Paper-2]

Context

A new study by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) indicates that many Indians in rural areas are afflicted by protein deficiency in spite of producing sufficient protein-rich food or being able to afford them.

Key highlights

- More than two-thirds of families surveyed across India's semi-arid tropics devour less protein than encouraged in spite of sufficient availability of protein assets.
- **Consumptions of Staples:** Regions depend closely on staple grains like rice and wheat, which contribute 60–75% of day by day protein intake.
- **Underutilization of Protein-wealthy foods:** Foods such as pulses, dairy, eggs, and meat remain underutilized, not always due to the fact they're scarce, however because of a combination of cultural food choices, confined nutritional cognizance, and financial constraints.
- **Deficiency in Wealthier Families:** Even wealthier families, who can have the funds for various diets, often fail to meet encouraged protein intake degrees.
 - Households wherein women had better stages of education were more likely to eat a balanced food regimen.
- **PDS System:** India's Public Distribution System (PDS), has been a hit in improving calorie intake.
 - However, it has inadvertently bolstered a weight loss plan ruled with the aid of cereals even as failing to provide enough protein-rich options.

Reasons for the Dietary Habits

- deeply ingrained dietary behavior,
- lack of expertise about the importance of protein-rich ingredients,
- monetary constraints.

Recommendations

- Increasing the inclusion of pulses, millets, and different protein-rich foods in government food programs to significantly enhance nutritional outcomes.
- Region-precise strategies could be had to sell balanced dietary intake.
- Integrating vitamins education into public health programmes and school curricula.

- Encouraging farmers to develop a more variety of nutrient-rich plant.

International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)

- ICRISAT stands as the optimal drylands agricultural research institute, committed to uplifting smallholder farmers and ensuring food safety in semi-arid tropics.
- It was established under a Memorandum of Agreement between the Government of India and the CGIAR in 1972.
- ICRISAT's headquarters are located in Asia (India), and the organization continues places of work across Eastern and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa.

Source: [The DTE](#)

Mains PYQ

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

- A new study by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) indicates that many Indians in rural areas are afflicted by protein deficiency in spite of producing sufficient protein-rich food or being able to afford them.
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- **PDS System:** India's Public Distribution System (PDS), has been a hit in improving calorie intake.

[2.2] Adultery in Civil Cases

Syllabus - Social Issues [GS Paper-1]

Context

Adultery remains in the statute books as a ground for relief in civil cases regarding renovation and divorce, and as a ground for punishment in the armed forces.

Key highlights

- Recently the Madhya Pradesh High Court ruled that evidence of consensual sexual intercourse turned into important to prove adultery as a ground for cancellation of protection.
- The ruling correctly restates the prison definition of adultery that has been conventional by the courts in civil cases.

What is Adultery?

- Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC), recognised the crime of adultery and provides the accompanying punishment.
- It described adultery as “whoever has sexual intercourse with a person who is and whom he knows or has reason to believe to be the wife of every other man, without the consent of that man, such sexual intercourse is responsible for the offence of adultery”.
- Under it most effectively a man can be prosecuted and punished for committing the crime of adultery.
- For someone to be punished for adultery he has to have had sexual intercourse with some other man’s wife, without that man’s consent.
- **Punishment:** It was punishable with up to 5 years imprisonment and a fine.

Decriminalization of Adultery

- The Supreme Court of India, in the landmark judgment of *Joseph Shine v. Union of India* (2018), struck down Section 497 IPC, maintaining it unconstitutional. The court docket held that:
 - Adultery is a personal count and does not warrant criminal prosecution.
 - It violates Article 14 (Right to Equality) and Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty) of the Constitution.
 - Marriage is a non-public courting, and the kingdom must now not intrude by imposing criminal liability.
 - However, the SC clarified that adultery would continue to be an ethical error and will be invoked as a ground in civil cases.
 - Despite decriminalization in civilian existence, adultery remains an offense below the Army Act, 1950, the Navy Act, 1957, and the Air Force Act, 1950. Military employees can face disciplinary action for adultery under those laws.

Arguments in Favour of Decriminalising of Adultery in India

- **Gender Equality:** As in keeping with the regulation most effective guys will be prosecuted, decriminalizing it promotes gender equality.
- **Personal Autonomy:** Criminalizing adultery undermines personal freedom and choice in relationships.
- **Encouragement of Healthy Relationships:** Decriminalizing adultery shifts the focus from punishment to addressing marital issues and encourages individuals to remedy private disputes privately instead of the use of the criminal system.
- **Overburdening of Legal System:** Decriminalizing adultery could reduce the load at the judicial machine, allowing courts to pay attention to more immediate criminal topics.

Arguments Against Decriminalising of Adultery in India

- **Protecting Marital Integrity:** Criminalizing it enables defend the sanctity of marital bonds and discourages actions that undermine relationships.
- **Deterrence:** The risk of criminal results may additionally act as a deterrent to infidelity.
- **Social and Moral Values:** Decriminalizing it can be seen as encouraging conduct that erodes the foundation of family and societal structures.
- **Impact on Women:** In societies where patriarchy continues to be prevalent, eliminating criminal results may inspire guys to have interaction in infidelity.

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

- Adultery remains in the statute books as a ground for relief in civil cases regarding renovation and divorce, and as a ground for punishment in the armed forces.
- Recently the Madhya Pradesh High Court ruled that evidence of consensual sexual intercourse turned into important to prove adultery as a ground for cancellation of protection.
- The ruling correctly restates the prison definition of adultery that has been conventional by the courts in civil cases.

[2.3] Protection of India's Cultural Heritage

Syllabus - Art & Culture [GS Paper-1]

Context

India is home to a number of the world's most iconic ancient and cultural sites. However, these monuments are under critical threat because of climate change and human activities.

Role of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was set up in 1861 to protect and hold historic monuments and sites.
- ASI presently oversees three,698 included monuments under the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act (1904) and the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (1958).

ASI's work consists of

- **Conservation and Restoration:** Regular upkeep of temples, forts, tombs, churches, palaces, and prehistoric sites.
- **Preventive Measures:** Addressing threats from weather, pollution, encroachments, and structural instability.
- **Monitoring and Research:** Studying the impact of environmental adjustments on monuments.
- **Legal Enforcement:** Ensuring monuments are blanketed from unlawful activities and misuse.

Impact of Climate Change on Cultural Heritage

- **Rising Sea Levels:** Coastal background sites just like the Konark Sun Temple (Odisha) and Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu) are at chance from saltwater intrusion and erosion.
- **Extreme Heat and Droughts:** Heatwaves and converting weather patterns have an effect on the stability of historical structures, in particular the ones made from sandstone and limestone.
- **Heavy Rains and Strong Winds:** Increased rainfall and cyclones cause water damage and erosion in forts, palaces, and cave temples.
- **Air Pollution:** Pollution has seriously affected monuments like the Taj Mahal, turning its marble yellow because of excessive sulfur dioxide ranges in the air.

Government Measures to Protect Heritage Sites

- **Increased Funding for Conservation:** The budget for ASI's protection paintings has multiplied by 70% in recent years.

- 2020-21 Allocation: ₹260.90 crores
- 2023-24 Allocation: ₹443.53 crores
- **Climate-Resilient Conservation Methods:** ASI has followed medical preservation techniques to protect monuments.
- **Automated Weather Stations (AWS):** Established in collaboration with ISRO to reveal temperature, wind, rainfall, and atmospheric stress at heritage sites.
- **Air Pollution Monitoring Labs:** Set up close to monuments like Taj Mahal (Agra) and Bibi Ka Maqbara (Aurangabad) to track pollution levels.
- **Collaboration with Other Agencies:** ASI works closely with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and UNESCO to increase techniques for disaster control of cultural sites.
- **Strengthening Legal Protection:** Under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (1958), monuments are protected from encroachment and misuse.

Way Forward

- **Community Involvement:** Local groups should be engaged in conservation efforts to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility.
- **Public Awareness:** Educational packages and campaigns can help people understand the importance of protective monuments.
- **Advanced Technology:** Using AI, 3-d mapping, and drone surveillance can help inside the documentation and healing of ancient sites.
- **Stronger Law Enforcement:** Stricter laws and harsher consequences for encroachments and defacement ought to be enforced.

Source: [The PIB](#)

Mains PYQ

1. Safeguarding the Indian art heritage is the need of the moment. Discuss. (2018)

- India is home to a number of the world's most iconic ancient and cultural sites. However, these monuments are under critical threat because of climate change and human activities.
- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was set up in 1861 to protect and hold historic monuments and sites.
- ASI presently oversees three,698 included monuments under the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act (1904) and the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (1958).

[2.4] Employment shifting to Private Sector

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

The trend of organised employment has been moving from the general public to private sector — particularly post the economic reforms of 1991.

Key highlights

- India's middle class after Independence was largely created by the public area.
- Employment within the public sector stood at 194.7 lakh and that within the organised private sector only at 80.6 lakh in 1995.
- The workers within the significant and country governments plus quasi-governments (public sector undertakings) and local bodies — fell to 176.1 lakh and the latter rose to 119.7 lakh through 2012.

Major Trends

- **Regular personnel with the Indian Railways:** Between 1990-91 and 2022-23, these plunged from 16.5 lakh to 11.9 lakh.
- **Workers in the IT Sector:** Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys already had 45,714 and 36,750 workers respectively at the end of 2004-05, which rose to 4,48,464 and 2,42,371 15 years later.
- **Banking sector transformation:** In 1991-92, of the entire worker strength of the scheduled industrial banks in India the Public sector banks had a share of 87%.

Reasons for the Transformation of Working Middle Class in India

- **Economic Liberalization:** Post-1991 reforms opened up the economic system, leading to the growth of the private sector and more process opportunities.
- **Higher Salaries and Benefits:** The personal sector often offers better pay, professional growth, and blessings in comparison to public sector jobs, attracting the middle magnificence.
- **Improved Work Culture:** It provides a more dynamic and overall performance-driven environment, which appeals to the formidable working middle magnificence.
- **Limited Public Sector Jobs:** The growth of public sector jobs has stagnated, and competition for these positions is excessive, making private sector jobs greater attractive.
- **Entrepreneurial Opportunities:** The rise in entrepreneurial ventures and startups has encouraged the middle class to shift toward private companies and self-employment.

Reasons for Increase within the Share of Informal Sector in India's Employment

- **Unskilled Labour:** The schooling gadget emphasises theoretical information over realistic talent. This method renders new graduates ill-prepared to meet enterprise demands.
- **Rural-Urban Divide:** Inaccessible sectors are infrequently getting satisfactory programmes for their education and industry exposure.
- **Technological Changes:** The upward push of gig economic system structures and informal hard work opportunities has extended the informal area.
- **Flexibility:** Many workers pick the flexibility of informal work, even though it lacks benefits like healthcare and pensions.

Challenges Related to Informal Sector in India

- **Low Wages and Exploitation:** Informal employment, via definition, lacks a written contract, paid go away, and as a result does not pay minimum wages or pay attention to working conditions.
- **Lack of Social Security:** Workers inside the informal sector frequently lack access to social protection advantages which include healthcare, pensions, and unemployment coverage.
- **Limited Access to Finance:** Informal sector workers and groups regularly war to get admission to formal economic services consisting of economic institution loans and credit.
- **Poor Quality of Life:** Unorganized sector workers had been some distance more likely to be negative than their organised sector opposite numbers.

Way Forward

- **Bridging the Gap in Education:** Aligning Education with Industry Demand Changes will put together college students for actual-international challenges.
- **Government Initiatives:** The programmes can focus on sectors like installation of sun strength, waste management, and precision agriculture.
- **Strengthening Rural Skilling Initiatives:** Leveraging technology to scale online platforms can ensure equitable access to quality education.
- **Incentivising for Retention of workers:** Offering tailor-made upskilling programmes, encouraging inclusive work cultures, and having mental health guides can decorate worker pride and retention.

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Mains PYQ

1. Most of the unemployment in India is structural in nature. Examine the methodology adopted to compute unemployment in the country and suggest improvements. (2023)

- The trend of organised employment has been moving from the general public to private sector — particularly post the economic reforms of 1991.
- India's middle class after Independence was largely created by the public area.
- Employment within the public sector stood at 194.7 lakh and that within the organised private sector only at 80.6 lakh in 1995.
- The workers within the significant and country governments plus quasi-governments (public sector undertakings) and local bodies — fell to 176.1 lakh and the latter rose to 119.7 lakh through 2012.

[2.5] India and the US cooperation in Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA)

Syllabus - International Relations [GS Paper-2]

Context

India and the US give a boost to cooperation in Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) with the launch of the Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance (ASIA) during PM Modi's visit to the USA.

Key highlights

- Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) refers to the functionality of a nation or an organisation to monitor, detect, and determine activities taking place under the surface of water bodies like oceans and seas.
- It performs a crucial role in maritime security, useful resource management, environmental safety, and disaster reaction.
- This collaboration marks a historical first—India is the only country with which the U.S. security industry has presented to work on such sensitive technology.

Significance of India-U.S. UDA Cooperation

- **Geopolitical and Strategic Importance:** Strengthening Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) is essential for India's national security, particularly because of:
 - China's developing naval presence within the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
 - The want for enhanced submarine detection and tracking competencies.
 - Increased cooperation within the Quad (India, U.S., Australia, Japan) to counter not unusual threats.
- **Defense Technology Collaboration:** The U.S. Has supplied numerous modern underwater surveillance and anti-submarine warfare (ASW) technologies, which includes:
- **Sea Picket:** An autonomous sonar surveillance device by Thayer Mahan.
- **Wave Glider:** Unmanned Surface Vehicle (USV) through Boeing's Liquid Robotics, with plans for co-manufacturing with Sagar Defence Engineering (60 gadgets).
- **Low-Frequency Active Towed Sonar:** Discussions underway among L3 Harris and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).
- **Impact on India's Defense Capabilities:** India's anti-submarine struggle (ASW) abilities may be notably bolstered, complementing present property which include:
 - 12 P-8I Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft already in service.
 - 24 MH-60R Multi-Role Helicopters (being inducted).
 - 15 MQ-9B Sea Guardian UAVs, a part of a 31-unit agreement with deliveries starting from 2029.
- **Technology Transfer, Make-in-India, and Economic Impact:** First-of-its-kind co-production and generation transfer in sensitive underwater systems.
 - Strengthens India's security production environment under Make in India & Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Challenges and Considerations

- **Technology Transfer and Data Security:** Concerns over sharing sensitive UDA information and sovereign control over surveillance systems.
- **Financial and Operational Challenges:** High cost of procurement, deployment, and renovation of superior underwater systems.
- **Technology Dependence:** Advanced sonar and AI systems require high-end research and investment.
- **Legal and Diplomatic Complexities:** Underwater area focus in disputed waters can create tensions with neighboring countries.
- **Environmental Impact:** Use of sonar technology can impact marine biodiversity and aquatic ecosystems.

Conclusion

- Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) is a vital factor of maritime security, monetary sustainability, and environmental conservation. Given the growing Chinese presence inside the Indian Ocean, India's awareness on UDA, in collaboration with the U.S. And Quad partners, will significantly beautify its maritime defense abilities and strategic positioning.

Source: *The Hindu*

Mains PYQ

1. 'What introduces friction into the ties between India and the country is that Washington is still unable to find for India a position in its global strategy, which would satisfy India's National self-esteem and ambitions'. Explain with suitable examples. (2019)

- India and the US give a boost to cooperation in Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) with the launch of the Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance (ASIA) during PM Modi's visit to the USA.
- Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) refers to the functionality of a nation or an organisation to monitor, detect, and determine activities taking place under the surface of water bodies like oceans and seas.
- It performs a crucial role in maritime security, useful resource management, environmental safety, and disaster reaction.
- This collaboration marks a historical first—India is the only country with which the U.S. security industry has presented to work on such sensitive technology.

[2.6] Status of Devolution to Panchayats in States

Syllabus - Polity and Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj has released the report titled '**Status of Devolution to Panchayats in States – An Indicative Evidence-Based Ranking**' (2024).

Key highlights

- The devolution index is an approach in assessing the implementation of 73rd and 74th Amendments and is prepared by the Indian Institute of Public Administration.
- It evaluates the current state of power and resource devolution to Panchayati Raj Institutions across all States and Union Territories.
- States/UTs had been ranked as per the six key dimensions of framework, features, finances, functionaries, capability enhancement, and duty.

Need for the Assessment

- The mandatory constitutional provisions— including regular Panchayat elections by state election commissions, reservations for SCs/STs and girls, and the constitution of state finance commissions—had been implemented.
- The devolution of functions, finances, and functionaries to Panchayats has been inconsistent across States.
- The effective local governance can't be done through these switch mechanisms by itself.
- It necessitates 'potential enhancement' measures and 'duty' to ensure equity and transparency in Panchayat operations.

Major Findings

- Karnataka tops the general Devolution Index (DI) ranking of the Panchayat Raj gadget amongst States, at the same time as Kerala and Tamil Nadu are in the second and third spot.
- Devolution has improved from 39.9% to 43.9% between the period 2013-14 to 2021-22.

- With the release of the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), the ability enhancement factor of the Index at some stage in this era has accelerated from 44% to 54.6%.
- During this period, the factor of the Index relating functionaries has seen a significant jump of more than 10% (from 39.6% to 50.9%).
- In the framework criterion, Kerala ranks first followed by Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Haryana.
- In the useful criterion, Tamil Nadu tops the listing observed via Karnataka, Odisha, and Rajasthan.
- In the price range criterion, Karnataka has secured the pinnacle area observed by Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Rajasthan.
- In the functionaries criterion, Gujarat ranks first observed by Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- In the capacity building criterion, Telangana has secured the primary spot observed by Tamil Nadu and Gujarat.

Challenges Identified in Report

- **Legal and Institutional Gaps:** Some states have not conducted ordinary panchayat elections.
- **Limited Role in Policy Implementation:** Panchayats have a nominal role in principal centrally sponsored schemes (MGNREGA, PMAY, NHM, and so on.).
- **Disparities Among States:** Some states perform appreciably higher because of robust governance structures and legal provisions, while others struggle because of bad implementation and political unwillingness.
- **Low Public Participation:** Gram Sabhas, which are vital for participatory governance, are regularly poorly attended and absent effectiveness.

Recommendations and Suggestions

- **Strengthening the Legal Framework:** Ensure ordinary and timely elections for panchayats.
 - Empower State Election Commissions (SECs) to function independently without state government interference.
- **Financial Empowerment:** Establish a Consolidated Fund for Local Government to offer direct and confident funding to panchayats.
 - Implement guidelines of the 16th Finance Commission to ensure panchayats obtain an effective share of GST sales.
- **Enhancing Functional Autonomy:** Decentralize key provider delivery features to ensure panchayats play a main position in rural development.
- **Promoting Accountability & Transparency:** Strengthen Gram Sabha participation by making them more available and effective.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Prelims PYQ

1. The fundamental object of Panchayati Raj system is to ensure which among the following? (2015)

1. People's participation in development
2. Political accountability
3. Democratic decentralization
4. Financial mobilization

Select the correct answer using the code given below

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

(b) 2 and 4 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: (c)

- The Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj has released the report titled **‘Status of Devolution to Panchayats in States – An Indicative Evidence-Based Ranking’ (2024)**.
- The devolution index is an approach in assessing the implementation of 73rd and 74th Amendments and is prepared by the Indian Institute of Public Administration.
- It evaluates the current state of power and resource devolution to Panchayati Raj Institutions across all States and Union Territories.
- States/UTs had been ranked as per the six key dimensions of framework, features, finances, functionaries, capability enhancement, and duty.

[2.7] WAVES Anime & Manga Contest

Syllabus: Governance, [GS Paper - 2]

Context

- India has encountered an enormous surge in anime and manga popularity throughout the previous few years. WAVES Anime & Manga Contest (WAM!) gives creators an ideal showcase for their talent since it attracts increasing numbers of Japanese animation enthusiasts and storytelling enthusiasts.

About in Brief

- WAVES Anime & Manga Contest receives support from the Media & Entertainment Association of India (MEAI) and the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting which organizes the event. The project connects anime and manga fans through opportunities to develop localized adaptations and original works therefore earning reputations in their industry. Various Indian locations will organize these events that will unite at WAVES 2025 held in Mumbai for a grand finale.
- WAM! operates within the Create in India Challenges as an affiliated organization of World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES). From May 1st to May 4th 2025 Jio World Convention Centre & Jio World Gardens in Mumbai became the host site for the summit. The event functions as an essential gathering place that enables professionals within media and entertainment fields to both exchange concepts and build partnerships alongside enhancing artistic advancements.

Contest Categories and Participation Verticals

The WAVES Anime & Manga Contest includes three essential participation divisions.

- The participants use a provided script to make a comic following traditional Japanese manga style.
- Creators must generate a digital vertical comic by implementing the provided storyline through Webtoon.
- A collaborative group transforms the provided script into a Japanese animated sequence that stands as Anime.

Participant Categories

- The competition includes categorized events which split participants into distinct divisions to ensure equal competition.
- The Student Individual division welcomes participants from all recognized educational institutions including schools and universities.
- Participants who form groups of no more than four students have the opportunity to enter the competition.
- Competitors who are not students can participate in the Individual (Professional) domain for advanced competition levels.
- Teams that consist of non-student participants numbering four or less can join as an entrant group.

Eligibility Criteria

According to the specified categories both individual participants and teams can enter the contest.

- **Manga & Webtoon:** Allows individual participation in both student and professional categories.
- **Anime:** Requires team participation (up to four members) for both student and professional categories.
- Students who are part of schools or undergraduate colleges (less than 21 years old) are eligible to join. Individuals above twenty-one must enroll as professional participants.

Cosplay Competition

The WAM! At the Cosplay Competition participants get to display their costume creativity by dressing as anime or manga or gaming or Indian comic characters. Students and professionals along with everyone can enter without paying any fees and the competition is open to all participants.

Some key points:

- All costumes together with props need to come from personal creations.
- Weapons together with props need to be made in a manner that prevents functionality.
- Participating individuals need to follow proper etiquette while at the event because offensive conduct may result in disqualification.
- **Judging criteria include:**
 - Costume accuracy
 - Craftsmanship
 - Performance

- Creativity
 - Audience engagement
 - A Q&A round about the character/costume
- Every applicant obtains two minutes of performance time with a one-minute introduction segment.
 - The cash prize awards along with electronic certificates of participation are given to all participants including the final three winners.

Conclusion

- The WAVES Anime & Manga Contest represents a top-notch program that improves anime and manga awareness across India.
- WAM! develops an environment which both inspires artistic development in talented newcomers through a nurturing approach while offering them strong competition to achieve high-quality results.
- This competition is expected to create a significant milestone by supporting innovation together with artistic excellence as well as collaboration in India's entertainment field which continues to grow.
- Students and professional artists together with anime enthusiasts can use this competition to establish their talent on both domestic and global platforms.

Source: [PIB](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q. Discuss the potential of India as a global hub for animation, manga, and digital storytelling. What challenges does the industry face, and what policy measures can be adopted to overcome them.

[2.8] Citizen-Generated Data (CGD) for SDGs in India

Syllabus: Governance, [GS Paper - 2]

Context:

- A growing number of people in India utilize Citizen-Generated Data (CGD) as a crucial method to monitor and accomplish Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Client-Generated Data consists of voluntary information which people or communities share to produce instantaneous awareness of social and economic conditions together with environmental issues.
- Official statistics gaps become more complete because CGD enables better policy choices which serve to protect "No One is Left Behind" as per the SDGs principles.

About in Brief

- MoSPI organized a half-day workshop about CGD on 17th February 2025 at New Delhi to understand its potential. The workshop focused on illuminating the concept of CGD together with examining the Copenhagen Framework applicability for Indian statistical frameworks.

What is Citizen-Generated Data?

Data acquisition happens through three different sectors which include individual contributions as well as civil society organizations (CSOs) and private entities.

The sources which generate data include:

- Mobile applications and surveys
- Social media interactions and online platforms
- Project groups through crowd sourcing combine with public feedback systems to create initiatives.
- Geo-spatial tools and satellite imagery

Government agencies together with policymakers utilize CGD as an additional source that helps them fill statistical gaps and enhances their decision-making capacity.

Key Highlights of the Workshop

Inauguration by Dr. Saurabh Garg, Secretary, MoSPI

- The workshop emphasized how CGD functions to connect missing data and supports statistical information that includes all population groups.
- The government displayed its dedication to implement participatory planning together with social auditing and grievance redressal systems such as CPGRAMS.
- The workshop addressed three main challenges related to the adoption of CGD: accuracy issues, privacy risks and problems with upscaling the system.

Global and National Perspectives on CGD

- UN agencies presented the Copenhagen Framework on Citizen Data to demonstrate effective CGD utilization guidelines during the gathering.
- The Digi Yatra Foundation provided details about how digital travel information assists in CGD activities.
- The Digital Life Certificate for Pensioners Scheme at State Bank of India (SBI) incorporated CGD as part of its solutions.

MoSPI's Initiatives in Expanding Data Sources

- Exploring non-traditional data sources like geo-spatial information and digital records.
- Strengthening data ecosystems for evidence-based policymaking.

Challenges in Using CGD for SDGs

The many advantages of CGD demand a solution to the following essential implementation obstacles:

- CGD presents the risk of producing inconsistent data quality since it lacks standardized processes.
- Fearful personal data must receive robust security measures.
- The expansion of CGD throughout various regions together with different communities presents a scalability challenge.
- Sustainable initiatives under CGD demand continuous financial backing together with organizational support for their continuation.

Way Forward

India must implement the following measures to optimize the use of CGD for monitoring the SDG progress:

- The nation requires an established system to acquire and confirm CGD data.
- An integration between CGD systems and official statistics will lead to improved data representativeness.
- Digital literacy programs should be developed to increase the number of citizens who actively participate.
- The government should establish collaborative partnerships between official sectors and both private businesses and civil society organizations (CSOs).

Conclusion

- Citizen-generated data serves as a fundamental tool to assist India in reaching their Sustainable Development Goals through its capability to offer immediate localized information about development sectors.
- The implementation of appropriate policies and technological backing will transform Citizen-Generated Data into an influential mechanism for data-based inclusive governance. The adoption of Citizen-Generated Data enables India to fulfill its goals of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, and Sabka Prayas."

Source: [PIB](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q. Discuss the significance of Citizen-Generated Data (CGD) in policy making and governance. What challenges does it present, and how can India integrate CGD effectively into its statistical system.

[2.9] Recognizing Progressive Disabilities

Syllabus: Science & Technology, [GS Paper - 3]

Context:

- Disability rights have developed over the years, from a care-based approach to human rights. But, progressive conditions, that invariably worsen, need particular attention in insurance policies and in health care.
- India's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) conducted a session lately to identify the means to boost the laws, policies, and systems of support dedicated to the people with disability (PwDs). Experts demanded better access, job opportunities and healthcare, financial support to ensure dignity and rights of PwDs.

Understanding Progressive Disabilities

Definition:

- Progressive disability is a condition that gradually deteriorates over time, such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, and muscular dystrophy.

Challenges:

- These disabilities require ongoing medical care; assistive technologies; financial support; and job accommodations that provide a competitive chance to work.

Current Legal Framework:

- Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 – Provides reservations in jobs and education.
- Mental Healthcare Act, 1987 & 2017 – Addresses mental health-related disabilities.
- Government Schemes – Includes Accessible India Campaign and Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan for better infrastructure.

Key Issues and Policy Gaps

- **Employment Challenges:** Low levels of private industries in hiring PwDs.
- **Health Access:** Requirement for inexpensive therapy, assistive technologies and specialized health care.
- **Financial Barriers:** High costs of treatment and lack of inclusive health insurance.
- **Benchmark disability criteria:** The 40% disability mark usually bars many from receiving any.
- **Awareness & Training:** No training given to doctors & ASHA workers in effectively supporting PwDs.
- **Stigma & Underreporting:** A lot of disabilities, especially among the elderly, are underreported owing to social stigma and lack of awareness.
- **Psychological support:** PwDs are faced with mental illness, stress and isolation results from lack of counseling and support.

Recent Recommendations and Way Forward

In the course of boosting the life quality of PwDs, specialists recommended:

- Reviewing the 40% disability margin for greater inclusivity.
- Encouraging private sector employment opportunities for PwDs.
- Improving access in buildings, transport and digital access points.
- Cutting down healthcare costs by increasing manufacturing of drugs locally.
- Investing in solution devices and software to support PwDs.
- To fortify prenatal and pro-natal diagnosis for early interventions.
- Increasing health professional awareness, training for better disability care.
- Offering financial, training and community-based resources to support caregiving.
- Extending social security programs for folks with disabilities with enabling financial stability and long-term care.
- Creating disability-inclusive public spaces with more transportation, communications and accessible services.
- Setting up effective grievance redressal mechanisms to prevent PwDs from workplace discrimination and exclusion.

Conclusion

- Recognizing progressive disabilities is what we require in order to have stronger inclusions. Policies should be centered on accessibility, employment and financial aid and social inclusivity.
- A multi-stakeholders approach including government, private sector and civil society is required to promote dignity and rights of persons with disabilities.
- By delivering more healthcare, policies and public awareness, India can strive towards a more equal and inclusive vision for the future of all.

Source: [PIB](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q. Discuss the key challenges faced by persons with progressive disabilities in India and suggest measures to improve their quality of life.

[2.10] China's Nuclear Fusion Reactor

Syllabus - Science and Technology [GS Paper-3]

Context

Chinese scientists stated that they were able to hold a plasma at a temperature of 100 million levels C for about 1,066 seconds in a nuclear fusion reactor known as the **Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST)**.

Key highlights

- EAST is a testbed reactor for (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor) ITER, an global megaproject.
- **Members of the Project:** Six countries around the world, along with India, and the European Union.
- They are running together to build a tokamak that will maintain nuclear fusion that releases more energy than that required to sustain the plasma.
- A tokamak is a gadget that uses magnetic fields to restrict plasma for nuclear fusion studies.

Background

- **1939:** Lise Meitner and Otto Frisch defined fission as a process of energy release.
- **1942:** The first sustainable nuclear fission reactor was built by Enrico Fermi and crew.
- Nuclear fission produces harmful radioactive waste while nuclear fusion doesn't.
- Nuclear fusion reactors have emerged as a crucial technological purpose for a global keenly inquisitive about new resources of clean energy.
- **Current Progress:** Projects like ITER are operating on developing possible fusion reactors, but net-positive energy from fusion continues to be a work in development.

What is Nuclear Fusion?

- Nuclear fusion is the method by which two light atomic nuclei combine to form a single heavier one while liberating massive amounts of energy.
- Fusion reactions take place in a state of matter known as plasma — a hot, charged gas made of wonderful ions and free-shifting electrons with unique homes wonderful from solids, beverages or gases.
- The sun, along with all other stars, is powered with the aid of this reaction.
- **Process:** The Deuterium (H-2) and Tritium (H-three) atoms are mixed to form Helium (He-four). A free and rapid neutron is also released as an end result.
 - The neutron is powered through the kinetic energy transformed from the 'greater' mass left over after the combination of lighter nuclei of deuterium and tritium happens.
- **Challenges:** Achieving controlled fusion demands extraordinarily high temperatures and pressures, similar to the ones in stars.

Significance of Fusion energy

- **Clean Energy:** Nuclear fusion does not emit carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases into the surroundings, so it is able to be a protracted-term supply of low-carbon energy from the second one half of this century onwards.
- **More Efficient:** Fusion should generate 4 cases more energy per kilogram of fuel than fission (utilized in nuclear energy plants) and nearly 4 million times greater energy than burning oil or coal.
- **Fusion fuel is abundant and effortlessly on hand:** Deuterium may be extracted inexpensively from seawater, and tritium can probably be constituted of the response of fusion-generated neutrons with evidently considerable lithium.
 - These gas substances might last for millions of years.
- **Safer to Use:** Future fusion reactors are also intrinsically safe and are not predicted to produce high activity or long-lived nuclear waste.
 - Furthermore, as the fusion procedure is difficult to begin and keep, there is no risk of a runaway response and meltdown.

Way Ahead

- EAST's successes are important for ITER's destiny, which faces grievances for delays and fee overruns.
- ITER's fee exceeds EUR 18 billion, making it the most costly technological know-how test in records.
- High prices have deterred a few governments from pursuing such tasks.
- **Alternative Fusion Methods:**
 - **Stellarator:** A device with a twisting layout that removes the want for a poloidal magnetic area, using complicated external magnets to reap magnetic confinement.
 - **Laser Fusion:** Uses effective laser beams to compress deuterium-tritium pellets, inflicting fusion and releasing strength.

Source: The Indian Express

Mains PYQ

1. With growing energy needs should India keep on expanding its nuclear energy programme? Discuss the facts and fears associated with nuclear energy. (2018)

- Chinese scientists stated that they were able to hold a plasma at a temperature of 100 million levels C for about 1,066 seconds in a nuclear fusion reactor known as the **Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST)**.
- EAST is a testbed reactor for (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor) ITER, an global megaproject.
- **Members of the Project:** Six countries around the world, along with India, and the European Union.
- They are running together to build a tokamak that will maintain nuclear fusion that releases more energy than that required to sustain the plasma.
- A tokamak is a gadget that uses magnetic fields to restrict plasma for nuclear fusion studies.

[2.11] RuTAGE Smart Village Center

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

The RuTAGE Smart Village Center (RSVC) was launched in Mandaura village, Sonipat, marking a transformative moment for rural technological advancement.

RuTAGE Smart Village Center (RSVC) model

- It was conceptualized by the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor (PSA).
- It is designed to serve as a permanent presence on the Panchayat level, offering deep handholding to cater to the technological desires of 15-20 villages over several years.
- It was honoured with the first prize on the NSE's Social Stock Exchange event in Varanasi in 2024.

Technological Solutions Offered

- **Agriculture & Waste Management:** Services for agriculture, waste control, homestays, and village tourism, supported by using pre-sowing to post-harvest technology, in collaboration with KVKs.
- **RuTAG Technologies:** Innovations from 7 IITs, developed under the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India.
- **Livelihood & Entrepreneurship:** Promoting local entrepreneurship through schemes like NRLM in Uttar Pradesh.
- **Renewable Energy:** Solar hybrid and wind technology solutions, with technical help from SELCO Foundation.
- **WASH:** Waste control, water, and sanitation solutions, such as IIT Madras Aquamaps and weVois technology.
- **FinTech:** Financial inclusion apps and AR/VR technologies developed by IISC and XR Group.
- **Capacity Building:** Research and capability-building initiatives with Tier 2 & 3 faculties wherein NIFTEM is a facility for piloting biscuit production from domestically sourced substances like sugar, ghee. NAARM project capacity building of RSVC centre heads.
- **Govt. Scheme Apps:** Dissemination of presidency schemes thru citizen-centric apps for technological knowledge, tech, and welfare packages.
- **Assistive Technologies:** Solutions for differently abled people through the Assistive Technology Foundation.

Purpose of RSVC

- RSVC aims to bridge the distance among rural needs and technological improvements, ensuring innovation reaches grassroots communities.
- Focuses on addressing challenges like animal intrusion, organic farming, and livelihood-enhancing technologies.

Role of Technology in Rural Growth

- **Farming:** Precision tools (GPS, sensors) and mechanization (tractors) growth crop yields and efficiency.
- **Education:** Online studying and digital literacy bridge the gap for rural students. Initiatives like PM e-VIDYA and SWAYAM offer digital gaining knowledge of possibilities.
- **Financial Inclusion:** The DBT application and PM Jan Dhan Yojana facilitate cashless transfers, enhancing transparency and decreasing fraud.
- **Water Management:** The National Program on Aquifer Mapping and Management utilizes technology for green groundwater management in agriculture.

Future Outlook

- RSVC initiative marks a significant step in the direction of empowering rural India via sustainable, scalable, and impactful technological answers.
- Continuous updates and comments could be used to refine and scale the effect of RSVCs.

Source: *The Indian Express*

Prelims PYQ

1. Which of the following grants/grant direct credit assistance to rural households? (2013)

1. Regional Rural Banks
2. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
3. Land Development Banks

www.vajiraoidiasacademy.com

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (c)

- The RuTAGe Smart Village Center (RSVC) was launched in Mandaura village, Sonipat, marking a transformative moment for rural technological advancement.
- It was conceptualized by the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor (PSA).
- It is designed to serve as a permanent presence on the Panchayat level, offering deep handholding to cater to the technological desires of 15-20 villages over several years.
- It was honoured with the first prize on the NSE's Social Stock Exchange event in Varanasi in 2024.

[2.12] Andhra Pradesh to expand Work-from-Home (WFH) Opportunities

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister has announced plans to expand work-from-home (WFH) opportunities, mainly focused on women professionals within the state.

Key highlights

- The Andhra Pradesh IT & Global Capability Centres (GCC) Policy four.0 is designed to draw top IT companies and facilitate employment boom.
- A key characteristic of the policy is encouraging companies to offer WFH options more liberally. This move aims to:
 - Foster work-life stability for women professionals.
 - Ensure same access to increase opportunities in science and technology fields.
 - Make employment more on hand for women with familial responsibilities.

Policy on Work-from-Home in India

- Unlike some nations with formal faraway work regulations, India does not have specific legal guidelines governing WFH rules.
- Companies decide work hours and expectations through internal employment contracts.
- The government, however, has advocated WFH in specific cases, including maternity leave or roles that permit remote work.
- Despite the initial surge in WFH adoption during the COVID-19 pandemic, many Indian IT companies have since mandated return-to-office rules.

Arguments in Favour of Work-from-Home

- **Cost Savings:** WFH has drastically decreased commuting expenses and allowed employees to remain in more less costly regions, leading to economic benefits for both individuals and corporations.
- **Improved Work-Life Balance:** WFH can offer more flexibility to control work and private duties, which include childcare or eldercare, which frequently disproportionately fall on women.
- **Increased Flexibility:** Employees can manage their time more correctly, enhancing work-life balance, especially for women who juggle expert and personal responsibilities.
- **Higher Energy Levels:** Reduced journey time has more desirable worker productivity and well-being.
- **Employer Benefits:** Organizations benefit from decreased office rental expenses and lower expenses related to purchaser conferences.

Arguments against WFH

- **Hindered Collaboration:** The absence of physical interactions influences teamwork, trust-building, and problem-solving capabilities.
- **Organizational Culture Challenges:** WFH weakens social, emotional, and human capital formation, impacting long-term place of business cohesion.
- **Lack of Recognition:** WFH could make it tougher for women to be seen and diagnosed for their contributions, potentially leading to missed opportunities for promotions and raises.

Way Ahead

- **Implement Hybrid Models:** A mix of far flung and in-office work can offer flexibility whilst preserving collaboration.
- **Invest in Digital Infrastructure:** Enhanced communicate tools can bridge the distance in teamwork and productivity.
- **Develop Inclusive Policies:** Organizations need to make certain that far flung workers, in particular women, receive identical opportunities for increase and management roles.

Conclusion

- Andhra Pradesh's WFH initiative for women has the ability to set a precedent for gender-inclusive employment guidelines in India.
- However, accomplishing long-term success will require strategic implementation and non-stop assessment of its impact on productivity and staff engagement.

Source: *The Indian Express*

Mains PYQ

1. Explore and evaluate the impact of 'Work From Home' on family relationships. (2022)

- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister has announced plans to expand work-from-home (WFH) opportunities, mainly focused on women professionals within the state.
- The Andhra Pradesh IT & Global Capability Centres (GCC) Policy four.0 is designed to draw top IT companies and facilitate employment boom.
- A key characteristic of the policy is encouraging companies to offer WFH options more liberally. This move aims to:
 - Foster work-life stability for women professionals.

- Ensure same access to increase opportunities in science and technology fields.
- Make employment more on hand for women with familial responsibilities.

[2.13] A Decade of Soil Health Cards

Syllabus: Geography, [GS Paper - 1]

Context:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi established the Soil Health Card (SHC) Scheme on February 19th 2015 in Suratgarh Rajasthan.
- The core purpose of this initiative is to teach farmers what their soil contains regarding nutrients and advise them about suitable fertilizer quantities.
- Using the scheme enables the improvement of soil quality while supporting environmentally friendly agricultural practices.
- Through the Soil Health Card Portal (www.soilhealth.dac.gov.in) Indian farmers can easily access their Soil Health Cards in multiple authenticated language options including dialects.

What is a Soil Health Card?

The Soil Health Card contains twelve essential soil parameters which include:

- Macronutrients: Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), Potassium (K), Sulfur (S)
- The necessary group of micronutrients includes Zinc (Zn), Iron (Fe), Copper (Cu), Manganese (Mn) and Boron (Bo).
- Other properties: pH level (acidity/basicity), Electrical Conductivity (EC), Organic Carbon (OC)
- The data present on Soil Health Cards enables farmers to assess soil condition for determining the appropriate fertilizers required with their suitable amendments.

Soil Testing and Village-Level Labs

The season schedule for soil sampling involves two events during Rabi and Kharif crop seasons.

- The federal government launched instructions for Village-Level Soil Testing Labs (VLSTLs) during June 2023. The establishments of these labs are possible through young business operators as well as self-help groups and agriculture universities.
- Village-level soil testing labs numbering 665 have been established throughout 17 states which provide farmers with accessible soil testing services since February 2025.

School Soil Health Programme

- A School Soil Health Programme initiated to educate students about soil health management started its operations. DA & FW together with ICAR and State Governments coordinate this initiative known as the project.
- This project began its operations in 20 schools by including 10 Kendriya Vidyalayas and 10 Navodaya Vidyalayas.
- Soil testing training happens for students ranging from Class VI to XII at the school.

- The establishment of school soil laboratories enabled students to perform soil sample tests while sharing fertilizer knowledge with farmers.
- Currently the program operates within 1,020 schools and each school possesses 1,000 soil testing facilities that serve more than 1.25 lakh students.

Integration with Other Schemes

- The merger between the Soil Health Card scheme and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) took effect during the 2022-23 financial period.
- The program continues to receive financial and technical backing through this integration.

Technological Advancements

- The government established the SHC Mobile App during 2023 through its introduction of multiple new functionality improvements.
- A GPS system enables exact identification of sampling sites for soil documentation.
- The portal becomes directly accessible by generating QR codes that link test results.
- Geographic Information System (GIS) integration: Displays soil health data on digital maps.
- The updated system launched in April 2023 provided field testing with enhanced precision as well as clarity.

Conclusion

- The Soil Health Card Scheme has functioned as an essential driver of agricultural change throughout the previous decade in Indian territory.
- Farmers now employ better information because of this system which allows them to choose appropriate fertilizers thus generating better soil quality for higher crop production.
- Through its School Soil Health Programme the scheme fosters community-wide knowledge development about sustainable farming systems. Advanced technology consisting of mobile apps and digital mapping systems enable the scheme to become more user-friendly and efficient.
- Toward the future the primary attention should concentrate on building greater soil testing facilities as well as teaching more farmers alongside fostering responsible modern agricultural practices.

Source: [PIB](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q. Discuss the impact of the Soil Health Card Scheme on sustainable agriculture in India. How can technology further improve soil health management?

[2.14] India's Organic Legacy at BIOFACH 2025

Syllabus: Science & Technology, [GS Paper - 3]

Context:

- The sustained history of organic farming in India continues to grow because the world now prioritizes sustainable agricultural methods. APEDA joined BIOFACH 2025, the world's largest organic trade fair sponsored by Germany, where it hosted the India Pavilion to showcase Indian organic products from February 11 to 14, 2025 in Nuremberg.
- APEDA established an India Pavilion which presented multiple organic items such as spices and pulses and rice and processed foods and essential oils from the country. India sealed a Letter of Intent (LoI) to serve as the Partner Country at BIOFACH 2026 which confirmed its position as a global leader in organic farming operations.

India Pavilion at BIOFACH 2025

- The opening ceremony of the India Pavilion occurred through the joint efforts of Shri Shatrughna Sinha, Consul General of India, Munich, and Shri Abhishek Dev, Chairman, APEDA.
- Visitors from worldwide ranks topped when the exhibition showcased India's extensive range of organic products.

The main characteristics of the India Pavilion involved:

- Organic pulses together with rice, spices, herbs, oilseeds, cashews, ginger, turmeric and large cardamom and cinnamon and mango puree and essential oils are displayed.
- More than 20 organizations took part in the exhibition through participation of exporters as well as Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and State Government Organizations.
- Attendees had the chance to sample three traditional dishes named organic Biryani along with Golden Turmeric Latte and Millet Dosa.
- Visitors would watch the preparation of Indian recipes through live demonstrations featuring traditional organic ingredients.
- Cultural experiences, such as Henna Art, connecting visitors to India's rich traditions.

India will establish its role as the Partner Country during BIOFACH 2026

- APEDA and Nuremberg Messe executed an agreement at BIOFACH 2025 to proclaim India as the scheduled Partner Country for BIOFACH 2026. Next year India will establish itself as a global leader for organic food through its prominent presence at the event which establishes its position as the center for organic food products.
- The decision to name India as the Partner Country in 2012 demonstrates its expanding role in the organic farming domain. The upcoming BIOFACH 2026 event allows India to display its organic farming capabilities through extensive global marketing efforts for its local farming community.

India's Leadership in Organic Farming

The organic farming industry of India is the world's second largest sector because of government backing along with official APEDA efforts and committed community members involved in agriculture.

It focuses on:

- Traditional and sustainable farming methods
- Farmers should apply bio-pesticides jointly with natural fertilizers.
- Preservation of soil health and biodiversity
- Growing demand for organic food in global markets
- India brought the highest representation to BIOFACH 2025 among all non-European countries which solidified its position as a leader in the organic agriculture sector. APEDA serves as an ongoing institutional support for exporters from India who need help fulfilling global organic certification specifications.

Future Prospects

- The worldwide movement toward chemical-free food has placed India in a sturdy position for expanding its national organic export capacity.
- The world can recognize India as the top organic food supplier through BIOFACH 2026 cooperation and other international partnerships.
- APEDA's initiatives to promote markets while training farmers alongside establishing quality assurance will enable India to maintain leadership in global organic trade.

Conclusion

- The participation of India at BIOFACH 2025 enabled the nation to demonstrate top-quality achievements within its organic farming sector to the world. Participation at the event allowed India to market its organic products worldwide while forming new international collaborative partnerships and raising export volumes.
- India possesses an essential chance to establish global leadership in sustainable and organic agricultural practices through its designation as Partner Country at BIOFACH 2026. The organic sector of India will expand through sustained government backing combined with increased farmer engagement thus creating a sustainable environment for future generations.

Source: [PIB](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q. India is emerging as a global leader in organic agriculture. Discuss the role of APEDA and international trade fairs like BIOFACH in promoting India's organic farming sector. What challenges does India face in expanding its organic exports.

[2.15] Solar Coronal Holes: Thermal & Magnetic Insights

Syllabus: Science & Technology, [GS Paper - 3]

Context:

- The Sun guides space weather formation because it affects space-based technology while changing Earth's atmospheric conditions. Solar coronal holes emerge as important solar phenomena which affect these changes. Solar images reveal these dark Sun features because they contain open magnetic field lines and the covering gas density is extremely low.
- Scientists from the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) recently performed research to study how coronal holes affect their thermal structures and magnetic field composition. Scientists need these results to forecast disturbances of space weather and predict modifications in rainfall patterns during the Indian Monsoon.

What Are Coronal Holes?

- Charged particles easily exit the Sun's atmosphere because coronal holes contain regions on its surface that possess open magnetic field lines.

Key characteristics of coronal holes:

- Darker patches emerge in X-ray as well as ultraviolet images.
- Solar atmosphere contains these areas which maintain lower density levels compared to the surrounding regions.
- The fast solar winds emanate from these areas.
- Geomagnetic storms on Earth develop due to these phenomena.
- The discovery of coronal holes happened in the 1970s through observations made by X-ray satellites. Researchers have made their study fundamental for analyzing solar activity together with its planetary impacts since its discovery during the 1970s.

What Are the Earthly Effects Caused by Coronal Holes?

Space weather events originating from coronal holes have powerful impacts which extend to affect the Earth.

Geomagnetic Storms

- The speeding winds from coronal holes produce geomagnetic storms by engaging with Earth's magnetosphere.
- The disturbance of GPS signals along with power grids and satellite communications represents a major impact during such storms.

Indian Monsoon Variability

- Science indicates that Indian monsoon rainfall gets altered by the presence of coronal holes.
- Sunspot effects in combination with coronal hole radiative activities cause modifications in atmospheric patterns that shift rainfall distribution throughout the world.

Ionospheric Disturbances

- Ionospheric disturbances occur when coronal hole particles reach Earth's ionospheric region which serves to reflect radio waves.
- The disturbance of communication along with signal interference takes place as a result.

New Study by Indian Scientists

Scientists at the IIA examined solar images taken by the Solar and Heliospheric Observatory (SOHO) space probe throughout eight years to better understand these solar phenomena. The investigation delivered exact data regarding both thermal and magnetic properties of coronal holes.

Key findings:

Temperature Structure:

- Coronal holes showed no major temperature differences across different latitudes of the Sun.
- Research indicates that coronal holes establish their presence from inner regions inside the Sun.

Magnetic Field Strength:

- Coronal holes experience an increasing magnetic field with distance from the solar equator throughout their ascent toward the poles.
- Observations show that coronal holes develop when magnetic waves named Alfvén waves create disturbances on top of one another.
- Research data enhances our knowledge of coronal hole development together with their function in generating space weather phenomena.

Why Is This Study Important?

- The investigation of coronal holes properties leads to improved understanding of several key issues.
- Improved forecasting abilities regarding space weather leads to reduced risks for satellites as well as decreased risks of disrupted communications.
- Predictive capabilities of monsoon weather serve critical functions for both agrarian operations and hydrosphere management in India.
- Countries need to establish methods for forecasting geomagnetic storm occurrences.
- Scientific breakthroughs in Indian space programs get strengthened by research activities that contribute to international efforts for space weather monitoring.

Conclusion

- Solar activity depends heavily on coronal holes because they guide crucial interactions that create changes in Earth's climate and affect its surrounding space fields.
- Researchers in India recently investigated coronal holes to reveal new properties about their thermal nature along with their magnetic elements which will aid space weather forecasts and climate prediction methods.

- Ongoing research about coronal holes will support our technologies' protection while improving the accuracy of climate models.

Source: [PIB](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q. Explain the significance of coronal holes in the Sun's atmosphere. How do they influence space weather and Earth's climate? Discuss the findings of recent research on their thermal and magnetic properties.

[2.16] Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan

Syllabus: Governance, [GS Paper - 2]

Context:

- Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan is a grandly held event which is an event to celebrate the glorious cultural and literature of the Marathi language. Language is very important if you are going to ask about the culture of any country.
- It celebrates the tradition and the tradition carries the essence of history and values. Amidst one of India's numerous languages, Marathi deserves a particular Status due to its value as a symbol of Knowledge, Pride and Symbol of Cultural identity.

Importance of Language and Culture

- A real wealth of a country lies in its culture and the language is one of the most important supporting columns for it. India's Constitution, laid out by statesmen of vision, puts great store by preservation of and promotion of our cultural and linguistic heritage.
- Satyameva Jayate slogan and Harappan civilization's seals all evidence this profound rooted cultural pride.
- India's history, from the ancient Gurukul system to the teachings of Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, highlights the importance of truth, justice, and dialogue.
- Great personalities such as the Buddha, Mahavira, and Shivaji Maharaj enriched India's cultural fabric.
- Shivaji Maharaj is famous for his administration and nationalism, he is the one that represents the strongest love for our culture and language.

Role of Maharashtra in Literature

- Maharashtra has given birth to countless people who have touched many areas, mainly literature to a great extent. Marathi literature is the reflection of thoughts, struggles and successes of the people.
- It is not just about words but also it is about the knowledge, wisdom, values and cultural roots passed from age to age.
- Language is not only a means of communication but also more than that. It is an expression of a century.

- During the times when a historical invasion occurred, India then faced huge troubles, including attacks on the culture, languages and religion. But the vitality of Indian languages amongst which is Marathi, kept that cultural flame.

Reviving Marathi in the Modern Times

- With modern era technology changes the way of knowledge sharing. The National Education Policy (NEP) admits the value of mother tongues, implying education in the language children know best.
- This method assures greater academic outcomes and grounds coupled with cultural roots.
- Marathi language is a pot of knowledge as the other regional languages are, say, a professor.
- Government initiatives to promote Marathi through technology and publications and educational programmes will certainly expand its outreach and relevance in the digital world.

Conclusion

- The Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan is not merely a literary meet but it also symbolises the culture, history and identity of the people.
- It also tells us that safeguarding and promoting our languages is vital to safeguard our cultural heritage.

Source: [PIB](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q. Discuss the significance of the Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan in promoting linguistic and cultural heritage in India. How does the preservation of regional languages contribute to national unity and cultural diversity?

[2.17] Digital License for Pilots

Syllabus: Science & Technology, [GS Paper - 3]

Context:

- The Indian civil aviation sector reached a major milestone when the Union Minister for Civil Aviation Mr. Ram Mohan Naidu launched the Electronic Personnel License (EPL) for pilots. The implementation of digital pilot licenses through this initiative positions India as the second country worldwide after receiving authorization from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). An Electronic Personnel License (EPL) represents a digital system that manages pilot authorization.
- The Electronic Personnel License functions digitally as a digital equivalent of physical pilot licenses. The eGCA Mobile Application provides secure access to EPL cards which eliminate the requirement for physical cards during operations. The digital initiative matches the national goals of both the “Digital India” and “Ease of Doing Business” campaigns held by the Government of India.

Key features of EPL include:

- Digital access via the eGCA app.
- Real-time availability of credentials for pilots.
- Enhanced security and tamper-proof licensing.
- Reduction in the need for plastic and paper-based licenses.

Significance and Benefits

The introduction of EPL offers several advantages for pilots, regulatory authorities, and the environment:

- The digital licensing process provides pilots with easy credential management by streamlining licensing operations to allow quicker credential access.
- EPL operates as an authentication system that works as a tamper-resistant system to validate pilot licenses therefore reducing document fraud.
- This initiative promotes environmental sustainability because it decreases the demand for plastic and paper-based licenses.
- EPL enables Indian pilots to gain quick international opportunities since their credentials remain accessible in real-time.
- EPL implementation began after the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) handed out pilot licenses as smart cards. Up to the time of its introduction the smart card license program distributed 62,000 licenses. The printed licenses reached 20,000 in 2024 while the monthly average amounted to 1,667 cards. EPL implementation will lead to the eventual reduction of physical cards which will result in an improved operational procedure.

Impact on India's Aviation Sector

- The aviation sector of India progresses at a fast pace. According to the Civil Aviation Minister India requires approximately 20000 new pilots during the upcoming years.
- This rapid aviation sector growth will receive support from EPL and electronic platforms including eGCA licensing and Digital Sky drone management and Electronic Flight Folder (EFF) air carrier operation, which bring improved efficiency and better transparency.
- Digital aviation solutions leadership by India demonstrates its dedication to modernize civil aviation. India leads the way among international aviation leaders since it implemented these systems before several others.

Conclusion

- The Electronic Personnel License (EPL) introduction represents a pivotal advancement for civil aviation development in India. Security functions alongside transparency and sustainability to streamline the process of licensing alongside providing increased safety.
- India advances the global aviation sector through leading-edge technology thus creating a worldwide standard which simultaneously builds pilot capabilities to navigate upcoming challenges.

Source: [PIB](#)

UPSC Practice Question:

Q. Discuss the significance of the Electronic Personnel License (EPL) initiative launched by the Civil Aviation Ministry in India. How does it contribute to efficiency, security, and sustainability in the aviation sector?

[2.18] Prime Minister Internship Scheme (PMIS) – Round 2

Syllabus: Governance, [GS Paper - 2]

Context:

- The Prime Minister Internship Scheme (PMIS) extends its application period by introducing Round 2 of the pilot phase.
- More than 1 lakh internship positions await qualified candidates in top companies across 730+ Indian districts through the second round of applications which gathered 6 lakh first-round submissions.
- Through this scheme Indian youth gain authentic professional experience together with important connections which lead to better employability.

Key Features of the PMIS

The PMIS provides multiple advantages to youth who want to begin their professional careers.

Wide Range of Opportunities:

- Over 1 lakh internships across various sectors.
- More than 300 top companies participated.
- The internship scheme features multiple sectors such as Oil, Gas & Energy, Banking, Travel, Automotive, FMCG and Manufacturing and many others.

Flexible and Customizable:

- Interns have the freedom to determine which district, state and sector along with specific location meets their preferences.
- Participants may submit applications to a maximum of 3 internships within the deadline period.

Eligibility:

- Youth aged 21 to 24 years.
- Students and employees who do not participate in full-time academic studies make up the eligible candidate group.

Financial Support:

- Monthly stipend of ₹5,000.
- One-time financial assistance of ₹6,000.

Training and Experience:

- The total training period with professional work for each internship requires a minimum duration of 6 months.
- Work placements during internships help interns practice their learnings through direct practice.

Awareness and Outreach

The number of youth participating in PMIS will expand through multiple IEC communications events running across all regions in India. These events are held in:

- **Colleges, universities, ITIs, and Rozgar Melas (Job Fairs).**
- **Digital campaigns through multiple platforms and influencers.**

Through strategic outreach activities there is full visibility of these opportunities for students and job seekers throughout India including multiple regions and demographics.

Significance and Impact

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs through its PMIS leadership platform guides India to maximize the opportunities available to its young people. Its impact includes:

- The educational sessions combined with on-the-job training develop interns into qualified job candidates.
- These internships create opportunities which transition into permanent positions to enhance positive career developments.
- The educational stipends combined with financial support enable young individuals to maintain life essentials during their professional training period.
- The program allows youth from every district to find equal opportunities no matter their residential location between rural areas and cities.

Conclusion

- Through the Prime Minister Internship Scheme (PMIS) young Indians can gain empowerment by developing skills and professional abilities as well as acquiring industrial insights.
- The new Round 2 initiative of the Prime Minister Internship Scheme enables more than 1 lakh young people to learn valuable on-the-job experience at leading organizations while enhancing their employability.
- The three-pronged approach of PMIS equips India with its goal of establishing a qualified self-reliant population of young workers.

Source: [PIB](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q: The Prime Minister Internship Scheme (PMIS) aims to bridge the gap between education and employment by providing skill-based opportunities to youth. Discuss the potential impact of the scheme on youth empowerment, skill development, and employability in India.

[2.19] Decline in Global Sea Ice Cover

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

According to the US National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) the combined sea ice volume in the Arctic and Antarctic has reached a file low of 15.76 million square km in February 2025.

About Sea ice

- Sea ice refers to the free-floating ice in the polar regions. While it generally expands during the winter and melts in the summers, some sea ice remains year-around.
- Sea ice isn't the same as icebergs, glaciers, ice sheets, and ice shelves, which form on land.
- Sea ice plays an important function in cooling the planet by trapping existing heat in the ocean, and for this reason precluding it from warming the air above.

Reasons for the Decline in Global Sea Ice Cover

- **Rising Global Temperatures:** The Arctic and Antarctic areas are warming at an multiplied tempo, with the Arctic experiencing warming 4 cases faster than the global average.
 - Ongoing ocean warming is placing the backdrop for sea ice decline, as hotter waters put off freezing and boost up melting.
 - The ice-albedo feedback effect worsens the state of affairs—as ice melts, darker ocean water absorbs more sun radiation, leading to similarly warming and ice loss.
- **Wind Patterns and Storms:** In the Arctic, storms have damaged apart ice across the Barents Sea (near Norway and Russia) and the Bering Sea (between Alaska and Russia).
 - Antarctic sea ice is surrounded by the ocean in preference to continents, making it more mobile and thinner.

Implications of Low Sea Ice Cover

- **Climate Change:** Less sea ice cowl method that more ocean water is exposed to the Sun, leading to more warmth absorption and a rise in temperatures.
- **Disruption of Ocean Currents:** The inflow of freshwater from melting ice is slowing down the circulation of water in the world's oceans.
- **Rising Sea Levels:** While melting sea ice does no longer at once raise sea tiers, its loss exposes glaciers and ice sheets to warmer waters, dashing up their melting.
- **Disruption of Marine Ecosystems:** The loss of sea ice influences marine food chains, especially species including krill, seals, and polar bears, which rely on ice for survival.

Way Ahead

- Countries should adhere to Paris Agreement goals and paintings near limiting worldwide common temperature to 1.5°C.
- Satellite observations and scientific expeditions need to be improved to better recognize polar ice adjustments.
- International agreements on protecting marine ecosystems and polar biodiversity must be greater.
- Strict rules on commercial activities, fishing, and resource exploitation within the polar regions are wanted.

Conclusion

- The record low international sea ice cover is a stark reminder of the accelerating impacts of climate change.
- Immediate international action is important to mitigate its cascading consequences on climate, ocean currents, ecosystems, and human livelihoods.
- Without pressing intervention, the lack of sea ice may need to push the Earth in the direction of irreversible climate tipping factors.

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Prelims PYQ

1. With reference to 'Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)' sometimes mentioned in the news while forecasting Indian monsoon, which of the following statements is/are correct? (2017)

- 1. The IOD phenomenon is characterized by a difference in sea surface temperature between tropical Western Indian Ocean and tropical Eastern Pacific Ocean.*
- 2. An IOD phenomenon can influence an El Nino's impact on the monsoon.*

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only*
- (b) 2 only*
- (c) Both 1 and 2*
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2*

Ans: (b)

- According to the US National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) the combined sea ice volume in the Arctic and Antarctic has reached a file low of 15.76 million square km in February 2025.
- Sea ice refers to the free-floating ice in the polar regions. While it generally expands during the winter and melts in the summers, some sea ice remains year-around.
- Sea ice isn't the same as icebergs, glaciers, ice sheets, and ice shelves, which form on land.
- Sea ice plays an important function in cooling the planet by trapping existing heat in the ocean, and for this reason precluding it from warming the air above.

[2.20] Peatlands and their ongoing Destruction

Syllabus - Environment [GS Paper-3]

Context

A current study has advised that peatlands are seriously underprotected, and their ongoing destruction should jeopardise climate change goals.

About Peatlands

- Peatlands are precise wetland ecosystems composed of in part decayed organic matter collected over lots of years.
- In cool climates, peatland vegetation is often made of Sphagnum mosses, sedges and shrubs and are the number one builder of peat, whereas in hotter climates graminoids and woody vegetation offer most of the organic matter.

Distribution of Peatlands

- Peatlands occur in both climatic zones and continents and cover 4.23 million km², which corresponds to 2.84% of the Earth's terrestrial surface.
- Countries with the maximum peatlands include Canada, Russia, Indonesia, the United States, Brazil, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, China, Peru, Finland and the Republic of the Congo.
 - The first 5 contain 70 percent of worldwide peatlands.
- Peatlands at the Earth's surface, hold 600 billion tonnes of carbon — surpassing the carbon saved in all the world's wooded area biomass mixed.
 - However, merely 17 percent of peatlands are safeguarded worldwide.
- Specifically, only 11 percent of boreal peatlands are covered, in comparison to 27 percent of temperate and tropical peatlands.

Threats to Peatlands

- **Agriculture and Forestry:** Large-scale commercial agriculture and logging operations drain peatlands, inflicting carbon launch into the environment.
- **Mining:** Peat extraction for fuel and horticulture, in conjunction with infrastructure initiatives, ends in the destruction of peat ecosystems.
- **Climate Change:** Rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns exacerbate peatland degradation, growing the risk of wildfires and carbon release.

Conservation Efforts

- **Role of Indigenous Communities:** Around 27% of worldwide peatlands lie within indigenous territories, in which traditional practices have contributed to their conservation.
 - The Brazzaville Declaration on Peatlands is an agreement followed in 2018 in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo.
 - It aimed at protecting and sustainably managing peatlands inside the Congo Basin, which incorporates the world's biggest tropical peatland complex.
- The **Global Peatlands Initiative (GPI)**, led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), aims to defend and conserve peatlands.
- Ramsar sites, contains roughly a 5th of covered peatlands globally and almost two-fifths of covered peatlands in the tropics.

[2.21] India's Insurance Sector

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

The Economic Survey 2025 projecting the Insurance sector as the fastest-growing amongst G20 countries. However, certain challenges necessitate a comprehensive evaluation of the world.

The Evolution of India's Insurance Sector

- The government has established a Committee chaired by Dinesh Khara to Review the Insurance Sector, aiming to modernize rules, enhance consumer protection, and boost investment.
- The insurance sector in India has developed through diverse insurance reforms and regulatory tendencies.
- **Key milestones:**
 - **1938:** The Insurance Act, 1938, was passed during British India to alter the insurance sector. It offers the felony framework for the functioning of the insurance sector by IRDAI.
 - The act defines sorts of insurance regulations in India: life, popular, and medical health insurance.
 - **1956:** Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) was nationalized.
 - **1972:** General insurance was nationalized.
 - **1999:** The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) was established, opening up the arena to private gamers.
 - **2015:** FDI restriction extended to 49% (later raised to 74% in 2021).
 - **2025 Economic Survey:** Highlights the need for further reforms due to elevated digitalization, rising risks, and international market traits.

Need for Insurance Reforms

- **Low Insurance Penetration & Density:** Insurance penetration declined from 4% in FY23 to 3.7% in FY24, under the global average.
 - Life insurance penetration dropped from 3% to 2.8%, at the same time as non-life insurance remained at 1%.
- **Regulatory Gaps & Need for Simplification:** Fragmented policies across life, non-life, and medical insurance.
 - Need for quicker declare settlements, improved patron criticism redressal, and greater digital protection.
- **Emerging Risks & Cybersecurity Challenges:** Climate change, geopolitical uncertainties, and cyber threats are reshaping risk management.
 - Digital fraud and misselling have emerged as the most important consumer concerns.
- **Boosting Innovation & Investment:** Technological advancements (AI, blockchain, and insurtech) require a regulatory framework that fosters innovation.
 - Foreign investments within the sector need in addition ease of regulations.
- **Expanding Rural & MSME insurance:** Government schemes like PMFBY and Ayushman Bharat have extended insurance, however private sector participation remains restrained.
 - Microinsurance for MSMEs, gig workers, and rural groups needs custom designed guidelines.

Way Ahead

- **Regulatory Modernization:** Streamline IRDAI suggestions for uniformity across sectors.
 - Improve consumer protection legal guidelines for quicker claim settlements.
- **Enhancing Insurance Penetration:** Encourage new insurance merchandise tailor-made for rural regions, MSMEs, and gig workers.
 - Strengthen monetary literacy applications to growth focus.
- **Strengthening Cybersecurity & Digital Oversight:** Establish strong cybersecurity norms for digital insurance.
 - Improve fraud detection and the usage of AI-pushed solutions.
- **Encouraging Insurtech & Innovation:** Simplify compliance for tech-pushed insurance startups.
 - Promote usage-primarily based and AI-driven insurance models.
- **Attracting Investments & Improving Market Competitiveness:** Further liberalization of FDI rules to draw international players.
 - Ensure a level gambling field between public and private insurers.

Conclusion

- The Committee to Review the Insurance Sector marks a vital step in reforming India's insurance landscape. By focusing on regulatory simplification, financial inclusion, digital security, and innovation, India can free up the overall ability of its insurance market and ensure sustainable growth in the coming years.

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Mains PYQ

1. The product diversification of financial institutions and insurance companies, resulting in overlapping of products and services strengthens the case for the merger of the two regulatory agencies, namely SEBI and IRDA. Justify. (2013)

- The Economic Survey 2025 projecting the Insurance sector as the fastest-growing amongst G20 countries. However, certain challenges necessitate a comprehensive evaluation of the world.
- The government has established a Committee chaired by Dinesh Khara to Review the Insurance Sector, aiming to modernize rules, enhance consumer protection, and boost investment.
- The Committee to Review the Insurance Sector marks a vital step in reforming India's insurance landscape.
- By focusing on regulatory simplification, financial inclusion, digital security, and innovation, India can free up the overall ability of its insurance market and ensure sustainable growth in the coming years.

[2.22] NAKSHA Program

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

The Union Minister of Rural Development and Agriculture inaugurated the NAKSHA program in Raisen, Madhya Pradesh.

Digitization of land records

- The digitization of land data is modernizing land ownership control in rural India, addressing challenges like complex office work and ownership disputes.
- **Status:** Nearly 95% of rural land records were digitized since 2016, improving transparency and accessibility.

Benefits of Digitization

- It enhances transparency and reduces illegal encroachments.
- It simplifies dispute resolution and decreases court docket burdens.
- It empowers marginalized groups by improving access to land rights.
- Geospatial mapping integration aids in accurate surveys and land control.

Challenges

- Land reforms face enormous demanding situations because of previous and missing land information across the country, mainly in northeastern states with community-owned land and limited land statistics.
- Many cadastral maps are outdated and a few are missing, inflicting discrepancies in land ownership.

Initiatives

- **Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP):** DILRMP, launched in April 2016, aims to create a latest, obvious land records device with actual-time land records.
 - Fully funded by the valuable government, it targets to reduce land disputes, prevent fraud, and optimize land use.
- **NAKSHA program:** It is anticipated to cost ₹194 crore, completely funded via the Government of India.
 - The program covers 152 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) throughout 26 states and three Union Territories.
 - Survey of India is a Technical partner, chargeable for aerial surveys and orthorectified imagery.
 - Madhya Pradesh State Electronic Development Corporation (MPSEDC) develops the end-to-end web-GIS platform.
 - National Informatics Centre Services Inc. (NICS) provides storage centers.
- **Objective:** Aims to create and update urban land statistics for accurate and dependable documentation of land ownership.
- **SVAMITVA Scheme:** The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) is implementing the Central Sector Scheme SVAMITVA with the goal to offer the 'Record of Rights' to village family owners owning homes in inhabited regions in villages.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- The government's initiative is revolutionizing land governance by way of increasing transparency and accessibility, particularly for marginalized groups.
- This shift towards prepared, green land record management contributes to a more inclusive and equitable society, fostering economic growth and balance.

Source: [The PIB](#)

Mains PYQ

1. Discuss the role of land reforms in agricultural development Identify the factors that were responsible for the success of land reforms in India. (2016)

- The Union Minister of Rural Development and Agriculture inaugurated the NAKSHA program in Raisen, Madhya Pradesh.
- The digitization of land data is modernizing land ownership control in rural India, addressing challenges like complex office work and ownership disputes.
- **Status:** Nearly 95% of rural land records were digitized since 2016, improving transparency and accessibility.

[2.23] Bharat Tex 2025

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

Bharat Tex 2025, India's biggest global textile event, came about in New Delhi, highlighting the country's textile improvements and global trade opportunities.

Key highlights

- Bharat Tex 2025 served as a platform to accelerate the government's "Farm to Fibre, Fabric, Fashion, and Foreign Markets" vision.
- The occasion featured over 5,000 exhibitors and more than 1,20,000 change visitors, from 120+ countries including international CEOs, policymakers, and enterprise leaders, attended the event.

India's Textile Industry

- India is the 6th-biggest exporter of textiles globally, contributing 8.21% to the country's general exports in 2023-24.
- The sector holds a 4.5% share in global trade, with the USA and European Union accounting for 47% of India's textile and garb exports.
- The industry gives direct employment to over 45 million humans.

India's Textile Industry

- **Prime Minister Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM MITRA) Parks Scheme:** 7 mega textile parks with an expected funding of USD 10 Bn are being set up with world magnificence infrastructure, plug and play centers and an included environment.

- **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme** with approved incentives of INR 10,683 crore to promote production of Man-made fibers (MMF) Apparel, MMF Fabrics and Products of Technical Textiles.
- **Samarth:** The scheme is a demand-driven and placement-oriented program to construct Capacity, deal with ability gaps within the fabric fee chain.
- **National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP):** Financial and market aid for handloom weavers.
- **Raw Material Support:** Promotion of cotton, jute, silk, and wool to improve quality and yield.

Challenges Facing India's Textile Industry

- **High Raw Material Costs:** Fluctuating cotton, jute, and artificial fiber charges.
- **Outdated Technology:** Low adoption of automation and current equipment.
- **Global Competition:** Strong opposition from China, Vietnam and Bangladesh.
- **Environmental Regulations:** Compliance with sustainability norms and pollutants control.
- **Skilled Labor Shortage:** Workforce needs upskilling to fulfill industry needs.
- **Supply Chain Issues:** Logistics inefficiencies and export-import bottlenecks.
- **Limited Market Access:** Trade boundaries, excessive tariffs, and FTA obstacles.

Way Ahead

- **Technology Upgradation:** Invest in automation and modern machinery.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Promote eco-friendly production and waste control.
- **Skill Development:** Strengthen workforce schooling through Samarth and different initiatives.
- **Global Market Expansion:** Leverage FTAs and improve export competitiveness.
- **Raw Material Security:** Enhance cotton, jute, silk, and wool production.

Source: [The PIB](#)

Mains PYQ

1. Analyse the factors for highly decentralized cotton textile industry in India. (2013)

- Bharat Tex 2025, India's biggest global textile event, came about in New Delhi, highlighting the country's textile improvements and global trade opportunities.
- Bharat Tex 2025 served as a platform to accelerate the government's "Farm to Fibre, Fabric, Fashion, and Foreign Markets" vision.
- The occasion featured over 5,000 exhibitors and more than 1,20,000 change visitors, from 120+ countries including international CEOs, policymakers, and enterprise leaders, attended the event.

[2.24] India and Qatar Strategic Partnership

Syllabus - International Relations [GS Paper-2]

Context

India and Qatar have signed an agreement to elevate their ties to the level of a strategic partnership.

Key highlights

- Both nations honored the 50 years of establishment of diplomatic relations in 2023.
- Both countries are exploring the option of concluding a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- Two aspects additionally signed a double taxation avoidance treaty and also deliberate on doubling their alternate to \$28 billion within 5 years.
- Both aspects mentioned the Israel-Palestinian struggle in Gaza Strip.
- India currently has strategic partnerships with four different individuals of the Gulf Cooperation Council – the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Kuwait.

Significance of the Visit

- **Arab States Summit:** The go to of the Qatari Emir has drawn attention as it's being held only 2 days previous to the 5 Arab states summit in Riyadh.
 - The summit will take up the new proposals from the USA.
- **US Proposal on Gaza Crisis:** President Trump's proposed that the Palestinians of the area must be shifted out to neighbouring countries like Egypt and Jordan.
- India supports a two-country solution in bringing an end to the Israel-Palestinian disaster and has welcomed the ceasefire that was introduced these days.

Brief on India-Qatar Relations

- **Economic and Trade Relations:** Qatar is the most important company of liquefied herbal gasoline (LNG) and liquefied petroleum fuel (LPG) to India, providing 10.91 million metric tonnes of LNG and 4.92 million metric tonnes of LPG in FY 2023-24.
 - The recent annual trade is worth \$14.08 billion.
- **Defence:** India participates in the biennial Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX).
 - Exercise Zair-Al-Bahr is a joint naval workout among the Indian Navy and the Qatar Emiri Naval Force (QENF).
 - The India-Qatar Defence Cooperation Agreement was signed in 2008 and extended for 5 years in 2018.
 - The agreement is managed through the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC).
 - Labor and Diaspora: India has a massive expatriate network in Qatar, numbering over 700,000.
 - The Indian diaspora in Qatar plays a critical position in the country's development, specifically in construction and other sectors.
- **Regional Cooperation:** Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern nations—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. It was established in 1981.
 - India engages often with GCC and ambitions to deepen its relations with the GCC.

Challenges/Concerns

- The Hamas–Israel warfare and transport attacks in the Red Sea have an effect on India's energy security and monetary increase.
- India remains careful in Middle Eastern politics, balancing relations with the Gulf, Iran, and Israel.
- If the conflict escalates, this balancing act ought to turn out to be more difficult.
- **Delay in Connectivity Projects:** The war has behind schedule a senior-officers meeting for the I2U2 institution considering the fact that 2023.
 - India urges monetary initiatives like I2U2 and IMEC to progress in spite of the war.
- **FTAs with GCC:** Delays in finalizing the India–GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA) due to adjustments in the GCC's trade negotiator.
 - Reaching an agreement that satisfies all GCC states remains a key undertaking.

Way Forward

- Growing safety challenges are growing the want for India to be a key strategic partner of Gulf states.
- India aims to make its regional presence and impact.
- Stronger alignment in political, economic, and protection hobbies is shaping a new framework for India-Gulf relations.
- If maintained, this framework will improve trust and permit more ambitious cooperation.

Source: [*The Indian Express*](#)

Mains PYQ

1. The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyse India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian countries. (2017)

- India and Qatar have signed an agreement to elevate their ties to the level of a strategic partnership.
- Both nations honored the 50 years of establishment of diplomatic relations in 2023.
- Both countries are exploring the option of concluding a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- Two aspects additionally signed a double taxation avoidance treaty and also deliberate on doubling their alternate to \$28 billion within 5 years.
- Both aspects mentioned the Israel-Palestinian struggle in Gaza Strip.
- India currently has strategic partnerships with four different individuals of the Gulf Cooperation Council – the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Kuwait.

[2.25] I&B Ministry Advisory regarding ‘Obscene Content’

Syllabus - Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Information & Broadcasting Ministry issued an advisory following proceedings concerning the spread of “obscene, pornographic, or vulgar content” on OTT structures and social media.

Key Highlights

- Over-the-Top (OTT) refers to media services that provide access to movies, tv shows, and other video content material without delay over the net, bypassing traditional cable, satellite, or broadcast television companies.
- The Information & Broadcasting Ministry has directed OTT structures to follow the Code of Ethics under the IT Rules, 2021, such as strict adherence to age-based categories.
- The advisory referenced the Indecent Representation of Women Act, 1986, Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS), 2023, POCSO Act, and the IT Act, 2000, noting that publishing obscene or pornographic content is punishable under these laws.
- Under the IT Rules, 2021, a three-level grievance redressal mechanism governs OTT structures and digital news publishers:
 - **Level-I: Self-Regulation by Publishers**
 - Platforms employ a Grievance Officer to solve complaints in 15 days.
 - Ensure compliance with the Code of Ethics and content material type.
 - **Level-II: Self-Regulation by Self-Regulatory Bodies (SRBs)**
 - SRBs oversee writer choices, take care of appeals, and ensure ethical compliance.
 - Must be registered with the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB).
 - **Level-III: Oversight through Ministry of Broadcasting**
 - The Ministry can issue advisories, warnings, or take motion for non-compliance.
 - A Grievance Appellate Committee (GAC) may also assess unresolved proceedings.

Challenges in OTT Regulation

- **Balancing Freedom & Regulation:** Excessive guidelines may result in self-censorship, affecting creativity.
 - Article 19 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of speech but lets in regulations for decency and morality.
- **Subjectivity in Grievance Redressal:** Varying interpretations of offensive content can also cause inconsistent rulings.
- **Jurisdiction Issues:** Global platforms face challenges in adapting to Indian legal guidelines.
- **Censorship Concerns:** There is a growing fear of presidency overreach, ambiguity in content regulations and political bias in content material moderation on OTT structures.
- **AI Moderation Challenges:** Automated moderation can also misinterpret cultural nuances, inflicting unjustified takedowns.

Laws Governing Obscenity in Online Content

- **Section 294 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023:** It Penalizes the sale, import, export, commercial, or make the most of obscene material, which includes electronic content material.

- The material should be lascivious or excessively sexual.
- **Section 67 of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000:** It penalizes the publication or transmission of obscene material in electronic form, with a more stringent punishment (up to 3 years imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs.5 lakh for first-time offenders).
- **Indecent Representation of Women Act, 1986:** Restricts content that portrays women indecently.
- **IT Rules, 2021:** the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, include:
 - Code of Ethics for OTT systems, Provisions for age-based category and access control mechanisms for “A” rated content material to prevent child access,
 - Platforms need to not transmit unlawful content and must exercise warning and restraint.
- **POCSO Act:** Protects children from sexual content material and exploitation.

Supreme Court’s Observations

- **Ranjit D. Udeshi v. State of Maharashtra (1964):** The Supreme Court implemented the Hicklin Test, defining obscenity as material that corrupts and depraves inclined thoughts, including children and people with impure thoughts.
- **Aveek Sarkar v. State of West Bengal (2014):** The SC adopted the “community requirements” check, quashing lawsuits in opposition to magazines for a nude picture of Boris Becker.
- In March 2024, the Supreme Court quashed obscenity lawsuits in opposition to the makers of College Romance, ruling that profanity by itself no longer amounted to obscenity.
- The judgment reinforced that for content material to be deemed obscene, it have to actively arouse sexual thoughts.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Mains PYQ

1. Examine the scope of Fundamental Rights in the light of the latest judgement of the Supreme Court on Right to Privacy. (2017)

- The Information & Broadcasting Ministry issued an advisory following proceedings concerning the spread of “obscene, pornographic, or vulgar content” on OTT structures and social media.
- Over-the-Top (OTT) refers to media services that provide access to movies, tv shows, and other video content material without delay over the net, bypassing traditional cable, satellite, or broadcast television companies.
- The Information & Broadcasting Ministry has directed OTT structures to follow the Code of Ethics under the IT Rules, 2021, such as strict adherence to age-based categories.
- The advisory referenced the Indecent Representation of Women Act, 1986, Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS), 2023, POCSO Act, and the IT Act, 2000, noting that publishing obscene or pornographic content is punishable under these laws.

[2.26] Restrictions on New India Co-operative Bank

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

The RBI's regulations on New India Co-operative Bank highlight ongoing vulnerabilities in the urban cooperative banking sector.

The Evolution of India's Insurance Sector

- Cooperative Banks discuss with the banks under the Banking System in India that perform on the ideas of cooperation and mutual advantage for his or her participants.
- They belong to their contributors who are both the proprietors and customers of the bank.
- They function on the precept of "one man or woman, one vote" in decision-making. Along with lending, these banks also take delivery of deposits.

Regulation of Cooperative Banks in India

- These banks in India, widely, come underneath the dual manage of:
- **Reserve Bank of India:** Under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, and the Banking Laws (Application to Co-operative Societies) Act, 1965, the RBI is answerable for regulating banking factors of those banks, together with capital adequacy, chance manage, and lending norms.
- **Registrar of Co-operative Societies (RCS) of respective State or Central Government:** They are liable for regulation of management-related components of those banks, along with incorporation, registration, management, audit, supersession of board of administrators, and liquidation.

Structure of Cooperative Banks in India

- These banks, under the Banking System in India, are normally categorised into – Rural Cooperative Banks (RCBS), and Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBS).

Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs)

- They function in urban and semi-urban regions and in particular lend to small borrowers and groups.
- Based on their law regime, they may be categorized into two types– Scheduled Banks and Non-Scheduled Banks.
- **Issues in Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs)**
 - Cooperative Banks are dealing with economic vulnerabilities along with low capitalization, excessive stages of NPAs, and coffee Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR).
 - A massive number of huge Cooperative banks have failed due to financial scams. Ex- Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) bank, Guru Raghavendra Cooperative Bank and Maharashtra State Cooperative (MSC) Bank have failed because of economic frauds.
- **Reasons for Recurring Issues within the UCBs**
 - **Regulatory Arbitrage:** Cooperative banks escape stringent RBI scrutiny in comparison to commercial banks.
 - **Political Interference:** Many cooperative banks are stimulated by local politicians, leading to poor governance.
 - **Limited Technological Adoption:** Many UCBs lack robust digital infrastructure, making them vulnerable to operational inefficiencies and fraud.

- **Weak Risk Management Practices:** Inadequate inner controls result in unchecked lending, growing bad loans.

Measures to Strengthen the Cooperative Banking Sector

- **Capital Adequacy Norms:** Cooperative banks need to preserve higher capital buffers to withstand financial shocks.
- **Technology Upgradation:** Adoption of digital banking, fraud detection mechanisms, and progressed cyber safety features.
- **Consolidation of Weak Banks:** Merging smaller, financially weak cooperative banks with larger, solid ones will decorate their resilience.
- **Governance Framework:** Stricter norms for board composition, qualifications of directors, and independent audits need to be enforced.

Source: [The ET](#)

Prelims PYQ

1. With reference to 'Urban Cooperative Banks' in India, consider the following statements:
 1. They are supervised and regulated by local boards set up by the State Governments.
 2. They can issue equity shares and preference shares.
 3. They were brought under the purview of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 through an Amendment in 1966.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

- The RBI's regulations on New India Co-operative Bank highlight ongoing vulnerabilities in the urban cooperative banking sector.
- These banks in India, widely, come underneath the dual manage of:
- **Reserve Bank of India:** Under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, and the Banking Laws (Application to Co-operative Societies) Act, 1965, the RBI is answerable for regulating banking factors of those banks, together with capital adequacy, chance manage, and lending norms.
- **Registrar of Co-operative Societies (RCS) of respective State or Central Government:** They are liable for regulation of management-related components of those banks, along with incorporation, registration, management, audit, supersession of board of administrators, and liquidation.

[2.27] SC stays Lokpal Order on HC Judges

Syllabus - Polity and Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Supreme Court stayed a Lokpal order bringing High Court judges under its jurisdiction terming the translation “very disturbing”.

About

- **Suo Motu Cognisance:** Supreme Court’s Special Bench took suo motu cognisance of the Lokpal’s current order, which impacted judicial independence.
 - Lokpal’s order declared High Court judges as ‘public servants’ under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act of 2013, allowing its jurisdiction over them.
- **Lokpal’s Argument:** Lokpal’s argument stemmed from High Courts being established by pre-constitutional British Acts, while the Supreme Court was shaped by the Constitution.
- **Exclusion of Supreme Court Judges:** Earlier, on January 3, Lokpal had ruled that it had no authority over Supreme Court judges.
- **Lokpal’s Jurisdiction:** The Lokpal primarily based its selection on Section 14(1) of the 2013 Act, which incorporates judges of High Courts created with the aid of Acts of Parliament.
- **Supreme Court’s Stance:** The Court emphasized that all judges are appointed under the Constitution, underscoring judicial independence.

Lokpal and Lokayuktas

- The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 came into force in 2014.
- **Purpose:** Establish Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayuktas in states for investigating corruption in public servants.
- **Concept:** The concept was stimulated by the Scandinavian Countries Ombudsman system.
 - The first Lokayukta was constituted in Maharashtra in 1971.
- **Appointment Process:** Members of Lokpal (and Lokayuktas) appointed by the President (Governor), based on suggestions from a Selection Committee.
- **Selection Committee:** Includes the PM (CM), Speaker of the Lower House, Leaders of Opposition, CJI (or a nominated judge), and an eminent jurist nominated by the President.
- **Composition of Lokpal:** One Chairperson (CJI/former SC judge/qualified non-judicial member), with up to eight contributors.
 - 50% judicial participants, and the non-judicial individuals need 25 years’ experience in relevant fields.
- **Removal of Members:** Members may be removed by using the President after an inquiry by using the Supreme Court, which may be initiated based at the President’s reference, a citizen’s petition, or a petition signed with the aid of 100 MPs.
- **Jurisdiction of Lokpal:** Can inquire into offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, dedicated by the PM (with safeguards), Union Ministers, MPs, officers (Group A-D), and positive personal entities.
- **PM’s Inquiry:** Inquiry against the PM should be in-digicam, accepted by a 2/three majority of the Lokpal, and can not contain positive sensitive areas like countrywide security.
 - The PM cannot be investigated associated with global relations, outside and inner safety, public order, atomic energy and technology.
- **Inquiry and Investigation:** Lokpal’s inquiry wing needs to act in 60 days, and investigations to be finished within 6 months.

- **Jurisdiction of Lokayuktas:** Covers the CM, Ministers, MLAs, state government employees, and positive personal entities (inclusive of non secular establishments).
- **Penalties:** Penalizes fake complaints with imprisonment up to at least one year and a high-quality of as much as ₹1 lakh.
 - Increases consequences for public servants committing corruption (from 5 to 7 years) and criminal misconduct (from 7 to 10 years).

Challenges

- **Limited Jurisdiction:** The jurisdiction is often limited to certain classes of public servants or precise areas of governance, which limit their ability to address all varieties of corruption comprehensively.
- **Lack of Independence:** They regularly face political interference or pressure from the authorities, which hinder their autonomy.
- **Whistleblower Protection:** Whistleblowers and complainants who record corruption may face threats, harassment, or retaliation, which discourages them from coming forward with information.
- **Political Will:** Ultimately, the effectiveness depends on the political will of the authorities to combat corruption and strengthen duty mechanisms.

Way Ahead

- Over the years, there were demands strengthening Lokpal and Lokayukts and expanding their jurisdiction to cover more public officials and institutions.
- By enforcing the required measures, India can notably enhance the effectiveness and credibility of Lokpal and Lokayuktas in combating corruption and selling desirable governance.

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Mains PYQ

1. 'A national Lokpal, however strong it may be, cannot resolve the problems of immorality in public affairs.' Discuss (2013)

- The Supreme Court stayed a Lokpal order bringing High Court judges under its jurisdiction terming the translation “very disturbing”.
- **Suo Motu Cognisance:** Supreme Court’s Special Bench took suo motu cognisance of the Lokpal’s current order, which impacted judicial independence.
- **Lokpal’s Argument:** Lokpal’s argument stemmed from High Courts being established by pre-constitutional British Acts, while the Supreme Court was shaped by the Constitution.
- **Exclusion of Supreme Court Judges:** Earlier, on January 3, Lokpal had ruled that it had no authority over Supreme Court judges.
- **Lokpal’s Jurisdiction:** The Lokpal primarily based its selection on Section 14(1) of the 2013 Act, which incorporates judges of High Courts created with the aid of Acts of Parliament.
- **Supreme Court’s Stance:** The Court emphasized that all judges are appointed under the Constitution, underscoring judicial independence.

[2.28] India-China Relations: A Complicated but Changing Relationship

Syllabus: International Relations, [GS Paper - 2]

Context:

- From ancient times until now India and China maintained a turbulent relationship through the mutual forces of friendship and warfare.
- Their relationship dates thousands of years into the past because they exchanged cultural artifacts and conducted trade activities during ancient times.
- Since modern times their diplomatic bond has transformed through various disagreements including border problems together with peace preservation initiatives.

Historical Background

- The territorial boundary between India and China serves as the principal reason for conflict between these two nations. During 1962 both countries engaged in a brief intense battle that allowed China to seize control of the Aksai Chin territory.
- The clash between the two nations brought an end to their diplomatic bonds until India and China restored full relations in 1976 after seven years without dialogue.

Renewed Relations in the 1980s

- During the 1980s India and China showed commitment to renew their diplomatic relationship. The two countries started to conduct regular diplomatic conversations together with increased commercial exchanges.
- A pivotal step forward occurred during 1993 when India along with China established the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Through this agreement both forces managed to minimize border conflicts and start working toward economic development and cultural initiatives.

The 21st Century: Friendship and Rivalry

- From the start of the 21st century onwards India and China managed to build a relationship of bilateral trade alongside continuing strategic competition in various domains.
- The economic connection between India and China expanded rapidly from an initial value of \$2 billion in 2000 to exceed \$90 billion in 2020. Both nations participated in international cooperative groups including BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).
- However, competition also increased. The Belt and Road Initiative launched by China and the Act East policy implemented by India generated fresh areas of competition because each nation sought to increase their geographical influence across Asia as well as elsewhere. Diplomatic conflicts together with border disputes sometimes resulted from this competitive situation.

Recent Developments: The Galwan Valley Clash

- The Galwan Valley saw a decisive event in June 2020 after troops from India and China fought each other. During the violent encounter amid the Galwan Valley interests 20 Indian soldiers lost their lives and the number of Chinese troops involved remains unknown. The violent confrontation resulted in deteriorated diplomatic ties because India and China accused one another of instigating the confrontation.

- India and China conducted several diplomatic meetings together with military talks to minimize border tensions after their military encounter. The border situation remains dangerous despite minor diplomatic advances because both India and China maintain continuous military surveillance. The border skirmish prompted Indian authorities to minimize their economic relations with China through new steps controlling their import of Chinese goods alongside investments.

Conclusion

- The relationship between India and China exists in a state of difficulty because of the combination of mutually beneficial collaboration along with ongoing disagreements.
- The improved relationship through diplomatic and trade collaboration experiences obstacles from historical conflicts as well as border conflicts and competition between the two nations for regional power.
- Both nations will need to preserve peace by using dialogue backed with mutual respect to determine how their relationship will evolve. The protection of peace and stability in the region depends on India and China directing their energy toward diplomacy together with cooperative aspects.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Mains Question:

Q. Discuss the historical, economic, and strategic factors that shape India-China relationship. How can both countries work towards a stable and peaceful future?

[2.29] Remission Without Application: Supreme Court Verdict

Syllabus: Polity & Governance, [GS Paper - 2]

Context:

- Important Judgment On Remission Of Sentence, Prisoners Can Get Remission Without Applying This ruling enhances prisoners' rights and enhances the fairness of the criminal justice system.

Background of the Case

- This one was about an inmate who had been convicted to a 20 year sentence finally serving only 14. He was entitled to remission, that is a reduction of his sentence under the law.
- However, the officials did not entertain his case saying he had not filed it. This was how the issue was brought to the Supreme Court.

Supreme Court's Judgment

- The Supreme Court has declared that prisoners do not have to apply for remission. It was made plain by the court that remission is a legal right granted by statute, not a charitable act. If a prisoner meets the requirements of remission, the authorities must have to consider their application.

- Court added that it was mandatory at the side of prison authorities to verify cases of able prisoners and tame remission meritably and transparently. The ability to excuse remission comes with authorities, and also they must liberally make use of.

Impact of the Judgment

This ruling will introduce one or two positive reform in the treatment of prisoners and operation of the criminal justice system:

- **Easier Remission Process:** Prisoners will in future no longer have to beg for remission. Once qualified, their cases will be looked at automatically.
- **Fair and Transparent System:** The judgement minimises the risk of misuse. Dismissal of eligible prisoners for not applying for remission cannot be condoned by the authorities.
- **Protecting Prisoners' Rights:** This decision guarantees that prisoners have their rights protected by law and are not deprived because of bureaucratic obstacles.
- **Encouraging Rehabilitation:** By streamlining remission the judgment rights prisoners to enter society sooner, all of which helps with rehabilitation and reintegration.

Conclusion

- The Supreme Court's ruling to allow remission without an application is a great step towards the delivery of justice and bringing about fairness in cases of prisoners.
- It streamlines the proceedings, protects the rights of prisoners and offers assistance to rehabilitation.
- This landmark ruling is anticipated to make a significant difference to the lives of many of those in prison and will improve the criminal justice at large in India.

Source: [IE](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q. The Supreme Court's judgment allowing remission without application is a significant step towards ensuring prisoners' rights and improving the criminal justice system. Discuss the implications of this judgment for prison reforms in India.

[2.30] Koraput's Changing Tribal Food Basket

Syllabus: Art & Culture, [GS Paper - 1]

Context:

- Cultural history alongside traditional way of life distinguishes Koraput district in Odisha as one of significant importance in the region.
- Tribes in this area satisfied their food requirements for long periods by consuming forest food items and local millet crops and local farm produce.
- Traditional food cultivation methods underwent changes because forest destruction combined with modern agricultural methods and growing urbanization.

Traditional Food Basket

- Prior to the modern era the people of Koraput used to eat a diverse collection of safe local food items that included foods from both jungle sources and cultivated lands.
- The Tribal people obtained edible plants from the woodland area which included fruits with leaves and tubers and additional edible plants that grew nearby. The tribal members depended on this specific food group to satisfy nearly all their nutritional demands.
- The primary diet of the population consisted mainly of three traditional grains including ragi with kutki and sanwa. The local environmental conditions created perfect conditions for these nutritious foods to be eaten.
- For long generations the tribals maintained traditional farming practices that involved the cultivation of paddy mixed with maize and pulses through natural agricultural methods.

Changes in the Food Basket

- Above events since then have brought total changes to the traditional food consumption practices throughout Koraput district.
- Mutual habitation of wildlife among human populations became challenging because deforestation reduced forest availability. Substantial reduction has occurred in the traditional ability of tribals to obtain forest products.
- Tribals changed their diet patterns to urban food items when they started buying packaged food from urban centers that emerged during the urban development process.
- The government and commercial businesses spearheaded agricultural programs that increased yields of paddy and maize without considering millets production.

Impact on Tribal Communities

Tribal social systems and economic situations experienced these distinct outcomes because of the changes:

- Increasing population age equals greater loss in beneficial practical knowledge about traditional crops and forest foods because traditional farming techniques disappear.
- Modern food adoption has led to diet deficiencies which especially harm both children and elderly residents who used to consume a wider range of foods.
- The dwindling supply of traditional food leads tribals to encounter rising levels of food scarcity and hunger-related poverty.

The Way Forward

The solution demands two parallel methods which focus on sustainable practice improvement and tribal community cooperation.

- Such programs must promote both traditional millet cultivation while offering seed distribution together with educational programs and financial aid.
- When forest resources stay sustainable tribals can continue obtaining their wild food sources to maintain their traditional way of living.
- Tribal farmers require better market access while receiving both financial aid and governmental assistance for their traditional farming operations.

Conclusion

- Complex food security problems affect Indian indigenous communities nationwide as Koraput's tribal food preference patterns change.
- Modernization brought positive developments while causing tribal communities to desert their old farming techniques while pushing their nutrition levels toward decline.
- An integrated effort between sustainable farming practices and forest conservation with tribal farming development initiatives will help Koraput bring back its diverse food traditions while advancing community health outcomes for all residents.

Source: [*The Hindu*](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q. Discuss the socio-economic and nutritional implications of this change and suggest measures to promote sustainable food systems among tribal populations.
