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SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

SECURE SYNOPSIS

MAINS 2018

GS-II

FEBRUARY 2018

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IAS SELF STUDY GUIDE

NOTE: Please remember that following '*answers*' are *NOT* '*model answers*'. They are NOT synopsis too if we go by definition of the term. What we are providing is content that both meets demand of the question and at the same time gives you extra points in the form of background information.

Table of Contents

General Studies Paper - II _____ 7

Topic: Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure _____ 7

Q1) Did the Constitution mark a moment of discontinuity with the colonial past, and a desire to transform Indian political and social structures? Or was it simply a transfer of political power and a change of rulers, leaving underlying institutional arrangements intact? Discuss. (250 Words) _____ 7

Topic: Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein _____ 8

Q1) It is argued that to resolve inter-state river disputes a right, credible and institutionalised practices for enabling inter-State mediation, coordination and cooperation is needed. Comment on the existing policy and elaborate the statement. (250 Words) 8

Q2) It is said that conducting simultaneous elections to assemblies and parliament will ensure consistency, continuity and governance, which are integral to democracy. Do you agree? What changes needs to be made to the constitution and related laws if the parliament decides to conduct such simultaneous elections? Examine. (250 Words) _____ 9

Q3) All the states in India are justified and constitutionally empowered to adopt their own flag to uphold the pride of their State without infringing the law. Comment. (250 Words) _____ 11

Q4) Discuss the significance and implications of the recent Supreme Court verdict in the River Cauvery water sharing dispute for other water disputes and also for federalism. (250 Words) _____ 12

Q5) As per the 84th Amendment act, the constituency boundaries are frozen till the first census after 2026, that is, at least until after 2031. What are the implications of this amendment? Should India go back to the decadal revisions of the constituency boundaries keeping in mind the changing demographics of India? Comment. (250 Words) _____ 13

Topic: Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these. _____ 14

Q1) Analyse the mechanism of Parliamentary oversight of the government's financial activities and examine how to strengthen it. (250 Words) _____ 14

Q2) Through its oversight function, Parliament holds the government accountable and ensures that policies are efficient and in keeping with the needs of citizens. What mechanisms are available to the Parliament to conduct oversight of the executive? Also in the light of criticisms made against parliament's this role, discuss major recommendations to strengthen this function of Parliament. (250 Words) _____ 16

Q3) What are the main features of India's anti-defection law? Also examine interpretations and recommendations made by the courts and committees on the law. Do you think, instead of the Speaker, the decision on defections should be decided by an external neutral body such as the Election Commission? Comment. (250 Words) _____ 18

Q4) Regulators do not exist in a vacuum outside government policy and while regulators have independence in performing their role, they still fall within the broad definition of the executive branch of the State, and are accountable to the legislature. Analyse. (250 Words) _____ 19

Q5) Developments following the 2G spectrum allocation and the Lok Pal issue have led to increased interest in understanding the work of Parliamentary committees. Analyse how effective the committee system has been and explore ways of strengthening it. (250 Words) _____ 20

Topic: Functioning of judiciary _____ 22

Q1) In India, the process of removing a judge – if found guilty of corruption or judicial impropriety – is too elaborate and somewhat cumbersome. Comment on the existing procedure and suggest reforms. (250 Words) _____ 22

Q2) The new roster for allocation of cases in the Supreme Court, with division of work among the judges according to various subject categories, is a move towards greater objectivity or fairness. Comment. (250 Words) _____ 23

Topic: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies _____ 24

Q1) The National Human Rights Commission of India is often considered as toothless body, however over a period of time it is observed that, though unevenly and sometimes ineffectively, it has carved out triumphal moments that have opened up state actions to judicial and public scrutiny. Critically evaluate. (250 Words) _____ 24

Topic: Salient features of the Representation of People's Act; _____ 25

Q1) It is said that the country's first election was an ingeniously indigenous an inventive exercise, with unique challenges and the way bureaucracy rose to the task holds lessons for today. Examine. (250 Words) _____ 25

Q2) In recent years a series of Supreme Court verdicts have aimed preserving the purity of the electoral process. Analyse these verdicts. (250 Words) _____ 25

Q3) The Supreme Court's recent decision on information disclosure (Lok Prahari v. Union of India) paves a way for future constitutional interventions in India's party funding regime, including the scheme of electoral bonds. Analyse. (250 Words) _____ 27

Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation _____ 27

Q1) How is India's Aadhaar different from America's Social Security Number (SSN)? Do you think going forward Aadhaar will help in better implementation of welfare schemes and administration of subsidies? Comment. (250 Words) _____ 27

Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health _____ 29

Q1) In the recent union budget government announced a flagship National Health Protection Scheme to cover over ten crore poor and vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage up to five lakh rupees per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation. Do you think it's a move towards universal health coverage and quality public healthcare? Critically comment. (250 Words) _____ 29

Q2) Despite improvements in awareness, services and treatments, cancer still kills more than 100,000 children every year worldwide. Examine the reasons. Also discuss why deaths due to cancer remain very high in India. (250 Words) _____ 30

Q3) Access issues are the cornerstone for equitable health systems worldwide. Analyse. (250 Words) _____ 31

Q4) In the light of recent HPV vaccine issue, critically examine the causes and consequences – especially for India – of clinical trials crisis around the globe. (250 Words) _____ 32

Q5) It is said that a large-scale vocational education system on the lines of the "dual" German model — classroom instruction plus apprentice training — would help raise the productivity of both individuals and the economy. In the light of recent studies on state of affairs in the Indian education sector, discuss the merits and demerits of adopting the 'dual' German model for India's children. (250 Words) _____ 33

Q6) The focus on universal health coverage should be through strengthening public health, not through targeted public insurance schemes. Comment. (250 Words) _____ 35

Q7) Swachh Bharat Abhiyan should be modified from a scheme providing free toilets, to one encouraging and enabling local governments to construct sewage systems. Comment. (250 Words) _____ 36

Q8) What are the features of the National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS)? Discuss its feasibility and the role of states in implementing this scheme. (250 Words) _____ 37

Q9) According to one authoritative study, there are a million unregistered and unqualified medical practitioners in India. Critically examine why quacks function freely in India. (250 Words) _____ 38

Q10) Examine the role and potential of community level interventions and emerging technologies in improving quality of care for women and newborns. (250 Words) _____ 39

Q11) Examine the role and potential of community level interventions and emerging technologies in improving quality of care for women and newborns. (250 Words) _____ 39

Q12) Analyse the findings of the NITI Aayog's Health Index report that was released recently. (250 Words) _____ 40

Q13) Socialisation of medicine with a reliance on taxation to fund basic programmes is the bedrock of a good health system. In the light of the statement, discuss the significance of NITI Aayog's first Health Index, its shortcomings and its implications for competitive federalism. (250 Words) _____ 41

Q14) Strengthening the health infrastructure at all levels which includes a strong regulatory mechanism is the need of the hour. In the light of new health schemes announced, discuss the statement. (250 Words) _____ 42

- Q15) Discuss critically implications of the WASH interventions for the health of children and women, especially stunting in children. (250 Words) _____ 43
- Q16) Discuss the recommendations and relevance of the Justice Verma Commission on teacher education. (250 Words) _____ 45
- Q17) In India, the social and economic costs of losing women to cervical cancer are devastating. Examine how India can prevent cervical cancers? Also write a note on the objectives of the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS). Also comment if cancer be declared as a notifiable disease. (250 Words) _____ 46
- Q18) It is argued that inducting Licentiate Medical Practitioners (LMP) may be the solution to the chronic shortage of doctors in rural areas. Do you agree? Comment. (250 Words) _____ 47
- Q19) In a recent study by the UNICEF, India's still has one of the highest newborn-mortality rate – nearly 640,000 babies were lost in 2016, more than any other country. What are the solutions to prevent newborn-mortality? Also comment why India is not able to reduce newborn-mortality rate. (250 Words) _____ 48
- Q20) The UK National Health Service (NHS) has been described as single greatest experiment in social service that the world has ever seen undertaken. However, lately NHS is facing certain challenges. Examine these challenges and the lessons it offers to India's move towards universal healthcare. (250 Words) _____ 49
- Q21) The health insurance in India suffers from many lacunae. In the light of the basic right to health of citizens that flows from Article 21 of the Constitution, critically analyse problems plaguing India's health insurance sector and measures needed to fix these problems. (250 Words) _____ 51

Topic: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections _____ 52

- Q1) Proper implementation of the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act of 1996 is crucial to ensure dignity and livelihood of poor and migrant labourers. Comment. (150 Words) _____ 52
- Q2) The recent economic survey highlights the importance of gender-disaggregated data in examining socio-economic growth. Examine how this gender-disaggregated data can be generated and challenges such data poses in policymaking. (250 Words) _____ 53
- Q3) The Housing for All by 2022 agenda, while trying to resolve India's urban housing crisis, must take into consideration millions of migrant workers in Indian cities who are living in nightmarish conditions. Comment. (150 Words) _____ 54
- Q4) What is neo-abolitionism? It is argued that India should assert a leadership role in the global fight against exploitation by countering the influence of neo-abolitionism. What do you understand by this argument? In the light of the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2016, discuss critically. (250 Words) _____ 55

Topic: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; _____ 56

- Q1) Discuss the features and prospects of recent policies meant to provide better social and economic security to India's growing population of senior citizens. (250 Words) _____ 56
- Q2) It is recommended that welfare and other such schemes should either be weeded out or merged for convergence with larger sectoral schemes or be transferred to states, which can then continue with these schemes based on their requirements. Discuss critically the rationale behind this recommendation. (250 Words) _____ 56
- Q3) Discuss the policy options that India should pursue to improve women's health in India. (250 Words) _____ 57

Topic: Development processes and the development industry- the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders _____ 58

- Q1) Discuss the role played by NGOs and international institutions through their development initiatives in helping India address immediate problems following India's partition. (250 Words) _____ 58
- Q2) Why the role people and civil society is crucial in the preparation of the annual budget? Has government of India taken any step in this regard? Critically comment. (150 Words) _____ 59

Topic: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability; e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; _____ 60

- Q1) The success of digital India and ease of doing business in India starts with ease of using government portals. Comment. (150 Words) _____ 60

- Q2) The success of Swachh Bharat mission hinges on strong municipalities and efficient governance. Comment. (250 Words) 61
- Q3) The success of Swachh Bharat mission hinges on strong municipalities and efficient governance. Comment. (250 Words) 62
- Q4) For governments, careful data mining from Big Data might help understand our behaviour in order to facilitate planning. Should governments rely too much on big data for planning? What cautions need to be taken? Examine critically. (250 Words) 62
- Q5) Despite their vital role in the global financial world, why do rating agencies fail to inspire confidence in markets and among nations? Should rating agencies be regulated? Discuss. (250 Words) 64
- Q6) Examine the merits and demerits of live-streaming of the proceedings of the Supreme Court of India. (250 Words) 65

Topic: Role of civil services in a democracy 66

- Q1) Do we really need a Chief Secretary in today's politico-administrative ambience in the States and Union Territories? Critically comment. (250 Words) 66

Topic: India and its neighborhood- relations. 67

- Q1) The unfolding crisis in Maldives draws attention to the perennial question about whether and when India should intervene in the internal politics of its neighbouring countries. Should India directly intervene and try to solve the Maldives crisis? Critically comment. (250 Words) 67
- Q2) Was 'Operation Cactus' that India carried out in 1988, in tune with India's then foreign policy? Should India carry out similar operation today? Comment. (250 Words) 67
- Q3) The success of Indian diplomacy would lie in striking the 'Goldilocks' balance in dealing with Male; neither too hot nor too cold. Analyse. (250 Words) 69
- Q4) The success of Indian diplomacy would lie in striking the 'Goldilocks' balance in dealing with Male; neither too hot nor too cold. Analyse. (250 Words) 70
- Q5) Critically analyse the nature and prospects of India's evolving 'Look West' policy. (250 Words) 71
- Q6) India is one of the few countries to have warm and mutually beneficial relations on all sides of the divide in West Asia including the Shia/Sunni split and the Iran/Israel rift. In the light of India's "Think West" policy, analyse the statement. (250 Words) 72
- Q7) Tibetan refugees in India are considered the 'most successful' refugee community in the world. Despite this appreciation, Tibetan refugees face numerous challenges in India, especially with respect to acquiring India's citizenship. Examine these challenges and suggest what Indian government should do to address grievances of the Tibetan community in India. (250 Words) 73

Topic: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests 75

- Q1) It is said that the India-U.S. civil nuclear agreement has become obsolete and there is a need for India to negotiate a new nuclear deal with the US. Considering new global realities, how should India revive this deal? Critically analyse. (250 Words) 75
- Q2) India is now a member of three of the four international export control groups. What does its membership of the Wassenaar Arrangement mean and why does it matter? Examine. (250 Words) 75
- Q3) Analyse the features and prospects of India's de-hyphenated policy towards Israel and Palestine. (250 Words) 76
- Q4) India recently joined the Ashgabat Agreement, which was instituted in April 2011. Discuss the significance of this for India. (250 Words) 77
- Q5) For India, in what ways priorities of engagement with Iran have changed? Analyse. (250 Words) 78
- Q6) India's energy requirements and greater geopolitical clout have resulted in it importing more hydrocarbon resources from Russia. Analyse how will ongoing tensions between Russia and the West, fluctuating crude oil prices, and the falling value of the rouble affect Indo-Russian cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector. (250 Words) 79
- Q7) For a robust 'Act East' Policy, relying on its natural and acquired advantages, India should build a robust maritime capacity in South East Asia. Comment. (250 Words) 80
- Q8) Is the Quadrilateral arrangement involving Australia, India, Japan and the U.S. a viable and strong arrangement to take on China? Critically examine. (250 Words) 82

Q1) Examine why security experts are worried about the Pentagon's 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR). Will NPR have any significant implications for India? Comment. (250 Words) _____ 83

Q2) Addressing the plight of refugees is one of the greatest challenges currently facing the international community. Examine the notable multilateral agreements and unilateral policies previously made in this regard and comment on the need for a global refugee policy. (250 Words) _____ 84

Q3) Recent events around the world have fuelled xenophobic and anti-immigration sentiments. Analyse how recent immigration policy changes in the Middle East will impact migration and remittances with respect to India, and how India should cope up with reducing remittances and returning migrants. (250 Words) _____ 86

Q4) China is planning the launch of a yuan-denominated oil futures exchange. What is oil futures exchange? How will this move by China affect global energy markets? Examine. (250 Words) _____ 87

Q1) What is the structure and mandate of UNSC Sanctions Committees? Why is India seeking transparency in these committees? Examine. (250 Words) _____ 88

General Studies Paper - II

Topic: Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure

Q1) Did the Constitution mark a moment of discontinuity with the colonial past, and a desire to transform Indian political and social structures? Or was it simply a transfer of political power and a change of rulers, leaving underlying institutional arrangements intact? Discuss. (250 Words)

The Hindu

Background:-

- Indian constitution though borrowed features from other countries it had its uniqueness and flexibility that is why it is called a **living document**. Even after so many changes in the society, the **Constitution** continues to work effectively because of this ability to be dynamic, to be open to interpretations and the ability to respond to the changing situation

How Indian constitution marks discontinuity with the colonial past and how it transformed political and social structures?

▪ **Political structures:-**

- **Universal suffrage in independent India** marked a decisive break from its colonial past.
 - The franchise granted by the British regime in the 1919 and 1935 Government of India Acts was highly restricted and no more than 10% of Indians could vote which independent India expanded to almost 100%
 - Voting in British India took place under the regime of separate electorates, divided along class and economic lines and independent India fought for a conception of universal citizenship.
 - Indian constitution rejected the arguments that individuals who were formally "illiterate" including women were incapable of exercising the franchise
 - Voting was a gift of the colonial government, which could be granted or taken away at its will in the pre independence times but this was not the case post independence as every person above 18 years was free to vote.
- **Independent India transformed the status of its people from subjects to citizens.**
- In the realm of the political, **it was a transformation from hierarchy and subordination to radical equality.**
- In early 2017, the Supreme Court expressly departed from colonial precedents on the subject, and placed important limits upon the scope of presidential ordinances which was not the case pre independence. **So there was flexibility in Indian constitution which the Supreme court can comprehend.**
- The Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles are believed to be the 'soul' and 'conscience' of the Constitution.
 - Fundamental rights would protect India's citizens from exploitation, discrimination, and arbitrary arrest.
- Indian **women could** contest elections immediately with the inauguration of the Constitution which was a long struggle for the women in the West.
- The 73rd and 74th Constitution (Amendments) Acts in 1992 have introduced **local self government in rural and urban areas and India** has now a three-tier government in the country.
- **Republic has opened the highest office of the state i.e. president to any citizen of India who could hold it through winning the election for that office.**

▪ **Social structures:-**

- The constitution offered a vision of a fairer India, where inequalities of money, caste, status and gender would no longer determine people's lot in life.
- **India's adherence to socialism (Democratic Socialism which is not state socialism) was witnessed in the provisions of constitution itself.**
- Several socialistic measures have been mentioned to remove inequality between man and woman and treat everyone equally
- India is secular state that accords same status to all religions in the country and the state is prohibited to make discrimination on the grounds of religion, caste etc
- The bitter experiences of people during British rule with regard to freedom of speech and expression, formation of unions or associations, holding meetings, voicing against the wrongs etc. **have witnessed**

a reversal following the coming into force of this Constitution of 1950. Untouchability has been declared as a punishable crime

Institutional arrangements were intact and constitution was about transfer of political power:-

- Constitution was simply a continuation of what existed before, with a few changes because experts point out that two-thirds of the Constitution replicates the 1935 Government of India Act
- Key enablers of colonial executive dominance such as the ordinance-making power and Emergency powers were carried over, and that the Constitution expressly endorsed existing colonial laws.
- These include the laws of sedition, blasphemy and criminal defamation, Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, and far-reaching Emergency powers. All these provisions are based on similar logic: the colonial imperative of reducing citizens to subjects and placing their liberties at the mercy of centralised and unaccountable power.
- This interpretation has sometimes been validated as well by the Supreme Court, which once pointed out that the Constitution did not seek to destroy the past institutions; it raised an edifice on what existed.

Conclusion:-

- Despite threats faced over the years in terms of violence, intolerance, discrimination against socially backward classes Constitution stood the test of times and has been amended with the changing needs of the society.

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

Q1) It is argued that to resolve inter-state river disputes a right, credible and institutionalised practices for enabling inter-State mediation, coordination and cooperation is needed. Comment on the existing policy and elaborate the statement. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Existing policy :-

- In the case of disputes relating to waters, Article 262 provides:
- **Parliament may by law provide** for the adjudication of any dispute or complaint with respect to the use, distribution or control of the waters of, or in, any inter-State river or river valley.
- Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, Parliament **may, by law provide** that neither the Supreme Court nor any other court shall exercise jurisdiction in respect of any such dispute or complaint.
- At present, the resolution of water dispute is governed by the Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956. According to its provisions, a state government can approach the Centre to refer the dispute to a tribunal, whose decision is considered final
- Interstate water dispute act:
- **Disputes Resolution Committee:** Under the Act, when a complaint is received from a state government regarding a water dispute, the central government may ask the affected states to undertake negotiations to settle the dispute. If the dispute cannot be settled through negotiations, the central government has to set up a Water Disputes Tribunal within a year of receiving such a complaint.
- **Time allotted to Tribunal to take its decision:** Under the Act, any water disputes tribunal has to give its decision on a dispute within a period of three years. This period is extendable by a maximum of two years.
- Under the Act, if the matter is again referred to the tribunal by a state for further consideration, the tribunal has to submit its report to the central government within a period of one year. This period of one year can be extended by the central government for such a period as it may consider necessary.
- **Maintenance of data bank and information:** Under the Act, the central government maintains a data bank and information system at the national level for each river basin.

Concerns:-

- Disputes have become sites of political mobilisation in multi-party democratic setting. Political **parties** often ride on the emotive associations and notions of identity to animate and escalate disputes.
- With increasing demand for water, inter-state river water disputes are on the rise.
- Under the present Act, a separate Tribunal has to be established for each dispute and there is no time limit for adjudication or publication of reports.
- Only three of the eight tribunals have actually given awards accepted by the states. Tribunals like those on the Cauvery and Ravi Beas have been in existence for over 26 and 30 years respectively without any award.
- When tribunal recommends such mechanisms, states object to these arrangements, as it happened in the Cauvery and Krishna disputes.

Statement elaboration/reforms needed:-

- Inter-State cooperation has always been approached by resolving disputes. Here is a telling contrast. The Act of 1956 for resolving disputes has been amended at least a dozen times since its inception. **But the River Boards Act, 1956, drafted simultaneously for inter-State collaboration, has not been amended even once since then.**
- A single, **permanent tribunal subsuming all the existing tribunals is proposed to be established** to resolve grievances of states with speed and efficiency.
 - A permanent tribunal to adjudicate river water disputes between States will undoubtedly be a vast improvement over the present system of setting up ad hoc tribunals as it is expected to provide for speedier adjudication.
 - An expert agency to collect data on rainfall, irrigation and surface water flows acquires importance and looks like an ideal mechanism to apportion water because party-States have a tendency to fiercely question data provided by the other side.
 - The Dispute Resolution Committee, an expert body that will seek to resolve inter-State differences before a tribunal is approached will discourage for needless litigation.
 - Water disputes are highly politicised and a strong public opinion forms around these issues. A single tribunal would address this issue as it would not be questioned for being politically biased.
 - Institutional mechanisms should be backed by the political will to make them work.
- **Public opinion is an important factor that cannot be wished away.** The Central government must keep these factors in mind when setting up the proposed tribunal. Without that cooperative approach, India's water dispute resolution is unlikely to see much improvement.
- The drive for political resolution suggests a welcome realisation to push the envelope beyond legal routes. **But the practices need to be structured within the constitutional realm. For example, the mediation practices may be structured under the Inter-State Council,** provided by the Constitution for the exclusive purpose of inter-State coordination. .
- River basin commissions, which work in a cooperative manner to manage trans-boundary conflicts, might offer a more workable solution
- The ecosystem has to enable not just inter-State dialogue for collaboration, but also other goals of executing agreements and projects for river development, conservation and restoration

Q2) It is said that conducting simultaneous elections to assemblies and parliament will ensure consistency, continuity and governance, which are integral to democracy. Do you agree? What changes needs to be made to the constitution and related laws if the parliament decides to conduct such simultaneous elections? Examine. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- The current government time and again supported the idea of holding simultaneous elections to panchayats, urban local bodies, states and Parliament..

Merits:-

- **Governance and consistency:-**
 - Parties and workers spending too much time and money in electioneering, can make use of the **time for social work and to take people-oriented programmes to the grassroots.**
 - To overcome the "policy paralysis and governance deficit" associated with imposition of the Model Code of Conduct at election time which leads to putting on hold all developmental activities on that area and also affects the bureaucracy's functioning.
 - Expenditure can be reduced by conducting simultaneous elections.
 - Law Commission in its 170th report {Reform of Electoral Laws (1999)} suggested holding simultaneous elections at all levels for **stability in governance.**
-
- It is felt that crucial manpower is often deployed on election duties for a prolonged period of time. **If simultaneous elections are held, then this manpower would be made available for other important tasks.**
- For instance for the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, which was held along with 4 state assemblies saw the deployment of 1077 in situ companies and 1349 mobile companies of Central Armed Police Force (CAPF).
- During frequent elections there is increase in "vices" such as communalism, casteism, corruption and crony capitalism.

- **Continuity:-**

- Will limit the disruption to normal public life associated with elections, such as increased traffic and noise pollution

The idea is good in principle but there are several practical difficulties as follows:

- Not all voters are highly educated to know who to vote for. They may get confused and may not know whether they are voting for candidates contesting assembly or parliament elections.
 - *There is a 77% chance that the Indian voter will vote for the same party for both the state and centre, when elections are held simultaneously.*
- Frequent elections bring the politicians back to the voters, create jobs and prevent the mixing of local and national issues in the minds of the voters.
- The issue of logistics and requirement of security personnel, election and administrative officials needs to be considered. There is a dearth of enough security and administrative officials to conduct simultaneous free and fair elections throughout the country in one go.
- Recently, the elections in West Bengal were held in 6 phases mainly due to the security concerns. If this is situation, holding simultaneous elections for all the states may need to be held in many phases stretching over many months.
- **Questions like these arise whether**
 - India need to introduce fixed terms for the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies,
 - How would simultaneity be preserved if there was a vote of no confidence, or application of President's Rule in a state, necessitating fresh elections at one level but not another.
- Local and national issues will get mixed up distorting priorities.
- The terms of different state governments are ending on separate dates and years.
- To hold simultaneous elections, the Centre will have to make some states agree to curtail the terms of their houses while others to extend theirs. While extension may not be a problem, curtailment of Assembly terms may be a major issue.
- Critics say amending the Constitution to effect simultaneous elections would fundamentally alter its democratic and federal character. India is a "Union of States", states have their own directly elected governments, and fixing a term adversely affects this right.

Other observations:-

- Evidence from Brazil, Argentina, Canada, Germany, the US and Europe supports the idea that elections that are held simultaneously produce greater alignment between national and regional election outcomes.
- There is also evidence that simultaneous elections contribute over time to the nationalisation of party systems

Changes that are to be made in the constitution and other laws :-

- **Several constitutional amendments are required to see the plan through.**
 - Now if the tenure of the state Assembly has to be made co-terminus with that of the Lok Sabha, then Constitutional amendments would be required.
 - For example, the point "unless sooner dissolved" can be amended to read that the term of the assemblies shall be co-terminus to that of the Lok Sabha. So the amendment can happen like this.
 - But now if the constitutional amendment is passed by both the Houses by two-third majority, even then this needs to be ratified by half of the states since states are affected by this amendment.
 - Article 83(2) provides for a term of five years for the House of People (Lok Sabha), from the date of its first sitting, **unless dissolved earlier**. Similar provisions under Article 172 (1) provides for a five-year tenure for state legislative Assemblies from the date of its first sitting.
 - The Election Commission has suggested that the **term of Lok Sabha could commence and end on predetermined dates and, to avoid premature dissolution, no-confidence motions should be moved**.
 - If the House is still dissolved, the President can run the government for the rest of the term or, if that period is long, fresh elections can be held for a House that would last only for the remaining length of time.
 - Assemblies can, as a one-time measure, be extended or curtailed to align their elections with the Lok Sabha cycle.
 - **Further, in respect of premature dissolution of a State Legislative Assembly, Article 356 is also relevant.**
 - The Representation of People Act 1951, which covers various modalities of conducting elections in the country, also needs to be amended.
 - The proviso to the Section 14(2) states: Provided that where a general election is held otherwise than on the dissolution of the existing House of the People, **no such notification shall be issued at any time earlier than six months prior to the date on which the duration of the House would expire** under the provisions of clause (2) of Article 83.
- **Legal amendments:-**
 - There are several steps before legal amendments are made.

- A study will have to be commissioned and undertaken. The draft will have to be passed by the Union cabinet.
- Further, a Bill to amend the laws and rules will have to be passed in both houses of Parliament. This will have to be followed by the president's approval.

No changes needed and how it would lead to misusing constitution:-

- The mandatory term has to be completed first, very often what the state governments do is that they dissolve the assembly before the term ends and they conduct elections. It is the prerogative of the assembly to decide when to call an election. But in doing it for conduct of simultaneous elections, **they would be misusing the Constitution**
- There is no need for amending the Constitution. If there is a consensus among the political parties to have a two-phase election, it can be done over a 10-15-year period.
 - In the interim the assembly elections coming in one year be conducted together. President has got the power to extend the period of assemblies by up to one year to bring about this uniformity. Similarly, preponing of elections can be done by the concerned chief ministers and political parties in the States.
- Some experts argue that as the Article 83 (2) and Article 172 (1) of Constitution have the term "unless sooner dissolved", it provides for a situation of simultaneous polls and hence there is no need for any amendment.

Way forward:-

- Standing committee recommended a cycle of elections, according to which elections to some legislative assemblies whose term end within six months to one year before or after the election date could be held during the midterm of Lok Sabha. For the rest of the states, elections could be held along with the general elections to Lok Sabha.
- Cost can be brought under control by ensuring that the legal cap on expenditure of candidates is followed by all parties

Conclusion:-

- **Before implementing it there is a need to weigh the pros and cons of concurrent elections in a rational way.**

Q3) All the states in India are justified and constitutionally empowered to adopt their own flag to uphold the pride of their State without infringing the law. Comment. (250 Words)

The Hindu

Background:-

- Of late, the demand for a *state flag* has been gaining traction in *This raised the debate whether states are allowed to have a separate flag or not.*

No issue:-

- Under the Constitution, a flag is not enumerated in the Seventh Schedule. **It is clear that there is no prohibition under the Constitution to hoist any flag other than the national flag.**
- Parliament has framed legislation regulating the hoisting of the national flag. One is the Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950. The other is the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.
 - **Under the 1971 Act, there is no prohibition against any State hoisting its own flag.**
- **Even the Flag Code of India, 2002 does not impose prohibitions on a State flag. It only says that the Code expressly authorises the flying of other flags under the condition that they should not be hoisted from the same masthead as the national flag or placed higher than it.**
 - By implication, the Code provides space for a State flag as long as it does not offend the dignity and honour of the national flag.
- In India, State boundaries are demarcated on the basis of linguistic homogeneity. This has naturally generated aspirations in the States for promoting their own languages and cultures. It is, therefore, natural for them to have symbols to recognise, protect and promote their own **languages and cultures**. A flag, which is both a benediction and a beckoning, serves this purpose better than any other symbol.
- **Having a separate flag is not going to be an affront to national integration. On the contrary, a separate flag for each State would strengthen the federal structure and serve as a symbol for a much more specific identity.**
- **A democratic right based on international examples:-**
 - All the 50 States in the U.S. have separate and distinct flags, apart from the national flag.
 - In the U.K., the political units of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland have their own flags without offending or affecting the integrity of the U.K.
 - It is the democratic right of Karnataka to assert its identity through a separate name, emblem and flag.

- **India's pluralistic nationalism celebrates the coexistence of multiple identities.** As long as subnationalism is not secessionist, it should not be viewed as a threat, but rather as a constitutive element of India's plural democracy.

However some issues are not resolved:-

- India has already divided the states on linguistic basis. The segregation of nation on the basis on state flags will only further divide the country.
- If other states too follow Karnataka, there will be scope for conflict between states in case of disrespect to the flag of another state.
- Having a separate state flag is against the spirit of 'One Nation One Flag' and diminishes the importance of the national flag.
- There are possibilities of it leading to narrow-minded regional feelings.

Way forward:-

- The state should frame a Flag Code carefully without giving scope for it to affect the unity and integrity of the country. Moreover, **the codes for both the flags should not clash.**

Q4) Discuss the significance and implications of the recent Supreme Court verdict in the River Cauvery water sharing dispute for other water disputes and also for federalism. (250 Words)

[The Indian Express](#)

[The Hindu](#)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- Recently the SC gave the judgement reducing the share of water of the Cauvery river allotted to Tamilnadu by the Cauvery tribunal. This brought in to forefront the issue of water disputes .

Significance and implications:-

- **Water disputes:-**
 - By upholding the approach of the Cauvery Water Dispute Tribunal, while slightly modifying its award, the Supreme Court has **boosted the prospects of a viable water-sharing arrangement among the riparian States.**
 - Verdict awarded a lesser amount to Tamil Nadu considering this **particular aspect of groundwater.** The verdict, in principle, now allows aggrieved states engaged in inter-state river disputes to gather data and stake claims based on available levels of groundwater.
 - The Supreme Court's message is that the **Centre should get down to creating a legal and technical framework to implement the Tribunal's award, as modified by the judgment. This is the strongest affirmation** so far of a basin State's right to its share of water on a regular basis. So a Cauvery Water Management Board need to be set up.
 - **The court rejected an argument by the Centre that Section 6A of the Inter-State Water Disputes Act of 1956 bestowed upon it discretion in framing a Cauvery water-sharing scheme.** The court said the argument does not stand to reason and a scheme has to be framed under Section 6A as per the award of the CWDT.
 - The Centre had argued that the parliamentary law of Inter-State Water Disputes Act of 1956 coupled with Article 262 (2) of the Indian Constitution excluded the Supreme Court from hearing or deciding any appeals against the tribunal's decision. The Centre had claimed the tribunal award was final.
 - **The apex court however held that the remedy under Article 136 was a constitutional right and it cannot be taken away by a legislation much less by invoking the principle of election**
 - It has **thrown open the possibility of re-examining the availability of groundwater**
 - The Supreme Court laid down **the concept of warrantable flexibility.** It noted that the concept of a basin and the beneficial use of the water ought to be traced generally to the sites and population thereof located in the basin.
- **Federalism:-**
 - It has underscored that no single State has primacy in accessing water resources and that **rivers are national assets.** This is a significant recognition of the principle of equitable distribution of inter-State rivers
 - The court said the **principle of equality among the riparian States does not imply equal division of water.** Equality here means equal consideration and equal economic opportunity of the co-basin States.
 - **Court said the tribunal did not consider the growing needs of Bengaluru .** The government allotted water to the city even though it is largely outside the Cauvery basin considering the growth of population.

- The Supreme Court referred to the **Helsinki Rules of 1966**, which recognise equitable use of water by each basin State taking into consideration the geography and hydrology of the basin, the climate, past utilisation of waters, economic and social needs, dependent population and availability of resources.
- The judgment also **refers to the Campione Rules in the context of the Cauvery dispute**. These Rules hold that basin States would in their respective territories manage the waters of an international drainage basin in an equitable and reasonable manner.
- The verdict has brought a sense of relief to farmers in the Cauvery basin area of Karnataka, who have fought for water for over two decades.
- **Concerns:-**
- Any further water supplied to Bengaluru would amount to trans-basin diversion in complete contravention of the principles of equitable apportionment, the National Water Policy and the Helsinki Rules, 1966. Such trans-basin diversion is detrimental and would lead to chaos
- Experts feel verdict was very favourable for Tamil Nadu.

Q5) As per the 84th Amendment act, the constituency boundaries are frozen till the first census after 2026, that is, at least until after 2031. What are the implications of this amendment? Should India go back to the decadal revisions of the constituency boundaries keeping in mind the changing demographics of India? Comment. (250 Words)

EPW

Background:-

- In India, the main basis for allocation of seats to various States in the Lok Sabha is **population** of the state. The division of each state into the territorial constituencies is to be readjusted after the completion of a census so that the **Population-Seat ratio is maintained** within the state and throughout the Union. So the purpose is the Rationalization of the structure and composition of the electoral constituencies, on the principle of “**One vote and one value**”.

Implications of 84th amendment :-

- It lifted the freeze on the delimitation of constituencies, as stipulated by the 42nd Constitution amendment of 1976, **and allowed delimitation within States on the basis of the 1991 Census**.
- It paved the way for readjustment of these seats on the basis of the 1991 Census figures, in order to **achieve parity between constituencies, as far as feasible**.
- **However, the Delimitation Act, 2002 mandated that data from the 1971 Census was to determine the number of seats for each state in the Lok Sabha.**
 - This has meant a sizeable gap between a state's share in the overall population of India and its share in the overall number of seats in the Lok Sabha.
 - **The gap seen above is only likely to widen over the years.** Uttar Pradesh will be even more under-represented and Tamil Nadu even more over-represented in the Lok Sabha.
- **This concept of delimitation is antagonistic to family planning as the states with more population will have more weightage in Lok Sabha.**
- The constituency boundaries are fixed **without providing enough opportunity for revision and readjustment given the demographic changes taking place in major cities and states.**
- Basing the 1971 Census figure of 54.81 crore to represent today's population presents a distorted version of our democratic polity and is contrary to what is mandated under Article 81 of the Constitution.
- It does not deal with the mechanism how the Presiding Officers of the Houses/Legislatures will deal with a large number of members in the house suddenly post 2026. The sudden increase in numbers will render the task of the Speaker more difficult and onerous.
- Social indicators like migration are not taken into consideration.

Yes, India should go back to decadal revisions of constituency boundaries:-

- Realistically, it may be even longer given that the delimitation exercise took six years on the previous occasion. Though there was a 30-year gap between the third and fourth delimitation commissions, **a 30-year gap in the next delimitation commission could have graver consequences.**
- **Decade is a good duration to assess the changing population trends**
- The percentage of India's population that lives in urban areas is increasing with every census. **Increasing urbanisation and freezing of might result in the progressive disenfranchisement of urban voters.** Their vote will not count for as much as the rural voter given the demographic trend. **With urban areas showing lower turnouts than rural areas, this could have major implications for democratic participation in India.**

- Scheduled Castes (SCs) account for 16.6% of India's population and Scheduled Tribes (STs), 8.6%. Clause (2) of Article 330 mandates that the seats reserved for SCs and STs shall be in proportion to their population in a given state. **If the state's representation in the Lok Sabha itself does not keep pace with the changing demographics, the SC and ST representation across the nation is likely to be out of sync** with the actual population across the nation.

No, delimitation need not be decadal because:-

- One of the prime reasons to freeze the readjustment of Lok Sabha/Assembly seats was to ensure uniform population growth in various states. **If readjustment had to be done after each Census, states that have controlled population growth would have lost out on the number of Lok Sabha seats & also on the value of its votes in the Presidential election while the ones that did not control stand to benefit.**
- If the readjustment was done after every Census, the southern states which have comparatively low decadal growth rate than northern states would have lost out on the total Lok Sabha seats for doing better on population control while the northern states would have benefitted for not controlling population.
- While freezing the readjustment till 2026 makes sense because of such uneven growth rates, it remains to be seen how the problem will be solved even after 2026.

Conclusion:-

- Not only are vast changes taking place across states, but within the states themselves like north eastern states representation need to improve. Parties which focus exclusively on a specific and narrow demographic may win disproportionately more seats than one which seeks to have a broader appeal.

Topic: Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Q1) Analyse the mechanism of Parliamentary oversight of the government's financial activities and examine how to strengthen it. (250 Words)

[PRS-India](#)

Background:-

- Parliamentary scrutiny of public finance is an important aspect of governmental accountability. There is a legitimate democratic need in this country to strengthen the capacity of Parliament and its members to carry effective financial oversight.

Mechanism of parliamentary oversight on government's financial activities :-

- Parliamentary oversight of the government's financial activities broadly involves two functions:
 - (a) scrutinising and sanctioning the government's expenditure proposals and the taxation policies financing them.
 - (b) examining the efficiency of government functioning, once the funds have been allocated for various activities.
- **Mechanisms for oversight before the budget is passed**
 - The Parliament scrutinises the annual budget (a) **on the floor of the House** and (b) **by the departmentally related standing committees**
 - **Scrutiny on the floor of the House**
 - The main scrutiny of the budget in the Lok Sabha takes place through:
 - **General discussion and voting:**
 - The general discussion on the Budget is held on a day subsequent to the presentation of the Budget by the Finance Minister.
 - Discussion at this stage is confined to the general examination of the Budget and policies of taxation expressed during the budget speech.
 - **Discussion on Demand for Grants:**
 - The general discussion is followed by a discussion on the Demand for Grants of different ministries. A certain number of days or hours are allocated for the discussion of all the demands. However, not all the demands are discussed within the allotted number of days.
 - **Scrutiny of Demands for Grants by Parliamentary Committees**
 - One of the functions of the Parliamentary Standing Committees is to consider the Demands for Grants of the ministries under their supervision.
 - **Mechanisms for oversight after the budget is passed**
 - Oversight by Parliament after the Budget is passed is necessary **to make sure that the sanctioned amount is being used in an appropriate manner. Parliament may also look at systemic improvements in financial management of the government.**

- The financial committees of Parliament, (a) the Public Accounts Committee, (b) Estimates Committee, (c) the Committee on Public Undertakings serve as important means of Parliamentary control over government agencies.
- **Financial Committees:** Financial Committees scrutinise and exercise parliamentary control over government expenditure/finances and table reports in Parliament.

Concerns :-

- Parliament core functions include Budget approval, scrutiny of its implementation, and holding the government to account. **However, Parliament lacks the capability to perform such functions effectively.** The result is often an arbitrary taxation policy, burgeoning fiscal deficit, and an inequitable allocation of public resources.
- **Indian political economy literature fails to adequately address the role of Parliament and State legislatures in public finance management.** The role of Parliament and State legislatures in budgetary decision-making and oversight is far from satisfactory. It is meaningful to have a well thought-out legislative-executive balance of power in budgetary governance.
- Voting of demand of grants is in the purview of Lok sabha so Rajya sabha does not have enough role.
- **Problem with guillotine:-**
 - With the Gujarat issue in 2002 having devoured valuable time of the budget session, the Lok Sabha applied the guillotine to vote demands for grants of all Ministries and departments except agriculture. This compromises the budget process.
- **PAC committee:-**
 - Some **PAC reports in the past have generated a lot of debate, media attention and discussion on the floor of the House.** Although it is open to the Lok Sabha to discuss reports of the Committee, such discussion is seldom held.
 - Average number of PAC reports per year tabled by the PAC have been decreasing in number since the 6th Lok Sabha (1977)
- Supplementary Demands for Grants are not scrutinised by any Committee.

How to strengthen it :-

- **Linking financial outlays to outcome:-**
 - Currently, no direct link exists between the amount allocated for the department and the final outcome in terms of learning levels of school children. There is a need for Parliament to ensure direct linkage of the Budget to actual outcomes and evaluate the Budget in accordance with these criteria.
- **Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) :-**
 - Many countries are characterised by a specialised body dedicated to conducting essential budget-related and financial research for Parliament, such as the US (Congressional Budget Office), UK (Office for Budget Responsibility) etc
 - There is a growing trend among legislatures, particularly within the OECD countries to establish specialised Budget research units.
 - Establishing a PBO within Parliament is undoubtedly necessary.
 - **It is an instrument for addressing bias towards spending and deficits and, more significantly, for enhancing fiscal discipline and promoting accountability.**
 - Further, it can generate quality public debate on Budget policy and public finance, enabling parliamentarians to engage meaningfully in the Budget process.
- **Strengthening the committee system**
 - **Public Accounts Committee**
 - Till 1946, reports of the PAC could be discussed in the Lok Sabha through a formal motion moved by the Finance Minister. **Adopting this practice again could ensure that reports of the PAC, examining crucial aspects of government functioning, are debated and discussed by the House.**
 - In order to expedite the regularisation of excesses over grants, **the PAC recommended that the CAG should report these excesses to Parliament, in advance** of submitting the Audit Report on the Appropriation Accounts.
- **Scrutiny of Supplementary Demands for Grants**
 - **Supplementary Demands are not scrutinised by Departmentally related standing committees and there is no prescribed limit to how much of such expenditure can be approved by Parliament. Evolving a system by which Supplementary Demands for Grants are discussed by DRSCs would strengthen Parliamentary oversight.**
 - The Estimates Committee should also examine why there was a need for Supplementary Demands, and why these could not be anticipated in the initial Demands.

Conclusion :-

- In the light of recent scams being unearthed along with issue of disproportionate assets of the elected representatives the measures elaborated like having a budget office, focusing on outcomes along with strengthening the committees will ensure parliament has effective financial oversight.

Q2) Through its oversight function, Parliament holds the government accountable and ensures that policies are efficient and in keeping with the needs of citizens. What mechanisms are available to the Parliament to conduct oversight of the executive? Also in the light of criticisms made against parliament's this role, discuss major recommendations to strengthen this function of Parliament. (250 Words)

[PRS-India](#)

Background:-

- Through its oversight function, Parliament holds the government accountable and ensures that policies are efficient and in keeping with the needs of citizens. In addition, parliamentary oversight is essential to prevent arbitrary and unconstitutional action by the government.

Mechanisms for Parliamentary oversight over executive :-

There are two key mechanisms of parliamentary oversight:

▪ Accountability on the floor of the House

1. Question Hour

1. Question Hour allows Members of Parliament (MPs) to pose questions to ministers relating to government policies, and hold the government accountable for its actions. Question Hour functioned for an average of 42% of its scheduled time, largely as a result of disruptions.
2. When Question Hour is disrupted, it is not made up by extending the scheduled time for the sitting or through meeting on additional days. Recently, in order to reduce disruptions, Rajya Sabha moved Question Hour from the first hour of sitting to the second hour of sitting.

2. Debates and motions

1. Debates and motions play a central role in parliament's oversight function by allowing MPs to initiate discussions and seek clarifications on government policies.
 2. In the past, MPs have raised issues such as price rise, improvement of infrastructure in backward areas, to the provision of welfare schemes for vulnerable communities through debates.
- Motions: motions allow for voting at the end of the discussion. There are three types of motions which assist in the oversight function of the Parliament: No Confidence Motions, Adjournment Motions, and Rule 184 in the Lok Sabha (corresponding to Rule 167 in the Rajya Sabha). The first two can only be moved in the Lok Sabha.
 - **Zero Hour**
 1. The hour following Question Hour is popularly called Zero Hour and is used by MPs to raise urgent matters.
 2. Typically, MPs use this time to make statements on urgent issues using Rule 377/Special Mention. This time is also used for laying papers such as annual reports of government institutions, CAG reports, etc.
 - Recently, Rajya Sabha has decided to start the day with Zero Hour, followed by Question Hour.

▪ Parliamentary committees which scrutinize government policies :-

Given the large number of issues which Parliament must address, parliamentary committees, comprising MPs, examine Bills, budgets of ministries, and policies of the government. Committees allow for more informed debate in Parliament, and they also provide an avenue for citizens to engage with Parliament. Committees can either be permanent or appointed temporarily.

- Ordinances, proclamation of emergency etc can be done only when parliament ratifies showing the parliamentary oversight on the executive.

Concerns:-

- Ordinances have become the preferred means of introducing legislative enactments that successive governments from every shade of political opinion have made liberal use of this mechanism. So this needs to be under check unless absolutely necessary
- The passing of bill as a money bill is the one of the executive's action to bypass Rajya Sabha effectively making the bicameral legislature as unicameral. The recent case of introduction of bill related to Aadhar Card is a proof of it. Appointing parliamentary secretaries to assist council of ministers is another case. Thus, the parliamentary secretaries being legislators may not finely balance the role of a legislator and assisting the executive. These need to be avoided.

- Limits on the number of parliamentary sittings has allowed the executive to avoid demonetisation-related queries, undermining the legislature's power. Last year's winter session is for 22 days.

How to strengthen the oversight?

- **Allowing Parliament to convene itself**

Currently, Parliament does not have the power to convene itself. The Constitution mandates that Parliament be convened by the President at least once every six months. In this context, **granting Parliament the power to convene at the request of a required number of MPs may allow Parliament to address issues more promptly, even during inter session period.** However, this requires a constitutional amendment.

- **Strengthening the role of the opposition**

1. Within the institution of Parliament, the opposition can play a central role in monitoring the government and holding it accountable. **Opposition parties could play a greater role in deciding the daily agenda of Parliament, or alternatively, time could be set aside each week for opposition parties to set the agenda.**
2. Internationally, the UK allows the opposition party to determine the agenda for 20 days of each session of Parliament, and Canada for 22 days. This practice could strengthen the ability of the opposition to hold the government accountable, through **allowing for greater specialisation in tracking the government.**

- **Revising certain rules of procedure of Parliament related to debates**

1. **Increasing accountability in Question Hour:**

At present, the Prime Minister is only required to answer questions that pertain to ministries allocated to him. The UK has a Prime Minister's Question Time during which the Prime Minister answers question on the government's policies, across sectors. India can look into this suggestion

2. **Strengthening discussions:**

Currently, the Speaker/Chairman can determine whether to admit a discussion as a debate or a motion. In practice, there is often disagreement between the government and the opposition on the rule under which a discussion is conducted, as motions are put to vote. **An alternative practice could be to allow a sufficiently large group of MPs to decide whether an issue should be introduced as a voting motion, or alternatively a debate.**

3. **Examination of reports:**

Given that a range of parliamentary committee reports are presented in Parliament, **institutional mechanisms may be developed to highlight issues raised in these reports**

- **Major recommendations to strengthen the committee system are detailed below:-**

1. **Requirement of attendance of ministers before committees:**

In current practice, government officials depose before committees, and ministers are exempt from appearing before committees. **This implies that the political executive, which is accountable to Parliament for the decision taken by it, does not clarify and defend its position before the committee. In other countries, such as the UK, ministers are required to depose before committees.**

2. **Increasing transparency:**

While some committees invite suggestions from the public on these issues, there is no consistency in the manner of public participation across these committees and on issues. **Public participation should be invited more systematically and be institutionalised in the procedures of each committee to strengthen the oversight function of committees.**

3. **Oversight committee:**

1. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parliaments may establish a general oversight committee to oversee the work of other permanent and ad-hoc committees
2. For example, **the US has established a Committee on Oversight and Government Reform specifically to perform oversight functions over the federal government,** even though individual committees also perform oversight functions over their sectors.

- **Oversight of regulators**

1. Parliament must develop formal oversight mechanisms for regulators, such as the Reserve Bank of India, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), etc. There is no mechanism for Parliament to directly hold regulator accountable for its actions.
2. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission made the following recommendations on strengthening Parliament's oversight of regulators:
 1. Regulators must appear before sector specific parliamentary committees and explain their policies, and
 2. An expert group should establish guidelines, once every five years, upon which regulators may be evaluated

- **Ensuring the accountability of intelligence agencies.**

At present, intelligence agencies are exempt from parliamentary oversight. This implies that there is limited operational or financial oversight of these agencies. **There is a need to establish a permanent parliamentary committee on intelligence agencies to perform oversight over these agencies.**

- The Anti-Defection Act needs to be recast, and used only in the most exceptional circumstances, while allowing MPs free rein on their self-expression. The U.K., for example, has the concept of a free vote allowing MPs to vote as they wish on particular legislative items.

Conclusion:-

- Parliament should be a space for policy and not for politics. India needs to undertake reforms to ensure that it is recast as such by ensuring a more robust public representatives

Q3) What are the main features of India's anti-defection law? Also examine interpretations and recommendations made by the courts and committees on the law. Do you think, instead of the Speaker, the decision on defections should be decided by an external neutral body such as the Election Commission? Comment. (250 Words)

PRS-India

Background:-

- The main intent of the law was to combat "the evil of political defections". However over the years there have been criticisms over the disqualifications and several issues in relation to the working of this law which need to be discussed.

Features of anti defection law :-

- **Disqualification**
 - If a member of a house belonging to a political party:
 - Voluntarily gives up the membership of his political party, or
 - Votes, or does not vote in the legislature, contrary to the directions of his political party. However, if the member has taken prior permission, or is condoned by the party within 15 days from such voting or abstention, the member shall not be disqualified.
 - If an independent candidate joins a political party after the election.
 - If a nominated member joins a party six months after he becomes a member of the legislature.
- **Power to Disqualify**
 - The Chairman or the Speaker of the House takes the decision to disqualify a member.
 - If a complaint is received with respect to the defection of the Chairman or Speaker, a member of the House elected by that House shall take the decision.
- **Exception**
 - A person shall not be disqualified if his original political party merges with another, and:
 - He and other members of the old political party become members of the new political party, or
 - He and other members do not accept the merger and opt to function as a separate group.
 - This exception shall operate only if not less than two-thirds of the members of party in the House have agreed to the merger.

Court interpretations on anti defection law:-

- The Tenth Schedule says the Speaker's/Chairperson's decision on questions of disqualification on ground of defection shall be final and can't be questioned in courts. In *Kihoto Hollohan vs Zachillhu and Others (1991)*, an SC Constitution Bench declared that the Speaker's decision was subject to judicial review.
- **In 1996** – Once a member is expelled, he is treated as an 'unattached' member in the house. However, he continues to be a member of the old party as per the Tenth Schedule. So if he joins a new party after being expelled, he can be said to have voluntarily given up membership of his old party.
- The Speaker of a House does not have the power to review his own decisions to disqualify a candidate. Such power is not provided for under the Schedule, and is not implicit in the provisions either
- If the Speaker fails to act on a complaint, or accepts claims of splits or mergers without making a finding, he fails to act as per the Tenth Schedule. The Court said that ignoring a petition for disqualification is not merely an irregularity but a violation of constitutional duties

Committee interpretations on anti defection law:-

- Following demands that disqualification not be decided by speakers as they failed to be impartial, the Dinesh Goswami Committee and the Constitution Review Commission headed by Justice MN Venkatachaliah (2002) had recommended such a decision be made by the President or the Governor on the Election Commission's advice, as in the case of disqualification on grounds of office of profit.

- **Dinesh Goswami Committee on electoral reforms (1990)**
 - Disqualification should be limited to cases where (a) a member voluntarily gives up the membership of his political party, (b) a member abstains from voting, or votes contrary to the party whip in a motion of vote of confidence or motion of no-confidence. .
- **Law Commission (170th Report, 1999)**
 - Pre-poll electoral fronts should be treated as political parties under anti-defection law.
 - Political parties should limit issuance of whips to instances only when the government is in danger.

Speaker should not be the final decider because:-

- The Speaker has been assigned the role of an impartial arbiter. **But the conduct of speakers has left much to be desired.**
- A lawmaker elected as Speaker/Chairman is allowed to resign from his/her party, and rejoin it if he/she demits office. But **speakers have invariably allowed themselves to be used for gain of their party or leader.**
- **There have been many instances which show there is a need for more clarity:-**
 - The Uttarakhand Assembly Speaker disqualified nine MLAs from the ruling party in 2016, despite the MLAs not leaving the Congress or voting against it in the Assembly. Furthermore, while the MLAs had voiced dissenting notes against the Budget, the Budget itself was declared passed without voting by the Speaker.
 - Such instances highlight the need for greater clarity in the interpretations associated with the Anti-Defection Law. **Perhaps, it might be better for such critical decisions, associated with representative disqualification, to be determined by the President instead, with inputs from the Election Commission.**

Conclusion:-

- The evil of political defections has been a matter of national concern. If it is not combated, it is likely to undermine the very foundations of our democracy and the principles which sustain it. So anti defection law is a boon but should not be misused.

Q4) Regulators do not exist in a vacuum outside government policy and while regulators have independence in performing their role, they still fall within the broad definition of the executive branch of the State, and are accountable to the legislature. Analyse. (250 Words)

PRS-India

Background:-

- The regulatory state came into its own in India in the post-liberalization era
- To simultaneously ensure regulatory independence and implementation of regulations consistent with government policies, legislative oversight of regulators is necessary.

Regulators need independence because:-

- The regulator is able to set up a specialised workforce that has superior technical knowledge
- This is assisted by modified human resource and other processes, when compared with the functioning of mainstream government departments
- With such knowledge, and close observation of the industry, an independent regulator is able to move rapidly in modifying regulations, thus giving malleability to laws
- The presence of independent regulators improves legal certainty by ensuring that the regulatory approach does not fluctuate with political changes.
- Excessive parliamentary interference would undercut their functional autonomy and may destroy their basic rationale. Judicious decision-making, depoliticizing decisions for fixation of tariffs, user charges and interest rates improve productivity and growth.

Regulators come under executive branch and are accountable to legislature:-

- The centrality of legislative oversight comes from the design of regulators i.e., the functions of the executive, legislature and judiciary are combined in the role of the regulator.
- **Regulatory** agencies are usually a **part** of the **executive branch** of the government, and they have statutory authority to perform their functions with oversight from the legislative branch.
- The regulators came under question like Medical commission of India, lacklustre performance of sports regulators ,the recent banking scams unearthed raised questions about the RBI role as well. So making them accountable to parliament is very important.

- In India, parliamentary scrutiny of the regulators can take place through the following means:
 - **Question Hour:**
 - Every regulator falls within the administrative domain of a government department. During question hour, MPs can ask questions to scrutinise the functioning of ministries and the regulators related to their departments.
 - **Discussions:**
 - Parliament may take up the role of regulators for debate under different Rules of Procedure of Parliament (such as half-hour discussions and discussions under Rule 193 in the Lok Sabha).
 - In these debates too, the concerned minister responds to the issues raised by the MPs. During these discussions, regulators cannot be summoned to explain their functioning
 - **Parliamentary committees:**
 - Public accounts committee has summoned RBI governor regarding demonetization last year. The PAC has also sought to know how much of the currency was demonetised, and how much has returned into the banking system
 - **Department related Standing Committees:**
 - The Committee system of Parliament is often used in several countries for oversight of regulators
 - Regulators are not required to regularly submit reports to parliamentary committees on their policies or to justify their actions. This is in contrast with the position in the United Kingdom, where the Bank of England periodically engages with the Parliament.
 - **Finance Committees:**
 - The Committee on Estimates reviews budgetary estimates of government departments. Such estimates include the budget of regulators.

Way forward:-

- The existing mechanisms of legislative oversight over regulators performance need to be strengthened considerably to be more effective.
- The appointment process can make regulators more accountable. In the United Kingdom and the US, the appointment of a regulator is subject to ratification by Parliament or an agency appointed by Parliament. **In contrast, the appointment of a regulator in India is at the discretion of the executive.**
- Currently, most regulators are financially self-sufficient, raising fees and charges for services, and consequently come under less scrutiny by Parliament. Requiring the approval of Parliament for budgets may be a way to exercise control on regulators.
- Ad hoc scrutiny of the regulator was not adequate for effective oversight. There needs to be parliamentary reporting requirements on a regular basis.
- **Question of coordination in its scrutiny of regulators:-**
 - Different regulators, while complying with their respective statutes, and executive orders, may take regulatory decisions that are in conflict with the overarching policy or the objectives of other regulators. **Establishing a dedicated joint parliamentary committee to oversee regulatory bodies would address this issue.**
- There needs to be a **proper mechanism for appeals against regulatory orders**. Each regulator needs to come out with a charter and timelines for the provision of their services.
- **Direct accountability of regulatory bodies to Parliament** was recommended by the **Damodaran Committee** in 2013.
- **Second ARC recommendations:-**
 - Suggested that regulators submit annual reports periodically which should include the progress made on achieving their objectives. These reports should be accessible to the public.
 - Regulators be scrutinised by sector-specific committees.

Conclusion:-

- Policymakers find significant advantages in governance through regulators as they can provide a level playing field to all participants without fear or favour. They can build expertise matching the complexities of the task and evolves processes to enforce authority rapidly and proactively. But regulators need to be accountable for their actions too.

Q5) Developments following the 2G spectrum allocation and the Lok Pal issue have led to increased interest in understanding the work of Parliamentary committees. Analyse how effective the committee system has been and explore ways of strengthening it. (250 Words)

PRS

Background:-

- Beyond the visible work in the two Houses, a substantial part of the work is carried out by Committees. The functions they carry are examine bills referred to them, select specific topics related to the ministries and examine implementation by the government and examine the budgetary outlays of the departments. **Their performance affects the overall effectiveness of Parliament as an institution that makes laws, holds the government accountable, and gives sanction for public spending.**

Effectiveness of committees:-

- These committees fulfill several objectives.
- **They help Parliament manage its business better.** It is easier to examine a topic in depth by a committee of 30 than by an assembly of 700.
- They **enable input from experts** and those who may be directly affected by a policy or legislation. For example, the DRSCs often invite comments from the public and call several people to testify before them.
- Being outside direct public glare **allows members to discuss issues and reach consensus without worrying about constituency pressures.**
- The anti-defection law does not apply to committees therefore, **decisions are not usually made on party lines.**
- These committees allow **members to focus on some specific areas** and build their expertise, which helps them scrutinize issues more thoroughly.
- Their **reports allow for informed debate in Parliament.**
- Committees **also provide a forum to build consensus across party lines**, help develop expertise in subjects, and enable consultation with independent experts and stakeholders.
- Over the years, **these committees have examined ministerial budgets, analyse legislation and scrutinise the government's working.**
- More significantly, they function through the year. They are important forums for debate.
 - **If these committees work effectively, they can keep a close watch on government functioning.**
- For example, **the parliamentary committee on information technology had examined the issue of spectrum allocation in 2006 much before the 2G controversy derailed the entire winter session of 2010.**
- The **committee also offers an opportunity for detailed scrutiny of bills being piloted by the government.** Currently, the rules of Parliament don't require every bill to be referred to a parliamentary committee for scrutiny. It comes at the **cost of ineffective scrutiny by the highest law-making body.**
- Reports of well-functioning committees act as an early warning system about the laxity in government functioning. But more importantly, the deliberations and scrutiny by committees ensure that **Parliament is able to fulfill some of its constitutional obligations in a politically charged environment.**

Concerns remain:-

- low attendance of MPs at meetings
- Too many ministries under a committee
- Norms not followed by most political parties while nominating MPs to committees
- The constitution of DRSCs for a year leaves very little time for specialisations.
- The DRSC usually invites many experts while scrutinizing bills. However, this is not always the case, even for bills with wide ramifications. **For example, the DRSC that examined the Right to Education Bill, 2008 did not invite any expert witness**
- All **bills are not referred to committees.** Just 27 percent of bills introduced in the current Parliament have been so referred.
 - Even a bill as important as the Constitution Amendment to enable the Goods and Services Tax was passed by Lok Sabha without reference to the DRSC.
- The **recommendation of committees are not binding.** It is for the government or any other member to move the relevant amendments, which may then be voted upon by the House.
- The **lack of standing research support.** These committees are supported by the general support staff of Parliament and do not have a dedicated set of researchers associated with them.
- A related issue is the **high churn in parliamentary membership.** In each of the last three Lok Sabhas, over 50 percent of the members elected were first time MPs. As several of the experienced members become ministers, **only a small pool of MPs gain subject knowledge by being in a committee for a long period of time.**
- **Transparency of the work of committees.** All committees meet behind closed doors and only the final report is published, with summary minutes.
- Nine DRSCs submitted only one report. On average, the Committees on Railways and Water Resources took the maximum time to submit reports.
- The number of meetings of the Committee is measurable but the quality of its work is difficult to judge.

Ways to strengthen them are:-

- Parliamentary committees don't have dedicated subject-wise research support available. However, their work could be made more effective if the committees had full-time, sector-specific research staff.
- Mandatory scrutiny of bills by parliamentary committees would ensure better planning of legislative business. This year, parliamentary committees are examining important policy issues like ease of doing business, the Indian Financial Code, smart cities and net neutrality, among others.
- The forum of parliamentary committees can also be effectively utilised in obtaining public feedback and building political consensus on contentious issues. This process also ensures any concerns with respect to a bill are addressed early and the government's legislative agenda isn't derailed at a late stage.
- **Recommendations of NCRWC**
 - DRSCs should be periodically reviewed. All Bills should be referred to DRSCs. They can elicit public views and call specialist advisors.
 - The Petitions Committee can be a supplement to the proposed office of the Lok Pal.
 - Major reports of all Committees should be discussed in Parliament especially in cases where there is disagreement between a Committee and the government.
- The recommendations of the PACs should be accorded greater weight and they should be treated as the "conscience-keepers of the nation in financial matters".
- Improving the transparency of input from advocacy groups.

Conclusion:-

- Many MPs call these committees "mini-parliaments" and strengthening their working will have a significant impact on Parliament's overall effectiveness

Topic: Functioning of judiciary

Q1) In India, the process of removing a judge – if found guilty of corruption or judicial impropriety – is too elaborate and somewhat cumbersome. Comment on the existing procedure and suggest reforms. (250 Words)

The Hindu

Background:-

- With an in-house committee concluding that a judge of the Allahabad High Court had committed judicial impropriety serious enough to warrant his removal, the subject of corruption in the higher judiciary is in the news.

Existing procedure :-

- The Constitution of India, through Article 124 (4) empowers the parliament to initiate the process of removal of any supreme court judge. The article says the judge can only be removed from his office on the ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity. Although, it did not define proved misbehaviour
- The first step towards impeachment is for the President and Prime Minister to be intimated of the concerns about the concerned judge. The inquiry committee's report is then placed on record. This is not crucial to the impeachment process, but could play a role in it. The mandatory steps are as follows:
 - There needs to be an impeachment motion in either of the Houses of Parliament. The motion can only be admitted by the Speaker in the Lok Sabha or Vice-President in Rajya Sabha if it has the required levels of support: 100 MPs in Lok Sabha or 50 MPs in Rajya Sabha.
 - If the motion is admitted, a three-member committee is set up to investigate the allegations. The committee is made up of a Supreme Court judge, the Chief Justice of any High Court, and a distinguished jurist (read judge/lawyer/scholar) nominated by the Speaker/Vice-President. When serious allegations have been raised in the past against judges, this step was taken.
 - However, the remaining steps have not been followed, because during the course of the investigation, the judges have shown the good sense to retire and get themselves out of the public eye.
 - Once the committee prepares its report, this has to be submitted to the Speaker/Vice-President, who then also shares it with the other House. If the committee finds that judge is guilty of any misbehaviour, the next step gets triggered.
 - Both Houses of Parliament then need to pass an 'address to the President' asking for judge to be removed. To succeed, this needs to be passed by a 2/3 majority of the MPs present in each house during the vote, and must also exceed the 50 percent mark in each House. This is the furthest things have ever got in the past, in Justice Ramaswami's case in 1993, though the motion failed to pass in the Lok Sabha.
 - If both addresses succeed, then the President can remove Judge from his position.

Why is it elaborate and cumbersome:-

- The process to impeach a judge of the higher judiciary is incredibly complex, but since this is the only meaningful way to hold these judges accountable.
- The High Courts and Supreme Court are the only institutions that can really take on the government, and hold them to account. It should therefore not be easy for these judges to be removed on the whims of the powers that be.
- However in the recent years there have been instances like the Justice Karnan's case, Medical bribery case in Uttar Pradesh which raised questions on the impeachment process

Reforms needed:-

- Performance Commission can be instituted. Many U.S. States have constituted such commissions, which examine complaints about the conduct of judges. **They are vested with powers to take consequential action.** The censure of culpable judges must be governed by the Commission.
- **An in-house finding** may help hasten it in flagrant cases. That internal mechanisms work with due regard for institutional integrity is something that should be welcomed.
- **Judicial accountability bill is necessary.**
- There needs to be some thought about giving **more teeth to the CJI when it comes to High Court judges** especially perhaps by allowing him to temporarily suspend the judge themselves (rather than relying on the Chief Justice of the relevant High Court).
- To prevent it from becoming overreach by the CJI, it could be that such suspensions are restricted to situations where the inquiry committee finds that there has been criminal or otherwise gravely serious misconduct.
- There should also be some sort of similar proceedings to take action against a judge who retires before the impeachment process is completed. **Impeachment doesn't just deal with criminal misconduct, after all, so while this may remain a possibility after a strategic retirement, in many other cases, the impropriety will go unpunished.**
- Try and introduce time limits for Parliament to deal with impeachment motions .

Q2) The new roster for allocation of cases in the Supreme Court, with division of work among the judges according to various subject categories, is a move towards greater objectivity or fairness. Comment. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- This new roster comes in the light of the press conference by the four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court expressing dissatisfaction at the manner of allocation of cases and the high-handedness of the Chief Justice of India in asserting his supremacy as master of roster to the exclusion of the senior judges of the court

New roster:-

- Under the new system cases will be allocated based on the subject matter they entail, according to a posting on the official website of the Supreme Court.
- Under the new roster system, **the CJI will hear all special leave petitions (SLPs), and matters related to public interest, social justice, elections, arbitration, and criminal matters, among others. These form a big chunk of the important matters heard by the apex court.**
- Other judges will hear matters related to labour disputes, taxation matters, compensation matters, consumer protection matters etc.

Benefits of the move:-

- This is the first time in the Supreme Court's history that a roster for Supreme Court judges has been made public.
- Making public the roster will make the whole system of allocation of cases transparent and will eliminate a lot of guesswork.

Concerns:-

- It has given impetus to more speculation and has become a stronger ground for **criticism of the prevailing practice at the Supreme Court.**
- **The roster aggregates all important cases to the Chief Justice of India .Mundane cases with little political significance have been assigned to the other senior judges.**
- Despite the judges going public with their discontent, there is no change .**This will have a long-term bearing on the state of Indian democracy.**
- **Many questions arise** like whether this roster has been prepared in consultation with senior judges of the Supreme Court or whether the cases have been allocated according to a particular judge's expertise in a subject matter or whether the allocation was transparent

- Experts are concerned that with such move **there is concentration of power in the hands of one person and it violates the foundation of Supreme court called as a court of equals** and the objective criteria has not been followed.
- Experts criticised that the allotment of cases in this manner defies all norms of equity and justice and in disregard for principles of neutrality, impartiality and transparency.

Way forward:-

- A just and fair roster must be one that is **divided subject-wise among judges according to their experience and expertise in those subjects.**
 - **Politically sensitive matters should be before the five senior judges of the Supreme Court.** Among them, the allocation of **individual cases must be by random computer allocation** not by the individual decision of any human.
 - For **other cases as well, if there is more than one judge dealing with a particular subject then cases belonging to that subject should be randomly allocated** among the various judges to whom that subject has been allocated.
- The bedrock of collegiums system is collective decision making. When appointments are a collective function, the allocation of important cases must be done collectively or at least in consultation with senior judges of the Supreme Court.
- Transparency in the allotment of cases and Supreme court functioning will only yield more authority to the Supreme Court as the supreme custodian of people's rights.

Topic: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies

Q1) The National Human Rights Commission of India is often considered as toothless body, however over a period of time it is observed that, though unevenly and sometimes ineffectively, it has carved out triumphal moments that have opened up state actions to judicial and public scrutiny. Critically evaluate. (250 Words)

EPW

Background:-

- NHRC being a statutory body with limited powers has taken a bold decision by questioning the government's stand on Rohingyas treating them as human beings first rather than as refugees.

Positives:

- Custodial torture, right to work and labour rights, extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, child labour, manual scavenging, problems faced by scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, religious minorities, persons with disabilities etc are the issues dealt by NHRC
- **Successful examples:-**
 - Some of the famous interventions of NHRC include campaigns against discrimination of HIV patients.
 - It also has asked all State Governments to report the cases of custodial deaths or rapes within 24 hours of occurrence failing which it would be assumed that there was an attempt to suppress the incident.
 - An important intervention of the Commission was related to Nithari Village in Noida, UP, where children were sexually abused and murdered.
 - Recently, NHRC helped to bring out in open a multi crore pension scam in Haryana.
 - It also is looking up the sterilization tragedy of Chattisgarh.
 - NHRC seeks factual report from Defence Ministry on allegations of human rights violations of armed forces by stone pelters in Jammu and Kashmir
- Accredited with 'A' status by ICC and endorsed by UNGA.
- Investigating the violation of human rights or action of any public servant that amounts to negligence in prevention of such violation.
- Visiting the jails or any other such public institutions under state government to inquire about the living conditions of inmate.

Concerns:-

- **Painstakingly investigates human rights violation cases, sometimes in remote areas, with its limited resources. But at the end when NHRC arrives at a finding, it can only recommend remedial measures** or direct the state concerned to pay compensation. It does not have power of prosecution.
- Even in the Rohingya refugees case, where the notice issued by it to the central government may serve to open up a space of dissonance within the dominant status quo on the issue, but **not be able to achieve anything more.**
- **It is dependent on the Government for manpower and money.** The Central Government shall pay to the Commission by way of grants such sums of money as it may consider fit.

- NHRC cannot investigate an event if the complaint was made more than one year after the incident. Hence, **a large number of genuine grievances go unaddressed.**
- Violations by armed forces cannot be effectively investigated (no power to summon witnesses)
- **Overburdened with complaints:**
 - It has limited strength. With increase in complaints it becomes difficult to address the cases
- Issue of majoritarianism may affect the impartiality/accountability of the body

Topic: Salient features of the Representation of People's Act;

Q1) It is said that the country's first election was an ingeniously indigenous an inventive exercise, with unique challenges and the way bureaucracy rose to the task holds lessons for today. Examine. (250 Words)

[The Indian Express](#)

Background:-

- The principle of universal franchise was adopted at the beginning of the constitutional debates in April 1947. It was a significant departure from elections under colonial rule, which were based on a very limited franchise and a divided electorate.

Inventive and indigenous because:-

- The origin of Indian democracy in particular the establishment of its edifice through the **implementation of universal adult franchise, was an ingeniously Indian enterprise.** It was no legacy of colonial rule, and was largely driven by the Indians.
- The **turning of all adults into voters was a staggering democratic state-building operation of inclusion and scale,** which surpassed any previous experience in democratic world history.
- **People from the margins found meaning and a place for themselves in the new polity based on universal adult franchise,** they also understood the potential new power of making group identity claims.
- The **SCs and STs, women turned into voters and everyone was equal irrespective of ascriptive criteria** and could now under universal franchise, fully partake in the electoral politics.
- Concerns about inclusiveness led to an innovation, **the use of large pictorial symbols, by which illiterate voters could identify their preferred candidate.**
- The ECI's rigorous approach is illustrated by its handling of women who were unwilling to provide their names to register as voters. **It used persuasion and made women as voters.**

Challenges:-

- There was a large gap to bridge in turning this constitutional aspiration into reality at Independence, **in the midst of the Partition that led to mass killings.**
- The vast majority of the future and largest electorate in history at the time of **over 173 million people was poor and illiterate.**
- **Identities and group cohesion with respect to caste, class posed challenge**

How Bureaucracy succeeded in tackling these challenges:-

- **The responsiveness of the civil service empowered people to understand that a place in the electoral roll** was the most concrete way at the time to secure membership in the new state.
- The bureaucrats of the secretariat replied to every letter that arrived at their desk.
- They took actions to redress the problems that arose.
- In this process, they mentored bureaucrats at all levels and ordinary citizens into the principles of electoral democracy and universal franchise

Q2) In recent years a series of Supreme Court verdicts have aimed preserving the purity of the electoral process. Analyse these verdicts. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- Recently Supreme court gave a judgement which is one more in a long line of significant verdicts aimed at preserving the purity of the electoral process.

SC judgements preserving the purity of electoral process and their significance :-

▪ Latest judgement:-

- The Supreme Court has **imposed an additional disclosure norm for candidates contesting elections. It has asked the Centre to amend the rules as well as the disclosure form filed by candidates along with their nomination papers, to include the sources of their income, and those of their spouses and dependants.**
- This is a very significant step when there are allegations that elected representatives amass wealth or gaining unusual access to public funds and loans. Now these need to be addressed through new norms. the court has made it clear that non-disclosure of assets and their sources would amount to a “corrupt practice” under Section 123 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951
- The court has also asked for the establishment of a permanent mechanism to investigate any unexplained or disproportionate increase in the assets of legislators during their tenure.
- The idea of a permanent mechanism to collect data about the assets of legislators and periodically examine them is laudable.

▪ Persons in Custody to be debarred from contesting elections

- As per the **2004 judgment of the Patna High Court in Jan Chaukidari v Union of India – upheld by the Supreme Court on 10 July 2013** all those in lawful police or judicial custody, other than those held in preventive detention, will forfeit their right to stand for election.
- *Jan Chaukidar* was one of the boldest and unconventional decisions taken by the apex judicial body, striving towards the cleansing of political arena.
- *It was being done to curb the criminalisation of politics.*
- *Further, Supreme court took account of practical considerations and ruled that the additional resources that would be required in terms of infrastructure, security and deployment of extra police forces were legitimate justifications in denying the right to vote to prisoners and those in custody.*

▪ MPs, MLAs to be disqualified on date of criminal conviction

- In **Lily Thomas v. the Union of India**, the Supreme Court declared Section 8 (4) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, (RPA) which allowed legislators a three-month window to appeal against their conviction effectively delaying their disqualification until such appeals were exhausted as

▪ Direction to provide the 'NOTA' option in voting machines:-

- The NOTA option would indeed compel political parties to nominate sound candidates. The bench noted that giving right to a voter not to vote for any candidate while protecting his right of secrecy is extremely important in a democracy.
- Such an option gives the voter the right to express his disapproval of the kind of candidates being put up by the parties.
- The right to cast a negative vote will foster the purity of the electoral process and also fulfil one of its objectives, namely, wide participation of people. Not allowing a person to cast a negative vote would defeat the very freedom of expression and the right to liberty.

▪ The VVPAT Ruling

- Supreme Court (SC), in the case of *Subramanian Swamy vs Election Commission of India (ECI)*, has held that VVPAT (Vote Verifiable Paper Audit Trail) is “indispensable for free and fair elections.
- This ruling is obviously a victory for accountable voting in India. This was necessary as there were criticisms against EVM and with this system people have proof that they have voted for his person.

▪ The Supreme Court said that freebies promised by political parties in their election manifestos shake the roots of free and fair polls, the, and directed the Election Commission to frame guidelines for regulating contents of manifestos.

- The Supreme Court in 2013 ruled that returning officer can reject nomination papers of a candidate for non-disclosure and suppression of information, including that of assets and their criminal background.
 - The apex court said that voters have fundamental right to know about their candidates and leaving columns blank in the nomination paper amounts to violation of their right.
- **Dispose-off cases within one year against MP/MLAs** if cases are serious offense mentioned under sec-8 of RP Act. This act as deterrence for wrongdoer.
- **With these judgements the court focused on making electoral system transparent and increase the accountability of the elected people.**

Conclusion:-

- The Centre and the Election Commission will have to jointly address the issues. The larger message from the verdict is that a fully informed electorate and transparent candidature will be key components of future elections in India.

Q3) The Supreme Court's recent decision on information disclosure (*Lok Prahari v. Union of India*) paves a way for future constitutional interventions in India's party funding regime, including the scheme of electoral bonds. Analyse. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- Supreme Court, over the last few decades, has readily stepped in to introduce electoral reforms. However, most of these interventions are directed at candidates, and rarely at the parties.
- The Lok Prahari decision paves a way for future constitutional interventions in India's party funding regime, including the scheme of electoral bonds.

Lok Prahari vs Union of India:-

- Candidates contesting polls will now have to disclose their sources of income and that of their family members.

Benefits of this judgement :-

- **Funding:-**
 - The U.S. Supreme Court held that **it is essential for voters to know the funding sources of their candidates**. Parties in India play at least two crucial roles in the election of candidates, namely financial support to candidates, and, more importantly, setting the agenda.
 - Parties cannot lay claim to the representation of a candidate, and at the same time argue that information about party funding is not relevant for voters.
- **Parties occupy a special space in India when it comes to agenda setting.** By virtue of a strong anti-defection law in India, all elected legislators are bound by their party agenda. Supreme Court, upholding the anti-defection amendment, noted that a person who gets elected as a candidate set up by a political party is so elected **on the basis of the programme of that political party**.
- The landmark order is **intended to bring in more transparency in the poll process and comes ahead of elections scheduled to several states**. So far, candidates only needed to reveal their income, not the sources.
- This move **can help in tackling the money power used in the elections**.
- If assets of a legislator increase without bearing any relationship to their known sources of income, it is **inconsistent with the principle of the Rule of Law and a universally accepted Code of Conduct expected of the holder of a public office in a Constitutional democracy**.
- Under Articles 102(1)(a) and 191(1)(a) that holding of any office of profit would disqualify a person either to become or continue to be a legislator.
- **Electoral bonds:-**
 - It strikes a blow against the provisions discouraging transparency in party funding. **If the court's jurisprudence is consistently applied, the scheme of electoral bonds could be declared unconstitutional.**
- **Also electoral bonds induce anonymity of the user further .With the judgement the source has to be told and the election process becomes accountable.**

Conclusion:-

- This is the first step to bring transparency in party funding mechanism. With multiple steps like bring political parties in the purview of RTI, considering state funding of elections the menace of money misuse in elections can be curbed.

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

Q1) How is India's Aadhaar different from America's Social Security Number (SSN)? Do you think going forward Aadhaar will help in better implementation of welfare schemes and administration of subsidies? Comment. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- India's Unique Identification project is the world's largest biometrics-based identity programme. Initially, the project had a limited aim to stop theft and pilferage from India's social welfare programmes by correctly identifying the beneficiaries using their biometrics. But now, the use of Aadhaar is expanding into newer areas, including business applications.

Aadhaar = Social Security Number? LEARN THE DIFFERENCE!

Aadhaar	Social Security Number (SSN)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is proof of national identity • Governed by Aadhaar Act 2016 • Collects biometric data • Links databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a record keeper of services • Governed by Federal legislation • Collects demographic data • Stores data in a centralised database

How is Aadhaar different from America's social security number ?

- **Purpose**
- SSN was created as a number record keeping scheme for government services. Aadhaar was created as a biometric based authenticator and a single unique proof of identity.
- **Applicability**
- SSN is for citizens and non-citizens authorized to work. Aadhaar is for residents.
- **Aadhaar is an identification number. Social Security Number is not.**
- **Aadhaar authenticates a person. The Social Security Number does not.**
- Aadhaar authenticates a person by matching his or her demographics or biometrics with the records in its database.
- Social security number is intended for authentication purposes and has not been built to do this on a national scale. It matches a name and associated Social Security Number against its records only in limited circumstances.
- **Aadhaar captures biometrics. The Social Security Number does not.**
- Aadhaar collects biometrics, which include the scan of all fingerprints, face and the iris of both eyes.
- The Social Security Number is thus printed on a small paper card and does not carry even a photograph
- **Aadhaar links databases. The Social Security Number does not.**
 - Millions of Aadhaar numbers have been linked to the bank records, ration lists, educational records, and telecom documents of individuals.
- **Aadhaar does not have privacy safeguards quite in the same way as the Social Security Number.** India does not have a privacy law either at the national or state level
- **Aadhaar functioned without a legal framework till recently. The Social Security Number was created through a law.**
- **The use of Aadhaar is expanding. The use of the Social Security Number is getting restricted.**

Benefits of Aadhaar:-

- Government schemes are asking for Aadhaar as it helps to **clean out duplications and fake accounts, insurance policies and unauthorised mobile connections, and provides accurate data to enable implementation of direct benefit programmes.**
 - The government claims to have removed millions of fake beneficiaries for government benefits by Aadhaar linking.
 - As reported by *Mint* in May 2017, over 23 million fake ration cards have been scrapped, potentially saving the government Rs14,000 crore in food subsidy every year.
 - Another *Mint* report in August says, three states discovered that about 2,72,000 fake students were availing the mid-day meal (MDM) scheme
- Use of Aadhaar **reduces the cost of identifying persons and provides increased transparency** to the government in implementation of its schemes.
- When you link your bank account with your Aadhaar, **government benefits such as subsidy on LPG cylinders is credited directly to that account.**
- The data privacy law will address data privacy and protection in all digital systems, not just Aadhaar.
- Recent initiatives regarding security by UIDAI like Virtual Aadhar are the steps in the right direction.

Concerns :-

- Fundamental objection to this linking of services is that all information on an individual will be available at a single place, which could **make surveillance easier and also increase the risks if this information is hacked.**
- A user's Aadhaar number and fingerprint are permanent identifiers, and at least the Aadhaar number **has been compromised for over 130 million citizens, as per a study by Centre for Internet & Society.**
- Users are vulnerable to social hacks. To forcefully and mandatorily link Aadhaar to bank accounts means that their finances are at risk.
- Absence of a clear redressal mechanisms for consumers in case of a data leak, misuse or hack. Not much beyond Regulation 32 has yet been specified by the UIDAI.
 - Apart from this, Section 47 of the Aadhaar Act stipulates that only UIDAI or its authorised officers can file a criminal complaint for violations of the Act.
 - The UIDAI has been given complete discretion in determining if and when to file a criminal complaint for violations of the Act, and an individual aggrieved by actions of a third person is left to rely upon the bonafide actions of the UIDAI.
- How unbridled, mandatory digitisation is causing immense pain and suffering to the poorest and most marginalised of this country.
- **Rajasthan :-**
 - The inability to open and use bank accounts, seed them with Aadhaar and Bhamashah, and then withdraw pension payments from their accounts using biometric authentication every month is resulting in sanctioned beneficiaries being removed from pension lists

Way forward:-

- It is imperative that the issues concerning cyber security breaches, existing architecture loopholes and privacy contravention and violations must be addressed at the earliest before going forward.
- If the UIDAI adopts smart cards, it can destroy the centralized database of biometrics just like the UK government did in 2010. This would completely eliminate the risk of foreign government, criminals and terrorists using the breached biometric database to remotely, covertly and non-consensually identify Indians
- IT laws have to be modernised and India has to put the liability on the company handling the data so that it is not stolen or shared without consent.

Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

Q1) In the recent union budget government announced a flagship National Health Protection Scheme to cover over ten crore poor and vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage up to five lakh rupees per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation. Do you think it's a move towards universal health coverage and quality public healthcare? Critically comment. (250 Words)

The Wire

Background:-

- India is concerned with many health issues be it malnutrition, infant mortality, rising non communicable diseases, growing number of deaths due to cancer etc. The national health protection scheme is the step in the right direction which can give impetus to healthcare in India.

Yes:-

- Will bring healthcare system closer to the homes of people.
- The new program would be a vast expansion of health coverage, allowing people to visit the country's many private hospitals for needs as varied as cancer treatment and knee replacements.
- Under the scheme, 10 crore families will be provided Rs 5 lakh cover per family annually for treatment. The programme is being touted as the world's largest health protection scheme.
- It is indeed heartening that 40 per cent of India's population will be covered under a insurance scheme. If the National Health Protection Scheme is properly implemented and monitored we would have taken an important step in creating a Swasth Bharat.
- The amount of Rs 5 lakh per family is a massive and unexpected hike from the existing fund of Rs 1 lakh per family. This amount is 17 times bigger than the RSBY scheme and will cover 40% of India's population.

No:-

- **Universal health insurance through private hospitals has not worked for the poor anywhere.**Biggest beneficiaries are the private hospitals and insurance companies. **There is no substitute for public health care.**
- It does not do anything to improve access to healthcare or reduce out-of-pocket expenditure.
- The government's proposals do little to prevent poor health in the first place. India is plagued by increasing levels of water and air pollution, some of it worsened by pro-business policies. Malnutrition, poor sanitation and lack of proper housing also remain major problems.
- **Earlier programme failures cast new doubts:-**
 - In its final iteration in 2016-2017, the RSBY also targeted 5.9 crore families, and managed to enroll 3.6 crore families. **Thus the government's announcement today of reaching ten crore families is also vastly ambitious.**
 - NHPS announced earlier has in fact been lying dormant with the Union cabinet since November 2016.
 - **An insurance-based strategy does not effectively address this problem of out-of-pocket expenditure.**
 - Most independent evaluations of the RSBY show that this scheme has neither managed to significantly reduce out-of-pocket expenditure nor has it increased access to healthcare for the poor. So regarding the latest schemes doubts prevail.
 - Only 1.2% of the hospitalisation cases of the rural population and 6.2% of the urban population received even part reimbursement.
 - There is evidence to show that despite efforts towards pushing for increased insurance coverage, neither have the poorest been reached out to nor has there been efficient financial protection.
 - RSBY did not affect the likelihood of inpatient out-of-pocket spending, the level of inpatient out of pocket spending or catastrophic inpatient spending.
 - Research from Chhattisgarh, which also has a state health insurance scheme along with the RSBY, shows that the accredited hospitals are highly concentrated in certain urban pockets, **making it inaccessible for most of the rural poor.**
- In real terms and as a percentage of GDP, **there is a decline in the health budget this year.**
- Universal health coverage by definition means universal coverage for all medical expenses. **This health insurance scheme covers only a part of the population** (ten crore households i.e. about 40% of population) for in-patient care alone.
- It would take six more months to finalise the scheme and then perhaps a few more months to contract insurance agencies and providers. **So it is uncertain if the scheme will be fully implemented this year**
- **Catastrophic health expenditures remain at more or less the same levels**, with and without government-funded insurance coverage in India at present.
- The private hospitals that get empanelled would no doubt have a market advantage over the others. The increase in insurance cover to Rs 5 lakhs has addressed the corporate sector's complaint of low reimbursement rates. This will **help corporate consolidation of the market.**

Way forward:-

- Universal health coverage is widely practised in the world. So India needs to accept it too.
- Also the public healthcare needs to be strengthened especially in rural areas.
- The government needs to provide adequate funding to improve the quality of services as well.

Q2) Despite improvements in awareness, services and treatments, cancer still kills more than 100,000 children every year worldwide. Examine the reasons. Also discuss why deaths due to cancer remain very high in India. (250 Words)

[Livemint](#)

Indian case:-

- As per 2016 ICMR reports, India is likely to have over 17.3 lakh new cases of cancer and over 8.8 lakh deaths due to the disease by 2020 with cancers of breast, lung and cervix topping the list.
- **Cancer cases as well as mortality are increasing rapidly among Indian women, primarily because of low awareness and late detection.**
 - India accounts for the third highest number of cancer cases among women after China and the US, growing annually at 4.5-5%, new data shows.
- India topped the list for mortality for breast and cervical cancers and reported the second highest incidence for ovarian cancer globally.
- Despite the established benefits of screening, **coverage in India is low for women.**
- **High out of pocket expenditure** as the treatment is costly.
- **Public healthcare is inadequate** so people go to private hospitals for treatment .
- **Lifestyle changes** leading to obesity and overweight people who are more vulnerable to cancer.

- **Government support to healthcare is very less**
- The country's food bowl Punjab is **paying the price for its productivity and a large number of cancer cases are due to excessive use of pesticides in the fields**
- **Ageing is another fundamental factor for the development of cancer.** The incidence of cancer rises dramatically with age, most likely due to buildup of risks for specific cancers that increase with age. The overall risk accumulation is combined with the tendency for cellular repair mechanism to be less effective as a person grows older.
- Use of tobacco in the form of smoking is quite prevalent in the Indian society

World scenario:-

- **Adults:-**
 - Around 30% of cancer deaths are due to the few leading behavioral and dietary risks:
 - High body mass index
 - low fruit and vegetable intake
 - lack of physical activity
 - Tobacco use, alcohol use.
 - Tobacco use is the most important risk factor for cancer causing 22% of Global Lung Cancer Death. Cancer causing Viral Infections such as HBV/HCV and HPV are responsible for upto 20% of cancer Deaths in low and middle-income countries
- **General:-**
 - Due to variation in the availability and quality of cancer diagnosis and treatment services among developed and developing countries.
 - Estimation of survival is **limited by incomplete data and by legal or administrative obstacles to updating the cancer records with a patient's date of death.**
- **Children:-**
 - Overall, in children less than 15 years of age, in the industrialized world, childhood cancer is listed as the 4th most common cause of death.
 - Leukaemia, brain cancers are predominant in children.
 - Different risk factors e.g., paediatric Burkitt lymphoma in sub-Saharan Africa is associated with Epstein-Barr virus infection in conjunction with malaria, whereas Burkitt lymphoma in industrialized countries is not associated with these infectious conditions or differences in risk among different ethnic or racial population subgroups.
 - Familial or genetic factors are thought to predispose the child to cancer.
 - An even smaller percentage of childhood cancer has an identified environmental link.
 - The majority of childhood cancers, however, remain poorly understood and causes are unknown.

Situation is improving:-

- Malignancies in childhood are relative rare and prognosis has been improving in the last three decades as a result of more accurate diagnoses and improved treatment strategies. Adult malignancies occurring after 20 years of age are 20-30 times more common in general.
- With awareness increasing worldwide there has been reduction of deaths in children due to cancer .also Indian initiatives like national health protection programme launched recently is a right step
- Pollution control mechanisms need to be strengthened to avoid Lung cancer deaths etc.
- Early detection, accurate diagnosis and effective treatment, including Pain relief and Palliative Care, help increase cancer survival rates and reduce sufferings.
- World Health Organization (WHO) has launched the global action plan for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases 2013-2020 that aims to reduce premature mortality from cancers by 25%.
- Nevertheless, Healthy lifestyle, balanced diet, weight management along with avoidance from smoking and alcohol can definitely reduce the risk of the occurrence of the cancer globally.

Q3) Access issues are the cornerstone for equitable health systems worldwide. Analyse.
(250 Words)

The Wire

Background:-

- In the world there are lot of people who are dying of diseases, no proper quality health care .So for effectively tackle it access to healthcare is necessary.
- From prohibitive cancer drugs that make it harder to fight the rising burden of non-communicable diseases, making resources available to fight microbial drug resistance, investments for neglected tropical diseases , or getting

access to timely diagnostics access issues are a cornerstone for equitable health systems worldwide even as overall health systems strengthening driven by countries is important.

Reasons why access to healthcare is needed and why countries were unable to provide access so far:-

- Equitable access to medicines is denied due to **market distortions and price barriers** to procurement which may include IP provisions, extremely tight regulatory standards and monopolies.
- **Lack of transparency in research and development**
- **Issues with transfer of technology.**
- **High cost of drugs** affect rich countries as well, eating into their health budgets and denying medicines to those in need.
 - In addition, the benefits accruing to generic producers of cheap drugs in alliance with pharmaceutical giants have also changed the dynamics.
- Health care to the well-being of citizens enhances the productive capacity of its population thereby **enhancing economic growth of the country.**
- In India, **Part IV of the Constitution** of India talks about the Directive Principles of State Policy. Article 47 under part IV lists the “Duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health”
- **India’s health-care infrastructure is largely inadequate to serve its vast population.** So access of healthcare does not ensure quality.
 - The total number of hospitals and health-care professionals, public and private included, fall short of addressing the total demand for health-care services, despite being large in numbers.
 - According to KPMG report, around 80 per cent of all doctors and 75 per cent of dispensaries serve 28 per cent of the country’s population.
 - The focus of policymakers has been to address the demand-side issues rather than the supply-side inefficiencies.
- **Dismal health-care expenditure has aggravated the inadequacy of health-care infrastructure.**
 - India accounts for over 17 per cent of the world’s population while spending very less of the world’s total health expenditure.
 - There is usually a considerable delay of funds disbursed for utilisation in critical government schemes rendering them ineffective.
 - Funds allocated for skill building of health-care professionals are usually not utilised owing to lack of such human resources.
- **Problems of governance deficit and regulatory capture arise due to myriad laws and regulations which impede the normal development of this sector.**
 - **A large number of institutions and health-care providers like doctors, equipment manufacturers, drug companies, and hospitals are not formally recognised by the state** due to a host of laws and regulations. This has inhibited access to health care.
- Finally, **the lack of awareness and monitoring of diseases as well as the steps needed to eradicate them pose a serious challenge to the access of health-care.**

Way forward:-

- **UN panel recommendation** is that governments and the private sector must refrain from explicit or implicit threats, tactics or strategies that undermine the right of the WTO Members to use TRIPS [the agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights] flexibilities
 - The panel said that undue political or commercial pressure, including punitive measures against offending members, should be reported to the WTO secretariat and its members.
- Experts recommended pushing for national laws to reflect TRIPS flexibilities and improve transparency in R&D costs in addition to asking countries to commit spending at least 0.01% of their gross domestic product to basic and applied research relevant to the health needs of developing countries.
- **India requires an urgently integrated action on health care to make it universally accessible and affordable at the same time.** This will not just address the country’s health needs but also have a positive impact on its poverty and growth levels.
- Similarly, **Japan’s rapid growth since the second decade of the 20th century can be understood in light of the higher investment in health and education after the Meiji restoration.** India needs to follow a similar strategy to make its citizens more competitive and act as an asset to the country’s growth.

Q4) In the light of recent HPV vaccine issue, critically examine the causes and consequences – especially for India – of clinical trials crisis around the globe. (250 Words)

Background :-

- India has the largest burden of cervical cancer in the world. Around 70,000 women die of it each year, and around 70% of these cases are caused by infections from HPV strains. However safety of clinical trials linked with the vaccine has come to light recently raising the issue further.

Causes of clinical trial crisis :-

- Clinical trials face a transparency crisis.** As drug makers often don't share all trial data, their claims cannot be re-examined by neutral outsiders.
- Drug makers have a **history of misrepresenting data** to make their medicines look safe.
- Limits their ability to detect many adverse effects. **Most clinical trials do not last long enough to provide accurate data on the adverse effects of a drug.**
 - Consider Ritalin, a prescription stimulant used to treat attention disorders in children
- There is no international institution responsible for clinical trials
- Misrepresentation of facts about their personal information by the trial volunteers** . There is a troubling trend of financially needy people serially volunteering for trials to supplement their income.
- Instances of volunteers not adhering to the required precautions.** For instance drinking alcohol, and hiding one's health history. Such behaviour can distort trial data
- There is a lot of scope for ethics committees even in India to directly supervise trials** which is not taken very seriously.
- Most of the countries do not have a national registry of volunteers. Even India does not have one.
- Various clinical trials across different geographical conditions might not be perfectly suitable for Indians.
- Lack of capacity of professionals and infrastructure** to carry out elaborated high tech trial

Consequences:-

- Trial data does not tell us if patients can safely stop a medication. **Most trials collect all of their data while patients are still taking the drug. Many psychiatric medications have common and severe adverse effects that only become evident upon discontinuation.**
- Can lead to death of people
- Their participants seldom resemble the patients most likely to take the medication.
- When post-marketing surveillance does succeed in identifying a major adverse effect, it does so after a large number of people have already been exposed to a drug.**
- This is an especially critical issue for India, given that it is introducing HPV vaccines in its Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP). **This means millions of girls in India aged between 9 and 14 years will get the vaccines for free.**
- The large demand for volunteers and the supply of willing subjects has spawned a bustling **marketplace for participation in bioequivalence studies**
- Can **cause a trio of rare illnesses** called Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS), Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS).
- Clinical trials may not be able to accurately determine the safety of prescription medications.** Prescribing doctors and the FDA rely primarily on clinical trials to determine the safety and efficacy of medications.
- The flu drug Tamiflu, manufactured by Roche, is the most famous example of this crisis. The World Health Organisation (WHO) added Tamiflu to its core list of essential medicines. **Following this, several countries spent billions of dollars on stockpiling the drug.** Later data suggested that the drug was not that effective and WHO dropped Tamiflu from its core drugs list in 2017. This ill hurt the legitimacy of the trials itself .

Conclusion:-

- Studies of new drugs be designed to collect data on adverse events even after their efficacy has been proven would be an important step.
- Collecting data during a period of drug withdrawal would also be welcome, along with pragmatic trials, ones that enroll patients like those who are likely to use the medication.

Q5) It is said that a large-scale vocational education system on the lines of the “dual” German model — classroom instruction plus apprentice training — would help raise the productivity of both individuals and the economy. In the light of recent studies on state of affairs in the Indian education sector, discuss the merits and demerits of adopting the ‘dual’ German model for India’s children. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Recent studies on the state of education sector:-

- According to recent ASER findings, as a group, 14.4% of youth aged 14 to 18 years are not enrolled in school or college.
- The imperative clearly is to look at factors that prevent them from being part of formal higher secondary education, of which availability and affordability of schools would be important.
- ASER's statistics indicate that overall, only 5.3% of the age group is enrolled in a vocational course, while 60.2% of out-of-school youth are engaged in some form of work. **These trends underscore the need to scale up substantive skill-building programmes, making them free or highly subsidised.**

German model of education:-

- Germany has had a highly successful dual vocational training system. **Trainees gain practical skills working in a business while at the same time acquiring theoretical knowledge at a vocational school.** This system of training has proved an effective instrument against not only youth unemployment, but also skills shortages. As a result, it has come to be regarded internationally as a successful model.

Advantages of adopting the German model:-

- **Vocational training can be helpful in achieving objectives in multiple policy areas**, which makes it possible to address a broad range of stakeholders
- Skills enhance workers flexibility and mobility, **reduce the danger of social marginalization and raise educational levels** in a non-academic context
- With the dual approach, **occupational skills are developed that are relevant to the labour market** but not narrowly focused on the requirements of individual businesses
- Dual vocational training would help **foster economic growth** across the country.
- This model will help **in developing proper skill set and successively utilise the demographic advantage India has.**
- India needs a robust, well-respected job-preparation alternative to college that begins in high school and seamlessly continues into advanced education and training. This is provided by the German model.
- An advantage to the individual student is that **he/she will be schooled in a level that matches his ability and not waste his time in studies that are not relevant.**
 - For example, a student who is not strong in academics but who possesses mechanical abilities would have the opportunity to learn a trade.
- Most of the students in rural areas lend a hand in farming to help their parents. Among those who are already working in the 14-18 age group, 79% are engaged in farming, and that too in their family farms. With German's model the ability of farmers to adopt technology, avail benefits offered by the government and demand stronger institutions would be enhanced, if elementary education is improved. **It would also produce the additional benefit of promoting health-seeking behaviour among these youth.**
- The practical nature of the education is an advantage, as is the mutual screening between potential employers and employees during training
- Education path is related to their career
- Lead to less drop outs as children are engaged in the learning of their potential career
- Teaching quality will also increase

Disadvantages:-

- For society in general, **the system might not produce a nimble enough workforce if the training can't keep up with technological advances and there might be a glut of workers who don't have marketable skills and need retraining.** The German educational system can be slow to react to these changes and might not stay relevant.
- For the individual, these effects can be especially devastating. **If his/her job becomes obsolete, a craftsman, for example, may have few other options, especially if he hasn't had education in other areas.** It is **decided very early in a person's education which direction the education will take.**
- **Teaching quality right now is not adequate to adhere to the needs to specialist approach of German education.**
- **If a student wants to change tracks, it can be difficult.** There is not much flexibility for the undecided.
- Training requires increase in expenditure of companies.
- .Parents might not be ready to send their daughters for training outside the school premises.

Conclusion:-

- There is need for increase in coherence between government and private sector so that the right training is given to the children to face the challenges in future.

Q6) The focus on universal health coverage should be through strengthening public health, not through targeted public insurance schemes. Comment. (250 Words)

[The Wire](#)

Background:-

- In the recent budget the government came up with the announcement of a National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS) which is a clear signal that the focus is on universal health coverage through targeted public insurance schemes.

Why targeting through public insurance schemes will not work?

- In effect, **these schemes will support the expansion of private insurance and hospital industries.**
- Important lesson from the American model of healthcare is that **spending on medical care alone does not improve health outcomes.** The US has the highest expenditure on medical care, but **does not compare well in terms of health outcomes and equity in access when compared with other developed countries.**
- Over the last three decades the growth, **consolidation of markets in medical care has played an important role in pushing for a variety of public subsidies.**
- In a context where the insurance coverage is small, the clientele for private hospitals is inadequate to earn profits. **In order to increase patient volume, expanding demand through insurance is a sure way. Public insurance schemes assure private hospitals a steady supply of patients to ensure their viability and survival.**
- There were serious loopholes in the implementation of Rashtriya Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (RSSY) especially in the empanelment of private hospitals. There is no clarity on how the new scheme addresses this

Why strengthening public healthcare is important?

- **India's health-care infrastructure is largely inadequate to serve its vast population.** So for access of healthcare strengthening healthcare is needed
 - The total number of hospitals and health-care professionals, public and private included, fall short of addressing the total demand for health-care services, despite being large in numbers.
 - According to KPMG report, around 80 per cent of all doctors and 75 per cent of dispensaries serve 28 per cent of the country's population.
 - The focus of policymakers has been to address the demand-side issues rather than the supply-side inefficiencies.
- **Dismal health-care expenditure has aggravated the inadequacy of health-care infrastructure.**
 - India accounts for over 17 per cent of the world's population while spending very less of the world's total health expenditure.
 - There is usually a considerable delay of funds disbursed for utilisation in critical government schemes rendering them ineffective.
 - Funds allocated for skill building of health-care professionals are usually not utilised owing to lack of such human resources.
 - lack of nursing, para-medical personnel and doctors, both at the MBBS and post-graduate level
- **Problems of governance deficit and regulatory capture arise due to myriad laws and regulations which impede the normal development of this sector.**
 - **A large number of institutions and health-care providers like doctors, equipment manufacturers, drug companies, and hospitals are not formally recognised by the state** due to a host of laws and regulations. This has inhibited access to health care.
- Finally, **the lack of awareness and monitoring of diseases as well as the steps needed to eradicate them pose a serious challenge to the access of health-care.**
- To reduce out of pocket expenditure
- At one end of the spectrum India has high-end hospitals delivering healthcare comparable to any developed nation in sharp contrast to this just a few hundred kilometres away in the **villages, one does not even have basic primary care**
- The tragedy of India's healthcare system is that **the gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' is increasing.**
- Access to Healthcare is still an issue in rural and sub-urban areas and insurance schemes do not solve that.

What is needed to be done?

- India needs a major revamp of the healthcare infrastructure, which **includes upgrading primary healthcare systems to provide preventive healthcare.**
- Awareness on preventive healthcare measures, nutrition, prenatal care, vaccinations and counselling on the importance of hygienic practices like sanitation and clean drinking water should be pursued aggressively.
- **Three-tier model**
 - The Government should focus on **promoting primary healthcare at all rural centres, secondary care hospitals at taluk levels and tertiary care establishments at district hospitals.**

- Supporting primary and secondary care could be predominantly the Government's responsibility, while tertiary care could be promoted as a public-private partnership.
- **India** needs to increase the availability of skilled healthcare workers at all levels. This calls for liberalisation of the medical education policy to allow for more doctors especially at the postgraduate level to be trained at corporate/private hospitals.
- Attending to health needs right from primary level care coupled with enhanced investments into better sanitation, water supply and nutrition. **In short, an inter-sectoral approach to improve health outcomes is needed.**

Conclusion:-

- The plans announced in the budget would have limited impact unless measures are first taken to strengthen primary care in a manner that it will act as a gatekeeper that reduces the need for secondary and tertiary healthcare services.

Q7) Swachh Bharat Abhiyan should be modified from a scheme providing free toilets, to one encouraging and enabling local governments to construct sewage systems. Comment. (250 Words)

[Livemint](https://www.livemint.com)

What is the need to modify the present Swachh Bharat Abhiyan:-

- **Unable to reach target:-**
 - **Access to free toilets has not helped resolve open defecation in India.** The programme is unlikely to succeed in its primary task of eliminating open defecation by October 2019.
- **The rate of open defecation is not decreasing much:-**
 - India has far higher levels of open defecation than other countries of the same GDP per capita. For example, India has a higher GDP per capita than Bangladesh, but in Bangladesh only 8.4% households defecate in the open, compared to 55% in India.
- **Purity and pollution:-**
 - **The key reason for this is that basic latrines that need to be emptied out manually or pumped by simple machines are unacceptable to higher caste Hindus.**
 - It is considered polluting to the individual and the home, and historically associated with untouchability. So people rather defecate in open than having a toilet at home.
 - It is not just a matter of access but a problem of perceptions of pollution, ritual purity, and caste.
- Even if the government builds free toilets without any leakage or corruption, India will at best have 80 million new toilets that a large proportion of Indians do not want to use.

Why concentrating on developing sewage system makes Swachh Bharat a success:-

- Deeply entrenched cultural contexts must be taken into account for successful policy outcomes. India needs to change perceptions of ritual purity through education and awareness in rural areas. This can be done by investing in sewage systems.
- **Enabling local governments to construct sewage systems will solve the purity issue :-**
 - A toilet that flushes away human waste into the sewage and waste management system solves the problem. If there is a functional sewage system, it is relatively low cost for households to build a toilet in every home that is connected to the sewage system.
- Developing proper sewage system in village would also have wider impact with water not stagnating any more, lesser vector borne diseases etc so the wider objective of sanitation will be achieved.
- Also it would not put stress on manual scavenging and this occupation can slowly fade away giving sense of dignity and equality to the most vulnerable sections.

However challenges exist are:-

- **Problem of political incentives when it comes to building sewage systems:-**
 - It takes years to build sewage systems, and local politicians face all the costs upfront, and the benefits are far in the future.
 - Disgruntled citizens and voters complain about the digging of neighbourhoods for years, causing much nuisance to their daily lives.
- These problems essentially act as disincentives of the political class to take action to solve the sanitation problem.

Way forward:-

- Pursuit of Swachh Bharat also requires strengthening public health services. Services such as good drainage systems, absence of swamps and ponds that are home to stagnant water, and the supply of safe drinking water

all of which reduce exposure to and spread of diseases are classic examples of public goods and require effective government intervention.

Q8) What are the features of the National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS)? Discuss its feasibility and the role of states in implementing this scheme. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

[The Wire](#)

Background:-

- India is concerned with many health issues be it malnutrition, infant mortality, rising non communicable diseases, growing number of deaths due to cancer etc. The national health protection scheme or the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme is the step in the right direction which can give impetus to healthcare in India.

Features:-

- The scheme seeks to provide health cover to 10 crore economically vulnerable families.
- Every family will be provided Rs. 5 lakhs annually for secondary and tertiary health care.
- 2000 crore are allocated for the scheme in the budget 2018.
- The overall investment required for the scheme is estimated to be around Rs. 10,000 crores to Rs. 12,000 crores.
- The Premium for every household is expected to be Rs.1000 to Rs. 1200 annually.
- The scheme is acentrally sponsored scheme. The centre intends to bear 60 percent of the cost. Remaining 40 percent will be borne by the states.
- The scheme will replace Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana under which, the government provided Rs.30,000 annually for healthcare. Under NHPS, Rs.30,000 is increased to Rs. 5 lakhs.
- The centre will face an annual burden of around Rs. 5000- 6000 crores towards premium. The rest will be come from state governments.
- NITI Aayog expects that at least 50% of the beneficiaries will use the scheme in the first year.

It is not feasible:-

- The amount of Rs 5 lakh per family is a massive and unexpected hike from the existing fund of Rs 1 lakh per family. This amount is 17 times bigger than the RSBY scheme and will cover 40% of India's population.
- Though it improved access to health care, **it did not reduce out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE), catastrophic health expenditure or health payment-induced poverty.**
- The NHPS addresses those concerns by sharply raising the coverage cap, but shares with the RSBY the weakness of **not covering outpatient care which accounts for the largest fraction of OOPE.**
- The NHPS too remains disconnected from primary care.**
- Universal health insurance through private hospitals has not worked for the poor anywhere.**Biggest beneficiaries are the private hospitals and insurance companies. **There is no substitute for public health care.**
- The government's proposals do little to prevent poor health in the first place. India is plagued by increasing levels of water and air pollution, some of it worsened by pro-business policies. Malnutrition, poor sanitation and lack of proper housing also remain major problems.
- Earlier programme failures cast new doubts:-**
 - In its final iteration in 2016-2017, the RSBY also targeted 5.9 crore families, and managed to enroll 3.6 crore families. **Thus the government's announcement today of reaching ten crore families is also vastly ambitious**
 - There is evidence to show that despite efforts towards pushing for increased insurance coverage, neither have the poorest been reached out to nor has there been efficient financial protection.
- In real terms and as a percentage of GDP, **there is a decline in the health budget this year.**
- It would take six more months to finalise the scheme and then perhaps a few more months to contract insurance agencies and providers. **So it is uncertain if the scheme will be fully implemented this year**

It is feasible because:-

- The NHPS will be financially viable, despite a high coverage offered to the few who fall sick in any year, because the rest in the large pool do not need it that year.
- Will bring healthcare system closer to the homes of people.
- It can achieve its goal as only 40 per cent of India's population will be covered under this insurance scheme. If the National Health Protection Scheme is properly implemented and monitored we would have taken an important step in creating a Swasth Bharat.

Role of states:-

- State governments have the main responsibility of health service delivery and also need to bear the major share of the public expenditure on health. **The National Health Policy (NHP) asks the States to raise their allocation for health to over 8% of the total State budget by 2020, requiring many States to double their health spending.**
- Both Central and State health agencies or their intermediaries will have to develop the capacity for competent purchasing of services from a diverse group of providers. **Otherwise, hospitals may undertake unnecessary tests and treatments to tap the generous coverage.** The choice of whether to administer NHPS through a trust or an insurance company will be left to individual States.
- Financially, the scheme will cost ₹10,000-12,000 crore annually over 5 years, with premium costing 1200 per annum. **Despite drawing resources from cess, it will need state funding support of 40% to boost central allocation.**
- Public health falls in state list. **Hence, state government has to share responsibility of effective delivery of healthcare services on the ground.** They have to double their GDP spending in healthcare to provide for the infrastructure needed for this scheme.
- The shortage of doctors and other personnel and the non-availability of public or private hospitals need to be looked upon by respective state governments.

Challenges with states:-

- Questions arise when centre has not raised its public expenditure on health will the states be inspired to raise their allocation for health to over 8%
- The NHPS needs a buy-in from the States, which have to contribute 40% of the funding. Even with the low cost coverage of the RSBY, several States opted out. Some decided to fund their own State-specific health insurance programmes.
- The southern states have vibrant and mature insurance schemes with Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka virtually racing towards universal health coverage. **The scheme may enable them to avail of financial assistance from the central government and use the resultant savings for other health needs in the primary healthcare segment to avert disease and keep costs low.**

Way forward:-

- Universal health coverage is widely practised in the world. So India needs to accept it too.
- Also the public healthcare needs to be strengthened especially in rural areas.
- The government needs to provide adequate funding to improve the quality of services as well.
- In a federal polity with multiple political parties sharing governance, an all-India alignment around the NHPS requires a high level of cooperative federalism, both to make the scheme viable and to ensure portability of coverage as people cross State borders.

Q9) According to one authoritative study, there are a million unregistered and unqualified medical practitioners in India. Critically examine why quacks function freely in India. (250 Words)

[Livemint](https://www.livemint.com)

Background:-

- The recent arrest of a man in Uttar Pradesh for allegedly injecting 41 people with the HIV virus from a single infected needle highlights how so-called 'quacks' are able to ply their trade freely in India.

Reasons why quacks function freely in India are:-

- **India is beset by a wide range of problems in healthcare delivery:-**
 - Overcrowded and under resourced public hospitals and expensive private hospitals often lead poverty-stricken families to turn to quacks.
 - Thus, patient safety is largely compromised in India.
- **Needle safety:-**
 - The World Health Organisation (WHO) has urged all countries including India to switch to the exclusive use of the auto-disable (AD) "smart" syringes that can only be used once. India is yet to adopt this on a national scale.
- Almost 15% of the ailing sample **opted for treatment from an unregistered private practitioner. They attract a lot of patients owing to their location utility and low charges**
- While there is a **huge shortage of doctors**, there are over one million quacks practising in India, according to the Indian Medical Association (IMA).
- **India currently has no tracking of infections or registry via public healthcare from reuse of syringes or needles or needle stick injuries.** According to WHO, every \$1 spent on injection safety saves \$14 in public healthcare.

- **Qualified doctors have some assistants who later start their own clinics without license.**

Way forward:-

- It is urgently needed to introduce **Universal Infection Prevention (UIP) guidelines** including urgent deployment of auto-disable syringes to limit infections from spreading. WHO says that the move can eliminate avoidable deaths and infections from reusable syringes and unsafe injection.
- According to the National Health Profile 2017, in India there is one government allopathic doctor for every 10,189 people, one government hospital bed for every 2,046 people and one state-run hospital for every 90,343 people. **The manpower and infrastructure needs to increase.**
- **Public need to be made aware about the health issues that might pop up by the treatment of quacks.**
 - **There is a database of doctors who have license and people can look into it whether any doctor is certified or not.**
- **Strict action needs to be taken by the government against these doctors.**

Q10) Examine the role and potential of community level interventions and emerging technologies in improving quality of care for women and newborns. (250 Words)

Down to Earth

Background:-

- Health care of women around the world needs a lot of improvement with maternal mortality rate still high in many countries and institution of deliveries is still minimal especially in third world countries.
- It is the lack of care providers and functional health facilities that have made countries rely on community health programmes.

Potential of community level interactions:-

- **Practices like home visitation and people mobilisation** prove effective at community level, for which women support groups play a pivotal role.
- These support groups, which comprise women of varying levels of experience, provide **ante-natal care and disseminate health-related messages within a community.**
- Health facilities are the second-level intervention, wherein emergency obstetric and newborn care facilities are provided. **This is followed by district-level intervention wherein health care workers are trained. District-level interventions also provide necessary data to guide national health policy.**
- **Community interventions can make girls aware about reproductive health in a better way educating them about the nutrition needed for them and child. This can lead to less child marriages in a country like India.**

Technology:-

- ICT does not only benefit medical practitioners in remote areas through the exchange of information between primary and specialty care health professionals, but also enables them to obtain a second opinion to help with diagnosis. **This helps in strengthening cooperation between health professionals and improves coordination.**
- Mother tracking system in India is a very innovative way to keep check on mother and the newborn child.
- Blood samples, medicines etc can be delivered on time in rural areas when technological interventions happen.
- Mass awareness can take place due to technology via mobile messages.

Conclusion:-

- Despite the advantages for a country to have effective healthcare the public health care system needs to be strengthened.
- India needs to focus on preventive healthcare with enhancing nutrition for newborn and mother to deal with the issue of malnutrition.

Q11) Examine the role and potential of community level interventions and emerging technologies in improving quality of care for women and newborns. (250 Words)

Down to Earth

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Conclusion:-

- Despite the advantages for a country to have effective healthcare the public health care system needs to be strengthened.
- India needs to focus on preventive healthcare with enhancing nutrition for new born and mother to deal with the issue of malnutrition.

Q12) Analyse the findings of the NITI Aayog's Health Index report that was released recently. (250 Words)

Down to Earth

Health index report :-

- In its first attempt at establishing an annual systematic tool to measure and understand the heterogeneity and complexity of the nation's performance in Health the NITI Aayog released a **Health Index report**
- The report ranks states and union territories (UTs) on their year-on-year incremental change in health outcomes and their overall performance with respect to each other.
- The report has ranked all states and UTs in three different categories: big states, small states and UT.

Key findings from the report:-

- Kerala has topped the list of larger states on overall health performance while Uttar Pradesh appeared at the bottom among larger states in terms of overall performance.
- As per the index report for large states, Kerala was followed by Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat.
- Besides Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Odisha are among the states that performed poorly in the health index.
- Among small states, Mizoram ranked first, followed by Manipur and Goa in terms of annual incremental performance.

Positives :

- **States with a record of investment in literacy, nutrition and primary health care have achieved high scores** in NITI Aayog's first Health Index. Kerala, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu are the best-performing large States.
- The better-performing States such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu is that their continuous improvements have overall left little room to notch up high incremental scores, **but intra-State inequalities need to be addressed.**
- The Health Index will act as a tool to leverage cooperative and competitive federalism, accelerating the pace of achieving health outcomes.
- **Kerala has emerged the top state in overall performance.**
 - It was a leader with respect to proportion of low birth weight among newborns, total fertility rate, NMR, sex ratio at birth and institutional deliveries.
 - With respect to the public health institutions also, the state came on top.
 - The vacancy of medical officers at PHCs was lowest in Kerala (six per cent) followed by Tamil Nadu (8) and Punjab (8).
 - Kerala also had the highest rates of e-payments.
 - It also has the notable distinction of surpassing the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 target.
 - The state is also credited with having cardiac care units in 50 per cent or more districts

Concerns:-

- The report said even Kerala lagged behind in having 24x7 Public health care. It also pointed to the delay of fund transfer from state treasury to implementation agencies. There was a decline in immunisation coverage.
- One-third of the states have registered a decline in performance

Way forward :-

- Both the Centre and the States have the responsibility to scale up their investment on health as a percentage of their budgets, to be more ambitious in interventions.
- While the NHPS may be able to address some of the financial risk associated with ill-health, it will take systematic improvements to preventive and primary care to achieve higher scores in the Index.
- As the experience from countries in the West shows, socialisation of medicine with a reliance on taxation to fund basic programmes is the bedrock of a good health system. **If the NITI Aayog Health Index leads to a mainstreaming of health on these lines, that would be a positive outcome.**

Q13) Socialisation of medicine with a reliance on taxation to fund basic programmes is the bedrock of a good health system. In the light of the statement, discuss the significance of NITI Aayog's first Health Index, its shortcomings and its implications for competitive federalism. (250 Words)

The Hindu

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- In its first attempt at establishing an annual systematic tool to measure and understand the heterogeneity and complexity of the nation's performance in Health the NITI Aayog released a **Health Index report**
- The report ranks states and union territories (UTs) on their year-on-year incremental change in health outcomes and their overall performance with respect to each other.
- The report has ranked all states and UTs in three different categories: big states, small states and UT.

Significance and implications for competitive federalism:-

- It lays out the **general map and helps in prioritising sectoral fund allocations and implementation of schemes to bring everybody at par with the desired quality of life.**
- The toppers are not entirely unexpected with Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat having consistently maintained their robustness. The laggard states Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh seem to continue in the historical classification of BIMARU and despite changed dispensations and nomenclature have not been able to quite break through.
- **It shows the incremental improvements or the quantum of jump that each state has made from the baseline year of 2014-2015.**
- By this measure, **the tribal-dominated states of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have done very well**, having been successful in bringing the marginalised into the fold of medical insurance and basic health entitlements.
- This was not a race for numbers but **for promoting cross-learning and cooperation to pull everybody out of the morass.**
- The whole point of the ranking is to **ensure that State health departments strengthen their primary healthcare systems.**
- The Health Index will act as a tool to leverage cooperative and competitive federalism, accelerating the pace of achieving health outcomes.
- This index can make states focus more on health care and help India achieve sustainable development goals .
- States can help each other and replicate successful programmes of one state in another.
 - Delhi government's flagship project Mohalla clinics was replicated in the Greater Hyderabad region. These local health centres, to be called 'Basthi Devakhana's'.

Shortcomings:-

- Many may argue that such comparisons label certain states as inferior that act as a deterrent for proactive approaches in them.
- The states with already good performance are not improving further.
- The states with bad performance may need help from the centre in terms of funds which might lead to conflict with developed states.
- It is not a very comprehensive index as it entails only a few parameters into consideration
- Private health care is not considered.

Way forward :-

- Both the Centre and the States have the responsibility to scale up their investment on health as a percentage of their budgets, to be more ambitious in interventions.
- While the NHPS may be able to address some of the financial risk associated with ill-health, it will take systematic improvements to preventive and primary care to achieve higher scores in the Index.
- As the experience from countries in the West shows, socialisation of medicine with a reliance on taxation to fund basic programmes is the bedrock of a good health system. **If the NITI Aayog Health Index leads to a mainstreaming of health on these lines, that would be a positive outcome.**

Q14) Strengthening the health infrastructure at all levels which includes a strong regulatory mechanism is the need of the hour. In the light of new health schemes announced, discuss the statement. (250 Words)

The Hindu

Background:-

- Recently in the union budget ,the National Health Protection Scheme was announced. The government has committed itself to providing coverage up to Rs. 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation for 10 crore poor families, with approximately 50 crore people as beneficiaries. However many questions were raised whether this would be enough for strengthening the public health care system in India.

Concerns with NHPS and other schemes which show it does not focus on public health care system adequately are:-

- In effect, **these schemes will support the expansion of private insurance and hospital industries.**
- Important lesson from the American model of healthcare is that **spending on medical care alone does not improve health outcomes.** The US has the highest expenditure on medical care, but **does not compare well in terms of health outcomes and equity in access when compared with other developed countries.**
- In a context where the insurance coverage is small, the clientele for private hospitals is inadequate to earn profits. **In order to increase patient volume, expanding demand through insurance is a sure way. Public insurance schemes assure private hospitals a steady supply of patients to ensure their viability and survival.**
- There were **serious loopholes in the implementation of Rashtriya Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (RSSY)** especially in the empanelment of private hospitals. There is no clarity on how the new scheme addresses this.
- **Reimbursement as a percentage of medical cost of hospitalisation in government schemes is abysmally low, especially for the bottom 40% of the population.**
 - Only 4.5% of total hospitalisation expenses are reimbursed to the bottom 40% and 11.9% for the entire population. There is no guarantee that increasing coverage will improve this.
- **The proportion of hospitalisation cost reimbursed is much higher for insurance schemes directly bought by households than government ones.** In the case of insurance being paid by the government, insurance companies are most often unwilling to pay the reimbursement as compared to when a household pays.
-
- Though NHPS improved access to health care, **it did not reduce out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE), catastrophic health expenditure or health payment-induced poverty.**
- The NHPS addresses those concerns by sharply raising the coverage cap, but shares with the RSBY the weakness of **not covering outpatient care which accounts for the largest fraction of OOPE.**
- **The NHPS too remains disconnected from primary care.**
- A majority of health insurance schemes **do not cover the cost of a non-hospitalised outpatient visit.**
- **Universal health insurance through private hospitals has not worked for the poor anywhere.**Biggest beneficiaries are the private hospitals and insurance companies. **There is no substitute for public health care.**
- The government's proposals **do little to prevent poor health in the first place.** India is plagued by increasing levels of water and air pollution, some of it worsened by pro-business policies. Malnutrition, poor sanitation and lack of proper housing also remain major problems.

Why strengthening public healthcare is important?

- **India's health-care infrastructure is largely inadequate to serve its vast population.** So for access of healthcare strengthening healthcare is needed
 - The total number of hospitals and health-care professionals, public and private included, fall short of addressing the total demand for health-care services, despite being large in numbers.
 - According to KPMG report, around 80 per cent of all doctors and 75 per cent of dispensaries serve 28 per cent of the country's population.
 - The focus of policymakers has been to address the demand-side issues rather than the supply-side inefficiencies.

- **Dismal health-care expenditure has aggravated the inadequacy of health-care infrastructure.**
 - India accounts for over 17 per cent of the world's population while spending very less of the world's total health expenditure.
 - There is usually a considerable delay of funds disbursed for utilisation in critical government schemes rendering them ineffective.
 - Funds allocated for skill building of health-care professionals are usually not utilised owing to lack of such human resources.
 - lack of nursing, Para-medical personnel and doctors, both at the MBBS and post-graduate level
- **Problems of governance deficit and regulatory capture arise due to myriad laws and regulations which impede the normal development of this sector.**
 - **A large number of institutions and health-care providers like doctors, equipment manufacturers, drug companies, and hospitals are not formally recognised by the state** due to a host of laws and regulations. This has inhibited access to health care.
- Finally, **the lack of awareness and monitoring of diseases as well as the steps needed to eradicate them pose a serious challenge to the access of health-care.**
- **To reduce out of pocket expenditure**
- At one end of the spectrum India has high-end hospitals delivering healthcare comparable to any developed nation in sharp contrast to this just a few hundred kilometres away in the **villages, one does not even have basic primary care**
- The tragedy of India's healthcare system is that **the gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' is increasing.**

What is needed to be done?

- **India needs to set appropriate goals and reform the public health care sector's governance and management systems**
 - Without good governance, additional spending would be worth little.
 - One potential model to adopt is to **set up publicly owned corporations at the state level that can take over the existing state health infrastructure and health delivery operations, thus permitting greater flexibility in management**
 - For secondary and tertiary care are concerned, the government's role should be to provide sensible and responsive regulation that allows a health care market to develop.
 - The government's regulatory mechanism will need to **address issues of information asymmetry between doctors and patients, Hospital accreditation, increased importance for patient safety standards and guidelines, Electronic Medical Records**
- **Three-tier model**
 - The Government should focus on **promoting primary healthcare at all rural centres, secondary care hospitals at taluk levels and tertiary care establishments at district hospitals.**
 - Supporting primary and secondary care could be predominantly the Government's responsibility, while tertiary care could be promoted as a public-private partnership.
- India needs a major revamp of the healthcare infrastructure, which **includes upgrading primary healthcare systems to provide preventive healthcare.**
- **Awareness on preventive healthcare measures**, nutrition, prenatal care, vaccinations and counselling on the importance of hygienic practices like sanitation and clean drinking water should be pursued aggressively.
- **India needs to increase the availability of skilled healthcare workers at all levels.** This calls for liberalisation of the medical education policy to allow for more doctors especially at the postgraduate level to be trained at corporate/private hospitals.
- Attending to health needs right from primary level care coupled with enhanced investments into better sanitation, water supply and nutrition. **In short, an inter-sectoral approach to improve health outcomes is needed.**

Conclusion:-

- The plans announced in the budget would have limited impact unless measures are first taken to strengthen primary care in a manner that it will act as a gatekeeper that reduces the need for secondary and tertiary healthcare services.

Q15) Discuss critically implications of the WASH interventions for the health of children and women, especially stunting in children. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- Cases related to water and sanitation are one of the major causes of death in children under five. **Without access to clean water and basic toilets, and without good hygiene practices, a child's survival, growth and development are at risk.**
- As India is undergoing transition from Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) are taking policy centre stage in most emerging and developing countries.
- In India, 128 million lack safe water services and about 840 million people don't have sanitation services

How WASH scheme impacts health of children?

- Studies in Gambian children in the 1990s showed that intestinal inflammation, possibly caused by exposure to faecal germs, is correlated with stunting. So WASH scheme can benefit the health of the children.
- **Hygiene and sanitation interventions have had considerable impact on reducing diarrhea** and absenteeism rates in school-age children.
- Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions, such as provision of clean piped drinking water, enhanced facilities for excreta disposal and the promotion of hand-washing with soap, are **frequently implemented to improve health and reduce infectious diseases and may be linked to child development outcomes.**
- WASH affects more than just the ability of children to attend school. Many children suffer physical and cognitive damage from water- and sanitation-related diseases that impact their performance at school and their overall educational attainment.
- **WASH and economics**
 - **The impact of poor WASH conditions extends beyond health and education**, and impacts on the economy through health spending and labour division.
- The world would save around US\$263 billion a year if it was able to provide basic, low cost water and sanitation facilities to countries in need.
- **WASH will tackle the following issues:-**
 - Empowering women helps communities reach their full health, economic and educational benefits. Therefore, **WASH projects with positive financial benefits for women will contribute to overall community development.**
 - Women's full participation in water and sanitation projects is strongly correlated with increased effectiveness and sustainability of these projects.
 - Additionally, WASH facilities in schools **can improve the lives of schoolchildren by significantly reducing disease**, increasing school attendance and contributing to dignity and gender equality.
 - When latrines are not available in households, women and girls will seek privacy after dark to defecate outside of their homes, **exposing them to a greater risk of harassment and sexual assault.**
 - Out of fear, women and girls may choose to ignore their needs which may increase the likelihood of urinary tract infections, chronic constipation or mental stress.
 - In addition, a lack of single-gender sanitation facilities in schools results in low levels of attendance among girls, perpetuating cycles of gender inequality and poverty.
 - Drop outs of girls can be prevented as well.
 - Also healthy woman would give birth to healthy child.

Concerns:-

- In the Bangladesh study the villages saw high rates of both contamination and stunting. Yet the WASH improvements made no difference, **which means that other factors could be driving stunting.** This heightens concerns that similar mechanisms underlie the association between open defecation and stunting in India.
- **Stunting is a complex problem. Children in richer South Asian countries are shorter on average than those in poorer Sub-Saharan African countries**, and no intervention so far has closed this gap.
- The problem is that **most of the data which show that children in households with poor toilets are more likely to be stunted comes from descriptive studies.**
- Another predicament is that for WASH interventions to be truly effective, more than one generation of families may need to adopt them. **Most trials do not last longer than two years, given how expensive and logistically challenging they are.**

Way forward:-

- The capacity for policymaking of State governments thus needs to be further strengthened to cater to the local needs.
- Focus on sanitation needs to increase from school level and within families itself.

Q16) Discuss the recommendations and relevance of the Justice Verma Commission on teacher education. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- In the light of recent ASER report, the quality of education has come largely under question. One of the reasons have been the teacher absenteeism and lack of teacher quality as well. So analysis on teacher education becomes important.

Why is Justice Verma committee relevant even today?

- **Teacher education constraints:-**
 - Current teacher education institutes are isolated from universities and the system of higher education. Teacher education institutes function as closed spaces with the sole mandate of training teachers missing the holistic aspect education needs.
 - Most teacher education programmes (B. Ed. and D. Ed.) do not adequately engage with subject knowledge.
 - Teaching is practiced as a mechanical delivery of a given a number of lessons, rather than reflective practice.
 - There is poor quality of training through distance mode
- Today, **students are quite advanced in their mental age in their intellect ideas and outlook. They are curious to know and have many doubts.** Teachers have to meet the queries with confidence. So there must be adequate freedom, flexibility and teaching instruction needs to be problem oriented and not discipline or theory oriented which is largely visible at present.
- **Approaches such as case studies, simulations, role play and action research would be more appropriate** for the professional development of teacher. **Open ended activities and questions could help bring out the vast experiences of the prospective teachers.**
- **The professional development of teachers need to be located in the larger sociocultural, economic and political context of contemporary Indian society** which is largely inadequate at present.
 - A teacher's task is to facilitate learning by enabling the child to construct or generate knowledge on the basis of his/her own observations, experiences, experimentation, analysis and reflections.
- **Teacher Education has to be made an integral part of social as well as educational system.** Teacher Education has to assume responsibility to prepare teachers with proper attitude and ability to translate the philosophy of education into practical learning experience.

Recommendations of this committee:-

- The Commission recommends the Government should **increases its investment for establishing teacher education institutions** and increase the **institutional capacity of teacher preparation, especially in deficit states.**
- Government may **explore the possibility of instituting a transparent procedure of pre- entry testing of candidates** to the pre-service teacher education programmes, keeping in view the variation in local conditions.
- **Teacher education should be a part of the higher education system.** The duration of programme of teacher education needs to be enhanced, in keeping with the recommendations of the Education Commission (1966), the implementation of which is long overdue.
- It is desirable that **new teacher education institutions are located in multi- and inter- disciplinary academic environment.** This will have significant implications for the redesigning of norms and standards of various teacher education courses specified by the NCTE. This will have also implications for employment and career progression of prospective teachers.
- In keeping with the recommendations of the Education Commission (1966), **every pre-service teacher education institution may have dedicated school attached to it as a laboratory** where student teachers get opportunities to experiment with new ideas and hone their capacities and skills to become reflective practitioners.
- There is a need to establish a **national level academic body for continual reflections and analysis of teacher education programmes,** their norms and standards, development of reading material and faculty development of teacher educators.
- The institutional capacity should be increased for preparation of teacher educators. There is need to make Masters in Education programme of two years duration

Conclusion:-

- Unless and until the present system of Teacher Education is revamped and re-organized, it would be difficult to provide suitable pre-service education and upgrade the quality of education in the country. The recent bill to recognise teacher training institutes is the step in the right direction.

Q17) In India, the social and economic costs of losing women to cervical cancer are devastating. Examine how India can prevent cervical cancers? Also write a note on the objectives of the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS). Also comment if cancer be declared as a notifiable disease.(250 Words)

[The Indian Express](#)

[Livemint](#)

Background:-

- India recorded an estimated 3.9 million cancer cases in 2016, data available with the National Cancer Registry Programme of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) shows.
- Cervical cancer kills a quarter of a million women each year around the world. One in four of those women is in India. **In terms of number of cases and deaths, India has the highest burden of the disease in the world.**

Notifiable disease:-

- A notifiable disease is a disease notified by doctors if it poses public health concern, such as dengue, malaria

Why should cancer be a notifiable disease?

- By making cancer a notifiable disease India will have **reliable information to focus on cancer control activities, patient care and health care planning.**
- Almost 50% of the developed nations have incorporated cancer to be a notifiable disease recognizing the need to address the growing burden of cancer on health and economy.
- It will **provide detailed official data on cancer incidence, and mortality.** India will be able to appropriately document its actual magnitude and quality."
- The **information can be utilized to plan strategy by government towards policy changes**
- **A regional break up on the cancer incidence will help divert more focus on regions that need more attention on cancer control policies** and other programmes on cancer prevention such as tobacco control, environmental issues, food adulteration etc.
- **Helps in developing cancer centres and treatment facilities based on the incidence patterns.** This would make a huge impact on patient who now needs to travel long distances for prolonged cancer care and treatment.
- ICMR has recommended to the health ministry to make cancer a "notifiable disease" long ago.
- **If cancer is made notifiable, like many other Western countries, every case will have to be reported and no cases can be left uncared for. Now, doctors sometimes don't look at a patient citing existing patient burden. That can't happen if it is made notifiable.**
- **Some states in India have already taken initiative:**
 - To facilitate better planning of treatment, prevention, policies, and research on cancer, Karnataka has made cancer a notifiable disease.
 - By this notification, Karnataka becomes the third State in the country to be notifying cancer. Punjab and West Bengal are the other two States who have done so.
- It is essential to notify cancer as **it would help in knowing about the cancer causing agents across the state and region specific causes. Also, once the state has statistically proved knowledge it can start a 'cleansing' procedure to remove cancer causing agents.** This would also help in identifying the disease early and preventing delay in treatment

India is not ready to notify cancer as notified disease mainly because:-

- India lacks the amount of man power, infrastructure and a plan to rehabilitate the cancer patients once it makes it a notifiable disease.
- Also this means a huge responsibility to also manage the problem effectively.

How India can prevent cervical cancers?

- **Effective interventions:-**
 - There are **screening techniques for early detection of cervical pre-cancer**
 - Simple procedures to treat pre-cancerous lesions
 - There is a vaccine against the human papillomavirus (HPV).
- **Awareness:-**
 - Stigma around women's sexual and reproductive health issues needs to be removed.
 - Cervical cancer prevention campaigns need to be organised which can help to raise awareness of the importance of vaccination and screening.
 - Culturally appropriate screening services need to be available, including provision of female health practitioners, and the costs of attending services need to be kept to a minimum.

- Healthy diet need to be followed.
- Awareness generation for cancer prevention, screening, early detection and referral to an appropriate level institution for treatment.
- **Lessons from Australia:-**
 - Australia's prevention programme has National Cervical Screening Program. Since the programme's commencement in 1991, the rate of cervical cancer in Australia has halved and cervical cancer mortality rate is now among the lowest in the world.
- **Indian government measures need implementation effectively:**
 - The government of India has already taken commendable steps toward reducing the burden of cervical cancer. For example, screening guidelines have been introduced by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, recommending screening for women aged 30-59 every five years.
 - A population level initiative of prevention, control and screening for common non-communicable diseases (NCDs) (diabetes, hypertension and oral, breast and cervical cancer) has been rolled out in more than 100 districts in 2017-18 under the National Health Mission (NHM).
- The central government is implementing a "Strengthening of Tertiary Care Cancer facilities" Scheme under National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) to assist states in establishing State Cancer Institutes (SCI) and Tertiary Care Cancer Centres (TCCC) in different parts of the country.
 - **Aim:-**
 - The NPCDCS aims at integration of NCD (non-communicable diseases) interventions in the NRHM framework for optimization of scarce resources and provision of seamless services to the end customer / patients as also for ensuring long term sustainability of interventions.
 - Thus, the institutionalization of NPCDCS at district level within the District Health Society, sharing administrative and financial structure of NRHM becomes a crucial programme strategy for NPCDCS.
 - **Objectives:-**
 - Prevent and control common NCDs through behaviour and life style changes
 - Provide early diagnosis and management of common NCDs
 - Build capacity at various levels of health care for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of common NCDs
 - Train human resource within the public health setup viz doctors, paramedics and nursing staff to cope with the increasing burden of NCD
 - Establish and develop capacity for palliative and rehabilitative care.

Conclusion:-

- Cervical cancer prevention is an investment in the lives of women today, the health of our daughters tomorrow, and the strength and prosperity of generations to come.

Q18) It is argued that inducting Licentiate Medical Practitioners (LMP) may be the solution to the chronic shortage of doctors in rural areas. Do you agree? Comment.
(250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- According to the 2001 Census, there is a tenfold difference in the availability of qualified doctors between urban and rural areas i.e. one qualified doctor per 8,333 (885) people in rural (urban) areas of India. **Addressing this rural scarcity is fundamental to efforts for achieving universal health care in India.**
- At the time of India's independence, licentiate medical practitioner (LMP)s, who underwent three years training, **comprised nearly two-thirds of the qualified medical practitioners** and they mostly served in rural areas. LMPs were abolished after Independence but doctors never really occupied the space that LMPs vacated. Now, the shortage of rural doctors has forced some States to look towards non-physician clinicians for relief.

Why LMP may be the solution:-

- If properly implemented, it **may provide rural India with a lasting pool of primary care physicians.**
- **Starting a short-term course in modern medicine can provide an opportunity to design a medical curriculum that is much more relevant to the nation's needs.**
- With LMPs **working at the grass-root level, a single PHC would be able to handle a bigger population, allowing for more resources to be concentrated on individual PHCs** for manpower and infrastructure development and also for **increasing the remuneration of medical officers.**
- **Ancillary responsibilities can be taken off an MBBS doctor and their skills put to better use.**
- Quality emergency and inpatient attention can be made available at the Primary health care-level.

- Concerns about the clinical and administrative incompetence of fresh MBBS graduates **appointed as bonded medical officers can be put to rest.**
- Many countries which have doctor shortages have **ameliorated this problem by using non-physician clinicians to deliver basic health services.**
 - In the United States, the United Kingdom, many countries in Africa, and even in South Asia, individuals such as nurse-practitioners or medical assistants, who have some years of basic clinical training, perform many of the clinical functions normally expected of fully qualified doctors.
 - In sub-Saharan Africa and many parts of Asia, clinical services in rural areas are possible only because of these non-physician clinicians.
- **Indian states example:-**
 - Clinicians with around three years of clinical training currently serve at government rural health clinics in Chhattisgarh and Assam.
 - Assessments of their performance in Chhattisgarh have shown them to be as competent as doctors for delivering basic clinical care.
 - Because their training focuses on serving as rural clinicians these clinicians, as the Chhattisgarh experience shows, have **a greater likelihood of staying and serving in rural areas.**

Demerits:-

- Short-term courses in modern medicine have been consistently equated with **producing cheaply made, poor quality doctors.**
- The **rural population would be made to feel like second class citizens** by appointing a lower tier doctor to treat them.
- Such proposals underestimate **the clinical importance of physicians expertise** and overestimate the cost-effectiveness of nurse practitioners.
- The Bhore committee rejected it.

Conclusion:-

- LMPs can be employed in sub-centres where they perform both clinical and administrative functions at the sub-centre level. This would also allow easier access to primary and emergency care and keep the post of medical officer for MBBS doctors, **thereby deterring any competition between the two cadres of physicians.**
- Along with other measures like strengthening public health Infrastructure and increasing government share in health expenditure India can make health programmes inclusive. The mention of bridge course in the medical bill under discussion recently is a right step.

Q19) In a recent study by the UNICEF, India's still has one of the highest newborn-mortality rate – nearly 640,000 babies were lost in 2016, more than any other country. What are the solutions to prevent newborn-mortality? Also comment why India is not able to reduce newborn-mortality rate. (250 Words)

The Hindu

Background :-

- India is one of the fastest economies in the world, its achievements in space technology surprised the world but when it is still one of the countries where new borns die everyday. **Its neonatal mortality rate stands at 25.4.**

Why India is not able to reduce new born mortality rate :-

- **Premature birth.** Premature births counts for over 80% of newborn deaths.
- **Complications like asphyxia during delivery.** Due to lack of institutionalisation of births and lack of health infrastructure in rural areas.
 - Complications during labour and delivery as well as infections like sepsis, meningitis and pneumonia are also major contributors
- **Female literacy rates** are less leading to less awareness regarding nutrition needed.
 - Babies born to mothers with no education face nearly twice the risk of early death as babies whose mothers have at least a secondary education
 - **Prevalence of child marriages,** anaemia among young women and a lack of focus on adolescent sanitation, all of which impact child death rates.
 - With the substantial unmet need of contraception nearly a quarter of married adolescents (15–19 years) and low contraception use by them in general, girls in this age band are at a high risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, HIV and unintended and **unplanned pregnancies. All these impact the mortality rate.**

- **Shortage of properly trained health workers and midwives:-**
 - Also the large reproductive population of 2.6 crore remains bereft of care during the critical phases of pregnancy
- **Babies born to the poorest families** are 40 per cent more likely to die than those who are born to the least poor
- The **absence of steps to propagate basic healthy practices relating to breast feeding and immunisation.**
- Part of the reason is that in the last two decades, **efforts to tackle the problem were not as well funded as HIV and AIDS prevention.**

Solutions to prevent new born mortality :-

- Paying attention to the **mother's health during pregnancy** and ensuring she delivers in a hospital attended by trained doctors or midwives. India has programmes such as the Janani Suraksha Yojana for this, but must expand its reach in laggard States like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
- **Each State will have to identify a specific goal to meet the target.** These could be enhanced coverage of health and nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene which can prevent pneumonia and diarrhoea.
 - Inexpensive lifesaving treatments remain inaccessible to a vast majority of Indian children, and especially those in the poorest groups within the country. All these challenges can only be met by **State intervention.**
- It is also equally important to **forge interlinkages and package different interventions at various levels like linking child survival to reproductive health**, family planning, and maternal health
- In addition to focusing attention to addressing disparities within States and among regions, there is an **urgent need to bring health and child services under universal health coverage** with a focus on special requirements of vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- Universalisation of maternal health and child services, which includes special newborn care, skilled delivery, immunisation and management of diarrhoea, need to be effectively implemented if India is to achieve the high goals of reducing child deaths .
- To lower neonatal deaths, **India needs to strengthen mother and newborn health services**, including home-based care by health workers, promoting breastfeeding, treating underweight babies, keeping the mother healthy, preventing early marriage and reducing malnutrition in adolescent girls.
- More than 80 per cent of newborn deaths can be saved with:
 - Provide clean water, disinfectants
 - Breastfeeding within the first hour
 - Good nutrition

Q20) The UK National Health Service (NHS) has been described as single greatest experiment in social service that the world has ever seen undertaken. However, lately NHS is facing certain challenges. Examine these challenges and the lessons it offers to India's move towards universal healthcare. (250 Words)

The Hindu

Background:-

- Universal healthcare, free at the point of provision, is a fundamental human right and the U.K. is perhaps the only country in the world that has truly tried to meet that requirement.

National Health Service:-

- The NHS is a rare example of **truly socialised medicine. Healthcare is provided by a single payer the British government and is funded by the taxpayer.**
- All appointments and treatments are free to the patient (though paid for through taxes), as are almost all prescription drugs.
- Responsibility for health services is **devolved to local boards or trusts.** These local units directly manage or contract services in their communities.
- **Britain spends 9.9% of its GDP on the NHS.**
- **Improved safety to the patient:-**
 - Through standardised use of the NHS number throughout health and social care system, your information is available to individuals providing your care, to ensure the best care is provided.
- **Improved access to information :**
 - Healthcare professionals will have access to important information to make decisions about your care.
- **Integrated care :-**
 - Information standards enable doctor to appropriately share his/her patients information with other healthcare professionals involved in their care in a safe and secure manner.
- **Widespread accessibility**
 - In Britain, the universal health care system is accessible throughout the breadth and length of the country.

- **Full coverage**

- All persons, irrespective of their health, age or gender are enrolled in the NHS. This takes care of 'adverse selection'. The NHS entitles every beneficiary to a specified, predetermined health package of essential primary, secondary and tertiary care, cashless at the point of service.
- Universal health care in Britain does not discriminate on any basis. Such system covers every citizen of the United Kingdom with full health coverage.

Challenges faced by NHS:-

- **Funding:-**

- It has failed to keep up with the needs of a system pressurised by an expanding and ageing population, and advancing medical technology.
- Adding to this are the cuts that have been made to social care budgets across the country.
- The government increased NHS funding in last year's budget, but NHS England warned that the funds did not plug the gap
- NHS budget rose at a rate of 2% or less since the Conservative government came to office in 2010. There itself is a shortfall of around £20 billion.

- **There are recruitment problems too:-**

- Posts remain unfilled, while hospital trusts fail to recruit the necessary staff.
- Due to anti immigration and Brexit options including recruiting staff from abroad even on a temporary basis, have become much more difficult.

- **The NHS lags behind many of Europe's other health systems** most funded by a mixture of private and public means when it comes to medical outcomes.

- **Lack of manpower:**

- The service is woefully short of family doctors and nurses, whose salaries have been cut, and it is finding it hard in the wake of the Brexit referendum to recruit more from Europe, which supplies a large proportion of the NHS's junior doctors and nurses.
- They do not receive the rewarding financial packages

- **Lack of options**

- The universal health care system leaves citizen no choice to choose the physician or treatment that they want.

- **Bureaucratic hurdles**

- Since the government runs the universal health care; there are bureaucracy hurdles and lots of red tape which result in poor service and long time wait.

- **Other problems:-**

- **Tens of thousands of patients have seen their surgery postponed. Targets for waiting lists and times have been dropped.** Accident and emergency centres are close to breakdown, while patients are lined up on trolleys in the absence of hospital beds.
- This winter's serious flu epidemic is a perfect example of problems with NHS and should instead insist on policies that allow for greater choice and competition in health care. The recent uptick in sick patients in the U.K. has further overwhelmed an already crippled system.
- Demography, the spread of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, rising expectations, and accelerating medical inflation have raised demand and costs. Chronic care costs now account for more than 80 percent of the NHS budget.

Lessons to be learnt by India :-

- **Health care should be "free at the point of service," a founding principle of the NHS.**
- **Fund health care from income taxes as the system of pooling works and is cheaper compared to insurance.** Whenever the British have reviewed the option of using health insurance instead of income tax financing, they have found evidence that an insurance-based health care system costs more to operate, is more inequitable, controls costs less effectively, and provides no basis for population-oriented prevention or public health gains
- **Establish a strong primary care base for a health care system.**
- **Pay General practitioners extra for treating patients with deprivations and from deprived areas.**
- **Reduce inequalities in historic funding that usually favour the affluent.** Reductions have been achieved through national planning, building up hospitals and resources in underserved areas, and giving disproportionately more new funds to less well-funded areas.
- Pharmacies in UK do not sell medications unless there is registered doctor's prescription. The number of private pharmacies working outside the NHS hospitals have a contract with the NHS to issue drugs only in a systematic and well organised manner.

Conclusion :-

- With the union budget 2018 announcing National health protection scheme which covers 40% of the population under the scheme for healthcare, it is the first step towards universal health care.

Q21) The health insurance in India suffers from many lacunae. In the light of the basic right to health of citizens that flows from Article 21 of the Constitution, critically analyse problems plaguing India's health insurance sector and measures needed to fix these problems. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

[The Indian Express](#)

Background:-

- Improved health and healthcare are of vital concern to the welfare of Indian society. Surveys have shown that ill health and its related costs are the biggest causes of indebtedness in rural India, with one fourth of the rural population in the poorest groups falling into a debt trap to pay for healthcare.
- The health insurance system of the country is necessary

Problems with Indian health insurance sector:-

- Policies sold to individuals **invariably contain a plethora of exclusions in the fine print, diminishing their practical value.** They are heavily weighted in favour of the insurer.
 - **Monitoring systems are weak .**
 - Various mechanisms like identity issues, masking, bundling, unbundling, upgrading, etc are used by providers to charge more from insurers and thus defeat the purpose of providing access to good quality healthcare with adequate facilities and skilled personnel at an affordable cost
- Health insurance in India **suffers from lack of scale**, covering only about 29% of the households surveyed under the National Family Health Survey-4, that too in a limited way.
- The health-care system **also lacks regulation of costs.** There is asymmetry of information, with the insured member unable to assess the real scope of the policy or negotiate the terms with the provider.
- The Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) is a glaring example. Many private hospitals registered under the RSBY were reported to have indulged in malpractices such as prescribing unnecessary diagnostic testing and hospitalisation. Between 2015 and 2017, five states had withdrawn from the RSBY, citing various difficulties.
- General insurers who deal in the non-life insurance market, which is dominated by mandated insurance such as accident, fire and marine, **do not have expertise in pricing and administering health insurance.**
- **There are reports of fraud and manipulation by clients and providers, which have implications for the growth and development of this sector.**
- Currently the schemes of hospitalisation and payment also seem to **infringe on the individual's right to choose a service provider.**
- **It is also a moot legal point whether insurers can decide how much to pay for a particular disorder** or whether insurance should restrict its role to financial coverage or act as a treatment modifier and healthcare guide.
- **Confidentiality issues**
 - As the pool of insurable prospects increases, insurers will sit on a mountain of personal data which is potentially damaging to the individual.
- **Unregulated reimbursement of medical costs by insurance companies will push up the prices of private care** and a large section of India's population who are not insured will be at a relative disadvantage as they will, in future, have to pay much more for private care
- Insurance claims are frequently rejected due to minor, technical reasons leading to disputes. Conditions and various points included in insurance policy contracts are generally not negotiable and are binding on consumers.
- Given that insurance companies are large monopolies, **the consumer is treated as secondary and does not have an opportunity to negotiate the terms and conditions of a contract.** Insurance companies may not strictly follow the conditions in all cases and this creates confusion and disputes.

Measures needed to fix these:-

- Insurance-based intervention in the health sector can only be a partial solution. The government should not abdicate its responsibility of providing a high-quality and affordable public health infrastructure.
- **Need of strong regulation:-**
 - This is necessary to define costs, curb frauds and empower patients
 - Insurance law has to be revisited to also ensure that there is a guaranteed renewal of policies, that age is no bar for entry, and pre-existing conditions are uniformly covered.
- **Self-governed "micro insurance schemes" can create tailor-made policies for people with low incomes.** These differ from commercial insurance policies in that the policy is a low-valued product with modest benefits, modest premium amounts, and simpler documentation.
 - Advantages of member-owned self-insured schemes include lower risk of moral hazard since the membership has an economic stake in the risk pool and "one for all and all for one" solidarity, conducive to improved participation.

- Correspondingly, a **system of data banks should be created where the information regarding individuals should be relatively inaccessible** except for purely commercial reasons in pricing and administering insurance products.
 - **Health policymakers and health systems research institutions, in collaboration with economic policy study institutes, need to gather information about the prevailing disease burden at various geographical regions;** develop standard treatment guidelines
- Unless **privatisation and development of health insurance is managed well** it will have a negative impact on healthcare especially for a large segment of the population in the country.
- There is also a **need to evolve criteria to be used for deciding upon target groups, who would avail of social health insurance scheme/s**, and also to address issues relating to whether indirect costs would be included in health insurance.
- **Adopt reserving rules specific to the different types of health insurance contracts.**
- There is an urgent **need to document global and Indian experiences in health insurance** so that different financing options are developed for different target groups.
- **Skill building for the personnel involved, and capacity-building of all the stakeholders involved, will be critical components to ensure the success of any health insurance programme.**
- Eliminate unreasonable exclusionary clauses designed to avoid claims.

Conclusion:-

- The success of any social insurance scheme will depend on its design and the implementation and monitoring mechanisms which will be set in place. It will also call for restructuring and reforming the health system.

Topic: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

Q1) Proper implementation of the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act of 1996 is crucial to ensure dignity and livelihood of poor and migrant labourers. Comment. (150 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- The Building and Other Construction Workers' (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act (BOCW) 1996, is the central legislation concerning labour welfare in the construction sector.
- Meant to regulate the employment and conditions of service of building and other construction workers and to provide for their safety, health and welfare.

Important provisions which need implementation ensure the welfare of workers:-

- The law makes it compulsory that any construction activity with more than 10 workers must follow the guidelines set by it.
- All the workers employed at these projects must be registered and must receive benefits provided by a welfare board and must receive a welfare fund.
- Workers have to register with state welfare boards, for which forms must be filled up and identification documents must be provided – the overall cost of which is not supposed to exceed Rs 50.
- Upon registration, the board gives an identity card to the worker with which he/she can avail benefits.
- The welfare boards have been created to provide assistance to workers and act as a counsel.
- The board is meant to fix hours of work and ensure that companies provide at least one day for rest during the week. For any overtime work or work on an off day, the worker is entitled to twice the normal wage rate.
- Payment of regular wages, safe drinking water, suitable toilets connected to sewage systems, temporary living accommodation with separate cooking, bathing, washing and lavatory facilities, crèches, first-aid kits, canteens and safety guidelines are to be provided by employers.
- The Labour Ministry in 2017 informed the court that the number of workers registered under the Act had increased from 2.15 crore to 2.8 crore. It said that the cess collected also went up from Rs. 25,477 crore to Rs. 37,482 crore.

Concerns with the implementation so far:-

- The registration forms are extremely detailed and very lengthy, making it impossible for the mostly illiterate workers to fill out themselves. **Hence, voluntary registration is very rare**
- Also, only workers between the age of 18 and 60 can be registered, leaving out those outside that age bracket.
- The welfare boards have done very little work and practically do not perform at all and when they do have welfare funds, the benefits are not distributed
- Facilities that employers are meant to ensure include a regularly maintained register for all workers, which is practised **but these registers are kept secret.**

- **Workers are not even ensured the basic facilities.**
- **Inspectors** are to ensure that all sites comply with legislation and workers are not being exploited. But this is rarely done.
- **Non-compliance with these standards** are punishable in civil courts, however such legal action has rarely been taken
- Because construction workers are spread out across the urban expanses, move frequently and come from different states, **a traditional trade union movement has not been effective in trying to organise them.**
 - Since their identification papers are from their own states, they fear losing their jobs and being thrown out if the union movement attracts the wrath of the police
- Lack of financial control, despite being an earning member of the family, lack of knowledge and information about rights and about the city leaves the women burdened and vulnerable.
- There is **no reliable estimate of their numbers.** Because they are migrants who remain hidden, they are ignored and they do not feel that they belong here

Conclusion:-

- Instances like recent deaths of workers in mines of Jharkhand has made it necessary for effective implementation of the act and also in line with the directive principles enshrined in the Indian constitution.

Q2) The recent economic survey highlights the importance of gender-disaggregated data in examining socio-economic growth. Examine how this gender-disaggregated data can be generated and challenges such data poses in policymaking. (250 Words)

The Indian Express

Background:-

- Gender disaggregated data gives a clear idea of the status of women in a country giving impetus to the direction of the measures taken by the government to be more inclusive

Present gaps in gender disaggregated data: (extra)

- Repeated data isn't available to help assess change over time or design interventions.
- Lack data on women's formal financial service access and usage.
- Health expenditure surveys at the household level don't give the information about how women are taking care of their health, including mental health.
- Data on the productivity differences between women's and men's farms, and market price realization by women farmers is another gap area.

How the gender disaggregated data can be generated:-

- The **proposed national time use survey** can help provide better estimates of women's work participation. Further, it would be good to better understand how norms and attitudes are changing across adult women and youth.
- Gender-disaggregated data provides a critical understanding of the status of women in both national as well as state-level institutions over time. A subset of these indicators can be used to construct **a Gender Well-Being Index that is published periodically.**
- There are cost-effective ways to **introduce gender-disaggregated questions into large national surveys by asking questions about who owns, who uses, who transacts within the household.**
- Applying a gender lens also requires ensuring that the right mix of women are included in the sample. **This generates estimates of different sub-groups of women, especially those who are the most marginalized**
- While some of this data can be generated by utilising existing datasets better, measuring progress on other indicators will require the **inclusion of additional questions in current surveys or the design of new surveys.**
 - For instance, **a nation-wide survey on the prevalence of violence against women and girls will be extremely helpful for unmasking geographical and other disparities as well as designing policy interventions.**
 - **Similarly, time-use surveys can capture the continuum of women's work.**
 - This will necessitate a strengthening of the management information systems of various ministries.
- **International examples:-**
 - Countries that have made significant strides towards achieving gender equality have put in place strong gender disaggregated data.
 - **The Gender Monitoring Office in Rwanda performs key functions to assess the progress made in the implementation of the national gender policy.**
 - **It develops gender-disaggregated data systems, publishes impact evaluation studies and most importantly, holds different institutions accountable.**
 - **Finland's Gender Equality Unit discharges similar functions.**

Challenges it poses to policymaking:-

- **The absence of data prevents stakeholders from being able to develop sound policies or relevant interventions.**
- **The evolving policy framework around sustainable development would also need to be careful not to further existing gender roles.**
- **For example, the latest gender guidelines released by the ministry of drinking water and sanitation caution against stereotyping women by limiting their role as behaviour change agents in sanitation.**
- **Survey questions can sometimes be based on traditional views of gender roles, and as a result, miss women and girls entirely, or undercount and undervalue their economic and social contributions to their families, communities, and countries. So, it's vital that the data that's gathered is accurate and comprehensive.**

Way forward:-

- **A dedicated cell within the Women and Child Development Ministry that focuses on data gathering, monitoring and conducting regular reviews with other ministries on defined gender targets is worth considering. This could allow the Ministry to play its oversight and coordination role more effectively.**
- **Legal frameworks and equal opportunity policies such as those pertaining to leave, maternity benefits, flexi hours and grievance redressal have a crucial role to play in ending the discrimination.**

Q3) The Housing for All by 2022 agenda, while trying to resolve India's urban housing crisis, must take into consideration millions of migrant workers in Indian cities who are living in nightmarish conditions. Comment. (150 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- **The Union Budget announced recently is committed to provide assistance for building 3.7 million houses in urban areas in 2018-19 under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). Similarly there are other schemes like Ujjwala, Saubhagya yojana etc which have been initiated to cater to the needs of the poor.**

Concerns:-

- **However, this does little to resolve India's urban housing crisis, which affects the poorest and most marginalised populations in cities.**
- **For these workers, there is no line between their work and personal lives. They stay at the workplace itself. They are not only constantly exposed to workplace hazards, but also face a higher degree of exploitation from the employer.**
- **The housing policies remain disconnected from the country's socio-economic reality of growing rural-urban migration where one in ten Indians are seasonal and circular labour migrants.**
- **Migrants are unable to afford housing even in slum settlements, resorting instead to living in the open, in shared rented rooms in deplorable conditions or within the workplace.**
- **They are not only deprived from basic services such as subsidised ration, water, sanitation and cooking fuel, but also face the constant threat of eviction and confiscation of their meagre assets.**
- **Permanent houses created by schemes like PMAY in cities do not cater to the temporary and transient housing needs and imaginations of seasonal migrant workers.**
- **They are also denied access to these housing schemes as they do not possess the required domicile documents in the city.**
- **They cannot afford to invest in a second home in the city, which is the only solution that the affordable housing scheme offers them.**
- **Many of migrants work as construction workers and the protection under Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act of 1996 is also not ensured to them leads them to live in deplorable conditions.**

Way forward:-

- **The creation of dignified housing arrangements for seasonal migrant workers demands the immediate attention of urban planning authorities as migrants spend six-ten months of a year in the city.**
- **The question of their housing should be contextualised within the larger question of their integration with the city, and right to the city itself.**
- **There is need for establishment for migrant welfare boards to analyse the correct estimate of these migrants and ensure protection and coverage under the government schemes.**

Q4) What is neo-abolitionism? It is argued that India should assert a leadership role in the global fight against exploitation by countering the influence of neo-abolitionism. What do you understand by this argument? In the light of the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2016, discuss critically. (250 Words)

The Hindu

Neo abolitionism:-

- **Neoabolitionist** (or **neo-abolitionist** or **new abolitionism**) is a term used by historians to refer to the rebirth of the civil rights movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s.
- Neoabolitionism is a discourse that perpetuates sensationalist accounts of modern slaves as victims tricked by unscrupulous traffickers and whose only hope is to be rescued by law-enforcing heroes.
- **It describes discourse on abolition of modern slavery, forced labour and marriages by government intervention.**

Why India should assert the leadership role ?

- Long before neoabolitionist groups and indeed Western countries set the global policy agenda on trafficking in the 1970s and 1980s **India and Brazil had developed a rich, indigenous jurisprudence on exploitation. This had a structural understanding of coercion and exploitation in labour markets and was backed by a creative regulatory response.**
- The topic of trafficking gained international prominence, and was treated to be equivalent to sex trafficking and sex work. **But India has a magnitude of laws which consider trafficking as a multidimensional issue** ranging from the Indian Penal Code and the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (ITPA), 1986, to social welfare legislation on contract and bonded labour, and inter-state migrant work.
- Neo abolitionism tries to tackle these issues in only a legal way neglecting socio economic disparities triggering people to become modern slaves etc.
- The current definition of trafficking in Section 370 of the IPC is not limited to sex work which is what is understood by neoabolitionists.

Issues with the trafficking bill :-

- The Indian government is set to introduce the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2016 and it exemplifies neoabolitionism.
- **It pursues the classic raid-rescue-rehabilitation model, with stringent penalties for trafficking**, including life imprisonment for its aggravated forms, reversals of burden of proof, and provisions for stripping traffickers of their assets.
- **It creates a plethora of new institutions with unclear roles** and no accountability
- **It creates a parallel adjudication machinery** with special courts and special public prosecutors.
- There is no clarity on how the Bill relates to the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (ITPA) 1986, and to labour laws.
- It does not consider exploitation as a socio economic concept and deals with it in a purely legal manner.

What should India do?

- India should focus on a multi-faceted legal and economic strategy by looking into
 - Robust implementation of labour laws
 - A universal social protection floor
 - Self-organisation of workers
 - Improved labour inspection, including in the informal economy
 - Corporate accountability for decent work conditions.
- **Experts also reiterated the need for systemic reforms** to counter distress migration, end caste-based discrimination, enforce the rural employment guarantee legislation, avoid the indiscriminate rescue of voluntary sex workers, and protect migrants mobility and rights.
- Only a bold, **holistic response to what is a socioeconomic problem of labour exploitation can help India realise SDG 8.7.**

Topic: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes;

Q1) Discuss the features and prospects of recent policies meant to provide better social and economic security to India's growing population of senior citizens. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Features and prospects of recent policies:

- Several tax and related incentives to ease the financial burden on people aged 60 and above were introduced in the recent union budget
- There is a five-fold increase in the exemption limit on interest income from savings, fixed and recurring deposits held with banks and post offices to Rs. 50,000
 - Government did away with the requirement for tax to be deducted at source on such income.
- Another useful tax change is the proposal to raise the annual income tax deduction limit for health insurance premium and/or medical reimbursement to Rs. 50,000 for all seniors.
- Set the ceiling for deduction in lieu of expenses incurred on certain critical illnesses to Rs. 1 lakh, irrespective of the age of the senior citizen. **This will increase their economic and social security.**
- Proposed extending the Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana by two years, up to March 2020, and doubled the cap on investment in the scheme to Rs. 15 lakh.
 - **This annuity-cum-insurance scheme entitles the senior citizen policyholder to a guaranteed pension that equates to an annual return of 8% on investment.**
- This pension plan, unlike the entirely government-funded Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme for the elderly who live below the poverty line, **is contributory and is run by the Life Insurance Corporation of India.**
- Government launched Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana recently

Despite efforts many issues still remain:-

- They do not have enough savings.
- There is little by way of a social safety net and health infrastructure.
- Too few have health insurance or pensions.
- India still largely relies on the family to take care of its elderly. The strain is showing as families splinter
- Old-age homes still carry the stigma of abandonment and destitution. Adult day care centres are too few. Many old-age homes do not accept patients with dementia.
- Public transport is not senior friendly.
- Physicians who do home visits are hard to find, though cataract and knee replacement surgeries are booming.
- With technology life of elderly has become even tougher.
- Older women are more prone to suffer abuse due to factors like gender discrimination, longer life span than older men, longer span of widowhood and no source of income as traditionally most of them are housewives.

Way forward:-

- With more than 70% of the 104 million elderly living in the rural hinterland, any serious initiative to improve the lot of senior citizens **must incorporate adequate budgetary support for social welfare spending on the relevant programmes.**
- While the Budget provisions Rs. 6,565 crore for the pension scheme for the elderly poor, its **outlay for the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment's assistance to voluntary organisations for programmes relating to the 'aged' at Rs. 60 crore is starkly inadequate.**
- With the number of the elderly in India set to surge by 2050 to almost 300 million, or about a fifth of the population, **governments need to make more comprehensive efforts to address the problems of elderly.**

Q2) It is recommended that welfare and other such schemes should either be weeded out or merged for convergence with larger sectoral schemes or be transferred to states, which can then continue with these schemes based on their requirements. Discuss critically the rationale behind this recommendation. (250 Words)

[Livemint](#)

The Union government at present runs hundreds of social welfare schemes (675 Central sector schemes as per Budget 2017-18). **There is a need to rationalize existing welfare schemes** because concerns are present:

- **A large majority of these are small in terms of allocation with the top six to seven schemes accounting for about 50% of total welfare spending.**

▪ **States concerns due to earlier approach:-**

- There are thousands of other schemes that different state governments run. Implementing such a large number of schemes efficiently, **specially by states with weak administrative capacity, puts a tremendous burden on states.**
- The actual per poor spending is downward sloping. **The poor belonging to a poor district receive less welfare spending than the poor from richer districts.**
- States such as Bihar and Jharkhand have often represented that they have limited resources and are not able to provide the state's share to enable them to access the required funds under CSS.
- States have repeatedly complained that the proliferation of such schemes infringes on their autonomy by reducing their fiscal space as they are expected to co-finance schemes.
- The uniform norms and strict guidelines provided for centrally sponsored schemes further **hamper the autonomy of states and can lead to inefficient overlaps.**
 - One of the components under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan scheme was funding for uniforms for all states. As a result, the Union government increased Bihar's budget for uniforms under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan by a whopping 200%.
 - But by then, Bihar had already spent its own money on uniforms as it already had a separate scheme for uniforms and much of the central allocation was not utilised.
- **Many centrally sponsored schemes also require setting up of parallel structures for implementation and fund flows.** These tend to bypass state governments, and undermine their authority and monitoring ability.
- The **inefficient administrative capacity of poor districts** leading to poor implementation of schemes.
- The **K. Chaturvedi committee report (2011)** had observed that Small outlays anyway do not achieve the objective of making an impact across the states. So its better to merge schemes or leave it to the states
- **Allocations to centrally sponsored schemes are very volatile too. The Union Budget allocates funds to schemes, but not to states.** Thus, state governments often don't know in advance either how much money it will get, or even when the money will be released. This causes uncertainty in state finance departments, and at the grassroots
- **This approach will lead to:-**
 - Better implementation at the ground level due to bottom up approach of planning the schemes
 - States role will be strengthened with added responsibility and centralization will be reduced leading to cooperative federalism

There is no rationale in the approach as:-

- Centrally sponsored schemes started as a tool by the Centre to assist states in fulfilling their Constitutional responsibilities in areas of national priority like agriculture, health and education.
- Moreover, in some states centrally sponsored schemes became the predominant mode of financing social sector expenditure.
- The mere merger of schemes doesn't address the deeper problems with centrally sponsored schemes.
- There is wide disparity in the states with many of them lacking infrastructure and without centre support development would be abysmal
- Misallocation of funds and corruption are issues which are predominant at the state level

Way forward:-

- The Niti Aayog has requested Union ministries to create an objective formula by which funds allocated to a particular scheme are distributed among states. **This is a welcome step if implemented as it will enable states to know how much funding to expect by looking at the Union Budget, reducing uncertainty in fund flows and helping speedy action**

Q3) Discuss the policy options that India should pursue to improve women's health in India. (250 Words)

PRS

Background:-

- There has been significant improvement in the health, education and employment status of women in India over time. Yet, health indices for girls and women compare much less favourably with those for boys and men. The poorer health indices for girls and women mandate a social revolution which not only provides equal opportunities but also focuses on achieving equal outcomes.

Measures already taken by the government are:-

- Successive governments have recognised the inequalities in health indices and have implemented many schemes to improve women's health.

- Many programmes like Janani Suraksha Yojana, the National Rural Health Mission, Mother child tracking system etc provide care for women, especially during pregnancy and delivery and after childbirth.
- Family planning programmes offer services related to contraception for women, improving their health.
- Many programmes aimed at the general population also impact women's health.

Policy options to be emphasized are:-

- **Synergy between the central and state policies** to ensure women are comprehensively covered For example, the central government must discuss with states to build 'pre-delivery hubs', preferably close to the delivery points to take care of such transportation issues for expectant mothers. Such hubs would help reduce the out-of-pocket expenses of poor and marginalised families and also reduce maternal deaths.
- **Functioning of Rastriya Swasthya Bima Yojana :-**
- The insurance scheme needs to be effectively implemented and proper oversight need to be created and that data pertaining to RSBY be made freely available on public platforms.
- **Demand for Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) :-**
 - ASHA workers across the country do not have fixed wages and that they have demanded a fixed wage component within their remuneration in many states. Issues regarding the training of ASHAs such as dearth of competent trainers, salary, infrastructure, and equipment need to be dealt with
- **Need for food fortification :-**
 - There has been more focus on availability of food to women rather than nutrition aspect by the schemes of the government .Food fortification of cereals with iron must be taken up with priority since (i) it does not alter the quality and nature of foods, (ii) can be introduced quickly, and (iii) can produce nutritional benefits for populations in a short period of time.
- **Unsafe abortions :-**
 - India has one of the highest abortion related deaths in the world. So the provision where only married women can get an abortion thereby allowing anyone to get an abortion.
- **Mental health of women:-**
 - Due to societal stigma and ignorance, mental illnesses suffered by women fail to get recognised. In this regard, creating awareness and providing possible remedies to help de-stigmatise mental health issues is necessary.
 - Psychological issues for women need to be taken of as women are more prone to depression due to domestic factors like domestic violence etc.
- There is a need **to focus on reproductive health** as India has high maternal mortality rate.
 - Fully satisfying women's need for modern contraception would also make healthcare investments more affordable overall.
 - For every additional dollar invested in contraception in developing regions, the cost of pregnancy related care including HIV care for women and newborns is reduced by about \$1.50 (about £1).

Conclusion:

- There is a huge payoff when women's health is focussed. Girls and young women are more likely to be able to stay at school, improving their future participation in the labour force and earning potential. Poverty is reduced, living conditions improve and communities are better off when women can fully participate and contribute. So Sustainable development is only possible if women's health is prioritised

Topic: Development processes and the development industry- the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders

Q1) Discuss the role played by NGOs and international institutions through their development initiatives in helping India address immediate problems following India's partition. (250 Words)

[EPW](#)

Background:-

- Some of the immediate challenges which were of concern to India immediately following India's partition were food security, illiteracy, vast population and depletion of resources etc.

Role played by NGO and international institutions:-

- **Family planning:-**
 - With the approval of the Nehru government, the Rockefeller foundation (RF) also took steps to **examine population growth rates and initiate a programme of human fertility restriction** in rural Punjab beginning with support for a pioneering longitudinal study in 1953.

- This represented the **first attempts on the part of international philanthropic organisations to connect the imperatives of rural development and economic growth to a programme of fertility restriction.**
- **Indus water treaty:-**
 - World bank's role in completing the international agreement that to this day governs hydrological and agricultural resources along the Indo-Pakistani border.
 - The connection between water, soil fertility, and the potential of new high-yielding seed varieties to increase Indian food production proved clear within the negotiations surrounding the treaty.
- **Agriculture:-**
 - The emphasis placed upon improving soil health within **Indus water treaty would enable the extensive cultivation of these high-yielding wheat varieties across post-partition Punjab.**
 - Further, the RF and the IARI's advocacy for the wider use of fertilisers would enable farmers to cultivate these varieties extensively. So the start for green revolution was given by NGO's .
- **Food security:-**
 - These organisations helped India getting food grains from abroad, tackling famine successfully.
 - With green revolution food imports largely reduced and slowly India became self sufficient
- India was facing the challenge of **illiteracy** .So many NGO's contributed to ensure education for the Indians.
- **Drinking Water:-**
 - The **India mark II** is a human-powered pump designed to lift water from a depth of fifty metres or less. The Mark II is world's most widely used water hand pump.
 - The pump was designed in the 1970s to serve village water needs in developing countries and rural areas.
 - The pump was designed in the 1970s in a joint effort between the Government of India, UNICEF, and The World Health Organization (WHO) to address the severe drought and a water shortage affecting India during that period and to prevent evacuation of villages to refugee camps.

Conclusion:-

- The role played by these institutions reached vast reaches of the society without any discrimination and India got slowly access to implementation of immunisation programmes, development projects etc.

Q2) Why the role people and civil society is crucial in the preparation of the annual budget? Has government of India taken any step in this regard? Critically comment. (150 Words)

Down to Earth

Why role of civil society and people is needed in budget making?

- Citizen participation is relevant at each stage of the budget process be it resource allocation, budget execution and budget evaluation.
- The positive impact of PB [participatory budgeting] is a **noticeable improvement in the accessibility and quality of various public welfare amenities in those municipalities that have adopted it.**
- The participation and influence of people belonging to low-income groups in the budget allocation process **are proof of their empowerment.**
- Citizen participation can make **local service delivery more effective**
- Participation is important in developing countries **as a means of improving the performance and accountability of bureaucracies and improving social justice.**
- Participation can: **provide information that improves technical or allocative efficiency; offer innovative solutions** that would not have arisen from traditional decision-making; and raise acceptance of programmes.
- **Civil society:-**
 - Civil society budget analysis can **augment the research capacity of legislatures and the media and, sometimes, in the executive.** It may provide **one of the few sources of specialized data** and analysis on the impact of the budget on the poor.
 - **Bringing new information to budget decision-making:**
 - Civil society budget groups are often able to be in close, regular contact with citizens and interest groups. This allows them to collate unique information on citizen priorities, non-government perspectives on the budget, expenditure tracking and project impact analysis.
 - Contributing positively to public expenditure management and oversight, since they are **potential sources of critical and independent information on the impact of the budget**
 - **Building literacy on public finances among citizens** and facilitating discussions and debates on budgetary issues.
 - **Adding new data into the budget process** by collecting, synthesizing, and disseminating information on public finances

- Providing **training on public finances to citizen groups, the media, and legislature**. This strengthens the capacity of all of these groups for oversight and to demand accountability from government agencies.
- **Examining the passage of the budget** through the legislature and its subsequent implementation.
- The major benefits that arise from effective civic engagement in budget work are seen in better **transparent and accountable budget processes and also efficient resource allocation and expenditures**.
- Feedback from civil society budget analysis **can be used as input to the development of future budgets**. Activities such as Expenditure tracking and monitoring helps improve service delivery in terms of quality, quantity and effectiveness.
- Civil society's general oversight role and information sharing **strengthens the capacity of local people to demand accountability from government**.

No, India did not encourage:-

- Even for the recent budget civil society expressed that only their views were asked but there was no discussion on the data presented.
- **The meeting was symptomatic of how insignificant a role people play in the preparation of the annual budget of India**, the world's largest democracy.
- In a survey by International Budget Partnership, India scored 48 out of 100 in its Open Budget Index.
- In India, the budget preparation usually starts in September but the consultation with the civil society is sometimes done very late. Any change suggested at such a late stage would have been very difficult to incorporate in the final budget document or the Economic Survey.
- It is very difficult to cite a case where these meetings managed to make the government change a decision.
- International experience shows that an inclusive budget preparation can be a developmental trigger.

India encouraged:-

- In 2010, for the first time in independent India, government introduced pre-budget consultation sessions. This mechanism has continued till date.
- In India, Pune is the only city where municipal corporation has made public participation integral to budget preparation. The initiative has been a success and witnessed a renewed interest in recent times.
- Among the states, Delhi has experimented with participatory budgeting with the formation of Mohalla Sabhas.

Way forward:-

- There is great need by government to accept budget groups as partners in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the national budget.
- Government should work towards creating strong linkages with such groups, it be able to develop a budget which meets the needs of the people especially the poor.
- The role of parliament is to bridge the gap between the grassroots and the executive, therefore its capacity and authority to scrutinise the National budget and the Audit reports should be enhanced.
- Though the finance ministry publishes the pre-budget consultations, it should also give details about the suggestions received and those that were accepted or rejected. This can even be a post-budget exercise to increase transparency.

Topic: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability; e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential;

Q1) The success of digital India and ease of doing business in India starts with ease of using government portals. Comment. (150 Words)

[Livemint](https://www.livemint.com)

Background:-

- E-governance and design of government portals affects how much people trust the government.
- If a government cannot implement reasonably high-quality digital governance systems especially the portals through which government actions are visible to the public, affects both basic governance quality and citizens and businesses trust in the government's ability to govern effectively.

Concerns:-

- The recently launched GST portal has issues for ease of doing business like
 - having to make a payment by manually calculating tax liability before being able to file returns
 - Inability to add or modify uploaded invoices in the offline tool.
- Failure of government portals leads to the goal of digital India failing as it is one way approach and people are still largely not included especially in rural areas who feel its better to go to office directly than use portals.

- The expertise to maintain government portals is very less.
- There is no specific email service for official purpose within the government
- The problem will only get worse with the push for digitization.
- When portals don't make it easy to access information, it is the **equivalent of denying the promised services or transparency**. This doesn't just cost citizens. It costs governments as well.
- Most of the websites are not GIGW (Guidelines for Indian Government websites, 2009 by NIC) compliant. **In 2016, the Standardization Testing and Quality Certification Directorate (STQCD) audited 957 government websites and found that only 31 were fully compliant.**
- In private companies user complaints are taken as valuable feedback for improvement. **Government departments have no such compulsion so there is no scope for improvement**
- **There is lack of GIGW compliance is based on departmental self-assessment.**
- Poor internet access and speeds, lack of literacy, a large number of languages, low awareness, high user use are also issues which hamper the effective service delivery of e-services in India.

Measures needed to improve:-

- Websites and portals should be more compliant to standardisation. Also local language portals can be established to cater to the needs of diverse Indian population.
- External audits by NIC and increase of physical infrastructure to increase reach of internet services is necessary.
- There is a need for bridging the digital gap in rural areas .
- **International examples:-**
 - The US government created **18F a fast-moving government agency for digital services**. It's now a 200-person team of engineers, designers, and product managers that serves as the US government's captive software start-up.
 - The UK government also constituted something similar called the Government Digital Service, a 300-person team that tackles tech projects.
 - An IDS or Indian Digital Service might be the answer.

Q2) The success of Swachh Bharat mission hinges on strong municipals and efficient governance. Comment. (250 Words)

[Down to Earth](#)

Issues with municipalities and efficient governance in Swachh Bharat programme:

- **The rate of open defecation is not decreasing much:-**
 - India has far higher levels of open defecation than other countries of the same GDP per capita.
 - Even though the rate of construction of toilets is increasing **the municipalities are failing to make people use them.**
- **Lack of funds with Municipalities is the biggest challenge.**
 - Unlike individual toilets there is no central funding for individual toilets, hence Municipalities fail to construct
- **Lack of proper sewage system:-**
 - Several toilets are being built in haste, but not connected to sewers. There has been a rush among local officials to show progress and to prove themselves before the Centre since it is a high-priority project. **So, even though nobody is using these toilets, they have been registered as a progress.**
 - It takes years to build sewage systems, and local politicians face all the costs upfront, and the benefits are far in the future.
 - Disgruntled citizens and voters complain about the digging of neighbourhoods for years, causing much nuisance to their daily lives.
- Deeply entrenched cultural contexts have not been taken into account for successful policy outcomes. **India needs to change perceptions of ritual purity through education and awareness in rural areas.** This can be done by municipalities investing in sewage systems.
- **Corruption:-**
 - Municipalities are not working as change agents. The municipalities in India are a very weak arm of governance. An elected body of a municipality is very weak and corrupt.
- **Problem of political incentives:-**
 - **Municipal and government offices are itself not clean.**
 - **Waste collection in urban areas is not done regularly .Even when it is done it is dumped outside the cities leading to heaps of garbage.**

Way forward:-

- **Pursuit of Swachh Bharat also requires strengthening public health services.** Services such as good drainage systems, absence of swamps and ponds that are home to stagnant water, and the supply of safe drinking water

all of which reduce exposure to and spread of diseases are classic examples of public goods and require effective government intervention.

- Developing proper sewage system in village would also have wider impact with water not stagnating any more, lesser vector borne diseases etc so **the wider objective of sanitation will be achieved.**
- **Enabling local governments to construct sewage systems will solve the purity issue :-**
 - A toilet that flushes away human waste into the sewage and waste management system solves the problem. If there is a functional sewage system, it is relatively low cost for households to build a toilet in every home that is connected to the sewage system.

Q3) The success of Swachh Bharat mission hinges on strong municipalities and efficient governance. Comment. (250 Words)

[Down to Earth](#)

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Q4) For governments, careful data mining from Big Data might help understand our behaviour in order to facilitate planning. Should governments rely too much on big data for planning? What cautions need to be taken? Examine critically. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- With technological innovations taking place every day and data generation is taking place at large the importance of big data cannot be put aside.

Government need to rely on big data:-

- **Big Data and associated analytics are beneficial in various areas, such as**
 - Solving traffic problems in cities
 - Targeting healthcare delivery
 - Efficient supply chain management
 - Preventive steps for environmental protection
 - Providing a personalized educational experience for students
 - Enabling security to individuals and society
 - Informed policymaking.
- When data is scarce, expensive to obtain, or not available in digital form, it makes sense to let people with experience make decisions, based on patterns and relationships they have observed and internalized. This is where big data importance lies as it makes it easy to process data and arrive at decisions.
- The new benefits that big data analytics brings to the table, however, are speed and efficiency.
- The possible benefits of Big Data analytics in government could **range from transforming government programmes and empowering citizens to improving transparency and enabling the participation of all stakeholders.**
- **International case studies:-**
 - Several countries, such as the UK, US and European Union (EU) member countries, have started big data government programmes.
 - The Open Government Data Platform initiative, similar to the Data.gov initiative of the US government started in 2009, is a welcome start in opening up public data for use by analysts, researchers and practitioners
 - **Big Data can enhance the government's ability to serve its citizens and address major national challenges involving the economy, healthcare, job creation, natural disasters, and terrorism.**

Concerns:-

- There are examples of **blunders being made with a load of information at one's fingertips.** Big data may mean more information, but **it also means more false information.** The errors are bound to increase exponentially with more and more redundant information.
- **Collection of data is also a paramount task** for government as data is received from multiple online and offline channels. Sharing data between departments and across ministries is a challenge, given the jurisdictional boundaries that exist.
- **Data blunders often arise out of bias, low-quality data, unreliable sources, technical glitches, an improper understanding of the larger picture,** and lack of proper statistical tools and resources to analyse large volumes of data.
- Moreover, **Big Data invariably exhibits fake statistical relationships among different variables.** Relying too heavily on a particular model is also a common mistake in Big Data analyses. **Therefore, the model should be wisely and carefully chosen according to the situation.**
- World is focussing on collecting more and more data while being inattentive to the necessity or capacity to use them. **There is a possibility of getting lost in the waves of data.**
- Problem with collecting and storing such vast amounts of data overseas is the ability of **owners of such data stores to violate the privacy of people.**
 - The alleged Russian interference in the U.S. election is an example.
- **The potential drain of economic wealth of a nation:-**
 - Currently, the corporations collecting such vast amounts of data are all based in developed countries, mostly in the U.S.
 - **India has neither the knowledge nor the favourable environment for businesses that collect data on such a vast scale.**

Cautions needed/What can India do are :-

- Any breach of confidentiality regarding data that is collected and processed by the government could have serious ramifications. **Thus the importance of data protection and privacy regulations and guidelines as exemplified by the EU's General Data Protection Regulation is necessary.**
- It is time to formulate a comprehensive Big Data programme across Central and state government ministries/departments with help from industry, academic and research institutions.
- **Mining and geological engineers design mines to remove minerals safely and efficiently. The same principle should be adopted by statisticians in order to mine data efficiently.** So, using some routine algorithm is not enough.
- **By providing appropriate subsidies such as cheap power and real estate, and cheap network bandwidth to those data centres, India should encourage its industries to be able to build and retain data within its boundaries.**

- In the short term, **India should also create a policy framework that encourages overseas multinationals such as Google and Amazon to build large data centres in India** and to retain the bulk of raw data collected in India within its national geographical boundaries.
- **India should also build research and development activities in Big Data Science and data centre technology** at academic and research institutions
- This will require **developing software and training for individuals** on how to protect their privacy and for organisations and government officials to put in place strict firewalls, data backup and secure erasure procedures.
- The government has approved the “Digital India” Plan that aims to connect 2.5 lakh villages to the Internet by 2019 and to bring Wi-Fi access to 2.5 lakh schools, all universities and public places in major cities and major tourist centres. **This is indeed a very desirable policy step.**

Q5) Despite their vital role in the global financial world, why do rating agencies fail to inspire confidence in markets and among nations? Should rating agencies be regulated? Discuss. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Why do rating agencies fail to inspire confidence in markets and why Credit rating agencies need to be regulated?

- **World experiences :-**
 - **Because of allegations of improper and inaccurate ratings occurring frequently.** Such agencies have been subject to a range of lawsuits, especially after Enron’s collapse and during the recent subprime mortgage crisis in the U.S.
 - **Moody’s has been fined across various geographies for non-adherence to standard rating protocols.** For instance, Moody’s has raked up fines of \$864 million for its role in 2008 crisis, while incorrect rating practices has led to fines of €1.2m in Europe.
 - More importantly, such rating agencies can have a global impact, affecting the fiscal fortunes of nations, **due to flight of capital**, as witnessed during the East Asian crisis of the 1990s where they have been criticised for failing to predict the crisis and then downgrading such countries several notches during the event.
- **Indian scenario :-**
 - Even in India, rating agencies have had a mixed record. Cases such as Amtek Auto and Ricoh India led the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to investigate rating agencies and tighten rules and disclosure norms.
- Numerous studies have showcased that **rating agencies seek to provide issuers** with non-rating services, along with potentially influencing a higher rating . **On average, about 40% of the total revenue of the rating agency stems from non-rating activities.**
- CRAs are **mainly paid by the companies whose securities they rate.** These companies benefit from favourable (high) ratings on them or their securities. Therefore, **the compensation arrangement leads to a conflict of interest.**
- Some institutional investors have to mandatorily rely on ratings. **Despite this, they have little accountability towards investors**

No:-

- CRAs maintain that while non-rating services do pose conflict of interest challenges, revenues from other services reduce dependence on rating service revenues and thereby **enable them to maintain objectivity and independence.**
- This would encourage entry into the credit rating business, stimulate innovation and eventually improve the efficiency of capital markets.

Way forward:-

- To safeguard investors, **SEBI can explore reforms** so that credit rating agencies do not provide non-rating advisory services to their clients.
 - SEBI should enable and promote the adoption of other models of remuneration for CRAs.
 - SEBI should consider promoting the rotation of employees of CRAs in respect of the same issuer, so that long-term relationships do not impede the independence of individuals.
 - SEBI should encourage investors to provide them information on the basis of which they can investigate into any irregularities in the functioning of CRAs and take action where appropriate.
 - SEBI should also consider incorporating a provision to make CRAs liable for compensating investors for any loss caused to them by negligent or fraudulent rating, with adequate safeguards.
- **A fixed operating fee model may also be explored,** thereby eliminating incentives to be the lowest-bidder with compromised quality.
- Outstanding ratings and sudden downgrades need to be subjected to greater supervision.
- Corporates should be pushed to change rating agencies on a regular basis.

- The issuer-pays model needs to change to an investor-pays model, with fees being standardised by the market regulator.

Q6) Examine the merits and demerits of live-streaming of the proceedings of the Supreme Court of India. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- The Supreme Court recently agreed to hear a petition filed by a senior lawyer seeking live streaming of judicial proceedings in the top court on matters of constitutional and national importance.

Merits of live streaming proceedings:-

- Indian legal system is **built on the concept of open courts**, which means that the proceedings are open to all members of the public
- Justice should not only be done, **it should also be seen to be done.**
- **The emphasis is to make those matters that are of great public importance available for all to see.**
- **Already existing:-**
 - In a bid to bring in transparency, the top court had last year allowed the installation of CCTV video recording with audio in trial courts and tribunals of each state.
 - **To promote transparency, live-streaming has been allowed for both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha proceedings since 2004.**
 - Similarly, the recording of videos in the highest courts in Canada and Australia, as well as in some international courts, most notably in the International Court of Justice, shows that this exercise has merits.
- The **access to justice, the need to build the right perception, along with the need to educate common people on how the judiciary functions** are all strong reasons in favour of allowing live-streaming of court proceedings.
- This leads to **avoiding multiple versions or wrong projections of facts**, or the menace of fake news or faulty reporting.
- It will **empower and provide access to citizens** who cannot personally come to the court due to socio-economic constraints.
- **Right to information** in real time about the proceedings in the Supreme Court of India on all matters of great public importance in exercise of people rights under **Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India.**
- Such an exercise would **inspire confidence in the functioning of the judiciary as an institution** and help in maintaining the respect that it deserves as a co-equal organ of the state.

Demerits:-

- India has digital divide and technical glitches can lead to poor quality of the streaming hampering the purpose itself.
- Some experts criticise the move they fear with this the court will be reduced to a spectacle
- There is the lack of infrastructure needed to initiate this process.
- Indian judiciary is already overburdened and it is very difficult to implement this

Way forward:-

- Live-streaming need not be called for in all types of matters nor in all courts. **Therefore, matters which have a privacy dimension can be kept out of its scope.** But matters which have a bearing on important public interest issues such as entry of women to the Sabarimala temple, or the constitutionality of the Aadhaar scheme etc can be available for all to watch.
- If live streaming of top court's proceedings is not possible at present, then **alternately the video recording should be allowed**

Conclusion:-

- Technology promises to be the game changer if those in power understand its importance and use it right. It also presents a hope for the Indian legal system to finally deliver on its promise to empower the masses.

Topic: Role of civil services in a democracy

Q1) Do we really need a Chief Secretary in today's politico-administrative ambience in the States and Union Territories? Critically comment. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

[The Indian Express](#)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- Chief secretary is the head of the civil administration in the state or union territory, an officer who represents not just his own service but all services within the civil administration but the recent incident of the Delhi chief secretary being assaulted has raised many questions.

The responsibilities chief secretary looks into are:-

- Guardian of the morale of the civil services and in particular the All India Services
- Design and continuous improvement of administrative systems
- Human resource development in the civil services
- Preserve integrity, neutrality and responsiveness in the civil services
- As a holistic representative of the government, ensure an integrated image of the government internally and externally
- Install and activate appropriate long-term planning, implementation and evaluation systems.
- Supreme court judgements:-**
 - P. Royappa (1974) – The post of Chief Secretary is lynchpin in the administration and smooth functioning of the administration .
 - Salil Sabhlok (2013) –It may be necessary for Chief Minister of a State to appoint a 'suitable' person as a Chief Secretary because both the State Government or the Chief Minister and the appointee share a similar vision of the administrative goals and requirements of the State.
- The CS has to show leadership while overseeing that public interest is preserved in letter and spirit. **It is his duty to run an efficient administration and give the CM fair and impartial advice.**

Why the feeling that chief secretary is not needed:-

- The question has arisen because to many of today's Chief Ministers it does not seem to matter who the Chief Secretary is or how long he or she stays in the job.
- In the Supreme Court judgment it dismissed the petition of an IAS officer against his supersession for promotion as Secretary to the Government of India and it remarked that "it is the privilege of the master to choose his cook."
- This has enabled Chief Ministers to promote officers to the Chief Secretary's grade and pick and choose the Chief Secretary from them as per their whims and fancies without having to supersede an officer openly on merits but for disagreeing with the leaders.
- Transfers of these officers based on Chief minister's wish raised questions whether the post should actually exist.

How to strengthen the mechanism:-

- Whenever cases of apparently unfair treatment of senior public servants by the political executive comes up before the Courts, **the likely adverse impact of such treatment on the quality of administration and service to the public may also be given due weight** instead of taking a narrowly legalistic, rule-based view
- For the appointment/removal of the Chief Secretary, adopt a mechanism similar to the one suggested by the National Police Commission for the appointment/removal of the DGP.
- The UPSC should acquire powers to do an annual State-wise review of how the All India Services cadres in each State are managed and place it before Parliament for a discussion

Conclusion:-

- Civil services are essential for the smooth functioning of the democracy and is a vital tool for governance of India which is visible in multiple implementation of programmes, policy formulation etc.

Topic: India and its neighborhood- relations.

Q1) The unfolding crisis in Maldives draws attention to the perennial question about whether and when India should intervene in the internal politics of its neighbouring countries. Should India directly intervene and try to solve the Maldives crisis? Critically comment. (250 Words)

[The Indian Express](#)

[The Indian Express](#)

Background:-

- Maldives is in the midst of a deep political crisis. President Abdulla Yameen has declared a state of emergency just days after the Supreme Court of Maldives has ordered for the release of political prisoners

India should intervene

- **Earlier instances:-**
 - India has often intervened in the internal affairs of other countries for instance the liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971, the intervention in the Sri Lankan civil war in the late 1980s etc.
- Doing something would involve political mediation between the government and Opposition, the use of diplomacy and ultimately restore order in Maldives. **Such an intervention is likely to get considerable international support**
- **The current President of Maldives role:-**
 - Ever since he took power in 2013, **India-Maldives relations have deteriorated.**
 - He went close to China and handed out big infrastructure projects to Chinese companies and also let Chinese naval ships to dock in Male.
 - His relations with Saudi Arabia and the **growing trend of radicalization in Maldives have also been areas of concern in India which compel it to intervene.**
- **India cannot be a global power if it does not intervene in major crises.** The current crisis in the Maldives is an opportunity for India and any global role is always dependent on a country's performance in the neighborhood first.
- **India's first priority is to ensure the safety of Indian tourists and workers in Maldives.** An Indian intervention can ensure that.

No intervention:-

- A military intervention today could leave Indian troops in the Maldivian crisis for a long time.
- It could **also prove counterproductive to India's long-term interests** for instance It would push Maldives even closer to the Chinese
- India's foreign policy follows no intervention in the internal affairs of other sovereign countries.
- **It would boost perception of India as a big brother and a bully in the region.**
- **An Indian military intervention is unlikely to benefit democratic forces in the Maldives in the long run.** Even if a democratic government is formed due to Indian intervention such a government would lack legitimacy in Maldivian people.
- Intervention by India could consolidate public opinion behind the present Maldivian president and ramp up nationalist fervour, **giving his actions greater acceptability.**
- India should also think deeply about the instruments it can use to ensure a favourable outcome in Maldives. The use of a instrument like the economic blockade in Nepal in 2015-16 will not help.

What should be done?

- India may also take the dispute to and lobby the UN Security Council to bring international attention to the issue.
- If things go very awry imposition of sanctions can also be done.

Q2) Was 'Operation Cactus' that India carried out in 1988, in tune with India's then foreign policy? Should India carry out similar operation today? Comment. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- 'Operation Cactus', the code name for India's military intervention in the **Maldives** in **1988**, following an attempted coup d'état against the government of President Abdul Gayoom and his request for help, was spontaneous and swift.

- This is highlighted in the light of the recent political crisis taken place in Maldives where the president has defied Supreme court order to release political prisoners.

Yes, operation cactus was very necessary:-

- India's foreign policy is about non interference in sovereign countries internal affairs but in 1988 the Maldivian president requested India's help through military intervention and as a responsible neighbor India as swift in its action and **within the bounds of legality per the ICJ Nicaragua**
- Also it was to protect Maldives from a band of armed militants of the People's Liberation Organisation (PLOTE) who had come from Sri Lanka and seized control over vital installations in Maldives. So India upheld rule of law.
- Because it was a group of militants, **the Indian government won the international community's praise for its quick and effective action**
- The entire population of Maldives was shocked by the militants action and was squarely behind the Gayoom government and India.
- **India's intervention in the Maldives was a model for the benign security role that India could play in the Indian Ocean**
- **'Operation Cactus enhanced India's prestige enormously and showed its efficiency and capability to mount a successful operation at short notice.**

No:-

- The intervention nevertheless caused some disquiet among India's neighbours in South Asia

India should intervene now :-

- **Earlier instances:-**
 - India has often intervened in the internal affairs of other countries for instance the liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971, the intervention in the Sri Lankan civil war in the late 1980s etc.
- Doing something would involve political mediation between the government and Opposition, the use of diplomacy and ultimately restore order in Maldives. **Such an intervention is likely to get considerable international support**
- **The current President of Maldives role:-**
 - Ever since he took power in 2013, **India-Maldives relations have deteriorated.**
 - He went close to China and handed out big infrastructure projects to Chinese companies and also let Chinese naval ships to dock in Male.
 - His relations with Saudi Arabia and the **growing trend of radicalization in Maldives have also been areas of concern in India which compel it to intervene.**
- **India cannot be a global power if it does not intervene in major crises.** The current crisis in the Maldives is an opportunity for India and any global role is always dependent on a country's performance in the neighborhood first.
- **India's first priority is to ensure the safety of Indian tourists and workers in Maldives.** An Indian intervention can ensure that.

No intervention now:-

- As the situation does not meet the requirements articulated by the 'responsibility to protect' doctrine, **unilateral military intervention would fall foul of Article 2 of the UN charter.**
- A military intervention today could leave Indian troops in the Maldivian crisis for a long time.
- It could **also prove counterproductive to India's long-term interests** for instance It would push Maldives even closer to the Chinese
- India's foreign policy follows no intervention in the internal affairs of other sovereign countries.
- **It would boost perception of India as a big brother and a bully in the region.**
- **An Indian military intervention is unlikely to benefit democratic forces in the Maldives in the long run .**Even if a democratic government is formed due to Indian intervention such a government would lack legitimacy in Maldivian people.
- Intervention by India could consolidate public opinion behind the present Maldivian president and ramp up nationalist fervour, **giving his actions greater acceptability.**
- India should also think deeply about the instruments it can use to ensure a favourable outcome in Maldives. The use of a instrument like the economic blockade in Nepal in 2015-16 will not help.

What should be done?

- India may also take the dispute to and lobby the UN Security Council to bring international attention to the issue.
- If things go very awry imposition of sanctions can also be done.
- India needs to be patient and monitor the situation especially till the planned elections in Maldives in the next few months.

Q3) The success of Indian diplomacy would lie in striking the 'Goldilocks' balance in dealing with Male; neither too hot nor too cold. Analyse. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- Maldives is in the midst of a deep political crisis. President Abdulla Yameen has declared a state of emergency just days after the Supreme Court of Maldives has ordered for the release of political prisoners.
- India's approach need to be assertive at the same time too much coercion should not be used. So a steady balance need to be maintained.

India should intervene now :-

- **Earlier instances:-**
 - India has often intervened in the internal affairs of other countries for instance the liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971, the intervention in the Sri Lankan civil war in the late 1980s etc.
- Doing something would involve political mediation between the government and Opposition, the use of diplomacy and ultimately restore order in Maldives. **Such an intervention is likely to get considerable international support .**
- Experts say that India is steadily losing stature in the neighbourhood and its inability to act in the Maldives will only further accentuate this reality.
- **The current President of Maldives role:-**
 - Ever since he took power in 2013, **India-Maldives relations have deteriorated.**
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No intervention now:-

- As the situation does not meet the requirements articulated by the 'responsibility to protect' doctrine, **unilateral military intervention would fall foul of Article 2 of the UN charter.**
- There is increasing recognition today that humanitarian intervention often leads to more chaos than order. **And the crisis in the Maldives is not even humanitarian in nature.**
- A military intervention today could leave Indian troops in the Maldivian crisis for a long time.
- It could **also prove counterproductive to India's long-term interests** for instance It would **push Maldives even closer to the Chinese.**
- India's foreign policy follows no intervention in the internal affairs of other sovereign countries. **Intervening in what is strictly a domestic political issue of the Maldives would also be in breach of India's traditional approach to dealing with crises in its neighbourhood.**
- **It would boost perception of India as a big brother and a bully in the region.**
- **An Indian military intervention is unlikely to benefit democratic forces in the Maldives in the long run .** Even if a democratic government is formed due to Indian intervention such a government would lack legitimacy in Maldivian people.
- Intervention by India could consolidate public opinion behind the present Maldivian president and ramp up nationalist fervour, **giving his actions greater acceptability.**
- An Indian intervention will push the Maldives towards **more Islamist politics.**
- Indian intervention **could also complicate life for over 25,000 Indian expatriates who live and work in the Maldives**

What should be done?

- India may also take the dispute to and lobby the UN Security Council to bring international attention to the issue.
- India should also think deeply about the instruments it can use to ensure a favourable outcome in Maldives. The use of a instrument like the economic blockade in Nepal in 2015-16 will not help.
- If things go very awry imposition of sanctions can also be done.
- India needs to be patient and monitor the situation especially till the planned elections in Maldives in the next few months.

Conclusion:-

- In short, India has very little moral, legal and political locus standi to justify an intervention in the Maldives. It's at best an interested party whose best bet is diplomacy and persuasion.

Q4) The success of Indian diplomacy would lie in striking the 'Goldilocks' balance in dealing with Male; neither too hot nor too cold. Analyse. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- Maldives is in the midst of a deep political crisis. President Abdulla Yameen has declared a state of emergency just days after the Supreme Court of Maldives has ordered for the release of political prisoners.
- India's approach need to be assertive at the same time too much coercion should not be used. So a steady balance need to be maintained.

India should intervene now :-

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- Doing something would involve political mediation between the government and Opposition, the use of diplomacy and ultimately restore order in Maldives. **Such an intervention is likely to get considerable international support .**
- Experts say that India is steadily losing stature in the neighbourhood and its inability to act in the Maldives will only further accentuate this reality.
- **The current President of Maldives role:-**
 - Ever since he took power in 2013, **India-Maldives relations have deteriorated.**
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- An Indian intervention will push the Maldives towards **more Islamist politics.**
- Indian intervention **could also complicate life for over 25,000 Indian expatriates who live and work in the Maldives**

What should be done?

- India may also take the dispute to and lobby the UN Security Council to bring international attention to the issue.
- India should also think deeply about the instruments it can use to ensure a favourable outcome in Maldives. The use of a instrument like the economic blockade in Nepal in 2015-16 will not help.
- If things go very awry imposition of sanctions can also be done.
- India needs to be patient and monitor the situation especially till the planned elections in Maldives in the next few months.

Conclusion:-

- In short, India has very little moral, legal and political locus standi to justify an intervention in the Maldives. It's at best an interested party whose best bet is diplomacy and persuasion.

Q5) Critically analyse the nature and prospects of India's evolving 'Look West' policy. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- After successfully implementing a "Look East" policy to promote trade and investment with its Asian neighbours, India has adopted a similar policy toward West Asia.

Nature of India's evolving Look west policy:-

- **India seeks to pursue a multi-dimensional engagement with West Asia.** While much focus is often given to India's 'Act East' policy, India's 'Look West' policy too is evolving rapidly.
- India's voice is becoming an important one in a region.
- **Trade and economic ties** are becoming the main point of relations and India is turning in a long term investor.
- De-hyphenation of relations is taking place for instance Israel and Palestine where India is acting independently to push its national interests.
- Growing convergence between the countries in the region and India on pragmatic issues like tackling terrorism, Energy security etc.
- The relations traditionally were based on energy and Indian Diaspora present there but now India seeks to maintain relations to be a significant power in the world as well.

Prospects:-

- **Trade and economic ties are becoming central to the India-UAE relationship.**
 - A landmark pact awarding a consortium of Indian oil companies a 10% stake in offshore oil concession will be the **first Indian investment in the UAE's upstream oil sector**, transforming a traditional buyer-seller relationship into a **long-term investor relationship with stakes in each other's strategic sectors.**
 - Similarly India's investment in Chabahar port of Iran
- **China's expanding footprint in the Indian Ocean Region has alerted India to the possibility of strengthening security ties with West Asian region. India is likely to step up its military presence in Oman.**
 - **Naval cooperation has already been gaining momentum with Muscat** giving berthing rights to Indian naval vessels to fight piracy in the Gulf of Aden. Regular naval exercises have now become the norm.
 - **India and Oman have not only made military cooperation more expansive** by enhancing cooperation in the field of health, tourism and peaceful uses of outer space.
- **West Asia is crucial for stability and economic growth in India.** It is from this region that we get around 65 per cent of our oil and more than 80 per cent of our gas supplies. Seven million Indians live in these Arab Gulf monarchies which are all members of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council.
- **India remains strongly committed to the establishment of a viable Palestinian state, living at peace with Israel.**
- **Israel -India relations are so multidimensional be it defence, agricultural technologies etc**

Concerns:

- Bureaucratic inertia in India continues to hamper India's outreach.
- If the Association of South East Asian Nations has been the vehicle for India's expanding partnership with South East Asia, there is **no similar forum in the Middle East.**
- One important reason for Delhi's success east of India has been the absence of domestic political discord over the region. **Ideological, political and religious divisions in India over the Middle East have long complicated Delhi's thinking of the region.**
- Instability in the region due to ISIS.

Way forward:-

- India's engagement with West Asia should now focus on delivering on its commitments and strengthening its presence as an economic and security partner.
- India as an emerging power need to articulate a clear road map for the region.
- Growing rivalry between the Sunni Arabs and Shia Iran is reshaping old relationships and India will have to be more pragmatic in its approach towards the region.

Q6) India is one of the few countries to have warm and mutually beneficial relations on all sides of the divide in West Asia including the Shia/Sunni split and the Iran/Israel rift. In the light of India's "Think West" policy, analyse the statement. (250 Words)

[IDSA](#)

[The Indian Express](#)

[Reference](#)

Background:-

- Over the past several years, India has tried to reshape its engagement with the Middle East, a region that houses millions of Indians and is vital for its economic, energy, and strategic interests.
- The recent meetings with almost the major countries in the western Asia Israel, Iran, Gulf countries and India show that India is maintaining good relations with these countries.

Think west policy:-

- It is the India's policy outreach towards the Gulf. It suggests a new push towards more concrete strategic policies for West Asia.
- The interplay among these (Gulf) nations actually offers India with new avenues of cooperation other than traditional focus on energy and labour. 'Act East' would be matched with 'Think West.'

How India managed to strike balance:-

- **Iran:-**
 - Both India and Iran seem to have come to the conclusion that there are a large number of areas in which their interests coincide and converge
 - Iran's importance for India derives from its immense energy resources, strategically important location linking West Asia with Central Asia, and the possibility of building a friendship not disturbed by the "Pakistan factor."
 - India and Iran have decided to focus their energies on areas of concurrence and rapidly embark on a mutually beneficial and fruitful partnership.
 - In the recent visit of Rouhani to India Nine agreements were signed covering a wide gamut of issues including connectivity, energy, infrastructure, trade, investment, security, defence, culture and people-to-people contacts.
 - **India's recent accession to the Ashgabat Agreement** and to the TIR Convention will help enhance its engagement with the region.
 - Chabahar provides a strategic option to India to connect with Afghanistan and Central Asia and beyond by sidestepping an uncooperative Pakistan.
 - India will set up 'plants in sectors such as fertilizers, petrochemicals and metallurgy in Chabahar Free Trade Zone (FTZ) on terms mutually beneficial to the concerned parties. This will be a win-win investment as it will promote India's energy security while providing financial resources and employment opportunities to Iran.
 - The Agreement on Avoidance of Double taxation was signed to promote bilateral trade and investment
- **Gulf countries:-**
 - The Gulf countries know that India does not have any ambitions to control West Asia. Nor is India part of any global alliance that challenges the Saudi influence in the region. This makes it easier for India to deepen its partnership with the Gulf Arab countries. India is not seen as a hostile power by either of the blocs(Gulf and Iran)
 - It is of vital importance to India that it maintains close ties with the Gulf Arab countries in order **to ensure energy security, the continued flow of remittances, the well-being of the Indian expatriate workforce, and the tackling of the terror threat.**
 - India offers both investment opportunities for the Saudi fund and remains a major buyer of its oil which make the country an important economic destination for the Saudis.
 - Saudi Arabia, like its compatriots in the Gulf, is now actively looking east to develop its core interest, selling oil.
 - Given the huge number of Indians working in the Gulf, it is possible that some of them could be influenced by the Islamic State's propaganda. Therefore, retaining close intelligence and counterterror cooperation to tackle this challenge is a security imperative for both India and the Gulf Arab countries
- **Israel-Palestine :-**
 - India has defence, agriculture ,science and technological relations with Israel at the same time it supports Palestinian cause as well. There is dehyphenation of the approach with Israel and Palestine which is welcomed by the countries.

Conclusion:-

- Today, India is building infrastructure in Iran while also sharing intelligence with Saudi Arabia. And while the UAE is cooperating with India on maritime security, Israel is selling arms to India. So the same approach needs to continue and India needs to maintain good relations with these countries.

Q7) Tibetan refugees in India are considered the 'most successful' refugee community in the world. Despite this appreciation, Tibetan refugees face numerous challenges in India, especially with respect to acquiring India's citizenship. Examine these challenges and suggest what Indian government should do to address grievances of the Tibetan community in India. (250 Words)

IDSA

Background:-

- India facilitated the preservation and promotion of the Tibetan refugees distinctive culture, tradition and identity. With the generous support and assistance of India and international aid agencies, the Tibetan refugees in India have not only attained self-sustenance but also successfully reconstructed their social, political and religious institutions in exile. Due to these achievements, Tibetan refugees are considered the 'most successful' refugee community in the world.
- There are about 1.2 lakh Tibetan refugees in India.

Challenges faced by Tibetan refugees are:-

- **Educated but unemployed Tibetan youth:-**
 - As the number of Tibetan youth with a graduate degree has increased, the government-in-exile could not employ them all in its establishment.
 - The youth are confronted with the challenge of finding employment according to their qualification and skill.
 - According to the Second Tibetan Demographic Survey, over 17 per cent of the total workforce population is unemployed or underemployed. Many of them succumbed to drug addiction in the absence of gainful employment.
- **Their status of statelessness disqualifies Tibetan youth from many job opportunities in India.**
 - Any economic activities outside the Tibetan settlements encounter uncertainty and insecurity as Tibetans neither have the right to own businesses or obtain a license to engage in business activities nor are allowed to own or buy land/property.
 - Further, they are not entitled to secure bank loans.
- **Difficulties of travelling abroad for studies, visiting relatives and other social engagements:-**
 - **To do these activities, the Government of India issues an "Identity Certificate" (IC) for Tibetans in lieu of a passport for travelling abroad.** Tibetans with this travel document have encountered problems with immigration officials at various airports **as many officials are unfamiliar with this kind of travel document.**
- **The Tibetan government-in-exile approach seems to be confusing to the Tibetans in India**
 - It has been encouraging Tibetans living in other countries, especially those in the West, to take up the citizenship of their host countries and labels them as Tibetan Ambassadors to distant lands.
 - On the other hand, it does not favour Tibetans in India adopting Indian citizenship.
- Even the Tibetan rehabilitation policy announced in 2014 It does not address property ownership, getting government jobs, or traveling freely within and outside India
- **The four conditions imposed by the Government of India recently for acquiring Indian citizenship are:-**
 - Registration/refugee certificate (RC) and identity certificate should be cancelled
 - The applicant should not be staying in designated Tibetan refugee settlements
 - An undertaking that he/she no longer enjoys Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) benefits
 - A declaration that he/she no longer enjoys any privileges, including subsidies by being an RC holder
 - **These will have a negative consequence in terms of dismantling Tibetan settlements** which are nerve centres for the preservation and promotion of Tibetan civilization.
- Tibetans are seen as refugees and as stateless in India. **Being seen that way after having been born and lived whole lives in India is unfair, demoralising and frustrating .**
- Despite the rehabilitation policy in some states, they cannot get driving licences or bank loans. In sectors where they can work, they often face discrimination from Indian employers. Besides, even registration certificates have become harder to get over the years.
- **Conflicts with locals:-**
 - In Arunachal Pradesh locals expressed their dissent and oppose to the permanent settlement of Tibetan refugees and their exclusion from Inner Line Permit provisions. **The locals argue that the implementation of the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy, 2014 would threaten their identity and culture.**

India's measures:-

- **Indian citizenship act 1986 :-**
 - Provides Citizenship to anyone Born in India Between 1950 and 1987 covering large sections of Tibetan refugees to entitle as Indian Citizens.
- **Tibetan rehabilitation policy 2014:-**The key features are as follows:
 - **Land**
 - The state governments should sign a lease document for allocating the land for the settlement of the Tibetan refugees for a period of about 20 years.
 - The land allotted for Tibetan occupation should not be disturbed by the state governments. It should also issue Rent Tenancy Certificate.
 - **Benefits**
 - The policy advises the state governments to extend the benefits of state schemes and the Centrally sponsored schemes such as NREGA, Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), National Food Security Act (NFSA) etc
 - **Basic Amenities**
 - The policy mandates the states to provide infrastructural facilities and basic amenities like Roads, Electrification, Drinking Water Schemes in or around the Tibetan Settlements.
 - **Economic Benefits**
 - The policy advises the states to undertake skill up-gradation and training programmes for the Tibetan refugees.
 - They should also permit the refugees to give permission to run Tibetan Bazaars to trade in Tibetan products like handloom, handicrafts etc.
 - Qualified professional among the Tibetan Refugees should be permitted to take up employment opportunities in private and non-Government Sectors.
 - States have to permit the refugees to carry out economic activities as they desire, and to that trade licenses/permission be provided.

Measures needed:-

- India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which spells out refugee rights and state responsibilities to protect them. India needs to sign it.
- Indian law can be amended to give Tibetan refugees a form of nationality that is short of Indian citizenship, such as the status of a protected persons. This status can be granted after negotiation with the Dalai Lama. After that, the refugees can be issued Indian travel documents and can enjoy diplomatic protection while overseas.
- **Government of India needs to rethink its four conditions** as well as the relaxation of rules with regard to Tibetans travelling abroad.
- To improve the conditions of Tibetans in these settlements, the Government of India needs to **redouble efforts to implement the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy of 2014 which it adopted in consultation with the Tibetan government-in-exile.**
- In the change of policy a proposal was made that Tibetan refugees would be provided with a no-objection certificate at the time of issuance of identity certificates and that would be enough for them to travel to any foreign country. This needs fast implementation.

Conclusion:-

- The Government of India could project these thriving Tibetan settlements at the international level as a model for post-conflict reconstruction of war-devastated societies and try to project its expertise to acquire a greater role in United Nations' post-conflict reconstruction and peace building activities with local ownership.
- **In effect, both the Government of India and the Tibetan government-in-exile need to adopt a long-term perspective and rethink their policy towards Tibetans acquiring Indian citizenship.**

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

Q1) It is said that the India-U.S. civil nuclear agreement has become obsolete and there is a need for India to negotiate a new nuclear deal with the US. Considering new global realities, how should India revive this deal? Critically analyse. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Reasons which make the deal obsolete or what is the need for the revival of the deal?

▪ **Issues with the Companies:-**

- So far there is no sign yet of any concrete contract between an American company and the Indian authorities to build a reactor. **In 2009, both GE-Hitachi and Toshiba-Westinghouse had begun talks on techno-commercial agreements for six reactors each in India.**
- GE-Hitachi's plans were shelved after it rejected the Obama-Modi agreement in 2015, saying GE would not accept the compromise formula on supplier liability.
- Toshiba and Westinghouse had major financial troubles last year. The track record of the company does not inspire confidence.
 - In the US too, work on four nuclear plants began but not one has been completed yet.
- India is thinking of reviving the deal with Westinghouse. While the construction of the plant will be done by a local partner, design and consultation will be provided by Westinghouse. **No one knows if the technology is reliable as no plants with the technology are in operation around the world.**

▪ **The deal that took place earlier was under different circumstances.** No there have been shifts in global politics, boom of renewable energy technology is happening, there is change in the U.S.'s commitment to India.

▪ **There are changes in the deal itself:-**

- The financial crisis was set off because Westinghouse went into major cost overruns in building four AP1000 reactors at two projects in the U.S., the same reactors as the ones meant for India.
- India's past record with Russian projects puts the mean time to construct a reactor here at nine years. This would mean that even if an India-U.S. techno-commercial contract is finally readied in 2019 it may not see fruition until 2029, a good 20 years after the nuclear agreement was signed. This was not the deal wanted

▪ **US policy on renewable energy changed:-**

- Trump's presidency has taken a very sharp turn away from renewable energy and nuclear energy.
- America wants to mine, export and push oil, gas, coal and shale trade into its foreign outreach. **So India** may not get the support that the Obama administration had promised both on financing renewable energy projects and in facilitating India-U.S. civil nuclear power deals.

▪ **India's own requirements from the India-U.S. civil nuclear deal have changed considerably.**

- In 2017, the Cabinet approved a \$11 billion, 7,000 MW construction plan for 10 Indian-made pressurised heavy water reactors (PHWRs). So India is making a push for **indigenous nuclear power plants**
- **India has also found much more comfort in its existing agreement with Russia's Atomstroyexport**, which makes steady pace in delivering reactors and operationalising power projects.

▪ The cost that India is prepared to pay for nuclear energy through foreign collaborations has also changed now.

▪ **Shifts in the world nuclear industry must be studied closely before heading back into negotiations with new companies.**

- As the pressure to lower nuclear power tariffs increases, nuclear safety requirements have become more stringent, putting intense strain on all those in the business.
- **Even the world is compromising on its commitment with nuclear energy post Fukushima disaster .**

▪ **Nuclear power is losing its primacy in the energy mix.** In 2016, for example, global wind power output grew by 16%, solar by 30%, but nuclear energy only by 1.4%.

How to revive the deal:-

- The above mentioned issues need to be carefully discussed and logical conclusions need to be derived
- Supplier liability need to be stressed.
- Safety mechanisms need to be imbibed more seriously.
- The projects need to be delivered on time and should also include cost over runs and bankruptcy of the companies.
- Enrichment and reprocessing is needed to avoid future of nuclear waste.

Q2) India is now a member of three of the four international export control groups. What does its membership of the Wassenaar Arrangement mean and why does it matter? Examine. (250 Words)

[Livemint](#)

Background:-

- In the 18 years since its nuclear tests, India's pursuit of nuclear legitimacy has taken several forms.
- As part of this effort, India has placed particular emphasis on joining key export control regimes.
- The Wassenaar Arrangement, or WA, is one of the world's four major export control regimes, the other three being the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Australia Group.

Wassenaar Agreement:-

- The Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) has been established in order to contribute to regional and international security and stability, by promoting transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies, thus preventing de-stabilizing accumulations. The aim is also to prevent the acquisition of these items by terrorists.
- It has 42 members; India was admitted as a "participating state" in 2017.
- Members must be producers/exporters of arms/sensitive industrial equipment
- Members must have national policies for non-proliferation and an effective export control regime
- Members must adhere to global non-proliferation compacts including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Biological Weapons Convention, Chemical Weapons Convention.
- The Arrangement is based on five crucial principles:
 - It contributes to regional and international security and stability.
 - It promotes transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies.
 - It complements and reinforces the export control regimes for weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.
 - It is not directed against any state or group of states.
 - It uses export controls as a means to combat terrorism.

Why does it matter?

- India's admittance to Wassenaar agreement despite being a non-signatory of the NPT has been seen as a sign of its **growing nuclear legitimacy**.
- Membership of the Wassenaar Arrangement is, along with membership of MTCR and Australia Group, three-fourths of the way into **the membership of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group**.
- Wassenaar Arrangement will **embed India deeper in the global non-proliferation architecture** and enable access to critical technologies in the defence and space sectors.
- India's entry into the WA is also an **acknowledgement of its rise as a powerful nation by major powers** in the international system.
- With gaining entry into the WA, **India is expected to acquire critical technologies which will boost its defence as well as space industry**
- The membership of these groups will **give India a distinct advantage when participating in the management of global commerce in advanced technology**.

Problems:-

- The US is likely to treat the export of armed drones to India with much more caution than it does to NATO allies.
- Not only is India working on nuclear-capable cruise missiles that could, in theory, benefit from drone technology US officials will also be hesitant to expand India's perceived options for striking Pakistan.
- Indian drones in Pakistan would face a drastically less permissive environment than their CIA counterparts, which fly in specially cleared airspace.

Conclusion:-

- India is moving in the right direction by being part of these groups and gaining international legitimacy. This shows the growing stature of India in the world arena .

Q3) Analyse the features and prospects of India's de-hyphenated policy towards Israel and Palestine. (250 Words)

[Livemint](https://www.insightsias.com)

De hyphenated policy-

- The policy where one country builds up relations with another country on standalone basis and without any linking (fear of backlash or criticism) with any other country is called de-hyphenation policy
- India's Non-alignment is the biggest example of de-hyphenated foreign policy where India made relations with both the adversaries of Cold war; US and Russia simultaneously without linking each other.

General features :-

The De hyphenated foreign policy means the foreign policy with:-

- More pragmatism and more need based approach than the traditional ethos
- Rational Public discourse on various foreign policy aspects.
- Active role of elected representatives in foreign policy.
- Efficient use of track 2 and track 3 diplomacy to meet the requirements of dialogues and foreign relations
- Use of economic strengths in relations to deal with the geo political goals
- Using soft power in foreign relations

Case of Israel-Palestine:-

- India, one of the early members of NAM, hesitated to establish full-fledged relations with Israel. Some strategy makers in India then were of the opinion that this might offend Islamic nations.
- As, India remained non-aligned, any state visit by an Indian leader was hyphenated as Israel- Palestine visit. **This means the visiting Indian leader used to visit both Israel and Palestine, in-order not to show any favouritism towards any of the two nations.**
- In an unprecedented move, India's PM last year visited Israel and not Palestine. **This divestment from NAM and projecting an explicit foreign policy stand is a perfect example of de-hyphenation in diplomacy.**
- It doesn't mean there is any shift in West Asia policy. India is wedded to support for the just cause of the Palestinian people and their government. It has supported Palestine in resolutions sponsored by them or other countries at the UN on many occasions.

Prospects of dehyphenated policy:-

- India's decision making matters in terms of foreign policy becomes autonomous.
- India's foreign policy will be solely guided by national interest; delinking other priorities.
- India will be able to develop close ties with Israel without irking Palestine or other Islamic countries
- India can have relations with major oil and trading partners of both Saudi Arabia and Iran; despite both being arch rivals in the region
- This policy will lead to diversification of markets and supplies for India.
- It can improve the India's image as a rising power where it is taking responsibility and dealing with international issues .This can even trigger India getting permanent seat in UNSC.
- It can also help Arab countries further ensure oil security for India.
- It will help in ensuring a balanced relationship and getting the best from both Israel and Palestine.
- It can lead to more trade especially defence with Israel and also with respect to terror India is more aligned with Israel.
- The fact that India is an upcoming superpower both by domestic and international narratives is a discourse that is directly on a collision course with its policy of non-alignment.
- Indian engagement revolves around protecting a demographic base of more than seven million of the country's citizens working in the region, responsible for sending over \$60 billion in remittances every year into the Indian economy. As India moves towards becoming a larger player in global politics and economics, these pre-existing policies are increasingly in need of review, and de-hyphenating Israel and Palestine was a process long past its due date.

Conclusion:-

- In the changing geopolitical scenario, the complexities and interactions have increased. Watertight compartmentalisation isn't possible in such situations
- National interest should be considered while resorting to hyphenation or dehyphenation on case to case basis.

Q4) India recently joined the Ashgabat Agreement, which was instituted in April 2011. Discuss the significance of this for India. (250 Words)

IDSIA

Ashgabat agreement :-

- India recently joined the Ashgabat Agreement, which was instituted in April 2011 to **establish an international multimodal transport and transit corridor between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.**
- The Agreement was first signed by Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Oman and Qatar on 25 April 2011.
- While Qatar subsequently withdrew from the agreement in 2013, Kazakhstan and Pakistan joined the grouping in 2016. **The Ashgabat Agreement came into force in April 2016.**
- Its **objective is to enhance connectivity within the Eurasian region and synchronize it with other regional transport corridors**, including the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

Significance :-

- With the commissioning of the Shahid Beheshti terminal at Chabahar and India's joining of the Ashgabat Agreement, a greater prospect now opens up for enlarging both the operational and practical scope of **Chabahar to become a vital gateway and the shortest land route to Central Asia.**
- Its accession to the Ashgabat Agreement would **enable India to utilise the existing transport and transit corridor to facilitate trade and commercial interactions with the Eurasian region.**
 - India's share in Central Asia's total trade is only about one per cent. Only by improving transport connectivity can the prospect of commercial ties with the region be enhanced.
- Further, this would **synchronise with India's efforts to implement the INSTC for enhanced connectivity.**
- **Resources:-**
 - Joining the Ashgabat Agreement would **make it easier for India to reach out to Central Asia** which houses **strategic and high-value minerals** including uranium, copper, titanium, ferroalloys, yellow phosphorus, iron ore etc.
- India's participation in Eurasian connectivity projects through the Ashgabat Agreement will serve to address the **integration process under the EAEU and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in more viable ways.**
- It will provide India an opportunity **for reorientation of the freight traffic from the traditional sea route to land transcontinental routes**
- **Afghanistan dependence on Pakistan will reduce and this will be beneficial for the stability of Indian neighbourhood.**
 - Opening up of Chabahar will provide a quick, easy, cheap, fast and seamless access to Indian goods and cargo to Afghanistan and Central Asia.
- In the backdrop of joining the Ashgabat Agreement, India can now enlarge the strategic role of Chabahar port for evolving an integrated transportation network involving both the INSTC and the proposed transit corridor to Central Asia.
 - In fact, the Chabahar-Irانشahr-Zahedan-Mashad corridor is the ideal route to connect to Sarakhs (Turkmen border). India has already committed to lay a railway track from Chabahar to Zahedan.

Certain challenges still exist in the region like:-

- Competition and rivalries between the countries in this region.
- Issues of water scarcity
- Border disputes
- Extremism and fundamentalism
- Drug trafficking
- Environmental degradation
- Migration
- Growing Violence & Security challenges

Way forward:-

- India's connectivity approach need not be limited to increasing trade and commerce but should aim to **enhance investment and services, interlinking sources of raw material, centres of productions and markets between India and Eurasia.**
 - For example, a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) could spur the unhindered flow of raw materials as well as inflow of capital and technology through new industrial infrastructure along Chabahar and INSTC routes.

Q5) For India, in what ways priorities of engagement with Iran have changed? Analyse.
(250 Words)

[The Indian Express](#)

Focus of India-Iran relations earlier :-

- **India has been caught up in the U.S.-Iran nuclear imbroglio before.**
 - During the Obama administration, India struggled to purchase oil from Iran, with the latter dropping out of its position among the top three oil providers to eighth, as India's payment system to Tehran via a bank in Turkey was shut down by US.
 - Immense pressure from the U.S. forced India to ward off Iranian requests to allow bank branches to open in India to facilitate transactions.
 - India has also followed the U.S. line at the UN, voting against Iran at the IAEA and cutting energy trade significantly in recent years. This made Iran perceive India to be closer to the US and EU, which were mounting pressure on Iran's nuclear programme.

- Earlier Arab-Israel issue also took centre stage.
- Connectivity via Chabahar was the target but it was mired with delays

How did the priorities change:-

- Despite hiccups, India's relations with Iran have remained generally stable in recent years
- For India, with the passage of time, priorities of engagement with Iran, too, have changed.
- **The main pillar of engagement is connectivity:-**
 - The Chabahar port in southeastern Iran is the lynchpin of that engagement, because the port gives India alternative access to Afghanistan and onwards to Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan.
 - India has a vital interest in operationalising Chabahar to its full potential.
 - India is also working with **Iran to operationalise the ambitious International North South Transport Corridor**, which will connect Mumbai with Central Asia, through the port of Bandar Abbas on the Strait of Hormuz, and then through rail and road links to the Eurasian region.
- **Energy:-**
 - **India imports almost 60% of its crude from West Asia and the Gulf, and Iran is one of the major suppliers.**
 - India is keen to lift the relationship to a comprehensive partnership by developing the Farzad B offshore oilfields in the Persian Gulf.
- **Indian companies can now invest in rupees in Iran.** Bhutan and Nepal are the other two countries that get such treatment
- There is the common interest in **stabilising Afghanistan.**
- Iran is not under the US sanctions anymore.
- **Shia- Sunni rivalry** has taken the centre stage now.
- Ashgabat agreement gave further impetus to the relations.

Still some concerns remain:-

- There is also a strong case for improved people-to-people links. **Restrictive visa regimes have ensured the Indian Diaspora in Iran is small in comparison to other countries in the region**, and the tourist traffic is low.
- The **issue of alleged Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav** currently on death row in Pakistan being kidnapped from Iran is not just an India-Pakistan matter.
- Beyond this, revelations of Iranian access to Al Qaeda and giving home to Osama Bin Laden's family after he was killed in the Abbottabad raid in Pakistan raises some uncomfortable **questions for Iran in the global narrative on terrorism.**
- **The challenges for India and Iran are not just economic, but political as well.**
 - In June last year, Iran's Supreme Leader brought up the issue of Kashmir for the first time in seven years including Kashmiris along with Muslims in Yemen and Bahrain as among those being oppressed by tyranny.
- **Iran and One belt one road initiative of China:-**
 - Iran's geographic location makes it the only viable land bridge from the Persian Gulf to the landlocked Central Asian states (a market of about 65 million people) and the three states of the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia). China is committed to becoming the predominant economic and political power in these areas.

Conclusion:-

- The recent visit by Iran's president is a good opportunity for both countries to iron out their differences, make significant strides on long-pending economic topics, and discuss the regional dynamics of a destabilized West Asia.

Q6) India's energy requirements and greater geopolitical clout have resulted in it importing more hydrocarbon resources from Russia. Analyse how will ongoing tensions between Russia and the West, fluctuating crude oil prices, and the falling value of the rouble affect Indo-Russian cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector. (250 Words)

[EPW](#)

Background:-

- Indo-Russian bilateral cooperation has been promising in the hydrocarbon sector. Of India's hydrocarbon imports by the end of 2012, Russia's share was \$176 million.
- In the light of India's growing energy necessity, commitment to Paris agreement there is need to diversify the energy imports and reduce dependence on Coal.

Impact on Indo –Russian cooperation:-

- With its liberal market policy on the export of natural gas and foreign investment in the country, Russia has **developed major LNG projects to pump gas to Asian markets.**
- **Western sanctions:-**
 - India went ahead with the 15th Indo–Russian Bilateral Summit in 2014 despite US protesting that it was not a good time to make business with Russia as usual.
 - Deprived of Western investment, Russia is turning towards Asian markets. The sanctions have created remarkable opportunities for Asian investors, particularly India, for opening joint ventures in the Russian energy sector.
 - From the Russian perspective, **Asian investors are particularly useful**, as they provide cost-effective deals and do not engage themselves in matters of Russian foreign policy.
 - The Western sanctions have prevented Russian energy companies from developing challenging exploration projects. **Therefore, even though the sanctions do not affect the ongoing Russian gas trade, they definitely compromise future Russian gas supply obligations.**
 - Another painful consequence of the Western economic sanctions is the **restriction on foreign investment.**
 - **Alongside the decline in the price of crude, sanctions have affected bilateral business by delaying the work to be done.** The Indian interest to drill shale oil in Siberia could be delayed since Russian companies have contracted US firm Liberty Resources to drill four wells in the Bazhenov shale formation in Siberia.
- **Declining value of the Russian rouble :-**
 - The rouble has lost roughly 23% of its value vis-à-vis the dollar, the euro, and the yen, and it loses about \$2 billion in revenue for every dollar fall in the price of oil
 - Indian investment in Russia will give impetus to the Russian economy and help in stabilising the rouble.
- **Fluctuating crude oil prices:**
 - Russia is especially vulnerable to those prices, since energy exports make up half of its budget.
 - Due to **falling oil prices** India's macro-economic indicators such as inflation, current account deficit (CAD), and trade balance improved so it will be in a better shape for trade with Russia.
 - The low prices may **make many new projects of Indian oil and gas companies like ONGC and OIL unviable, particularly in high-cost projects such as drilling in deepwater, in the Arctic, in Sakhalin, and the Yamal Peninsula.**
 - Hence, Russian and Indian companies will recover very soon and their joint investment and cooperation in the energy sector, at the national and global context, will take the momentum further.

Way forward:-

- Moscow's overseas quest for the 2,600 km-long overland Russia–China–India (RCI) pipeline is congruent with the shifting emphasis in the energy sector globally. If this pipeline is not operationalised, alternative pipeline options could be available for India to access Russian oil and natural gas.
 - For example, the Russian pipeline that reaches Mazar-e-Sharif in Afghanistan could be extended to connect with the ongoing Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India gas pipeline (R–TAPI).
- Russia's involvement in the R–TAPI project will speed up the process of the ongoing TAPI project and lastly, diversifying suppliers by buying more oil from Russia will cushion India against geopolitical risks and take energy security to a higher trajectory.

Q7) For a robust 'Act East' Policy, relying on its natural and acquired advantages, India should build a robust maritime capacity in South East Asia. Comment. (250 Words)

[Livemint](https://www.insightsonindia.com)

Background:-

- The post-Cold War world has compelled India to reshape relations with important countries, such as the US and Japan. There is immense potential for India finally to play a greater role not just in South Asia but in Asia as a whole.

Why should India build a robust maritime capacity:-

- **Natural advantages:-**
 - **Cultural:-**
 - India's ties with Southeast Asia date back more than 2,000 years. Ancient trade between India and countries such as Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand is well-documented. **Southeast Asian cultures, traditions and languages have been profoundly influenced by these early linkages.**
 - **Geographic:-**
 - India is located strategically along major sea-lanes from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific. These sea lanes are also vital trade routes for many ASEAN Member States.

- **Acquired advantages:-**
 - Indian maritime forces have been conducting regular deployments east of the Malacca Straits through a set of bilateral maritime security and naval relations
 - They have accumulated geographical familiarity and knowledge over many decades
- **Close to ASEAN:-**
 - India became an ASEAN Sectoral Dialogue Partner in 1992, a full ASEAN Dialogue Partner in 1995, and participated in the East Asia Summits (EAS) from 2005.
 - ASEAN and India share common interests in peace and security in the region, and an open, balanced and inclusive regional architecture. Both sides share an interest in preserving these vital maritime conduits of trade.
- **Growing relations:-**
 - Several Southeast Asian countries locked in territorial disputes with China have sought even greater Indian engagement in the region
 - China's distinctly hegemonic moves in the last few years in the South China Sea and its growing assertiveness have made ASEAN look towards India as a partner for equilibrium.
 - India already has strong naval ties with countries such as Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia. The ongoing activities of ship visits, of coordinated patrols, of exercises that take place bilaterally, are taking place very well
- **China factor:-**
 - China has also expanded its presence in South Asia, building ports and power plants in countries around India's periphery, such as Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and spurring India to seek new allies.
- **Quad:-**
 - By emphasizing the Act East Policy as the cornerstone of its engagement in the Indo-Pacific India has indicated that the Quad would be an extension of that policy.
 - Rather than assuming greater responsibility with its rising power, China has become more authoritarian, opaque, mercantile, and revisionist. Furthermore, in all four countries elected governments attempted to reach accommodations with Beijing, but were spurned. **This means that despite a continued willingness to engage China by all four parties, alternative mechanisms to uphold a rules-based order are being sought. For this reason, Quad is looked into.**
 - **Being part of quad will upgrade the India's naval forces and make them more effective.**
 - Malabar exercise has expanded in its military capabilities, built confidence, and is setting geopolitical rhetoric. India has quite rightly stuck to its ASEAN centrality/Act East Policy as the pivot for its Indo-Pacific nomenclature and views Quad in this context.
- **Domestic actions:-**
 - India revamped its maritime doctrine in 2015, wherein it took stock of its commitment to an actionable policy. **And keeping in line with this approach it has upped its maritime naval drills**, made port calls in Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, and undertaken maritime capacity building efforts (beyond training) in Vietnam and Myanmar.
- **Growing international stature:-**
 - India sees itself as an emerging pole in the international order and therefore is keen on preserving its autonomy and flexibility of decision-making. It has also become a more vocal proponent and supporter of a liberal international order.
- **Act east policy has wider prerogatives:-**
 - Act East is much more comprehensive and includes a strong security component, including greater capacity building, interoperability, and information sharing with Southeast and Northeast Asian powers.
 - The scope of Act East has expanded to cover the entire Indo-Pacific, beyond an earlier focus on Southeast Asia, China, Japan, and South Korea.
 - Act East has been more focused on end results rather than direction, which is a natural progression and also a sign of greater urgency.

How to do it:-

- **Creating more institutionalized patterns of joint training and exercises along the lines of the Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX), involving navies and coastguards.**
- The latest Sambandh Initiative, and Mobile Training Team programme are targeted at the smaller Indian Ocean neighbours as part of the overall response to China's increasing presence in the region. **It might be worthwhile extending these programmes to South-East Asia.**
- Where technical capacity is concerned, India's extension of credit to Vietnam for acquiring new patrol vessels is noteworthy, but a **more structured programme aimed at South and South-East Asia along the lines of Australia's Pacific patrol boat programme**, could be feasible.
- India could also leverage its **space technology strengths**, especially remote-sensing capabilities for maritime domain awareness.

- **Technical tie-ups between the Indian Space Research Organization and its Asean counterparts in the area of micro- and nano-satellites** for which such national programmes already exist in South-East Asia can be another way forward.
- It may reap greater benefits for these extra-regional powers to coordinate with each other instead of disparate national approaches to assist South-East Asia's maritime security capacity-building, which could lead to duplication and overlap of efforts. **The Quad may serve as such a platform to facilitate such efforts**
- Even with external naval modernization and the success of the Vikrant-class aircraft carrier and Arihant-class of nuclear submarines, **India's indigenous defence production has faced serious operational glitch**, leading to delays such as the failed MiG-29K. So India needs to focus on modernising its naval force than focusing on imports.

Conclusion:-

- **The Delhi declaration at the recent India-ASEAN summit gave further impetus to maritime cooperation** which emphasised need to promote maritime transport cooperation and encourage potential private sector participation in development of seaports, maritime logistics network and maritime services in order to create greater efficient linkages and continue discussions on these priority areas.

Q8) Is the Quadrilateral arrangement involving Australia, India, Japan and the U.S a viable and strong arrangement to take on China? Critically examine. (250 Words)

The Hindu

Background:-

- China's ascent as a superpower is driven not only by its economic dynamism and military modernisation but also by the fact that there has not been a proper multinational coalition with a vision to check its expansionist tendencies. Hence Quad is the mechanism trying to provide an alternative to Chinese hegemony.

It is strong arrangement and viable because:-

- Four countries US, India, Japan and Australia are working to establish a joint regional infrastructure scheme as an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- Unlike the military option, **this is a softer side of the "Quad" engagement and its members are already undertaking connectivity projects around the world.** India and Japan, for example, are working on an ambitious Asia-Africa Growth Corridor linking Southeast Asia to Africa
- **By pooling their resources and having the United States in tow, they stand a reasonable chance of reifying the notion of the "Indo-Pacific".**
- It offers scope for democratic powers to cooperate through military interoperability and **construction of connectivity corridors that are not authoritarian and non-transparent** like Beijing's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative.
- As the "quadrilateral" re-emerges, it is worthwhile **looking at the modalities of a maritime security, defence collaboration and connectivity vertical rising among "like-minded democracies** in Indo-Pacific" that places India at the very fulcrum and provide the necessary balance in Asia.
- The concept of a 'quad' involving India, Japan, Australia and the US **sounds a timely response to China's revanchist policies.** The nations have a great degree of strategic convergence and run on similar value-based systems that prioritise a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- All these countries have individual issues with China. So by coming together they can devise mechanisms to solve problems.

However many questions are raised because:-

- Despite all the concerns expressed by the countries of the Quad, **India remains the only one to openly oppose the BRI.**
- The Quad is yet to decide what its real aim is: maritime security, connectivity, countering China's moves in the Indo-Pacific and on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), or a combination of all three.
- Some strategic analysts in India are still debating the utility of the Indian partnership with the US and Japan, leave alone Australia, Britain or France. They argue that India is needlessly dragging itself into the US-China rivalry
- India's political profile in its neighbourhood will stand diminished if it accepts the need for assistance from other powers
- **Countries have conflicts themselves :-**
 - Even before the quad came into existence, US accused Japan last year of "engaging in unfair trade practices".
 - India's multilateral trade positions on agriculture, industrial goods, and services, among others during the current Doha round of trade negotiations remain an anathema to the US, Japan, and Australia.

- Specifically on its agenda given that **the grouping has often been wary of explicitly annoying the Chinese. US and Japan want to question Chinese hegemony but India's motive is not only that. It wants freedom of navigation in sea lanes.**
- Still dependent on China :-**
 - None of the Quad members can afford to take an overtly anti-Chinese posture nor can they do so as a group.
 - In 2016, the US imported Chinese goods worth \$416 billion; China enjoyed a surplus of \$346 billion. Without the relatively cheaper Chinese goods, US would face employment issues. China holds more than a trillion dollars in treasury bonds in the US.
 - The Sino-Japanese annual trade has hovered around \$400 billion, heavily in Japan's favour.
 - China has been Australia's biggest trading partner for the last eight years; it is the largest importer of Australian wines, besides iron ore and milk. The "Quad" can, at best, act as a pressure group to encourage China's adherence to a rules-based regime in the Indo-Pacific region.

Conclusion:-

- India urgently needs to develop a clear vision for a stable regional security order and work out what role India would like China to play in that vision and how it can nudge China towards that.
- Keeping China out of the regional security order is not realistic, letting China dominate it is not desirable: smart-balancing China within such an order is indeed the optimal strategy.

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

Q1) Examine why security experts are worried about the Pentagon's 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR). Will NPR have any significant implications for India? Comment. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- The US government recently released its Nuclear Posture Review (NPR).
- A case to develop low-yield atomic bombs, largely in response to Russia and China's advances over the years, forms the cornerstone of the Pentagon's 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), released this month.
- This represents a radical break from former President Barack Obama's 2010 NPR, which envisaged a reduced role for atomic weapons in defence, except in "extreme circumstances".

Main points of NPR 2018:-

- It shows the Trump administration **will broaden the circumstances under which it would use nuclear weapons first and more tightly integrate its nuclear and conventional forces to facilitate nuclear war-fighting.**
- It also plans to add a third type of low-yield weapon to the arsenal** by modifying some of the existing warheads on sub-based ballistic missiles.
- All of these changes can occur within this presidential term.
- In the longer run, the NPR calls for the deployment of a nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile.** The U.S. has not deployed such a weapon for 25 years.

US government view:-

- The review is looking at how nuclear weapons can deter new non-nuclear attacks that could have strategic effects: catastrophic mass casualties, cyberattacks against U.S. infrastructure, chemical or biological attacks, or attacks against U.S. critical space capabilities

Concerns raised:-

- This new policy **deliberately blurs the line between nuclear and conventional forces and eliminates a clear firewall.**
- The decision to deploy *another* type of low-yield weapon and this one on submarines is consistent with the **new emphasis on nuclear war-fighting.** Existing U.S. B61 bombs and air-launched cruise missiles already have low-yield options.
- The new policy **also shoots a big hole in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty**, which is key to U.S. security. It simply **rejects the U.S. obligation to take steps toward nuclear disarmament.**
- The NPR is a **concern to the non-nuclear weapon states**, who are already fed up with the slow progress of the United States and Russia.
- But early indications suggest the new NPR will expand the contingencies that **could lead to the use of nuclear weapons.**

- Experts say that **threatening nuclear attack to counter new kinds of asymmetric threats** is would increase the risk of nuclear weapons use, and **would make it easier for other countries to justify excessive roles for nuclear weapons in their policies**
- Once nuclear weapons are used in a conflict against another nuclear-armed adversary, **there is no guarantee against a cycle of escalation leading to all-out global nuclear war.**
- A legion of critics blasted a potential nuclear buildup as **dangerous, fiscally ruinous** and **redolent of outdated Cold War thinking.**
- Skeptics of the Trump administration's embrace of nuclear weapons argue that they **won't be able to credibly deter** the sort of low-level aggression carried out by countries like Russia in Eastern Europe and North Korea in northeast Asia. The strategy seems to embrace the weapons more for their own sake than any utility they might provide.
- There is no replacement in hand once the NEW START treaty will end and this attitude of US would **divert American resources away from conventional advantage**, and bring no additional security.

Implications on India:-

- The policy can lead to focus on military aspect by countries and can threaten the peace and stability of the region.
- It would give further impetus to Pakistan to use nuclear weapon with India's policy of no first use for nuclear weapons in place.
- India can get updated technology transfer from US and can use it to modernize Indian defence.
- There will be more pressure on India to indigenize the modernization of defence forces as relying on other countries is riskier.

Q2) Addressing the plight of refugees is one of the greatest challenges currently facing the international community. Examine the notable multilateral agreements and unilateral policies previously made in this regard and comment on the need for a global refugee policy. (250 Words)

Project Syndicate

Background:-

- With some 65.6 million people forcibly uprooted by violence, natural disasters, and economic hardship, there are more displaced people today than immediately after World War II.
- But, because no country is immune to the consequences associated with large movements of refugees, only a coordinated response can ameliorate the suffering.

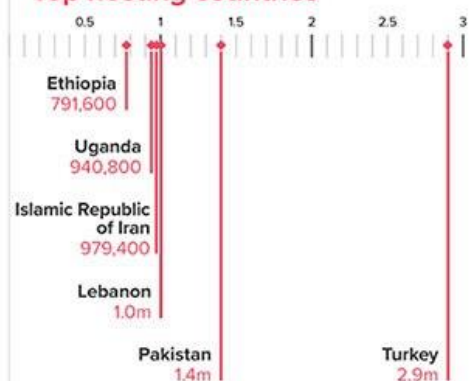
Where the world's displaced people are being hosted



55% of refugees worldwide came from three countries



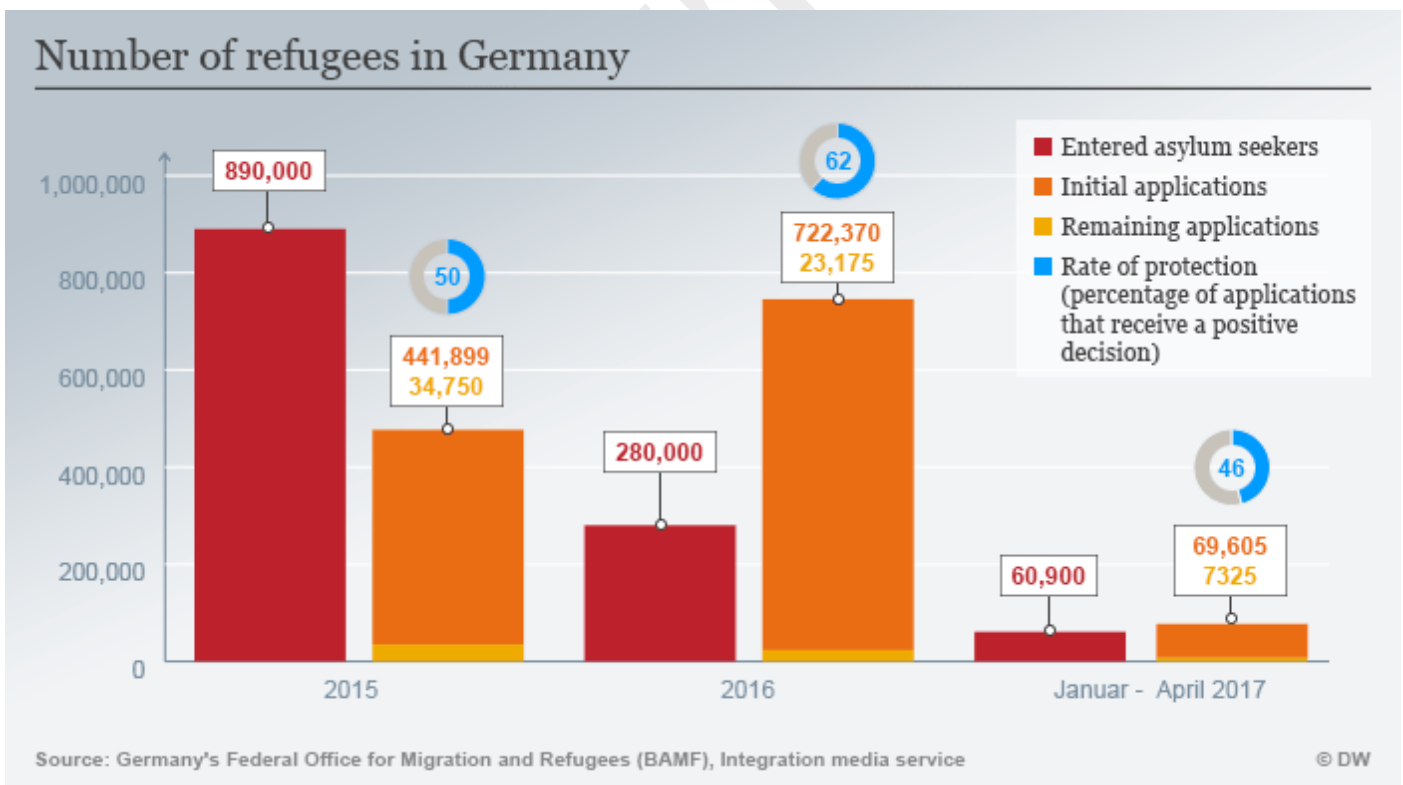
Top hosting countries



Multilateral agreements and unilateral policies on refugees:-

- United nations conventions and refugees:
 - **1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugee**
 - The 1951 Refugee Convention is the key legal document that forms the basis of UN work regarding refugees. The core principle is non-refoulement, which asserts that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. This is now considered a rule of customary international law.
 - **The Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1967 Protocol):**
 - **The 1967 Protocol removed both the temporal and geographic restrictions.** This was needed in the historical context of refugee flows resulting from decolonization.

- United Nations convention against torture:
 - The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment is an international human rights treaty, under the review of the United Nations, **that aims to prevent torture and other acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment around the world.**
- The New York Declaration called for states to ease pressure on less-developed countries like Lebanon, Jordan, and Ethiopia that host the most refugees,** to increase efforts to boost refugees self-dependence to expand resettlement; and to foster ways for refugees to return home.
- India had a refugee population of just over 2 lakh by end of 2015.** India, meanwhile, deals with refugees and asylum seekers and refugees on an ad hoc basis, consulting a basic refugee policy and administrative laws like The Passport (Entry of India) Act, 1920, The Passport Act 1967, The Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, The Foreigners Act, 1946, and the Foreigners Order, 1948. The legal status of refugees in India is governed mainly by the Foreigners Act 1946 and the Citizenship Act 1955.
- Latin America:**
 - According to the N.refugee agency, over 100,000 Venezuelans have claimed asylum since 2014 while 190,000 others have found alternative legal pathways.
 - Peru's asylum law, passed in 2003, applies to those who have fled Venezuela as a result of persecution or violence.
 - Brazil does have a refugee law, which grants asylum seekers the right to stay in Brazil until their claim is judged by the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE). In 2017, after pressure from civil society and public bodies, Brazil agreed to grant temporary residence to Venezuelans through Resolution No. 126 of 2017
 - Latin America is thus leading the world in acknowledging that criminal violence can, in some circumstances, qualify the victims as refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention or the Latin American expanded refugee definition in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration.
- Germany decided to suspend the Dublin Procedure** for Syrians, which meant that refugees from that country no longer had to be sent back to the first EU country that they entered. The country famously adopted an "open border" policy.



Why a global refugee policy is needed ?

- Movements of people are a **quintessentially global phenomenon** that demands a global sharing of responsibility
- Refugees and migrants contribute to the growth and development of host countries as well as their countries of origin.** So there is a need for more measures to promote the social and economic inclusion of refugees and migrants..
- There is a need to give greater attention to addressing the drivers of forced displacement.

- There is a need to strengthen the international systems that manage large movements of people so that **they uphold human rights norms and provide the necessary protections**. States must honour their international legal obligations, including the 1951 Refugee Convention.
- More orderly and legal pathways for migrants and refugees will be crucial, so that **desperate people are not forced to turn to criminal networks in their search for safety**.
- Refugee and migrant crises are far from insurmountable, but they cannot be addressed by states acting alone. **Today, millions of refugees and migrants are being deprived of their basic rights, and the world is depriving itself of the full benefits of what refugees and migrants have to offer.**
- Refugees can face adversities of trafficking, threat to life, even radicalisation so global efforts need to be made to provide them a decent life.
- Global policy efforts, therefore, must focus on better cooperation and dialogue among the affected countries. This includes promoting a safe and secure working environment for refugees.

Conclusion:-

- Rather than closing borders, as some governments have done, the international community must work together to address the issue of global displacement

Q3) Recent events around the world have fuelled xenophobic and anti-immigration sentiments. Analyse how recent immigration policy changes in the Middle East will impact migration and remittances with respect to India, and how India should cope up with reducing remittances and returning migrants. (250 Words)

The Hindu

Background:-

- The impact of migration on economic growth and development through increased remittances is well established with India receiving about 56% of its remittances from migrants in West Asia
- In a world where developments such as Brexit and the Trump presidency in the U.S. have intensified debate on migration, considerable uncertainties about remittances remain.

Changes in the immigration policies of Middle eastern countries:

- Along with declining oil prices and sluggish regional economies, especially in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, the regional governments decided to prioritise filling their workforce with their nationals.
- Oman began "Omanisation", a policy aimed at replacing expatriate workers with trained Omani personnel, back in 1988.
- The other four, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, have tightened their immigration policies to appease increasingly restive youth, many of whom were unemployed and participated in protests during the Arab uprisings.
- In 2011, the Saudi government enacted Saudi Nationalisation Scheme or Nitaqat system with a view to reducing unemployment among Saudi nationals, with incentives being announced for companies and enterprises performing in accordance with this system.
 - Under the new Nitaqat system, companies will be labelled as "blue or premium", "green", "yellow", or "red" depending on the level of Saudi workers in them to comply with established workers.
 - Companies with less than 10 employees will not fall under the Nitaqat program.
 - Red companies will not be allowed to renew work visas for their foreign employees. Foreign workers employed by companies categorized as "red" must seek employment with a "green" company before their visas expire.
 - Yellow companies may renew work visas for up to six years for each foreign employee, but this time limit applies retrospectively.
 - Last year it restricted employment in shopping malls to Saudi nationals.
 - In 2016 it issued an order to reduce dependence on expatriate workers comes after last year's decision to reserve all jobs in mobile phone shops for Saudi nationals.

How will they impact migration and remittances for India:-

- It is evident that the youth of West Asia will replace migrants in the coming years, **in turn leading to a reduction in remittances.**
- Thousands of Indians are set to return to India leading to reverse migration.
- Result in immediate job losses and reduced job opportunities.
- It is almost impossible now to run companies on the licences given to Saudi nationals. Strict actions are being taken against benami businesses.
- **Impact on Kerala:-**
 - Without remittances, Kerala would have had to adopt an entirely different economic growth path.

- In 2016, for the first time in 20 years, the Malayali migrant community got smaller by 10% to 2.2 million.
- Replaced by migrants from other Asian countries such as the Philippines and Nepal, but also by other Indian migrants from Bihar, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- Decrease in migration is expected to result in a similar decrease in remittances to the State.
- Kerala thus faces the huge challenge of reintegrating and rehabilitating them into the society and the economy.
- The sudden exodus of the unemployed could trigger off economic crisis and social unrest in the State.
- The sudden fall in remittances from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries may lead to a ripple effect on interlinked sectors such as real estate and transport.

How will India cope up with changed situation:-

- India needs to formulate strategies to compensate for the restricted flow of remittances that is expected in the near future.
- This demands innovative policies targeted at skilling, reskilling and educating both prospective and returned emigrants.
- Both the central and state governments must plan out strong rehabilitation packages for the unemployed migrant returnees.
- Government should undertake massive investments in infrastructure and industrial development to boost employment opportunities.

Q4) China is planning the launch of a yuan-denominated oil futures exchange. What is oil futures exchange? How will this move by China affect global energy markets? Examine. (250 Words)

IDSA

Background:-

- China has been trying to translate its growing economic strength into global influence, and international acceptance and use of its currency, as in the case of the dollar, would go a long way in allowing it the leverage it seeks.
- By planning the launch of a yuan denominated oil futures exchange, China wants the yuan to play an increasingly important role in global trade

Oil futures exchange:-

- Futures contracts are financial instruments and carry with them legally binding obligations. Buyer and seller have the obligation to take or make delivery of an underlying instrument at a specified settlement date in the future.
- Oil futures are part of the derivatives family of financial products as their value 'derives' from the underlying instrument. These contracts are standardised in terms of quality, quantity and settlement dates.
- In the case of crude oil, the main futures exchanges are the **New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX)** and the **Intercontinental Exchange (ICE)** where West Texas Intermediate (WTI) and North Sea Brent crude oil are traded respectively.
- These exchanges trade what is referred to as 'light- sweet' crude oil and a single contract, or 'lot', calls for the purchase or sale of 1,000 barrels of oil. Traders can buy and sell oil for delivery several months or years ahead.
- Futures contracts are traded on regulated futures exchanges. Trading can take place through electronic dealing systems, open outcry around a pit or a combination of both.
- Each futures exchange has a clearing house which ensures that trades are settled in accordance with market rules and that guarantees the performance of the contracts traded.

Impact on global energy markets:-

- **Asia:-**
 - The launch will provide China with the opportunity to create an Asian crude oil benchmark that **would better reflect pricing for the oil imported and consumed in Asia, the world's top importing region.**
 - The move is designed to give China more clout in crude pricing as well as promote its currency as a truly global one.
- **Other countries:-**
 - In January 2018, Pakistan's central bank said it has officially adopted the Yuan as a currency for trade with China. Several banks, including HSBC and Deutsche Bank, are also picking up the Yuan for their currency reserves, which is indicative of the **growing acceptance of the Yuan as an international currency, although it remains far behind the dollar.**
- The **rules of the global oil game may begin to change enormously**

- Active involvement of Chinese independent refiners over the last few years has created a more **diverse marketplace of participants domestically in China**, creating an environment in which a crude futures contract is more likely to succeed.
- For the oil market, it **shows how the center of gravity is shifting to Asia**. It means the U.S. is not front and center in the oil market anymore,
- In recent years, a seismic shift has taken place as China has dethroned the United States as the world's biggest oil importer, yet that's not really reflected in the commodities market. So this goes a long way towards righting the energy market.
- Given the US's rise as a potential energy exporter and other factors, China may succeed in this goal.
 - An oil contract priced in Yuan that can be swapped for gold is a major blow for the dollar. **The link to petroleum trade is seen a major component of the dollar's status in the world economy.**
- Beijing's scheme aims to shift trade in "black gold" from petrodollars to a proposed Petro-Yuan which benefits China by **making its currency more attractive internationally and providing greater energy security**
- However, the **biggest winners may well be Russia** because any decline in the dollar's status severely dilutes US ability to wage economic war against Russia, via sanctions.
 - Iran, Indonesia, and Venezuela have indicated their interest in the project.
- **Paying in Yuan for oil could become part of One Belt, One Road initiative to develop ties across Eurasia, including the Middle East.** Chinese participation in Saudi Aramco's planned initial public offering **could help sway Saudi opinion toward accepting yuan**, which is used in only about 2 percent of global payments.
- **Concerns:-**
 - However Investors are unlikely to jump full on into the petro-yuan just yet; capital controls in China will deter some interest.
 - Any transition from the US dollar to the yuan will take years.

Conclusion:-

- China will have to pursue reforms to strengthen domestic debt markets, improve corporate governance and bring in more regulatory transparency and enforce the rule of law in order to attract and absorb huge global financial flows and the Shanghai exchange may mark the first sign of cracks forming in the US dollar's edifice.

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

Q1) What is the structure and mandate of UNSC Sanctions Committees? Why is India seeking transparency in these committees? Examine. (250 Words)

[The Wire](#)

Sanctions Committees

- The use of **mandatory sanctions is intended to apply pressure on a State or entity to comply with the objectives set by the UN Security Council** without resorting to the use of force. Sanctions thus offer the Security Council an important instrument to enforce its decisions.
- The universal character of the United Nations makes it an especially appropriate body to establish and monitor such measures
- **The Council has resorted to mandatory sanctions as an enforcement tool when peace has been threatened and diplomatic efforts have failed.**
- The range of sanctions has included comprehensive economic and trade sanctions and/or more targeted measures such as arms embargoes, travel bans, financial or diplomatic restrictions.
- The Security Council has 14 sanctions committees, each with an assigned target or set of targets. The principles of anonymity and unanimity guide the actions of these bodies.
- **Structure:-**
 - It consists of 15 members of the UNSC.
 - The head of these committees is appointed by the UNSC chairperson

Reasons why India is seeking transparency of these committees:-

- UN Security Council's veto-wielding members are obstructing some resolution like the designation of Pakistan-based Masood Azhar as a global terrorist **without giving any explanation**
- Most of the time, countries are not aware which countries have exercised their veto.
- Unlike in the Security Council, where vetoes are cast in public meetings and explanations made publicly, decisions of these sanctions committees can be placed on hold or blocked by any of the 15 Member States of these Committees.
- **The challenges related to the working methods of the sanctions committees were not merely related to transparency and accountability and in that context a case existed for the Council to address the anomalies in the committees working methods**

- The anomalies not only affected the efficiency and credibility of the work of the Council, but also **impacted the larger membership that was required to implement its decisions**

Way forward:-

- UN reforms need to take place to allow developing countries to play more role in UN.
- When it comes to national security issues like terrorism the countries need to coordinate and work together and keep the bilateral tensions aside .