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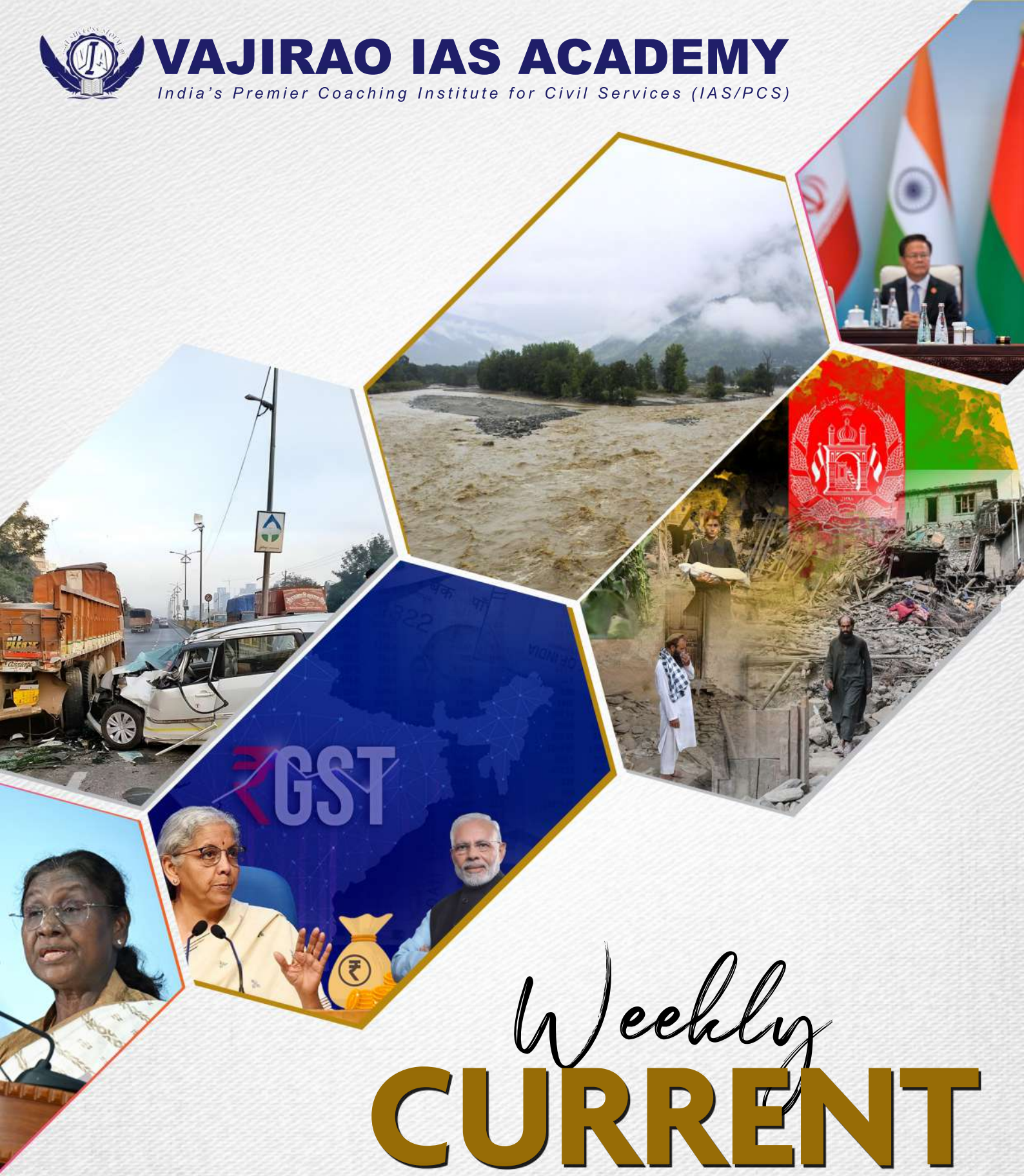

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

"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.

INDEX

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1. Simplified Editorials

1.1 RTI Amendment: Right to Deny Information 1
1.2 India's Macro Turnaround: Low Inflation, High Growth.....3
1.3 Mental Health as a Constitutional Right.....4
1.4 SC's Move Against Stubble Burning 6
1.5 Equalising Access to Primary Food in India 8

2. Daily Current Affairs

2.1 Albania's AI-generated Minister 'Diella'.....11
2.2 India's Vote in Favour of Palestine Statehood.....13
2.3 Nepal's First Woman PM.....15
2.4 All-time High Pending Cases in Supreme Court.....16
2.5 Development Projects in Manipur 18
2.6 Guidelines to Maintain Integrity of DNA Samples.....20
2.7 SC on Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025.....22
2.8 SC on Extension of the POSH Act to Political Parties.....24
2.9 Suggestion for National Framework for Global Capability Centres.....25
2.10 AI for Viksit Bharat Roadmap.....27
2.11 Need for Modernisation in Armed Forces.....29
2.12 India's First National Policy on Geothermal Energy.....31
2.13 AI-powered Large Language Model (LLM).....33
2.14 PM Pushes for Made in India Products.....35
2.15 Global Innovation Index 2025.....37
2.16 Gender Equality in Tribal Property Rights.....38
2.17 Trump's Science Policies: India's Innovation Edge.....40

2.18 Global Plastic Pollution Crisis 41
2.19 PLI scheme for white goods 43
2.20 India's Rise as a Global Climate Champion.....44
2.21 India's Hydrogen Push Gains Global Momentum.....45
2.22 Swasth Nari, Sashakt Parivar Abhiyaan (SNSPA).....47
2.23 EU-India partnership.....49
2.24 Defence Agreement Between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.....50
2.25 UN Gender Snapshot 2025.....52
2.26 India Condemns the Doha Strike.....53
2.27 India's Pathways to Integrating Climate and Health 55
2.28 India-China Rapprochement Amid Border Disputes 56

[1.1] RTI Amendment: Right to Deny Information

Syllabus: Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

India's Right to Information (RTI) Act faces a fundamental challenge with recent changes under the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, leading to a shift towards a "right to deny information." This development marks a critical moment for democratic accountability and transparency in governance.

Background: RTI Act and Its Democratic Role

The RTI Act, enacted in 2005, empowered citizens by affirming that government-held information belongs to the people. It was celebrated as a vital instrument to expose corruption, inefficiency, and arbitrariness in governance. Its foundational ethos asserted citizens as the owners—not mere petitioners—of public information.

The Heart of the Issue: Section 8(1)(j) and Its Truncation

- Section 8(1)(j) originally balanced the right to transparency against the need for personal privacy. It permitted denial of information only if it lacked any connection to public activity or represented an unwarranted invasion of privacy, except when a larger public interest was at stake. Importantly, this provision mandated that information not withheld from Parliament or State legislatures could not be denied to citizens. This section was grounded in evolving judicial interpretations, such as those in the landmark Puttaswamy case.
- With the DPDP Act, the language of Section 8(1)(j) has been drastically reduced to just six words, making it vague. The nuanced criteria previously guiding denials have vanished, giving Public Information Officers (PIOs) unchecked power to refuse requests.

Expanding the Definition of 'Personal Information'

- Under the RTI Act, "person" generally refers to individual human beings. In contrast, the DPDP defines "person" more broadly—encompassing individuals, companies, firms, associations, Hindu undivided families, and even government entities. This expansive definition means almost any government-held data can be classified as "personal information," laying the groundwork for blanket denials.

- Moreover, the DPDP introduces an overriding clause that supersedes other laws, and imposes hefty penalties (up to ₹250 crore) for non-compliance. This encourages risk-averse behavior in PIOs, making them more likely to reject RTI requests without proper scrutiny.

Implications for Transparency and Accountability

- The citizen's role as a watchdog is diminished, weakening a core pillar of democratic governance.
- Essential documents—corrected marksheets, pension beneficiary lists, or employment records—can now be refused. For instance, Rajasthan's earlier success in eliminating "ghost employees" using such data will now be impossible.
- Corruption-related records may be shielded via the "personal information" label, undermining anti-corruption efforts.
- The provision to disclose information in larger public interest (Section 8(2)) is rarely applied, with less than 1% cases leveraging this safeguard.

Why Is Public Outrage Muted?

- The changes are presented as pro-privacy reforms, which appear benign. Many people focus on protecting individual data, unintentionally overlooking how transparency serves collective interests.
- Media response has been subdued. Unlike past RTI amendments—such as those affecting Information Commissioner tenure, which sparked protests—current changes have generated minimal discussion.
- There is a lack of awareness about the scale and impact of the amendments, leading to apathy and silence even among civil society stakeholders.

Addressing the Crisis: What Must Be Done

- **Media engagement:** Vigorous discussion in print, digital, and regional channels must spotlight the erosion of transparency.
- **Political accountability:** Citizens should demand political parties include the reversal of these amendments in their manifestos.
- **Civil society activism:** Continuous efforts are needed to build public opinion on the democratic regression triggered by these changes.
- **Recognizing the threat:** The transformation of RTI from a right to know into a right to deny must be treated with urgency—as seriously as threats to other fundamental rights.

Conclusion: The Road Ahead

The RTI Act is more than mere legislation; it represents a democratic principle of citizen ownership over government-held data. The DPDP Act's amendment risks transforming this ethos into secrecy and denial, imperiling both transparency and accountability. Unless citizens, media, and political actors mobilize for reversal and restoration, a cornerstone of India's democracy stands weakened.

Source: The Hindu

[1.2] India's Macro Turnaround: Low Inflation, High Growth

Syllabus: Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

India's macroeconomic scenario in 2025 stands out for its combination of low inflation and relatively high growth, marking a sharp reversal from last year's adverse trends.

Introduction

India's August 2025 retail inflation settled at 2.1%, well within the Reserve Bank of India's target range of 2%-6%. This achievement came after a nine-month stretch of declining inflation and remains unthreatening despite a slight uptick. Strikingly, food inflation deflated rapidly, with vegetable prices contracting 15.9% and pulses 14.5%. Welfare interventions under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) have ensured affordable essential items for vulnerable sections, contrasting sharply with the high inflation–low growth scenario of the previous year.

Current Inflation Trends

- **Retail Inflation Stability:** India's retail inflation persisted at 2.1%, reflecting overall price stability despite ongoing global economic uncertainties.
- **Food Price Contraction:** Substantial declines in the prices of core food items, including vegetables and pulses, have significantly reduced household expenditure pressures.
- **Welfare cushioning:** The NFSA's provision of free foodgrains has played a central role in ensuring food affordability, particularly against a globally volatile backdrop.
- **Broad-Based Macro Improvement:** Lower inflation prevailed across housing, fuel, clothing, and other basic needs compared to July, furthering the environment of stability.

Macro Picture: Last Year vs. This Year

India's economic turnaround is visible in the growth–inflation differential, which widened from 2.1 percentage points last year to 5.5 points in 2025.

- **From High to Low Inflation:** While last year's inflation eroded purchasing power and slowed growth, current pressures are subdued, allowing for consumption and investment to recover.
- **Growth Revival**: Accelerated growth has provided policymakers increased fiscal breathing room to support welfare and development initiatives.
- **Data Integrity:** Despite concerns over statistical comparability, the substantive improvement is seen as credible and robust.

Policy Drivers: Global and Domestic

- **Russian Oil Purchases:** The risk of reverting to non-Russian crude, if required by geopolitical developments, is now marginal for India, as global crude prices remain relatively low.

- **GST Rate Cuts:** From September 22, concerted GST reforms are slated to further bring down consumer prices, reinforcing disinflationary trends.
- **RBI and Rate Policy:** The RBI's stance is cautiously optimistic; if current trends persist, the Monetary Policy Committee may consider rate cuts in December 2025 to stimulate further growth.

Outlook for India's Macroeconomy

- **Benign Inflation Path:** Current indicators signal continued price stability, with little immediate risk from global oil shocks or commodity volatility.
- **Fiscal Space Strengthening:** Low inflation enables both welfare and infrastructural investments without risking price spirals, promoting sustainable and inclusive growth.
- **Rate Cut Prospects:** The likelihood of future monetary easing could give further impetus to economic activity and credit expansion.

Conclusion

India's 2025 macroeconomic landscape exemplifies resilience and reversal. Effective price stabilization and targeted welfare cushioning have helped the country move from high inflation–low growth to low inflation–high growth. This provides a stable platform for policy to focus on long-term goals, such as sustainable, inclusive development and building buffers against global volatility.

Source: The Hindu

[1.3] Mental Health as a Constitutional Right

Syllabus: Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court of India declared mental health an integral component of the fundamental Right to Life under Article 21 of the Constitution. The July 2025 verdict in the case of Sukdeb Saha v. State of Andhra Pradesh has recast mental well-being not as a matter of charity but as a constitutional right, compelling the state and institutions to uphold it. This decision is a significant step towards addressing India's mental health crisis and systemic failures, especially concerning students.

The Context of the Verdict: Student Suicides

The ruling was prompted by the tragic suicide of a 17-year-old NEET aspirant, which drew national attention to the immense psychological pressure on students in educational and coaching institutions. The court recognized that a system prioritizing relentless academic competition over student welfare contributes significantly to this crisis. The judgment highlighted a "suicide epidemic" in coaching hubs like Kota, underscoring systemic negligence.

Key Observations of the Supreme Court

The bench made several critical observations that form the foundation of this progressive judgment:

- **Expansion of Article 21:** The court reiterated that the Right to Life includes the right to a dignified and meaningful life, of which mental health is an inseparable part.
- **Institutional Accountability:** Educational institutions and coaching centers have a legal "duty of care" towards their students' well-being.
- **State's Responsibility:** The government is obligated to ensure safe learning environments and protect student welfare.
- **Systemic Failure:** The court identified the education system's flawed approach, where a student's worth is linked to academic performance, as a form of "structural victimisation".

Binding Guidelines for Educational Institutions

To enforce its ruling, the Supreme Court issued 15 binding guidelines for all educational and coaching institutions nationwide. These guidelines are designed to create a preventive, remedial, and supportive mental health framework. Key directives include:

- **Mandatory Mental Health Policy:** Institutions must implement a uniform, publicly accessible mental health policy based on national guidelines.
- **Trained Counselors:** The appointment of qualified counselors and psychologists, particularly in institutions with over 100 students.
- **Stress Reduction Measures:** Prohibition of discriminatory academic practices like batch segregation and public shaming, and setting realistic academic goals.
- **Suicide Prevention Infrastructure:** Visible display of suicide prevention helplines and implementation of crisis response protocols.
- **Staff Training:** Mandatory bi-annual mental health training for all staff to help identify and support distressed students.
- **Parental Sensitisation:** Orientation programs for parents to recognize signs of distress and reduce academic pressure.
- **Safety Measures:** Installation of tamper-proof safety devices and restriction of access to high-risk areas in residential institutions.

Intersection with Existing Legislation and International Norms

The judgment reinforces India's progressive Mental Healthcare Act (MHCA), 2017, which guarantees every person the right to access mental healthcare and decriminalized attempted suicide. The court also highlighted India's obligations under international instruments like the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This alignment with global standards strengthens the domestic legal framework for mental health.

Implications and Way Forward

This verdict marks a paradigm shift, elevating mental health from a neglected public health issue to a non-negotiable constitutional entitlement. For UPSC aspirants, the judgment highlights crucial aspects of constitutional law, public health, social justice, and governance. The onus is now on the executive to effectively implement these guidelines, requiring significant budgetary allocation, infrastructural changes, and a shift in societal attitudes. The success of this landmark ruling will depend on how effectively institutional apathy is replaced with accountability and a rights-based approach to mental well-being.

Source: The hIndu

[1.4] SC's Move Against Stubble Burning

Syllabus: Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Supreme Court of India has recently proposed stricter legal and policy interventions—including the possible prosecution and jailing of farmers who persistently use stubble burning to prepare agricultural fields—aimed at tackling Delhi-NCR's annual winter pollution crisis, which worsens after the southwest monsoon recedes each year. This move acknowledges that air pollution from agriculture, especially stubble burning in Punjab, Haryana, UP, and Delhi, cannot be effectively controlled without cross-State cooperation and stronger enforcement.

The Problem of Stubble Burning

- Stubble burning has become a seasonal menace, with farmers setting crop residues on fire after harvesting paddy and wheat, especially in Punjab and Haryana.
- This practice is quick and cost-effective for debt-ridden, small and marginal farmers pressed for time between harvest and sowing of the next crop.
- However, it releases enormous amounts of fine particulate matter and toxic pollutants, exacerbating Delhi-NCR's poor air quality during October–November.

Judicial and Government Responses

- The formation of the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) in the National Capital Region, with representation from multiple North Indian states, was meant to facilitate coordinated action against transboundary air pollution.
- Despite its statutory powers, CAQM has struggled to assert its authority independently, often constrained by political pressures and selective implementation of its orders.
- For example, bans on end-of-life vehicle fuel sales were postponed after public and political outcry.

Supreme Court's Stern Observations

- Recently, a Supreme Court bench led by Chief Justice B.R. Gavai highlighted the inadequacies in enforcement and suggested that selective prosecution—including possible jail terms for egregious stubble burning offenders—might serve as a deterrent.
- The Court emphasized that while farmers are valued for their contribution to food security, they cannot be exempt from accountability when public health and the environment are threatened.

The "Carrot and Stick" Approach

The Court advocates a "carrot and stick" strategy, balancing incentives for compliance with punitive measures for violations. Alternatives provided so far include subsidized machinery for in-situ stubble management, biofuel conversion schemes, and financial support, but uptake is inconsistent due to costs, logistical challenges, and lack of timely support for marginal farmers.

Centre's Reluctance on Prosecution

The Central government maintains a policy against prosecuting farmers, citing social sensitivity and the risk of targeting vulnerable, small-scale cultivators whose families depend on their labor. Instead, states like Punjab have implemented administrative penalties, such as "red entry" in land records and restricted access to grain markets.

Structural Factors Hindering Change

- Debt-burdened farmers and limited time between harvest and sowing push many toward stubble burning.
- Delayed sowing windows (to conserve groundwater) compress the time available for field preparation, increasing agricultural pressure.
- Insufficient alternative utilization of crop residues and poor rural mechanization further complicate transitions away from burning.

Way Forward: Multi-dimensional Solutions

- Strengthen CAQM's authority, ensure transparency, and promote cross-state collaboration.
- Expand access to affordable stubble management technologies, especially for small/marginal farmers.
- Institute selective, non-punitive enforcement: deterrent penal action for repeat or large-scale violators, administrative penalties for minor offenses.
- Improve government support schemes and monitoring, minimize delays in policy execution, and discourage "one-size-fits-all" punitive measures.
- Mobilize farmer cooperatives and local governance to encourage sustainable practices.
- Employ judicial oversight to ensure timely action and compliance by state machinery.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's intervention reiterates the urgent need for both accountability and empathy towards farmers while demanding stronger, transparent and coordinated actions to combat stubble burning and winter air pollution. Sustainable and inclusive solutions, balanced with deterrence, remain crucial for achieving lasting air quality improvements in North India.

Source: The Hindu

[1.5] Equalising Access to Primary Food in India

Syllabus: Food Security [GS Paper-3]

Context

India has made remarkable progress in reducing extreme poverty over the last decade, with the World Bank reporting a fall from 16.2% in 2011-12 to 2.3% in 2022-23. However, food deprivation remains a stark challenge. The 2024 NSS Household Consumption Survey revealed that about 50% of rural India and 20% of urban India could not afford two simple "thalis" (balanced meals) a day. This raises critical questions beyond calorie adequacy: how to ensure equitable access to nutritious food across social classes and regions in India.

Understanding the "Thali Index" versus Traditional Poverty Lines

- Traditional poverty measures in India—such as calorie intake thresholds—primarily capture minimum energy needs, often overlooking nutritional quality and a balanced diet. The "Thali Index" is a more holistic measure representing a balanced meal, including cereals, pulses, vegetables, curd, and salad, reflecting both calorific and nutritional adequacy. The cost of this average home-cooked thali is estimated at around ₹30, making two thalis a day a realistic benchmark for minimum nutrition.
- The survey findings reveal that despite rising incomes, a significant share of the population struggles to afford such a basic nutritious diet daily. This discrepancy highlights hidden hunger and nutritional deprivation not visible in poverty statistics relying solely on income or calorie consumption metrics.

The Public Distribution System: Successes and Limitations

Successes of PDS

- Ensured food security for over 80 crore beneficiaries.
- Equalized cereal consumption across income groups.
- Coverage extended to 75% of rural and 50% of urban populations under NFSA.

Limitations of PDS

- Focuses mainly on cereals, which form only ~10% of household food expenditure.
- Nutritional imbalance: poor consume nearly half the pulses compared to the rich.
- Subsidy distortion: non-vulnerable households benefit excessively.
- Issues of leakage, inefficiency, and blanket subsidies reduce effectiveness.

Inequality in Protein Consumption and Nutritional Security

- While cereal subsidies have helped equalize basic calorie intake, protein consumption through pulses remains widely unequal.
- Pulses are critical for preventing malnutrition, anemia, and supporting physical and cognitive development, especially in women and children.
- The lack of affordable protein sources perpetuates hidden hunger despite apparent success in calorie-based food security.

Policy Recommendations for Equalising Food Consumption

1. Rationalize and Restructure Subsidies

- Trim excess cereal subsidy entitlements, especially for better-off groups consuming more than the basic "two thalis/day."
- Redirect financial resources saved from cereal subsidies toward subsidizing pulses and other protein-rich foods to ensure nutritional adequacy.
- Make PDS more compact and targeted by focusing on needy populations and essential food items.

2. Expand Pulse Coverage in PDS

- Incorporate pulses systematically into public food distribution to improve protein availability at subsidized rates.
- Promote fortified foods and diversified food baskets that go beyond cereals to tackle micronutrient deficiencies.

3. Improve Targeting and Efficiency

- Avoid blanket subsidies that benefit non-needy groups; focus on disadvantaged households identified through better data.
- Strengthen delivery mechanisms to reduce leakages and ensure that subsidies reach the intended beneficiaries.

4. Link Food Security with Nutrition Outcomes

- Integrate initiatives like PM POSHAN (mid-day meal scheme) and fortified rice distribution with PDS reforms to create a holistic nutrition security framework.
- Promote community awareness and behavioural change towards balanced diets beyond cheap calories.

Regional and Urban-Rural Disparities

Food consumption patterns differ significantly between rural and urban areas. Rural households spend a higher proportion of their income on food (around 47%) compared to urban households (around 40%). Yet, urban poverty also manifests through food insecurity due to high non-food expenses like rent, health, and transport, which reduce

the residual money for buying nutritious food. Policies must therefore be tailored to regional contexts and urban poverty dynamics.

The Broader Implications for India and SDGs

Equalising primary food consumption aligns directly with Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Resolving hidden hunger and nutritional deprivation will improve population health, productivity, and socio-economic outcomes. India's challenge is to move beyond rhetoric and poverty statistics towards ensuring that the poorest can afford not just calories but a dignified, nutritious diet.

Conclusion

The contrast between declining income poverty and persistent food deprivation underlines the need for rethinking India's food security strategy. While equalising cereal consumption has been a notable success through PDS, the next frontier lies in ensuring protein and nutritional adequacy through targeted pulse subsidies and efficient policy measures. By restructuring subsidies and focusing on balanced diets, India can address hidden hunger, promote nutritional equity, and set a global welfare benchmark in food security.

Source: The Hindu

2. Daily Current Affairs

[2.1] Albania's AI-generated Minister 'Diella'

Syllabus - Science and Technology [GS Paper-3]

Context

Albania is the first nation to establish an AI-generated "minister" whose mission is to combat corruption.

Key Highlights

- The digital minister was introduced to the cabinet by Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama.
- 'Diella,' which means 'Sun,' is the name of the digital assistant, who is in charge of making all choices pertaining to the public tenders, ensuring that they are completely free of corruption.
- The AI minister will also be able to evaluate bids and recruit talent from all over the world.
- Diella's origins as a virtual assistant: At first, Diella was presented in January as an AI-driven digital assistant modeled after a woman wearing traditional Albanian garb.
- Its goal was to assist citizens in using the official e-Albania platform, which provides access to documents and services.
- **Albania's corruption issues:** Historically, Albania's public procurement process has been the target of several corruption scandals.
    - According to reports, corruption has spread to high levels of government, turning the nation into a hub for transnational criminal organizations laundering proceeds from drug and arms trafficking.

Application of AI in the Public Sector

- **Administration and Governance:** NLP (Natural Language Processing) tools and AI chatbots can be used to respond quickly to public concerns.
- **Healthcare:** AI models for the early identification of diseases (such as TB and cancer screening).
- **Telemedicine:** Virtual assistants powered by artificial intelligence that facilitate access to healthcare in rural areas.
- **Education:** AI-powered adaptive platforms that customize instruction to meet the specific needs of each student.
- **Automated Assessments:** lowering the workload for teachers and offering prompt feedback.
- **Law and Order:** Hotspot mapping and AI-based crime pattern analysis.
- **Face Identification and Surveillance:** locating possible offenders in public safety activities.

- **Judiciary:** Using AI to help manage cases and cut down on the backlog by automating basic paperwork.
- **Urban Governance:** AI for waste disposal, energy efficiency, and traffic control.
- **Social sector and welfare programs:** AI to identify real beneficiaries, minimize leakages in MGNREGA, PDS, etc.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Utilizing AI for micro-credit risk analysis and digital banking.

Concerns

- **Discrimination and Bias:** AI models that are trained on data may become biased and discriminate against specific groups.
- **Data Protection:** The Digital Personal Data Protection Act of 2023 notwithstanding, India still lacks a complete system for protecting sensitive citizen data.
- **Accountability Gap:** It's unclear who is at fault if AI makes a bad choice, whether it's the coder, the user, or the government.
- **Job Displacement:** Automation might replace lower-level administrative and clerical positions.
- **Overreliance on Technology:** Risk of ignoring human judgement, empathy, and contextual understanding.
- **Cybersecurity Risks:** AI systems susceptible to manipulation, hacking, or hostile assaults.
- **Reliance on Outside Tech Companies:** If India depends too much on outside AI businesses, there is a risk of "digital colonization."

Government Programs

- **IndiaAI Mission (2024):** With a five-year budget of ₹10,300 crore, it aims to advance artificial intelligence in India.
- **India's AI Models and Language Technologies:** The government is supporting the creation of India's own basic models, such as Large Language Models (LLMs) and problem-specific AI solutions designed to meet Indian requirements.
- **BharatGen:** Introduced in 2024, BharatGen is the first government-funded multimodal LLM project in the world.
- **Sarvam-1 AI Model:** With 2 billion parameters and support for ten major Indian languages, Sarvam-1 is a big language model that has been designed specifically for Indian languages.
- **Centers of Excellence for AI:** Creating specialized AI hubs and innovation centers around the nation to foster AI research and startups.
- **India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** Promotes digital transformation by combining public money and private sector innovation.

Conclusion

- India's quick progress in AI is a result of robust government programs that have established the nation as a major force in the field.
- The usage of AI in the administration of public services and justice might be researched and suggested by a specialized task force.
- To prevent abuse and guarantee that AI tools adhere to ethical norms, civil rights, and privacy, a well-balanced strategy must be used.

Source: ***The Indian Express***

Mains PYQ

1. Introduce the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI). How does AI help clinical diagnosis? Do you perceive any threat to the privacy of the individual in the use of AI in healthcare? (2023)

- Albania is the first nation to establish an AI-generated "minister" whose mission is to combat corruption.
- The digital minister was introduced to the cabinet by Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama.
- 'Diella,' which means 'Sun,' is the name of the digital assistant, who is in charge of making all choices pertaining to the public tenders, ensuring that they are completely free of corruption.
- The AI minister will also be able to evaluate bids and recruit talent from all over the world.
- Diella's origins as a virtual assistant: At first, Diella was presented in January as an AI-driven digital assistant modeled after a woman wearing traditional Albanian garb.
- Its goal was to assist citizens in using the official e-Albania platform, which provides access to documents and services.

[2.2] India's Vote in Favour of Palestine Statehood

Syllabus - International Relations [GS Paper-2]

Context

India has voted in favor of a resolution in the United Nations General Assembly that supports the 'New York Declaration' on the peaceful disposal of the Palestine issue and the implementation of a two-state solution.

Key Highlights

- The proposal was introduced by France and adopted with voting in favor of 142 nations, against 10 and 12 restraints.
    - Those who voted against Argentina, Hungary, Israel and the United States.
- In the announcement, the leaders agreed to take collective action to end the war in Gaza to achieve a fair, peaceful and permanent settlement of the Israeli-Palestine conflict.
- The resolution is based on the effective implementation of the two-state solution, and to build a better future for Palestinians, Israel and all people in the region.
    - This asked the leadership of Israel to release a clear public commitment to the two-state solution, including a sovereign and viable Palestinian state.

India's stand on Israel-Palestine conflict

- India was the first non-Arab country to recognize Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1974.
- In 1988, India was one of the first countries to recognize the state of Palestine.
- India continued to vote in favor of Palestinian proposals in the United Nations.
- **Support for Palestinian State:**
    - India supports a two-state solution-the peaceful co-existence of Israel and Palestine within the safe and recognized boundaries.
    - Eastern Jerusalem is advocated as the capital of Palestine (based on United Nations resolutions).

- Supports Palestine's membership in international organizations (eg, UNESCO, UNESCO, UNGA Observer State in 2012).

- **High level Visits:** Prime Minister Modi paid the historic visit to Palestine in 2018, the first to an Indian Prime Minister.
  - Earlier, former President Pranab Mukherjee visited Palestine in 2015, marking the first visit to Palestine by an Indian President.
- **Development Assistance:** India has provided various forms of development support to Palestine over the years of US $ 141 million.
  - India, Brazil, South Africa (IBSA) Fund has also funded four projects in Palestine, priced at US $ 5 MN.
- **In the United Nations, India emphasizes:**
  - Violence and rejection of terrorism from both sides.
  - Gaza requires human assistance.
  - Support for diplomatic and peaceful disposal.
- **India's position reflects a delicate balance:** even after India's relationship with Israel in the last three decades, it has kept a careful balance between its new partnership and historical commitment to Palestine.
  - India has a strategic partnership with Israel in defense, agriculture and innovation.
  - India frames its stance as "Royal Support for Palestine, a practical partnership with Israel".

Conclusion

- India supports Palestine's state's rights and two-state solutions, as well as strengthening strategic relations with Israel.
- Its position is of the shape of realism, balances West Asian interests, and commitment to international law.

Source: ***The ToI***

Mains PYQ

1. "India's relations with Israel have, of late, acquired a depth and diversity, which cannot be rolled back." Discuss. (2018)

- India has voted in favor of a resolution in the United Nations General Assembly that supports the 'New York Declaration' on the peaceful disposal of the Palestine issue and the implementation of a two-state solution.
- The proposal was introduced by France and adopted with voting in favor of 142 nations, against 10 and 12 restraints.
- In the announcement, the leaders agreed to take collective action to end the war in Gaza to achieve a fair, peaceful and permanent settlement of the Israeli-Palestine conflict.
- The resolution is based on the effective implementation of the two-state solution, and to build a better future for Palestinians, Israel and all people in the region.

[2.3] Nepal's First Woman PM

Syllabus - International Relations [GS Paper-2]

Context

Former Chief Justice Sushila Karki was named the first female Prime Minister of Nepal by President Ram Chandra Poudel.

Key Highlights

- The President of Nepal declared new elections for March 5, 2026, and dissolved Parliament.
- The prime minister, K.P. Sharma Oli, was ousted by a Gen Z-led demonstration that was fueled by corruption, mismanagement, and a contentious social media ban.
- Following extensive discussions involving legal professionals, political figures, and the military, Chief Justice Sushila Karki was chosen with the support of demonstrators.

Sushila Karki, Chief Justice

- She is well-known for her integrity and anti-corruption stance, and she now heads an interim Cabinet whose mission is to bring things back into order, look into the recent violence, and get ready for elections.
- In a show of support for the new administration, India said it hoped for peace and a lasting relationship.

Overview of India and Nepal's Relationship

- The Indian states of Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand share a border with Nepal.
- The robust interpersonal connections between India and Nepal serve as an illustration of the long history of cultural and civilizational links between the two nations.
- Under its 'Neighborhood First' policy, India gives priority to Nepal as a partner.
- **Collaboration on Defense and Security:**
    - Nepal and India have a longstanding and deep relationship of mutual benefit in the areas of defense and security.
    - The armies of both countries have a wonderful and harmonious relationship built on mutual trust and respect.
    - India and Nepal also share the ancient custom of bestowing the Honorary title of General on the Army Chief of the other country.
    - The Gorkha Regiment has strengthened the already robust bonds between the two forces.
    - Strategically, Nepal is significant because it lies between India and China.
- **Developmental partnership**
    - India's development partnership with Nepal involves significant human resource collaboration, with more than 1,500 scholarships given each year to students studying a variety of fields, including medicine, engineering, agriculture, and traditional arts.
    - The Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program includes feasibility studies of Nepali professionals, training, consulting, and research trips.
- **Collaboration in the economic and commercial sectors:**
    - With 33.5% of Nepal's total FDI (USD 670 million) and 64.1% of its overall trade (USD 8.85 billion in FY 2022–23), India is Nepal's top trade and investment partner.

- With Indian exports amounting to USD 8.015 billion and Nepalese exports to India at USD 839.62 million, Nepal is India's 17th biggest export market.
- The majority of Nepal's exports are edible oil, coffee, tea, and jute, which are 67.9% of India's total imports from Nepal. India, in turn, sends Nepal petroleum products, iron and steel, cereals, automobiles, and equipment.
- There are about 150 Indian businesses in Nepal that operate in the tourism, energy, services, and manufacturing industries.

- **Connections Between People**
  - More than 8 million members of the Nepali diaspora in India, including students, laborers, and experts.
  - **Religious ties:** Bodh Gaya (India), Janakpur (Sita's birthplace), and Pashupatinath Temple (Nepal).

Source: ***The Hindu***

Mains PYQ

1. Discuss the positive and negative effects of globalization on women in India? (2015)

- Former Chief Justice Sushila Karki was named the first female Prime Minister of Nepal by President Ram Chandra Poudel.
- The President of Nepal declared new elections for March 5, 2026, and dissolved Parliament.
- The prime minister, K.P. Sharma Oli, was ousted by a Gen Z-led demonstration that was fueled by corruption, mismanagement, and a contentious social media ban.
- Following extensive discussions involving legal professionals, political figures, and the military, Chief Justice Sushila Karki was chosen with the support of demonstrators.

[2.4] All-time High Pending Cases in Supreme Court

Syllabus - Polity [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Supreme Court of India now has more cases pending than ever before, which raises questions about the judicial system's effectiveness, accessibility, and legitimacy.

Key Highlights

- The National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) reports that the Supreme Court of India is experiencing an unprecedented increase in case pendency, with 88,492 cases currently pending.
- Despite structural changes and digitalization initiatives, its growth rate has surpassed 35% over the last five years.

Reasons for Case Delays

- **Low Case Disposal Rate:** The court recorded 7,080 new cases in August 2025 alone, but only managed to resolve 5,667, representing an 80.04% disposal rate.
- **Limited Working Days:** The number of sessions is still inadequate to address the expanding caseload due to court holidays and shorter work hours.

- **Procedural Complexity:** The pace of justice is slowed down by lengthy procedures, adjournments, and appeals.
- **Low Ratio of Judges to Population:** With only about 21 judges for every million citizens, India has one of the lowest ratios of judges to population in the world, which is significantly less than the advised 50.
- **Misuse of Special Leave Petitions (SLPs):** Article 136 gives the Supreme Court the authority to hear appeals in unusual circumstances.
- **Litigation by the Government Overload:** The government, which is responsible for almost half of all outstanding lawsuits, is the largest litigant, and many of these claims are considered to be trivial or repetitive.
- **Poor Infrastructure and Technology Adoption:** Despite digitalization initiatives, several courts still lack strong case management systems.
- **Legacy Cases and Long-Term Backlog:** Thousands of cases have been pending for more than ten years, with some dating back more than thirty years.
- **Lack of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR):** Mediation and arbitration are underutilized, even though they may lessen the strain on courts considerably.

Effects on Justice and Governance

- **Erosion of public trust:** Citizens lose faith in the judiciary when justice is delayed, particularly in cases involving constitutional interpretation, corruption, and human rights.
- **Economic Impact:** Litigation-stuck business disputes hinder investment and slow economic expansion.
- **Social injustice:** The disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups is exacerbated by delays in criminal trials and civil conflicts, which exacerbate uncertainty and hardship.
- **Jail Overcrowding:** Over half of Indian jails are overcrowded, and around 76% of inmates are awaiting trial, according to the Indian Justice Report 2025.

Steps for Improvement

- **Differentiated Case Management (DCM):** Under the Unclogging the Docket Initiative, which prioritized finding and expediting cases that were brief, unsuccessful, and dated, the Supreme Court adopted it.
- **Monitoring Mechanisms and Arrears Committees:** The Supreme Court has established Arrears Committees to develop plans to reduce the backlog.
- **Digital Instruments and E-Courts:** The Supreme Court has increased the use of e-filing, virtual hearings, and electronic case management technologies (ECMTs).
- **National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG):** It provides transparency and analytics, but needs to be more seamlessly integrated with case management systems.

Source: ***The Hindu***

Mains PYQ

1. Critically examine the Supreme Court's judgment on 'National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014' with reference to the appointment of judges of higher judiciary in India. (2017)

- The Supreme Court of India now has more cases pending than ever before, which raises questions about the judicial system's effectiveness, accessibility, and legitimacy.

- The National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) reports that the Supreme Court of India is experiencing an unprecedented increase in case pendency, with 88,492 cases currently pending.
- Despite structural changes and digitalization initiatives, its growth rate has surpassed 35% over the last five years.

[2.5] Development Projects in Manipur

Syllabus - Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

In Imphal, Manipur, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone and opened several development initiatives.

Key Highlights

- **Connectivity and infrastructure:**
  - The Manipur Urban Roads Project, which has an investment of more than ₹3,600 crore, was launched in order to improve urban infrastructure and road connectivity in Imphal.
  - Soon, Imphal will be connected to the country's railway system by the ₹22,000 crore Jiribam-Imphal railway line.
  - The Imphal airport has been enlarged with a ₹400 crore investment, and helicopter service has begun in order to improve air connections.
  - To enhance administration, the Police Headquarters (valued at ₹101 crore) and the Civil Secretariat building (valued at ₹538 crore) were opened.
- **IT and Digital Projects:**
  - The goal of the Manipur Infotech Development Project is to strengthen the state's IT and startup ecosystem.
- **Women's Empowerment:**
  - The opening of four new Ima Markets (women-only markets) strengthens the long history of women-led economy in Manipur.
  - Establish nine working women's dormitories to promote women's empowerment and promote education and employment.
- **Sports and Culture:**
  - Provide support for Khelo India initiatives and the National Sports University.
  - The Marjing Polo Complex promotes polo, and it is home to the highest polo statue in the world.

Key Unresolved Issues in Manipur

- **Rehabbing Displaced Families:** More than 57,000 individuals are housed in Manipur's over 280 relief centers, many of whom have been displaced for more than two years.
- **Movement Restrictions:** During the conflict, "buffer zones" were established as armed borders dividing the valley and hill regions.
  - Meiteis in the valley were excluded from particular services, while Kuki-Zo communities were denied access to Imphal and other valley-based facilities, due to the limitations on free movement imposed by these zones.

- The border tribes were formerly permitted by the Free Movement Regime to travel up to 16 kilometers into either nation without a visa. The administration intends to construct a border fence as well.
- The Kuki-Zo and Naga populations, who have social and economic connections across the border, have opposed these initiatives.

- **Political Vacancy:** It is imperative to establish justice and good governance in Manipur to foster an environment that is conducive to the state's stability and progress.
- **Dialogue is still lacking:** Although the scale of violence has decreased since late 2024, there is still no ongoing dialogue between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities.

Demand for a Separate Administration

- Specifically, the Kuki-Zo Council has asked for their hill regions of Manipur to be administratively separated from the remainder of the state as a Under Article 239A of the Indian Constitution, a Union Territory (UT) has a legislature.
- According to Article 239A of the Indian Constitution, the Parliament has the authority to establish a local legislature or a Council of Ministers, or both, for particular Union Territories.
  - The Fourteenth Amendment Act of 1962 added this provision to the Constitution.
- However, Meitei groups such COCOMI vehemently oppose the suggestion, seeing it as a step towards "ethnic partition" and a danger to Manipur's territorial integrity.

Need for Development

- Improvements in infrastructure and connectivity are essential for trade, mobility, and access to healthcare and education.
- The expansion of the IT and digital industries can foster integration with the rest of the economy, create jobs, and create business prospects.
- Ima Markets, a program that focuses on women, helps to support cultural identity and strengthen local economies.
- Targeted assistance to displaced communities and peace-building initiatives are essential for social cohesion and long-term stability.
- Infrastructure-based regional integration is consistent with the Act East Policy and promotes economic cooperation with Southeast Asia.

Way Ahead

- In order to achieve a lasting peace in Manipur, there must be an inclusive dialogue between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities, supported by impartial mediation.
- The government must give priority to the rehabilitation of displaced families with respect for their dignity and provide them with means of subsistence. Furthermore, alienation can be lessened by fostering balanced border management and enhancing local government bodies.
- A political agreement that protects tribal rights while maintaining Manipur's territorial integrity is ultimately necessary.

Source: ***The Hindu***

Mains PYQ

1. What are the two major legal initiatives by the State since Independence addressing discrimination against Scheduled Tribes (STs)? (2017)

- In Imphal, Manipur, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone and opened several development initiatives.
- **Connectivity and infrastructure:** The Manipur Urban Roads Project, which has an investment of more than ₹3,600 crore, was launched in order to improve urban infrastructure and road connectivity in Imphal.
- **IT and Digital Projects:** The goal of the Manipur Infotech Development Project is to strengthen the state's IT and startup ecosystem.
- **Women's Empowerment:** The opening of four new Ima Markets (women-only markets) strengthens the long history of women-led economy in Manipur.
- **Sports and Culture:** Provide support for Khelo India initiatives and the National Sports University.

[2.6] Guidelines to Maintain Integrity of DNA Samples

Syllabus - Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Supreme Court recently published standards in Kattavellai @ Devakar v. State of Tamil Nadu to protect the integrity of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) samples in criminal proceedings.

Importance of DNA Evidence in Criminal Trials

- The genetic information in all living things is encoded by the molecule known as DNA.
- It can be extracted from biological samples like blood, saliva, hair, skin, sperm, and bone.
- When the DNA profile of a sample discovered at a crime scene matches the DNA profile of a suspect, it is generally fair to assume that the biological origin of both samples is the same. In criminal proceedings, however, it is not conclusive proof.
- The Supreme Court ruled in the Devakar case that DNA evidence is merely the opinion of an expert (under Section 45 of the Evidence Act / Section). 39 of the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023).
- Before a court can rely on DNA evidence, it must be adequately supported by scientific and legal proof.

SC Direction Is Required

- **Procedural Delays:** The court discovered substantial, unexplained delays in the delivery of samples to the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) for DNA testing.
- **Lack of Consistency:** Despite the fact that various organizations have produced some norms, there is no consistency and no common process that all investigating agencies are obligated to adhere to.

SC's Guidelines

- In cases involving DNA evidence, the Supreme Court established four principles.
- **Collection Method:** The document recording the collection must include the names and titles of the medical personnel who were there, the investigating officer, and any independent witnesses.
- **Transportation:** It will be the responsibility of the investigating officer to deliver the DNA evidence (sample) to the relevant police station or hospital.
    - Within 48 hours after collection, samples must arrive to the relevant FSL.

    - The causes of any delay must be documented, and every attempt should be made to maintain the samples.
- **Sample Handling:** No package may be opened, modified, or resealed while samples are kept awaiting trial or appeal without the trial court's explicit consent.
- **Custody Chain Register:** A Chain of Custody Register must be kept from the moment of acquisition until the logical conclusion, such as the accused's conviction or acquittal.
    - This register must be added to the trial court file. The officer conducting the investigation is accountable for addressing any cases of noncompliance.

Earlier Decisions of SC

- The Supreme Court said in Anil v. State of Maharashtra (2014) that the validity and reliability of a DNA profile are contingent upon the laboratory's quality control and procedures.
- The Supreme Court in Manoj and Ors. v. State of Madhya Pradesh (2022) dismissed a DNA report on the basis that the sample was taken 'from' the state.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs rejected' DNA evidence in Rahul v. State of Delhi (2022) because it remained in the police Malkhana for two months. and it was impossible to rule out the potential for tampering during that period.

Conclusion

- The Supreme Court published rules to guarantee consistent practices, even if 'Police' and 'Public Order' are under the State List.
- It emphasized the significance of both the investigating agency collecting samples (in a manner free of contamination and delay) and the FSL performing quality control in order to produce trustworthy results.

Source: ***The Hindu***

Prelims PYQ

1. Consider the following statements: DNA Barcoding can be a tool to:(2022)

1. ***assess the age of a plant or animal.***
2. ***distinguish among species that look alike.***
3. ***identify undesirable animal or plant materials in processed foods.***

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 3 only

(c) 1 and 2

(d) 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

- The Supreme Court recently published standards in Kattavellai @ Devakar v. State of Tamil Nadu to protect the integrity of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) samples in criminal proceedings.
- **Collection Method:** The document recording the collection must include the names and titles of the medical personnel who were there, the investigating officer, and any independent witnesses.
- **Transportation:** It will be the responsibility of the investigating officer to deliver the DNA evidence (sample) to the relevant police station or hospital.

- **Sample Handling:** No package may be opened, modified, or resealed while samples are kept awaiting trial or appeal without the trial court's explicit consent.
- **Custody Chain Register:** A Chain of Custody Register must be kept from the moment of acquisition until the logical conclusion, such as the accused's conviction or acquittal.

[2.7] SC on Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025

Syllabus - Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, which balances state control with minority rights, has been upheld by the Supreme Court, although it has also struck down some of its provisions.

Significant Changes Made by the Waqf (Amendment) Act of 2025

- The Central Waqf Council is made up of the Union Minister who is responsible for Waqf as its ex officio chair.
- Council members are:
    - MPs, or members of parliament.
    - Individuals who are well-known throughout the country.
    - Supreme Court/High Court judges who have retired.
    - Renowned authorities in Muslim law.
    - Removes the condition that members of parliament, former judges, and notable individuals must be Muslims.
    - The Council must have two members who are not Muslims.
- **Composition of Waqf Boards is as follows:**
    - Gives state administrations the power to select one representative from each category.
    - Two members must not be Muslims.
    - Must have at least one member from each of the Shia, Sunni, and Backward Muslim social groups.
    - Needs two Muslim women members.
- **Tribunal Composition:**
    - Removes the authority in Islamic law.
    - The judge of the District Court (Chairman).
    - Officer of the Joint Secretary Rank.
- **Applications Against Tribunal Orders:**
    - **Act:** Tribunal decisions are binding, and no appeals are permitted in court.
    - The amendment permits appeals against Tribunal judgments to be filed with the High Court within 90 days.
- **Survey of Properties:** The District Collector or other senior officials take the Survey Commissioner's place under the Act's provisions to oversee the survey of Waqf properties.
- **Government property as waqf:** It specifies that any government property designated as waqf would no longer be considered as such.
    - If ownership is unclear, the Collector of the region will make the decision; if it is considered government property, he will amend the revenue records.
- **Audits:** State-sponsored auditors will audit Waqf organizations with income exceeding ₹1 lakh.

- **Centralized Portal:** To improve transparency and efficiency, a central portal will be built to automate the management of Waqf assets.
- **Property Dedication:** By dedicating property to the Waqf, practicing Muslims (for at least five years) are able to revive the regulations that existed prior to 2013.
- **Women's Inheritance:** With particular considerations for widows, divorced women, and orphans, women must receive inheritance before the Waqf statement.

Key changes Incorporated into the Act

- **Islam in practice:** The most notable intervention by the Court pertains to Section 3(r), which mandates that anyone establishing a waqf must prove that they have been adhering to Islam for a minimum of five years.
    - The provision was put on hold by the court until the government establishes regulations for establishing religious practice.
- **District Collector's Authority Over Waqf Properties:** According to Section 3C, the District Collectors are responsible for deciding if assets said to be waqf are actually government-owned.
    - The court's judgment stated that the law permitting waqf status to be revoked prior to the conclusion of the investigation was "prima facie arbitrary" and remained in place.
    - Ordered that waqf assets not be evicted or changed until after the Waqf Tribunal makes a final ruling and any following appeals.
- **Representation in Waqf Administration:** According to its revised law, there may be up to 12 non-Muslims on the Central Waqf Council (22 members) and 7 non-Muslims on state boards (11 members).
    - This has been limited by the Court to three (State) and four (Central).
    - The heads of Waqf Boards should, to the extent that it is practicable, be Muslims (not essential).
    - In religious issues, this balance prioritized transparency and inclusivity over minority autonomy.
- **Deletion of "Waqf by User":** Earlier legislation permitted the declaration of property as waqf on the basis of prolonged religious usage alone, without the need for official paperwork.
- **Court's decision:** It maintained deletion, but made it clear that the change is only prospective—that is, that it does not affect waqf-by-user properties that were registered before April 8, 2025.
- **Protected Monuments:** The court refused to intervene with legislation that stipulates that the waqf status of property belonging to Scheduled Tribes or protected monuments is invalid.

Conclusion

- Unless a court overturns it, a regulation enacted by Parliament is assumed to be constitutional.
- Although SC declined to halt the Waqf Act, it did halt some clauses "to protect the interest of all parties and balance equities during pendency".

Source: ***The Hindu***

Mains PYQ

1. How is the Indian concept of secularism different from the western model of secularism? Discuss. (2018)

- The Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, which balances state control with minority rights, has been upheld by the Supreme Court, although it has also struck down some of its provisions.
- The most notable intervention by the Court pertains to Section 3(r), which mandates that anyone establishing a waqf must prove that they have been adhering to Islam for a minimum of five years.
- According to Section 3C, the District Collectors are responsible for deciding if assets said to be waqf are actually government-owned.
- Earlier legislation permitted the declaration of property as waqf on the basis of prolonged religious usage alone, without the need for official paperwork.
- It maintained deletion, but made it clear that the change is only prospective—that is, that it does not affect waqf-by-user properties that were registered before April 8, 2025.

[2.8] SC on Extension of the POSH Act to Political Parties

Syllabus - Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Supreme Court refused to consider a petition asking to expand the scope of the Protection of Women from Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act (POSH) to include political parties, noting that the law does not recognize them as workplaces.

Background

- The Kerala High Court found in Centre for Constitutional Rights Research and Advocacy v State of Kerala & Ors (2022) that political parties are not subject to have a typical employer-employee relationship and cannot be compelled to form Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs).
- Noncompliance has frequently been blamed on the decentralized and informal character of political party organizations in conjunction with this ambiguity.

Reasons for Extending the POSH Act to Political Parties

- **Constitutional Requirement for Equality:** Women's right to protection under POSH in political spaces is undermined by denying them this right, which violates Articles 14 (equality before law), 15 (non-discrimination), and 19(1)(g) (right to equality), 21 (right to life and dignity), and 21 (right to life and dignity).
- The **Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997)** case held that a woman's basic rights include protection against sexual harassment.
    - The exclusion of political parties weakens this feeling.
- **Addressing the Accountability Gap:** More than 2,700 registered political parties operate without Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs).
    - By creating a formal redress mechanism where there is none now, expanding POSH would close this institutional gap.
- **Promoting Women's Political Leadership:** Sexual harassment continues to be a major obstacle to women's involvement in politics.
    - Legal protection would foster a safer environment, allowing more women to participate in elections, hold leadership positions, and continue to be involved in public life.

Arguments against Extending the POSH Act to Political Parties

- **Lack of Employer-Employee Relationship:** Political parties function under informal frameworks and do not have a clear employer-employee relationship, making it harder to apply the POSH Act.
- **Decentralized Party Structures:** It is challenging to implement centralized ICCs or ensure consistent adherence due to the varied and decentralized character of political parties.

Way Ahead

- **Codes of Conduct at the Party Level:** To establish credibility and show a commitment to inclusion, political parties should voluntarily implement gender-sensitivity measures, codes of conduct, and procedures for a safe workplace.
- **Sector-Specific Mechanisms:** The government could establish sectoral grievance redressal boards for the informal, freelance, and voluntary sectors, such as politics, film, and media, to offer impartial and trustworthy platforms outside of employer control.

Source: ***The Hindu***

Mains PYQ

1. We are witnessing increasing instances of sexual violence against women in the country. Despite existing legal provisions against it, the number of such incidences is on the rise. Suggest some innovative measures to tackle this menace. (2014)

- The Supreme Court refused to consider a petition asking to expand the scope of the Protection of Women from Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act (POSH) to include political parties, noting that the law does not recognize them as workplaces.
- The Kerala High Court found in Centre for Constitutional Rights Research and Advocacy v State of Kerala & Ors (2022) that political parties are not subject to have a typical employer-employee relationship and cannot be compelled to form Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs).
- Noncompliance has frequently been blamed on the decentralized and informal character of political party organizations in conjunction with this ambiguity.

[2.9] Suggestion for National Framework for Global Capability Centres

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has released a suggested National Framework for Global Capability Centers (GCCs).

Key Highlights

- **Investment facilitation:** The policy calls for legally supported Digital Economic Zones that have "plug-and-play physical and digital infrastructure, harmonised regulations and competitive incentives."
- **National Portal:** It proposes a National Single Window Portal to offer smooth approvals, backed by a three-tier governance framework centered around a National GCC Council.

- **Extension:** It advocates extending GCCs beyond India's six metropolitan centers.
    - Coimbatore, Kochi, Indore, Jaipur, Bhubaneswar, and other Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities are identified as potential future growth hubs, growing digital workforce, and higher retention rates.
- **Concessional Business Tax:** The government should think about granting concessional business tax rates or tax holidays to GCCs established inside the designated special economic zones.
- **Services Clarification:** The government should also clarify the kind of services that GCCs are providing in order to get rid of the label of "intermediary."
    - This will facilitate thorough examination by authorities on tax refund requests and speed up the process of getting refunds for the goods and services tax (GST).

Global Capability Centers

- Global In-house Centers (GICs) or Captives, sometimes referred to as Global Capability Centers (GCCs), are primarily offshore centers created by multinational corporations at the global level to offer a range of services to their parent companies.
- These hubs function as internal entities inside the worldwide corporate framework, offering specialized services like IT, research and development (R&D), customer support, and other business functions.
- The GCCs have transformed from cost-cutting centers, mostly created to benefit from cheaper labor, to strategic hubs that foster creativity. and result in value creation over the last few decades.

GCC Landscape of India

- India already has over 1,800 GCCs that employ 2.16 million experts and generate about $68 billion in direct gross value addition (GVA), which is equivalent to around 1.8% of the country's GDP.
- The CII framework predicts that by 2030, the number of centers might increase to 5,000, producing between $154 and $199 billion in direct GVA.
- The total effect, which includes indirect and induced effects, may reach $470–600 billion.
- **Potential employment:** It might result in 20–25 million jobs by 2030, with 4–5 million of those being high-quality direct jobs in industries like cybersecurity, digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and engineering R&D.

India's GCC Growth Drivers

- India is well-known throughout the world for its varied talent base, which includes professionals in finance, IT, engineering, analytics, and other fields.
    - GCCs have been able to carry out complicated, high-value projects in India because of the availability of a qualified labor force.
- **Advances in technology:** Some of the cutting-edge technologies that have been adopted quickly include blockchain, the Internet of Things (IoT), AI, and ML.
    - This has, in turn, allowed Indian GCCs to digitally revolutionize their parent firms and provide novel solutions.
- **Strategically focused:** Over the years, multinational corporations (MNCs) have realized the value of establishing GCCs in India, moving from being known as a cost-saving hub to a strategic one.
    - Businesses now regard these centers as a strategic resource that allows them to increase their operational effectiveness, promote growth, and gain a competitive edge.
- **Government backing:** Several Indian government reforms, such as the Digital India Campaign, which aims to facilitate business operations, have helped to make this happen. In India, there are favorable conditions for the development of GCCs.

Way Ahead

- By changing the view of India from a cost-saving medium to a center of innovation and strategic value, global capability hubs have revolutionized the corporate environment in the nation.
- By making use of India's skilled workforce, technological prowess, and pro-government legislation, GCCs in the nation have fostered economic expansion, job creation, and regional development.
- Through ongoing innovation, partnership, and investment in infrastructure and people, GCCs may advance India's aim of becoming a US$ 5 trillion economy while also fostering sustainable development.

Source: ***The ET***

Mains PYQ

1. "The broader aims and objectives of WTO are to manage and promote international trade in the era of globalization. But the Doha round of negotiations seems doomed due to differences between the developed and the developing countries." Discuss from the Indian perspective. (2016)

- The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has released a suggested National Framework for Global Capability Centers (GCCs).
- **Investment facilitation:** The policy calls for legally supported Digital Economic Zones that have "plug-and-play physical and digital infrastructure, harmonised regulations and competitive incentives."
- **National Portal:** It proposes a National Single Window Portal to offer smooth approvals, backed by a three-tier governance framework centered around a National GCC Council.
- **Extension:** It advocates extending GCCs beyond India's six metropolitan centers.
- **Concessional Business Tax:** The government should think about granting concessional business tax rates or tax holidays to GCCs established inside the designated special economic zones.
- **Services Clarification:** The government should also clarify the kind of services that GCCs are providing in order to get rid of the label of "intermediary."

[2.10] AI for Viksit Bharat Roadmap

Syllabus - Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

As part of its Frontier Tech Hub, NITI Aayog unveiled two game-changing projects: the NITI Frontier Tech Repository and the AI for Viksit Bharat Roadmap: Opportunity for Accelerated Economic Growth.

Key Highlights

- The roadmap identifies two key levers for turning the potential of AI into reality and outlines a workable course of action.
    - Increasing the use of AI across sectors to boost efficiency and productivity;

    - Using generative AI to change R&D so that India can take advantage of innovation-driven possibilities.
- **Vision:** To mainstream AI-assisted technologies across all districts in order to encourage inclusive development and make sure that India does not fall behind in the worldwide tech revolution.

NITI Frontier Technology Repository

- With more than 200 impact stories from all over India in four industries – Agriculture, Healthcare, Education, and National Security – the Frontier Tech Repository serves as a showcase.
- It illustrates how governments and businesses are utilizing technology to improve people's lives.
- **Initiatives that Support:**
    - The Frontier 50 Initiative, in which NITI Aayog will help 50 Aspirational Districts/Blocks choose use cases from the Repository and implement those latest technologies.
    - The NITI Frontier Tech Impact Awards for States, which acknowledge the three states that are leading the way in using technology to advance education, healthcare, governance, and livelihoods, and assist them in achieving quantifiable, positive results.

In what ways can AI revolutionize vital industries?

- **Banking and Finance:** By 2035, artificial intelligence might contribute $50 to $55 billion to the Indian banking industry.
    - It can enhance fraud detection, guarantee regulatory compliance, and improve the efficiency of back-office procedures.
- **Industry and Manufacturing:** It is anticipated that by 2035, the productivity gains from AI-driven automation in manufacturing will be between $85 and $100 billion. In addition to optimizing factory operations, generative AI may aid in the creation of novel products.
- **Pharmaceuticals and Biotechnology:** India's pharmaceutical sector may be revolutionized by AI, transforming it from a generics-based market into an innovation-driven center.
    - By using computational biology and generative AI, drug discovery timelines may be cut by 60–80% and costs by 20–30%.
- **Automotive:** With a value of $6–8 billion, software-enabled cars may make up 40–50% of all cars sold in India by 2035.
    - Additionally, AI can revolutionize the auto components sector by streamlining and reducing the cost of design processes, resulting in an additional $25–30 billion.

Challenges

- Inadequate safeguards for data privacy and fragmentation.
- Ancient IT infrastructure in business and finance.
- There is a scarcity of AI specialists in bioinformatics, robotics, and chip design.
- Slow approval procedures for innovative medicines and technology.
- Ethical concerns such algorithmic bias and cybersecurity risks.

Key Strategic Elements for an AI Roadmap

- **Digital Infrastructure:** Under the India AI Mission, there will be an expansion of robotics test facilities, 5G networks, cloud services, and AI computing capability.
- **Data Governance:** enhancing AI Kosh as a national data platform, establishing industry-specific data grids, and ensuring the safe and consent-based sharing of data.

- **Regulation:** alignment with international standards, regulatory sandboxes, audit systems, and transparent ethical norms.

Conclusion

- To achieve its target of 8% sustained growth, India needs a significant increase in productivity and innovation, and AI is the essential facilitator.
- The nation must embrace AI, take the lead in establishing standards, foster innovation, and establish cooperative ecosystems in order to realize the aim of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

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

Mains PYQ

1. Introduce the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI). How does AI help clinical diagnosis? Do you perceive any threat to the privacy of the individual in the use of AI in healthcare? (2023)

- As part of its Frontier Tech Hub, NITI Aayog unveiled two game-changing projects: the NITI Frontier Tech Repository and the AI for Viksit Bharat Roadmap: Opportunity for Accelerated Economic Growth.
- The roadmap identifies two key levers for turning the potential of AI into reality and outlines a workable course of action.
- **Vision:** To mainstream AI-assisted technologies across all districts in order to encourage inclusive development and make sure that India does not fall behind in the worldwide tech revolution.

[2.11] Need for Modernisation in Armed Forces

Syllabus - Defence [GS Paper-3]

Context

In order to be ready to face "invisible" threats from information, ideological, ecological, and biological warfare, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh urged the armed forces to maintain their vigilance and readiness.

Key Highlights

- Continuous assessment and preparedness were necessary due to the chaotic global order, regional instability, and changing security environment.
- He encouraged commanders to strive for the Sudarshan Chakra vision espoused by Prime Minister Modi.
- It is India's strategy for establishing a 21st-century military that is technologically sophisticated, joint, self-sufficient, and strategically adaptable in order to safeguard national interests in a fast-evolving world.
- The project's medium-term (five-year) and long-term (ten-year) path were to be planned by a committee.

Necessity of Modernization

- **Changing Nature of War:** The move from conventional wars to hybrid warfare, which includes cyber, space, information, drones, and AI-enabled weapons.
- **Regional Security Issues:** Terrorism, Pakistan's proxy conflicts, and China's military buildup.
- **Technology Gap:** Need to lessen reliance on imports and increase domestic capacity.
- **Operational Preparedness:** To sustain a credible deterrent and make sure we're ready for brief, intense battles.

Modernization Challenges

- **Reorientation to Multi-Domain Conflict:** In order to succeed in a future conflict, multi-domain high-tech operations will need a variety of skills and abilities.
- **Human Capital & Professional Military Education (PME):** The Necessity for Officers Trained in Joint Operations, Strategic Thinking, and Technology Adaptation.
- **Technological Disparities:** The Army is behind in cyber, drones, robots, AI, and electronic warfare.
- **Problems with Civil-Military Coordination:** There is a lack of cooperation between the MoD, the military, and the industrial sector.
- **Geopolitical Pressures:** A two-front threat from China and Pakistan necessitates swift modernization, but the rate is still sluggish.

Government Programs

- **Department of Military Affairs (DMA) and Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) (2019):** It was founded to foster greater coordination and integration in training, planning, and acquisition.
- **Defense Acquisition Procedure (DAP) of 2020** gives preference to "Make in India" sectors and encourages indigenous design, development, and manufacturing.
- The year 2025 is designated the "**Year of Reforms**," with an emphasis on strengthening the jointness and integration of the tri-service.
    - Streamlining and accelerating the acquisition process.
- **Focus on new areas:** Cyber, Space, AI, Machine Learning, Hypersonics, Robotics.
- **Integrated Theatre Commands (ITCs):** A push to reorganize the command structure so that the Army, Navy, and Air Force in a region are under a single commander.
- **TPCR 2025**, which outlines requirements, skill gaps, and technology advancements for the next ten years, was unveiled at "Ran Samwad 2025" and adopts a joint doctrine and technology perspective.
    - To enhance interoperability, there are specialized joint doctrines (such as Special Forces) in addition to joint doctrines for multi-domain operations (land, sea, air, space, cyber, cognitive).
- **Indigenous Production Push and Defense Industrial Corridors:** To strengthen its defense manufacturing, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh have established two defense industrial corridors. defense industry and support local manufacturing.
- **Joint activities:** Tri-service integrated, multi-domain exercises are carried out by the Indian Armed Forces, with an emphasis on coordinated operations between the Army, Air Force, and Navy (Exercise Prachand Prahar, Exercise Desert Hunt).
- **Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS):** It forms the foundation for real-time coordination, allowing for coordinated reactions among several units of the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

Way Forward

- In today's world, where technology is rapidly replacing war and warriors, the aim of transforming into a modern, adaptable, and technologically knowledgeable force is not just a wish but a need.
- To become a future-ready force, this change will necessitate a commitment to rethinking force structure, adaptive training and strategies, and equipment, as well as technological innovation.

Source: ***The Hindu***

Prelims PYQ

1. What is "Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD)", sometimes seen in the news? (2018)

(a) An Israeli radar system

(b) India's indigenous anti-missile programme

(c) An American anti-missile system

(d) A defence collaboration between Japan and South Korea.

Ans.: (c)

In order to be ready to face "invisible" threats from information, ideological, ecological, and biological warfare, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh urged the armed forces to maintain their vigilance and readiness.

- Continuous assessment and preparedness were necessary due to the chaotic global order, regional instability, and changing security environment.
- He encouraged commanders to strive for the Sudarshan Chakra vision espoused by Prime Minister Modi.
- It is India's strategy for establishing a 21st-century military that is technologically sophisticated, joint, self-sufficient, and strategically adaptable in order to safeguard national interests in a fast-evolving world.
- The project's medium-term (five-year) and long-term (ten-year) path were to be planned by a committee.

[2.12] India's First National Policy on Geothermal Energy

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

Joining a growing number of nations betting on geothermal energy, the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) just unveiled its first national policy on utilizing subsurface heat to attain net zero emissions by 2070.

Geothermal Energy National Policy

- **Vision and Objectives:** To promote geothermal energy as a cornerstone of India's renewable energy industry, thereby increasing energy security, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, and advancing sustainable development.

- **Framework for Implementation (by MNRE):**
    - World collaboration with the top geothermal countries.
    - Pilot initiatives within the Renewable Energy Research and Technology Development Programme.
    - Project finance is available through IREDA and DFIs through low-interest loans.
    - Creating Centers of Excellence (CoEs) to offer training and technical help.
    - Regular progress updates to monitor milestones and ensure accountability.
- **Developmental Model and Implementation:** The geothermal development plan comprises exploration, drilling, feasibility studies, construction, and operation.
- **Fiscal Incentives:** Viability Gap Funding (VGF), Sovereign Green Bonds, and long-term concessional loans.
    - tax holidays, import duty and GST exemptions, and expedited depreciation advantages.
    - Inclusion in Carbon Credit Trading and Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPOs).
- **Investment Support:** International partnerships, concessional loans, and 100% FDI.
- **Project Lifespan:** Geothermal initiatives can be supported for up to 30 years, with extensions contingent upon the availability of resources.
    - Financial assistance specifically targeted towards high-altitude and northeastern states.
    - Turning decommissioned oil and gas wells into geothermal ventures.

Regulations for Union Territories and States

- Distribution of geothermal blocks along with exploration permits (3–5 years).
- A single-window clearance mechanism for licenses and permissions.
- Land leases to developers at reduced rates.
- Compensatory actions and community participation in isolated and tribal areas.
- Measures for the long-term development of projects (up to 30 years).

Geothermal Energy (Geo = Earth, Thermal = Heat)

- It is the heat that is kept in the Earth's crust and originates mostly from the Earth's natural heat caused by the degradation of the uranium, thorium, and potassium isotopes that are naturally radioactive.
- The temperature of the planet rises, on average, by 25 to 30 degrees Celsius per kilometer of depth above the ambient surface temperature (geothermal gradient). The heat is transmitted from the interior. mainly by conduction toward the surface.
- **Categories**:
    - **High-enthalpy resources:** Geysers and hot springs are frequently linked to volcanic areas and are mostly utilized for power production.
    - **Low- to Medium-enthalpy Resources:** Geothermal heat pumps and direct-use applications are better suited for this kind of resource, which includes hot rocks and shallow ground layers.

Source: ***The BS***

Prelims PYQ

1. Consider the following: (2013)

1. ***Electromagnetic radiation***
2. ***Geothermal energy***
3. ***Gravitational force***
4. ***Plate movements***
5. ***Rotation of the earth***
6. ***Revolution of the earth***

Which of the above are responsible for bringing dynamic changes on the surface of the earth?

(a) 1, 2, 3 and 4 only

(b) 1, 3, 5 and 6 only

(c) 2, 4, 5 and 6 only

(d) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6

Ans.: (d)

[2.13] AI-powered Large Language Model (LLM)

Syllabus - Defence [GS Paper-3]

Context

To increase efficiency and consistency in public auditing, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) will introduce an AI-powered Large Language Model (LLM).

Key Highlights

- Traditional, field-heavy audits are becoming more time-consuming and less scalable as a result of the rising volume and complexity of government transactions that are subject to public auditing.
- Nowadays, a lot of government systems generate extensive digital documents; however, without automatic analysis, large datasets are still underutilized for oversight.
- By allowing auditors to concentrate field visits on genuinely high-risk concerns, hybrid and remote audits can help lower logistical expenses.

Large Language Models (LLMs)

- An artificial intelligence (AI) algorithm known as a big language model (LLM) makes use of deep learning methodologies and large datasets to comprehend, create, forecast, and summarize fresh information.
- Deep learning involves the probabilistic analysis of unstructured data, which ultimately allows the deep learning model to identify differences between various pieces of content without human interaction.
- It makes it easier to see how characters, words, and sentences interact.

Benefits of an Audit System Powered by Artificial Intelligence

- **Increased efficiency:** Automated analysis of massive datasets will reduce the time spent on typical evidence collection and document preparation.
- **Increased uniformity:** By pulling precedent and standard methods from decades of inspection reports, the LLM lowers variability among audit teams.
- **Improved risk identification:** Pattern recognition and anomaly detection will allow for more precise targeting of high-risk transactions and programs.
- **Expanded audit coverage:** Audit offices may use hybrid and remote methodologies to cover more auditees without a commensurate rise in personnel travel.
- **Quicker feedback and resolution:** A unified digital portal will allow auditees to respond promptly and monitor the progress of audit findings.

Previous Initiatives

- Remote audit pilots covering receipts and expenditures, such as data-led GST audits and Telangana's remote compliance audit for the Stamps & Registration Department.
- PAG (Audit), Haryana, conducted a hybrid audit demonstration at Public Works.
- PRI accreditation without paper via West Bengal's Virtual Audit System, which is integrated with AuditOnline.
- The CAG-Connect portal will offer a single digital interface to about 10 million auditee companies.

Related Issues

- **Variable digital maturity:** A lot of local organizations and departments don't have data that is consistent and of high quality.
- **Risks to data security and privacy:** There are cybersecurity and legal concerns associated with processing private financial and personal information.
- **The dependability and explicability of AI:** LLMs may provide erroneous results and have opaque reasoning.
- **Restrictions imposed by the law and institutions:** The regulations governing access to particular government databases may differ from one state to another.

Way Ahead

- **Implement institutionalized human oversight:** It mandates that all AI-generated results will be reviewed by a person and implements practices for explainable AI.
- **Ongoing Assessment:** Regularly audit the model, review its performance, and solicit stakeholder feedback.
- **Data and APIs should be standardized:** Create common data formats and secure APIs to provide uninterrupted access to state and central systems.

Source: ***The Hindu***

Mains PYQ

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

- To increase efficiency and consistency in public auditing, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) will introduce an AI-powered Large Language Model (LLM).

- Traditional, field-heavy audits are becoming more time-consuming and less scalable as a result of the rising volume and complexity of government transactions that are subject to public auditing.
- Nowadays, a lot of government systems generate extensive digital documents; however, without automatic analysis, large datasets are still underutilized for oversight.
- By allowing auditors to concentrate field visits on genuinely high-risk concerns, hybrid and remote audits can help lower logistical expenses.

[2.14] PM Pushes for Made in India Products

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

To help India become a developed nation by 2047, Prime Minister Modi has encouraged Indians to purchase items produced there.

Key Highlights

- In Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district, the Prime Minister established the groundwork for the nation's first PM Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM MITRA) park.
- PM MITRA park in Dhar is one of the seven similar facilities the Union Ministry of Textiles has authorized.
- Maharashtra's Amravati, Uttar Pradesh's Lucknow, Karnataka's Kalaburagi, Gujarat's Navsari, Telangana's Warangal, and Tamil Nadu's Virudhnagar are the other locations.
- The initiative seeks to promote India's textile production and exports using the 5F theme: Farm to Fiber to Factory to Fashion to Foreign.

Manufacturing Industry in India

- Currently, 17% of India's GDP comes from the manufacturing sector.
- One of India's aims is to increase the manufacturing sector's contribution to the GDP to 25%.
- India is concentrating on 14 recognized sunrise sectors, such as semiconductors, renewable energy components, medical equipment, batteries, and labor-intensive industries like textiles and leather, to increase the percentage of GDP accounted for by manufacturing
- **Growth and Performance:** The Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) for 2022-23 reports that the manufacturing sector saw strong output growth of 21.5%. The Gross Value Added (GVA) increased by 7.3%.
    - Motor vehicles, chemicals, food goods, coke, and refined petroleum products, and basic metal manufacturing were among the major industries that together accounted for 58% of overall manufacturing production.
- **Job Creation:** The manufacturing industry has also been a major employer, creating about 2.2 million new positions in 2022–23.

Issues Experienced by India's Manufacturing Industry

- **Infrastructure Bottlenecks:** Low output is caused by expensive logistics, inadequate port connections, and electricity shortages.
- **Import Dependence:** High reliance on imports for defense gear, electronics components, and semiconductors.

- **Low Productivity:** Productivity is still low as a result of obsolete equipment, fragmented units, and insufficient automation.
- **Global Competition:** India faces stiff competition from nations like Vietnam, Bangladesh, and China, which have superior ecosystems and cheaper manufacturing.
- **Environmental Issues:** Increasing pressure for sustainable and green manufacturing, which comes at a high compliance price.

Significant Steps Taken to Facilitate Make in India

- **Ease of Doing Business:** India's rating in the World Bank's Doing Business Report (DBR) 2020 increased from 142nd in 2014 to 63rd.
- **Vaccine Production:** India not only reached COVID-19 vaccine coverage in record time but also rose to prominence as a significant exporter to numerous developing and underdeveloped nations worldwide.
- **Vande Bharat Trains:** These are India's first homegrown semi-high-speed trains, and they are a prime example of the success of the "Make in India" program.
    - Currently, there are 102 Vande Bharat train services (51 trains) running on Indian Railways.
- India's expanding power and capacity in this essential industry were demonstrated in 2023–24, when defense production increased to ₹1.27 lakh crore and exports reached more than 90 nations.
- **Electronics:** Production almost doubled between FY17 (USD 48 billion) and FY23 (USD 101 billion), mostly due to mobile phones, which currently account for 43% of overall electronics output.
    - India currently produces 99% of its mobile devices domestically and is the second-largest producer of them globally.
- The textile industry has made a huge contribution to the employment market in India by generating an astounding 14.5 crore jobs nationwide.

Conclusion

- The engineering and heavy industries have undergone a paradigm shift thanks to the 'Make in India' program.
- The effort has been important in bolstering India's industrial foundation by promoting technological innovation, increasing domestic output, improving competitiveness, and creating jobs.
- The industry is on track for further expansion in the next years with ongoing investment and consistent government backing.

Source: ***The Hindu***

Mains PYQ

1. "Success of 'Make in India' program depends on the success of the 'Skill India' programme and radical labour reforms." Discuss with logical arguments. (2015)

- To help India become a developed nation by 2047, Prime Minister Modi has encouraged Indians to purchase items produced there.
- In Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district, the Prime Minister established the groundwork for the nation's first PM Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM MITRA) park.
- PM MITRA park in Dhar is one of the seven similar facilities the Union Ministry of Textiles has authorized.

- Maharashtra's Amravati, Uttar Pradesh's Lucknow, Karnataka's Kalaburagi, Gujarat's Navsari, Telangana's Warangal, and Tamil Nadu's Virudhnagar are the other locations.
- The initiative seeks to promote India's textile production and exports using the 5F theme: Farm to Fiber to Factory to Fashion to Foreign.

[2.15] Global Innovation Index 2025

Syllabus - Science and Technology [GS Paper-3]

Context

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) published the 18th edition of the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2025.

Key Highlights

- The GII, which was founded in 2007, is released every year. It ranks around 140 countries based on their innovation ecosystems using performance indicators and rankings.
- **R&D Decline:** Growth slowed to 2.9% in 2024, the lowest rate since the 2010 financial crisis, and a drop from the 4.4% increase in the prior year.
    - WIPO predicts that growth will continue to decelerate in 2025 (2.3%).
- **Top Countries:** For the fifteenth year running, Switzerland continues to be the world's top innovation leader, followed by Sweden, the United States, South Korea, and Singapore in the top five.
    - China leads middle-income economies and enters the top ten for the first time, coming in at number ten in the world.
- **India:** India has steadily moved up the rankings from 48 in 2020 to 38 in 2025, and significantly, it is now the top nation among lower-middle-income economies in the area of Central and Southern Asia.
    - India's top rankings are in Market Sophistication (38) and Knowledge & Technology Outputs (22), while its lowest rankings are in Business Sophistication (64), Infrastructure (61), and Institutions (58).
    - India is distinctive for its exports of ICT services, a thriving VC environment, late-stage VC and startup finance, unicorns, and intangible assets, all of which point to technology-led development.

Importance to India

- India's consistent rise demonstrates its strength in the digital economy, ICT exports, and entrepreneurship.
- However, disparities in infrastructure, institutions, and company maturity highlight areas in need of improvement.

Major Indian Innovation Programs

- **Startup India (2016):** Initiated by DPIIT; provides tax breaks, a Fund of Funds, a credit guarantee, and regulatory simplicity to support new businesses.
- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM):** An initiative of the NITI Aayog that fosters innovation through Atal Tinkering Labs (schools), Incubation Centers (startups), and New India Challenges (solutions to national problems).

- **National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI):** A DST program that provides support to innovators through incubation support, Entrepreneur-in-Residence (fellowships), and PRAYAS (idea to prototype).
- **Digital Public Infrastructure (UPI, Aadhaar, ONDC, DigiLocker):** establishes scalable platforms that foster innovation in the fields of fintech, business, and governance.
- **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes:** Offers incentives for research and development as well as production in industries such as electronics, semiconductors, electric vehicles, and pharmaceuticals.

Source: ***The Indian Express***

Prelims PYQ

1. What does venture capital mean? (2014)

(a) A short-term capital provided to industries

(b) A long-term start-up capital provided to new entrepreneurs

(c) Funds provided to industries at times of incurring losses

(d) Funds provided for replacement and renovation of industries

Ans: (b)

- The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) published the 18th edition of the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2025.
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- **India:** India has steadily moved up the rankings from 48 in 2020 to 38 in 2025, and significantly, it is now the top nation among lower-middle-income economies in the area of Central and Southern Asia.

[2.16] Gender Equality in Tribal Property Rights

Syllabus: Indian Society [GS Paper-1]

Context

Property ownership is not only an economic matter but also central to power, dignity, and equality. Among tribal communities in India, women face deep-rooted exclusion from inheritance and property rights, reflecting a critical gender parity gap. This issue gained renewed attention with the Supreme Court's landmark July 2025 judgment striking down customary laws excluding tribal daughters from ancestral property rights.

Background: Exclusion of Tribal Women

Customary laws in Scheduled Areas often exclude women from land inheritance despite their significant economic contributions, especially in agriculture. Tribal land is commonly viewed as "communitarian," yet proceeds from land sales rarely benefit local gram sabhas or women. The fear of land alienation due to women marrying outside the tribe is cited to justify exclusion, perpetuating systemic gender injustice. According to the 2015–16 Agriculture Census, only 16.7% of Scheduled Tribe (ST) women own land compared to 83.3% of men.

Supreme Court Judgment: Ram Charan vs Sukhram (2025)

The Supreme Court ruled that denying daughters their rightful share in ancestral tribal property violates fundamental rights, notably Articles 14 (equality) and 15 (non-discrimination) of the Constitution. This verdict marks a historic shift from previous rulings that upheld customary exclusion, affirming gender justice and equality for tribal women. The judgment arose from a case involving daughters of a Gond tribal woman from Chhattisgarh seeking their share of ancestral property.

Legal and Policy Challenges

- **Customary Laws vs Statutory Rights:** Tribal customary laws on marriage and succession exclude women, but the Hindu Succession Act, 2005 excludes Scheduled Tribes from its ambit (Section 2(2)), leaving a legal vacuum.
- **Previous Judicial Precedents:** Earlier rulings like Madhu Kishwar (1996) upheld customary exclusions, fearing legal chaos. More recent cases (e.g., Prabha Minz vs Martha Ekka, 2022 and Kamala Neti, 2022) have progressively advanced tribal women's rights, culminating in the 2025 Supreme Court decision.

Importance of Property Rights for Tribal Women

Property ownership enhances women's economic independence, bargaining power, and protection against domestic violence. It also promotes social dignity and political participation, such as in gram sabhas. Recognizing women's rights to tribal lands can break cycles of poverty and marginalization, fostering equitable development.

Need for Codification of Tribal Succession Laws

A separate codified Tribal Succession Act is necessary to reconcile tribal customs with constitutional equality. Such a legal framework would guarantee inheritance rights for women without undermining indigenous identity, similar to codifications under Hindu and Christian succession laws. Codification would ensure uniformity, clarity, and enforceability of women's rights.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's July 2025 ruling on tribal women's property rights is a landmark milestone toward gender parity and social justice. However, lasting change requires comprehensive legislative enactment, social sensitization, and the integration of constitutional values in tribal governance. Ensuring tribal women's equal access to ancestral property is crucial for empowering them, upholding dignity, and advancing inclusive nation-building.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine the challenges faced by tribal women in exercising property rights in India. How does customary law impact their inheritance rights, and what role has the judiciary played in addressing these issues?

[2.17] Trump's Science Policies: India's Innovation Edge

Syllabus: International Relation [GS Paper-3]

Context

Donald Trump's crackdown on science funding and restrictive policies in the United States has opened a significant opportunity for India to strengthen its scientific and technological ecosystem. This development comes at a critical time when India is aiming to boost its global research profile and become a global leader in cutting-edge technologies.

Introduction: The US Science Funding Cuts and Visa Restrictions

The Trump administration significantly cut budgets for key US science agencies like the National Science Foundation (NSF) and NASA by over 50%. Concurrently, tight visa regulations and fewer tenure-track jobs have stranded many highly skilled Indian-origin and global researchers in the US, creating a glut of scientific talent seeking new opportunities. This situation contrasts with India's recent bold funding announcements through the Anusandhan National Research Foundation and a ₹1 lakh crore R&D Innovation Fund aimed at mission-oriented research and innovation.

India's Scientific Research Imbalance

Despite ranking among the top five countries in 29 critical technology domains, India contributes only 2.5% of the world's highly cited scientific papers and has just 2% of scientists among the global top 2% cited researchers. China, by contrast, dominates 37 of 44 critical technologies, transforming its research strength into sovereign strategic power through aggressive talent recruitment and investment. India's main gap lies not in talent numbers but in the lack of an ecosystem that consistently produces world-class breakthroughs and retains top-tier researchers.

Strategic Opportunity for India

Trump's crackdown and US restrictions have precipitated a unique opportunity for India to attract this stranded global scientific talent. With many Indian-origin PhDs and postdocs looking for careers outside the US, India's large-scale funding and new research frameworks could position the country as a preferred destination. However, to capitalize, India needs credible, transparent pathways to embed and retain these scientists—something China achieved through its "Young Thousand Talents" program, which recruited 3,500 scientists between 2011 and 2017 and boosted China's place among the top institutions globally.

Institutional Reforms and Talent Retention

To harness this opportunity, experts suggest establishing Focused Research Organisations (FROs) with public-private-academia partnerships to absorb and engage top talent in key strategic technologies like semiconductors, quantum communication, synthetic biology, and advanced propulsion. Such organisations would offer long-term career prospects, collaborative leadership, and competitive compensation aligned with global benchmarks, unlike India's current fragmented and underfunded research environment.

Implications for India's Strategic Autonomy

Developing sovereign capabilities in critical emerging technologies depends heavily on India successfully integrating top global talent at scale. Delays or insufficient talent retention risks losing breakthroughs that will underpin India's economic and defence autonomy in decades ahead. Beyond funding, the focus must be on sustainable talent ecosystems, international collaborations, and industry-linked innovation.

Conclusion: Seizing the Moment

India must act urgently to translate external global shifts into domestic gains. The Trump administration's crackdown on US science has inadvertently created a rare, time-sensitive window for India to boost its global position by attracting and embedding top researchers and innovators. With the right reforms, investment, and strategic vision, India can transform this challenge into a major advantage, enhancing its research output, technological innovation, and global scientific stature.

Source: The Indian Express

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Analyze the impact of the Trump administration's science policies on the global innovation ecosystem. How has this created an opportunity for India to enhance its research and development capabilities and emerge as a leader in emerging technologies?

[2.18] Global Plastic Pollution Crisis

Syllabus: Environmental Pollution [GS Paper-3]

Context

The global plastic pollution crisis is a grave environmental threat with far-reaching consequences for ecosystems, climate, and human health. With global plastic waste projected to triple by 2060, reaching 1.2 billion tonnes, the scale of the problem is alarming and demands urgent, concerted action.

The explosive growth of plastic waste

The world's reliance on plastic has grown exponentially since the mid-20th century, with production doubling between 2000 and 2019 to 460 million tonnes annually. This surge, driven by packaging and fast-moving consumer goods, has overwhelmed waste management systems globally, particularly in developing nations.

- **Low recycling rates:** Despite the crisis, only 9% of global plastic waste is recycled. The majority ends up in landfills, is incinerated, or leaks into the environment, especially in countries with poor waste management infrastructure.
- **The rise of single-use plastics:** Single-use plastics, including packaging, cutlery, and bags, are a primary driver of the problem. They constitute a massive portion of the waste stream and are often discarded after a single, brief use.

Severe ecological and human health impacts

The non-biodegradable nature of plastic ensures that it persists in the environment for centuries, breaking down into smaller and smaller pieces rather than disappearing.

- **Impact on marine ecosystems:** Each year, 11 million tonnes of plastic enter the ocean, jeopardizing marine life through entanglement and ingestion. Scientists warn that at current rates, the ocean could contain more plastic than fish by weight by mid-century.
- **Microplastic contamination:** Plastic fragments into microscopic particles known as microplastics and nanoplastics, which have infiltrated every part of the planet, from the deep ocean to the highest mountains. These particles are ingested by organisms across the food chain and have even been found in human blood and organs.

- **Climate change nexus:** The plastic lifecycle, from fossil fuel extraction for production to incineration, is a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions. Plastics account for 3.4% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and this share is expected to grow.
- **Human health risks:** Plastics contain thousands of hazardous chemical additives, including carcinogens and endocrine disruptors. These chemicals can leach into water and food, posing serious long-term health risks to humans.

The way forward: A multi-pronged approach

Addressing this crisis requires a comprehensive strategy involving governments, industries, and individuals.

- **Policy and regulation:** Governments must implement stricter regulations to limit plastic production, particularly single-use items. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes can hold manufacturers accountable for their products' full lifecycle. International cooperation through legally binding treaties is also crucial.
- **Sustainable alternatives:** Investing in and promoting eco-friendly and biodegradable alternatives, as well as redesigning products for reuse and recycling, can reduce dependence on virgin plastic.
- **Improved waste management:** Robust and inclusive waste management infrastructure is essential, especially in developing economies. This includes incentivizing recycling and developing innovative technologies for processing difficult-to-recycle materials.
- **Behavioural change:** Public awareness campaigns are vital for promoting responsible consumption and disposal practices. Individuals can make a significant difference by reducing, reusing, and recycling plastic in their daily lives.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Plastic pollution is one of the most pressing environmental challenges of the 21st century. Critically examine the causes, impacts, and challenges in managing plastic waste in India. Suggest measures to address the crisis in line with global best practices.

[2.19] PLI scheme for white goods

Syllabus: Government Policies [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Government of India has reopened the application window for the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for White Goods, specifically covering air conditioners (ACs) and LED lights. The application window is open from September 15 to October 14, 2025. This decision comes in response to growing industry interest and market demand, encouraging further investments under the scheme.

Background and Objective

The PLI Scheme for White Goods was approved by the Union Cabinet in April 2021 with a financial outlay of ₹6,238 crore. The scheme aims to promote domestic manufacturing of white goods, reduce import dependency, and position India as a global manufacturing hub. It incentivizes companies to manufacture key components of ACs and LED lights, including those components not presently produced in sufficient quantities in India.

Scope and Eligibility

Both new applicants and existing beneficiaries of the scheme are eligible to apply during the reopened window. Existing beneficiaries can apply if they propose to invest more by switching to a higher target segment or through their group companies applying under different segments. This inclusive approach ensures fairness and aims to maximize industry participation.

Incentives and Duration

Under the scheme, eligible manufacturers receive financial incentives ranging from 4% to 6% on incremental sales of the covered products. The scheme spans seven years from FY 2021-22 to FY 2028-29. Applicants approved in this fourth round will be eligible for incentives for the remainder of the scheme's tenure, or for a maximum of two years in cases involving new investors or beneficiaries opting for higher investment categories.

Market Growth and Industry Confidence

The reopening has been driven by a strong appetite among industry players to invest further, reflecting the growing market for white goods such as ACs and LED lights. Urbanization, rising incomes, and demand for energy-efficient appliances have fueled this market growth. The scheme has successfully encouraged manufacturing investments amounting to ₹10,406 crore committed by 83 applicants so far, including major domestic and international brands.

Significance for India's Manufacturing and Economy

The PLI Scheme for White Goods supports India's push for self-reliance by building domestic manufacturing capabilities. It improves supply chains, reduces reliance on imports of critical components, and enhances the global competitiveness of India-made white goods. Additionally, it encourages technology transfer, skill development, and innovation in energy-efficient and eco-friendly appliances.

Conclusion

The government's decision to reopen the PLI scheme application window for white goods underscores the growing market potential and the government's commitment to strengthening India's manufacturing ecosystem. By providing financial incentives and encouraging greater investment, the scheme is poised to accelerate production, create jobs, and contribute to India's vision of becoming a global manufacturing hub.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme:

1. **It aims to boost domestic manufacturing by providing incentives based on production.**
2. **It covers only the electronics sector.**
3. **The scheme is implemented by the NITI Aayog.**

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 1 and 2 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 1 only

Explanation: PLI covers multiple sectors (not only electronics) and is implemented by the respective ministries, not NITI Aayog.

[2.20] India's Rise as a Global Climate Champion

Syllabus: Environment [GS Paper-3]

Context

India's transformation from a developing country with rising energy needs to a global leader in climate action demonstrates a successful blend of sustainable development and climate responsibility. Guided by the principles of equity, justice, and innovation, India has set a global example through its commitments and diplomacy on climate change.

Early Commitments and Milestones

- **Paris Agreement and NDCs:** At COP21 in Paris (2015), India committed to achieving 40% of its installed electric power capacity from non-fossil fuels by 2030. Remarkably, the country achieved this target by 2021, nearly a decade ahead of schedule.
- **Emission Intensity Reduction:** India pledged to reduce the emission intensity of its GDP by 33-35% below 2005 levels by 2030, showing measurable progress towards climate mitigation.
- **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):** India's NDCs also include creating an additional carbon sink through enhanced forest and tree cover, aiming to absorb 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent by 2030.

Landmark Initiatives Driving Climate Leadership

- **International Solar Alliance (ISA):** Launched in 2015, this India-initiated global coalition promotes solar energy use, uniting over 120 countries. It underscores India's leading role in renewable energy diplomacy and technology transfer to the Global South.
- **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI):** Founded in 2019, this platform addresses climate-resilient infrastructure worldwide, reflecting India's leadership in adaptation and disaster risk reduction.
- **Global Biofuel Alliance and Green Hydrogen Mission:** India is spearheading efforts towards promoting sustainable biofuels and green hydrogen as clean energy alternatives to decarbonize industry.

Bold International Commitments

- **COP26 Pledge - Panchamrit:** At Glasgow in 2021, India announced five ambitious targets: achieving 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030; meeting 50% of energy needs from renewables by 2030; reducing carbon intensity by 45%; cutting projected carbon emissions by 1 billion tons by 2030; and achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2070.
- **Climate Finance Advocacy:** India continues to press developed nations to honor commitments of $100 billion annually for climate finance and supports mechanisms like loss and damage funds to assist vulnerable countries.

Integrating Climate with Development

- **Sustainable Economic Growth:** India demonstrates that large-scale economic growth can progress concurrently with sustainability, as reflected in increasing renewable energy capacity and reducing coal dependence.
- **Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE):** This global movement encourages citizens to adopt sustainable lifestyle choices, demonstrating India's holistic approach to climate action extending beyond policy to societal transformation.

India's Leadership Role and Global Impact

- India has emerged as a voice for developing nations, advocating the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities."
- The country's leadership in multilateral forums such as the G20 and UNFCCC negotiations strengthens global climate governance with an inclusive, equity-centered approach.
- By advancing technology, financing, and capacity-building alliances, India catalyzes climate action beyond its borders, enhancing global South collaboration in climate solutions.

Conclusion

India's journey to becoming a global climate champion rests on its proactive commitments, domestic achievements in renewable energy expansion, and strong diplomatic efforts to promote climate justice and sustainable development. This leadership exemplifies how a developing country can contribute decisively to global climate goals while addressing national priorities, embodying a model for equitable and effective climate governance.

Source: News on Air

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine how India has emerged as a global climate champion. Discuss the key domestic initiatives and international commitments that have shaped India's climate leadership. What challenges does India face in balancing climate action with its development priorities?

[2.21] India's Hydrogen Push Gains Global Momentum

Syllabus: Environment [GS Paper-3]

Context

The International Energy Agency (IEA), in its Global Hydrogen Review 2025, has highlighted the accelerating pace of hydrogen deployment worldwide. However, it warns that stronger policies, investments, and infrastructure are crucial to ensure hydrogen fulfills its role in achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. India, with its ambitious National Green Hydrogen Mission, aims to become a global leader by producing 5 million tonnes of green hydrogen annually by 2030.

Global Hydrogen Scenario

- **Rising Momentum**
    - Hydrogen is increasingly recognized as the "fuel of the future" due to its ability to decarbonize hard-to-abate sectors such as steel, cement, shipping, and aviation.

- Over 50 countries have announced hydrogen strategies, signaling rapid global adoption.

- **Challenges Highlighted by IEA**
  - Lack of sufficient large-scale infrastructure for production, storage, and transport.
  - Investment flow remains inadequate compared to the scale of needs.
  - Policy uncertainty in some regions slows project execution.
  - Without stronger support, hydrogen's contribution to net-zero will fall short.

India's Green Hydrogen Push

- **National Green Hydrogen Mission**
  - Launched in 2023, with INR 19,744 crore support package.
  - Targets 5 million tonnes annual production by 2030.
  - Seeks to cut nearly 50 million tonnes of CO_2 emissions per year.
  - Aims to make India a global hub for production, use, and export of green hydrogen.
- **Sectoral Applications in India**
  - **Industry:** Decarbonization of steel and fertilizers.
  - **Transport:** Hydrogen fuel cells for heavy-duty vehicles and shipping.
  - **Energy Security:** Blending hydrogen with natural gas and enhancing renewable integration.
  - **Exports:** Potential to become a supplier to regions like EU and Japan.

Comparative Global Position

- **India vs. Other Players**
  - **Europe:** Leading in hydrogen electrolyzer deployment and hydrogen corridors.
  - **China:** Investing heavily in hydrogen-powered transport fleets and electrolyzer manufacturing.
  - **Japan & South Korea:** Focusing on hydrogen imports due to limited domestic renewable resources.
  - **India:** Competitive advantage lies in RE potential (solar, wind), low production cost, and policy support.
- **Competitive Edge**
  - Abundant renewables lower input cost for green hydrogen.
  - A large domestic market ensures early demand creation.
  - Opportunity to lead Global South in energy transition.

Key Challenges for India

- Need for massive infrastructure for pipelines, storage, refueling stations.
- Scaling up electrolyzer manufacturing domestically.
- Ensuring cost competitiveness compared to grey hydrogen from fossil fuels.
- Building global partnerships and certification standards for exports.

Way Forward

- Strengthen policy consistency with clear long-term incentives.
- Attract private capital and global technology collaborations.
- Create demand from industries through mandates or incentives.
- Develop hydrogen hubs, corridors, and export terminals.

- Integrate hydrogen within India's broader decarbonization roadmap.

Conclusion

Hydrogen is central to achieving global climate goals, but its deployment requires urgent scaling up of investment and policy ambition. As the *Global Hydrogen Review 2025* suggests, India is well-positioned to play a pivotal role due to its renewable energy base and policy momentum. With timely execution, India can not only achieve energy independence and decarbonization but also emerge as a global hydrogen leader by 2030.

Source: DTE

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Hydrogen is being hailed as the fuel of the future with potential to decarbonize hard-to-abate sectors. Critically analyze India's strategy under the National Green Hydrogen Mission in the context of global hydrogen race. What challenges must India overcome to emerge as a global leader by 2030?

[2.22] Swasth Nari, Sashakt Parivar Abhiyaan (SNSPA)

Syllabus: Government Initiative [GS Paper-2]

Context

Swasth Nari, Sashakt Parivar Abhiyaan (SNSPA) is a major government campaign launched in September 2025 to enhance women's, children's, and family health services, with a focus on rural and tribal India. The initiative represents a landmark step in India's journey towards holistic and inclusive health, empowering women as key drivers of family and national progress.

Introduction

SNSPA was introduced by the Prime Minister on 17th September 2025, jointly led by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD). It aligns with flagship programs like Poshan 2.0 and Mission Shakti, and culminates on Gandhi Jayanti, October 2, 2025.

Objectives

- Strengthen healthcare access for women and children, especially in rural and tribal regions.
- Comprehensive health screenings for anaemia, hypertension, diabetes, TB, reproductive health, cancers, and genetic disorders.
- Promote nutrition, awareness, and behaviour change through education, community action, and collaboration with Anganwadis, self-help groups, and volunteers.
- Foster family well-being via integrated maternal, child, and adolescent health services.

Key Features

- **Large-Scale Health Camps:** Over one lakh health camps are deployed across Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, Community Health Centres, and District Hospitals nationwide. These camps

offer screening, immunisation, nutrition counselling, menstrual hygiene awareness, and mental health support.

- **Real-Time Monitoring:** Implementation is tracked via the SASHAKT digital portal for real-time data, transparency, and efficient service delivery.
- **Community Participation:** SNSPA is a Jan Bhagidaari Abhiyaan, encouraging participation by private hospitals, healthcare professionals, volunteers (including Nikshay Mitras), self-help groups, and Panchayati Raj institutions. Awareness activities leverage platforms like All India Radio, Doordarshan, and social media.
- **Targeted Rural and Tribal Services:** Special attention is given to remote and tribal areas using specialist medical teams, tailored counselling, and outreach through Anganwadis. Blood donation drives and TB elimination activities further strengthen community health infrastructure.

Impact and Outcomes

SNSPA aims to reduce maternal mortality by expanding antenatal care, screenings, and immunisation services. It strives to raise awareness of menstrual hygiene, nutrition, and wellness, and foster sustainable behaviour change to lower disease burden and mortality rates. By integrating with existing government schemes, SNSPA pushes towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047—healthier, empowered families as catalysts of national development.

Conclusion

Swasth Nari, Sashakt Parivar Abhiyaan demonstrates a paradigm shift in India's health strategy—placing women's health and family empowerment at the centre of inclusive national progress. Through collaborative, technology-enabled outreach and deep community engagement, SNSPA is set to transform health outcomes for millions and accelerate India's growth journey.

Source: DDNews

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q. With reference to the Swasth Nari, Sashakt Parivar Abhiyaan (SNSPA), consider the following statements:

1. **SNSPA is jointly implemented by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of Women and Child Development.**
2. **It aims to strengthen healthcare for women and children, with a focus on rural and tribal regions.**
3. **The initiative exclusively relies on government hospitals for its health camps.**

Which of the above statements is/are correct?
A) 1 and 2 only
B) 2 and 3 only
C) 1 and 3 only
D) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A) 1 and 2 only

[2.23] EU-India partnership

Syllabus: International Relation [GS Paper-2]

Context

The EU-India partnership is undergoing a strategic upgrade, aiming to deepen ties across trade, technology, defence, climate action, and global governance. This comprehensive agenda seeks to position both as pillars of stability and prosperity in a shifting geopolitical landscape.

Strategic Context and Objectives

The partnership's enhancement reflects converging interests in sustaining economic growth, securing global supply chains, fostering climate resilience, and supporting rules-based international order. Both sides view this as timely, given global disruptions, supply chain vulnerabilities, and the rise of multipolarity. The EU's new strategic agenda, adopted in September 2025, sets out five key pillars: prosperity and sustainability, trade and investment, supply chain security, technology and clean transition, and security and defence.

Trade and Investment Ties

Central to the upgrade is the goal of finalising a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by the end of 2025, promising the largest bilateral trade deal in India's history. The FTA aims to:

- Increase EU–India trade, which topped $141 billion in goods and $71 billion in services.
- Promote market access for Indian and European exporters.
- Include Investment Protection and Geographical Indications pacts to support long-term business cooperation.
- Address non-tariff barriers and tariff protection on cars, dairy, wine, and agricultural goods, which remain contentious points.

Technology and Innovation

The India–EU Trade and Technology Council, launched in 2022, drives cooperation in digital governance, AI, and cybersecurity. Key areas:

- Joint work on digital public infrastructure, secure cross-border e-signatures, and mutual recognition.
- Cooperation on semiconductors, emerging telecom (6G), and AI frameworks between European AI Office and India AI Mission.
- Promotion of innovation hubs, startup partnerships, and research in high-impact fields like HPC, nuclear, and clean energy tech.

Clean Transition and Climate Action

Climate resilience and decarbonisation form another pillar:

- Collaboration in green hydrogen, renewables, disaster-resilient infrastructure, and methane reduction.
- EU support for India's energy ambitions through technology transfer and joint initiatives, including International Solar Alliance and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.

Security and Defence Cooperation

Rising global security challenges have prompted proposals for an upgraded India–EU Security and Defence Partnership:

- Joint consultations on crisis management, maritime security, and cyber-defence.

- Negotiations for a Security of Information Agreement to enable classified information exchange.
- Coordination on Indo-Pacific, rules-based maritime order, counterterrorism, and space security.

Challenges and Areas of Divergence

Despite deepening engagement, concerns persist, especially over India's continued oil purchases from Russia and participation in Russian military exercises, which the EU regards as a major stumbling block. Additionally, differences over market access, agricultural protection, and regulatory barriers continue to slow FTA finalisation.

Conclusion

The elevated EU-India partnership embodies shared pursuit of economic prosperity, technological sovereignty, climate resilience, and geopolitical stability. While strategic convergences outpace traditional obstacles, progress depends on overcoming legacy trade barriers and navigating divergent geopolitical interests.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Critically examine the recent strategic upgrade in the EU-India partnership. Discuss the key areas of convergence, major challenges to deeper cooperation, and the significance of the evolving relationship for India's geopolitical and economic interests in the context of current global shifts.

[2.24] Defence Agreement Between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan

Syllabus - International Relations [GS Paper-2]

Context

India has stated that it is aware of the mutual defense pact that Pakistan recently signed with Saudi Arabia and reaffirmed its dedication to "comprehensive national security."

Key Highlights

- **Meeting Background:** The deal was signed in the wake of an emergency conference of Arab and Muslim countries held by Qatar in response to Israel's military attacks on Hamas leaders.
- **The Pact, also known as the "Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement,"** specifies that "any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both."

Rationale behind the Agreement

- **Timing of the agreement:** After Israel targeted Hamas leadership by attacking Qatar, the agreement is thought to be a signal to Israel.
- **Regional warning:** Israel's growing activities in Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and, more recently, Qatar have alarmed Arab countries.

    - The attack, which was thought to have been supported by the United States, caused Gulf nations to question the US's trustworthiness as a security provider.
- **Atomic Weapon:** The Gulf states' sense of vulnerability is heightened by the knowledge that Israel is the only country in the Middle East with nuclear weapons.
- **Islamic solidarity:** The Saudi-Pakistan agreement demonstrates the unity of the larger Islamic group.

India's Response

- According to the Ministry of External Affairs, it was aware of the possibility of such an agreement between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.
- In response, India stated that it will analyze the consequences of this occurrence for its own national security as well as for the stability of the region and the world.
- In all areas, the government is still dedicated to maintaining full national security and safeguarding India's national interests.

Significant Geopolitical Ramifications

- In a historic step, Pakistan has signed its most significant defense agreement in decades, which also provides it with strategic and economic advantages.
- **Impact on India ties:** The treaty could have an impact on the expanding strategic and economic connection between India and Saudi Arabia.
- **Institutional significance:** It reinforces Pakistan's position in the security structure of West Asia, increasing its strategic importance.
    - Pakistan can obtain US weapons with Saudi finance since Washington appears ready to sell.
- The pact might drag Pakistan into protracted conflicts in the Middle East rather than helping it.

Conclusion

- The defense agreement appears to be a show of force that is more about Israel than India.
- Therefore, the agreement might actually tie Pakistan more tightly to Saudi Arabia's regional conflicts in the Middle East rather than ensuring it a guaranteed defense against any bilateral escalation.

Source: ***The Indian Express***

Mains PYQ

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

- India has stated that it is aware of the mutual defense pact that Pakistan recently signed with Saudi Arabia and reaffirmed its dedication to "comprehensive national security."
- **Meeting Background:** The deal was signed in the wake of an emergency conference of Arab and Muslim countries held by Qatar in response to Israel's military attacks on Hamas leaders.
- **The Pact, also known as the "Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement,"** specifies that "any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both."

[2.25] UN Gender Snapshot 2025

Syllabus - Society [GS Paper-1]

Context

According to the UN Gender Snapshot 2025, which was jointly published by UN Women and UN DESA, over 351 million women and girls are at risk if nothing is done right away.

Key Highlights

- **Persistent Poverty:** Since 2020, 10% of women have been living in poverty. The vulnerabilities are exacerbated by climate change and conflict.
- **Work and Representation:** Women devote 2.5 times more time to unpaid domestic and care labor than men. Worldwide, they have fewer than one-third of the seats in parliament.
- **Digital Divide:** In 2024, 70% of men used the internet, compared to 65% of women.
- **Violence and Food Insecurity:** In 2024, 64 million more women experienced food insecurity than males.
- **Climate Change:** By 2050, the worst-case climate change scenarios might drive an additional 158 million women into poverty.
- **Digital divide:** According to NFHS-5, just 33% of women utilize the internet, as opposed to 57% of men. NCRB data from 2022 shows that violence against women is still common.

International Initiatives for Gender Equality

- **United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5:** Seeks to promote gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is a historic UN resolution that was passed in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women, and it offers a full picture of the situation.
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) promotes legislative changes and legal safeguards against gender discrimination.

India's Gender Equality Effort

- **Poshan Abhiyan:** The goal of this program is to enhance nutritional results for lactating mothers, expectant women, and children.
- **Women's Digital Literacy Program:** This program is a component of **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)** and gives women the skills they need to use electronic government services and financial services.
- The One Stop Centre Scheme (Sakhi Centers) seeks to provide women impacted by violence with a variety of integrated services under one roof, including police, psychosocial counseling, temporary lodging, medical assistance, legal assistance, legal advice, and facilitation are all examples of support.
- From 2018 to 2023, the Women in Science and Engineering-KIRAN (WISE KIRAN) initiative has aided approximately 1,962 female scientists.
- The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act of 2017 grants 26 weeks of paid maternity leave to women employed in the public and commercial sectors.
- In an effort to set aside one-third of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and Delhi Assembly, the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023, was enacted.

Source:* *The DTE

Mains PYQ

1. Discuss the desirability of greater representation to women in the higher judiciary to ensure diversity, equity and inclusiveness. (2021)

- According to the UN Gender Snapshot 2025, which was jointly published by UN Women and UN DESA, over 351 million women and girls are at risk if nothing is done right away.
- **Persistent Poverty:** Since 2020, 10% of women have been living in poverty. The vulnerabilities are exacerbated by climate change and conflict.
- **Work and Representation:** Women devote 2.5 times more time to unpaid domestic and care labor than men. Worldwide, they have fewer than one-third of the seats in parliament.
- **Digital Divide:** In 2024, 70% of men used the internet, compared to 65% of women.
- **Violence and Food Insecurity:** In 2024, 64 million more women experienced food insecurity than males.
- **Climate Change:** By 2050, the worst-case climate change scenarios might drive an additional 158 million women into poverty.
- **Digital divide:** According to NFHS-5, just 33% of women utilize the internet, as opposed to 57% of men. NCRB data from 2022 shows that violence against women is still common.

[2.26] India Condemns the Doha Strike

Syllabus - International Relations [GS Paper-2]

Context

In contrast to India's more subdued stance on prior Israeli strikes in other nations, India recently criticized Israel's bombing of Doha.

Key Highlights

- According to sources, Hamas leaders were discussing the U.S.-proposed ceasefire arrangement at a residence in Doha, Qatar, when the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) attacked it.
- Netanyahu, the prime minister of Israel, asserted that the attack was "justified" because Qatar was "harboring and funding" Hamas members.
    - India denounced the infringement of Qatar's sovereignty.
- India's response to Israel's bombing of other nations in the region, such as Lebanon, Yemen, Tunisia, Syria, and Iran, stands in stark contrast to its reaction to the attacks.

Basis of India's Stance

- **Energy Security:** Qatar is a major LNG provider for India with long-term contracts.
    - An increase in Doha poses an immediate risk to India's energy security.
- **A Large Diaspora:** More than 800,000 Indians are living in Qatar, and they contribute significantly through remittances.
    - In India's Gulf policy, the security of diaspora communities is always a top priority.
- **Strategic Balancing:** Although India has strong defense and tech ties with Israel, it also has close economic and cultural ties with Arab Gulf nations.
    - Although it does not explicitly denounce Israel, the statement expresses dissatisfaction with actions that threaten stability.

- **Geopolitical Considerations:** It is thought that the United States is diminishing its security presence in the Gulf.
    - India must maintain favorable relations with GCC nations as they investigate shared defense strategies.
- **Adherence to a Multilateral Position:** India's position is consistent with its recent support for the two-state solution for Palestine at the UNGA.

Consequences of India's Position

- Reinforces ties with Qatar and the GCC, sending a message to the Gulf countries that India respects their security issues.
    - It will safeguard the interests of the diaspora, commerce, and energy contracts.
- India maintained ties with Israel by refraining from outright condemnation but also making clear that indiscriminate military operations are unacceptable.
- **Enhances India's Reputation as a Responsible Power:** India portrays itself as a balanced, peace-oriented player in West Asia by describing the strike as a threat to "peace and stability."
    - This increases India's legitimacy in organizations such as the UNGA, OIC, and Arab League.
- **Strategic Autonomy in Action:** Shows India is not supporting the U.S. or Israel's version of events.
    - In a multipolar West Asia, it supports India's strategy of multi-alignment.

Impacts on India's West Asia Strategy

- India's close relationship with Israel is now at odds with the Arab bloc as a result of its silence on Gaza, which has caused significant civilian deaths, and its efforts to reconcile Israel and the Arab world.
- **Energy Security and Diaspora Issues:** India's West Asia strategy will continue to be driven by energy diversification and diaspora protection.
- **India's Engagement and Regional Multilateralism:** The Arab League–OIC condemnation and GCC's defense discussions demonstrate a resurgence in Arab solidarity.
    - Given India's significant economic interests throughout Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, and Kuwait, it cannot afford to ignore regional issues.
    - India may need to increase its involvement in forums such as the India-GCC FTA talks and broaden strategic discussions beyond bilateral relationships.

Way Ahead

- India may find itself in a more difficult position as future escalations will require it to support both Israel and its Arab partners.
- The boundaries of transactional diplomacy are illustrated by the present state of affairs, where India must strike a balance between its values and its interests.

Source: ***The Hindu***

Mains PYQ

1. 'Too little cash, too much politics, leaves UNESCO fighting for life.' Discuss the statement in the light of US' withdrawal and its accusation of the cultural body as being 'anti-Israel bias'. (2019)

- In contrast to India's more subdued stance on prior Israeli strikes in other nations, India recently criticized Israel's bombing of Doha.
- According to sources, Hamas leaders were discussing the U.S.-proposed ceasefire arrangement at a residence in Doha, Qatar, when the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) attacked it.
- Netanyahu, the prime minister of Israel, asserted that the attack was "justified" because Qatar was "harboring and funding" Hamas members.
    - India denounced the infringement of Qatar's sovereignty.
- India's response to Israel's bombing of other nations in the region, such as Lebanon, Yemen, Tunisia, Syria, and Iran, stands in stark contrast to its reaction to the attacks.

[2.27] India's Pathways to Integrating Climate and Health

Syllabus: Health [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Global Conference on Climate and Health, held in Brazil in July 2025, saw 90 countries shape the Belém Health Action Plan — a new global framework that will guide deliberations at COP30. Ironically, despite its rich experiences linking welfare and climate-health outcomes, India was not officially present, missing a chance to set the global agenda.

India's Welfare Schemes: Unintentional Climate-Health Synergies

India's flagship welfare schemes, though not initially targeted as climate policies, have delivered significant climate and health co-benefits.

- **Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN):** Covers 11 crore children and promotes nutrition, integrating millet cultivation for climate-resilient food systems, thus affecting agriculture and health positively.
- **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan: I**mproved sanitation and public health, embedded dignity, and advanced environmental restoration, changing social norms about hygiene.
- **MNREGA:** Provided employment while restoring ecosystems, with activities like water conservation and afforestation that support climate resilience.
- **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY):** Enabled clean cooking fuel access, reducing air pollution and carbon emissions — critical for respiratory health.

Leadership, Community Engagement, and Cultural Anchoring

- Bold political leadership, especially the Prime Minister's involvement, gave critical inter-ministerial traction to initiatives like Swachh Bharat and PMUY.
- Community engagement was fostered through parent-teacher committees (POSHAN), and local pride underpinned Swachh Bharat, promoting stronger ownership of climate-health goals.
- By framing climate action as health protection rather than technical carbon mitigation, India tapped into broader cultural acceptance.

Persistent Structural Challenges

Despite successes, India's model faces hurdles:

- **Administrative Silos:** Stand-alone sectoral mandates restrict multi-dimensional solutions.
- **Affordability:** High LPG refill costs under PMUY remain unaffordable for many, overshadowed by oil marketing priorities.

- **Social Barriers:** Gender norms and cultural practices hinder clean fuel and sanitation adoption.
- **Monitoring Gaps:** Programme metrics focus on coverage rather than holistic climate-health impact, limiting lesson extraction.

Towards an Integrated Climate-Health Governance Framework

India's experience suggests actionable strategies for future governance:

- **Strategic Prioritisation:** Climate action must be reframed as immediate health security, not only environmental protection.
- **Procedural Integration:** Health impact assessments should be embedded into all sectors — energy, urban planning, transport.
- **Participatory Implementation:** Grassroots actors like ASHA workers, Self-Help Groups, and Panchayats must champion health-climate synergy.

Relevance for Himalayan and Coastal States

- India's multi-sectoral welfare models, focusing on nutrition, sanitation, ecosystem restoration, and clean energy, are particularly relevant for Himalayan and coastal regions faced with warming, floods, and sea-level rise.
- Their adaptive frameworks can inform targeted resilience-building efforts.

Conclusion: Converting Scattered Lessons Into a Global Model

India's welfare architecture demonstrates that policies aimed at social objectives can create strong climate-health co-benefits. Intentional, institutionalised integration, robust political commitment, and widespread community mobilisation are now needed to scale these successes and position India as a global climate-health leader.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Discuss how India's welfare schemes (such as PM POSHAN, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, MNREGA, and PM Ujjwala Yojana) illustrate pathways for integrating climate and health objectives. Critically analyse the structural and governance challenges involved in scaling up this climate-health synergy at the national level.

[2.28] India-China Rapprochement Amid Border Disputes

Syllabus: International Relation [GS Paper-2]

Context

India should not overlook boundary issues while normalising ties with China, as the unresolved border dispute poses risks to sovereignty, security, and long-term bilateral stability. Normalisation must balance engagement with strategic autonomy and robust border management.

Introduction

The India–China relationship is marked by phases of cooperation interspersed with confrontation, with the unresolved boundary dispute at the core. The 2020 Galwan Valley incident starkly highlighted the fragility of compartmentalising ties, reviving debates on whether India can afford to set aside the boundary issue.

Historical Approach: Compartmentalisation

India and China previously adopted a "compartmentalisation" strategy, especially after Rajiv Gandhi's 1988 visit to Beijing, where peace along the LAC was maintained while broader engagement continued. This allowed progress in trade, culture, and diplomacy, even as boundary talks remained unresolved.

- However, the Galwan clash in 2020 exposed the limits of this strategy, demonstrating that border peace cannot be taken for granted.

Why India Cannot Overlook the Boundary Issue

- **Sovereignty & Security:** Ignoring the boundary disputes risks India's territorial integrity and exposes vulnerabilities, especially due to China's infrastructure build-up along the LAC.
- **Credibility:** Consistent border incidents erode India's global credibility and undermine domestic political consensus, making compromise harder.
- **Leverage and Deterrence:** China uses boundary ambiguity as strategic leverage, making it imperative for India to remain vigilant and proactive in border management.

Strategic Implications of Overlooking Boundary Issues

- China's reluctance to resolve the dispute suggests a preference for keeping India off balance and curbing its rise as a competitor.
- China's growing regional influence through trilateral mechanisms (with Pakistan and Bangladesh) and strategic encirclement tactics highlight the dangers of neglecting boundary concerns.
- Asymmetry in power makes India vulnerable if border disputes are overlooked, with periodic flare-ups likely.

Economic Considerations: Balancing Engagement

- While workable ties and economic engagement remain important—given China's manufacturing dominance and India's growth prospects—these cannot override core security interests.
- India's counterstrategy involves bolstering border infrastructure, building international partnerships (QUAD, ASEAN), and balancing engagement with hedging against risks.

Recent Developments

- The 2024 Border Patrol Agreement restored some patrolling rights for India, marking cautious progress but not settling the overarching dispute.
- India continues to press for the restoration of pre-2020 conditions while enhancing its border security posture.

Conclusion

India's normalisation of ties with China cannot meaningfully proceed without addressing the boundary dispute. Sustained engagement must be backed by robust border management, strategic diversification, and credible deterrence, ensuring that sovereignty and security are not compromised as ties progress.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. India and China have sought avenues of rapprochement despite recurring border disputes and strategic competition. Critically examine the factors driving this engagement, the challenges to trust-building, and the prospects for a stable relationship between the two Asian powers.