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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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[1.1] Registration Bill 2025: Compliance Concerns

Syllabus: Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Indian government's proposed Registration Bill, 2025, aims to modernize and digitize the country's property registration system by replacing the archaic Registration Act of 1908. While the bill promises to bring transparency, efficiency, and citizen-centricity to the registration process, concerns persist regarding the potential burden of compliance for ordinary citizens. Despite its digital-first approach, several provisions may inadvertently complicate rather than simplify the process for many stakeholders.

The Promise of Digital Transformation

- **Online Registration and Digital Records:** The Registration Bill, 2025, introduces a fully digital registration process. Citizens can submit, admit, and receive certificates for property documents entirely online. The bill mandates the issuance of electronic registration certificates and maintains digital archives, promising to eliminate long queues at sub-registrar offices and reduce reliance on intermediaries.
- **Expanded Scope of Compulsory Registration:** Unlike the 1908 Act, which required registration for a limited set of transactions (such as sale deeds, gift deeds, and leases exceeding one year), the new bill expands the list of compulsorily registrable documents. This includes agreements to sell, powers of attorney, sale certificates issued by authorities, equitable mortgages, and documents related to company mergers, demergers, or restructurings under the Companies Act, 2013.
- **Digital Identity Verification:** The bill promotes Aadhaar-based authentication but allows alternative verification methods for those without Aadhaar. This is intended to ensure inclusivity while enhancing the security and evidentiary value of registered documents.

The Reality of Compliance Burdens

- **Increased Documentation Requirements:** While the bill's intention is to curb fraud and enhance legal enforceability, the expanded list of compulsorily registrable documents means that more transactions will require formal registration. This could increase the administrative burden on individuals and businesses, especially those unfamiliar with digital processes or lacking access to reliable internet infrastructure.

- **Ambiguity in Optional Registration:** The bill provides for simplified optional registration for documents not covered by the expanded compulsory list. However, it fails to specify which documents fall under this category, leaving it open to wide interpretation. This ambiguity may lead to confusion and inconsistent implementation, further complicating compliance for citizens.
- **Digital Divide and Accessibility Challenges:** Although the bill allows for both online and offline registration, the digital-first approach may disadvantage citizens in rural or remote areas, where digital literacy and internet connectivity are limited. The requirement for electronic signatures, biometric thumbprints, and digital submission of documents may create barriers for those without access to necessary technology or support.
- **Integration with Multiple Databases:** The bill envisions seamless integration with land records and corporate registries for real-time verification. While this is a laudable goal, the practical implementation of such integration remains a challenge. Discrepancies in existing records, lack of standardization across states, and technical glitches could increase the compliance burden and delay transactions.

Administrative and Procedural Concerns

- **Modernized Organizational Structure:** The bill proposes a more agile and responsive administrative hierarchy, including the introduction of additional and assistant inspectors general of registration. It also streamlines appointment processes for registrars and delegates rule-making authority to state governments. While these changes aim to improve efficiency, they could also lead to a more complex regulatory environment if not implemented uniformly across states.
- **Clear Grounds for Refusal and Appeal Mechanisms:** The bill outlines clear grounds for refusal of registration and provides for appeal mechanisms and judicial recourse. While this is intended to protect citizens from arbitrary decisions, it also means that applicants must be more vigilant about meeting all requirements, increasing the risk of inadvertent non-compliance and subsequent legal disputes.
- **Fraud Prevention and Legal Safeguards:** The bill introduces digital signatures, biometric thumbprints, photographs, and mandatory PAN submission to enhance security. While these measures are designed to prevent fraud, they also add layers of procedural complexity. Physical appearances may still be required in cases of suspected fraud or public interest, which could negate some of the benefits of online registration for affected individuals.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Feedback

- **Ongoing Public Consultation:** The bill is currently in the pre-legislative consultation phase, with public feedback invited until June 25, 2025. Stakeholders, including legal experts, industry representatives, and ordinary citizens, have raised concerns about the potential compliance burden and the need for clearer guidelines and support mechanisms.
- **Need for Capacity Building and Awareness:** To ensure that the benefits of the new bill are realized, the government must invest in capacity building and awareness campaigns. This includes training for registration officials, support for citizens in navigating digital processes, and robust grievance redressal mechanisms to address challenges as they arise.

Source: BL

[1.2] Global Challenges and the Indian Economy

Syllabus : Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

The Indian economy has demonstrated remarkable resilience amid global uncertainties, consistently maintaining robust growth rates and outperforming most major economies in recent years. However, as the global landscape becomes increasingly volatile—marked by trade wars, geopolitical tensions, and supply chain disruptions—India faces the dual challenge of sustaining its growth momentum while navigating new risks. This calls for a strategic recalibration by both policymakers and industry leaders.

Global Challenges and Their Impact on India

Trade Wars and Geopolitical Tensions

- **Trade Wars:** The escalation of trade barriers, particularly between the US and China, has created uncertain tariff regimes. For Indian exporters, deciding on issue trading is difficult because of the bubbly nature of U.S. trade policies and uncertainty about future shifts.
- **Geopolitical Tensions:** Involvement in military conflict, along with strategic rivalries, negatively impacts trade and puts supplies at risk by increasing commodity prices. Increases in commodity prices are flaring an already volatile financial outlook. As a major importer of energy and intermediate goods India will ultimately change the measured costs despite its risks being high on international disruption.

Supply Chain Disruption

- **Legacy of pandemic:** The global pandemic, mainly COVID-19, has appreciably disrupted supply chains. While India has predominantly much of its activity returned, there remains a chance, should a determined breakdown occur, that some form of global disruption could recur.
- **Logistical bottlenecks:** The costs associated with shipping disruptions, large congestion at ports, revealed through the red sea crisis, and geopolitical blockades are resolved to only tariffs on costs of logistics and timely delivery on imports and exports.

Cost Inflation

- **Pressure on input costs:** The issues primarily associate cost with significant increases in prices of identified supplies within India such as energy, metals basically commodities for manufacturers, and agriculture that subsequently inflate the costs of manufacturing.
- **Inflation pressure:** India has against many nations experienced substantial falling retail inflation (CPI is now at 3.2 in April 2025). However, there are identified areas of food inflation directly stimulating household budgets from food which has provoked concerns for factory margins, in particular edible oils and fruit in general.

Domestic Resilience and Economic Fundamentals

Strong Growth Trajectory

- **GDP Growth:** India's real GDP grew by 7.4% in Q4 FY25, with full-year growth at 6.5%, surpassing expectations. Growth is projected at 6.2% for FY26.
- Sectoral Drivers: Services and construction sectors have been key growth drivers, with construction activity growing by 10.8% in Q4 FY25. Manufacturing is also showing improvement, though private consumption has moderated.

Macroeconomic Stability

- **Fiscal Management:** The central government maintained the fiscal deficit at 4.8% of GDP in FY25, aided by strong corporate tax revenues and disciplined spending. Capital expenditure exceeded expectations at ₹10.5 trillion.
- **Investment Momentum:** Investment activity improved sharply in Q4 FY25, led by private sector announcements and government project completions, especially in manufacturing and electricity.

Industry's Need to Re-strategise

Dealing with Rising Costs

- **Cost Management:** Industries will need to use lean manufacturing, energy efficiency, and digital solutions to maintain their margins in the presence of rising input costs.
- **Supply Chain Localisation:** Industries that remove reliance on a global supply chain, instead finding local suppliers and building domestic capabilities will gain resilience.

Getting Past Disrupted Supply Networks

- **Diversification:** Companies must diversify their supply chain, and invest in logistics and infrastructure, so they do not put themselves at risk from a single-source supplier disruption.
- **Digitalisation:** By using technology, companies can do inventory management, real time tracking and predictive analytics to help predict disruptions and manage them.

Addressing Asymmetric Information

- **Transparency and sharing data:** The sector and government can work together to better align points of information, which will allow for better decision making.
- **Policy Clarity:** Stable and predictable policy frameworks are essential to reduce uncertainty and encourage investment.

Policy Imperatives for Sustainable Growth

Reform Agenda

- **Long-Term Reforms:** Structural reforms are prioritized to attract investment and boost manufacturing, particularly in land, labor and capital.
- **Deregulation and Ease of Doing Business:** Streamlining regulations and promoting a business-friendly culture is essential for continued investment, growth and innovation.

Investment in Human Capital

- **Skill Development:** Upskilling the labor force to meet the requirements of a digital and green economy is critical.
- **Job Creation:** Addressing the stagnation of job growth and stagnant wages is critical to promote inclusive growth and domestic demand.

Climate and Fiscal Prudence

- **Green Transition:** Investment in renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure will allow India to achieve its climate ambitions and minimize its dependency on fossil fuels.
- **Debt Discipline:** Exercising debt discipline and prudent debt management will maintain macroeconomic stability and ensure investor confidence.

Conclusion

India's economic resilience and strong fundamentals provide a solid foundation for navigating global turbulence. However, to sustain high growth and achieve its ambition of becoming a developed nation by 2047, India must address structural challenges, re-strategise industry operations, and implement bold reforms. Policymakers and industry leaders must work in tandem to build a more resilient, innovative, and inclusive economy, capable of withstanding global shocks and seizing new opportunities.

Source: The Hindu

[1.3] Falling Inflation Amid Rising Unemployment

Syllabus: Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

In May 2025, India witnessed a significant fall in inflation to 2.8%, yet unemployment rose to 5.8%, highlighting a complex economic scenario where price stability coexists with a weakening job market. This paradox raises critical questions about the interplay between inflation and unemployment and the broader implications for economic policy.

Recent Economic Trends in Inflation and Unemployment

- **Inflation Decline:** The sharp decline in inflation, especially food inflation which dropped from nearly 11% in October 2024 to less than 1% in May 2025, was primarily driven by faster agricultural growth. Increased food production narrowed the supply-demand gap, easing price pressures and pulling down the overall Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- **Rising Unemployment:** Contrasting the inflation trend, unemployment rose from 5.1% in April to 5.8% in May 2025. This increase was largely due to a post-harvest seasonal slowdown in agriculture, which caused a fall in agricultural jobs from 45.9% to 43.5% of the workforce. The rise in unemployment was especially

pronounced among youth (urban youth unemployment at 17.9% and rural youth at 13.7%) and women, whose labour force participation rate dropped from 28.8% to 27.8%.

Understanding the Inflation-Unemployment Relationship

- **Phillips Curve Context:** Traditionally, the Phillips Curve suggests an inverse relationship between inflation and unemployment—lower unemployment tends to push inflation up, and vice versa. However, the current scenario challenges this notion as inflation falls while unemployment rises.
- **Demand-Side Explanation:** The rise in unemployment typically signals a fall in aggregate demand (AD) and economic growth. Lower demand reduces wage pressures because unemployed workers weaken the bargaining power of labour unions, leading to muted wage inflation. Firms also face higher spare capacity, increasing price competition and further lowering inflation.
- **Cost-Push Inflation Complexity:** Sometimes inflation and unemployment can rise together due to cost-push factors like oil price shocks. However, in India's current case, the fall in inflation alongside rising unemployment suggests demand-side factors dominate.

Why Inflation Fell Despite Rising Unemployment

- **Agricultural Growth:** The faster growth in agriculture increased food supply, which is a major component of CPI, thus driving down inflation despite weak demand in other sectors.
- **RBI's Monetary Policy:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) did not raise repo rates since June 2022, yet inflation fell sharply. This indicates that inflation dynamics were influenced more by supply-side factors than monetary tightening. The RBI's inflation control strategy appears reactive rather than proactive, with inflation expectations remaining high despite actual inflation falling.

Implications of Rising Unemployment Amid Low Inflation

- **Economic Growth Slowdown:** GDP growth slowed from 9.2% in 2023-24 to 6.5% in 2024-25, reflecting a broader economic slowdown that impacts employment generation.
- **Sectoral Shifts and Labour Market Challenges:** The post-harvest decline in agricultural employment and insufficient absorption of labour into manufacturing and services sectors contribute to rising unemployment, especially among vulnerable groups like youth and women.
- **Labour Force Participation:** The drop in female labour participation indicates persistent structural issues in the labour market, exacerbated by seasonal and economic factors.

Policy Considerations and Way Forward

- **Balanced Focus Beyond Inflation:** Focusing solely on inflation control can mask deeper economic problems such as joblessness, which directly affects livelihoods and social stability.

- **Monetary and Fiscal Coordination:** Monetary policy needs to be complemented by fiscal measures that stimulate demand and create jobs, especially in non-agricultural sectors.
- **Structural Reforms:** Enhancing skill development, promoting labour-intensive industries, and improving labour market flexibility are essential to absorb the growing workforce.
- **Monitoring Inflation Expectations:** Persistent high inflation expectations despite falling inflation suggest the need for credible communication and policy frameworks to anchor expectations and support economic stability.

Conclusion

The simultaneous fall in inflation and rise in unemployment in India during May 2025 illustrates the complex and sometimes counterintuitive relationship between these two key economic indicators. While supply-side improvements in agriculture helped tame inflation, the labour market remains fragile due to seasonal and structural challenges. Policymakers must adopt a holistic approach that goes beyond inflation targeting to address unemployment and ensure inclusive economic growth.

Source: The Hindu

[1.4] The 1975 Emergency and Its Lessons

Syllabus: Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Emergency imposed in India on June 25, 1975, remains one of the most significant and controversial episodes in the country's democratic history. It lasted for 21 months, ending in March 1977, and witnessed the suspension of fundamental rights, press censorship, mass arrests, and rule by decree. This period serves as a crucial case study for understanding the fragility and resilience of Indian democracy.

Background and Causes of the Emergency

- **Political and Legal Trigger:** The catalyst was the Allahabad High Court decision of June 12, 1975, which overturned Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's 1971 election on the grounds of electoral malpractice, resulting in a political crisis.
- **Socio-Economic and Political Context:** Indira Gandhi's government was under pressure on multiple fronts - economic pressure relating to the 1971 India-Pakistan war, droughts, the 1973 oil crisis, inflation, and widespread public unhappiness about corruption and misgovernance. There were growing agitation movements, particularly led by Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) who called for a "Total Revolution" with an agenda to take on corruption and authoritarianism.

Constitutional Provisions and Declaration

- **Legal Base:** The Emergency was declared under Article 352 of the Indian Constitution which provides for a national emergency to be proclaimed when the security of India or part of it is threatened by war, external aggression or armed rebellion. In 1975 the government declared the Emergency on the basis of "internal disturbance". The declaration implied that fundamental rights guaranteed in Part III of the Constitution (for example, freedom of speech and expression) have been suspended.
- **Process of Imposition:** On the night of June 25, 1975, the Cabinet recommended the proclamation, which was signed by President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed shortly after midnight. This was followed by the imposition of press censorship, arrest of opposition leaders, and suspension of democratic processes.

Key Features and Impact of the Emergency

- **Reduction in Press Freedom:** Media was heavily censored; newspapers were forced to publish government directed content, and dissenting voices were silenced.
- **Centralization of Power: T**he Emergency transformed India's federal structure to a de facto unitary structure where the central government was telling the states what to do, Parliament was exercising legislative powers over state subjects, and the Lok Sabha's term was extended to more than five years.
- **Social and Economic Measures:** The government instituted extremely unpopular measures, such as mass sterilization campaigns which served as forced sterilization campaigns for population control purposes, that resulted in widespread human rights abuses and anger across India.
- **Restoration of Democracy after Emergency:** The Emergency was lifted on March 21, 1977 and the general elections were only a short investigation later, which resulted in a massive defeat for Indira Gandhi's Congress party. It was a reminder of the resilience of democracy in India. Once again the propaganda was acted upon and the language would prevail when people had the democratic process and the institutions restored through the electoral mandate.

Lasting Lessons from the Emergency

- **Awareness of Authoritarianism:** The Emergency illustrated how constitutional provisions meant to safeguard the country can be used to undercut democracy and civil rights.
- **Significance of Fundamental Rights:** The suspension of fundamental rights called attention to their importance (or utility) for safeguarding the right to individual freedom and limiting state power.
- **Need for Constitutional Protections:** This led to the enactment of the 44th Amendment (1978) which included new safeguards to prevent the misuse of the Emergency provisions of the Constitution, including stricter provisions for the proclamation, and restoration of fundamental rights in case of Emergency.
- **Judiciary and Media:** The Emergency period revealed how vulnerable our democratic institutions can be, such as the judiciary and media when faced with authoritarianism. The need for an independent judiciary as well as vigilant public attention was clear.

- **Political Accountability and Public Engagement:** The tremendous protests that confronted Emergency and ultimately led to the electoral defeat of the government for its policies, clearly demonstrated the potential of political accountability and public engagement.

Conclusion

The Emergency of 1975-77 remains a stark reminder of the delicate balance between state power and individual freedoms in a democracy. It teaches the importance of constitutional safeguards, vigilant institutions, and active citizenry to prevent any erosion of democratic values.

Source: The Indian Express

[1.5] Voting Rights for Migrants in India

Syllabus: Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

India is the largest democracy in the world. According to Article 326 of the Indian Constitution, India guarantees universal adult suffrage, allowing all citizens over the age of 18 an equal vote in elections for Lok Sabha [the lower house of parliament] and State Assemblies. However, millions of internal migrants are faced with onerous barriers to exercising their voting rights, thus raising questions about political inclusion, electoral justice, and participatory governance.

Understanding the Migrant Population and Voting Rights

- **What is a Migrant?:** Migrants in India are both internal migrants, who move across states or regions in the country, and international migrants, who move across national borders. According to the 2011 Census, India had over 450 million internal migrants, which has increased to over 600 million in 2023, and includes over 28.9% of the national population. Many migrants are circular or seasonal, and retain links with their state of origin while working temporarily in urban or industrial centers.
- **Constitutional and Legal Framework:** The right to vote is constitutionally guaranteed and administered through the Election Commission of India (ECI), which is an independent office, designed to supervise free and fair elections. However, according to the Representation of People Act 1950, in order to register there must be proof of "ordinarily resident" in a constituency to vote. This is a huge barrier in establishing residence, as migrants do not have proof of residence in their location of work.

Challenges Faced by Migrants in Exercising Voting Rights

- **Lack of Access, Not Denial of Right:** The disenfranchisement of migrants is not due to denial of the statutory right to vote but stems from systemic barriers that prevent their access to voting. Migrants often cannot register in their place of work due to documentation issues, and returning to their home constituencies to vote is costly and logistically difficult.
- **Circular Migrants as a Distinct Class:** The most disadvantaged category is circular migrants proximal to home but broadly classified and recognized as a unique class. Usually, these migrants are from SC/ST/OBC groups that all share marginal conditions of limited education and access to economic resources: placing these types of migrants at a real disadvantage for residency or to vote.
- **Complexity of Timing and Logistics:** National and state elections (littered with positive contexts of well-resourced individuals with stable lives) takes place during peak migration, usually during the months of April-May, which again, creates additional layers of disconnect between migrants and citizenship behaviour, especially attending to vote.
- **Judicial significance of freedom to vote:** Judgement on counting electoral votes have highlighted that the right to vote is a freedom, but there is not legal mechanism or restriction stamping the state, votes can be freely disallowed, resisted etc. Thus, courts have interpreted the freedom to vote as an extension of the fundamental right to freedom of expression in Article 19(1)(a) and this has provided citizens and states with positive obligation on migrant votes/privileges balofied by being citizens representing the steering authority (the elections commission etc).

Possible Solutions and Government Initiatives

Given the diversity and mobility of migrants, a combination of solutions is necessary to ensure their effective enfranchisement:

- **Remote Electronic Voting Machines (RVMs):** RVMs were tested by the Election Commission of India (ECI) in 2023 and could enable migrants to vote anywhere they qualify - as long as the voter does not need to appear in person. However, such machines still face logistical, political, and identification issues.
- **Postal Ballot System:** Migrants could be given the right to postal ballots in a similar manner that members of the armed forces and others in specific categories can vote by mail, which generally increases access to voting. It will entail advance registration, ballot distribution and return.
- **Switching Voting Constituencies:** Migrants who reside in a population center for six months or more should be able to voluntarily change their registered constituency to participate in electing their local representatives and engaging in local government.
- **Special Voter Registration Drives:** Special drives would identify long-term migrants and women who migrate by marriage which will increase electoral inclusion.
- **Government Assistance on Polling Day:** Designating a statutory holiday and providing public transport for all voters on polling day would be very helpful, particularly if it reduced migrants' economic and logistical burdens when engaging with the electoral process.

Importance of Enabling Migrant Voting Rights

- **Political Inclusion and Representation:** Enfranchisement of migrants reinforces legitimacy and representation in policy making and governance. This includes addressing migrant's socio-economic problems and improving their overall well-being.
- **Upholding Democratic Values:** The voting rights of migrants will uphold the democratic fabric of society by providing true inclusivity and engagement that represent the entire diversity and mobility of the Indian populace.
- **Reducing Marginalization:** Political invisibility increases migrants' vulnerabilities. Political inclusion strengthens their accountability, and representatives and migrants are also free to demand better living and working conditions.

Conclusion

The enfranchisement of migrants in India is a constitutional imperative and a democratic necessity. While the right to vote is guaranteed, systemic barriers prevent millions of migrants from exercising this right effectively. A multi-pronged strategy involving technological solutions like RVMs, postal ballots, constituency switching, and supportive government policies can ensure that migrants are no longer invisible in the electoral process. Enabling voting rights for migrants will enhance political inclusion, uphold democratic ideals, and contribute to more equitable governance.

Source: The Hindu

[1.6] WTO and Multilateral Trade Reform

Syllabus: Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

Multilateralism, particularly under the aegis of the World Trade Organization (WTO), has historically been the cornerstone of a rules-based international trade system. However, recent challenges such as rising protectionism, stalled negotiations, and institutional paralysis have questioned its efficacy. Reviving a WTO-led multilateral order is essential to ensure fair, predictable, and sustainable global trade that supports development, environmental goals, and digital transformation.

Importance of the WTO in the Global Trade System

- **Trade Liberalization and Market Access:** The WTO has played a pivotal role in reducing trade barriers like tariffs and quotas, facilitating smoother and freer trade among its 164 member economies. For example, the average tariff rate among WTO members fell from 16.7% in 1995 to 7.5% in 2020, reflecting significant liberalization efforts.

- **Rules-Based Trading System:** It provides a legal framework that governs trade in goods, services, intellectual property, and investment, ensuring non-discrimination and fairness. The WTO's Dispute Settlement Body has resolved over 600 disputes, maintaining stability and transparency in trade relations.
- **Technical Assistance and Capacity Building:** The WTO supports developing and least-developed countries to integrate into global trade through training, advisory services, and frameworks like the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF).

Challenges Facing Multilateralism and the WTO

- **Stalled Negotiations and Institutional Paralysis:** The Doha Round, launched in 2001, remains unresolved, highlighting difficulties in reaching consensus among diverse member interests. The WTO's Appellate Body has been paralyzed due to disagreements, notably with the US, undermining dispute resolution.
- **Rising Protectionism and Fragmentation:** Increasing nationalist policies and unilateral trade measures threaten the multilateral trading system, risking fragmentation and trade wars.
- **Outdated Institutional Structures:** Existing governance structures do not fully reflect current global economic realities, with emerging powers underrepresented in decision-making.

The Case for Reviving a WTO-Led Multilateral Order

Evolving Beyond Trade Liberalization

The WTO must transform from a mere trade liberalization body to a guardian of equitable globalization that supports developmental, environmental, and digital transitions. This includes:

- Crafting enforceable rules on digital trade, cross-border data flows, green subsidies, and industrial policies to prevent fragmentation of global markets4.
- Institutionalizing trade-climate linkages by aligning WTO rules with climate goals, such as regulating Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanisms (CBAMs), while providing differential treatment for developing countries.

Reforming Governance and Representation

- Reform voting and decision-making structures to better reflect demographic and economic shifts, including greater representation for emerging economies like India, Brazil, and African nations.
- Establish a permanent WTO Reform Council to propose systemic reforms regularly, ensuring the institution adapts to technological, environmental, and geopolitical changes.

Restoring the Dispute Settlement Mechanism

- Address concerns over judicial overreach by clarifying the limits of the Appellate Body and reinstating its function with tighter timelines and respect for domestic policy space, thereby restoring trust in the WTO's dispute resolution.

Dynamic Special and Differential Treatment (SDT)

- Move away from self-declared developing status to eligibility based on objective criteria such as GDP per capita, vulnerability indices, and export competitiveness, ensuring fairness and relevance in development classifications.

Conclusion

Reviving multilateralism under a reformed and WTO-led global trade order is crucial for sustaining open, fair, and predictable international trade. It requires institutional reforms, embracing new trade realities like digitalization and climate change, and restoring trust through effective dispute resolution. Such a revitalized multilateral system will not only promote global economic growth but also ensure equitable and sustainable development for all nations in an increasingly multipolar world.

Source: HT

2. Daily Current Affairs

[2.1] UK passes the Assisted Dying Bill

Syllabus - Polity [GS Paper-2]

Context

The UK House of Commons passed the Assisted Dying Bill to permit terminally ill people in England and Wales to end their lives.

Key Highlights

- The bill will only follow people in England and Wales who have less than six months to live.
- An affected person selecting to die might need to be of capable thoughts and docs, a psychiatrist, senior lawyer and social worker might need to sign off on their choice.
- Advocates regard the new Bill as a humane and compassionate intervention that brings closure to a painful dependence on the immediate family.
- Opponents are concerned that the significantly disabled and vulnerable patients may also be forced to end their lives to alleviate the burden on loved ones.

About Assisted Dying

- Assisted death refers to the act of assisting a person intentionally end their life, commonly to relieve laid low with a terminal contamination or extreme, untreatable ache.
- There are two important forms:
    - **Assisted Suicide:** A person, with the support of a medical professional or every other individual, takes their personal life, commonly by consuming a prescribed lethal dose of drugs.
    - **Euthanasia:** A health practitioner or healthcare issuer actively administers a deadly substance to end the life of an affected person, usually at their request, to relieve excessive suffering.

Status Across the Globe

- The exercise of assisted dying is surprisingly controversial and is legal in just a few nations or regions, with strict suggestions and guidelines where it's authorized.
    - Switzerland was the first country which in 1942 legalised assisted dying.
- Across Europe, 6 nations have a few forms of legalised assisted dying: Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain and Austria.
    - Later on the U.S., Australia and New Zealand enacted associated legislations.
- Canada's 2016 Medical Assistance in Dying regulation can be availed even by the ones whose condition isn't always terminal.

What is the status in India?

- The Supreme Court had in 2018 legalised passive euthanasia, contingent upon the character having a "living will".
    - SC held that the 'right to die with dignity' forms part of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.
    - A living will is a written document that specifies the movements to be taken if the person is unable to make their personal medical choices in the future.
    - Goa is the first state that has formalised, to some extent, the implementation of directives issued by way of the Supreme Court.
- In 2024, the Health Ministry launched draft guidelines on chickening out medical help for terminally ill patients.
- These specify that docs need to refrain from initiating life-support measures when they provide no gain to the affected person and are possibly to cause struggling and a lack of dignity.

Arguments in Favour of Assisted Dying

- **Autonomy and Choice:** Individuals need to have the right to make decisions about their personal lives, such as the decision to end it to avoid prolonged struggling.
- **Relief from Suffering:** Assisted death provides a compassionate option for people with terminal illnesses or unbearable ache, allowing them to die with dignity.
- **Quality of Life:** For some, the exception of life might also deteriorate to a point where death is seen as a better option than living with constant struggling or lack of independence.
- **Respect for Individual Rights:** People have to have control over their bodies and lives, which include the choice to end their life in a humane and controlled manner.

Arguments Against Assisted Dying

- **Moral and Ethical Concerns:** Many agree that taking a lifestyle, even on the individual's request, is morally wrong and is going against the sanctity of life.
- **Risk of Abuse:** Vulnerable people, consisting of those with mental fitness problems or stress from family, may be coerced into choosing assisted dying.
- **Medical Ethics:** Healthcare professionals are traditionally bound to preserve life, and assisted dying may conflict with the essential position of docs in recuperation and care.
- **Alternative Solutions:** Advocates argue that palliative care and pain management can provide relief, making assisted dying useless.

Way Ahead

- **Stronger Regulations:** Implementing strict legal safeguards to ensure it is only available to individuals who meet particular standards.
- **Palliative Care Expansion:** Improving access to high-quality palliative care to deal with suffering and reduce the demand for assisted death.
- **Public Debate:** Ongoing discussions about the moral, prison, and ethical implications of assisted dying, may be considered even as framing the guidelines.
- **International Perspective:** Countries might also appear to people with legal assisted dying frameworks for steering on effective law and safeguards.
- **Mental Health Support:** Providing psychological evaluations to prevent coercion or impulsive choices and ensure knowledgeable consent is given.

Source: ***The News on AIR***

Prelims PYQ

1. Right to Privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty. Which of the following in the Constitution of India correctly and appropriately imply the above statement? (2018)

(a) Article 14 and the provisions under the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution.

(b) Article 17 and the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV.

(c) Article 21 and the freedoms guaranteed in Part III.

(d) Article 24 and the provisions under the 44th Amendment to the Constitution.

Ans: (c)

- The U.K. House of Commons passed the Assisted Dying Bill to permit terminally ill people in England and Wales to end their lives.
- The bill will only follow people in England and Wales who have less than six months to live.
- An affected person selecting to die might need to be of capable thoughts and docs, a psychiatrist, senior lawyer and social worker might need to sign off on their choice.
- Advocates regard the new Bill as a humane and compassionate intervention that brings closure to a painful dependence on the immediate family.
- Opponents are concerned that the significantly disabled and vulnerable patients may also be forced to end their lives to alleviate the burden on loved ones.

[2.2] Pakistan's Balancing Act on Iran

Syllabus - International Relations [GS Paper-2]

Context

Pakistan has prolonged strong rhetorical support to Iran amid the ongoing Iran-Israel war.

Iran and Pakistan Relations

- **Foundational Ties:** Iran was the first country to apprehend Pakistan after its independence in 1947.
    - Iran furnished army and diplomatic assistance to Pakistan all through the 1965 and 1971 wars with India.
    - Despite shared Islamic identity, ties have been marked by deep distrust, mainly as the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which redefined Iran's geopolitical stance.
- **Border Tensions and the Baloch Question:** The 900-km Iran-Pakistan border runs through the Baloch heartland, with the Pak province of Balochistan on one side and the Iranian province of Sistan-Baluchistan on the alternative.
    - Each side accuses the alternative of offering safe haven to separatist agencies.
    - There have been at least 15 border clashes in the last decade, most recently in January 2024.
- **Divergence over Afghanistan:** Iran (Shia-Majority) supported the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance in the Nineties, out of issues stemming from a strongly anti-Shia group (Taliban) ruling a neighbour with which it shares a 921-km-border.

- Pakistan has traditionally sponsored the Taliban, resulting in conflicting regional stakes in Afghanistan.

- **Sectarian Dimensions and the Saudi Factor:** Pakistan's close alliance with Saudi Arabia, a Sunni-majority energy, has strained ties with Iran.
  - Saudi-funded Sunni madrasas in Pakistan have fostered sectarian ideologies against Shia minorities.
  - Iran sees this as a part of a broader Sunni axis opposed to its pursuits.

The American Angle: Divergent Alignments

- Post-1979, Iran has remained adverse to the USA, while Pakistan has relied on American assistance, specifically all through the Cold War.
- Post-11th of September technology, Pakistan changed into a key US ally against the Taliban, receiving huge military and financial resources.
- US disengagement post-2021 (after the Afghanistan exit) has reduced Pakistan's value America's strategic calculus.
- Now, Iran–Israel tensions offer Pakistan a capability diplomatic commencing to regain relevance in US eyes:
  - Publicly rejecting military aid for Iran reassures the US.
  - Pakistan is likewise pitching itself as a mediator, with Foreign Minister claiming efforts to enlarge Iran's willingness to barter with the USA, contingent on a halt in Israeli strikes.

How is Iran Strategically Important to India?

- India and Iran share deep civilisational, linguistic, and historical ties. Post-independence, they signed a friendship treaty in 1950.
- Key milestones encompass the 2001 Tehran Declaration and the New Delhi Declaration, which bolstered cooperation in areas like economy, energy, education, and counter-terrorism.
- Iran is extremely essential for India as a strategic accomplice as it gives connectivity, mainly via the Chabahar Port and the International NorthSouth Transport Corridor (INSTC).
- These offer alternative trade routes, bypassing Pakistan and decorating access to Central Asia and beyond.

Emerging Challenges

- Pakistan's moves amid the Iran-Israel war reflect a broader strategy to regain regional relevance and re-interact with the United States.
- Pakistan's balancing act involves:
  - Vocal non-army support to Iran.
  - Leveraging diplomatic tools to remain applicable post-Afghanistan.
- Pakistan also sees rhetorical assistance for Iran as a way to weaken India-Iran ties, mainly given India's strategic investments in Iran's Chabahar Port and connectivity projects that pass Pakistan.

Conclusion

- The Iran–Pakistan relationship is a strategic paradox which on the surface are Islamic allies with historic ties but in reality are geopolitical competition, deeply divided over sectarian, regional, and global alignments.
- The US component, India's strategic outreach to Iran, and the Israel–Iran disaster add in additional layers to this dynamic.

- For India, understanding this relation is prime to protecting its interests in Iran and keeping regional balance in the face of Pakistan's recalibrated foreign policy.

Source: ***The Indian Express***

Mains PYQ

1. In what ways would the ongoing U.S-Iran Nuclear Pact Controversy affect the national interest of India? How should India respond to this situation? (2018)

- Pakistan has prolonged strong rhetorical support to Iran amid the ongoing Iran-Israel war.
- **Foundational Ties:** Iran was the first country to apprehend Pakistan after its independence in 1947.
- **Border Tensions and the Baloch Question:** The 900-km Iran-Pakistan border runs through the Baloch heartland, with the Pak province of Balochistan on one side and the Iranian province of Sistan-Baluchistan on the alternative.
- **Divergence over Afghanistan:** Iran (Shia-Majority) supported the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance in the Nineties, out of issues stemming from a strongly anti-Shia group (Taliban) ruling a neighbour with which it shares a 921-km-border.
- **Sectarian Dimensions and the Saudi Factor:** Pakistan's close alliance with Saudi Arabia, a Sunni-majority energy, has strained ties with Iran.

[2.3] India's logistics Cost to Come Down to 9%

Syllabus - Infrastructure [GS Paper-3]

Context

The Union Road Transport and Highways Minister has said that India's logistics cost will come down to 9% by the Year-End.

Background

- Logistics cost refers to the entire expenditure incurred to transport goods from the point of origin to the point of consumption.
- It includes Transportation cost, Warehousing cost, Inventory carrying cost and Packaging and administrative cost.
- The Economic Survey 2022-23 talked about that logistics costs in India were in the range of 14-18% of GDP towards the global benchmark of 8%.

India's logistics sector

- The logistics industry plays an essential position in the dynamic economic landscape of India by enabling the efficient movement of goods and services throughout the country's large territory.
- The Indian logistics area is one of the most important in the world and offers a huge addressable possibility.
- The warehousing and logistics quarter contributes 13-14% to India's GDP and is increasing to keep pace with the country's fast economic growth.

- In 2023, India ranked 38 out of the 139 countries in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index (LPI), up 6 locations from the preceding scores in 2018.

Benefits of a Robust Logistics sector

- **Economic Competitiveness:** Efficient logistics reduces general cost of products and offerings, enhancing India's ability to compete globally.
- **Boosts Exports and Trade:** Reliable, cost-effective logistics lessen turnaround time and enhance transport commitments.
- **Industrial Growth:** Reduces input cost and improves Just-in-Time (JIT) production fashions.
- **Improves Ease of Doing Business:** Efficient goods movement reduces compliance burden and inventory costs for agencies.
- **Strengthens Supply Chain Resilience:** Minimises disruption risks and delays, improving supply chain predictability and versatility.

Challenges with Logistics quarter in India

- **Lack of Technology Adoption:** Slow adoption of superior technologies, including Internet of Things (IoT), RFID (Radio-Frequency Identification), and automation.
- **Infrastructure Bottlenecks:** Inadequate infrastructure, specially in terms of roads, ports, and last-mile connectivity, along with Poor road conditions and congestion can cause delays and extended expenses.
- **Higher logistics costs:** India's expenditure on logistics costs amounts to about 13-14% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is considerably higher than the worldwide average of around 8%.
- **Inefficient Warehousing:** Inefficiencies in warehousing, which include old infrastructure, lack of automation, and inadequate garage capacity, contribute to high logistics costs.
- **Limited Modal decision:** Over reliance on road transport and limited use of opportunity modes along with rail and coastal transport contribute to higher logistics costs.

Steps taken by Government of India

- **Grant of Infrastructure popularity to the Logistics sector:** The government has granted infrastructure popularity to the logistics region, allowing the industry to access less expensive finances.
- **PM Gati Shakti's initiative:** It is a National Master Plan targeted on multimodal connectivity to reduce logistics costs and stimulate financial growth.
- **National Logistics Policy (NLP):** In 2022, NLP was released to ensure quick last-mile transport, last delivery-related challenges, and ensure preferred speed in the logistics sector.
- **Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs):** The government is operating on the construction of devoted freight corridors together with the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor and the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor.
- **Bharatmala Pariyojana:** This is a flagship street and highways development program aimed toward enhancing connectivity across the country. The project includes the development of financial corridors, inter-corridors, and costder routes.
- **Sagarmala Project:** This initiative focuses on promoting port-led development to lessen logistics costs for domestic and export-import trade. It includes the development of ports, coastal delivery, and inland waterways.

Way Ahead

- **Digitalisation:** It permits the digitisation of files and transactions, decreasing office work and improving the overall performance of logistics operations.

- **Data analytics:** It can offer treasured insights into supply chain overall performance, taking into consideration better decision-making and optimisation of routes, stock control, and aid allocation.
- **Technology upgradation:** Technologies including barcode scanning, RFID, and real-time monitoring can significantly enhance monitoring and tracing capabilities, improving operational performance and lowering expenses.
- **Warehouse efficiency:** Improved stock accuracy, reduced warehouse inventory, and optimized on-shelf stock availability, can enhance normal warehouse efficiency.

Source:* *The Hindu

Mains PYQ

1. The Gati-Shakti Yojana needs meticulous coordination between the government and the private sector to achieve the goal of connectivity. Discuss. (2022)

- The Union Road Transport and Highways Minister has said that India's logistics cost will come down to 9% by the Year-End.
- Logistics cost refers to the entire expenditure incurred to transport goods from the point of origin to the point of consumption.
- It includes Transportation cost, Warehousing cost, Inventory carrying cost and Packaging and administrative cost.
- The Economic Survey 2022-23 talked about that logistics costs in India were in the range of 14-18% of GDP towards the global benchmark of 8%.

[2.4] Ban on Refuelling Overage Vehicles

Syllabus: Environment Pollution [GS Paper-3]

Context

The National Capital Region (NCR), particularly Delhi, is set to enforce a stringent ban on the refuelling of overage vehicles as part of a comprehensive strategy to combat air pollution. The initiative, spearheaded by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), aims to reduce vehicular emissions by systematically phasing out End-of-Life Vehicles (ELVs) from city roads.

Key Features of the Ban

Effective Date and Scope

- **Delhi:** The ban on refuelling ELVs will come into force from July 1, 2025.
- **Expansion to NCR:** The policy will be extended to five high-vehicle-density districts—Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddha Nagar, and Sonipat—from November 1, 2025.
- **NCR-Wide Implementation:** The rest of the NCR will be covered under the ban from April 1, 2026.

Definition of End-of-Life Vehicles

- **Diesel Vehicles:** Older than 10 years.
- **Petrol Vehicles:** Older than 15 years.

- **Applicability:** Applies to all vehicles, regardless of their registration status or origin, if found plying in Delhi or the designated regions.

Enforcement Mechanism

Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) System

- **Installation:** ANPR cameras have been installed at all major fuel stations in Delhi, with a target of 100% coverage before the ban's commencement.
- **Functionality:** The cameras scan vehicle number plates in real time and cross-verify details with the VAHAN database for age, fuel type, and registration status.
- **Alert System:** If an ELV is detected, an audio alert is triggered at the fuel station, instructing staff to deny refuelling.

Role of Enforcement Teams

- **Composition:** Over 100 enforcement teams, comprising officials from the Transport Department and Traffic Police, have been formed.
- **Monitoring:** Teams will conduct periodic checks and respond to alerts generated by the ANPR system.
- **Penalties:** Vehicles found violating the ban will be impounded and may face scrapping through Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities (RVSFs).

Public Announcement and Awareness

- **Announcement Systems:** Petrol pumps are being equipped with public address systems to inform staff and customers about the ban.
- **Trial Runs:** Pilot testing of the announcement mechanism has been conducted at select locations to ensure smooth implementation.

Rationale and Expected Impact

Environmental Benefits

- **Reduction in Air Pollution:** Old vehicles are significant contributors to air pollution due to outdated emission standards.
- **Health Benefits:** Lower vehicular emissions are expected to reduce respiratory and cardiovascular diseases among residents.

Scale of the Challenge

- **Delhi:** Approximately 62 lakh ELVs, including 41 lakh two-wheelers and 18 lakh four-wheelers.
- **NCR:** Another 44 lakh ELVs, highlighting the magnitude of the task.

Implementation Challenges and Concerns

Technological Glitches

- **False Positives:** Initial reports indicated that some valid vehicles, especially CNG-run auto rickshaws, were incorrectly flagged as overaged.
- **Equipment Reliability:** Issues with non-functional cameras and announcement systems have been reported, though authorities claim most problems have been addressed.

Public Response and Compliance

- **Resistance:** Some vehicle owners may attempt to circumvent the ban by registering vehicles in other states.
- **Transparency:** The digital, real-time nature of the system is expected to minimize loopholes and ensure accountability.

Policy Support and Future Roadmap

Scrapping and Transfer Options

- **Scrapping Facilities:** Owners of ELVs can get their vehicles scrapped at RVSFs.
- **Transfer Outside Delhi:** No-Objection Certificates (NOCs) will be issued for transferring ELVs out of Delhi, provided they meet the destination state's regulations.

Phased Rollout

- **Delhi:** July 1, 2025.
- **Five Districts:** November 1, 2025.
- **Rest of NCR:** April 1, 2026.

Conclusion

The ban on refuelling overage vehicles marks a bold step in Delhi and NCR fight against air pollution. By leveraging technology and robust enforcement mechanisms, the authorities aim to phase out millions of polluting vehicles, setting a precedent for other Indian cities grappling with similar challenges. While implementation hurdles remain, the initiative is expected to deliver substantial environmental and public health benefits in the years ahead.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Critically examine the role, effectiveness, and challenges faced by CAQM in improving air quality in the National Capital Region and adjoining areas. (250 words)

[2.5] Development for Peace and Poverty Reduction

Syllabus: International Relation [GS Paper-2]

Context

The United Nations has consistently emphasized the inextricable link between poverty, conflict, and development. As global hostilities rise and humanitarian crises deepen, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called for renewed global commitment to invest in development as the most effective strategy to break the cycle of poverty and conflict. This approach is rooted in the understanding that sustainable development is not just a pathway to economic growth but also the first line of defense against instability and violence.

The Poverty-Conflict Cycle

- Conflicts directly aggravate poverty by destroying infrastructures, displacing populations, and losing or shattering their economies. Whereas poverty breeds despair, social unrest, dissatisfaction, or grievances that often erupt into violence and instability. The United Nations states that in conflict-affected areas lie about forty percent of the 700 million people living in extreme poverty, whereas all ten countries with the lowest Human Development Index are currently undergoing conflict.
- When it comes to human cost, that could be staggering. Over 120 million people have been displaced from their homes in recent times. Just disrupt lives, halt the future, and deprive entire generations of education, health, and economic opportunities.

The Role of Development in Breaking the Cycle

- **Development as a Preventive Measure:** According to the UN, investment in development is the best way to prevent conflict. Development initiatives go to the root of instability—such as inequality, corruption, and human rights violations—by building institutions and fostering social cohesion. According to the International Monetary Fund, a dollar spent on prevention could save up to one hundred and three dollars in conflict-related costs.
- **Local-Level Development:** Development at the local level is particularly important in fragile settings. When livelihoods are restored, infrastructure is rebuilt, and the local economy is supported through development, communities are empowered toward recovery and resilience. The return of water and electricity, the reopening of women's businesses, and farmers trading food create opportunities for hope and lay the foundation for peace.

Global Challenges and Current Trends

- **Reversing Development Gains:** Despite decades of progress, recent years have seen a reversal in development gains. The global economy is slowing, trade tensions are rising, and aid budgets are being slashed while military spending increases. If these trends continue, two-thirds of the world's population could be living in conflict-affected or fragile countries by 2030.
- **Financial Constraints:** Developing countries face significant financial challenges, including limited fiscal space, crushing debt burdens, and skyrocketing prices. The world is currently falling short by over $4 trillion annually in the resources needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

The Need for Collective Action

- **International Cooperation:** The Chairperson of the African Union Commission has highlighted that poverty and underdevelopment are global challenges requiring a global response. Addressing systemic imbalances—economic, political, and institutional—is essential to uphold international peace and security.
- **Enhanced Support for Peace Operations:** There is a pressing need for enhanced support to peace operations, particularly in regions where poverty and underdevelopment are deeply entrenched. African-led peace operations, for example, require greater international backing to be effective.

Strategies for Sustainable Peace and Development

- **Inclusive and Participatory Institutions:** Building inclusive and participatory institutions is critical for sustainable peace. Grievance mechanisms and inclusive governance structures expand access for vulnerable groups and increase trust in the state. Examples from Madagascar, South Sudan, and Côte d'Ivoire demonstrate how such approaches can lower levels of violence and improve social cohesion.
- **Confidence-Building Measures:** Local development initiatives, such as the rehabilitation of shared healthcare institutions, community markets, and educational facilities, create opportunities for interaction and dialogue among divided communities. Projects like the Dialogue for the Future in Bosnia and Herzegovina and confidence-building measures in Georgia have proven effective in normalizing relationships and reducing the potential for violent conflict.

Source: DTE

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. In the light of this statement, discuss how inclusive development strategies can contribute to sustainable peace and poverty reduction in India. (250 words)

[2.6] Draft Registration Bill 2025

Syllabus - Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has invited tips on the new draft Registration Bill 2025.

Key Highlights

- It is brought to set up a current framework for registration of land records, and a more citizen-centric approach.
- It will update the 117-12 months-antique Registration Act of 1908.
- It will digitise the registration of property records, beautify transparency, and preserve digital data.
- **Key Features:**
    - It introduces a latest, citizen-friendly framework for land document registration, allowing both online and offline strategies with Aadhaar or alternative identification verification.
    - It expands the listing of obligatory documents for registration, along with revenue agreements and enterprise mergers, while additionally presenting for simplified optional registration, although info in this are vague.
    - New roles consisting of Additional and Assistant Inspector Generals of Registration are created to help the Inspector General.
    - The Inspector General can cancel registrations made on false or illegal grounds, with appeals allowed in 30 days.
    - The bill reduces imprisonment consequences from 7 to 3 years, along with fines.

Issues and Challenges

- Concerns about the Bill consist of the need for stronger cybersecurity to protect digital data and e-signature data.
- Additionally, delegating registration responsibilities to Common Services Centres (CSCs), which manage legally sensitive approaches like stamp duty valuation and identify transfer, can also result in procedural gaps.

Other Related Steps

- The Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP), remodeled in 2016 as 100% Central Sector Scheme.
    - It aims to create a contemporary, obvious, and integrated land record system.
    - Its objectives include enhancing real-time land records, optimizing land use, aiding landowners and policymakers, lowering disputes and fraud, minimizing the need for physical office visits, and enabling records sharing throughout organizations.
- **SVAMITVA Scheme:** It was Launched on April 24, 2020 and Scheme aims to convert rural India by providing property owners in village Abadi regions with an official "Record of Rights."
    - Using drone and GIS technology for land demarcation, it enables property monetization, access to bank loans, reduces disputes, and helps village-level planning—advancing rural empowerment and Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- **The NAKSHA programme:** It is a tech-pushed initiative by the Department of Land Resources with Survey of India and other partners, aims to modernize urban land records.
    - It addresses the growing need for verifiable and only land data amid India's unexpectedly increasing urban population.

Source: ***The Indian Express***

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 Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has invited tips on the new draft Registration Bill 2025.
- It is brought to set up a current framework for registration of land records, and a more citizen-centric approach.
- It will update the 117-12 months-antique Registration Act of 1908.
- It will digitise the registration of property records, beautify transparency, and preserve digital data.

[2.7] Foreign Universities Impacting Higher Education in India

Syllabus - Education [GS Paper-2]

Context

The access of several foreign universities into India, enabled by the UGC (Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) Regulations, 2023, marks a prime improvement in Indian higher education.

Background

- Prominent foreign institutions are setting up branch campuses, in particular in GIFT City and Navi Mumbai.
- NYU Abu Dhabi and Yale-NUS in Singapore are great successes—because of strong local partnerships, beneficent nation support, and academic autonomy.
- This flow is as per the imaginative and prescient of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which inspires the internationalisation of education.

Why Are Foreign Universities Entering India?

- **Push Factors in the West:**
    - **Demographic Transition:** Many Global North countries like the U.K., Canada, and Australia are witnessing declining home enrolments because of falling start charges.
    - **Financial Pressures:** Public funding for better education has declined in several Western nations. As a result, universities have turned to international students, who pay significantly higher tuition fees, to plug funding gaps.
    - **Recent Visa and Policy Changes:** The U.K., Australia, and Canada have all introduced caps or tighter controls on international scholar visas because of rising migration and housing pressures, impacting their universities' sales.
    - **Budget Cuts:** Faced with reduced enrolments and income, many universities have all started downsizing, making the search for foreign markets like India extra urgent.

- **Pull Factors in India:**
    - **Large Youth Population:** India has the largest young people population in the world. With extra than 40 million college students in better education and a GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) of ~30%, the demand for first-rate training is growing.
    - **Growing Middle Class:** Rising incomes and aspirations are making quality education more lower priced for Indian families.
    - **Regulatory Reforms:** The FHEI Regulations 2023 allow top-rating foreign universities to set up campuses in India with operational autonomy.
    - **NEP 2020 Goals:** The NEP promotes international partnerships, knowledge exchange, and academic excellence—growing a conducive policy environment.

Benefits of Foreign University Campuses

- **Improved Academic Standards:** Top foreign institutions are anticipated to convey global pedagogical practices, college education, interdisciplinary curriculum, and studies orientation.
- **International Degrees:** Students who can't come up with the money to move abroad could be able to access international levels at a lower fee in India.
- **Curbing Brain Drain:** By imparting notable opportunities within India, some college students may decide upon staying again, lowering the outflow of skills.
- **Collaboration Opportunities:** These campuses could function as hubs of industry-academia partnerships, mainly in STEM, AI, climate sciences, fintech, and liberal arts.
- **Innovation Ecosystems:** Locations like GIFT City and Navi Mumbai are being placed as edu-economic hubs where college students can get admission to internships, entrepreneurship incubators, and global company networks.

What are the Challenges?

- **Limited Initial Impact:** The scale will be small in the short to medium term—initial enrolments are likely to be constrained to a few thousand college students per campus.
- **Affordability Concerns:** If foreign campuses reflect their home-country fee structures, accessibility for common Indian students can be low.
- **Operational Hurdles:** Despite UGC's liberalised norms, concerns continue to be over land acquisition, accreditation popularity, and faculty recruitment norms.
- **Precedents of Failure:** Several foreign campuses in Malaysia, UAE, and China have both shut down or failed to meet expectations because of low enrolments or cultural misalignment.

Way Ahead

- **Tiered Fee Structures:** To ensure inclusivity, campuses must be incentivised to offer scholarships, need-based financial useful resources, and differential pricing.
- **Clear Quality Assurance Mechanisms:** UGC and NAAC should build strong oversight mechanisms to ensure foreign campuses uphold global requirements whilst aligning with Indian values.
- **Strong Local Partnerships:** Foreign universities need to be endorsed to collaborate with Indian HEIs, industry bodies, and research institutes to localise content and enhance outreach.
- **Periodic Impact Assessments:** A national-level effect monitoring mechanism should examine student satisfaction, research output, and employability outcomes of foreign branch campuses.

Source: ***The Hindu***

Mains PYQ

1. "Education is not an injunction, it is an effective and pervasive tool for all-round development of an individual and social transformation". Examine the New Education Policy, 2020 (NEP, 2020) in light of the above statement. (2020)

- The access of several foreign universities into India, enabled by the UGC (Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) Regulations, 2023, marks a prime improvement in Indian higher education.
- Prominent foreign institutions are setting up branch campuses, in particular in GIFT City and Navi Mumbai.
- NYU Abu Dhabi and Yale-NUS in Singapore are great successes—because of strong local partnerships, beneficent nation support, and academic autonomy.
- This flow is as per the imaginative and prescient of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which inspires the internationalisation of education.

[2.8] Expansionary Fiscal and Monetary Policies

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

India is currently witnessing an extraordinary segment wherein each fiscal and monetary policies are expansionary.

Key Policies Adopted Recently

- In Union Budget 2025–26, ₹11.21 lakh crore earmarked for infrastructure, agriculture, MSMEs, and virtual connectivity (strong emphasis on capital expenditure).
- Income Tax cuts announced had been intended to enhance consumption at some stage in a slowdown.
- RBI reduced the repo price to 5.5% to encourage borrowing and investment amid a slowing boom.
- The RBI's dual mandate — price stability and boom — has led to:
    - Rate cuts to inspire borrowing.
    - Inflation concentrated on, with retail inflation falling to 4.6% in 2024–25.
    - Liquidity assistance for financial establishments and NBFCs.

Issues & Challenges

- **Lack of Policy Coordination:** If both guidelines work collectively without coordination, it might overheat the economy causing inflation.
- **Muted Demand Response:** People aren't spending an awful lot, in spite of tax cuts. This demanding situations the Rational Expectations Theory (core to inflation targeting)
- **Widening Fiscal Deficit Risk:** If growth doesn't rise, tax sales will fall, leading to a financial deficit. To plug the distance, the government may reduce welfare spending, hurting vulnerable organizations.
- **Rising Inequality and Weak Wages:** Corporate incomes rising, however actual wages stagnant. Expansion regulations may also gain capital more than labour.

Instances of Expansionary Policies Adopted in Past

- **The New Deal (Nineteen Thirties):** By the US, in reaction to the Great Depression.
- **Post-2008 Global Financial Crisis:** By Central Banks and US Federal Reserve; Slashed interest rates to near zero and brought quantitative easing — buying government securities to inject liquidity into the economy.
    - In India, RBI slashed the repo rate from 9% in 2008 to 4.75% by April 2009.
- **Japan's Abenomics (2012–2020):** Three-pronged strategy:
    - Monetary easing by the Bank of Japan;
    - Fiscal stimulus through government spending; and
    - Structural reforms to revive Japan's stagnant economic system.
- **COVID-19 Pandemic Response (2020–2021):**
    - Massive financial stimulus applications — direct cash transfers, unemployment benefits, and business loans — while significant banks reduce interest rates and accelerated asset purchases to cushion the economic blow.
    - India rolled out the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, a ₹20 lakh crore package
- **Other steps:**
    - Repo rate cuts to a historic low of 4%.
    - Loan moratoriums and liquidity aid for NBFCs and housing finance corporations.

Benefits of Expansionary Policies in India

- **Boosts Aggregate Demand:** Expansionary monetary guidelines like tax cuts and multiplied public spending raise disposable income and consumption.
- **Supports Employment:** Government-funded infrastructure projects and MSME support schemes can generate jobs, especially in rural and casual sectors, decreasing unemployment throughout downturns.
- **Encourages Private Investment:** Lower borrowing costs and progressed consumer sentiment can incentivize groups to put money into capacity expansion, innovation, and hiring.
- **Stabilizes Financial Markets:** Liquidity injections through the RBI and credit guarantees for NBFCs and banks assist keep monetary balance and prevent credit crunches.
- **Short-Term Economic Relief:** During emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic, direct cash transfers and food security features provided instantaneous remedy to prone populations.

Way Forward

- **Strengthen Policy Coordination Mechanism:** Institutionalised talk between RBI and Ministry of Finance.
- **Prioritise Targeted Transfers:** growth DBTs and salary support schemes to boost bottom-up demand.
- **Revise Tax Structures Holistically:** Combine income tax remedy with indirect tax (GST) rationalisation.
- **Monitor Inflation Proactively:** Preemptively tighten financial policy if demand-pull inflation rises.

Conclusion

- Expansionary policies have performed an important function in India's economic management, especially all through crises. However, their success depends on timing, focused on, and coordination.
- Policymakers need to balance short-term stimulus with long-term monetary prudence and structural reforms to ensure sustainable growth.

Source: ***The Hindu***

Mains PYQ

1. Do you agree with the view that steady GDP growth and low inflation have left the Indian economy in good shape? Give reasons in support of your arguments. (2019)

- India is currently witnessing an extraordinary segment wherein each fiscal and monetary policies are expansionary.
- In Union Budget 2025–26, ₹11.21 lakh crore earmarked for infrastructure, agriculture, MSMEs, and virtual connectivity (strong emphasis on capital expenditure).
- Income Tax cuts announced had been intended to enhance consumption at some stage in a slowdown.
- RBI reduced the repo price to 5.5% to encourage borrowing and investment amid a slowing boom.
- The RBI's dual mandate — price stability and boom — has led to:
    - Rate cuts to inspire borrowing.
    - Inflation concentrated on, with retail inflation falling to 4.6% in 2024–25.
    - Liquidity assistance for financial establishments and NBFCs.

[2.9] Organ Transplantation

Subject - Science

Definition

- Organ transplantation is a life-saving way wherein a failing organ (kidney, liver, heart, lung) is replaced with a healthy organ from a living donor (e.g., kidney, partial liver) or a deceased donor (brain-dead or after cardiac demise) to repair feature in last-stage organ failure. Common transplants consist of the kidney, liver, coronary heart, lungs, pancreas, and intestines.

Status

- India is the third country in the world after the USA and China, in terms of the total number of transplants completed in a year.
- **Growing Demand and Persistent Shortage:** Of 1.8 lakh renal failure cases annually, only 6,000 transplants occur, with a donation rate under 1 per million versus a need for 65 per million.
- **Slow Growth in Donor Numbers:** Donor numbers, along with living and deceased donors, grew modestly from 6,916 in 2014 to about 16,041 in 2022.
- **Regional Variations:** Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, and Maharashtra lead in deceased donors, even as Delhi-NCR, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, and West Bengal record the maximum living donors.

Gaps in India's Organ Transplantation Programme

- **Infrastructural Deficiencies:** Many government hospitals lack dedicated infrastructure for organ retrieval and transplantation, and face a high shortage of ICU beds vital for keeping brain-stem dead (BSD) donors and post-operative care.

- **Shortage of Skilled Transplant Professionals:** Government hospitals face a crucial shortage of skilled transplant surgeons, nephrologists, urologists, anaesthetists, neurologists, neurosurgeons, and intensivists.
- **Procedural Bottlenecks:** Delays in approval and formation of Brain-Stem Dead (BSD) Committees, vital for deceased organ donation, remain a prime hurdle.
- **Financial Strain:** Insufficient investment blocks the initiation or revival of specialised programmes like lung transplantation, while the high value of immunosuppressant capsules imposes a heavy burden, as most schemes cover most effectively the first year of medication.
- **Peri-Transplant Donor Tissue Damage:** Aging and sicknesses lessen donor organs, leading to Ischemia-Reperfusion Injury (IRI). Many organs are discarded due to inferior quality, impacting transplant achievement prices.
- **Chronic Rejection in Organ Transplantation:** Long-term survival rates for transplanted organs have not appreciably improved during the last 20 years. Current anti-rejection treatment plans continue to be in large part unchanged, with only modest enhancements in survival rates.
- **Access and Awareness Gaps:** India's organ transplantation programme is challenged by the dominance of the private sector, limiting low-priced access for poor sufferers; the absence of green corridors hampers fast organ shipping; and low awareness, in conjunction with misconceptions about organ donation, discourage public participation.
- **Ethical and Legal Challenges:** Organ trafficking, commercialisation of organ donation, and a black market for organs persist regardless of strict laws like the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994 (THOT Act, 1994).

Strategies to Enhance the Organ Transplantation Framework in India

- **Enhancing Infrastructure:** Upgrade ICU and transplant centers in government hospitals with devoted Transplant ICUs (TICUs) and operation theatres, undertake advanced maintenance technology like hypothermic/normothermic device perfusion, and standardize organ procurement and delivery protocols to reduce delays and wastage.
- **Financial Support and Policy Reforms:** Include liver and heart transplants under Ayushman Bharat, covering lifelong immunosuppressant expenses, along with elevated funding for transplant applications in government hospitals, in particular for luxurious processes like lung transplants.
- **Addressing Manpower Shortages:** Adopt recruitment and retention policies for transplant experts (including surgeons, nephrologists, intensivists) and reduce common transfers to ensure program continuity.
- **Promoting Research and Ethical Practices:** Invest in bioengineered organs, xenotransplantation, and AI-driven organ matching, at the same time as growing ethical guidelines for equitable organ allocation and obvious consent techniques.
- **Emphasising Broader Benefits:** A robust organ and tissue transplant ecosystem can enhance medical tourism, enhance India's soft power, promote inter-state coordination through efficient sharing networks, and support the health finances by generating revenue and lowering long-term healthcare expenses.
- **Strengthening Public Awareness:** Launch national awareness campaigns using social media, TV, and superstar endorsements, at the side of school and college education, community engagement with survivor and donor family testimonials, and partnerships with spiritual leaders to promote organ donation and dispel myths.

[2.10] Child Labour Rescues in 2024–25

Syllabus - Government Policies & Interventions [GS Paper-2]

Context

Recently, the Centre for Legal Action and Behaviour Change (C-LAB), in partnership with the Just Rights for Children (JRC) community, released a report associated with child labour rescues in 2024–25.

Key Highlights

- Over 53,000 children were rescued across 24 states and union territories (Between April 2024 and March 2025).
- Telangana topped the listing with 11,063 rescues, followed by Bihar (3,974), Rajasthan (3,847), Uttar Pradesh (3,804), and Delhi (2,588)
- **Alarming Trends:** The file famous that almost 90% of rescued children aged 10 to 14 were observed operating in sectors categorized as the worst sorts of child labour — inclusive of spas, massage parlours, and orchestras.
- **Legal Action and Enforcement:** A overall of 38,388 FIRs were registered and 5,809 arrests made, with 85% of arrests without delay related to child labour.
    - Telangana, Bihar, and Rajasthan led in enforcement.
    - States like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh showed high rescue numbers however fewer arrests.
- **Policy Recommendations:** The record demands the launch of a National Mission to End Child Labour, the formation of district-stage Child Labour Task Forces, and higher coordination among NGOs and regulation enforcement to ensure prosecution and rehabilitation.

Definition of Child

- **United Nations Convention at the Rights of the Child (UNHRC):** A child as an individual who has not attained the age of 18 years. India has been a signatory to the UNHRC on the grounds that 1992.
- **International Labour Organization (ILO):** Child is any character below 18.
    - Child Labour (as per the ILO) refers to work that deprives children in their youth, their potential and their dignity, and that is dangerous to their physical and/or mental development.

Constitutional Provisions Related To Child

- **Article 15(3) (Protective Discrimination):** It empowers the State to make special provisions for children, recognizing their need for added safeguards and aid.
- **Article 21A (Right to Education):** It guarantees loose and obligatory education for all children aged 6 to 14 years.

Reasons Behind Child Labour in India

- **Poverty and Economic Compulsion:** According to the Ministry of Labour & Employment, poverty remains the primary driving force of child labour.
    - Families suffering to meet basic needs often depend upon children to supplement household income, specifically in rural and informal sectors.
- **Lack of Access to Quality Education:** Many children drop out of college because of bad infrastructure, teacher shortages, or monetary constraints.
    - Once out of faculty, they may be much more likely to enter the workforce.

- **Illiteracy and Low Awareness**: Parents with constrained education may not fully apprehend the long-term value of schooling or the legal protections against child labour.
    - It perpetuates a cycle of exploitation.
- **Demand for Cheap Labour:** Industries such as beedi-making, carpet weaving, and fireworks regularly decide upon child workers for their nimble arms and decrease wages.
- **Cultural and Social Norms:** In a few communities, child labour is normalized or can be seen as a ceremony of passage.
    - Girls, mainly, can be pulled into domestic work or caregiving roles at a young age.
- **Migration and Trafficking:** Children from marginalized groups are frequently trafficked or migrate with households to urban areas, in which they grow to be in exploitative jobs without legal safeguards.

Model State Action Plans

- The Ministry of Labour & Employment has circulated version plans to guide states in enforcement, rescue, and rehabilitation efforts.
- **Support for Action Against Child Labour (SAFAL):** It aimed toward strengthening enforcement and community- based monitoring.
- **National Policy on Child Labour (1987):**
    - Focus on rehabilitating children in unsafe occupations.
    - Convergence of welfare schemes to aid households of child labourers.
    - Launch of mission-based interventions in high-incidence areas.
- **National Child Labour Project (NCLP):** Implemented in districts with high child labour prevalence. It provides:
    - Special schooling centres for rescued children
    - Bridge schooling, vocational education, mid-day meals, and stipends
    - Support for mainstreaming into formal schools
    - Now integrated into the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan.

Source: ***The Hindu***

Mains PYQ

1. Examine the main provisions of the National Child Policy and throw light on the status of its implementation. (2016)

- Recently, the Centre for Legal Action and Behaviour Change (C-LAB), in partnership with the Just Rights for Children (JRC) community, released a report associated with child labour rescues in 2024–25.
- Over 53,000 children were rescued across 24 states and union territories (Between April 2024 and March 2025).
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- **Legal Action and Enforcement:** A overall of 38,388 FIRs were registered and 5,809 arrests made, with 85% of arrests without delay related to child labour.

- **Policy Recommendations:** The record demands the launch of a National Mission to End Child Labour, the formation of district-stage Child Labour Task Forces, and higher coordination among NGOs and regulation enforcement to ensure prosecution and rehabilitation.

[2.11] 10th Global Tobacco Epidemic Report

Syllabus - Health [GS Paper-2]

Context

WHO has released the 10th version of its Global Tobacco Epidemic Report, assessing development in tobacco control since the launch of the MPOWER method in 2008.

Key Highlights

- The record notes substantial worldwide development, with over 6.1 billion people now covered by as a minimum one of the 6 MPOWER measures.
- **Widespread Impact:** Since 2007, a hundred and fifty five nations have applied at least one of the MPOWER policy prescriptions, collectively reaping rewards over 6.1 billion people.
- **India's Leadership in Digital Content Regulation:** India has significantly turned out to be the first country globally to use tobacco control policies especially to digital streaming content.
- **India's Strong Stance on TAPS:** India has applied stringent measures to lessen tobacco marketing, advertising, and sponsorship (TAPS) throughout all media. This aligns with the "E" (Enforce bans) in MPOWER and is an essential step in reducing tobacco enchantment.
- **Tobacco Tax:** A vital finding is that tobacco tax remains the least-followed MPOWER measure globally. This is a widespread problem as growing tobacco taxes is widely identified as one of the only approaches to lessen consumption, especially amongst children and low-income groups.

Tobacco Consumption

- Tobacco use claims over 7 million lives a year, predominantly in low- and middle-income countries.
    - India is the world's 2nd-largest tobacco producer after China.
    - India is the 4th largest manufacturer of Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco in the world after China, Brazil and Zimbabwe.
- Tobacco use is a major danger issue for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in India, which include most cancers, heart diseases, and respiratory diseases, accounting for over 1.35 million deaths every year.
- Significant development has been made to reduce tobacco use in countries with the highest burden of tobacco consumption over the last 2 decades.
- Key strategies consist of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and the six proven World Health Organization (WHO) MPOWER tobacco control measures to lessen tobacco use:
    - Monitoring tobacco use and prevention guidelines;
    - Protecting people from tobacco smoke with smoke-free air legislation;
    - Offering help to stop tobacco use;
    - Warning approximately the risks of tobacco with pack labels and mass media;
    - Enforcing bans on tobacco advertising, advertising and sponsorship;

- Raising taxes on tobacco.

Source: ***The WHO***

Prelims PYQ

1. Which one of the following groups of plants was domesticated in the 'New World' and introduced into the 'Old World'? (2019)

(a) Tobacco, cocoa and rubber

(b) Tobacco, cotton and rubber

(c) Cotton, coffee and sugarcane

(d) Rubber, coffee and wheat

Ans: (a)

- WHO has released the 10th version of its Global Tobacco Epidemic Report, assessing development in tobacco control since the launch of the MPOWER method in 2008.
- The record notes substantial worldwide development, with over 6.1 billion people now covered by as a minimum one of the 6 MPOWER measures.
- **Widespread Impact:** Since 2007, a hundred and fifty five nations have applied at least one of the MPOWER policy prescriptions, collectively reaping rewards over 6.1 billion people.
- **India's Leadership in Digital Content Regulation:** India has significantly turned out to be the first country globally to use tobacco control policies especially to digital streaming content.
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- **Tobacco Tax:** A vital finding is that tobacco tax remains the least-followed MPOWER measure globally. This is a widespread problem as growing tobacco taxes is widely identified as one of the only approaches to lessen consumption, especially amongst children and low-income groups.

[2.12] First-Ever Household Income Survey

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) will conduct the first-ever Household Income Survey in 2026.

Key Highlights

- This might be India's first comprehensive, national survey targeted totally on household income, including both rural and urban segment.
- **Lead Agency:** Conducted via the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) under the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- **Technical Expert Group (TEG):** It was constituted via MoSPI under the Chairmanship of Dr. Surjit S. Bhalla.

- **Mandate of TEG:**
    - Finalize definitions, ideas, survey tools, and sampling strategies,
    - Adopt fine practices from nations like the US, Australia, Canada, and South Africa to deal with prior underreporting,
    - Guide estimation methods, data quality protocols, end result finalization, and publication timelines,
    - Incorporate virtual tools to capture technology-driven impacts on wages and income.

Significance of the Household Income Survey

- **First Accurate Mapping of Income Distribution:** Despite a long time of statistics on consumption, poverty, and employment, India lacks official data on family income levels and distribution.
    - The survey fills a vital hole, allowing policymakers to apprehend income inequality, inter-local disparities, and the real unfold of monetary growth.
- **Targeting of Welfare Schemes:** The authorities can more correctly layout and put into effect subsidies, social safety, and direct benefit transfers, shifting near proof-based and inclusive policymaking.
- **Analysis of Technology Impact:** The survey will assess how digital platforms, gig work, automation, and informal employment influence family income, a place underexplored by present datasets.
- **Benchmark for Fiscal and Tax Policy:** It can offer a sensible baseline for taxation policies, income slabs, and economic redistribution methods by capturing real income flows throughout sectors and instructions.
- **International Comparability:** Countries just like the USA, Australia, and South Africa frequently conduct income surveys.

Challenges in Conducting the Survey

- **Disclosure Hesitation:** Households frequently understate or cover income, mainly from informal or cash-based resources, fearing taxation or legal scrutiny.
- **Complex and Diverse Income Sources:** Indian households earn from multiple, fragmented streams—agriculture, daily wages, remittances, informal trades, and pensions.
    - Capturing and verifying these streams, especially in rural settings, is technically concerning.
- **Mismatch Between Income, Consumption, and Savings:** Previous surveys discovered pronounced income lower than total consumption and savings, suggesting gaps in don't forget accuracy or deliberate misreporting.
- **Seasonality and Volatility of income:** In sectors like agriculture and production, income differs broadly throughout months or seasons. A single-factor survey may also fail to capture these variations until longitudinal or repeated visits are used.
- **Training of Field Enumerators:** Gathering dependable income information demands well-trained surveyors who can navigate complex interviews and probe sensitively without inflicting pain or suspicion.

Way Ahead

- **Institutionalising the Survey:** Rather than a one-off exercise, the Household Income Survey has to be institutionalised at regular periods, permitting monitoring of developments over time and permitting better long-term planning.
    - Detailed training of field investigators is crucial, not only in technical methods but also in constructing trust with respondents, navigating sensitive income questions, and information local income patterns.

Source: ***The Indian Express***

Prelims PYQ

1. As per the NSSO 70th Round "Situation Assessment Survey of Agricultural Households", consider the following statements: (2018)

1. ***Rajasthan has the highest percentage share of agricultural households among its rural households.***
2. ***Out of the total agricultural households in the country, a little over 60 percent belong to OBCs.***
3. ***In Kerala, a little over 60 percent of agricultural households reported to have received maximum income from sources other than agricultural activities.***

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 2 and 3 only

(b) 2 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (c)

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) will conduct the first-ever Household Income Survey in 2026.
- This might be India's first comprehensive, national survey targeted totally on household income, including both rural and urban segment.
- **Lead Agency:** Conducted via the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) under the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- **Technical Expert Group (TEG):** It was constituted via MoSPI under the Chairmanship of Dr. Surjit S. Bhalla.

[2.13] Bangladesh, China and Pakistan Trilateral Meeting

Syllabus - International Relations [GS Paper-2]

Context

Bangladesh, China and Pakistan held an informal trilateral meeting on the sidelines of the 9th China-South Asia Exposition and the sixth China-South Asia Cooperation meeting in Kunming.

Key Highlights

- The 3 countries exchanged perspectives on the premise of mutual trust, understanding and shared imaginative and prescient for peace, prosperity and balance within the area, the discharge brought.
- They identified key areas for cooperation which include infrastructure, connectivity, trade, investment, healthcare, agriculture, maritime affairs, ICT, disaster preparedness, and climate change.

Why Are These Countries Coming Closer?

- **China's Strategic Interests:**
  - **BRI Expansion:** China is deepening its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) footprint in South Asia by integrating regional players through infrastructure and trade projects.
  - **Countering Indo-Pacific Strategy:** The trilateral may be seen as an attempt to stabilize the Quad (India, US, Japan, Australia) and the Indo-Pacific security structure.
- **Pakistan's Objectives:**
  - **Regional Isolation:** Pakistan is going through regional diplomatic isolation and sees China as a steadfast ally.
  - **Leverage in South Asia:** Inclusion of Bangladesh facilitates Pakistan interacted with another key South Asian participant, diluting Indian influence.
- **Bangladesh's Calculated Hedging:**
  - **Balancing India and China:** While historically close to India, Bangladesh is also looking for Chinese investment and infrastructure assistance to diversify its partnerships.
  - **Economic Interests:** China is Bangladesh's top trading partner and a tremendous supply of FDI, in particular in electricity and infrastructure.

Geopolitical Implications of the Trilateral Engagement

- **Attempt at Creating a 'Continental Bloc':** The trilateral should gradually evolve into a strategic bloc in South Asia with deep Chinese influence — running parallel to India-led initiatives like BIMSTEC and BBIN.
- **China's Maritime Ambitions:** If the cooperation extends into Bay of Bengal maritime affairs, it would mark a large Chinese foothold in India's maritime backyard.
- **Diminishing SAARC Relevance:** With SAARC rendered ineffective because of India-Pakistan tensions, China is now trying to craft a China-centric alternative regional layout.
- **Potential for Strategic Infrastructure:** China's port investments in Chittagong (Bangladesh) and Gwadar (Pakistan) may need to ultimately guide dual-use centers, raising concerns about militarisation and encirclement of India.

Way Ahead

- **Regional Multilateralism:** India needs to proactively push sub-regional organisations like BIMSTEC, BBIN, and IORA as platforms for promoting regional connectivity and countering China-centric regional architectures.
- **Recalibration of Neighbourhood Policy:** A long-term strategic blueprint that includes predictable financial assistance, admiration for smaller nations' agency, and cooperative security mechanisms can help counter China's transactional international relations.

Conclusion

- The informal meeting among China, Pakistan, and Bangladesh displays China's evolving method to reshape South Asia's geopolitical architecture in its favour.
- India has to respond with a balanced approach that combines principled diplomacy, development-led partnerships, and strong security features to preserve its leadership and promote regional stability.

Source:* *The Indian Express

Mains PYQ

1. "Increasing cross-border terrorist attacks in India and growing interference in the internal affairs of several member-states by Pakistan are not conducive for the future of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)." Explain with suitable examples. (2016)

- Bangladesh, China and Pakistan held an informal trilateral meeting on the sidelines of the 9th China-South Asia Exposition and the sixth China-South Asia Cooperation meeting in Kunming.
- The 3 countries exchanged perspectives on the premise of mutual trust, understanding and shared imaginative and prescient for peace, prosperity and balance within the area, the discharge brought.
- They identified key areas for cooperation which include infrastructure, connectivity, trade, investment, healthcare, agriculture, maritime affairs, ICT, disaster preparedness, and climate change.

[2.14] India and South Africa 9th Joint Defence Committee

Syllabus - International Relations [GS Paper-2]

Context

India and South Africa signed two agreements in the domain of submarine cooperation during the 9th Joint Defence Committee (JDC) meeting held in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Significance of Cooperation Between two Countries

- **Blue-Water Collaboration:** For India's goal to bolster blue-water naval presence, cooperation with South Africa complements reach throughout the Indian and Atlantic Oceans.
- **Shared Security Beyond Submarines:** These agreements bolster not just rescue, but also training, surveillance, and joint R&D—a key to addressing threats like piracy, trafficking, and strategic rivalries.
- **Defence Industrial Growth:** India's defence production prowess aligns properly with South Africa's naval modernization objectives.
- **Regional & Historical Significance:** Rooted in shared anti-colonial histories, this partnership extends diplomatic convergence into deeper defence integration.

India-South Africa Relations

- **History of Friendship:** India and South Africa share historical ties rooted in the conflict against colonialism and apartheid. India was the first country to reduce trade ties with the apartheid regime in 1946 and led international efforts on the UN and NAM to impose sanctions.
- **Diplomatic Relations:** Formal diplomatic ties were restored in 1993.
    - The Red Fort Declaration of 1997 created a Strategic Partnership.
    - 2023 marked 30 years of renewed diplomatic relations.
- **Defence and Maritime Cooperation:** Defence cooperation commenced in 1996.
    - India and South Africa conduct joint naval exercise events like IBSAMAR (India-Brazil-South Africa Maritime) and MILAN.

- South Africa also participates in India-Africa Defence Dialogue and has sent liaison officials to India's IFC-IOR.

- **Political Engagement:** India and South Africa often hold high-level conferences at BRICS, G20, and IBSA boards.
  - President Cyril Ramaphosa was the Chief Guest at India's Republic Day in 2019.
- **Trade and Investment:** Bilateral exchange reached $19.25 billion in 2023–24.
  - India exports cars, pharma merchandise, rice, and chemical substances.
  - It imports gold, coal, copper ore, phosphoric acid, and manganese from South Africa.
  - India is one of the top 10 trading partners of South Africa.
- **Skill and Education Cooperation:** The Gandhi–Mandela Centre of Specialisation was established in Pretoria in 2021 to educate artisans.
  - India gives ITEC education programmes for South African professionals.
- **Indian Diaspora:** South Africa has a 1.7 million strong Indian-born population.
  - Most are living in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, and Cape Town.

Way Ahead

- India–South Africa relations are built on shared history, mutual respect, and a commitment to inclusive development.
- By deepening cooperation throughout defence, trade, innovation, and multilateral boards, India and South Africa can play a main role in shaping a just and equitable world for the Global South.

Source: ***The Indian Express***

Mains PYQ

1. "If the last few decades were of Asia's growth story, the next few are expected to be of Africa's." In the light of this statement, examine India's influence in Africa in recent years. (2021)

- India and South Africa signed two agreements in the domain of submarine cooperation during the 9th Joint Defence Committee (JDC) meeting held in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Significance of Cooperation Between two Countries

- **Blue-Water Collaboration:** For India's goal to bolster blue-water naval presence, cooperation with South Africa complements reach throughout the Indian and Atlantic Oceans.
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- **Defence Industrial Growth:** India's defence production prowess aligns properly with South Africa's naval modernization objectives.
- **Regional & Historical Significance:** Rooted in shared anti-colonial histories, this partnership extends diplomatic convergence into deeper defence integration.

[2.15] India's Data Imperative: The Pivot Towards Quality

Syllabus - Infrastructure [GS Paper-3]

Context

NITI Aayog recently launched the third edition of its quarterly insights series Future Front, titled "India's Data Imperative: The Pivot Towards Quality."

Key Highlights

- This report underscores the pressing need for strong data quality to improve virtual governance, domesticate public trust, and ensure efficient service transport.
- India's virtual infrastructure (UPI, Aadhaar, Ayushman Bharat) has scaled massively.
- However, as platforms mature, quality of data has grown to be a national imperative.
- A single error (wrong digit, mismatched name) can motivate critical problems: halted pensions, subsidy misdelivery, or inflated welfare costs.

Need for Robust Data Ecosystem

- **Fiscal Leakage:** Errors and duplication lead to 4–7% annual welfare overspending.
- **Policy Distortion:** Inconsistent or previous data causes misdirected schemes and delays.
- **Erosion of Trust:** Citizens lose trust because of mismatched data and claim rejections.

Core Challenges Identified

- **Systemic Design Flaws:** Incentives prioritize pace over accuracy.
- **Fragmentation:** Silos and incompatible formats avert integration.
- **Outdated Systems:** Legacy tech lacks validation, audit trails.
- **Lack of Accountability:** No clean statistics custodianship.
- **Rushed Execution:** Quantity-targeted goals compromise quality.
- **Low Expectations:** 80% accuracy considered "desirable sufficient" in lots of structures.

Structural Recommendations

- **Institutionalising Ownership:** Designate data custodians at national/state/district levels.
    - Make great a shared duty—programme heads, IT groups, discipline workforce.
    - Ensure a single point of responsibility for retaining data integrity end-to-end.
- **Incentivising Data Quality:** Go beyond pace; praise accuracy and completeness.
    - Track indicators like error rates, completion levels and timeliness.
    - Integrate these into programme reviews as a measure of delivery strength, not just audit compliance.
- **Ensuring Interoperability:** Enable systems to securely exchange data across systems, departments, and time horizons.
    - Essential for retaining public data cost.

Way Ahead: Cultural Shift Needed

- Promote a culture of data stewardship throughout all ranges of presidency.
- Demand seen top-level commitment to boost the value of clean, depended on data.

- Data fine is now important to the public trust, efficient service delivery, and the achievement of India's AI environment.

Source: ***The News on AIR***

Mains PYQ

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

- NITI Aayog recently launched the third edition of its quarterly insights series Future Front, titled "India's Data Imperative: The Pivot Towards Quality."
- This report underscores the pressing need for strong data quality to improve virtual governance, domesticate public trust, and ensure efficient service transport.
- India's virtual infrastructure (UPI, Aadhaar, Ayushman Bharat) has scaled massively.
- However, as platforms mature, quality of data has grown to be a national imperative.
- A single error (wrong digit, mismatched name) can motivate critical problems: halted pensions, subsidy misdelivery, or inflated welfare costs.

[2.16] SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting

Syllabus - International Relations [GS Paper-2]

Context

India has refused to sign a joint declaration on the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' meeting in Qingdao, China.

Key Highlights

- India is not satisfied with the language of the joint record and there has been no point out of cross-border terrorist activities particularly the current Pahalgam Terror attack.
- The refusal to advocate the report resulted in the conclave ending without a joint communication.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- Shanghai Five emerged in 1996 from a sequence of border demarcation and demilitarization talks between 4 former USSR republics and China.
- Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan have been participants of the Shanghai Five.
- With the accession of Uzbekistan to the organization in 2001, the Shanghai Five was renamed the SCO.
- **Objective:** To decorate regional cooperation for efforts to curb terrorism, separatism, and extremism in the Central Asian region.
- **Members:** China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Belarus and the 4 Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan.
    - India became a full member in 2017 and assumed the rotating chairmanship in 2023.

    - Member countries contribute around 30 percent of the global GDP and about 40 percent of the world's population.
- **Observer status:** Afghanistan and Mongolia.
- **Language:** The SCO's official languages are Russian and Chinese.
- **Structure:** The highest decision-making body of the SCO is the Council of Heads of States (CHS) which meets as soon as a year.
    - The Organization has 2 status bodies — the Secretariat in Beijing and the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent.

Significance for India

- **Regional Security:** The SCO serves as a platform for addressing security concerns, including terrorism, separatism, and extremism, which are vital issues for India.
    - Through SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), India collaborates on intelligence sharing and counter-terrorism efforts.
- **Balancing China and Pakistan:** While each are SCO members, the forum allows India to claim its function and prevent the formation of anti-India narratives.
- **Energy Security:** Central Asia is rich in oil, fuel, and uranium. SCO membership permits India to reinforce energy ties with these countries.
- **Economic Cooperation:** The organisation facilitates financial collaboration among member states, which enhance trade and investment opportunities for India, specifically with Central Asian countries.
- **Central Asia:** The SCO is in particular vital for India since its membership and focus emphasize Central Asia—a region in which India is eager to ramp up ties but faces an inherent constraint with its outreach.

Challenges

- **China-Pakistan Axis:** The strong partnership between China and Pakistan in the SCO complicates India's strategic positioning, as at instances it limits India's influence in regional security discussions.
- **Geopolitical Tensions:** Ongoing border disputes and geopolitical tensions with China and Pakistan spill over into SCO discussions, making it hard for India to interact constructively.
- **Focus on Security over Economic Development:** The SCO's primary recognition on security issues sometimes overshadow financial and developmental cooperation, which are vital for India's interests in the region.
- **Institutional barriers:** Decision-making within SCO is consensus-based, slowing progress on key issues.

Conclusion

- SCO is a strategic platform for India to engage with Eurasian powers, promote regional stability, stable financial and energy interests, and enhance counter-terrorism cooperation.
- Despite challenges, India uses SCO to promote its vision of "**Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)**" and as a counterbalance to Western alliances.

Source: ***The Indian Express***

Mains PYQ

1. Critically examine the aims and objectives of SCO. What importance does it hold for India? (2021)

- India has refused to sign a joint declaration on the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' meeting in Qingdao, China.
- India is not satisfied with the language of the joint record and there has been no point out of cross-border terrorist activities particularly the current Pahalgam Terror attack.
- The refusal to advocate the report resulted in the conclave ending without a joint communication.

[2.17] RBI's Revised PSL Norms for Small Finance Banks

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has comfortable priority sector lending (PSL) norms for Small Finance Banks (SFBs).

Key Highlights

- PSL loans target for SFBs has been lowered to 60 per cent of their loans from 75 percent earlier from the contemporary financial year.
- The additional element (35 percent) of PSL might be decreased to 20 percent, thereby making the overall PSL target as 60 per cent of ANBC (adjusted net bank credit) or Credit Equivalent of Off-Balance Sheet Exposures (CEOBE), whichever is better from financial year 2025-26 onwards.
- SFBs will hold to allocate 40 percent in their ANBC or CEOBE, whichever is better, to different sub-sectors under PSL as per the extant PSL prescriptions, even as the balance 20 percent may be allotted to any individual or more sub-sectors under the PSL where the bank has competitive benefit.

Priority sector lending (PSL)

- Priority sector lending (PSL) is an RBI-mandated policy requiring banks to allocate a hard and fast portion of their loans to key sectors that face credit shortages but are critical for inclusive financial growth.
- It incorporates loans to agriculture, MSMEs, export credit, training, housing, social infrastructure, renewable energy, weaker sections and different segments.
    - In March 2025, the RBI had issued revised PSL hints for banks, enhancing limits for loans which includes housing and education, while the PSL target for urban cooperative banks (UCBs) was introduced down from 75 percent to 60 percent.

Small Finance Banks (SFBs)

- They are operational below the law of the RBI in India, below the purview of the top bank's Banking Ombudsman Scheme, 2006, as amended sometimes.
- SFBs are registered as public constrained organizations under the Companies Act, 2013 and ruled by Banking Regulations Act, 1949; RBI Act, 1934.
- They challenge RBI's prudential norms for business banks, which include CRR and SLR.
- **Objectives:** SFBs aim to offer financial savings vehicles and credit to underserved sectors like small businesses, farmers, micro-industries, and the unorganized sector by cost-effective, technology-driven operations.

- **Eligibility:** Eligible promoters including resident people with 10 years of banking/finance experience, resident-owned companies/societies, and existing NBFCs, MFIs, and LABs. Promoters have to have a strong track record (5+ years).
- **Scope:** Small Finance Banks provide simple banking services including Savings Accounts, Current Accounts, Fixed Deposits, Recurring Deposits, Loans, and many others.
- **Capital Requirements:** Minimum paid-up equity capital is INR 100 crore, with promoters contributing as a minimum 40% initially (lowering to 26% within 12 years). Foreign shareholding follows the FDI policy for private sector banks.

Source: ***The Indian Express***

Prelims PYQ

1. What is the purpose of setting up of Small Finance Banks (SFBs) in India? (2017)

1. ***To supply credit to small business units***
2. ***To supply credit to small and marginal farmers***
3. ***To encourage young entrepreneurs to set up business particularly in rural areas.***

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (a)

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has comfortable priority sector lending (PSL) norms for Small Finance Banks (SFBs).
- PSL loans target for SFBs has been lowered to 60 per cent of their loans from 75 percent earlier from the contemporary financial year.
- The additional element (35 percent) of PSL might be decreased to 20 percent, thereby making the overall PSL target as 60 per cent of ANBC (adjusted net bank credit) or Credit Equivalent of Off-Balance Sheet Exposures (CEOBE), whichever is better from financial year 2025-26 onwards.
- SFBs will hold to allocate 40 percent in their ANBC or CEOBE, whichever is better, to different sub-sectors under PSL as per the extant PSL prescriptions, even as the balance 20 percent may be allotted to any individual or more sub-sectors under the PSL where the bank has competitive benefit.

[2.18] Bihar's First Nuclear Power Plant

Syllabus - Energy [GS Paper-3]

Context

Bihar is ready to host its first nuclear energy plant, making it one of the first six states to benefit from the Government of India's National Nuclear Energy Mission.

Key Highlights

- The declaration comes as a part of a broader push to diversify India's energy blend, strengthen local energy security, and integrate advanced technologies like Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).
- The Government has additionally approved a 1,000 MW battery storage potential task in Bihar, geared toward improving grid stability and supporting renewable energy integration.
- The authorities will offer viability gap funding of Rs 18 lakh per MW for this initiative.

Nuclear Energy

- Nuclear power is the power released throughout nuclear reactions, either through fission (splitting of atomic nuclei) or fusion (merging of atomic nuclei).
- In nuclear fission, heavy atomic nuclei, consisting of the ones of uranium or plutonium, are cut up into lighter nuclei, liberating a huge amount of energy.
    - This method is utilized in nuclear energy flora to generate energy.

Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)

- Small modular reactors (SMRs) are advanced nuclear reactors with a power ability of as much as 300 MW(e) in step with unit, roughly one-third the producing potential of traditional nuclear energy plants.
    - Small – physically a fragment of the scale of a conventional nuclear energy reactor.
    - Modular – making it feasible for structures and components to be manufacturing unit-assembled and transported as a unit to place for set up.
    - Reactors – harnessing nuclear fission to generate heat to supply energy .
- There are 4 four foremost kinds of SMR i.e., mild water, high temperature fuel, liquid steel, and molten salt.

Advantages of SMR

- **Enhanced Safety Features:** SMRs make use of passive safety mechanisms, along with natural convection and gravity-driven cooling, which assist prevent overheating without relying on external energy or human intervention.
- **Flexibility:** The modular nature of SMRs lets in for incremental power additions, which is good for developing power wishes.
- **Suitability for Remote and Off-Grid Areas:** SMRs compact layout makes them adaptable for smaller grid systems and programs like district heating and water desalination.
- **Cost-Effective Construction:** Prefabrication in controlled environments reduces on-site creation time and expenses.

Government Initiatives for Enhancing India's Nuclear Capacity

- India ambitions to increase its nuclear installed capacity from the present 8,180 MW to 22,480 MW by 2031–32.
- Construction and commissioning of 10 Reactors with a total capacity of 8,000 MW is ongoing across the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh.
- **International Collaboration:** In-precept approval has been granted for setting up 6 × 1,208 MW nuclear energy reactors in Kovvada, Andhra Pradesh, in cooperation with the USA.

Recent Developments in Nuclear Energy in India

- A massive new uranium deposit was found around India's oldest uranium mine in Jaduguda (Jharkhand).

- **Rajasthan Atomic Power Project (RAPP-7) Achieves Criticality:** On September 19, 2024, Unit-7 of RAPP reached criticality, a key milestone in nuclear reactor operations, indicating the beginning of a self-sustained fission chain response.
    - This is the third indigenous nuclear reactor to achieve this popularity.
- The Kakrapar Atomic Power Station Units 3 & 4, each of 700 MWe, started commercial operation in FY 2023–24.
- These are some of the first indigenously designed Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) of this scale.
- India's first 500 MWe PFBR at Kalpakkam performed key milestones in 2024, which include primary sodium filling, commissioning of sodium pumps, and core loading.

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)

- Bihar is ready to host its first nuclear energy plant, making it one of the first six states to benefit from the Government of India's National Nuclear Energy Mission.
- The declaration comes as a part of a broader push to diversify India's energy blend, strengthen local energy security, and integrate advanced technologies like Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).
- The Government has additionally approved a 1,000 MW battery storage potential task in Bihar, geared toward improving grid stability and supporting renewable energy integration.
- The authorities will offer viability gap funding of Rs 18 lakh per MW for this initiative.

[2.19] Ensuring Adivasi Identity in Census

Syllabus: Governance, Social Justice [GS Paper-2]

Context

The demand for recognition of Adivasi (Scheduled Tribe) identity in the Census is a pressing issue in contemporary Indian society and governance. As India prepares for the 2027 Census, the lack of a separate column for Adivasi faiths continues to spark debate on constitutional rights, cultural representation, and social justice.

Why is Adivasi Identity Recognition Important?

- **Cultural and Spiritual Diversity:** Adivasi communities in India have a rich diversity of languages, traditions, and practices associated with their religions. Adivasi religions or beliefs, such as Sarna Dharam and other forms of nature worship, do not share the same status as the six religions recognized and documented in the Census - Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism. As no separate column can exist for Adivasi religions, there is misrepresentation of Adivasi beliefs, and significant cultural invisibility.
- **Constitutional Rights and Protections:** While the Indian Constitution affords citizens freedom of religion (articles 25 and 26) and provides protections for the customs, belief systems, and traditional practices of Scheduled Tribes (ST) under sections five and six, the Format for the Census denies those who wish to declare their religious identity as Adivasi the

potential need to accurately declare such an identity, the undoing of such constitutional protections, rights, and guarantees.

Impact on Adivasi Communities

- **Cultural Loss and Assimilation:** The systematic exclusion of Adivasi faiths and religion in the Census deprives them as a whole, as Adivasi 'different' religious identities lose their visibility and credibility. This is due to the continued loss of tribal culture and customs, as groups are forced into complete assimilation into dominant religious bodies.
- **Different Standards of Treatment and Racialization:** Some groups feel they are actively treated differently based on religious identification vs pure tribal identification. For example, they articulate that Christian STs can be abrogated from ST identification, while Hindu-identifying STs can retain ST identification. This exemplifies a double standard, and effectively rejects the letter and the spirit of the constitution where ST classification should be based on specific social, cultural and historical characteristics, not religious characteristics.

State-Level Initiatives and Public Awareness

- **Place Based Awareness and Recognition:** In places like Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh, some community awareness projects not only contributed awareness to the value of a Sarna and Gond registration under the Census, but they also led to more Sarna and Gond registrations and subsequent inclusion in the Census as Adivasi. This shows that if Adivasi communities are not duplicitous and aware, they will represent themselves correctly
- **Sourcing and Resolution From Jharkhand:** In 2020, an unanimous Resolution was passed in Jharkhand asking for the Sarna identity/faith to be included as an identifier on the Census. The government resolution went to the Centre, and nothing followed. This demonstrates the existence of a need for nation-wide acknowledgement of Adivasi faiths.

Why a Separate 'Adivasi/ST Faiths' Column is Needed?

- **Visibility and Legitimacy:** A separate column for Adivasi/ST faiths on the Census would ensure accurate coverage of representation in the Census process.; protect cultural diversity ; and resist assimilative injustices. This would also further Adivasi religious identities' visibility and legitimacy.
- **Protection of Constitutional Rights:** Including a separate column for Adivasi faiths would protect the constitutional rights and cultural dignity of Adivasi communities. It would also acknowledge the ongoing concerns with misclassification, in that Adivasis would not lose their constitutional protections due to misrepresentation and it would further therefore protect the correct categories and subcategories of Adivasi faith in the Census process.
- **Democratic and Social Empowerment:** Recognizing Adivasi faith in the Census is critical for the purpose of representation, and for the social empowerment of Adivasi communities. Recognition of Adivasi faiths will help protect the cultural integrity of their unique traditions, languages and religiously-informed beliefs, as integral parts of the pluralistic fabric of Indian society.

Conclusion

Recognising Adivasi identity in the Census is a vital step towards ensuring constitutional justice, cultural preservation, and social inclusion. The inclusion of a separate 'Adivasi/ST Faiths' column would not only address long standing grievances but also strengthen India's commitment to pluralism and diversity.

Source: The Hindu

[2.20] India in Critical and Emerging Tech

Syllabus: Science and Technology [GS Paper-3]

Context

India's performance in critical and emerging technologies, as highlighted by the Critical and Emerging Technologies Index 2025, remains a cause for concern. The index evaluates countries across five key sectors: semiconductors, artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, space, and quantum technologies. India's overall score of 15.2 places it well behind global leaders such as the United States, China, and Europe. Specifically, India ranks second last among the 25 countries assessed, trailing even France, Canada, and Australia. This underscores substantial gaps in research and development (R&D), infrastructure, and global influence in these sectors.

Why Semiconductors Matter

Semiconductor technology is foundational to the modern digital economy. Semiconductors power everything from consumer electronics and telecommunications to advanced computing, automotive systems, and healthcare devices. Given their strategic importance, countries are racing to establish robust semiconductor ecosystems to secure economic security and technological sovereignty. The ongoing global chip shortage has further highlighted the need for resilient supply chains and domestic manufacturing capabilities.

Challenges Facing India's Semiconductor Industry

- **Underdeveloped Supply Chain**: India lacks domestic sources for key semiconductor raw materials like silicon wafers, high-purity gases, and ultrapure water. While there is some chemical and gas production (e.g., in Dahej, Gujarat), the absence of semiconductor-grade manufacturing capacity leads to heavy import dependence and vulnerability to global disruptions.
- **Talent Shortage**: Despite a strong presence in chip design (20% of global workforce), India faces a significant skill gap in semiconductor fabrication, assembly, and testing. Specialized engineers and technicians are in short supply, though efforts are underway to develop targeted training programs through industry-academia-government collaboration.
- **Global Competition & Tech Evolution**: India competes with established giants like the U.S., China, Taiwan, and South Korea, which have mature ecosystems and large investments. As a late entrant, India must rapidly scale up and invest in R&D to keep pace with fast-evolving technologies and manufacturing processes.

Government Initiatives and Policy Responses

- **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)**: Launched in December 2021, ISM aims to build a robust semiconductor and display manufacturing ecosystem, offering up to 50% fiscal support for fans and related facilities.
- **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme**: Provides financial incentives to attract domestic and foreign investments in chip fabrication and packaging, reduce import dependence, and promote R&D and skill development.
- **Recent Progress**: India plans to produce its first indigenous chip by 2025. Key projects include Micron's assembly and testing plant in Gujarat and a TATA-Powerchip partnership, expected to boost investment and strengthen the ecosystem.

The Road Ahead: Opportunities and Recommendations

- **Taking Advantage of Strengths in Design:** India possesses immense engineering talent and, assuming future success, is poised to dominate semiconductor design. Through capitalizing on our engineering talents further, India can now evolve into manufacturing and testing both

the design and prototype chips. As we work to exploit our strengths in some of the highest-value work in our value system, India will be able to reduce our reliance on other nations.

- **Creating a National Semiconductor Development Ecosystem:** India will need to create a sound semiconductor development ecosystem to discover an area of self-reliance. Beginning with investing in research and development, India could, similar to America, create a corporate cluster of advanced manufacturing, such as Texas or Silicon Valley. India could also look to develop domestic suppliers for raw materials and domestic suppliers of equipment and services to develop our semiconductor capabilities.
- **International Collaboration:** Collaborations with foreign countries via international initiatives such as the US-India iCET will provide access to advanced technologies, capital and expertise. An engaged world will advance India's semiconductor capabilities faster by integrating India's semiconductor sector with the rest of the world.
- **Prepare and Invest in Skill Development and Education:** India must prepare and invest in to close the talent gap between countries. There will need to be a whole slate of post-secondary and vocational educational systems developed as the people the semiconductor sector needs to support its growth. Clearly defined skill pathways into shortening educational and apprenticeship periods will be identified, and specialized modules in advanced manufacturing and testing for semiconductors will need to be developed jointly with industry and education mentorship and knowledge exchange relationships to support the province in educating the widest range of education participants to avail development opportunities.

Conclusion

India's lag in critical technologies, especially semiconductors, is a significant challenge but also an opportunity for transformation. With targeted policy interventions, robust investment, and a focus on skill development, India can bridge the gap and emerge as a key player in the global semiconductor landscape. The success of initiatives like the India Semiconductor Mission and the PLI Scheme will be crucial in realizing this vision.

Source: PressReader

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Discuss the key initiatives taken by the Government of India to promote critical and emerging technologies. Also, analyze the major challenges and suggest measures to overcome them.

[2.21] India-ASEAN Trade Deal

Syllabus: International Relation [GS Paper-2]

Context

The India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA), formally known as the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA), was signed in 2009 and came into effect in 2010. Over the past 15 years, this agreement has facilitated trade between India and the 10-member ASEAN bloc, which includes Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. However, the current Indian government has expressed dissatisfaction with the deal, citing persistent trade imbalances and asymmetrical benefits.

Current Status of Review Negotiations

Despite nine rounds of negotiations since 2022, the review of the AITIGA has made little progress. Both sides agreed in 2023 to conclude the review by 2025, but talks have moved at a glacial pace, with ASEAN described as "stonewalling" the process. Indian officials have highlighted that while India opened up 71% of its tariff lines to ASEAN countries, some members like Indonesia granted access to only 41% of products, with Vietnam and Thailand offering access to about two-thirds of their tariff lines. This asymmetry has become a central point of contention.

Key Issues in the Review

- **Trade Imbalance:** India's exports to ASEAN have doubled over the last 15 years, but imports from ASEAN have more than tripled. In 2022-23, India exported around $44 billion to ASEAN but imported $87.57 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of $43.57 billion. This growing deficit is a major concern for Indian policymakers.
- **Tariff Line Disparities:** India has offered duty concessions on over 71% of its tariff lines, but several ASEAN members have reciprocated with significantly lower levels of access for Indian goods.
- **Non-Tariff Barriers and Third-Country Routing:** India is also concerned about non-tariff barriers and the alleged routing of goods, particularly from China, through ASEAN countries to take advantage of lower tariffs under the FTA.

Industry and Economic Implications

Indian industry leaders have long demanded a review of the FTA to address the trade asymmetry and to ensure a level playing field. The stagnation in negotiations has led to mounting frustration, with calls for India to consider retaliatory measures if ASEAN fails to address these concerns. The review is seen as crucial for balancing trade and making it more sustainable for Indian businesses.

Conclusion

The India-ASEAN FTA review remains deadlocked after nine rounds of talks, with little progress on addressing the core issues of trade imbalance and tariff line disparities. The ongoing statemate highlights the complexities of renegotiating international trade agreements to reflect current economic realities and the need for a more equitable partnership between India and ASEAN. The outcome of these negotiations will have significant implications for India's trade strategy and its economic relationship with Southeast Asia.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Critically examine the achievements and challenges of the India-ASEAN trade partnership. Suggest measures to make the relationship more equitable and strategic.

[2.22] Agriculture, Dairy Obstruct India-U.S. Trade

Syllabus: International Relation [GS Paper-2]

Context

The ongoing bilateral deal negotiations between India and the US face steep challenges, particularly with sensitive issues surrounding dairy and agriculture, both of which occupy essential space in the economies and societies of their nations.

Background of the Trade Negotiations

India and the United States have been negotiating a bilateral trade agreement to reduce tariffs and expand market access. A deadline for an interim trade deal is July 9, 2025, the date after which the US has indicated a 26% tariff on Indian goods will go back into effect if no deal has been reached.

Why Dairy and Agriculture Are Sticking Points

- **Importance of Dairy Sector in India:** India is the biggest producer of milk in the world, with total production of 239 million metric tons that is more than double the United States. The dairy sector provides a livelihood for more than 80 million smallholder farmers, most of whom are rural and poor. The average Indian dairy farmer has only two or three animals, which is in stark contrast to U.S. dairy farms with hundreds of animals. This weakens the Indian farmer's economic position. Dairy is of cultural significance in India, but consumer preferences differ between India and the U.S., where cattle feed may contain animal by-products that are not acceptable practices in India.
- **Protectionist Pressure from India:** Dairy has, so far, been traditionally kept out of all its free trade agreements by India, and India is adamant about protecting the industry from competing with U.S. dairy products that are being produced at a lower cost. Indian dairy industry leaders have been clear in their statements saying India should not become a dumping ground for U.S. surplus dairy that may severely affect domestic milk prices and producers. Removal of import tariffs on tariff products like skimmed milk powder, the government fears, will trigger import substitution, thereby reducing local demand for milk and severely impacting the incomes of dairy farmers.
- **U.S. Concerns and Demands:** While the United States seeks market activities for dairy and other agricultural products vis-à-vis tariff reductions and non-tariff barriers easing in India, the full list includes genetically modified crops, apples, tree nuts, and other agricultural products. The U.S. dairy industry, worth $8.22 billion in exports, considers India to be a colossal untapped market but continues to face structural impediments alongside very stringent sanitary standards that hamper any form of entrance.

Broader Agricultural Issues

- Apart from dairy, India is cautious about lowering tariffs on agricultural imports like maize and soybean due to concerns over farmer welfare and health risks associated with genetically modified organisms (GMOs).
- Indian authorities have pushed back against U.S. demands for low-duty imports of such agricultural products, citing potential adverse impacts on domestic farmers and food security.
- The Indian government emphasizes the need for a "win-win" trade deal that balances interests and protects vulnerable sectors.

Impact on Trade Negotiations and Future Outlook

The dairy and agriculture-related problems, remaining unresolved, continue to stand in the way of a full-fledged India-U.S. trade agreement. Both sides are eager to conclude a mini-deal before the deadline of July 9, but due to the complexity of these issues, an extension of the talks past this date is likely, setting the warm target of concluding phase one by the fall of 2025. India may receive

access concessions in labor-intensive sectors such as textiles, gems, and leather, whereas the U.S., for its part, is after access in industrial goods and agricultural markets.

Conclusion

The dairy and agriculture sectors are emblematic of the broader challenges in India-U.S. trade talks. India's imperative to protect its vast network of small dairy farmers and maintain food security clashes with the U.S.'s export-driven agenda seeking greater market access. Until these fundamental differences are addressed through nuanced and pragmatic solutions, the bilateral trade deal will remain stalled, limiting the full potential of economic cooperation between the two countries.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Discuss the key points of contention in this sectoral deadlock and suggest a way forward for a balanced trade agreement that protects domestic interests while promoting bilateral cooperation.

[2.23] India's Coffee Exports Surge

Syllabus: Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

India’s coffee export sector has witnessed a remarkable transformation over the last decade, marked by a 125% surge in export earnings, reaching $1.8 billion in the fiscal year 2023-24. This growth reflects the combined impact of strategic government initiatives, enhanced global demand, and a focus on value addition and sustainability.

Remarkable Growth in Coffee Exports

India’s coffee exports have grown from approximately $800 million in 2014-15 to $1.8 billion in 2023-24, representing a 125% increase over 11 years. The fiscal year 2024-25 saw a record 40.2% rise in export earnings to $1.803 billion, further accelerating growth in 2025-26 with a reported 25% increase compared to the previous year. This consistent upward trend underscores India’s growing footprint in the global coffee market.

Key Export Destinations

Europe remains the largest importer of Indian coffee, with countries such as Italy, Germany, and Belgium leading demand. Other significant markets include Middle Eastern nations, South Korea, Japan, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Nordic countries like Finland, Norway, and Denmark. This diversified export base reflects India’s ability to cater to varied consumer preferences worldwide.

Government Initiatives Driving Export Growth

- **Digitalisation and Ease of Doing Business:** Introduction of online issuance of Registration-cum-Membership Certificates (RCMC), export permits, and certificates of origin with digital signatures has streamlined export procedures and reduced bottlenecks.
- **Export Incentives:** The government provides transit and freight assistance, offering Rs 3 per kg for value-added coffee exports and Rs 2 per kg for high-value green coffee shipments to distant markets. This financial support enhances competitiveness in premium segments.

- **Regular Engagement and Market Intelligence:** Continuous interaction with exporters helps identify and resolve challenges promptly, while dissemination of global market intelligence aids strategic decision-making.
- **Promotion of Value Addition:** Emphasis on processing and marketing value-added coffee products has helped capture higher export revenues and build brand equity internationally.

Strategic Promotion and Sustainability Efforts

- Organizing buyer-seller meets and business matchmaking events in key markets.
- Promoting Geographical Indication (GI) tags for distinctive Indian coffee varieties, currently awarded to five regional and two specialty coffees, with ongoing campaigns for more varieties.
- Leveraging digital media to highlight India's unique coffee attributes such as shade-grown, hand-picked, and sun-dried processing methods.
- Supporting innovation and entrepreneurship through the Atal Incubation Centre at the Central Coffee Research Institute in Bengaluru, which has nurtured over 63 startups and trained more than 3,000 individuals in the coffee value chain.

India's coffee sector also emphasizes sustainability, positioning itself as a global leader in environmentally responsible coffee production. This commitment aligns with growing international demand for sustainable and ethically sourced products.

Domestic Market and Future Prospects

Alongside export growth, efforts to expand domestic coffee consumption are underway, utilizing e-commerce platforms like ONDC, Amazon, and Flipkart to reach wider audiences. The integration of sustainability, innovation, and strategic promotion is expected to sustain India's momentum in the global coffee arena. As the seventh-largest coffee producer and fifth-largest exporter globally, India contributes about 3.5% to world coffee production and 5% to exports. With continued government support, infrastructure development, and market diversification, India's coffee export sector is well-positioned for robust growth and enhanced global recognition in the coming years.

Source: TOI

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. What challenges does the Indian coffee sector face in sustaining this momentum in the global market?

[2.24] Safe Water Scarcity Affects 2 Billion People

Syllabus: Health [GS Paper-2], Environment [GS Paper-3]

Context

Access to safe drinking water is a basic human right essential for health and development. Yet, about 2.2 billion people, one in four worldwide, still lack safely managed drinking water, leading to serious health, economic, and social challenges that demand urgent global action.

Current Status of Global Drinking Water Access

Definition of Safe Drinking Water:

Safe drinking water is water that is readily available within the premises, free from pollutants, and in sufficient quantity for human and domestic use. The Sustainable Development Goal 6.1, therefore, stipulates the provision of universal and equitable access to such water.

Statistics on Access:

- In 2022, 6 billion people had access to safely managed drinking water services, but 2.2 billion did not.
- Among those without safely managed services:
    - 1.5 billion had basic services (improved source within 30 minutes round trip)
    - 292 million had limited services (improved source more than 30 minutes away)
    - 296 million used unimproved sources such as unprotected wells
    - 115 million depended on untreated surface water (rivers and lakes).

Geographical and Social Disparities:

Access is uneven, with rural areas and the poorer populations suffering disproportionately. Sometimes, women and girls shoulder the burden of fetching water, keeping them from studies and other economic opportunities.

Causes and Challenges

- **Contamination and Infrastructure:** Many water sources become unsafe due to contamination during collection, transport or storage. It remains challenging to expand piped water directly to homes, especially in rural and conflict affected locations.
- **Water Scarcity and Climate Change:** 2 billion people live in areas of water stress, and this is expected to increase to half the world's population by 2025 due to climate change.
- **Health Risks:** Poor WASH leads to contaminated water which causes diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea, which together kill 500,000 people each year, (including 1,000 children under five per day).
- **Conflict Zone:** Children in conflict areas are almost three times more likely to die from water borne diseases than violence.

Global Efforts and Recommendations

- **Global Recognitions and Goals:** In 2010, the UN General Assembly recognized the human right to safe water and sanitation. Within the SDG framework, it specifies that safe water access is indispensable towards reducing poverty, improving health, and unlocking economic potential.
- **Investment and Governance:** The WHO, UNICEF, and World Bank collectively feel that the construction of sustainable water systems requires considered investment, strengthening of governance frameworks, improvements in capacity, and innovative approaches. Governments need to improve planning, coordination, and regulation to ensure a supply of safe water.
- **Community and Technology Solutions:** Important next steps include scaling up household connections, improving water quality monitoring, and preventing contamination. Innovations in water treatment and infrastructure management will expedite progress particularly for the under-served.

Conclusion

The fact that 2.2 billion people still lack access to safe drinking water is a stark reminder of global inequalities and the urgent need for coordinated action. Achieving universal access requires political will, investment, and inclusive policies that prioritize vulnerable populations. Ensuring safe drinking water is not only a health imperative but also a foundation for sustainable development and social justice.

Source: Press Reader

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Discuss the key factors contributing to safe water scarcity in India and suggest sustainable policy measures to address the issue.

[2.25] Importance of Indian languages

Syllabus - Culture [GS Paper-1]

Context

The Department of Official Language recently celebrated its golden jubilee, marking 50 years since its establishment in 1975.

Key Highlights

- At this event, the Union Home Minister underscored the importance of Indian languages in keeping the nation's cultural identity, maintaining that language isn't always only a tool of communication but the 'soul of a nation'.

About Indian Languages

- India's linguistic variety isn't only a cultural asset — it's a foundational pillar of its national identity, democratic ethos, and inclusive development.
- **Cultural and Civilizational Heritage:** Census 2011 regarded 121 languages and over 1,600 mother tongues are used throughout India.
    - The Indus Valley script, Brāhmī, and Kharosthī are some of the earliest writing systems, reflecting India's long-standing literary traditions.
    - India has 11 recognized classical languages, i.e. Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia and recently brought Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali.
- **Constitutional and Legal Recognition:** The Constitution of India recognizes 22 scheduled languages under the Eighth Schedule, declaring the same status and promoting local languages.
    - Article 350A mandates that states provide primary education in the mother tongue for children from linguistic minority groups.
        - The Constitution guarantees the right to conserve one's language and way of life as a Fundamental Right.
    - Article 343 designates Hindi in Devanagari script as the official language of the Union, whilst permitting the continuing use of English.

- Article 344 presents for the constitution of a Commission and a Committee on Official Language to study and recommend on the progressive use of the Hindi language for professional functions.
- Article 345 grants State Legislatures the authority to undertake one or more languages used in the State or Hindi as the official language(s) of that specific State.

Importance of Language & Policy Support

- **Multilingualism as a Way of Life:** Most Indians grow up speaking two or more languages.
  - Multilingualism fosters intercultural know-how, social cohesion, and cognitive improvement, in particular amongst children.
- **Education and Empowerment:** The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 promotes mother tongue-based education up to Grade 5 and preferably till Grade 8, wherever possible.
  - Competitive assessments like JEE, NEET, and CUET are actually offered in 13 Indian languages, expanding access to higher schooling.
  - Digital structures like DIKSHA and SWAYAM provide e-studying content material in over a hundred thirty Indian languages, bridging the virtual divide.
  - DIKSHA hosts textbooks and mastering resources in 33 Indian languages and Indian Sign Language.
  - SWAYAM offers translated engineering content material in eleven Indian languages.
- **Digital Inclusion and Innovation:** Under the Digital India initiative, cell phones sold in India since 2017 have to help all Indian languages, enabling broader access to e-governance and e-commerce.
  - Projects like Bhashini aims to increase AI equipment for Indian languages, ensuring that generation serves all linguistic communities.
- **Safeguarding Endangered Languages:** India has lost 50 languages in the last 5 years, and many tribal and minority languages continue to be at risk.
- Dedicated Institutions for Language Promotion:
  - Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysuru;
  - Central Hindi Directorate, Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, and CSTT;
  - National Councils for Promotion of Urdu and Sindhi Languages;
  - Central Sanskrit Universities;
  - Central Institute of Classical Tamil (CICT), Chennai
- Initiatives like the Bharatiya Bhasha Anubhag and the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat marketing campaign aim to foster linguistic appreciation and solidarity among youths.

Source: ***The ToI***

Prelims PYQ

1. Consider the following languages: (2014)

1. ***Gujarati***
2. ***Kannada***
3. ***Telugu***

Which of the above has/have been declared as 'Classical Language/Languages' by the Government?

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

Ans: (c)

- The Department of Official Language recently celebrated its golden jubilee, marking 50 years since its establishment in 1975.
- At this event, the Union Home Minister underscored the importance of Indian languages in keeping the nation's cultural identity, maintaining that language isn't always only a tool of communication but the 'soul of a nation'.
- India's linguistic variety isn't only a cultural asset — it's a foundational pillar of its national identity, democratic ethos, and inclusive development.

[2.26] 80 years of the UN Charter

Syllabus - International Organisations [GS Paper-2]

Context

June 26, 2025 marks 80 years of the signing of the UN Charter in 1945, considered the founding treaty of the United Nations.

Key Highlights

- The Charter came into force on October 24, 1945, now located as United Nations Day.
- The UN Charter was signed on June 26, 1945, at the United Nations Conference on International Organization in San Francisco, by 50 nations in the aftermath of World War II.
- It was based on proposals evolved through China, the U.S., the UK, and the US during the Dumbarton Oaks Conference (1944).
- It contains a Preamble and 111 Articles, organized into chapters.
- **Key Functions of the UN Charter:**
    - Maintaining global peace and security
    - Promoting human rights and essential freedoms
    - Encouraging social progress and higher standards of life
    - Fostering global cooperation
- **Principal Organs of the United Nations:** The General Assembly (GA), The Security Council (SC), The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), The Trusteeship Council, The International Court of Justice (ICJ), and The UN Secretariat.

UN80 Initiative

- Launched in March 2025 by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, the UN80 Initiative is a system-wide reform attempt marking the UN's 80th anniversary, aimed toward modernizing the Organization to better serve current global challenges.
- Three Core Pillars of Reform:
    - **Efficiency & Effectiveness:** Remove duplication, red tape; optimize operations (e.g., reallocating features to lower-cost duty stations).
    - **Mandate Review:** Out of ~40,000 collected mandates, the UN will hire AI equipment to streamline, prioritize, and cast off obsolete directives.
    - **Structural Realignment:** Reassess UN device architecture, realign programmes, and doubtlessly reform institutions.

Need for Reform in UN Governance

- **Financial Strains & Budget Cuts:** UN faces a multi-year liquidity crisis due to past due or missing dues—only 75 of 193 Members paid complete 2025 checks on time.
- **Mandate Overload:** Thousands of overlapping or old mandates preclude UN agility and efficacy.
- **Evolving Global Threats:** The UN aims to adapt to new challenges: tech governance (AI), pandemics, climate crises, and multifaceted conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, etc.
- **Multilateral Trust Deficit:** Growing political polarization and declining public trust in global establishments heighten the urgency for multilateral reforms.

India's Position & Advocacy

- India strongly helps UN reform, specifically Security Council expansion, pointing out the existing form is out of date and unrepresentative.
- Member of G4 countries (India, Brazil, Germany, Japan), advocating inclusion of emerging powers and greater regional illustration — Africa, Latin America, Asia-Pacific.
- India has served eight times as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

What are the challenges?

- **Political Pushback by way of the P5:** Permanent members (US, UK, France, Russia, China) maintain veto power and have little incentive to dilute their effect.
- **Complex Negotiation Framework:** Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) have been ongoing since 2008, but loss of draft textual content or settlement stalls progress.
- **Funding Imperatives & Oversight:** UN80 lacks clean monetary structure to help long-term reform projects.
    - No unbiased monitoring or duty mechanism exists, making development monitoring vulnerable and closely depending on political will.
- **Consensus Fatigue & Multipolar Distractions:** There's "consensus fatigue" among smaller countries who feel sidelined in elite-driven negotiations. In a multipolar world, cognizance is moving to regional alliances (BRICS, Quad, SCO), making UN-centric reforms much less pressing for lots of states.

Way Ahead

- The UN80 Initiative offers a timely, complete roadmap to modernize the UN.
- India is a consistent proponent of multilateral reform, with specific emphasis on Security Council growth to reflect today's global realities.
- However, success hinges on overcoming entrenched P5 resistance, regional geopolitical dynamics, and imposing obvious oversight mechanisms to ensure promised reforms translate into action.

Source:* *The Indian Express

Mains PYQ

1. What are the main functions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)? Explain different functional commissions attached to it. (2017)

- June 26, 2025 marks 80 years of the signing of the UN Charter in 1945, considered the founding treaty of the United Nations.
- The Charter came into force on October 24, 1945, now located as United Nations Day.

- The UN Charter was signed on June 26, 1945, at the United Nations Conference on International Organization in San Francisco, by 50 nations in the aftermath of World War II.
- It was based on proposals evolved through China, the U.S., the UK, and the US during the Dumbarton Oaks Conference (1944).
- It contains a Preamble and 111 Articles, organized into chapters.

[2.27] Need for a Fresh Electoral Rolls for Bihar

Syllabus - Polity and Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has asked for the electoral rolls for Bihar to be prepared afresh.

Key Highlights

- All electors ought to submit an enumeration shape, and people registered after 2003 ought to also offer documentation setting up their citizenship.
- This special intensive revision(SIV) of rolls will sooner or later cover all states and Union Territories.
- **Reasons for the SIV:** Rapid urbanisation, common migration, younger residents turning into eligible to vote, non-reporting of deaths and inclusion of the names of foreign unlawful immigrants have necessitated the conduct.
- The booth level officials (BLOs) will make residence to residence verification of the electorate.
- The remaining extensive revision for Bihar was carried out by the Commission in 2003.

Provision in RPA

- As in keeping with the Section 21(3) of The Representation of the People Act, 1950 the Election Commission "may also at any time… direct a special revision of the electoral roll for any constituency or part of a constituency in such manner because it may think suit".
- The revision of rolls can be executed "both intensively or summarily or partly intensively and partially summarily, as the (ECI) can also direct".
- In an intensive revision, the electoral roll is prepared afresh and in a precise revision, the roll is amended.
- Intensive revisions had been completed in 1952-56, 1957, 1961, 1965, 1966, 1983-eighty four, 1987-89, 1992, 1993, 1995, 2002, 2003 and 2004.

Eligibility to be a Registered Voter in India

- **Article 326 of the Constitution stipulates that:** absolutely everyone who's a citizen of India & who is not much less than 18 years of age at the qualifying date & isn't always disqualified under any law shall be entitled to be registered within the electoral roll.
- Section 16 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 disqualifies someone from being registered on an electoral roll if:
    - they're not a citizen of India,
    - are of unsound thoughts, as declared by using a competent courtroom, or
    - are disqualified under any regulation regarding corrupt practices or offences in reference to elections.
    - Procedure for Voter Registration

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) mandates new citizens to apply using Form 6.
- Applicants must put up:
    - Self-attested proof of age and address (such as application payments, passport, etc.)
    - A statement of Indian citizenship, which they should personally sign.
    - Proof of citizenship (along with passport or birth certificates) is not strictly required until the ERO suspects the applicant's credentials.
    - Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and Booth Level Officers (BLOs) are responsible for verifying the programs. The manner includes:
        - Verification of reports,
        - Hearings for claims and objections,
        - Acceptance or rejection of the utility.
- Section 31 of the RP Act, 1950 penalizes false declarations in voter applications.

Source: ***The Indian Express***

Mains PYQ

1. Examine the need for electoral reforms as suggested by various committees with particular reference to "one nation - one election" principle. (2024)

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) has asked for the electoral rolls for Bihar to be prepared afresh.
- All electors ought to submit an enumeration shape, and people registered after 2003 ought to also offer documentation setting up their citizenship.
- This special intensive revision(SIV) of rolls will sooner or later cover all states and Union Territories.
- **Reasons for the SIV:** Rapid urbanisation, common migration, younger residents turning into eligible to vote, non-reporting of deaths and inclusion of the names of foreign unlawful immigrants have necessitated the conduct.
- The booth level officials (BLOs) will make residence to residence verification of the electorate.
- The remaining extensive revision for Bihar was carried out by the Commission in 2003.

[2.28] Ratle hydropower projects

Syllabus: Environment, Infrastructure [GS Paper-3]

Context

The Kishenganga and Ratle hydropower projects are located in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and utilize waters from the Indus river system. These projects have been a subject of dispute between India and Pakistan under the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) of 1960, a water-sharing agreement brokered by the World Bank to regulate the use of the Indus basin waters between the two countries. Pakistan raised objections to certain design elements of these projects in 2016, triggering arbitration proceedings. India, however, suspended its obligations under the Treaty following the Pahalgam terror attack in April 2025, citing Pakistan's support for cross-border terrorism as the reason for placing the Treaty in abeyance.

The Court of Arbitration's Supplemental Award

The Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, which Pakistan invoked to address its objections, issued a "supplemental award" affirming its competence to adjudicate the dispute regarding the Kishenganga and Ratle projects despite India's suspension of the Treaty. The Court ruled unanimously that India's decision to keep the IWT in abeyance "does not limit" its jurisdiction and that the ruling is binding and without appeal.

India's Categorical Rejection

- India has categorically rejected the Court of Arbitration's supplemental award as well as all prior pronouncements of this body. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated that India has never recognized the legal existence of this so-called Court of Arbitration, declaring it "illegal" and "in brazen violation" of the Indus Waters Treaty.
- India's position is that the constitution of this arbitral body itself constitutes a serious breach of the Treaty. Consequently, any proceedings, awards, or decisions by this Court are illegal and void ab initio. India also emphasized that since the Treaty is in abeyance, it is no longer bound to adhere to any obligations under it or to accept the jurisdiction of any arbitration mechanism set up under the Treaty.

Sovereignty and Security Concerns

India justified its suspension of the Treaty citing sovereign rights under international law, linked to Pakistan's failure to credibly and irrevocably renounce support for cross-border terrorism. Until Pakistan takes such steps, India maintains it will not be bound by the Treaty's provisions, including those related to dispute resolution.

India's Criticism of Pakistan's Role

The MEA described the Court of Arbitration's ruling as a "charade at Pakistan's behest" and accused Pakistan of using "fabricated arbitration mechanisms" to evade accountability for its role as a "global epicenter of terrorism." India views Pakistan's actions as part of a long-standing pattern of deception and manipulation of international forums.

Implications for India-Pakistan Relations and Water Diplomacy

- **Legal and Diplomatic Standoff:** India's rejection of the Court's ruling deepens the legal and diplomatic impasse over the Indus Waters Treaty and the hydropower projects.
- **Water Security:** The dispute highlights the critical importance of water resources in the geopolitics of South Asia, especially in the sensitive Jammu and Kashmir region.
- **Terrorism and Treaty Compliance:** India's linking of Treaty suspension to Pakistan's counter-terrorism actions marks a significant shift, intertwining security concerns with water-sharing agreements.
- **International Arbitration:** The case raises questions about the legitimacy and effectiveness of international arbitration mechanisms when one party refuses to recognize the tribunal.

Conclusion

India's categorical rejection of the Court of Arbitration's supplemental award on the Kishenganga and Ratle hydropower projects underscores its firm stance on sovereignty, security, and treaty obligations. India maintains that the Court itself is illegal and that Pakistan's invocation of this mechanism is a strategic ploy to deflect from its support for terrorism. This development marks a critical juncture in India-Pakistan water diplomacy, with significant implications for bilateral relations and regional stability.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Consider the following statements about the Ratle Hydroelectric Project:

1. **It is a run-of-the-river hydroelectric power project on the Chenab River in Jammu and Kashmir.**
2. **The project is a joint venture between Jammu & Kashmir State Power Development Corporation (JKSPDC) and National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC).**
3. **The project involves the construction of a concrete gravity dam and underground powerhouse.**
4. **Pakistan has raised objections to this project citing violation of the Indus Waters Treaty.**

Which of the statements given above are correct?

Options:
A) 1 and 2 only
B) 1, 2 and 3 only
C) 1, 3 and 4 only
D) All of the above

Answer: D) All of the above

[2.29] 10 Years of AMRUT

Syllabus: Government Initiative [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) has completed 10 years since its launch on June 25, 2015, marking a significant milestone in India's urban development journey.

10 Years of AMRUT: A Decade of Urban Transformation in India

Introduction

Launched by the Government of India on June 25, 2015, AMRUT is a flagship Centrally Sponsored Scheme aimed at improving urban infrastructure and ensuring a better quality of life in selected cities and towns across the country. It focuses on providing basic civic amenities such as water supply, sewerage, urban transport, and green spaces, with a special emphasis on inclusivity and sustainability.

Objectives of AMRUT

- Universal Access to Water and Sewerage: Ensure every household in urban areas has access to functional tap water connections and sewerage facilities.
- Enhancement of Urban Livability: Increase the amenity value of cities by developing parks, green spaces, and promoting non-motorized transport.
- Pollution Reduction: Promote sustainable urban transport and better waste management to reduce pollution.
- Inclusive Urban Development: Prioritize the needs of the urban poor and disadvantaged sections by providing essential services.

Key Features and Focus Areas

- **Water Supply:** Augmentation, rehabilitation, and universal coverage of water supply through functional taps.

- **Sewerage and Septage Management:** Provision of sewer connections and faecal sludge management to improve sanitation.
- **Stormwater Drainage:** Development of infrastructure to manage urban flooding and waterlogging.
- **Green Spaces and Parks:** Allocation of up to 2.5% of project costs for parks with amenities for children and elderly, enhancing urban environment.
- **Non-Motorized Urban Transport:** Promotion of walking and cycling infrastructure to reduce vehicular pollution and congestion.

Financial Outlay and Implementation

- **Investment:** ₹77,640 crore worth of State Annual Action Plans (SAAPs) approved with ₹35,990 crore as committed Central Assistance.
- **Projects:** Over 5,800 projects worth ₹82,222 crore initiated; more than 4,600 projects completed.
- **Coverage:** Initially covered 500 cities and towns, now expanded to include all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) under AMRUT 2.0.
- **Achievements:** 134 lakh water tap connections and 102 lakh sewer connections provided, nearing the targeted universal coverage.

AMRUT 2.0: The Next Phase

Launched on October 1, 2021, AMRUT 2.0 is a five-year mission (2021-22 to 2025-26) aiming to:

- Achieve universal functional tap water coverage in all statutory towns.
- Promote a circular economy of water through City Water Balance Plans focusing on recycling treated sewage, water conservation, and rejuvenation of water bodies.
- Strengthen urban reforms including reduction of non-revenue water, urban planning, and urban finance management.
- Total indicative outlay of ₹2,99,000 crore including ₹76,760 crore as Central share for five years.

Challenges Faced

- **Project Delays:** Due to land acquisition issues, bureaucratic hurdles, and financial constraints.
- **Capacity Constraints:** Limited technical and administrative capacity at local urban bodies.
- **Sustainability Integration:** Difficulty in incorporating sustainable urban practices consistently.
- **Coordination Issues:** Need for better synergy between Central, State, and local governments for smooth implementation.

Impact and Significance

- AMRUT has redefined urban infrastructure development by focusing on basic services that directly improve citizens' quality of life.
- It has laid the foundation for sustainable and inclusive urban growth, addressing critical issues like water security, sanitation, and urban greenery.
- The scheme complements other urban initiatives like the Smart Cities Mission, contributing to the vision of resilient and livable cities.
- The recent Budget 2025 allocation of ₹1 lakh crore for urban development, including AMRUT projects, underscores the government’s commitment to transforming urban India into growth hubs.

Conclusion

AMRUT's decade-long journey reflects a transformative approach to urban governance and infrastructure development in India. By focusing on universal access to water and sanitation, enhancing green spaces, and promoting sustainable urban transport, AMRUT has significantly contributed to improving the urban quality of life. The ongoing AMRUT 2.0 phase aims to build on this legacy by embracing water circularity and urban reforms, ensuring that India's cities become more livable, inclusive, and resilient in the years to come.

Source: PIB

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Critically evaluate the performance of the AMRUT scheme over the past decade. How far has it contributed to sustainable and inclusive urban development in India?

[2.30] India's Growing Vaccination Crisis

Syllabus: Governance, Health [GS Paper-2]

Context

A recent global study published in The Lancet has brought to light a critical public health concern in India: over 1.44 million children remain "zero-dose," meaning they have not received even the first dose of the essential diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTP) vaccine in 2023. India ranks second globally after Nigeria in the number of such unvaccinated children, underscoring persistent immunisation inequities despite decades of progress.

What Does "Zero-Dose" Mean?

A "zero-dose" child is defined as a child who has not received any routine vaccinations, and has missed all vaccines such as DTP, which is a key measure of access to immunisation services. These children remain at risk from preventable and continue to face risks from preventable but potentially fatal illnesses, for example diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, measles, polio, and tuberculosis.

Scale and Significance of the Problem

- **Global:** In 2022, there were about 15.7 million zero-dose children globally, with more than half of zero-dose children living in eight countries. With DTP coverage from 2019-2023, the eight countries include India, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Indonesia and Brazil.
- **India:** India is home to 1.44 million zero-dose children, the second largest share globally, and makes a substantial contribution to the global vaccination gap.
- **COVID-19:** The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted routine immunisation services. Since 2020, vaccine coverage has seen a sharp decline and areas that previously recorded some loss of zero-dose children have all returned to record levels of zero-dose children. Prior to COVID-19, we estimated that there were an additional 12.8 million new zero-dose children in India between 2020 and 2023, a substantial number of which were estimated during the pandemic.

Causes Behind the Vaccination Gap in India

- **Disadvantaged and Remote Communities:** Zero-dose children are often from low income, rural, tribal and/or remote communities that lack the ability to access health services.

- **Health Delivery System Deficiencies:** Inadequate health delivery systems, lack of trained health staff, and issues related to vaccine supply chains inhibit coverage in certain areas.
- **Vaccine Misinformation and Hesitancy:** Growing vaccine misinformation, hesitancy and vaccine awareness inhibits immunisation efforts.
- **Socio-political Variables:** Displacement, social unrest, economic uncertainty, and adverse climate impacts may aggravate inequities in vaccine access.

Consequences of the Vaccination Gap

- **Increased Disease Burden:** Unvaccinated children are at high-risk of catching and transmitting vaccine preventable diseases. These children and young people carry a much heavier burden of morbidity and mortality.
- **Threat to Public Health Targets:** The lack of progress represents a threat both to India's and the wider world's ability to reach the immunisation 2030 targets set by WHO and other global health institutions.
- **Expanding Health Inequities:** Health inequities continue to persist and ultimately worsen as gaps in service delivery further impact defined groups that are already under-valued or marginalised and will therefore carry further impacts from the ongoing inequity

Government Initiatives and Challenges

India's Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) offers free vaccination against 12 diseases, yet gaps persist due to implementation challenges in reaching all children. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the fragility of routine immunisation services and the need for resilient health systems.

Conclusion

The Lancet study's revelation of 1.44 million zero-dose children in India is a stark reminder that despite significant advances, large immunisation gaps remain. Urgent, focused, and equitable action is needed to ensure every child receives life-saving vaccines, protecting them from preventable diseases and contributing to India's broader public health and development goals.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Critically examine the causes behind declining immunisation rates in India and suggest policy measures to improve vaccine coverage, especially among vulnerable groups.

[2.31] India Enters Top 100 in SDG Index

Syllabus: Governance [GS Paper–2]

Context

India has achieved a significant milestone by entering the top 100 countries in the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index for the first time. In the 2025 Sustainable Development Report (SDR) released by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, India is ranked 99th out of 167 countries with a score of 67, marking steady progress from its 109th rank in 2024 and consistent improvement over recent years.

Understanding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the SDG Index

- The SDGs are 17 interconnected global goals adopted by 193 UN member states in 2015 to tackle the world's greatest challenges, including poverty, inequality, health, education, climate change, and sustainability, among others, by the year 2030. The SDGs Index is a composite metric that measures the extent to which countries are achieving these goals, using data on selected indicators, on a scale of 0 to 100, i.e., 100 means that they have achieved the respective goal.
- The Sustainable Development Report is an annual report on where the world is at with respect to progress being made towards the SDGs. It also assigns ranks to countries for their performance on the SDGs. The 2025 report maps out the countries which made the most progress and analyses trends for different regions and the drivers contributing to those improvements.

India's Performance and Regional Comparisons

- India's advancement to the 99th position with a score of 67 shows progress in several important indicators including poverty alleviation, health care, and access to clean energy. With the same scoring system, India has moved from 120th in 2021, 121st in 2022, 112th in 2023, and in 109th position in 2024.
- China comes next from India in South Asia from its neighbours, ranked 49th (74.4), Bhutan is 74th (70.5), Nepal 85th (68.6), then Bangladesh 114th (63.9) and Pakistan at 140th (57). Neighbouring maritime nations, Maldives are at 53rd and Sri Lanka at 93rd.
- Globally, Nordic European countries have ranked the highest (Finland first, Sweden second and Denmark third) however, despite their world-leading placing, these countries are also challenged by resilience to climate action policies and their biodiversity.

Key Drivers of India's Progress

- The SDG Index for India has improved as a result of rapidly improving socioeconomic measures, resulting in health measures like under-5 and neonatal mortality (SDG 3), electricity access (SDG 7), as well as mobile broadband and internet access (SDG 9).
- The SDG India Index developed by NITI Aayog measures the progress at the national level and is used in a complementary way to the global index by reporting at the state-wise level and utilizing a total of 113 indicators across 16 goals. The national index reports India's composite score has improved to 71 in 2023-24 (up from 57 in 2018), indicating progress is being made over time. States such as UttaraKhand and Kerala have shown the most achievement while U.P. has shown the most improvement, gaining 25 points.
- Government schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Ujjwala Yojana, and Ayushman Bharat have all helped accelerate progress through improved housing, sanitation, access to clean cooking fuel, and improved access to healthcare services.

Challenges and the Road Ahead

- Despite India's improved ranking, the global SDG progress remains off-track. Only 17% of the SDG targets worldwide are projected to be achieved by 2030 due to obstacles such as conflicts, structural vulnerabilities, and limited fiscal space.
- India must continue to address disparities among states, with some like Bihar, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, and Nagaland lagging behind and requiring targeted interventions. Sustained policy focus, increased investments, and enhanced implementation of SDG-related programs are essential to maintain and accelerate progress.

Conclusion

India's entry into the top 100 of the global SDG Index marks a significant achievement in its sustainable development journey. The improvement reflects concerted efforts across multiple sectors and states. However, with global and national challenges persisting, India's continued commitment and strategic action will be crucial to fully realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Critically analyze India's performance in the SDG Index with reference to regional disparities and policy implications. Suggest measures to improve outcomes in lagging areas.