INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

SECURE SYNOPSIS

MAINS 2019

GS-II

JULY 2019

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.

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General Studies Paper - II

Q) Discuss the controversies surrounding the office of speaker in India. Suggest measures to make the office of speaker impartial and independent. Should it be modeled on the lines of office of British speaker ?   (250 words)

Laxmikant: Indian Polity

Introduction:
- The **Speaker** is the **presiding officer of the Lok Sabha** (House of the People), the lower house of the Parliament of India. The speaker is elected generally in the very first meeting of the Lok Sabha following general elections.
- Serving for a term of five years, the speaker chosen from sitting members of the Lok Sabha (House of the People), and is by convention a member of the ruling party or alliance.

Body:
Controversies surrounding the office of Speaker in India:
- **Appointment and tenure**: The structural issues regarding the manner in which the Speaker is appointed and his tenure in office. Usually the speaker is from the ruling party and this makes it a more of a political liability on speaker to favour his party.
- **Lack of Tenure security**: With no security in the continuity of office, the Speaker is dependent on his or her political party for re-election. This makes the Speaker susceptible to pulls and pressures from her/his political party in the conduct of the proceedings of the Lok Sabha.
- **Anti-defection law**: In recent times, there are number of instances where the role of speaker has been criticised for decision on membership of MLAs under the anti-defection law and their ruling have been challenged in courts. 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. It was anticipated that giving Speakers the power to expel legislators would prevent unnecessary delays by courts and make anti defection law more effective.
- **Discretionary power**: There are various instances where the Rules vest the Speakers with unbridled powers such as in case of declaration of bill as money bill (Lok Sabha Speaker). This discretionary power comes under criticism when Aadhar bill was introduced in Lok Sabha as Money Bill.
- **Referral to DSRCs:** The Speaker is also empowered to refer the Bill to a Standing Committee. As per prevailing practice house members or speaker usually refers all important bills to the concerned Departmentally Related Standing Committees for examination and report. But in recent time speaker uses its discretionary power to pass many important bills on day after introduction of bill without proper discussion and references.
- **Increased disruptions:** Frequent disruptions reduced the time required for important discussions and compel speaker to allocate less time for discussion. This often questions the impartiality of speaker as he allegedly provides more time to ruling party. Also, it is alleged that speaker took harsh punishment against the disrupting member of opposition compared to government
- **Elections:** The position of the Indian Speaker is paradoxical. They contest the election for the post on a party ticket. Yet they are expected to conduct themselves in a non-partisan manner, while being beholden to the party for a ticket for the next election.
- **Political Aspirations:** The position is often used to woo the political parties by favouring them to harbour political ambitions. The need for re-election also skews incentives for the Speaker. The fear of losing the position in case of not favouring their political parties also pushes them to compromise neutrality.

Some instances of controversies:
- In 1988, Tamil Nadu Assembly Speaker P.H. Pandian disqualified six senior AIADMK ministers for giving up their party membership, along with 27 other MLAs , identified with the pro-Jayalalithaa faction.
- Sixteen MLAs in the Arunachal Pradesh Assembly were disqualified by the Speaker, Nabam Rebia, in 2016 despite not officially leaving the party or defying its directives.
- Uttarakhand Assembly Speaker, Govind Singh Kunjwal, disqualified nine MLAs from the ruling party in 2016, despite the MLAs not leaving the Congress or voting against it in the Assembly.

Convention in British Parliament:

- The Westminster system considers it a taboo to induct a Speaker into the cabinet.
- No sitting Speaker of the House of Commons in Britain has lost his or her seat. This is because of the convention of not fielding candidates in the Speaker's constituency.
- In comparison, in India, there are many Speakers who have lost their seats in general elections.
- The promise of continuity in office for many terms is used to ensure the Speaker's impartiality.
- Also, Indian Speakers are not made members of the Rajya Sabha after they demit office.
- But the British Parliament automatically elevates the Speaker to the House of Lords.
- By convention, political parties (usually) do not field a candidate against the Speaker at the time of general elections.
- And the Speaker can continue in office, until deciding otherwise. By convention, the Speaker also gives up the membership of his/her political party.

Measures needed:

- The **page Committee, headed by V.S. Page**, suggested that if the Speaker had conducted himself or herself in an impartial and efficient manner during the tenure of his or her office, he or she should be allowed to continue in the next Parliament.
- Anyone seeking the office of the Speaker might be asked to run for election on an independent ticket.
- Any Speaker should be barred from future political office, except for the post of President, while being given a pension for life.
- Following the **UK model of Speaker** where the Speaker elect compulsorily resigns from the party membership. This will ensure neutrality of the office.
- The Speaker should be allowed to recommend a range of disciplinary actions like cuts in salary, reduction in speaking time for the member based on the recommendation of the parliamentary committee.
- The Speaker can arrange informal sessions with the members who frequently disrupt the house. He can try to resolve their grievances if any with respect to the conduct of the house.
- **A code of ethics for MPs** must be formed to clearly define cases for suspension and dismissals.
- Power must be given to speaker to form a parliamentary committee to recommend removal of MPs regularly disrupting the house. The decision of the committee must be subject to judicial review.
- **Ethics committee of Lok Sabha** need to be given more mandate like other mature democracies

Conclusion:

- The office of the Speaker in India is a living and dynamic institution which deals with the actual needs and problems of Parliament in the performance of its functions. It is in her that the responsibility of conducting the business of the House in a manner befitting the place of the institution in a representative democracy is invested.

Q) What is Article 35(A) ? Why is it a controversial, even sentimental issue for the Kashmir Valley ? Critically analyse. (250 words)

Indianexpress

Why this question:

The question is in the context of Article 35 A corresponding to the constitution of Jammu and Kashmir.

Key demand of the question:

Discussion should focus upon explaining the nuances of Article 35 A and the controversies surrounding it.

Directive:

Critically analyze – When asked to analyse, you have to examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them as a whole in a summary. When 'critically' is suffixed or prefixed to a directive, one needs to look at the good and bad of the topic and give a fair judgement.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

In brief define article 35 A.

Body:

Article 35A of the constitution provide Jammu and Kashmir Legislature a carte blanche to decide who all are 'permanent residents' of the State and confer on them special rights and privileges in public sector jobs, acquisition of property in the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare.

It is mandatory according to the provision that no act of the legislature coming under it can be challenged for violating the Constitution or any law of the land.

Discuss the main provisions of Article 35 A.

What are the controversies surrounding it and what needs to be done to overcome the challenges?

Conclusion:

Conclude with solutions to the issue.

Introduction:

- Article 35A is a provision incorporated in the Constitution **giving the Jammu and Kashmir Legislature a carte blanche to decide who all are 'permanent residents' of the State and confer on them special rights and privileges in public sector jobs, acquisition of property in the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare**.
- The provision mandates that **no act of the legislature coming under it can be challenged for violating the Constitution or any other law of the land**.

Body:

- A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court which says Article 35A restricts citizens from other States from getting employment or buying property within Jammu and Kashmir is a **violation of fundamental rights under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Indian Constitution**.

WHAT IS ARTICLE 35A?

ARTICLE 35A (1954) was incorporated in the Indian Contitution through a Constitutional amendment even much before the Constitution of J&K came into existence (1956).

The Article allows the state of Jammu and Kashmir to grant special privileges and rights to permanent residents but denies rights to several others who too have genuine claims.

It debars non-residents of J&K from buying land or property getting a government job or voting in Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

Article 35A is Controversial due to:

- Article 35A is **against the "very spirit of oneness of India"** as it creates a **"class within a class of Indian citizens".**
- It treats non-permanent residents of J&K as **'second-class' citizens.**
- Non-permanent residents of J&K are not eligible for employment under the State government and are also debarred from contesting elections.
- **Meritorious students are denied scholarships** and they cannot even seek redress in any court of law.
- Further, the issues of refugees who migrated to J&K during Partition are still not treated as '**State subjects' under the J&K Constitution.**
- It was **inserted unconstitutionally**, bypassing Article 368 which empowers only Parliament to amend the Constitution.
- The laws enacted in pursuance of Article 35A are **ultra vires of the fundamental rights conferred by Part III of the Constitution, especially, and not limited to, Articles 14 (right to equality) and 21 (protection of life).**

Article 35(A) is sentimental to a few because:

- Some experts say that the removal of Article 35A would **change the demography of Kashmir**. The separatist might fan anti-India feelings in the valley by politically misusing the issue. The hardening of the posture by the separatists will consequently disturb normalcy in the state.
- **Asymmetrical federalism** has been quite successful in India in preserving its unity and integrity. The Indian constitution purposefully mandates differential treatments for different units of the Indian Union.
- The Indian Constitution grants special status to J&K via Article 370 which together with the Instrument of Accession has been the cornerstone of **J&K s successful incorporation into the Indian Union**. In this context, scrapping Article 35A would be **violative of Article 370** as well as the instrument of accession.
- The removal of Article 35A would also **indirectly impact the special provision bestowed upon Mizoram, Nagaland** under Article 371.
- Critics also allege that it will lead to **erosion of Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy**.
- The rights of the legislature of J&K are not unlimited. The legislature can grant preferential treatment only in selective cases regarding property rights, employment, settlement and scholarship.

Conclusion:
- This matter requires the **active participation of all stakeholders**. It is necessary to give confidence to the residents of J&K that any alteration in status quo will not take away their rights but will boost J&K's prosperity as it will open doors for more investment, resulting in new opportunities.
- Article 35A, which was incorporated about six decades ago, now requires a relook, especially given that J&K is now a well-established democratic State.

Topic – Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary; Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

Q) Discuss the importance of legal aid in India. Do you agree that citizens often upon the law as an enemy, not as a friend in India? Discuss the issues and challenges associated specifically with free legal aid services in India.   (250 words)

The hindu

Why this question:

Recently the National Law University, Delhi (NLUD) in a report titled 'Quality of Legal Representation: An Empirical Analysis of Free Legal Aid Services in India' has revealed that people don't have faith over the services of legal aid counsel (LAC) under the free legal aid services.

Key demand of the question:

A majority of the people who are entitled to the free legal aid system see the service as an option only when they cannot afford a private lawyer. Thus, it is important for us to analyse the underlying issues and challenges facing the same.

Directive:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Briefly discuss the concept of free legal aid.

Body:

- First bring out the importance of free legal aid – Legal aid to the poor is necessary for the preservation of rule of law which is necessary for the existence of the orderly society. It implies giving free legal services to the poor and needy who cannot afford the services of a lawyer for the conduct of a case or a legal proceeding in any court, tribunal or before an authority. Until and unless poor illiterate man is not legally assisted, he is denied equally in the opportunity to seek justice.
- Then move on to discuss the issues and challenges – lack of awareness of the availability of legal aid, perception that free service is incompatible with quality service etc.
- Quote facts and findings of the report, take hints from the article.

Conclusion:

Conclude by suggesting solutions and way forward.

Introduction:
- Legal aid is free legal assistance to the poor and weaker sections of the society with the object to enable them to exercise the rights given to them by law.
- **Justice P.N.Bhagwati** has rightly said that "the poor and the illiterate should be able to approach the Courts and their ignorance and poverty should not be an impediment in the way of their obtaining Justice from the Courts."
- **Article 39A** of the Constitution of India provides for free legal aid to the poor and weaker sections of the society and ensures justice for all.
- **Article 14 and 22(1)** of the constitution also make it obligatory for the State to ensure equality before law and a legal system which promotes justice on the basis of equal opportunity to all.

Body:

Importance of legal aid in India:

- The main object is to provide equal justice is to be made available to the poor, down trodden and weaker section of society.
- The foundation of the right to legal aid is premised in the universally accepted principle of "Fair trial".
- The right to a fair hearing is universally recognized and documented in national constitutions and regional and international human rights instruments. It is the foundation for the protection of individual liberties.
- Right to legal aid is a demonstration of the need to level the powers of state to those of the suspect.
- The right to legal aid and representation at the expense of the state becomes a constituent element of the right to a fair trial.
- The purpose of legal aid provision is to inform those in contact with the law of the extent of their rights and provide assurance of the existence and availability of services, irrespective of social and economic means.
- Legal aid to the poor is necessary for the preservation of rule of law which is necessary for the existence of the orderly society.
- It implies giving free legal services to the poor and needy who cannot afford the services of a lawyer for the conduct of a case or a legal proceeding in any court, tribunal or before an authority.
- Until and unless poor illiterate man is not legally assisted, he is denied equally in the opportunity to seek justice. Therefore a step towards making the legal service serve the poor and the deprived; the judiciary has taken active interest in providing legal aid to the needy in the recent past.
- The Indian Constitution provides for an independent and impartial judiciary and the courts are given power to protect the constitution and safeguard the rights of people irrespective of their financial status.

Legal Services Institutions for providing Free Legal Services:

- National Level : National Legal Services Authority
- State Level: State Legal Services Authority. It is headed by the Chief Justice of the State High Court who is its Patron-in-Chief. A serving or retired Judge of the High Court is nominated as its Executive Chairman.
- District Level: District Legal Services Authority. The District Judge of the District is its ex-officio Chairman.
- Taluka/ Sub-Division Level: Taluka/ Sub-Divisional Legal Services Committee. It is headed by a senior Civil Judge.
- High Court : High Court Legal Services Committee
- Supreme Court: Supreme Court Legal Services Committee

Challenges of free legal aid in India:

- The National Law University, Delhi (NLUD) in a report titled 'Quality of Legal Representation: An Empirical Analysis of Free Legal Aid Services in India' has revealed that people don't have faith over the services of legal aid counsel (LAC) under the free legal aid services.
- A majority of the people who are entitled to the free legal aid system see the service as an option only when they cannot afford a private lawyer.
- there is a general lack of awareness of the availability of legal aid;
- there is a perception that free service is incompatible with quality service;
- there are not enough lawyers delivered by the legal services authorities, and
- Lawyers generally are uninterested in providing competent legal assistance because of financial constraints.
- Lawyers assigned to provide legal aid and paid with public funds do not faithfully represent their clients, casting serious doubt on the credibility of the scheme of legal aid provided to weaker sections of society.
- Some lawyers engaged by legal aid committees hold their client's cases for ransom by employing delay tactics.
- Another major obstacle to the legal aid movement in India is that the delivery system for legal aid is far too inefficient.

Measures needed:

- The key to a successful free legal aid system is increased awareness among the populace and more efficient delivery processes.
- More lawyers must be encouraged to delivery free legal aid and a campaign should be launched to inform people about the existence of free legal aid.
- Successful legal aid delivery in India requires the government to embark on a campaign to inform and educate the public of its right to free legal aid.
- Further, the government must employ more efficient processes to improve legal aid delivery, including but not limited to increased compensation for legal aid lawyers.
- Payment of better honorarium to the lawyers who provide Legal Aid.

- Provide Free and Competent Legal Services to the eligible persons;
- organize Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes;

Conclusion:

- Legal aid is not a charity or bounty, but is an obligation of the state and right of the citizens. The focus of legal aid is on distributive justice, effective implementation of welfare benefits and elimination of social and structural discrimination against the poor.
- The prime object of the state should be "equal justice for all". Thus, legal aid strives to ensure that the constitutional pledge is fulfilled in its letter and spirit and equal justice is made available to the downtrodden and weaker sections of the society.

Q) The recent decision of SC in case of Karnataka to Members of the Assembly of non-compelling participation in the proceedings of the ongoing session of the House, holds utmost constitutional relevance and importance, but it may also open a Pandora box for wider concerns. Comment.   (250 words)

Indianexpress

Why this question:

The question is in the backdrop of recent political crisis surrounding the State of Karnataka.

Key demand of the question:

The answer must analyse the SC order and the possible repercussions it may have in future in such situations.

Directive:

Comment– here we have to express our knowledge and understanding of the issue and form an overall opinion thereupon.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Describe briefly the verdict of the SC in this context.

Body:

The answer should start with appreciation of the judgement of the apex court.

The order noted that the hearing of the plea had raised the issue of whether resignations submitted by MLAs at a point of time earlier than petitions for their disqualification under the Tenth Schedule (anti-defection law) of the Constitution should be decided first or whether both should be taken up simultaneously or the disqualification proceedings should have precedence over the requests for resignation.

Discuss the possible nuances of the order and analyse the role of speaker and functioning of the constitutional mechanism.

Explain what can be the possible issues or challenges.

Conclusion:

Conclude with significance of the order.

Introduction:

- In the wake of political crisis in Karnataka, the SC bench of CJI Ranjan Gogoi, Justices Deepak Gupta and Aniruddha Bose passed an interim order giving Speaker as much time as he required to decide on resignations, and permitting the MLAs to stay out of the House proceedings, if they choose to do so, until further orders.
- In the name of maintaining ' constitutional balance', the Court passed an order nullifying the effect of Clause 2(b) of Schedule 10 of the Constitution.

Body:

- The Bench described its order as a **"prudent" interim exercise and a deft balancing act in the face of "conflicting and competing" rights of the Speaker and the dissident MLAs.**
- The court said the **interim order is only meant to maintain the constitutional balance between the authority of the Speaker and the rights of the rebel MLAs.**

Pros of the order:

- Supreme Court said it should not shackle the Speaker's authority. He should be allowed to arrive at a decision on the resignations at an "appropriate time".
- Upholding the right of speaker to decide on the matter of defecting MLA's and right of legislators to whether sit or abstain from trust vote has once again reflected on judicial pragmatism and maturity.

- Supreme Court order reinforces the positional strength of the speaker of the house , however, now it is up to the speaker to ensure the trust of the democracy is not jeopardised and must therefore act in good faith.
- The order ensures to uphold the sanctity of the legislative institution and maintain the doctrine of separation of powers, as upheld in the basic structure.
- SC has ensured to protect itself from judicial overreach and thereby not undermining the role of speaker and the decision of the house
- It gives primacy to fundamental right of freedom (article 19) of the legislatures. Hence, it gives respect to independent choice of the legislatures.
- Article 190-3(B) gives choice of the resignation to the legislatures by writing to the speaker.
- The order restricts the practice of treating individual legislatures as dummy by their respective political parties

The order opens a Pandora's Box:
- The liberty given by the apex court to dissident legislators will in effect enable them to defy any party whip issued to them to attend the trust vote, and thereby to ward off any consequences of disqualification.
- Clause 2 (b) of the Tenth Schedule mandates that a legislator is liable for defection if he or she "votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to any direction issued by the political party to which he belongs or by any person or authority authorised by it in this behalf…"
- Supreme Court's order has empowered the legislators to act against Clause 2(b) of Schedule 10. In other words, the order has extinguished the impact of Clause 2(b) of Schedule 10 of the Constitution.
- The SC order deprives the political parties of the power to issue party whips to their members to attend the trust vote session. It has curtailed the party's right under the 10th Schedule.
- The court said the Speaker, once he had taken a call on the resignations, should place his decision before the court.
- This shows that the decision of the Speaker and any legal issues sprouting from it would certainly be open for adjudication before the Supreme Court in future.
- The court's order may act as an impetus for the Speaker to take a quick call on the pending disqualification as well as resignation of the MLAs.
- It doesn't address politically motivated defections.

Way forward:
- The dissident MLAs risk nothing other than their seats, certainly not the opportunity to join the Cabinet of a successor government.
- When the court takes up the substantive questions of law for adjudication, it should squarely address the new-found interplay between issues of resignation and disqualification, lest it become a perennial source of political controversy.

Q) Nearly 90% of all pending cases in the country come from India's lower courts (district and subordinate courts), which are the first port-of-call for most legal disputes. Discuss the causes and consequences of such a situation and suggest solutions. (250 words)

Livemint

Why this question:
The article brings out the sorrow state of affairs the Judiciary in India is facing with respect to pendency of cases.

Demand of the question:
The answer must analyse the underlying causes of such pendency facing the judiciary along with suggestions as to what needs to be done to overcome the same.

Directive word:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:
Introduction
Quote facts/figures to justify the question statement.

Body
- There are more than 3 crore cases pending in different courts of India. Many of these cases are pending for more than 10 years – Around 2.7 crore cases pending in District and Sub-ordinate Courts.
- Then discuss Why too many cases are pending in Indian courts? Discuss the causes that have led to rise in the number of cases registered.
- What are the consequences of pendency? The common man's faith in the justice system is at an all-time low. Denies the poor man and under trial prisoners their due of justice. Economic reforms remain only on paper without speedier justice system. Foreign investors are increasingly doubtful about the timely delivery of justice, which affects the success of programs like 'Make in India'. Judiciary is unable to handle the "avalanche" of litigation. Judiciary becomes overworked and lose its efficiency. Justice delayed is justice denied and Justice hurried is justice buried.

Conclusion

Conclude with what needs to be done, suggest solutions.

Introduction:
- The justice system in any democracy is set up, under the Constitution to serve the public without "fear or favour, affection or ill-will" as far as judges are concerned.
- The Indian Judiciary plays an increasingly important role in the life and the governance of this country. Pendency of cases across courts in India has increased in the last decade.

Body:

Reasons for pendency of Cases:
- **Shortage of judges:** around 5,580 or 25% of posts are lying empty in the subordinate courts. It leads to poor Judges to Population Ratio, as India has only 20 judges per million population. Earlier, Law Commission had recommended 50 judges per million.
- **Frequent adjournments:** The laid down procedure of allowing a maximum of three adjournments per case is not followed in over 50 per cent of the matters being heard by courts, leading to rising pendency of cases.
- **Low budgetary allocation leading to poor infrastructure:** India spends only about 0.09% of its GDP to maintain the judicial infrastructure. Infrastructure status of lower courts of the country is miserably grim due to which they fail to deliver quality judgements. A 2016 report published by the Supreme Court showed that existing infrastructure could accommodate only 15,540 judicial officers against the all-India sanctioned strength of 20,558.
- **Burden of government cases:** Statistics provided by LIMBS shows that the Centre and the States were responsible for over 46% of the pending cases in Indian courts.
- **Special leave petition:** cases in the Supreme Court, currently comprises to 40% of the court's pendency. Which eventually leads to reduced time for the cases related to constitutional issues.
- **Judges Vacation:** Supreme Court's works on average for 188 days a year, while apex court rules specify minimum of 225 days of work.
- **Lack of court management systems:** Courts have created dedicated posts for court managers to help improve court operations, optimise case movement and judicial time. However only few courts have filled up such posts so far.
- **Inefficient investigation:** Police are quite often handicapped in undertaking effective investigation for want of modern and scientific tools to collect evidences.
- **Increasing Literacy:** With people becoming more aware of their rights and the obligations of the State towards them, they approach the courts more frequently in case of any violation

Impacts of Judicial Pendency
- **Denial of 'timely justice' amounts to denial of 'justice' itself:** Timely disposal of cases is essential to maintain rule of law and provide access to justice. Speedy trial is a part of right to life and liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- **Erodes social infrastructure:** a weak judiciary has a negative effect on social development, which leads to: lower per capita income; higher poverty rates; poorer public infrastructure; and, higher crime rates.
- **Affects human rights:** Overcrowding of the prisons, already infrastructure deficient, in some cases beyond 150% of the capacity, results in "violation of human rights".
- **Affects the economy of the country** as it was estimated that judicial delays cost India around 1.5% of its Gross Domestic Product annually.

- As per the Economic Survey 2017-18, pendency hampers dispute resolution, contract enforcement, discourage investments, stall projects, hamper tax collection and escalate legal costs which lead to Increasing cost of doing business.

Measures needed:
- **Improving infrastructure for quality justice:** The Parliamentary Standing Committee which presented its report on Infrastructure Development and Strengthening of Subordinate Courts, suggested:
- States should provide suitable land for construction of court buildings etc. It should undertake vertical construction in light of shortage of land.
- Timeline set out for computerisation of all the courts, as a necessary step towards setting up of e- courts.
- **Addressing the Issue of Vacancies:** Ensure the appointments of the judges be done in an efficient way by arriving at an optimal judge strength to handle the cases pending in the system. The 120th Law Commission of India report for the first time, suggested a judge strength fixation formula.
- Supreme Court and High Courts should appoint efficient and experienced judges as Ad-hoc judges in accordance with the Constitution.
- **All India Judicial Service**, which would benefit the subordinate judiciary by increasing quality of judges and help reduce the pendency.
- Having a definite time frame to dispose the cases by setting annual targets and action plans for the subordinate judiciary and the High Courts. The judicial officers could be issued a strict code of conduct, to ensure that the duties are adequately performed by the officials.
- Strict regulation of adjournments and imposition of exemplary costs for seeking it on flimsy grounds especially at the trial stage and not permitting dilution of time frames specified in Civil Procedure Code.
- **Better Court Management System & Reliable Data Collection:** For this categorization of cases on the basis of urgency and priority along with bunching of cases should be done.
- **Use of Information technology (IT) solutions:** The use of technology for tracking and monitoring cases and in providing relevant information to make justice litigant friendly. A greater impetus should be given to
- **Process reengineering:** Involves redesigning of core business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in productivity and quality by incorporating the use of technology in court rules. It will include:
- **Electronic filing of cases:** e-Courts are a welcome step in this direction, as they give case status and case history of all the pending cases across High courts and Subordinate courts bringing ease of access to information.
- **Revamping of National Judicial Data Grid** by introducing a new type of search known as elastic search, which is closer to the artificial intelligence.
- **Alternate dispute resolution (ADR):** As stated in the Conference on National Initiative to Reduce Pendency and Delay in Judicial System- Legal Services Authorities should undertake pre-litigation mediation so that the inflow of cases into courts can be regulated.
  - **The Lok Adalat** should be organized regularly for settling civil and family matters.
  - **Gram Nyayalayas**, as an effective way to manage small claim disputes from rural areas which will help in decreasing the workload of the judicial institution.
  - **Village Legal Care & Support Centre** can also be established by the High Courts to work at grass root level to make the State litigation friendly.

Conclusion:
- The fundamental requirement of a good judicial administration is accessibility, affordability and speedy justice, which will not be realized until and unless the justice delivery system is made within the reach of the individual in a time bound manner and within a reasonable cost.
- Therefore, continuous formative assessment is the key to strengthen and reinforce the justice delivery system in India.

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

Q) Inward-looking coalition with partners constantly at war with each other has often stalled governance in many states with recent one being Karnataka. In the light of the above statement critically evaluate the working of Coalition politics in India. (250 words)

Indianexpress

Introduction:

- A coalition is an alliance of parties formed for the purpose of contesting elections jointly and/or forming a government and managing the governance by a process of sharing process.
- So coalition implies co-operation between political parties and this co-operation may take place may take place at Electoral, Parliamentary and Governmental levels.
- The recent episode of Karnataka where a coalition government is on the verge of collapse brings back the doubts on coalition politics.

Body:

Benefits of coalition governments:

- The coalition government addresses the regional disparity more than the single party rule.
- Coalition government is **more democratic**, and hence fairer, because it represents a much broader spectrum of public opinion than government by one party alone. In almost all coalitions, a majority of citizens voted for the parties which form the government and so their views and interests are represented in political decision making.
- Coalition government creates a **more honest and dynamic political system**, allowing voters a clearer choice at election time. It is also easier for parties to split, or new ones to be formed, as new political issues divide opinion, because new parties still have a chance of a share in political power. The **Desai government (1977-1979),** for example, undid regressive laws enacted by the Indira Gandhi government during the Emergency.
- Coalitions provide good government because their decisions are made in the interests of a majority of the people. A coalition government better reflects the popular opinion of the electorate within a country.
- Coalition government provides more continuity in administration. Amore consensual style of politics also allows for a more gradual and constructive shift of policy between administrations.
- Such government functions on principle of politics of consensus. Besides, states are given more powers, and the base of concept of federalism is strengthened.
- Government will be more consensus based: resulting policies will be broadly approved of for the benefit of the nation. Eg: The coalition governments could take pluralistic opinions and could address issues such as lynching or sedition laws, these would be crucial interventions in India's governance, especially consequential for citizens ranged against the perpetuation of majoritarianism.
- Better representation of the electorate's wishes. Better quality of policy: enhanced scrutiny and increased attention paid to each policy
- Increased continuity: election does not lead to dramatic overhaul which can produce fragmented rule

- Yet instability apart, coalition governments have been effective in enhancing democratic legitimacy, representativeness, and national unity.
- Critics of one-party majority governments often cite the excessive abuse of President's Rule during Indira Gandhi's time as one of its shortcomings, a practice that the coalition era has effectively ended.

However, it has its own set of limitations:

- Coalition government is actually less democratic as the balance of power is inevitably held by the small parties who can barter their support for concessions from the main groups within the coalition.
- Coalition government is less transparent, because a party has no real chance of forming a government alone, the manifestos they present to the public become irrelevant and often wildly unrealistic.
- Coalitions provide bad government because they are unable to take a long-term view.
- Coalition governments are very unstable, often collapsing and reforming at frequent intervals – Italy, for example, averages more than one government per year since 1945. This greatly restricts the ability of governments to deal with major reforms and means that politicians seldom stay in any particular ministerial post for long enough to get to grips with its demands.
- Coalition governments are definitely far less effective, not durable, and non-dependable as compared to the governments formed by any one party with a definite ideology and principles.
- In coalition governments, MLAs and MPs from all the parties are given portfolios/ministries and appointed as Ministers. These ministers are appointed on the recommendations of the parent party, without taking the qualification, character and criminal /clean record of the MLAs and MPs.

Conclusion:

- Since India is a diverse country with different ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities, it also has diverse ideologies. Due to this, the benefit that a coalition has is that it leads to more consensus based politics and reflects the popular opinion of the electorate.
- It is the competency of the government and not whether it is a coalition or an individual party that plays an important role in impacting the welfare of the people. Whether the right decisions come from a coalition or an individual ruling party, they will always be appreciated and rewarded by the public.

Q) "Defection is condemnable, especially if it is to bring down one regime and form another." Comment in the backdrop of political crisis presently facing the state of Karnataka. (250 words)

The hindu

Why this question:
The question is based on the current situation of political crisis the state of Karnataka is undergoing.
Key demand of the question:
The answer must discuss the nuances of defection in detail.
Directive:
Comment– here we have to express our knowledge and understanding of the issue and form an overall opinion thereupon.
Structure of the answer:
Introduction:
Discuss in brief what is meant by defection.
Body:
The answer needs to discuss the following aspects –
Discuss in detail the constitutional provisions related to defection in the Indian polity.
Explain what way the provisions are often being misused for political gains.
Use the example of the current Karnataka case and other states in the past.
Conclusion:
Conclude by suggesting solutions, what should be the way forward.

Introduction:

- Defection is "desertion by one member of the party of his loyalty towards his political party" or basically it means "When an elected representative joins another party without resigning his present party for benefits".
- The recent episode in Karnataka where a set of MLAs have resigned from one party to join another to further their own interests has brought the anti-defection debate to the fore again.
- The Supreme Court's decision to ask the parties to the political crisis in Karnataka to maintain the status quo until it examines the questions of law involved, is pragmatic and expedient.

Body:

Provisions against Defection:

- **The Anti-Defection Law** was passed in 1985 through the 52nd Amendment to the Constitution, which added the Tenth Schedule to the Indian Constitution.
- The main intent of the law was to combat "the evil of political defections" which may be due to reward of office or other similar considerations. The law applies to both Parliament and state assemblies. However, there are several issues in relation to the working of this law.

Details of SC Order:

- The Speaker has been asked not to decide the issue of MLAs' resignation or disqualification.
- An order has been passed when one of the questions to be decided is whether the court can give such a direction to the Speaker.
- It now transpires that legislators can be prevented from resigning by claiming that they have incurred disqualification.

Misuse of provisions for political gains:

- It was argued in court that "the rebel MLAs are trying to avoid disqualification by tendering resignations."
- This is astounding, as the penalty for defection is loss of legislative office.
- Quitting the current post before joining another party is a legal and moral obligation.
- However, Politicians cannot be tied down to parties against their will by not letting them leave even their legislative positions.
- Converting resignation into a disqualification matter is an attempt to deny a member's right to quit his seat in the legislature before joining another party, even if the crossing-over is a politically expedient measure.
- A disqualified member cannot become a Minister without getting elected again, whereas one who resigns can be inducted into an alternative Cabinet without being a member.

Current concerns:

- Converting resignation into a disqualification matter adds new dimension to a political crisis
- The on-going proceedings represent an increasingly common trend in litigation on constitutional issues: the propensity of the political class to twist and stretch the law in their favour and leave it to the court to set things right.
- The Speaker already enjoys extraordinary powers under the Constitution.
- In addition to immunity from judicial scrutiny for legislative matters, such as whether a Bill is a money bill, presiding officers get to decide whether a member has incurred disqualification under the anti-defection law.
- Though the decision is subject to judicial review, many Speakers have evaded judicial scrutiny by merely not acting on disqualification matters.
- The question whether the Speaker's inaction can be challenged in court is pending before another Constitution Bench.
- Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have instances of Speakers not acting on disqualification questions for years. The current crisis (Converting resignation into a disqualification matter) in Karnataka has exposed a new dimension to a political crisis.
- Accepting a resignation is a simple function of being satisfied if it is voluntary, while disqualification is decided on evidence and inquiry. The two should not be mixed up.

Way forward:

Dinesh Goswami Committee on electoral reforms

- Disqualification should be limited to cases-
    - o A member voluntarily gives up the membership of his political party
    - o 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)

- Provisions which exempt splits and mergers from disqualification to be deleted.
- Pre-poll electoral fronts should be treated as political parties under anti-defection
- Political parties should limit issuance of whips to instances only when the government is in danger.

Election Commission:

- Decisions under the Tenth Schedule should be made by the President/ Governor on the binding advice of the Election Commission.

Q) The office of the Speaker in India is a living and dynamic institution which deals with the actual needs and problems of Parliament in the performance of its functions. Discuss. (250 words)

Why this question:

The question is based on the topic of office of speaker and the significance of the same.

Key demand of the question:

Directive:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Discuss the constitutional features pertaining to office of speaker.

Body:

The answer must explain the office of the Speaker occupies a pivotal position in our parliamentary democracy. It has been said of the office of the Speaker that while the members of Parliament represent the individual constituencies, the Speaker represents the full authority of the House itself. She symbolizes the dignity and power of the House over which she is presiding. Therefore, it is expected that the holder of this office of high dignity has to be one who can represent the House in all its manifestations.

Quote the recent happenings across the states signifying the importance.

Conclusion:

Conclude with why this office still remains one of the most crucial ones in the life of every upper house.

Introduction:

- The **Speaker** is the **presiding officer of the Lok Sabha** (House of the People), the lower house of the Parliament of India. The speaker is elected generally in the very first meeting of the Lok Sabha following general elections.
- Serving for a term of five years, the speaker chosen from sitting members of the Lok Sabha (House of the People), and is by convention a member of the ruling party or alliance.

Body:

Importance of office of Speaker:

- The office of the Speaker occupies a **pivotal position in our parliamentary democracy**.
- It has been said of the office of the Speaker that while the members of Parliament represent the individual constituencies, the **Speaker represents the full authority of the House itself**.
- **She symbolises the dignity and power of the House over which she is presiding**.
- The responsibility entrusted to the Speaker is so onerous that she cannot afford to overlook any aspect of parliamentary life.
- Her actions come under close scrutiny in the House and are also widely reported in the mass media.
- With the televising of proceedings of Parliament, the small screen brings to millions of households in the country the day-to-day developments in the House making the Speaker's task all the more important.
- Even though the Speaker speaks rarely in the House, when she does, **she speaks for the House as a whole.**
- The Speaker is looked upon as the true guardian of the traditions of parliamentary democracy.
- Her unique position is illustrated by the fact that **she is placed very high in the Warrant of Precedence in our country**, standing next only to the President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister.
- In India, through the Constitution of the land, through the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha and through the practices and conventions, adequate powers are vested in the office of the Speaker to help her in the smooth conduct of the parliamentary proceedings and for protecting the independence and impartiality of the office.
- The Constitution of India provides that the Speaker's salary and allowances are not to be voted by Parliament and are to be charged on the Consolidated Fund of India.
- Therefore, it is expected that the holder of this office of high dignity has to be one who can represent the House in all its manifestations.

However, there have been many instances when the Speaker's office has been in the dock:

- **Appointment and tenure**: The structural issues regarding the manner in which the Speaker is appointed and his tenure in office. Usually the speaker is from the ruling party and this makes it a more of a political liability on speaker to favour his party.
- **Anti-defection law**: In recent times, there are number of instances where the role of speaker has been criticised for decision on membership of MLAs under the anti-defection law and their ruling have been challenged in courts. 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. It was anticipated that giving Speakers the power to expel legislators would prevent unnecessary delays by courts and make anti defection law more effective.
- **Discretionary power**: There are various instances where the Rules vest the Speakers with unbridled powers such as in case of declaration of bill as money bill (Lok Sabha Speaker). This discretionary power comes under criticism when Aadhar bill was introduced in Lok Sabha as Money Bill.
- **Referral to DSRCs:** The Speaker is also empowered to refer the Bill to a Standing Committee. As per prevailing practice house members or speaker usually refers all important bills to the concerned Departmentally Related Standing Committees for examination and report. But in recent time speaker uses its discretionary power to pass many important bills on day after introduction of bill without proper discussion and references.
- **Increased disruptions:** Frequent disruptions reduced the time required for important discussions and compel speaker to allocate less time for discussion. This often questions the impartiality of speaker as he allegedly provides more time to ruling party. Also, it is alleged that speaker took harsh punishment against the disrupting member of opposition compared to government

Conclusion:

- The office of the Speaker in India is a living and dynamic institution which deals with the actual needs and problems of Parliament in the performance of its functions. It is in her that the responsibility of conducting the business of the House in a manner befitting the place of the institution in a representative democracy is invested.
- The founding fathers of our Constitution had recognised the importance of this office in our democratic set-up and it was this recognition that guided them in establishing this office as one of the prominent and dignified ones in the scheme of governance of the country. smoothly.

Q) What is a whip ? Discuss the roles and functions that a chief whip would play when a government faces no-confidence motion in the lower house ? (250 words)

Timesnownews

Why this question:

The question is in the backdrop of the recent doubts raised on the authority of the office of whip in the ongoing Karnataka political crisis.

Key demand of the question:

The answer must discuss in detail the key features of the office of whip, the roles and functions performed by them.

Directive:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Define that Whip is an official appointed to maintain discipline among, secure attendance of, and give necessary information to, members of his party.

Body:

Explain that In India, the party whip directs the party members to stick to the party's stand on certain issues and directs them to vote as per the direction of senior party members. Whip cannot be used in all cases.

Then discuss the chief functions of the whip.

Explain the types of whip and implications of whip in Indian polity.

Conclusion:

Conclude with significance of whip.

Introduction:
- A whip in parliamentary parlance is a written order that party members be present for an important vote, or that they vote only in a particular way. The term is derived from the old British practice of "whipping in" lawmakers to follow the party line.
- The concept of the whip was inherited from colonial British rule. It is used in parliamentary parlance often for floor management by political parties in the legislature.

Body:

Role of Whip:
- In India, all parties can issue a whip to their members.
- Parties appoint a senior member from among their House contingents to issue whips.
- This member is called a Chief Whip, and he/she is assisted by additional Whips.
- They are vital in maintaining the links between the internal organisation of the party inside the Parliament.
- A whip is also an important office-bearer of the party in the Parliament.

Functions of Whip:
- The whip plays a crucial role in **ensuring the smooth and efficient conduct of business on the floor of the House**.
- He is charged with the **responsibility of ensuring the attendance of his party members** in large numbers and **securing their support in favour of or against a particular issue**.
- He **ensures discipline** among party members in the House.
- He **identifies the signs of discontent** among MPs and informs the respective leaders of their party.
- He or she acts as a **binding force in the party** and **responsible for maintaining the internal party organisation** in the Parliament.

Kinds of Whips:
- A one-line whip, underlined once, is usually issued to inform party members of a vote, and allows them to abstain in case they decide not to follow the party line.
- A two-line whip directs them to be present during the vote.
- A three-line whip is the strongest, employed on important occasions such as the second reading of a Bill or a no-confidence motion, and places an obligation on members to toe the party line.

Defiance of Whip:
- In India, rebelling against a three-line whip can put a lawmaker's membership of the House at risk. The anti-defection law allows the Speaker/Chairperson to disqualify such a member; the only exception is when more than a third of legislators vote against a directive, effectively splitting the party.

Conclusion:
- In the parliamentary form of Government, Whips of various political parties are the vital links of the internal organization of parties, inside the legislatures.
- The efficient and smooth functioning of Parliament and State Legislatures depends, to a considerable extent, upon the office of the Whip. The Whips can be rightly said to be the managers of the parties within the legislatures.

Q) Examine the provisions of Anti-defection law. Does anti-defection largely failed to meet its objective in the recent past? Critically discuss. (250 words)

The hindu

Introduction:
- Defection is "desertion by one member of the party of his loyalty towards his political party" or basically it means "When an elected representative joins another party without resigning his present party for benefits".
- The Anti-Defection Law was passed in 1985 through the 52nd Amendment to the Constitution, which added the Tenth Schedule to the Indian Constitution. The main intent of the law was to combat "the evil of political defections" which may be due to reward of office or other similar considerations. The law applies to both Parliament and state assemblies. However, there are several issues in relation to the working of this law.

Body:

Grounds for 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.

- o 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.

Exception:
- **Merger:** A person shall not be disqualified if his original political party merges with another, and:
  - o He and other members of the old political party become members of the new political party, or
  - o 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.

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.

Advantages of anti-defection law:
- Provides stability to the government by preventing shifts of party allegiance.
- Ensures that candidates remain loyal to the party as well the citizens voting for him.
- Promotes party discipline.
- Facilitates merger of political parties without attracting the provisions of Anti-defection
- Expected to reduce corruption at the political level.
- More concentration on governance is possible.
- Provides for punitive measures against a member who defects from one party to another.

Challenges posed/Shortcomings of anti defection law:
- The anti-defection law raises a number of questions, several of which have been addressed by the courts and the presiding officers.
- **The law impinge on the right of free speech of the legislators:**
  - o This issue was addressed by the **five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in 1992 (Kihoto Hollohan vs Zachilhu and others).** The court said that "the anti-defection law seeks to recognise the practical need to place the proprieties of political and personal conduct…above certain theoretical assumptions." It held that the law does not violate any rights or freedoms, or the basic structure of parliamentary democracy.
- **Doubts regarding "voluntarily" resigning from a party:**
  - o According to a Supreme Court judgment, "voluntarily giving up the membership of the party" is not synonymous with "resignation".
  - o It has interpreted that in the absence of a formal resignation by the member, the giving up of membership can be inferred by his conduct.
  - o In other judgments, members who have publicly expressed opposition to their party or support for another party were deemed to have resigned
- **Regarding Whips:**
  - o Political parties issue a direction to MPs on how to vote on most issues, irrespective of the nature of the issue.
  - o It restricts a legislator from voting in line with his conscience, judgement and interests of his electorate.
  - o Such a situation impedes the oversight function of the legislature over the government, by ensuring that members vote based on the decisions taken by the party leadership, and not what their constituents would like them to vote for.
- **Challenging the decision of the presiding officer in the courts:**
  - o The law states that the decision is final and not subject to judicial review. There are several instances that presiding officers take politically partisan view.
  - o The Supreme Court struck down part of this condition. It held that there may not be any judicial intervention until the presiding officer gives his order. However, the final decision is subject to appeal in the High Courts and Supreme Court.

Various Recommendations to overcome the above challenges:
- **Dinesh Goswami Committee on electoral reforms:** Disqualification should be limited to following cases:
  - o A member voluntarily gives up the membership of his political party

- A member abstains from voting, or votes contrary to the party whip in a motion of vote of confidence or motion of no-confidence. Political parties could issue whips only when the government was in danger.
- **Law Commission (170ᵗʰ Report)**
  - Provisions which exempt splits and mergers from disqualification to be deleted.
  - Pre-poll electoral fronts should be treated as political parties under anti-defection
  - Political parties should limit issuance of whips to instances only when the government is in danger.
- **Election Commission**
  - Decisions under the Tenth Schedule should be made by the President/ Governor on the binding advice of the Election Commission.

Conclusion:

- The anti-defection law seeks to provide a stable government by ensuring the legislators do not switch sides. The true objective to enhance the credibility of the country's polity by addressing rampant party-hopping by elected representatives should be pursued rather than using it as a political tool to pursue narrow interests of party.

Q) What are parliamentary standing committees? Why are they necessary? Discuss their roles and functions to bring out their significance. (250 words)

The hindu

Why this question:

Eleven of the 22 Bills introduced in the ongoing session of Parliament have been passed, which makes it a highly productive session after many years. But these Bills have been passed without scrutiny by *parliamentary standing committees*, their purpose being to enable detailed consideration of a piece of legislation.

Key demand of the question:

The answer must discuss importance of parliamentary standing committees, their key functions, roles and responsibilities and justify their significance.

Directive:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Define what are parliamentary committees.

Body:

Discuss in detail the following points:

What are Parliamentary standing committees? Their purposes?

Explain why is it in news – After the formation of the 17th Lok Sabha, parliamentary standing committees have not been constituted as consultations among parties are still under way. Partly as a result of this, the Bills were passed without committee scrutiny. They were discussed in Parliament over durations ranging between two and five hours.

Discuss the role and significance of parliamentary standing committees.

Conclusion:

Conclude with their importance.

Introduction:

- In the Indian Parliament, a Standing committee is a committee consisting of Members of Parliament.
- It is a permanent and regular committee which is constituted from time to time according to the provisions of an Act of Parliament or Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business.
- Both houses of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, and Lok Sabha have similar Committee structures with a few exceptions.
- Parliamentary committees draw their authority from **Article 105 (on privileges of Parliament members) and Article 118 (on Parliament's authority to make rules for regulating its procedure and conduct of business).**

Body:

Current Issue:
- Eleven of the 22 Bills introduced in the ongoing session of Parliament have been passed, which makes it a highly productive session after many years.
- But these Bills have been passed without scrutiny by parliamentary standing committees, their purpose being to enable detailed consideration of a piece of legislation.
- After the formation of the 17th Lok Sabha, parliamentary standing committees have not been constituted as consultations among parties are still under way.
- Partly as a result of this, the Bills were passed without committee scrutiny. They were discussed in Parliament over durations ranging between two and five hours.

Necessity for Parliamentary Standing Committees:
- Parliament is the embodiment of the people's will. Committees are an **instrument of Parliament for its own effective functioning.**
- Committees are **platforms for threadbare discussion on a proposed law**.
- The **smaller cohort of lawmakers**, assembled on the basis of the proportional strength of individual parties and interests and expertise of individual lawmakers, could have more open, intensive and better-informed discussions.
- Committee meetings are **'closed door' and members are not bound by party whips**, which allows them the latitude for a more meaningful exchange of views as against discussions in full and open Houses where grandstanding and party positions invariably take precedence.
- Members of Parliament may have great acumen but they **would require the assistance of experts in dealing with such situations**. It is through committees that such expertise is drawn into lawmaking.
- Executive accountability to the legislature is enforced through questions in Parliament also, which are answered by ministers. However, department standing committees go one step further and hear from senior officials of the government in a closed setting, **allowing for more detailed discussions**.
- This mechanism also enables parliamentarians to **understand the executive processes closely**.

Role of committees:
- Support Parliament's work.
- Examine ministerial budgets, consider Demands for Grants, analyse legislation and scrutinise the government's working.
- Examine Bills referred to by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha or the Speaker, Lok Sabha.
- Consideration of Annual Reports.
- Consideration of national basic long term policy documents presented to the House and referred to the Committee by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha or the Speaker, Lok Sabha.

Way forward:
- Parliamentary committees don't have dedicated subject-wise research support available. The knowledge gap is partially bridged by expert testimony from government and other stakeholders.
- Their work could be made more effective if the committees had full-time, sector-specific research staff.
- The national commission to review the working of the Constitution has recommended that in order to strengthen the committee system, research support should be made available to them.
- Currently, the rules of Parliament don't require every bill to be referred to a parliamentary committee for scrutiny. While this allows the government greater flexibility and the ability to speed up legislative business, it comes at the cost of ineffective scrutiny by the highest law-making body.
- **Mandatory scrutiny of all bills by parliamentary committees would ensure better planning of legislative business.**

Conclusion:
- Thus, the PSC act as check and balance which must be constituted at the earliest.

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.

Q) The Nagaland government has recently initiated an exercise to prepare a master list of all indigenous inhabitants of the State. Critically analyse in what way the positives of such a move outweigh the negatives ?   (250 words)
Hindustantimes

> *Why this question:*
> The Nagaland government is initiating an exercise to prepare a master list of all indigenous inhabitants of the State. This list, called the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN), is seen as a localised version of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) that Assam began updating four years ago and is scheduled to complete by July 31.
> *Key demand of the question:*
> The answer must analyse the pros and cons of such an act taken by the government which is intended to prevent fake 'indigenous inhabitants' certificates.
> *Directive:*
> **Critically analyze** – When asked to analyse, you have to examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them as a whole in a summary. When 'critically' is suffixed or prefixed to a directive, one needs to look at the good and bad of the topic and give a fair judgement.
> *Structure of the answer:*
> *Introduction:*
> State the facts related to the move taken by the government of Nagaland with respect to the indigenous inhabitants.
> *Body:*
> Discussion should have the following aspects covered:
> What is Nagaland's initiative? what is the intent?
> What is the procedure of the survey – discuss the detailed technicalities.
> What can be the possible challenges?
> list the pros and cons and conclude in what way it can best benefit the people of Nagaland.
> *Conclusion:*
> Conclude with a balanced opinion that with proper measures and survey in place the positives of such a move are greater than the negatives.

Introduction:

- The Government of Nagaland has decided to set up a Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN) with the aim of preventing fake indigenous inhabitants' certificates.
- All indigenous inhabitants of the state would be issued a barcoded and numbered Indigenous Inhabitant Certificate.
- The process will be conducted across Nagaland and will be done as part of the online system of Inner Line Permit (ILP), which is already in force in Nagaland.

Body:
Key features:

- The RIIN will be the master list of all indigenous inhabitants of the state.
- The RIIN list will be based on "an extensive survey".
- It will involve official records of indigenous residents from rural and (urban) wards and would be prepared under the supervision of the district administration.
- This provisional list will then be published in all villages, wards and on government websites by September 11, 2019.

Positives of the move:

- Identification of indigenous people will be easier. Illegal Bangladeshi and Rohingya migrants can be stopped and burden on the socio-economic resources can be curbed.
- Better targeting of beneficiaries for government services like PDS.
- Helps in preservation of Naga culture tribes from encroachment.
- It would help in better internal security of the already disturbed North-East India.
- It could also led to decrease in tribal clashes, Greater Nagaland demand
- It would promote harmony and development of region which is gateway to ASEAN

Challenges/Negatives of the move:

- The Assam experience shows that in the complex demographies of the North-eastern States, the registration process may not be that easy.
- As many as 40 lakh people were left out of the NRC listing in Assam, in the alleged process to filter out 'illegal immigrants'.

- Indeed, in Nagaland, various local attempts have been made to determine non-locals, non-tribals and non-Nagas.
- Efforts have been taken to identify what some people refer to as the 'Illegal Bangladeshi Immigrant', but not full-fledged.
- The situation on the ground is already volatile and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act is routinely extended there too.
- All these pose significant challenges to the citizenship registration process.

Conclusion:
- In the complex demographies of North-Eastern States, it may prove to be difficult. In Nagaland, various local attempts have been made previously to determine non-locals, non-tribals and non-Nagas. RIIN should not become a vehicle to determine outsiders / insiders.
- It is expected to deepen the existing fault-lines. Emotive political issues cannot be allowed to drive the compiling of a registry of citizens. Given this, the Nagaland government should facilitate the right to appeal and a humane hearing for those who are left out.

Q) What are the constitutional provisions related to interstate river water disputes? Why have river water disputes spun out for such long durations of time in our country? Can there be a fix? comment. (250 words)

The hindu

Why this question:
The Union Cabinet has approved the Inter-State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2019 that will help adjudicate disputes relating to waters of inter-State rivers and river valleys.

Key demand of the question:
The answer must list down the constitutional provisions related to interstate water dispute and discuss in detail the reasons for the delayed/ unsettled nature of the issue.

Directive:
Comment– here we have to express our knowledge and understanding of the issue and form an overall opinion thereupon.

Structure of the answer:
Introduction:
Quote the recent controversies surrounding the bill and bring out the significance of the constitutional provisions of the bill.

Body:
Discuss how Inter-State River Water Disputes are one of the most contiguous issues in the Indian federalism today.
List the Constitutional provisions for River Water Dispute in India.
Explain the reasons for the lingering water disputes over long durations of time. quote examples – Cauvery Water Dispute etc.
Suggest what should be the way forward? – significance of Inter-State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill, Disputes Resolution Committee (DRC) etc.

Conclusion:
Conclude that such disputes can hamper growth and development of the country and must be resolved amicably without much political opportunism.

Introduction:
- The Inter-State River Water Disputes are one of the most contentious issues in the Indian federalism today.
- With increasing demand for water, inter-state river water disputes are on the rise but the present Inter State River Water Dispute Act, 1956 that provides the legal framework to address such disputes is seen to have many drawbacks.
- Cabinet recently approved **Inter-State River Water disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2019.** The Bill seeks to amend the Inter State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 with a view to streamline the adjudication of inter-state river water disputes and make the present institutional architecture robust.

Body:

Constitutional provisions related to interstate river water disputes:

- **Entry 17 of State List** deals with water i.e. water supply, irrigation, canal, drainage, embankments, water storage and water power.
- **Entry 56 of Union List** empowers the Union Government for the regulation and development of inter-state rivers and river valleys to the extent declared by Parliament to be expedient in the public interest.
- **Article 262:** In the case of disputes relating to waters, it provides
  - **Clause 1:** 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**.
  - **Clause 2:** 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 as mentioned above.
- Parliament has enacted two laws according to Article 262:
  - River Board Act, 1956
  - Inter-State Water Dispute Act, 1956

Reasons for delay in resolving river water disputes:

- The Inter State Water Dispute Act, 1956 which provides the legal framework to address such disputes suffers from many drawbacks as it does not fix any time limit for resolving river water disputes.
- Under this Act, a separate Tribunal has to be established for each Inter State River Water Dispute.
- Only three out of eight Tribunals have given awards accepted by the States, while Tribunals like Cauvery and Ravi Beas have been in existence for over 26 and 30 years respectively without any award.
- Delays are on account of no time limit for adjudication by a Tribunal, no upper age limit for the Chairman or the Members, work getting stalled due to occurrence of any vacancy and no time limit for publishing the report of the Tribunal.
- For instance, in the case of Godavari water dispute, the request was made in 1962, but the tribunal was constituted in 1968 and the award was given in 1979 which was published in the Gazette in 1980. The Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal, constituted in 1990, gave its final award in 2007
- Opacity in the institutional framework and guidelines that define these proceedings; and ensuring compliance.
- The River Boards Act 1956, which is supposed to facilitate inter-state collaboration over water resource development, remained a 'dead letter' since its enactment.
- Though award is final and beyond the jurisdiction of Courts, either States can approach Supreme Court under Article 136 (Special Leave Petition) under Article 32 linking issue with the violation of Article 21 (Right to Life).
- The composition of the tribunal is not multidisciplinary and it consists of persons only from the judiciary.
- The **absence of authoritative water data** that is acceptable to all parties currently makes it difficult to even set up a baseline for adjudication.
- Surface water is controlled by Central Water Commission (CWC) and ground water by Central Ground Water Board of India (CGWB). Both bodies work independently and there is no common forum for common discussion with state governments on water management
- The growing nexus between water and politics have transformed the disputes into turfs of vote bank politics.
  - This politicisation has also led to increasing defiance by states, extended litigations and subversion of resolution mechanisms.
  - For example, the Punjab government played truant in the case of the Ravi-Beas tribunal.
- Too much discretion at too many stages of the process.
  - Partly because of procedural complexities involving multiple stakeholders across governments and agencies.
  - India's complicated federal polity and its colonial legacy.

Way forward:

- The Centre's proposal to set up a **single, permanent tribunal to adjudicate on inter-state river water dispute**s could be a major step towards streamlining the dispute redressal mechanism.
- However, this alone will not be able to address the different kinds of problems—legal, administrative, constitutional and political—that plague the overall framework.
- Centre's proposal to set up an agency alongside the tribunal, which will collect and process data on river waters, can be a right step in this direction.
- To strengthen the cooperative federalism, parochial mindset making regional issues superior to national issues should not be allowed.
- So disputes must be resolved by dialogue and talks and the political opportunism must be avoided.

- A robust and transparent institutional framework with cooperative approach is need of the hour.

Conclusion:
- The bill is a step towards the **cooperative federalism** and will promote a **prompt decision making** in case of the various interstate water disputes.
- The solutions on water disputes will help in the **socio economic development of stakeholder states**. The implementation of the proposed steps in the bill in its true spirit will develop an **integrated regime of river water utilisation.**

Topic: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies

Q) The recent passage of the Right to Information (Amendment) Bill by the Lok Sabha has reignited the debate on the future of important institutions in India. In this context, discuss the controversial provisions of the Right to Information (Amendment) Bill. To what extent, it effects the independent functioning of Information commissions ?   (250 words)

The hindu

Introduction:
- The Right to Information (RTI) Act, operationalised in October 2005, was seen as a powerful tool for citizen empowerment. Democracy requires an informed citizenry and transparency of information which are vital to its functioning and also to contain corruption and to hold governments and their instrumentalities accountable to the governed. It showed an early promise by exposing wrongdoings at high places and bringing to limelight various scams.
- The Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2019 that amends the Right to Information Act, 2005 has been introduced in Lok Sabha. However, former information commissioners and RTI activists have come out strongly against the move by the central government to amend the RTI Act, 2005.

Body:

THEN AND NOW

TERM

2005 ACT: Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and Information Commissioners (ICs) at central and state levels will serve for five years.

2019 BILL: Central government will notify the term of office.

SALARY

2005 ACT: At central level, salary of CIC and ICs equivalent to salary of Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners, respectively. At state level, equivalent to salary of Election Commissioners and Chief Secretary, respectively.

2019 BILL: Salaries, allowances, and other terms and conditions of service of central and state CIC and ICs will be determined by the central

government.

DEDUCTIONS

2005 ACT: At the time of appointment, if CIC and ICs (at central and state levels) are receiving pension or any other retirement benefits for previous government service, their salaries will be reduced by an amount equal to that pension. Previous government service includes service under: (i) the central government, (ii) state government, (iii) corporation established under a central or state law, and (iv) company owned or controlled by the central or state government.

2019 BILL: The Bill removes these provisions.

Source: PRS Legislative Research

Amendments:
- The Bill primarily amends **Sections 13 and 16** of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.
- The **Centre shall have the powers** to set the salaries and service conditions of Information Commissioners at central as well as state levels.
- **Term of the central Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners**: appointment will be "for such term as may be prescribed by the Central Government".
- While the original Act prescribes salaries, allowances and other terms of service of the state Chief Information Commissioner as "the same as that of an Election Commissioner", and the salaries and other terms of service of the State Information Commissioners as "the same as that of the Chief Secretary to the State Government", the amendment proposes that these "shall be such as may be prescribed by the Central Government".

Reasons for opposition:
- The original Act had quantified the tenures, and defined the salaries in terms of existing benchmarks. The amendments are being viewed as implying that, in effect, the terms of appointment, salaries and tenures of the Chief Information Commissioners and Information Commissioners can be decided on a case-to-case basis by the government. This will **take away the independence of the RTI authorities**.
- Therefore, the Bill is being seen as a "**threat to the independence**" of the Central Information Commissioner.
- By **diminishing the status of the CIC, IC and State CIC from that of a Supreme Court judge** would reduce their ability to issue directives to senior government functionaries.
- The amendments would **empower the Centre to make rules to decide the tenure, salary, allowances and other terms of service of information commissioners of the Central and also State Information Commissions**.
- This will **fundamentally weaken the institution of the information commissions** as it will adversely impact the ability of commissioners to function in an independent manner.
- The **separation of powers** is a concept which underscores independence and is vital to India's democratic checks and balances.
- The Commission which is vested by law with status, independence and authority, will now **function like a department of the Central government**.
- When power is centralised and the freedom of expression threatened, it **affects the fundamental federal fabric.**
- The government has brought about the **Bill in complete secrecy and there have been no public consultations on the Bill**, which will impact the fundamental right to information of the citizens of the country.

Government's rationale:
- The mandate of Election Commission of India and Central and State Information Commissions are different.
- Hence, their status and service conditions need to be rationalised accordingly.
- The Central Information Commissioner has been given the status of a Supreme Court judge.
- But, his judgments can be challenged in the High Courts, which is inconsistent.
- Besides, the RTI Act did not give the government rule-making powers, which the amendment proposes to correct.

Way forward:
- Independent structures set up to regulate and monitor the government are vital to a democratic state committed to deliver justice and constitutional guarantees.
- The separation of powers is a concept which underscores this independence and is vital to our democratic checks and balances.
- So when power is centralised, the freedom of expression is threatened which can lead to the decline of democracy.

Conclusion:
- RTI Act has **transparency, accountability and participation** as its mandate and is considered equally important legal document after the Constitution. There is a necessity to undertake the measures to strengthen this powerful tool that can deliver **significant social benefits.**

Q) The recent amendments to the RTI Act passed in the Lok Sabha have drawn criticism from the Opposition and a large section of the civil society. In such a scenario critically analyse the amendments made to the act and their effects thereon.   (250 words)

Indianexpress
Why this question:

The bill introduces changes in the terms and conditions of appointment of the chief information commissioner (CIC) at the Centre and the information commissioners in states. The RTI amendment bill has three provisions that have been challenged by the Opposition members in Parliament and by activists working in the field.

Demand of the question:

The answer must provide for detailed critical analysis of the recent amendments made to the act and in what way the associated concerns can be resolved.

Directive word:

Critically analyze – When asked to analyse, you have to examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them as a whole in a summary. When 'critically' is suffixed or prefixed to a directive, one needs to look at the good and bad of the topic and give a fair judgement.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction

In brief explain the basic things that the RTI Act of 2005 does.

Body

Explain precisely the specific amendments made – In the 2019 RTI amendment bill, the government has done away with the fixed tenure of five years for the chief information commissioners and the information commissioners. Their salaries too have been altered. Both will now be separately notified by the government of the day.

This, in a political sense, means that the government can threaten or lure the chief information commissioner and information commissioners with arbitrary removal or extension and curtailment or increase in salary depending upon their suitability for the ruling dispensation.

Suggest what needs to be done to overcome these concerns.

Conclusion

Conclude with way forward.

Introduction:

- The Right to Information (RTI) Act, operationalised in October 2005, was seen as a powerful tool for citizen empowerment. Democracy requires an informed citizenry and transparency of information which are vital to its functioning and also to contain corruption and to hold governments and their instrumentalities accountable to the governed. It showed an early promise by exposing wrongdoings at high places and bringing to limelight various scams.
- The Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2019 that amends the Right to Information Act, 2005 has been introduced in

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2019 BILL: The Bill removes these provisions.

Source: PRS Legislative Research

Lok Sabha. However, former information commissioners and RTI activists have come out strongly against the move by the central government to amend the RTI Act, 2005.

Body:

Amendments:

- The Bill primarily amends **Sections 13 and 16** of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.
- The **Centre shall have the powers** to set the salaries and service conditions of Information Commissioners at central as well as state levels.

- **Term of the central Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners**: appointment will be "for such term as may be prescribed by the Central Government".
- While the original Act prescribes salaries, allowances and other terms of service of the state Chief Information Commissioner as "the same as that of an Election Commissioner", and the salaries and other terms of service of the State Information Commissioners as "the same as that of the Chief Secretary to the State Government", the amendment proposes that these "shall be such as may be prescribed by the Central Government".

Reasons for opposition:
- The original Act had quantified the tenures, and defined the salaries in terms of existing benchmarks. The amendments are being viewed as implying that, in effect, the terms of appointment, salaries and tenures of the Chief Information Commissioners and Information Commissioners can be decided on a case-to-case basis by the government. This will **take away the independence of the RTI authorities**.
- Therefore, the Bill is being seen as a "**threat to the independence**" of the Central Information Commissioner.
- By **diminishing the status of the CIC, IC and State CIC from that of a Supreme Court judge** would reduce their ability to issue directives to senior government functionaries.
- The amendments would **empower the Centre to make rules to decide the tenure, salary, allowances and other terms of service of information commissioners of the Central and also State Information Commissions**.
- This will **fundamentally weaken the institution of the information commissions** as it will adversely impact the ability of commissioners to function in an independent manner.
- The **separation of powers** is a concept which underscores independence and is vital to India's democratic checks and balances.
- The Commission which is vested by law with status, independence and authority, will now **function like a department of the Central government**.
- When power is centralised and the freedom of expression threatened, it **affects the fundamental federal fabric.**
- The government has brought about the **Bill in complete secrecy and there have been no public consultations on the Bill**, which will impact the fundamental right to information of the citizens of the country.

Government's rationale:
- The mandate of Election Commission of India and Central and State Information Commissions are different.
- Hence, their status and service conditions need to be rationalised accordingly.
- The Central Information Commissioner has been given the status of a Supreme Court judge.
- But, his judgments can be challenged in the High Courts, which is inconsistent.
- Besides, the RTI Act did not give the government rule-making powers, which the amendment proposes to correct.

Way forward:
- Independent structures set up to regulate and monitor the government are vital to a democratic state committed to deliver justice and constitutional guarantees.
- The separation of powers is a concept which underscores this independence and is vital to our democratic checks and balances.
- So when power is centralised, the freedom of expression is threatened which can lead to the decline of democracy.

Conclusion:
- RTI Act has **transparency, accountability and participation** as its mandate and is considered equally important legal document after the Constitution. There is a necessity to undertake the measures to strengthen this powerful tool that can deliver **significant social benefits.**

Q) Do you think giving the government the authority to fix the tenure and salaries of information commissioners, would be a proxy way to kill the RTI? Analyse and suggest solutions to strengthen the ambit of RTI.   (250 words)

livemint

> *Why this question:*
> The article discusses in detail in what way in the wake of a bruising battle over the RTI Act, much-needed steps to improve transparency are being ignored.

One must discuss the recent amendments made by the government and the pros and cons of such steps and the effects it has on the functioning of the RTI. One has to suggest solutions to overcome such issues.

Directive word:

Analyze – When asked to analyse, you have to examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them as a whole in a summary.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction

State the recent amendments made to the RTI act.

Body

First explain the proposed amendment – the salaries, allowances and other terms and conditions of service of the CIC and ICs "shall be such as may be prescribed by the central government". The tenure of information commissioners at the centre and the states is proposed to be amended from "a term of five years" to "terms as may be prescribed by the central government".

Then discuss why is it being opposed and on what grounds?

Explain what needs to be done to preserve the true spirit of the act and to ensure it functions to the best possible way.

Conclusion

Conclude by suggesting solutions to make the act more effective.

Introduction:

- The Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2019 that amends the Right to Information Act, 2005 has been introduced in Lok Sabha. However, former information commissioners and RTI activists have come out strongly against the move by the central government to amend the RTI Act, 2005.

Body:

Amendments:

- The Bill primarily amends **Sections 13 and 16** of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.
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Reasons for opposition:

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- Therefore, the Bill is being seen as a "**threat to the independence**" of the Central Information Commissioner.
- By **diminishing the status of the CIC, IC and State CIC from that of a Supreme Court judge** would reduce their ability to issue directives to senior government functionaries.
- The amendments would **empower the Centre to make rules to decide the tenure, salary, allowances and other terms of service of information commissioners of the Central and also State Information Commissions**.
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- The **separation of powers** is a concept which underscores independence and is vital to India's democratic checks and balances.
- The Commission which is vested by law with status, independence and authority, will now **function like a department of the Central government**.
- When power is centralised and the freedom of expression threatened, it **affects the fundamental federal fabric.**
- The government has brought about the **Bill in complete secrecy and there have been no public consultations on the Bill**, which will impact the fundamental right to information of the citizens of the country.

Government's rationale:
- The mandate of Election Commission of India and Central and State Information Commissions are different.
- Hence, their status and service conditions need to be rationalised accordingly.
- The Central Information Commissioner has been given the status of a Supreme Court judge.
- But, his judgments can be challenged in the High Courts, which is inconsistent.
- Besides, the RTI Act did not give the government rule-making powers, which the amendment proposes to correct.

Measures needed to strengthen RTI:
- **Reduce pendency:** To begin with, the government could take steps to reduce pending appeals. In June 2019, about 31,000 appeals were pending, over 9,000 of those pending for over a year. Currently, four out of the ten positions of information commissioners are vacant.
- **Prune the exemption list:** According to an RTI ratings report by the Canada-based Centre for Law and Democracy, India's rank slipped from second position in 2011 to eighth in 2018. In its current form, Section 8 of the RTI Act lists ten exemptions, ranging from any information that may hurt national security, impede the process of ongoing investigations to cabinet papers and deliberations of the council of ministers. These must be reduced.
- **Protect whistle-blowers:** According to a tracker of assaults on RTI activists set up by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), a Delhi-based international non-profit, 84 RTI activists have been murdered since 2005 for seeking information on illegal construction, alleged scams in social welfare schemes, and corruption in panchayats. While seven activists have committed suicide, more than 350 have either faced assault or harassment. Starting with timely and effective investigation, India needs to put in place long-term measures to prevent these assaults
- **CIC as a constitutional body:** The currently statutory body must be made a constitutional body to uphold its sanctity.
- **Political parties under RTI:** All political parties claim to serve the public but are unanimous in their reluctance to share information with citizens. They must be put under ambit of RTI.

Way forward:
- The RTI has **unshackled millions** of users who will continue to use this **democratic right creatively** and to **dismantle exclusive power.**
- **Independent structures** set up to regulate and monitor the government are vital to a democratic state committed to deliver justice and constitutional guarantees.
- The **separation of powers** is a concept which underscores this independence and is vital to our democratic checks and balances.
- So when power is centralised, the **freedom of expression is threatened** which can lead to the decline of democracy.
- The need of the hour is the Government should take into account the concerns of the experts and should **arrive at an amicable solution**, which **ensures sufficient independence** to the Commission.

Conclusion:
- RTI Act has **transparency, accountability and participation** as its mandate and is considered equally important legal document after the Constitution. There is a necessity to undertake the measures to strengthen this powerful tool that can deliver **significant social benefits.**

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

Q) "The essence of the Juvenile Justice Act of 2000 is to ensure that the trial in the regular court is offence-oriented and in the juvenile court it is offender-oriented." How far do you think the Juvenile Justice Act of 2000 has been successful in the above aspect? Discuss. (250 words)

Indianexpress

> ***Why this question:***
> The article discusses in detail the nuances of Juvenile Justice Act of 2000, the amendments to which have given scope to try a juvenile as an adult too in specific cases.

Introduction:
- The Juvenile Justice Act of 2000 was amended in 2015 with a provision allowing for **Children in Conflict with Law (CCL)** to be tried as adults under certain circumstances. In 2016, a 17-year-old was booked for the murder of his three-year-old neighbour in Mumbai.
- The Mumbai city Juvenile Justice Board as well as a children's court directed that he be tried as an adult under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015. Last week, the Bombay High Court set aside these orders and directed that the accused be tried as a minor, saying the Act is reformative and not retributive.

Body:
Provision of JJ Act:
- The Act defines a child as someone who is under age 18. For a CCL, age on the date of the offence is the basis for determining whether he or she was a child or an adult.
- The amended Act distinguishes children in the age group 16-18 as a category which can be tried as adults if they are alleged to have committed a heinous offence — one that attracts a minimum punishment of seven years.
- The Act does not, however, make it mandatory for all children in this age group to be tried as adults.

Criteria for trying a child as an adult:
As per Section 15 of the JJ Act, there are three criteria that the Juvenile Justice Board in the concerned district should consider while conducting a preliminary assessment to determine whether the child should be tried as an adult or under the juvenile justice system, which prescribes a maximum term of three years in a special home. The criteria are:
- Whether the child has the mental and physical capacity to commit such an offence.
- Whether the child has the ability to understand its consequences.
- The circumstances in which the offence was committed.

If the Board finds that the child can be tried as an adult, the case is transferred to a designated children's court, which again decides whether the Board's decision is correct.

Evaluation of JJ Act:
- The statute permits a child of 16 years and above to stand trial as an adult in case of heinous offence, it did not mean that all those children should be subjected to adult punishment.
- Essentially, the trial in the regular court is offence-oriented; in the juvenile court, it is offender-oriented.
- In other words, in the children's court, societal safety and the child's future are balanced.
- For an adult offender, prison is the default opinion; for a juvenile it is the last resort.

Conclusion:
- The improvement of the juvenile justice system is a gradual process, which requires intensive and continual follow-up as well as long-term commitment rather than a series of 'ad hoc' exercises and 'knee-jerk' responses.

- The decision of the Bombay high court is of great significance as children in conflict with law need to be reformed than be given retributive justice. This would help them become better citizens of India.

Q) Exclusion of people from the final National Register of Citizens in Assam may lead to humanitarian crisis. Elaborate. Critically analyze the status of stateless people in the light of Article 21.   (250 words)

The hindu

Introduction:
- The National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise is among the most ambitious experiments the Indian state has undertaken. The NRC is the list of Indian citizens and was **prepared in 1951**, following the census of 1951. The process of **NRC update** was taken up in **Assam** as per a **Supreme Court order in 2013**.
- In order to **wean out cases of illegal migration from Bangladesh and other adjoining areas**, NRC updation was carried out under **The Citizenship Act, 1955**, and according to **rules framed in the Assam Accord**.

Body:

NRC would lead to Humanitarian crisis:
- NRC is becoming a dangerous card in the sordid game of political confrontation across the whole of India's east and Northeast.
- **Families separated:**
  - o Names of some family members have been included in the final draft but those of their wives and children are missing. There are so many cases such as those.
  - o Leave aside the harassment and humiliation of having to file claims all over again and chase officials who are often less than sympathetic.
- **Rising insecurity among people leading to violence:**
  - o Chant of national security and a muscular nationalism could stoke more mistrust and aggravate the climate of uncertainty in the border state.
  - o Incidents of harassment on the charge of being illegal Bangladeshi on flimsy ground, or no ground at all, are making the migrants nervous.
- **Names Are excluded:**
  - o From the frenetic pace to meet deadlines in the face of an unrelenting apex court to the omission of 1,50,000 names from the 19 million that had made it to the first draft.
  - o The latest list again had its share of notable omissions, including serving and former legislators.
- **The future of illegal migrants is under question:**
  - o Bigger challenges lie ahead, especially after the final NRC list determines the precise number of deemed illegal immigrants.
  - o India addresses the fate of those eventually left off the list will ascertain whether its democracy can lay claim to being humane or not.
  - o It is doubtful if all indigenous people have their paper in order. For instance, there are doubts that many poor people belonging to nomadic tribal communities would be able to produce documentary evidence that they lived in the state forty seven years ago.
- **Strain in India-Bangladesh relation:**
  - o Biggest fallout of the NRC updating could be India's relations with Bangladesh, which has been on an upswing since 2009.
- **Rising violence:**
  - o India and Bangladesh don't have an agreement to facilitate deportation of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants to that country. This will render the identified illegal migrants as stateless people.

  UN experts recently warned that the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam could render millions of citizens stateless and create instability in India. A panel of three experts said the exercise has increased hate speech against minorities in social media and built a climate of racial hatred.

Status of Stateless people:
- Article 21 of Indian constitution is available to all including foreigners in India.
- Thus, NRC would be a violation of the constitution.
- The **Supreme Court in Abdul Kuddus v Union of India** rejected the petitioners' arguments, and held that the "opinion" of the Foreigners Tribunal was to be treated as a "quasi-judicial order", and was therefore final and binding on all parties including upon the preparation of the NRC.

- In further strengthening the Foreigners Tribunal, the judiciary has failed to fulfil its duty as the last protector of rights

Measures needed:
- A person's citizenship is a basic human right.
- Declaring people foreigners in haste without judicially verifying their credentials can leave many human beings stateless.
- Under such circumstances, the Tribunal must uphold their fundamental constitutional promises and function with complete independence, without any hint of arbitrariness or discrimination in the adjudication process.

Way forward:
- India, as a country which follows the ideology of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', should not be hasty in taking decisions that can disenfranchise her citizens – contradicting its centuries-followed values.
- The need of the hour is that Union Government should clearly chart out the course of action regarding the fate of excluded people from final NRC data and political parties should refrain from colouring the entire NRC process through electoral prospects that may snowball in to communal violence.
- There is a need for a robust mechanism of legal support for the four million who have to prove their citizenship to India with their limited means.

Q) "India's digital transformation has given rise to an entrepreneurial mindset not just among urban masses but also among rural youth". Comment. (250 words)

Livemint

Why this question:
The article highlights the positives that the digital literacy has brought in , especially the rural areas where the digital literacy has penetrated the regions of rural pockets that still lack literacy.

Key demand of the question:
The answer must bring out the positives of digital literacy and the effects it has especially on rural India.

Directive:
Comment– here we have to express our knowledge and understanding of the issue and form an overall opinion thereupon.

Structure of the answer:
Introduction:
In brief define digital literacy.

Body:
First explain how Digital literacy will provide the opportunity to rural people for education, financial inclusion, accessing best health services, getting employment, selling their good and services etc.
Digital technology successfully reducing the geographical distance, reducing the transaction cost, permitting real time events and providing the true information. All this will help the development of rural India.
Discuss the various initiatives taken by the government of India in rendering digital services to rural india.
Explain how it has brought the entrepreneurial mentality among the rural youth.

Conclusion:
Conclude with way forward.

Introduction:
- Digital Literacy is the ability of individuals and communities to understand and use digital technologies for meaningful actions within life situations.
- The goal of Digital Literacy is **to teach and assess basic computer concepts and skills** so that people can use computer technology in everyday life to develop new social and economic opportunities for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Body:

Importance of digital literacy for Rural India:
- Digital literacy will provide the opportunity to rural people for education, financial inclusion, accessing best health services, getting employment, selling their goods and services etc.
- Digital technology successfully reducing the geographical distance, reducing the transaction cost, permitting real time events and providing the true information.

- Digital literacy sessions, coupled with life skills training, help the rural youth in villages to gain exposure to concepts beyond textbooks and theory.
- Digital literacy is an empowering tool for adolescents and youth. It has the potential to raise the literacy levels in rural areas and give young people the functional knowledge to be aware and responsible citizens.
- Digital literacy helps in participation in the e-Governance, reaping the benefits of Digital financial inclusion like DBT, filing RTI applications etc.

Digital literacy and Rural Indian Entrepreneurship:
- **Boosted Connectivity between Established Businesses and New Entrepreneurs:** The digital India programme has brought the communities together. The start-ups can now access reliable data and trusted information about setting up and running their business, just with the use of their fingertips.
- **Facilitated Global Reach of the Indian Companies:** The Digital India had empowered more and more young entrepreneurs to build innovative solutions and start their own venture for both Indian and global audience.
- **Ease of Establishing a Company:** Digitization of the economy has made it easier to start a company. Benefits like self-certifications and online registration of the companies allow the potential entrepreneurs to start their business hassle free. Digital India is a much-needed change that this country of youths has been longing for.
- **Building up of an Organised Market and Healthy Start-Up Ecosystem:** Building a digital India is an encouraging initiative that is taking the start-up ecosystem of the country to the next level.
- **Empowered the Youth to Become "Job-Giver":** This initiative launched by the government is enabling the Indian youth to become job creators and not job seekers. From start-ups to the existing business houses, the programme is encouraging talent, while driving innovation.
- **Lowered cost of working:** Digitization has encouraged millions of young minds to come up with new ideas while giving confidence to the investors to seek partnership with the start-ups. This has further lowered the cost in terms of timing.

Way forward:
- Strengthening the Digital literacy program through **National Digital literacy mission and initiatives like Digital Saksharatha Abhiyan (DISHA).**
- **Use of PPP and CSR funds** to further encourage Private players in spreading digital literacy in rural areas.
- The **National Digital Telecommunication Policy 2018** should be implemented in true letter and spirit.
- Speeding up the implementation of BharatNet.
- **Localisation of data in the regional languages, ease of accessibility, reducing digital divide** can further boost the penetration of Digital India.

Conclusion:
- The benefits of Digital India can be made all inclusive and equitable by better Digital literacy. It can cut down on distress migration, expand opportunities for trade of the agricultural products, increase the per capita income of the rural youths.

Topic – Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Q) The effectiveness of Government measures in recent times have indicated a decline in child labour in India. Will this lead to complete eradication of child labour in India? Critically analyse. (250 words)

Indianexpress

Why this question:
The article highlights the recent reports published in Lok Sabha that suggested instances of child labour detected during inspections having reduced successively from 2014 to 2018.

Demand of the question:
The answer has to evaluate the recent declining trends in child labour and to what extent government efforts alone have contributed to eradication of it and what more is needed to make India child labour free.

Directive word:

Critically analyze – When asked to analyze, you have to examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them as a whole in a summary. When

'critically' is suffixed or prefixed to a directive, one needs to look at the good and bad of the topic and give a fair judgement.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction

Quote some facts to depict the declining trends.

Body

- Explain what is meant by Child labour? –
- According to International Labour Organization (ILO), the term 'child labour' is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.
- Then explain What are the consequences/adverse effects of child labour on a child's life?
- What have been the government's efforts in addressing the issue?
- What needs to be done to completely get rid of such a social evil?

Conclusion
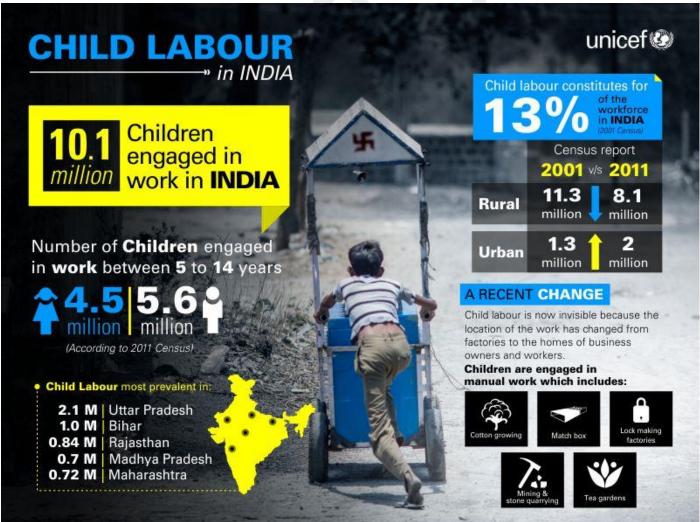
Conclude with way forward.

Introduction:

- Child labour typically means the employment of children in any manual work with or without payment. It is a deep rooted social ill in India. As per the 2011 Census, in the age group 5-14 years, 10.1 million of 259.6 million constituted working children.
- Even though there was a decline in the number of working children to 3.9% in 2011 from 5% in 2001, the decline rate is grossly insufficient to meet **target 8.7 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, which is **to end child labour in all forms by 2025**.

Body:

Current state of Child Labour in India:

Efforts taken to eradicate child labour in India:
- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (1986)** to prohibit the engagement of children in certain employments and to regulate the conditions of work of children in certain other employments
- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016 :** The Amendment Act completely prohibits the employment of children below 14 years.
- The amendment also prohibits the employment of adolescents in the age group of 14 to 18 years in hazardous occupations and processes and regulates their working conditions where they are not prohibited.
- On **World Day Against Child Labour (June 12) in 2017**, India ratified **two core conventions** of the **International Labour Organization on child labour**.
- **National Policy on Child Labour (1987)**, with a focus more on rehabilitation of children working in hazardous occupations and processes, rather than on prevention.
- **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000** and **amendment of the JJ Act in 2006**: includes the working child in the category of children in need of care and protection, without any limitation of age or type of occupation.
- **Section 23 (cruelty to Juvenile) and Section 26 (exploitation of juvenile employee)** specifically deal with child labour under children in need of care and protection.
- **Pencil**: The government has launched a dedicated platform viz. pencil.gov.in to ensure effective enforcement of child labour laws and end child labour.
- **The Right to Education Act 2009** has made it mandatory for the state to ensure that all children aged six to 14 years are in school and receive free education. Along with Article 21A of the Constitution of India recognizing education as a fundamental right, this constitutes a timely opportunity to use education to combat child labour in India.
- Amendments made to the **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act** prescribes severe punishment for people found guilty of retaining bonded labour.
- The amendment stipulates rigorous imprisonment for those who force children to beg, handle or carry human waste and animal carcasses.
- The **draft National Policy for Domestic Workers**, when goes into force, will ensure minimum Rs.9,000 salary for household helpers.
- Every police station in the country has a separate cell for juvenile, women and child protection.
- Many **NGOs like Bachpan Bachao Andolan, CARE India, Child Rights and You, Global march against child labour, RIDE India, Child line etc**. have been working to eradicate child labour in India.

Gaps still persist:
- Multiple forms exist: Child labour is not uniform. It takes many forms depending upon the type of work that children are made to do, the age and sex of the child and whether they work independently or with families.
- Due to this complex nature of child labour, there is no one strategy that can be used to eliminate it.
- The absence of national legislation to give effect to global conventions on the employment of children in hazardous industries, as well as on the minimum age of work.
- The lack of harmony between global commitments and domestic priorities.
- Incoherency between laws that prescribe a minimum age for employment and those for completion of compulsory school education. It also means that the expansion of quality universal basic education has to extend beyond the fulfilment of statutory provisions.
- Lack of effective labour inspections in the informal economy. Around 71% of working children are concentrated in the agriculture sector, with 69% of them undertaking unpaid work in family units.

Way forward:
- Abolition of child trafficking, elimination of poverty, free and compulsory education, and basic standards of living can reduce the problem to a great extent.
- Strict implementation of labour laws is also essential in order to prevent exploitation by parties or multinational companies
- Strengthening policy and legislative enforcement, and building the capacities of government, workers' and employers' organisations as well as other partners at national, State and community levels should be prioritized.
- **Education:**
  - Spreading literacy and education is a potent weapon against the practice of child labour, because illiterate persons do not understand the implications of child labour

- o The single most effective way to stem the flow of school-aged children into child labour is to improve access to and quality of schooling.
  - **Eradicate Unemployment:**
    - o Another way to stop child labour is to eliminate or rein in unemployment. Because of inadequate employment, many families cannot afford to meet all their expenses. If employment opportunities are increased, they will be able to let their children read and write and become worthy citizens
- Continued progress against child labour requires policies that help mitigate the economic vulnerability of households. Accelerating progress towards universal social protection is key, as social protection helps prevent poor households from having to rely on child labour as a coping mechanism.
  - **Attitude change:**
    - o It is important that the attitudes and mindsets of people are changed to instead employ adults and allow all children to go to school and have the chance to learn, play and socialize as they should.
    - o A sector-wide culture of child labour-free businesses has to be nurtured.

Conclusion:
- Eliminating child labour is firmly placed within Goal 8 of the SDGs. A stronger nexus between the discourse on SDGs and the discourse on eliminating child labour can take the advantage of complementarities and synergies of a wide range of actors engaged in both areas of work.
- The fight against child labour is not just the responsibility of one, it is the responsibility of all.

Q) The prevention of torture has been one of the key human rights developments in the last decade, However, India's commitment to preventing and abolishing torture as well as punishing its perpetrators has remained extremely weak. Critically analyse in the light of recent incidences of custodial deaths around the country. (250 words)

Livemint

Why this question:
Recently Kerala govt has come in the line of fire over rising cases of custodial deaths, police torture.
Key demand of the question:
The answer must analyse the recent custodial deaths and the underlying causes as to what is the key issue associated and why India has remained weak in this aspect of human rights.
Directive:
Critically analyze – When asked to analyze, you have to examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them as a whole in a summary. When 'critically' is suffixed or prefixed to a directive, one needs to look at the good and bad of the topic and give a fair judgement.
Structure of the answer:
Introduction:
In brief discuss the recent police custodial ills across the country.
Body:
Have the following points discussed in the answer:
Discuss the issue first in detail, use data/facts to substantiate.
Explain why there has been a neglect;causes of such ill happenings.
Discuss what needs to be done? Need for reforms in the police across the country.
What needs to be done?
Conclusion:
Conclude that reforms are needed with respect to custodial deaths on an urgent basis to do away with the human rights violation.

Introduction:
- Custodial torture is global, old and stubborn. Recent incident where the Kerala high court ordered a probe into the actions of Idukki magistrate over custodial death of a 49-year-old man. This is the fifth allegation of custodial death against the Kerala Police since 2016.
- In India, the **National Human Rights Commission** figures of reported torture cases, the report said the figures showed **custodial violence and torture continue to be rampant in the country**. It also pointed out that the **number of reported cases being only a fraction of actuals, the situation was serious**.

Body:
Custodial torture is an inhuman practice:
- It represents the worst form of excesses by public servants entrusted with the duty of law enforcement.
- The practice of custodial power is about men — and sometimes, women — who are in positions of power, even if for a brief while and over a limited terrain, having custody over a powerless person.
- Custodial death, when not 'natural', is the extreme end-point of custodial torture. The death penalty, notwithstanding 'due process', is a close kin to this lawless and heartless game.

Need for an anti-torture legislation in India:
- India has practised and continues to practise the 'third degree' with impunity.
- India **signed the UN Convention against Torture** in 1997, but **neither has it ratified nor followed or preceded by domestic legislation to outlaw and prevent custodial torture**.
- India's non-ratification of the Convention is both surprising and dismaying.
- In 2010, the then government introduced **Prevention of Torture Bill** in the Lok Sabha in 2010 and had it passed in 10 days. The bill as passed by the Lok Sabha was referred to a select committee of the Rajya Sabha.
- The committee gave its report recommending the Bill's adoption later the same year. It lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha. And was not revived by the 16th, the present Lok Sabha.
- The current government spoke of amending Sections 330 (voluntarily causing hurt to extort confession) and 331 of the Indian Penal Code, but in vain.
- There has been **no consistent documentation** of torture-related complaints. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) does not document cases of custodial torture. The NHRC does deal with cases of torture in custody, but the annual figures related to such cases do not get reported in its reports.
- In the ten-month period between September 2017 and June 2018, English language news reports on Internet noted 122 incidents of custodial torture resulting in 30 deaths. In several cases among these 122 incidents, there were multiple victims.
- The procedure to deal with children in conflict with law is different from the routine procedure of criminal justice system. But incidents show that children have been subjected to torture in police custody
- Torture is not just confined to police custody, but is also perpetrated in otherwise assumed to be "safer" custodial institutions like judicial custody (prisons), juvenile homes, de-addiction centres etc
- Nine years after the report of the Select Committee and 21 years after signing the Convention, India is yet to legislate a law that will outlaw torture

Way Forward:
- In a matter that concerns 'life and liberty', the Supreme Court is the guardian of the Constitution's guarantees.
- The **Law Commission of India submitted its 273rd report** recommending government to ratify the UNCAT and also proposed the Prevention of Torture Bill 2017.
- Definition of torture should be broadened to include discrimination of any kind as one of the purposes of torture. It is widely recognised that discrimination based on religion, caste and association with ideas does have an impact on the incidence and extent of torture.
- Given the fact that there is a possibility of a range of acts that can be committed under torture, cruelty and ill-treatment leading to differing severity of harm—the punishment prescribed should have further gradation. Also, death penalty should not be included as the punishment.
- The bill should enlist possible factors based on which the calculation of compensation should be devised.
- It is imperative that the democratic opposition makes the ratification of the Convention and a new anti-torture legislation part of its common programme. The 17th Lok Sabha must take a stand on this matter.
- It gives us a choice to join the civilised world in moving away from ancient barbarism

Conclusion:
- The prevention of torture has been one of **the key human rights developments** in the last decade. With India's strong stake for a seat at the UNSC, the issue has assumed importance.
- There is an urgent need to address the ways in which inequalities continue to exist and question the nature of our criminal justice system which turns a blind eye to torture.

Q) Discuss the impact of Digitalization on Healthcare Services Performance and analyse the trends and evaluate the various challenges posed by it. (250 words)

Livemint

Why this question:

India's apex drug regulator, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO), has issued an alert about a possible risk of hacking of some insulin pumps manufactured by device maker Medtronic PLC recently, after the US FDA flagged the issue last week.

Key demand of the question:

The question is intended to evaluate the effect that digitization/technology is having upon the Healthcare system and the various challenges it poses upon it.

Directive:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Define the role played by technology in healthcare system in general.

Body:

Healthcare systems are facing many challenges, from demographics to multi-morbidities that are associated with increasing the demand for more services. New technologies are thought to be a solution to these problems. However, to address these problems with digitalization of healthcare will imply the combination of properly using technologies, aligned with integrated working processes and skilled professionals.

In the answer one must first highlight the challenges associated with the digitalization of healthcare, the next the implementation of digital services, considering a method to design online service, and then the impact of digitalization on healthcare workforce performance.

Finally, the discussion should examine the challenges of digitalization for the future.

Explain how proper digitalization of healthcare will enable changes in the paradigm of healthcare delivery as well as in the mechanism for patients' participation and engagement.

Conclusion:

Conclude that the sustainability of healthcare will depend on how efficient we will make digital service design.

Introduction:

- The technology shift has cast itself over the field of healthcare, bringing with it a digital transformation in the way doctors and patients interact. Rapidly transforming medical technology and the availability of technology diagnostic and therapeutic equipment together with changing practice pattern of doctors has revolutionized the way health care is being delivered today.
- It is even more helpful in a country where nearly 70 per cent of the population lives in rural communities, e-health initiatives would change the game for our healthcare sector and the one billion it serves.

Body:

Impact of digitalization on Healthcare:

- Telemedicine has fast become the mainstay of health technology deployment for the delivery of services
- Disease surveillance and management, maternal and infant education, awareness on prevention of NCDs and vector-borne diseases can all be enabled through SMS-based communications, videos and messaging services for the rural population.
- Mobile phone applications offering aggregator services for medical professionals, delivery of medicines and availability of diagnostic and test reports are set to enhance efficiency of services and also ensure faster access to medical treatment
- The digitisation of medical records can be enabled by providing cloud-based storage for key health documents with patient profiles.
- Electronic medical record systems such as HealthConnect in Australia, SPINE in England, AORTA in the Netherlands, EMRX in Singapore and others have had a profound impact on the quality and continuity of care.

- Healthcare industry is one of the fields where you can use big data to its maximum potential. Big data analysis has evolved to be a major boon, both for managing the health of the patient and for the business angle of the healthcare organizations.
- With virtual reality, it is possible to understand the organs and their positioning in alarming clarity and in three-dimensional terms. This is known as 3D bioprinting.
- Wearable technology and internet of things has revolutionized the monitoring of health parameters.
- Most importantly the core processes within the institutions become automated, making early detection and quick diagnosis, proving it to be quite impactful

Benefits:
- **Reducing Medical Errors:** It provides a vehicle for improving quality and safety of patient care by reducing medication and medical errors.
- **Patient Involvement:** It stimulates consumer education and patients' involvement in their own health care.
- **Increases efficiency:** by eliminating unnecessary paperwork and provides caregivers with clinical decision support tools for more effective care and treatment
- **Improves public health reporting and monitoring:** by creating a potential loop for feedback between health-related research and actual practice. Further, it provides a basic level of interoperability among electronic health records (EHRs) maintained by individual physicians and organizations.
- **Technology in Healthcare:** It facilitates efficient deployment of emerging technology and health care services and provides the backbone of technical infrastructure for leverage by national and State level initiatives

Challenges posed to adoption of digitalization:
- Digital transformation places significant demands on the digital infrastructure. Lack of internet connectivity put patients' life at risk.
- Connectivity lapses in various regions affecting the poor more
- Affordability of hi-tech solutions will pose a challenge to poorer sections of society.
- The increasing adoption of cloud technologies, and explosive growth in the number of connected devices and data fuelled by digital health will bring significant strain and complexity to legacy IT systems. This could threaten performance and the user experience.
- **Possible risk of hacking** of some medical devices or databases which could leak the private information of patients leading to violation of right to privacy.
- In some cases, digital health initiatives will fail to take off altogether.
- There is a huge supply-demand gap in health infrastructure and human resourcing for the sector. With 80 per cent of doctors, 75 per cent of dispensaries and 60 per cent of hospitals in urban areas, there exists a great distortion in the distribution of health infrastructure.

Way forward:
- Stable source and supply of electricity and internet services in every rural area, so as to facilitate IT innovations applied.
- The government must encourage application development in the health sector with a fund set aside to encourage young entrepreneurs in this field.
- The government's scheme should help extend credit to health technology entrepreneurs.
- Strengthening the telemedicine sector, by hiring more efficient staff and tele callers, so as to meet the vast rural population

Conclusion:
- Though the healthcare sector has traditionally seen lower levels of IT investment and adoption, the trend is fast changing. Currently, the industry is in the phase shedding away its initial reluctance towards technology and exploring the impact of various technologies.
- While many programs have either been rolled out, or envisaged in parts of India, the implementation, almost always, has been partial or incomplete, but is expected to improve over the coming years.

Q) Hidden hunger is a major challenge for India. Discuss the statement in the light of recent Global Hunger Index and also elaborate on India's effort to achieve food security. (250 words)

Reference

Why this question:
The question is intended to evaluate the hidden hunger scenario prevalent in the country.

Key demand of the question:
The answer must highlight the recent findings of the global hunger index report and discuss the efforts being made to eradicate the hidden hunger issue.

Directive:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:
Begin with brief narration of the findings of the report.

Body:
Discussion should include the following:

Explain that the Global hunger index and its rankings reflect the status of food security in a particular country. It is based on four factors – stunting, wasting, under nourishment and child mortality.

Nutritional transition in India where food habits are moving from minimally processed food to highly processed, calorific, micro nutrient poor foods can be cited as a reason.

Excessive stress on high yielding staple crops such as rice and wheat has also worsened the stress on micro nutrient rich food. Food inflation, lack of sufficient information, education on balanced nutrition can be cited as other reasons.

Then discuss in what way the report took a positive opinion on India s effort to raise its food security. PDS system, NRHM, Midday meal program, ICDS scheme, Antyodaya anna yojana all are the steps in ensuring food security. Here the criticism is that Indian planning was centered on carbohydrate security rather than nutritional security as a whole.

Added to this, leakages in PDS, improper targeting need to be addressed. In this context, reforms initiated in Chhattisgarh for protein malnutrition, Universal PDS system can provide a direction.

Conclusion:
Conclude with way forward.

Introduction:
- According to the Global hunger Report, when Govt. provides only free or subsidised wheat and rice, then the hunger gets eliminated only from the energy intake angle. The deficiency in vitamins and minerals still continues and this is called **Hidden Hunger**.
- It occurs when the quality of food people eat does not meet the nutrient requirements, so the food is deficient in micronutrients such as the vitamins and minerals that need for their growth and development.

Body:

Hidden hunger is a major challenge for India:
- India is home to over 40 million stunted and 17 million wasted children (under-five years).
- Despite a fast-growing economy and the largest anti-malnutrition programme, India has the world's worst level of child malnutrition
- Iron deficiency is thought to be the most common cause of anaemia globally, accounting for between 25-50% of anaemia cases.
- Though anaemia among children has declined, it affects every second child in the country. There has been no perceptible decline in anaemia among 15 to 49-year old women; it affects around 60 per cent of them.
- The daily consumption of iron rich dark green leafy vegetables has reduced from 64 per cent to 48 per cent of the population in the last decade.
- Many, in fact, argue that the NFSA's focus on wheat and rice has forced millets — traditional source for iron and minerals — out of the market.
- The government's iron supplementation programme to overcome IDA has led to only 30 per cent of pregnant women consuming iron and folic acid tablets.
- Lack of sanitation and clean drinking water are the reasons high levels of malnutrition persists in India despite improvement in food availability

India's effort to achieve food security:
- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS),** with its network of 1.4 million Anganwadi Centres, reaching almost 100 million beneficiaries who include pregnant and nursing mothers and children up to 6 years;
- **Mid-day meals (MDM)** that reach almost 120 million children in schools; and
- **Public Distribution System (PDS)** that reaches over 800 million people under the National Food Security Act.

- The recently announced flagship program of the Ministry of Women and Child Development will be anchored through the **National Nutrition Mission (NNM), or Poshan Abhiyaan**, with its own specific budget of ₹9,046 crore and a proposed World Bank loan of $200 million, to ensure convergence among the various programmes of the government.
- Additionally, NITI Aayog has worked on a **National Nutrition Strategy (NNS),** isolated the 100 most backward districts for stunting and prioritised those for interventions.
- The National Nutrition Strategy (NNS) has set very ambitious targets for 2022 and the Poshan Abhiyaan has also specified three-year targets to reduce stunting, under-nutrition and low birth weight by 2% each year, and to reduce anaemia by 3% each year.
- **IYCF** (Infant and Young child feeding), **Food and Nutrition, Immunization, Institutional Delivery**, **WASH** (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), **De-worming, ORS-Zinc, Food Fortification, Dietary Diversification, Adolescent Nutrition, Maternal Health and Nutrition**, **ECCE** (Early Childhood care and Education), Convergence, **ICT-RTM** (Information and Communication. Technology enabled Real Time Monitoring), Capacity Building.

FIGURE 3.3 CONSEQUENCES OF MICRONUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES THROUGHOUT THE LIFE CYCLE

Measures needed:
- Early life-cycle interventions targeting the first 1,000 days of a child's life are crucial for reducing a child's susceptibility to infections, and breaking the link between undernutrition, disease and mortality.
- Direct nutrition interventions can reduce stunting only by 20%; indirect interventions, for example, access to water, sanitation and hygiene, must tackle the remaining 80%.
- The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan should be used to leverage policy complementarities with household sanitation, and behavioural change encouraged through social messaging and information-education-communication activities for pregnant and lactating mothers.
- Policy must deliver universal, rights-based nutrition services, which overcome disparities across gender, communities and geographical regions.
- The Global Hunger Index report recommends returning to traditional diets comprising locally available, biodiverse food to overcome growing under-nutrition.
- To combine fragmented efforts, **a nodal government body** should be established with responsibility for meeting time-bound nutrition targets, and coordinating multi-sectoral programmes, including the ICDS, the National Rural Health Mission, the midday meal scheme, and the public distribution system.

- Food fortification of staples (including wheat, flour, rice and edible oils) represents a cost-effective and scalable solution to enhance nutrient intake. Standards for food fortification should be established, and guidelines changed to promote the use of fortified inputs in ICDS-provided hot cooked meals.
- The government should facilitate public-private partnerships in the sector. Private sector engagement can leverage technological solutions for scaling up food fortification initiatives, and complement the government's outreach efforts through mass awareness and education campaigns in communities.

Conclusion:

- Prioritizing early childhood nutrition is key to ensuring India's development rests on strong and steady shoulders. India's ability to harness long-term demographic dividends rests on it prioritizing nutrition in its health agenda, and reforming the institutional framework through which interventions are delivered.

Q) Right local community level healthcare intervention is a precondition to achieve 'Health for All' in India. Elucidate.   (250 words)

Reference

Why this question:

The question is about analyzing the role of local community level healthcare intervention in achieving the health for all dream of India.

Key demand of the question:

The answer has to bring out the importance of local healthcare intervention in supporting the health system of the country.

Directive:

Elucidate – Give a detailed account as to how and why it occurred, or what is the particular context. You must be defining key terms where ever appropriate, and substantiate with relevant associated facts.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Discuss the current stresses in terms of doctors, staff and support system the healthcare system of the country is undergoing.

Body:

One has to affirm that how significant shifts in focus would enable the Indian state to re-prioritize its policies in its pursuit to provide universal health and medical care by taking full support from the local community healthcare intervention.

Explain that the Gandhian dream of self-sufficient, networked community governments – Panchayats – is often dismissed as utopian and impractical. The contrary is true. Community institutions have many distinct advantages in looking after their own habitat and the health and welfare of their members. Interventions can be context specific and based on intimate knowledge of one another; they will rely on mutual cooperation rather than on a bureaucracy or the dictates of the 'market'; they will be able to have a more holistic and a less 'medicalised' approach to health and they will be able to work out the most appropriate cost recovery methods for whatever facilities and services they provide.

Conclusion:

Conclude with way forward.

Introduction:

- Primary healthcare or local community level healthcare, similarly defined, is healthcare provided to all, especially the most marginalised, with their participation and for their needs. If the primary healthcare system of a country is not functioning well, it is symptomatic of problems in its democracy itself.

Body:

Importance of local community level health care:

- Primary Health Care (PHC) is the heart and soul of medicine. It is the foundation of every health care system: the first contact and ongoing link between people and their health providers.
- PHC is how individuals and families connect with the health care system throughout their lives, for everything from prenatal checkups and routine immunizations to the treatment of illness and the management of chronic conditions.
- When PHC works, people are able to get the care they need to stay healthy. The vast majority of a community's health needs can be met by a well-functioning primary care system.

- PHC explicitly ensures a focus on equity, accessibility and quality of care. PHC is people-focused: organized around people rather than diseases, and encompassing the full range of interventions that foster good health.
- The principles of the PHC approach of the **Alma Ata declaration** (1978) such as healthcare closest to home and appropriate technology that is effective, safe, cheap, and simple to use, need to be applied to the healthcare system as a whole. The PHC-infused-UHC could facilitate such a shift.

The major challenges faced by healthcare system in India are:

- **Finance:** At **about 1.3% of the national income**, India's **public healthcare spending** between 2008 and 2015, has virtually remained stagnant. This is way less than the global **average of 6 per cent**. It is a herculean task to implement a scheme that could potentially cost Rs 5 lakh per person and benefit 53.7 crore out of India's 121 crore citizenry, or roughly about 44% of the country's population. **Over 70 per cent of the total healthcare expenditure** is accounted for by the private sector.
- **Crumbling public health infrastructure:** Given the country's crumbling public healthcare infrastructure, most patients are forced to go to private clinics and hospitals. There is a shortage of **PHCs (22%)** and **sub-health centres (20%),** while **only 7% sub-health centres and 12% primary health centres meet Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS) norms**.
- **High Out of Pocket Expenditure:** Reports suggest that 70% of the medical spending is from the patient's pockets leading to huge burden and pushing many into poverty. Most consumers complain of rising costs. Hundred days into the PMJAY, it remains to be seen if private hospitals provide knee replacement at Rs 80,000 (current charges Rs 3.5 lakh) bypass surgery at Rs 1.7 lakh (against Rs 4 lakh).
- **Insurance:** India has one of the lowest per capita healthcare expenditures in the world. Government contribution to insurance stands at roughly 32 percent, as opposed to 83.5 percent in the UK. The high out-of-pocket expenses in India stem from the fact that 76 percent of Indians do not have health insurance.
- **Doctor-Density Ratio:** The **WHO** reports the doctor-density ratio in **India at 8 per 10,000 people** as against **one doctor for a population of 1,000.** To achieve such access, merely increasing the number of primary and secondary healthcare centres is not enough.
- **Shortage of Medical Personnel:** Data by **IndiaSpend** show that there is a staggering shortage of medical and paramedical staff at all levels of care: 10,907 auxiliary nurse midwives and 3,673 doctors are needed at sub-health and primary health centres, while for community health centres the figure is 18,422 specialists.
- **Rural-urban disparity:** The rural healthcare infrastructure is three-tiered and includes a sub-center, primary health centre (PHC) and CHC. PHCs are short of more than 3,000 doctors, with the shortage up by 200 per cent over the last 10 years to 27,421. Private hospitals don't have adequate presence in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities and there is a trend towards super specialisation in Tier-1 cities.
- **Social Inequality:** The growth of health facilities has been highly imbalanced in India. Rural, hilly and remote areas of the country are under served while in urban areas and cities, health facility is well developed. The SC/ST and the poor people are far away from modern health service.
- **Poor healthcare ranking:** India ranks as low as 145th among 195 countries in healthcare quality and accessibility, behind even Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.
- **Commercial motive:** lack of transparency and unethical practices in the private sector.
- **Lack of level playing field between the public and private hospitals**: This has been a major concern as public hospitals would continue receiving budgetary support. This would dissuade the private players from actively participating in the scheme.
- **Scheme flaws**: The overall situation with the National Health Mission, India's flagship programme in primary health care, continues to be dismal. The NHM's share in the health budget fell from 73% in 2006 to 50% in 2019 in the absence of uniform and substantial increases in health spending by States.

Steps taken up currently:

- The **National Health Policy (NHP) 2017** advocated allocating resources of up to two-thirds or more to primary care as it enunciated the goal of achieving "the highest possible level of good health and well-being, through a preventive and promotive healthcare orientation".
- A 167% increase in allocation this year for the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY)** — the **insurance programme** which aims to cover 10 crore poor families for hospitalisation expenses of up to ₹5 lakh per family per annum.
- The government's recent steps to **incentivise the private sector to open hospitals** in Tier II and Tier III cities.
- Individual states are adopting technology to support health-insurance schemes. For instance, Remedinet Technology (India's first completely electronic cashless health insurance claims processing network) has been

signed on as the technology partner for the Karnataka Government's recently announced cashless health insurance schemes.

Measures needed to strengthen the existing state of Health infrastructure in the country are:

- There is an immediate need to **increase the public spending to 2.5% of GDP**, despite that being lower than global average of 5.4%.
- The achievement of a distress-free and comprehensive wellness system for all hinges on the performance of health and wellness centres as they will be instrumental in reducing the greater burden of out-of-pocket expenditure on health.
- There is a need to depart from the current trend of erratic and insufficient increases in health spending and make substantial and sustained investments in public health over the next decade.
- A **National Health Regulatory and Development Framework** needs to be made for improving the quality (for example registration of health practitioners), performance, equity, efficacy and accountability of healthcare delivery across the country.
- Increase the Public-**Private Partnerships** to increase the last-mile reach of healthcare.
- **Generic drugs and Jan Aushadi Kendras** should be increased to make medicines affordable and reduce the major component of Out of Pocket Expenditure.
- The government's **National Innovation Council**, which is mandated to provide a platform for collaboration amongst healthcare domain experts, stakeholders and key participants, should encourage a culture of innovation in India and help develop policy on innovations that will focus on an Indian model for inclusive growth.
- India should take cue from other developing countries like Thailand to work towards providing **Universal Health Coverage**. UHC includes three components: Population coverage, disease coverage and cost coverage.
- Leveraging the **benefits of Information Technology** like computer and mobile-phone based e-health and m-health initiatives to improve quality of healthcare service delivery. **Start-ups** are investing in healthcare sector from process automation to diagnostics to low-cost innovations. Policy and regulatory support should be provided to make healthcare accessible and affordable.

Conclusion:

- India needs a holistic approach to tackle problems in healthcare industry. This includes the active collaboration of all stakeholders public, private sectors, and individuals.
- A more dynamic and pro-active approach is needed to handle the dual disease burden. A universal access to health makes the nation fit and healthy, aiding better to achieve the demographic dividend.

Q) The move of the government to ensure registered medical practitioners dispense only generic medicine will make them easily accessible but the lack of regulation may play killjoy. Critically analyse. (250 words)

The hindu

Why this question:

The Central Government is considering amendments to the Drugs and Cosmetic Rules, 1945 to ensure that registered medical practitioners dispense only generic medicines.

Demand of the question:

One has to explain what are Generic drugs, their significance, concerns, usage and efforts made by the government to promote them.

Directive word:

Critically analyze – When asked to analyse, you have to examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them as a whole in a summary. When 'critically' is suffixed or prefixed to a directive, one needs to look at the good and bad of the topic and give a fair judgement.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction

State the recent step taken by the govt. to amend the Act – It is now proposed that registered medical practitioners shall supply generic medicines only and physicians samples shall be supplied free of cost.

Body

- Start by explaining What is a Generic Medicine? – Generic medicines are unbranded medicines which are equally safe and having the same efficacy as that of branded medicines in terms of their

therapeutic value. The prices of generic medicines are much cheaper than their branded equivalent.
- The answer must focus on the challenge front in terms of lack of regulatory framework as to what factors despite making it compulsory can still make the usage of generic drugs less affordable/accessible.
- Discuss the fundamental areas of concern, then move on to explain the efforts made by govt. in this direction.

Conclusion
Conclude with way forward.

Introduction:
- A generic drug is a pharmaceutical drug that is equivalent to a brand-name product in dosage, strength, route of administration, quality, performance, and intended use. In most cases, generic products become available after the patent protections afforded to a drug's original developer expire.
- The Central Government is considering amendments to the Drugs and Cosmetic Rules, 1945 to ensure that registered medical practitioners dispense only generic medicines.

Body:
Benefits of mandatory prescription of Generic drug:
- This is expected to bring down drug prices and expand access to affordable health solutions. As per the latest National Sample Survey Office survey on healthcare, in 2014, medicines emerged as a principal component of total health expenses—72% in rural areas and 68% in urban areas.
- For a country with one of the highest per capita out-of-pocket expenditures on health, even a modest drop in drug prices will free hundreds of households from the widespread phenomenon of a medical poverty trap.
- In addition to the social benefits, the generics-only policy also makes economic sense. By promoting generic drug consumption, the government safeguards the health of its generic drug manufacturing industry—one of the largest suppliers of low-cost medicines in the world.
- Low-cost medicines, apart from their attribute as a commercial commodity, have far-reaching implications on public health and international human rights. India has unambiguously subscribed to the pro-public health argument, and has articulated its position several times at home and in international forums
- It will free hundreds of households from the phenomena of medical poverty trap.
- The nexus between doctors and pharma companies will be disincentivized.
- With the promotion of generic drug consumption, the growth engine of Indian economy in general and of generic industry in particular will keep rolling at high pace.

However, the compulsory prescription has certain demerits as well.
- Generics are found to be of substandard quality in many cases. And hence there are concerns of efficacy of such drugs.
- No more than 1% of generic drugs sold in India undergo quality tests. There is also a lack of data integrity in generic firms which makes inspection and verification of drug quality extremely difficult.
- Poor hygiene standards of the manufacturing plant of generics also restricts them from being a good substitute for branded medicines.
- The process gives a lot of power into the hands of medicine shops and thus compromises patient's safety.
- Lower awareness and corruption have given rise nexus between Doctors chemists & pharma sector. So, public awareness via digital media along surveillance mechanism to curb nexus
- Government has comparatively less control over the distribution of drugs and the type of drugs getting prescribed. The cooperation and efforts by doctors, retail drug sellers and pharmaceutical industry is very crucial in order to make this happen in efficient manner
- India is import driven country for active pharmaceutical ingredient and already facing challenge of substandard quality of generic drugs. Along with this current move may reduce FDI inflow in pharma sector and slowdown research & development in domestic pharma companies

Conclusion:
- Though the policy perspective should be welcomed, the loopholes need to be plugged as soon as possible. Ensuring the correctness of pharmacist, making the patients literate, increasing the number of drug inspectors and ensuring the efficacy of Medical Council of India could be few supplementary steps.

Q) The current nutrition level is the biggest development challenge, it has implications on both current and future generations in India. In the light of the above statement discuss the relevance of POSHAN Abhiyaan in achieving goals in this direction. (250 words)

livemint

Why this question:

The article talks about Nutrition as a challenge and yet to be achieved goal in the country.

Key demand of the question:

The answer needs to analyse the nutrition aspect prevailing in the country and to what extent POSHAN Abhiyaan has been successful in achieving its goals.

Directive:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Quote facts suggesting current conditions of nutrition in the country.

Body:

Take hints from the article and discuss the context first, explain though the nutrition policy is heading the right direction there are challenges that need attention.

Explain the features of the POSHAN Abhiyaan and in what way the mission has been trying to address the issues plaguing nutrition scenario. Discuss the shortcomings of the same if any.

Explain the pros and cons and suggest what needs to be done.

Conclusion:

Conclude that one mission alone can not resolve the entire issue and that multi – integrated approach is required to resolve the problem.

Introduction:

- India is home to one of the largest populations of malnourished children in the world. The POSHAN (PM's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment) Abhiyaan was launched in 2018.
- The scheme aims to ensure holistic development and adequate nutrition for pregnant women, mothers and children. It is to ensure that malnutrition doesn't affect children's cognitive development or physical growth.

Body:

Salient features of POSHAN:

- The Abhiyaan targets to reduce stunting, undernutrition, anaemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively.
- The target of the mission is to bring down stunting among children in the age group 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by 2022.
- POSHAN Abhiyaan aims to ensure service delivery and interventions by use of technology, behavioural change through convergence and lays-down specific targets to be achieved across different monitoring parameters.
- Under the Abhiyaan, Swasth Bharat Preraks will be deployed one in each district for coordinating with district officials and enabling fast and efficient execution of the Abhiyaan across the country. Swasth Bharat Preraks would function as catalyst for fast tracking the implementation of the Abhiyaan.

Pros of POSHAN Abhiyan:

- **Complete approach towards malnutrition:** The programme through use of technology, a targeted approach and convergence strives to reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia and low birth weight in children, also focus on adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers, thus holistically addressing malnutrition.
- It targets to reduce level of under-nutrition and other related problems by ensuring convergence of various nutrition related schemes and provide performance based incentives to states and community nutrition and health workers, facilitating a focus on results.
- It will monitor and review implementation of all such schemes and utilize existing structural arrangements of line ministries wherever available.
- Its large component involves gradual scaling-up of the interventions supported by ongoing World Bank assisted Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Systems Strengthening and Nutrition Improvement Project (ISSNIP) to all districts in the country by 2022.

- Union Government has signed $200 million loan agreement with World Bank for National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyaan) for 315 districts across all states and union territories.
- The World Bank loan will be used for improving coverage and quality of ICDS nutrition services to pregnant and lactating women and children under 3 years of age.
- It will be also used for project in improving skills and capacities of ICDS staff and community nutrition workers, instituting mechanisms of community mobilization and behaviour change communication, strengthening systems of citizen engagement and grievance redress.
- It will be also used for establishing mobile technology based tools for improved monitoring and management of services for better outreach to beneficiaries during critical 1,000 day window for nutrition impact.
- POSHAN Convergence Matrix looks at deploying a multi-pronged approach to mobilise the masses towards creating a nutritionally aware society.
- Community based events at anganwadi centres to engage the beneficiaries and their families towards nutritional awareness; sustained mass media, multimedia, outdoor campaigns; mobilisation of all frontline functionaries; SHGs and volunteers towards nutrition are the methods to be adopted. The aim is to generate a Jan Andolan towards Nutrition.
- Thus the POSHAN Abhiyan is to bring all of us together, put accountability and responsibilities on all stakeholders to help the country accomplish its desired potential in terms of its demographic dividend.

Challenges towards POSHAN Abhiyan:
- **Challenges with data:**
  - Lack of credible data on a year-year basis. For example, there has been a 10-year gap between NFHS 3 and NFHS 4.
  - Further, there is confusion and inability to cope with measurement procedures among poorly trained Anganwadi workers and thus data on malnutrition may not be accurate.
  - Lack of adequate access to food: Due to ineffective functioning (corruption and leakages) of the public distribution system (PDS), access to food is a major problem. Loss of food grains in warehouses (due to rotting and theft) further aggravates the problem.
- **Issues with ICDS:**
  - Major issues with ICDS are the supply of quality food and its uniform distribution.
  - Also, Anganwadi workers are unable to play an effective role in attending to the problem of malnutrition because of low wages and inadequate training.
- **Cereal-based Diet:**
  - A major reason for micronutrient deficiency in India is because of a cereal-based diet. However, even the National Food Security Act does not address the issue of nutritional deficiency adequately.
  - Further, food fortification has also been inadequate.
- **Social-economic and Cultural challenges:**
  - Major challenges in implementing nutritional programmes are socio-cultural factors such as caste. For example, Hausla Poshan Yojana, a plan to provide nutritious food to pregnant women and malnourished children in Uttar Pradesh failed to even start because some women beneficiaries allegedly refused to consume the food prepared by Anganwadi workers belonging to the SC community.
  - Illiteracy among women and gender biases is also a challenge
- **Lack of nutritional and health awareness:**
  - Lack of awareness, ignorance of healthy diets, unhealthy feeding and caring practices, poor breastfeeding practice are major challenges in reducing malnutrition
- **Sanitation and hygiene:**
  - Lack of sanitation is also an important challenge in reducing malnutrition. Poor sanitary conditions caused by open-defecation and other issues lead to the incidence of diarrhoeal diseases which make children susceptible to stunting
- **Financial Constraints:**
  - Budgetary allocations of many schemes have decreased over time. Further, the money allocated has remained unspent in many states.

Way forward:
- To address the problem of child under-nutrition, and disease there should be early life-cycle interventions targeting the first 1,000 days of a child's life.

- ICDS, Mid day Meal and PDS should be re-worked upon for greater effectiveness. Public-Private partnership in this domain should be encouraged. This would ensure that leakages, space and other constraints of lack of hygiene, delay in supply of food etc do not hinder delivering nutritious food.
- It is important to extend the food fortification of staples. Public-private partnerships can help leverage the appropriate technology for scaling up food fortification interventions. Further, the focus should be on incorporating nutritious food and diversify the diet.
- It is important to target multiple contributing factors, for example, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). The focus should not only be on building toilets but bringing about a behavioural change among people
- Agricultural policy should be aligned with nutrition policy with incentives provided for encouraging the production of nutrient-rich and local crops for self-consumption.
- It is important to have sufficient information and reliable, updated data for effective interventions. It is thus necessary to collect and maintain real-time data on various nutrition indicators.

Conclusion:
- Boosting nutrition levels across the country is one of the biggest low hanging fruit in the Indian public policy sphere. If we can conquer space, we can conquer malnutrition.

Q) Where does India stand in battle against Measles ? Do you think India can achieve its 2020 target ? Discuss the status of MR in India and the challenges it has been facing in eliminating the same.   (250 words)

Indianexpress

Why this question:
The article explains in detail how Sri Lanka has made health history after spending three years free of any new measles and the World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared that the deadly childhood infection has been eliminated in the island nation. In contrast, India has a long road ahead, particularly because vaccine-resistant voices are sometimes being heard.

Demand of the question:
One has to discuss the challenges India is facing in eliminating the Measles. What are the challenges it is facing and how can we address them and achieve the target of measle free India?

Directive word:
Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:
Introduction
Quote the recent achievement made by the island country of Sri-Lanka. The World Health Organization (WHO), has declared Sri Lanka, a measles-free country.

Body
Discuss the following points –
What is measles? – Measles is a highly contagious viral disease and is a cause of death among young children globally.
Explain what does the elimination disease mean – The elimination of a disease means that there have been zero new cases of the disease in the last three years. The country reported its last case of measles in May 2016.
The other countries in the region which have eliminated measles in their geographical area are Bhutan, Maldives, DPR Korea and Timor-Leste.
Explain the status of India with respect to Measles, what are the concerns, challenges etc and suggest a way forward.

Conclusion
Conclude that the target of achieving a measles free India isn't an impossible thing and that with suitable and targeted approach it can definitely be achieved.

Introduction:
- Measles is a highly contagious viral disease, which is transmitted via droplets from the nose, mouth or throat of infected persons.
- It remains an important cause of death among young children globally, despite the availability of a safe and effective vaccine. India has one of the highest incidences of Measles in the world.

Body:
Status of India in battle against Measles and Rubella:
- The latest Global Measles and Rubella Update, which lists provisional data received in June and covering the period between May 2018 and April 2019, says India reported 47,056 measles cases and 1,263 rubella cases during these 12 months.
- India, as part of the global initiative, has targeted elimination of measles and control of rubella by 2020.
- Rubella control is achieved when a country reduces the number of rubella cases by 95% as compared to cases in 2008.
- India has initiated the world's largest Measles-Rubella (MR) Campaign targeting vaccination of 410 million children and adolescents aged between 9 months and 15 years.
- The MR campaign began in February 2017, and as of November 2018, 135 million children have been vaccinated in 28 states/UTs.
- Under the programme, two doses of measles and rubella vaccines are to be given at ages 9-12 months and 16-24 months.
- However, India has made important gains in recent years. Measles deaths have declined by 51% from an estimated 100,000 in the year 2000 to 49,000 in 2015.

Challenges in fight against MR:
- **Anti-Vaccination Movement:**
  - Such movements are driven by fraudulent claims linking the vaccine against measles to risk of autism in children. However, repeated studies have shown that there is no such link.
- **Poverty:**
  - In poorer countries, fewer people are vaccinated and a larger portion of the population is left vulnerable to the virus.
- **Vaccination Hesitancy:**
  - Compulsory nature of vaccines is seen as forcing by state
  - Temporal adverse health outcomes due to vaccination,
- **Lack of Education and awareness:**
  - Unfamiliarity with vaccine-preventable diseases,
  - Lack of trust in corporations and public health agencies.

Government Initiatives:
- **Measles-Rubella (MR) vaccination**
  - The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched MR Vaccination program in 2017.
  - The MR campaign targets around 41 crore children across the country, the largest ever in any campaign.
  - All children aged between 9 months and less than 15 years will be given a single shot of Measles-Rubella (MR) vaccination irrespective of their previous measles/rubella vaccination status or measles/rubella disease status.
  - MR vaccine will be provided free- of- cost across the states.
- Other Initiatives include **Universal Immunization Programme (UIP), Mission Indradhanush and Intensified Mission Indradhanush.**

Way forward:
- A strong surveillance system and all vaccine-preventable diseases should be an integral part of the Health policy.
- Strengthening the government initiatives by intensifying vaccination.
- Mass vaccination campaigns with a measles-rubella vaccine should be held periodically to plug immunisation gaps
- Using the help of NGOs, Anganwadi workers, ANMs to reach out to the last possible child.
- Detecting and addressing vaccine-hesitant subgroups
- Educating all health care providers involved with immunization on best practices
- Educating children, youth and adults on the importance of immunization for health

Conclusion:
- India has a long road ahead, particularly because vaccine-resistant voices are sometimes being heard.
- The World Health Organization (WHO), has declared Sri Lanka, a measles-free country.
- India can learn the best practices adopted to emulate the same.

Q) Despite being a low-cost tool, nutrition counselling has proven to be one of the best bets for India in attaining global goals more favourably. Discuss. (250 words)

Why this question:

A study was conducted by India Consensus, which is a partnership between Tata Trusts and Copenhagen Consensus. This study suggests that nutrition and health counselling delivered under the auspices of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme is one of the best possible investments that can be made by any government.

Demand of the question:

The answer must discuss the significance of nutrition counselling in attaining the Global goals for India.

Directive word:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction

Start by explaining what do you understand by nutrition counselling.

Body

In short first discuss the relevance of schemes that have been working to resolve the challenges of nutrition plaguing the Indian health system, then discuss the highlights of the study; The preliminary results of this analysis show that there are many policies that can achieve amazing outcomes. If India were to spend ₹50,000 crore more on achieving the Global Goals, focussing on the most phenomenal programmes identified so far by India Consensus would create extra benefits for India worth ₹20 lakh crore — more than the entire Indian public consumption. With returns like this at stake, there are compelling reasons to look favourably at approaches including nutrition counselling.

Conclusion

Suggest way forward and reassert significance of such approaches.

Introduction:

- Nutrition counselling is an ongoing process in which a health professional, usually a registered dietician, works with an individual to assess his or her usual dietary intake and identify areas where change is needed. The nutrition counsellor provides information, educational materials, support, and follow-up to help the individual make and maintain the needed dietary changes.

Body:

- The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme is one of the world's largest programmes for early childhood care and development. A new study by India Consensus suggests that nutrition and health counselling delivered under the programme is one of the best possible investments that can be made by any government.

Role of Nutrition counselling in alleviation of malnutrition:

- As a behavioural change intervention, nutrition and health counselling is relatively low cost for every person that is reached.
- It's important to note that this programme does not provide food, but instead provides information to the mother, making it more likely that the child will receive more and better food.
- And that in turn leads to lifelong benefits.
- Many studies have now demonstrated that these benefits can be large. Improving the nutrition and health outcomes of the children of mothers reached makes this a highly cost-effective intervention.
- Two analyses in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, looking at a six-year campaign of nutrition counselling and hand-washing. It is estimated that counselling leads to a 12% reduction in stunting. This leads to better cognitive skills.
- Quantifying the increase in earnings shows that the per unit benefit for Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan comes to ₹71,500 and ₹54,000.
- What these figures mean is that the investment generates returns to society worth ₹61 and ₹43, respectively, for every rupee spent. While the analysis will differ for other States, these results show that nutritional counselling is a phenomenal investment.

Nutritional counselling can help prevent malnutrition and improve nutrition through following strategies:

Nutritional planning: This involves political commitment by the government. A well planned and well executed long term project can accelerate the developmental process and the benefits can be rewarding and permanent. Nutritional planning involves formulation of a nutrition policy and overall long term planning to improve production and supplies of food, ensure its equitable distribution and programs to increase the purchasing power of people.

Direct nutrition and health interventions: Improved health care system: Infections like malaria, measles and diarrhoea are prevalent in our society and they precipitate acute malnutrition among children and infants. A good health care system that provides immunisation, oral rehydration, periodic de-worming, early diagnosis and proper treatment of common illnesses can go a long way in preventing malnutrition in the society.

Nutrition education: People can be educated on-
- The nutritional quality of common foods.
- Importance and nutritional quality of various locally available and culturally accepted low cost foods.
- Importance of exclusive breastfeeding for six months and continuing to breast feed up to two years or beyond.
- Damage caused by irrational beliefs and cultural practices of feeding.
- Recipes for preparing proper weaning foods and good supplementary food from locally available low cost foods.
- Importance of including milk, eggs, meat or pulses in sufficient quantities in the diet to enhance the net dietary protein value.
- Importance of feeding children and adults during illness.
- Importance of immunising their children and following proper sanitation in their day to day life.

Early detection of malnutrition and intervention:
- The longer the developmental delays remain uncorrected, the greater the chance of permanent effects and hence intervention must occur during pregnancy and first three years of life.
- A well recorded growth chart can detect malnutrition very early. Velocity of growth is more important than the actual weight at a given time.
- If growth of the child is slowed or is arrested, physician should be alerted and any hidden infection or any reason for nutritional deficiency must be evaluated and taken care of.

Nutrition supplementation: Usually, biologically vulnerable groups like pregnant women, infants, preschool going and school going children are targeted by various welfare measures conducted by the government. Calories, proteins and micronutrients like iron, vitamin A and zinc can be supplemented.

Conclusion:
- With returns like this at stake, there are compelling reasons to look favourably at approaches including nutrition counselling.

Q) India has recently recorded the fastest absolute reduction in the MPI Index value among 10 countries across every developing region. Evaluate the policy paradigm that has led to such a commendable progress. (250 words)

Indianexpress

Why this question:

The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2019 report, an initiative of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and the United Nations Development Programme, released last week, says that India has recorded the fastest absolute reduction in the Index value among 10 countries across every developing region.

Demand of the question:

The answer must analyse policies and programs that made the change in poverty levels possible.

Directive word:

Evaluate – When you are asked to evaluate, you have to pass a sound judgement about the truth of the given statement in the question or the topic based on evidences. You have to appraise the worth of the statement in question. There is scope for forming a personal opinion here.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction

Highlight the findings of the report in a line or two.

Body

Discuss the key findings of the report – According to this report, between 2005-06 and 2015-16, India lifted 271 million out of poverty and reduced deprivations in many of its 10 indicators, particularly in

assets, cooking fuel, sanitation and nutrition. It also says that Jharkhand, among the poorest regions in the world, reduced the incidence of multi-dimensional poverty — captured in indicators such as nutrition, sanitation, child mortality, housing, cooking fuel, years of schooling and electricity — the fastest.

Explain in what way schemes or programmes designed to provide pucca housing, toilets, cooking gas, power, roads and healthcare or the public provision of private goods with a lot of positive externalities have led to the change in the poverty dynamics.

Conclusion

Conclude with need for growth with its trickle-down effect to further reduce and eliminate poverty and to ensure economic convergence among states.

Introduction:

- The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2019 report, an initiative of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and the United Nations Development Programme, released last week, says that India has recorded the fastest absolute reduction in the Index value among 10 countries across every developing region.

Body:

Highlights of the report:

- **Incidence of multidimensional poverty almost halved between 2005-06 and 2015-16**, climbing down to 27.5%, indicating that the number of poor people in India fell by more than 271 million within ten years.
- Incidence of multidimensional poverty halved in India **due to faster progress among the poorest in the country.** Among states, Jharkhand had the greatest improvement, with Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Nagaland only slightly behind.
- However, Bihar was still the poorest state in 2015- 16, with more than half of its population living in poverty. In 2015-16, the four poorest states – Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh – were home to 196 million multidimensional poor people – over half of all the people living in multidimensional poverty in India.
- **Least poor regions also saw reduction in poverty**. Relative to their starting levels, they netted some of the highest rates of reduction. For example, Kerala, one of the least poor regions in 2006, reduced its MPI by around 92%.
- The positive trend of pro-poor poverty reduction was seen also across religions and caste groups. In both cases, the poorest groups (Muslims and Scheduled Tribes) reduced poverty the most over the ten years from 2005-06 to 2015-16.
- The poorest district is Alirajpur in Madhya Pradesh, where 76.5% of people are poor – the same as Sierra Leone in Sub-Saharan Africa. Only eight countries have higher rates of MPI.

Policies which helped:

- That pace of economic growth over a sustained period helped create the fiscal space for welfare programmes both by the Centre and the states, ensuring better access to food, nutrition, health and cooking fuel.
- The knock-on impact has been felt by states, too, with poverty levels declining faster in better managed states which had invested hugely in the social sector.
- Such high growth helped the government launch schemes such as MGNREGA, which threw up work opportunities.
- The government can be credited for schemes or programmes designed to provide pucca housing (PMAY), toilets (SBM), cooking gas (Ujjwala Yojana), power (SAUBHAGYA), roads (PM Gram Sadak Yojana) and healthcare (Ayushman Bharat) or the public provision of private goods with a lot of positive externalities.

Way forward:

- Need to tackle high fertility, government can work in a Bangladesh family planning approach model with collaboration of united nation population group and NGOs.
- Reduce poverty by a community approach by using the self help group formula.
- Government needs to take crude action against the female foeticide and abortion cases that affect these states.
- There is a need for effective implementation of government schemes in these states like aspirational districts initiative, Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana etc.
- Inclusive education is necessary with better outcomes.
- Sanitation needs to be strictly taken care of to avoid diseases.

Conclusion:

- But all these programmes need resources which can come only from growth with its trickle-down effect. So the focus has to be on growth to further reduce and eliminate poverty and to ensure economic convergence among states.
- A couple of percentage points' increase or decrease in growth can make a big difference to a nation's destiny.

Q) The double burden of undernutrition and obesity needs to be tackled as part of India's national nutrition strategy. Discuss. (250 words)

Reference

Why this question:

The question is about discussing the issues of undernutrition and overnutrition and significance of Nation nutrition strategy to consider the two aspects on a mission mode so as to resolve the double burden.

Key demand of the question:

The answer has to deliberate on the causes of the double burden of obesity and undernutrition.

Directive:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Define what you understand by under and over nutrition.

Body:

Discuss first the significance of nutrition on the health of an individual and in what way it is an important component in deciding the growth and development of the country.

Then move on to explain the importance of dealing with the two alarming issues in the Nation nutrition strategy.

Conclusion:

Conclude with way forward.

Introduction:

- According to WHO, Malnutrition refers to deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients. The term malnutrition covers 2 broad groups of conditions. One is **'undernutrition'**—which includes **stunting** (low height for age), **wasting** (low weight for height), **underweight** (low weight for age) and **micronutrient deficiencies or insufficiencies** (a lack of important vitamins and minerals).
- The other is **overweight**, **obesity** and **diet-related non-communicable diseases** (such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer). The scale of malnutrition in India constitutes a **public health crisis**, which not only violates a fundamental right of humanity, but also undermines significant advances made in economic, social, and cultural indicators.
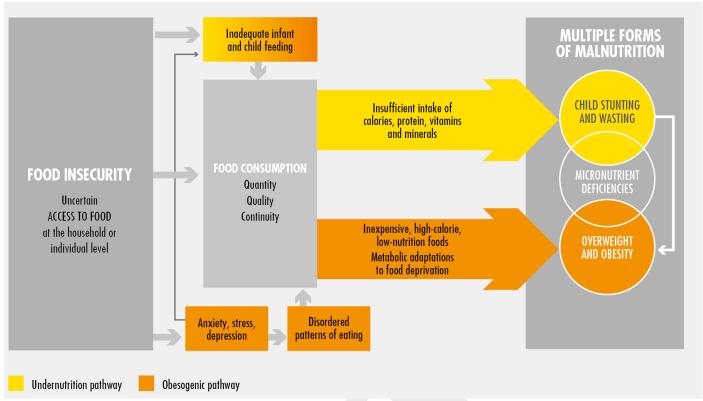
Body:

- India is home to one of the largest populations of malnourished children in the world. One cannot build a strong building on a weak foundation.

Current Scenario of Malnutrition in India:

- India is home to over 40 million stunted and 17 million wasted children (under-five years).
- Despite a fast-growing economy and the largest anti-malnutrition programme, India has the world's worst level of child malnutrition
- Though anaemia among children has declined, it affects every second child in the country. There has been no perceptible decline in anaemia among 15 to 49-year old women; it affects around 60 per cent of them.
- The daily consumption of iron rich dark green leafy vegetables has reduced from 64 per cent to 48 per cent of the population in the last decade.
- Many, in fact, argue that the NFSA's focus on wheat and rice has forced millets — traditional source for iron and minerals — out of the market.
- The government's iron supplementation programme to overcome IDA has led to only 30 per cent of pregnant women consuming iron and folic acid tablets.
- Lack of sanitation and clean drinking water are the reasons high levels of malnutrition persists in India despite improvement in food availability

Undernutrition pathway   Obesogenic pathway

Key features of the National Nutrition Strategy include:

- The Strategy aims to reduce all forms of malnutrition by 2030, with a focus on the most vulnerable and critical age groups. The Strategy also aims to assist in achieving the targets identified as part of the Sustainable Development Goals related to nutrition and health.
- The Strategy aims to launch a National Nutrition Mission, similar to the National Health Mission. This is to enable integration of nutrition-related interventions cutting across sectors like women and child development, health, food and public distribution, sanitation, drinking water, and rural development.
- A decentralised approach will be promoted with greater flexibility and decision making at the state, district and local levels.
- Further, the Strategy aims to strengthen the ownership of Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local bodies over nutrition initiatives
- The Strategy proposes to launch interventions with a focus on improving healthcare and nutrition among children as well as mothers.
- Governance reforms envisaged in the Strategy include: (i) convergence of state and district implementation plans for ICDS, NHM and Swachh Bharat, (ii) focus on the most vulnerable communities in districts with the highest levels of child malnutrition, and (iii) service delivery models based on evidence of impact.

Way forward:

- **Availability:**
  - Farmers should be encouraged and incentivised for agricultural diversification.
  - Innovative and low-cost farming technologies, increase in the irrigation coverage and enhancing knowledge of farmers in areas such as appropriate use of land and water should be encouraged to improve the sustainability of food productivity.
  - The government should improve policy support for improving agricultural produce of traditional crops in the country.
- **Accessibility:**
  - The targeting efficiency of all food safety nets should be improved, especially that of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), to ensure that the poorest are included.
  - In addition, fortification of government-approved commodities within the social safety net programmes can improve nutritional outcomes.
  - Child feeding practices should be improved in the country, especially at the critical ages when solid foods are introduced to the diet.
  - Fortification, diversification and supplementation may be used as simultaneous strategies to address micro and macronutrient deficiencies.

- **Utilisation:**
  - Storage capacity should be improved to prevent post-harvest losses.
  - There is a need for more robust measures that can take cognizance of all aspects of SDG 2.
  - All the major welfare programmes need to be gender sensitive.
  - The inherited dehumanising poverty explains the persistence of malnutrition on a large scale.
  - Children born in impecunious circumstances suffer the most from malnutrition. It is all the more reason for governments to intervene to provide adequate nutrition to all.
  - Funds for food to all yield great returns and help in unlocking the full potential of citizens besides strengthening the workforce.

Conclusion:

- According to M S Swaminathan, to promote nutrient value food production, a multi-pronged strategy involving academic institutions, government, scientists and farmers should be evolved. Boosting nutrition levels across the country is one of the biggest low hanging fruit in the Indian public policy sphere.

Q) "Our communities present us with a lot of untapped potential, unleashing it is the key to gaining the momentum we need to make faster progress towards reaching the target of an AIDS free India". Comment.   (250 words)

The hindu

Why this question:
The article talks about the significance of communities in achieving the goal of AIDS free India.
Demand of the question:
One has to explain that success is being achieved where policies and programmes focus on people, not diseases, and where communities are fully engaged from the outset in designing, shaping and implementing health policies. This is how real and lasting change is achieved and this is what will reduce the devastating impact of AIDS.
Directive word:
Comment– here we have to express our knowledge and understanding of the issue and form an overall opinion thereupon.
Structure of the answer:
Introduction
In brief discuss the scenario of prevalence of AIDS in India.
Body
The answer must emphasize on the role that community participation plays in addressing issues like that of AIDS and in what way All over the world, communities are demonstrating time and again that they can, and do, deliver results. Since the beginning of the epidemic in India until now, communities have been the most trusted and reliable partners for the National AIDS Control Organization and the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS. They are fully engaged in many aspects of the National AIDS Response, including prevention, care, support and treatment programmes. There are over 1,500 community-based organizations reaching out to key populations. In India, there are around 300 district-level networks of people living with HIV which are supporting treatment programmes through psychosocial support, treatment literacy and adherence counselling.
Conclusion
Conclude with way forward.

Introduction:

- As per studies conducted in 2015, India has 2.1 million people affected by HIV, making it the third largest country in terms of population affected by the disease.
- To safeguard the rights of people living with and affected by HIV, the Union Health Ministry had enacted the Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017.

Body:

- The **UN Sustainable Development Goals include ensuring good health and well-being for all by 2030**. This includes the commitment to end the AIDS epidemic.
- In many countries, continued access to HIV treatment and prevention options are reducing AIDS-related deaths and new HIV infections. However, there are still too many countries where AIDS-related deaths and new infections are not decreasing fast.

Role of the community in controlling AIDS:
- Success is being achieved where policies and programmes focus on people, not diseases, and where communities are fully engaged from the outset in designing, shaping and implementing health policies.
- This is how real and lasting change is achieved and this is what will reduce the devastating impact of AIDS.
- Adopting the latest scientific research and medical knowledge, strong political leadership, and proactively fighting and reducing stigma and discrimination are all crucial.
- However, without sustained investment in community responses led by people living with HIV and those most affected, countries will not gain the traction necessary to reach the most vulnerable. It is only by doing that can one end the AIDS epidemic.
- It is also important to note that community services play varying roles depending on the context. They often support fragile public health systems by filling critical gaps. They come from — and connect effectively with — key populations such as gay men, sex workers, people who use drugs, and transgenders.
- They provide services that bolster clinic-based care and they extend the reach of health services to the community at large. They also hold decision-makers to account.
- It is important to note that by signing the 2016 UN Political Declaration on Ending AIDS, countries affirmed the critical role that communities play in advocacy, coordination of AIDS responses and service delivery.
- Moreover, they recognised that community responses to HIV must be scaled up.
- They committed to at least 30% of services being community-led by 2030. However, most countries are nowhere near reaching that commitment. And where investment in communities is most lacking, there is often weaker progress being made against HIV and other health threats.

Indian scenario:
- There are over 1,500 community-based organisations reaching out to key populations.
- In India, there are around 300 district-level networks of people living with HIV which are supporting treatment programmes through psychosocial support, treatment literacy and adherence counselling.

Other measures needed:
- Emphasis on both prevention & control as well as care and support
- There is a need to invest in research to find cure for this epidemic
- Focus on areas that have received little attention so far from government and other NGOs
- Government must sensitize about the repeal of colonial laws like IPC section 377 to reach to transgender and sex workers
- Targeted intervention should be adopted. As in Karnataka sensitizing police personnel and educating female sex workers help to reduce HIV infection
- More awareness should be generated to reduce stigma attached with the HIV infected people.

Conclusion:
- Our communities present us with a lot of untapped potential. Unleashing this is the key to gaining the momentum we need to make faster progress towards reaching UNAIDS Fast-Track targets. The more we invest in communities, the closer we get to ending the AIDS epidemic.

Q) In light of the consistent stagnation of public health spending, discuss the potential of PPP model for providing universal healthcare in India. (250 words)

Thehindubuisnessline

Introduction:
- India takes pride in the fact that it is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. But our heads will hang in shame if we look at India's health system.

Body:

Public healthcare scenario in India:
- The government spends 1.02% of the GDP on health compared to the global spending of 6%.
- There is a shortfall of 20% sub-centres, 22% public health centres and 32% community health centres.
- The average population served by one public sector allopathic doctor is 11 times higher than the World Health Organization's recommendations.
- High out of pocket expenditure to the tunes of 60%. The excessive reliance on OOP payments leads to financial barriers for the poorest, thereby perpetuating inequalities in health care.
- Clearly, India is struggling to serve its population amid the rising burden of diseases along with poor coverage by public health on the other.
- In addition to these challenges, the private sector is poorly regulated when it comes to quality and pricing.

Potential of PPP model for providing universal healthcare in India:

- **Enhancing affordability:** There has been a steady increase in the number of drugs under price control, to make medicines affordable.
- **Enhances Inclusivity:** It's difficult for government alone to meet the healthcare infrastructure and capacity gaps in Tier II and Tier III cities as well as rural areas. To provide Health insurance- Karnataka's Yeshasvini Cooperative Farmer's Healthcare Scheme and Andhra Pradesh's Arogya Raksha Scheme can be cited as successful examples.
- **Financing Mechanism:** The partnership between the public and the private sectors in healthcare is important for several reasons including equity and for promoting economic development.
- **Infrastructure:** NITI Aayog has sought to infuse fresh life into PPP in healthcare delivery through a new model focused on district hospitals and new norms on pricing of procedures. The provisions for making available infrastructure of district hospitals to private providers for 30 years along with viability gap funding appears that we have got the design right for the PPP model.
- **Quality of Service:** Private healthcare in India usually offers quality service but is often expensive and largely unregulated. The Delhi government's new scheme is a novelty for the common man but has a precedent in several government schemes for employees which use public funds to provide private healthcare. e.g the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) has existed for decades and has been emulated by several states.
- **Capacity building and training:** private players can play a key role in capacity building and training through PPP modes by working with the public sector to better utilize the infrastructure of government

Issues in public private partnership

- There lack of inbuilt mechanism to decide how the government and the private sector share revenue and risks.
- Aim of Private sector is to maximize profit, which is inconsonance with governments aim of providing universal quality services to all
- Lack of a proper regulatory framework to regulate the health sector and partnership.
- Some PPP projects attempted earlier have failed, so there is apprehension about success of large scale PPP in health sector.

Measures needed:

- **Staunch and well-defined governance:** An institutional structure should be set up to foster, monitor and evaluate the PPPs. This needs to be established at the state-level under the leadership of the state health ministry.
- **Equitable representation of partners in the institutional framework:** Institutional structure is a cornerstone for development of a sustainable PPP project. It will help to meet consensus on shared responsibilities and roles and will facilitate communication among the partners leading to a strong sense of ownership and trust.
- **Evidence-based PPP:** Systematic research initiatives and mechanisms must be established to constantly understand the evolving needs and benefits to end users.
- **Regulate user fee:** One of the hurdles of engaging the private providers for public health service delivery is OOP expenditure. Therefore, it is important to regulate user fees of this sector under partnership.
- **Effective risk allocation and sharing:** Risks shall be allocated to the party best able to control and manage them so that value for money is maximised.

Conclusion:

- To provide universal healthcare which is the need of hour given the dismal condition of healthcare sector in India. The key to success of PP partnership is mutual respect and trust with a common goal of providing quality care for all ages at affordable cost.
- This meaningful engagement may be the next game changer in healthcare for the country.

Q) "Draft NEP wants critical thinking and Creativity to be treated as the cornerstone of intellectual development". In this light, what are the recommendations made by Kasturirangan committee. What measures have been taken by government to ensure critical thinking and creativity. (250 words)

The hindu

Introduction:

- The Draft National Education Policy, 2019 prepared by a committee chaired by Dr K. Kasturirangan has been shared by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development for public comments. The policy aims at making India a knowledge superpower by equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge.

- It also focuses on eliminating the shortage of manpower in Science and Technology, academics and industry. The Draft Policy is built on foundational pillars of **Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability**. The draft Policy is right in emphasising what it calls "liberal" higher education but the manner in which it redefines the term robs it of its very essence.

Body:

Recommendations made by Kasturirangan committee:

- **"A liberal arts education, as so beautifully described and practiced in India's past," says the NEP, "enables one to truly develop both sides of the brain—both the creative and the analytical side"**
- The draft NEP 2019 advocates building new institutions of higher education which are essentially multidisciplinary in nature, in addition to ones focusing on the study of Pali, Prakrit, Persian and Sanskrit.
- It further departs from existing policy in the way it seamlessly weaves the professionalization of higher education with a redefined notion of what 'liberal' education entails.
- It effects a shift in the meaning of the term 'liberal' across the neo-liberal universe by giving a clarion call to return to the great Indian traditions of the Lalitavistara Sutra, Bhavbhuti's Kadambari and Yashodhara's Jayamangala, all of which define an educated person as a master of a number of kalas.
- Kalas include everything from carpentry and engineering to music, painting and dance.

Shortcomings:

- The end goal of liberal education has a free thinking individual at the centre – free to think, question and critique.
- The 'liberal' in liberal education has, therefore, remained a contested term, debated across feudal, industrial, capitalist, and neo-liberal societies because of its inbuilt ambiguity.
- The case for liberal education is made in the name of employability and choice, or flexibility in designing a study plan.
- The development of the individual is seen in terms of her productive engagement with the economic progress of her society that now requires a certain flexible disposition.
- The increased privatisation of higher education and the handing over of its vision, provision and delivery largely to private hands are features that have been seen in earlier policy documents.
- An education in languages and the humanities as being antithetical to a professional education – considered to be the sole responsibility of private stakeholders.
- If an education in humanities had to be offered, it was the task of the government.

Measures taken by Government to ensure critical thinking and creativity:

- **Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan (RAA)** – a convergent framework that aims at nurturing a spirit of inquiry and creativity, love for Science and Mathematics and effective use of technology amongst children and encourage those who show an inclination and talent for these subjects to be encouraged and supported to heights of academic excellence and research.
- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** – This is dedicated to promoting a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among Indian students.
- **AIM's Atal Tinkering Labs** – where students are encouraged to develop innovation skills and ideas to transform the country.
- **IMPRINT** provides the overarching vision that guides research into areas that are predominantly socially relevant.
- **Creative India; Innovative India** – Scheme for IPR Awareness
- **Skill initiatives**, including Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), Vocational Training Institutes for Women, Advanced Training Institutes run by the Directorate of General Training (DGT) and Basic Training Centres and Related Instructions Centres by private firms or the government. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) of the Central Government
- **Jigyasa**, a student-scientist connect programme. Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), has joined hands with Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) to implement this programme.
- **USTTAD:** Upgrading the Skills and Training in Traditional Arts/ Crafts for Development of the minorities.

Conclusion:

- A policy for education that wants to embrace liberal education cannot afford to blank out the complexities involved in such an education for the teacher, the taught, and the content of what is taught.
- Choice and flexibility are inherent in the idea of liberal education but they in themselves do not make liberal education. In and of themselves they do not hold the liberating, democratic, dissenting potential which is at the heart of liberal education.

Q) Discuss the rural healthcare situation currently being witnessed in India. How have better healthcare services affecting rural lives? Examine.   (250 words)

Livemint

Why this question:
The article throws light upon the conditions of healthcare sector specifically in the rural regions of the country.

Key demand of the question:
The answer must analyse the current rural healthcare situation and in what way they have progressed and have affected the rural lives positively.

Directive:
Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:
Introduction:
In a few lines bring out some facts/figures suggesting the progress made so far.

Body:
The answer should trace the impact the government's initiatives in this regard are having in villages.
Explain the rural healthcare situation on ground.
How are better healthcare services affecting rural lives? Explain this aspect in detail, take hints from the article and detail upon the positives.

Conclusion:
Conclude with way forward and commend the government initiatives that are a step in the right direction.
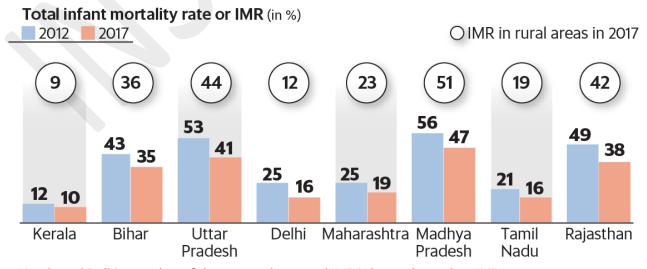
Introduction:
- Post Independence there has been a significant improvement, in the health status of people. Public health and health services have been synonymous in India.
- This integration has dwarfed the growth of a comprehensive public health system, which is critical to overcome some of the systemic challenges in healthcare.
- Poor strata of population have denied proper health care due to lack of universal healthcare. The above figures from a NSSO survey show the improving trend.

Body:

Improving rural wellness

Northern states still lag their southern counterparts on health parameters but continue to improve gradually.

Total infant mortality rate or IMR (in %)

| 2012 | 2017 | | ◯ IMR in rural areas in 2017 |

State	IMR in rural areas 2017	2012	2017
Kerala	9	12	10
Bihar	36	43	35
Uttar Pradesh	44	53	41
Delhi	12	25	16
Maharashtra	23	25	19
Madhya Pradesh	51	56	47
Tamil Nadu	19	21	16
Rajasthan	42	49	38

Kerala and Delhi are only 2 of the states where rural IMR is lower than urban IMR.

Source: censusindia.gov.in

Rural healthcare situation:
- The latest data on live births, infant mortality and deaths suggests more people in rural areas are visiting doctors than ever before at private and government clinics/hospitals.
- The percentage of live births where the mother got medical attention at delivery either at a government or private hospital rose from 73.1 in 2012 to 81.9 in 2017 at the all-India level.
- Similarly, 47% got attention before their death in 2017, up from 34.6% in 2012. In both events, birth and death, all the 22 states in surveyed showed an improvement from the previous time.

Impact of Better healthcare services in India:
- Nagaland fares the best, with the lowest death rate and the lowest birth rate, says the latest bulletin of the Sample Registration System.
- The death rate in 29 states and Delhi for 2017 ranges from 3.6% in Nagaland to 7.5% in Chhattisgarh. Nagaland scores well on birth rates, too, sharing the fifth spot with Chandigarh at 13.5%.
- The health indicators of its rural areas are good as well, with the birth rate at 14% against an all-India rural average of 21.8% and the death rate at 4.2% versus 6.9%.
- The IMR in its rural areas is 7%.
- Fewer children are dying at birth not just in urban areas but also in rural regions.
- The infant mortality rate, widely accepted as a crude indicator of the health scenario of a country, fell from 58% (infant deaths per 1,000 live births) in 2008 to 37% in 2017 in rural areas, while birth rate came down to 21.8% from 24.4% during the same period in those areas.
- Death rate declined during the decade.
- The rate of decline in these years has been higher in rural areas (around 14.5%) than in urban areas (10.5%).

Conclusion:
- India needs a holistic approach to tackle problems in healthcare industry. This includes the active collaboration of all stakeholders public, private sectors, and individuals.
- A more dynamic and pro-active approach is needed to handle the dual disease burden. A universal access to health makes the nation fit and healthy, aiding better to achieve the demographic dividend

Q) In recent years, suicide cases have received alarming attention, for they account for the majority of India's health burden. Critically analyse the high suicide death rate in the country and how India is responding to this challenge ? (250 words)

Livemint

Why this question:
The article discusses in detail the recent rising incidences of suicide cases across the world thus necessitating us to analyse the challenge India is facing on this front.

Demand of the question:
The answer must discuss in detail the problem of suicide and other mental ailments in India, the reason why Indian society is prone to it and assesses how we have responded to the challenge.

Directive word:

Critically analyze – When asked to analyse, you have to examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them as a whole in a summary. When 'critically' is suffixed or prefixed to a directive, one needs to look at the good and bad of the topic and give a fair judgement.

Structure of the answer:
Introduction
Quote facts from the article to set the background of the question.

Body
Bring out the fact that suicide and mental ailments form a chunk of India's disease burden, from data on suicide death rates, gather insights into the high suicide death rates in the country. Explain the reasons why suicide death rate is so high for India. Bring out the steps taken to deal with this challenge and discuss the way forward.

Conclusion
Conclude with both long-term and short-term solutions for the issue.

Introduction:

- **Sociologist Emile Durkheim** had famously hypothesised that **'suicides are a result of not just psychological or emotional factors but social factors as well'.** Every 40 seconds, someone somewhere in the world takes his or her own life.

Body:

Suicide statistics:

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), for every 100,000 women, about 16 women take their own lives. By the data available, India's suicide rate for women is the sixth highest in the world.
- Suicide is the second biggest cause of death, especially amongst younger men, exceeded only by death due to traffic accidents.
- Suicide is the leading cause of death among young women. We lose about 25 men for every 100,000 men to suicide.
- According to **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)'s 'Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India' report for 2015**, there were 1,336,623 suicides across the country that year.
- Among all states, Maharashtra (16,970) had the highest number of suicides in 2015, followed by Tamilnadu.
- As per report, one-third of the suicides in the country in 2015 were committed by young adults under age 30, and another one-third by people in the age group 30-45.

Reasons for high number of suicides in India are a mix of psychological or emotional influences and social dimensions:

- **Women :**
  - Women are struggling with disproportionate socio-economic burdens.
  - Their high SDRs relative to men are rooted in factors as varied as the difference in socially acceptable methods of dealing with stress and conflict for women and men, domestic violence and the different ways in which poverty affects the genders.
  - Married women form the biggest victim group of suicide deaths among women in general. This group becomes more vulnerable due to arranged and early marriage, young motherhood and economic dependence.
- The past few decades have witnessed economic, labour and social changes on a scale rarely seen before. Such rapid change with the economic dislocation and change in social and community links it brings can be destabilizing.
- **The social stigma**:
  - The social stigma attached to mental health disorders in India is a major hurdle in addressing them.
  - Stigma and general lack of knowledge and understanding when it comes to mental health disorders prevent timely intervention.
- **Lack of Medical and Psychological Care:**
  - State capabilities for addressing mental health issues are close to non-existent.
  - The country has about 5,000 psychiatrists and less than 2,000 clinical psychologists.
  - Expenditure on mental health accounts for a tiny fraction of total public health spending.
- **Farmers suicide:**
  - India's economy vastly depends on agriculture with around 60% of its people directly or indirectly depends upon it.
  - Different reasons like droughts, low yield prices, exploitation by middlemen and inability to pay loans lead Indian farmers to commit suicide.
- **Youth suicide:**
  - Reason for such high numbers can be attributed to lack of economic, social, and emotional resources.
  - More specifically, academic pressure, workplace stress, social pressures, modernisation of urban centers, relationship concerns, and the breakdown of support systems.
  - Some researchers have attributed the rise of youth suicide to urbanisation and the breakdown of the traditional large family support system.
  - The clash of values within families is an important factor for young people in their lives. As young Indians become more progressive, their traditionalist households become less supportive of their choices pertaining to financial independence, marriage age, rehabilitation, taking care of the elderly etc

- **Depression:**
  - o WHO says that depression and suicide are closely linked and, at its worst, depression can lead to suicide.18 per cent of the total number of people suffering from depression globally were in India in 2015.
- **Discrimination:**
  - o Discrimination and slurs for having belonged to an ST community and having procured admission into the college through the SC/ST quota.
  - o Racial slurs, Sexist slur etc. leading to extreme harassment of individuals.
  - o **Caste-based discrimination** and resentment from upper-caste students and faculty is common in the high-pressure environment of medical colleges, as well as in other higher educational institutes in the country.
  - o The 2007 report by the Thorat Committee has shown how rampant and varied the caste-based discrimination practices were in AIIMS, the country's premier medical college.

Measures taken by Government:
- There have been some positive developments over the past few years.
- The decriminalization of suicide was long overdue and welcome.
- The same holds true for the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India's mandating that insurance companies are to make provisions to cover mental illnesses in their policies along with physical illnesses.
- Concerned over the spate of suicides in Indian colleges, the ministry of human resource development has circulated a manual to the country's higher education institutions, asking the authorities to adopt measures to prevent students from taking the extreme step.
- The manual lists measures such as early identification of suicidal tendencies, a buddy programme and a double-blind helpline where both the caller and the counsellor are unaware of each other's identity.
- Other experts have suggested proactive steps at the adolescent stage itself with the introduction of mental health in school curricula.
- **Mental healthcare act 2016:** This Act will ensure these people have the right to live a life with dignity and not be discriminated against or harassed by the authorities. .
- The SC has also said that Section 309 of IPC also violates right to life as given under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

Measures needed:
- First, stop-gap solutions to setting up expert committees and counsellors in schools have not been able to solve the problem.
- The deep-rooted causes must be addressed. The government must undertake a comprehensive study on the reasons behind these suicides.
- Second, the curriculum should be designed in ways that stress the importance of mental exercises and meditation. E.g.: The Delhi government's initiative on the 'Happiness Curriculum' may be a step in the right direction.
- Third, with regards to higher education, 12 measures were suggested by the **Justice Roopanwal Commission.**
- Making Equal Opportunity Cells with an anti-discrimination officer functional in universities and colleges.
- Starting from the most "innocuous" of ragging practices to "extreme harassment," such discriminatory behaviour in fact constitutes violence and is an assault on the human rights of a person that prevents them from leading their lives with dignity and obtaining an education.
- Educational approaches in schools, namely, teaching about the facts of suicide, developing educational modules in life skills, and problem-solving and training teachers
- Psychological support and care should be given to the individual. The state can seek assistance from NGOs as well as religious missionaries for this purpose.
- Strengthening the existing National Mental Health Programme and the district mental health programme, along with focus on training resources and streamlining of funds are some other recommendations for fighting depression and suicide.
- Finally, it is high time we seek to reinvent our educational ecosystem in ways that impregnate new meanings, new ideas of living, and renewed possibilities that could transform a life of precarity into a life worth living.

Conclusion:

- Suicide is preventable. Youth who are contemplating suicide frequently give warning signs of their distress. Parents, teachers, and friends are in a key position to pick up on these signs and get help. Most important is to never take these warning signs lightly or promise to keep them secret.

Q) Medical Devices Industry (MDI) plays a critical role in the healthcare ecosystem and is indispensable to achieve the goal of health for all citizens of the country. Discuss. (250 words)

Indianexpress

Why this question:

The Medical Devices Industry (MDI) plays a critical role in the healthcare ecosystem and is indispensable to achieve the goal of health for all citizens of the country. The manufacturing and trade in MDI is growing steadily which includes a wide range of products. Although the industry has been growing in double digits but is predominantly import-driven with imports accounting for over 65% of the domestic market.

Key demand of the question:

The answer must discuss in detail the significance of Medical Devices Industry (MDI) in the health sector of the country.

Directive:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Provide for an overview of medical device industry.

Body:

Brief upon few relevant facts – medical devices industry in India consists of large multinationals, with extensive service networks, as well as small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The current market size of the medical devices industry in India is estimated to be $ 5.2 bn.

Discuss how it is a sunrise sector, bring out its possible potential that is yet to be realized, what are the various govt. initiatives that are required to be taken.

Conclusion:

Conclude with way forward.

Introduction:

- The medical devices industry in India consists of large multinationals, with extensive service networks, as well as small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
- The Medical Devices Industry (MDI) plays a critical role in the healthcare ecosystem and is crucial to **achieve the goal of health for all citizens of the country.** The manufacturing and trade in MDI is growing steadily in double digits.
- However, it is largely import-driven with imports accounting for over 65 percent of the domestic market. The investigations into faulty hip implants bring out the urgent need for a law to regulate medical devices.

Body:

Importance of Medical Devices in Healthcare:

- Medical devices are essential for **safe and effective prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of illness and disease**.
- Medical devices also have the capacity to act as **"bridges"** (as in devices like cardiac assist, pulmonary assist, and renal dialysis) enabling patients desperately in need of a transplant (e.g., heart, lung, kidney, etc.) to survive long enough to receive one.
- Medical devices rarely provide anything approximating "cure", but can have enormous effect of reducing or even eliminating symptoms and can, on occasion, go so far as to turn a potentially fatal condition (e.g., diabetes, esp. type 1) into a manageable, chronic condition.
- This capacity of devices to **enable patients to survive or just improve their quality of life** in the absence of a cure will continue to grow as multiple scientific disciplines (biomaterials research, cell biology, information technologies, etc.) individually make advances and complement each other in medical device design.

Laws governing MDI in India:
- Earlier, only 10 notified medical devices were regulated in India later this has since been broadened to 23 categories of devices.
- These mainly include syringes, needles, perfusion sets, in-vitro devices for HIV treatment, catheters, intra-ocular lenses, cannulas, bone cements, heart valves, orthopedic implants, coronary stents, IUDs and condoms.
- The important segments of medical devices in India are consumables and disposables that are mostly manufactured by Indian player, patients aids like hearing aids and pacemakers, various implants, and stents.
- In India, medical devices continue to be regulated as "drugs" via the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, and that newly introduced Medical Device Rules, 2017, which came into effect on January 1, 2018.
- New rules classify medical devices based on risk, as is done by the Global Harmonization Task Force.

Issues in Indian medical device regulation:
- In India a device such as a pacemaker cost less in the market and much more when implanted in a hospital.
- For instance, a US-based company buys an 'X' pacemaker for Rs 25,000.
- The Indian subsidiary then increases the price, fixes the MRP at Rs 50,000, and then sells it to a distributor at a "discounted price", say Rs 46,000.
- The distributor then sells it to a hospital at a price that is still discounted compared to the MRP, say at Rs 48,000.
- Finally, the patient buys the device from the hospital at Rs 50,000, so within the chain all three make a profit.
- Additionally, the patient pays the cost of the surgery, which varies from hospital to hospital.
- Currently, there are no specific rules or a law that allows the government to direct a medical device company to give compensation to a victim after the device has been found faulty.

Way forward:
- The medical device industry is a unique blend of engineering and medicine.
- It involves the creation of machines that are then used to support life within the human body.
- Given this, it needs not only careful regulation but also the highest ethical standards.
- Certainly, major changes are needed in the sector.
- It is up to the government to reinvigorate both the IPC and the CDSCO, and to give them more resources and a clearer mandate.
- The issue of the trustworthiness of the private sector to be relied for the tertiary health care system also needs attention.
- A large and vibrant public sector in tertiary health care is essential.
- This is possibly the way to counteract the hurtful consequences of information asymmetries and poor regulation.
- The government should re-examine its plan for universal health care, at this juncture.

Q) Discuss the different fertility transitions witnessing rural and urban India also discuss the contrast in the trends in North vs South India. (250 words)

livemint

Why this question:
The article discusses in detail the newer trends in the fertility transition across the country.

Key demand of the question:
The answer must discuss in detail the Spatial Patterns of Fertility Transition in India in terms of rural-urban and north-south contrast.

Directive:
Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:
Introduction:
In brief set the background of the question by taking cues from the article.
Body:
The answer must capture the following aspects in detail –
First discuss the reasons for vastly different fertility transitions going on in rural and urban India, and the north and south of the country.
Quote data from new Sample Registration Survey (2017) data for India.

Explain how over the last decade, fertility has fallen sharply in both rural and urban India.
Discuss the parameters that have changed, reasons for their change etc.
Then appreciate the pressing need to think over these changing trends to harness the true potential
of the demography along with effective management of the population.
Conclusion:
Conclude with way forward.

Introduction:
- The highlight of the new Sample Registration Survey (2017) data for India is undoubtedly the **continuing rapid fall of fertility rates**. But nestled within the data is a story of **two contrasting trends in rural and urban India** that underscore how India can sometimes truly be two (or more) countries.
- India's total fertility rate (TFR) (the average number of children that a woman will have in her lifetime) is declining. It is now 2.2 per woman, nearing the replacement rate of 2.1, according to the latest government data.

Body:

Trends in fertility pattern:
- Falling fertility in India has produced two diametrically opposite processes going on simultaneously, the new data shows.
- One, fertility in the higher age groups (mothers aged 35 and above) has fallen substantially in rural areas, as couples choose to limit their family size, and stop having children after they have had the desired number
- Second, in urban areas, **fertility among older women has grown**, as better educated women are able to delay marriage and childbirth, and improved healthcare allows women to have children later in life.
- While fertility in general is lower among more educated women, there is one notable exception: in urban areas, fertility rates among women in their 30s are higher among better educated rather than less educated women.
- TFR goes below 2 in both urban and rural areas, where girls complete schooling and reduces further as they pass college.
- Among the major states, fertility in the southern states has fallen well below replacement levels.
- In fact, the TFR in urban India as a whole has now fallen to levels that in some countries are taken as a cause for concern in terms of being too low.
- TFR in urban India fell to 1.7 as of 2017, comparable to that of Belgium, Iceland and Norway, and lower than that of the United States or the United Kingdom (1.8). Japan, which is regarded as being in the grip of a demographic crisis with too low fertility rates is still far behind urban India at 1.4 children per woman.
- The focus on above-replacement fertility in the northern states has dominated the national dialogue around fertility to the detriment of the southern states and urban areas where fertility is falling far faster than expected.
- Some other less affluent states are also now at Japan-like "crisis" levels. Urban Odisha, West Bengal (1.3), Jammu & Kashmir (1.2), Himachal Pradesh (1.1) have TFR even lower than in the south, and lower than that of Japan.

Other notable observations:
- The total fertility rate has more than halved in both urban and rural areas, falling even below the replacement level in the former where it is 1.7, down from 4.1 in 1971.
- In rural areas, TFR has fallen from 5.4 to 2.4 during the same period.
- For rural areas, it varies from 1.6 in Delhi and Tamil Nadu to 3.3 in Bihar.
- For urban areas, the variation is from 1.1 in Himachal Pradesh to 2.4 in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- Of the 22 states, only six have a TFR of 2 or more in urban areas. There are 10 states where TFR is below 2 in rural regions.

Decreasing fertility rate and its challenges:
- The decrease in fertility and the associated decrease in the dependency ratio, in turn lead to an increase in the share of the population concentrated in the working ages and hence in the ratio of the working age to the non-working age population.
- **Dependency ratio:**
  - The proportion of workers rises sharply, even as the proportion of dependants falls. In many countries, the ratio of workers to dependents goes up, giving a huge boost to per capita income.

- o India will see a significant rise in working age adults India's dependency ratio that is the number of dependents to working people is low at 0.6, compared with the developed countries. That ratio is going to decline further with fertility rates continuing to fall.
- For the next few decades India will have a youthful, dynamic and productive workforce than the rest of the world.
- A demographic trend where the proportion of persons aged 15-24 in the population increases significantly compared to other age groups which paired with limited employment opportunities may contribute to **increased poverty, hunger, malnutrition, poorer health, lower educational outcomes, child labour, unsupervised and abandoned children, and rising rates of domestic violence.**
- **Education constraints:**
  - o There are serious problems with Indian higher education. These include a shortage of high quality faculty, poor incentive structures, lack of good regulation
  - o India is home to the world's largest concentration of illiterate people in the world
- **Health:**
  - o At the primary level, there are also serious problems with health and nutrition that impact the effectiveness of education and the capacity for learning.
  - o In future large proportion of older working aged people who face longer periods of retirement, accumulate assets to support themselves.

Way forward:
- **Health and education parameters** need to be improved substantially to make the Indian workforce efficient and skilled.
- Enhance, support and coordinate private sector initiatives for skill development through appropriate Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models; strive for significant operational and financial involvement from the private sector
- Focus on underprivileged sections of society and backward regions of the country thereby enabling a move out of poverty; similarly, focus significantly on the unorganized or informal sector workforce.
- Measures should have pan Indian presence and not just concentrated in metropolitan cities as most of the workforce is likely to come from the rural hinterland.
- Investing in people through healthcare, quality education, jobs and skills helps build human capital, which is key to supporting economic growth, ending extreme poverty, and creating more inclusive societies
- New technology could be exploited to accelerate the pace of building human capital, including massive open online courses and virtual classrooms
- Policymakers should have a greater incentive to redouble their efforts to promote human capital so that it can contribute to economic growth and job creation

TOPIC: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- application, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures. Role of civil services in a democracy.

Q) Do you think the recently proposed automated facial recognition system for improving outcomes in the area of Criminal identification and verification is opaque, vague and prone to misuse? Critically analyse. (250 words)

Indianexpress

Why this question:
The article captures a detailed discussion on the recent move made by NCRB, which has proposed integrating facial recognition system with multiple existing databases. The most prominent is the NCRB-managed Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS). Facial recognition has been proposed in the CCTNS program since its origin.

Demand of the question:
Th answer must critically examine the pros and cons of such a move and suggest a way forward.

Directive word:

Critically analyze – When asked to analyse, you have to examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them as a whole in a summary. When 'critically' is suffixed or prefixed to a directive, one needs to look at the good and bad of the topic and give a fair judgement.

Structure of the answer:
Introduction
State the relevance first, explain what you understand by automated facial recognition system.
Body
Discuss the following aspects in the body of the answer –

- The question demands a detailed discussion on the concerns around using facial recognition. Explain that the Cyber experts across the world have cautioned against government abuse of facial recognition technology, as it can be used as tool of control and risks inaccurate results.
- Explain the issue of privacy infringement and others in detail.
- Form a fair and balanced opinion.

Conclusion
Conclude with what can be done and suggest a balanced way ahead.

Introduction:

- Automated facial recognition system (AFRS) is a mobile and web application hosted in NCRB's data centre in Delhi but used by all police stations in the country. AFRS works by comparing the new image of an unidentified person often taken from CCTV footage with the existing database to find a match and identify the person.
- The artificial intelligence technology used for pattern-finding and matching is called "neural networks". Currently, facial recognition in India is done manually.

Body:

NCRB's request call:

- The NCRB, which manages crime data for police, would like to use automated facial recognition to identify criminals, missing people, and unidentified dead bodies, as well as for "crime prevention".
- Its Request for Proposal calls for gathering CCTV footage, as well as photos from newspapers, raids, and sketches.
- The project is aimed at being compatible with other biometrics such as iris and fingerprints.
- NCRB has proposed integrating this facial recognition system with multiple existing databases.
- The most prominent is the NCRB-managed Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS).
- Facial recognition has been proposed in the CCTNS program since its origin.
- The new facial recognition system will be integrated with Integrated Criminal Justice System (ICJS), as well as state-specific systems, the Immigration, Visa and Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT), and the Khoya Paya portal on missing children.

Need for AFRS:

- Automated Facial Recognition System can play a very vital role in improving outcomes in the area of Criminal identification and verification by facilitating easy recording, analysis, retrieval and sharing of Information between different organisations.
- While fingerprints and iris scans provide far more accurate matching results, automatic facial recognition is an easier solution especially for identification amongst crowds.
- The integration of fingerprint database, face recognition software and iris scans will massively boost the police department's crime investigation capabilities.
- It will also help civilian verification when needed. No one will be able to get away with a fake ID.
- It will also help civilian verification when needed.
- It also plans to offer citizen services, such as passport verification, crime reporting, online tracking of case progress, grievance reporting against police officers etc.

Concerns:

- Cyber experts across the world have cautioned against government abuse of facial recognition technology, as it can be used as tool of control and risks inaccurate results.
- Amid NCRB's controversial step to install an automated facial recognition system, India should take note of the ongoing privacy debate in the US.
- In the absence of data protection law, Indian citizens are more vulnerable to privacy abuses.
- Use of surveillance cameras and facial recognition constrict the rights of particular class of people.
- In the US, the FBI and Department of State operate one of the largest facial recognition systems.
- International organisations have also condemned the Chinese government on its use of surveillance cameras and facial recognition to constrict the rights of Uighurs, a mostly Muslim minority.

Conclusion:

- In light of the fact that India does not have any legal framework to safeguard the personal data of its citizens, nor any sort of judicial oversight over public surveillance programmes, the current proposal for AFRS raises eyebrows.

Q) "The idea of lateral entry into the administrative Services would energies Indian administration." What are its possible advantages and limitations ? Elucidate. (250 words)

Livemint

Why this question:

The government wants to parachute private sector experts into India's bureaucracy, the question intends to inquire into the workableness of the idea of lateral entry.

Key demand of the question:

The answer must evaluate the pros and cons of lateral entry into Indian administrative services.

Directive:

Elucidate – Give a detailed account as to how and why it occurred, or what is the particular context. You must be defining key terms where ever appropriate, and substantiate with relevant associated facts.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Start with your understanding on what is lateral entry.

Body:

Explain that the issue of lateral entry into civil services at mid-level positions of the Union government has received much attention recently.

Then discuss the need for lateral entry of outside specialists into the middle rung of Indian bureaucracy.

Provide for some Argument Against or Disadvantages of Lateral Entry into Civil Services.

Suggest How to Make Lateral Entry into Civil Services a Success Story.

Conclusion:

Conclude with way forward.

Introduction:

- The lateral entry mode, which pertains to the appointment of specialists from private sector in government organisations, is an attempt by the government to bring in fresh talent into the bureaucracy.
- While the nine lateral entrants, all set to join government soon, the latest attempt to reform the bureaucracy has raised more questions than answers

Body:

Possible advantages:

- Civil servants enter public service as generalists and have grassroots realities. Building specific domain expertise starts quite late for career bureaucrats.
- To bring in fresh ideas and new approaches to governance. Expert advice and opinion for efficient administration and fulfilling the aspirations of people
- The present system of frequent and arbitrary transfers hinders gaining of the relevant experience by incumbent officers. They spend less than 16 months, on average, in any post; and studies shows only 24% of postings are viewed as "merit-based" by bureaucrats themselves.
- **Former instances :**
  - o Lateral entry into finance ministry produced illustrious public servants like Manmohan Singh, Montek Singh Ahluwalia and Vijay Kelkar etc.
- Outside talent from the private sector is more likely to be target-oriented, which will improve the performance of the government.
- Lateral entry scheme, if implemented properly, may foster more competitive spirit, break the complacency of the higher civil servants and eventually prove to be a pioneering initiative in public interest.
- Question often raised in this context is whether the higher bureaucracy is equipped to comprehend complex economic and technical issues in order to properly aid and advise the Minister. Doubts are raised whether civil servants can handle diverse portfolios from civil aviation to power to defence.

- The three-year action agenda released by NITI Aayog in August 2017 said "policymaking is a specialized activity" and "lateral entry will have the beneficial side effect of bringing competition to the established career bureaucracy".
- Lateral entry at the level of Secretary has met with some success earlier:
    - Besides, Secretaries to the Departments of Atomic Energy, Science & Technology, Scientific and Industrial Research, Health Research, and Agricultural Research have always been scientists of eminence.
    - Similarly, in departments like the Railways, Posts, etc., all senior positions are manned by Indian Railway or Postal Service officers. Therefore, there is nothing very original in the new initiative to allow entry at the level of Joint Secretary.

However, it has challenges too:

- Many serving Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers see this move as threatening their hegemony.
- Experts criticize this move as the beginning of the end of a neutral and impartial civil service with the likely induction of loyalists to the current dispensation.
- Doubts have been expressed if private business houses would plant their people in order to influence government policies.
- Differences in work culture may often come in the way.
- The width and depth of field experience which the civil services provide is not available with outside talent.
- Interests and motivation vary from person to person. Therefore, short term entry of officers through lateral entry might lead to corrupt practices.
- The private sector who ran Air India, Indian Airlines and Vayudoot proved to be failures.
- Lateral entry into civil services undermines reservation policy.
- If a person from a private infrastructure company is appointed in an infra ministry it will lead to questions of morality, ethics and conflict of interest."
- Lack of transparency, honesty and political interference in the selection process.
- Nobody knows why a particular individual was selected and why others more qualified were left out.
- It is difficult to assess the performance of a secretary to the government due to complex nature of the job. So it would be difficult to measure the performance of lateral entrants.
- If the selection is politically motivated, it may degrade the system.

Way forward:

- Government must ensure that only candidates, the likes of whom are not available in the existing system, are appointed. If they turn out to be truly outstanding, there should be provisions to induct them permanently in the government, with approval of the UPSC, and consider them for higher postings.
- Government must also allow deputation of its officers to private sector as well so that they get exposure to market practices and fresh ideas.
- The remedy lies not through lateral induction but through more rigorous performance appraisal and improved personnel management.
- The government can consider lateral entry to head certain mission-mode projects and public-sector entities where private-sector expertise actually matters.
- The process of selection needs to be transparent.
- A credible statutory agency like UPSC should be entrusted with the responsibility of recruitment.

Q) What is Paid news ? Discuss the reasons for rise in paid news in India and also suggest solutions to the menace of paid news.   (250 words)

Reference

Why this question:

Recently Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar informed Rajya Sabha about the steps being taken by the Government to curb the menace of Paid News.

Key demand of the question:

The answer must discuss the context and reasons for rise in paid news and one must suggest solutions to curb the problems of this paid news.

Directive:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:
Introduction:
Define what is paid news.
Body:
Paid news is defined as any news or analysis appearing in print or electronic media for consideration in cash or kind. Manifestations of paid news are:
Advertisements camouflaged as news, Denial of coverage to select electoral candidates, exchanging of advertisement space for equity stakes between media houses and corporate.
Explain the recent trends witnessed in terms of paid news in India.
What are the various counter measures to overcome the challenge of paid news?
Conclusion:
Conclude with solutions.

Introduction:
- **The Press Council of India (PCI)** defines paid news as **any news or analysis appearing in print or electronic media for consideration in cash or kind.** This type of news is typically sponsored by politicians, businessmen, and celebrities in order to improve their public image or accomplish political goals.

Body:
Manifestations of paid news are:
- Advertisements camouflaged as news.
- Denial of coverage to select electoral candidates.
- Exchanging of advertisement space for equity stakes between media houses and corporate.

Reasons for rise in paid news:
- Corporatisation of media
- Owners having themselves the editorial roles.
- Decline in autonomy of editors/journalists due to emergence of contract system and poor wage levels of journalists
- Lack of restriction on ownership across media segments or between content and distribution could give rise to monopolistic practices.

Challenges posed:
- Paid news is a grave election malpractice and is not recognized as an offence by Representation of Peoples Act.
- In many cases, money spent on paid news is not represented in elections expenditure and is a punishable offence.
- There has been a lot of discussion on paid news including a parliamentary standing committee report on the subject, yet there is no consensus on how to deal with the problem.
- Existing regulatory set-up dealing with paid news is inadequ
- Universally profit-maximizing entities will act to increase returns rather than look at social externalities.

Way forward:
- It is a reminder for the amendment of RPA Act, 1951.
- A legal framework in which electoral issues are expeditiously adjudicated must also be put in place if election law is to be enforced in both letter and spirit.
- Define what constitutes paid political news, so that Press Council of India can adopt appropriate guidelines.
- Periodic review of the editor/journalist autonomy and wage conditions.
- Financial accounts of the media houses should be subject to examination, especially the revenue source for a suspected paid news case.
- Regulator(s) should have the power to take strong action against offenders and should not include media owners/interested parties as members.
- Transparent and unbiased policy for distribution of advertisements by the central and state governments, with provisions for scrutiny.
- Conduct study to evaluate the mechanism adopted by other countries to tackle the problem of paid news.
- Naming and shaming of media houses involved in paid new
- In India, a more alert citizenry can make a difference by bringing the problem of paid news to the public domain.

Conclusion:

- The media acts as a repository of public trust for conveying correct and true information to the people. The "paid news" is therefore, a serious matter as it influences the functioning of a free press.
- There is an urgent need to protect the right of the public to accurate information before voters exercise their franchise when such incidents are on rise. Hence, a legal framework in which electoral issues are expeditiously adjudicated must be put in place if election laws are to be enforced in both letter and spirit.

Q) Is India on the right path to harness data as a "public good" in the service of the people? Discuss in the backdrop of the debate of ongoing data secrecy vs digital India. (250 words)

Indianexpress

Why this question:

The question aims to analyse if the country is on the right path of dealing with privacy when it comes to handling data.

Key demand of the question:

The answer must discuss in detail the issues involved in handling data and in what way the government should handle the concerns.

Directive:

Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Define what is data privacy.

Body:

Take hints from the article and discuss in depth the relevance of data in today's world and in what way different countries across the world are dealing with the issues associated with data security.

Justify as to how India stands at the cusp of a major opportunity, one where data and digital platforms can become an enabler of a meaningful life for every Indian. This is also the opportunity for India to become a global leader and present a new approach that other countries can emulate.

Conclusion:

Conclude with way forward.

Introduction:

- **Data privacy**, also known as **information privacy**, is **the necessity to preserve and protect any personal information, collected by any organization, from being accessed by a third party**.
- It is a part of Information Technology that helps an individual or an organization determine what data within a system can be shared with others and which should be restricted.

Body:

Data as a 'public good' has the following potential:

- **Governments:** They can improve targeting in welfare schemes and subsidies by reducing both inclusion and exclusion errors hence improving public service delivery.
- **Private sector firms:** Data may be sold to corporate sector which may in turn use these to discover untapped markets or innovate new products. This also generates revenues for the government.
- **Citizens:** They are the largest group of beneficiaries of the proposed data revolution. For example initiatives like DigiLocker, Non-Banking Financial Company-Account Aggregator (NBFC-AA). They enable citizens to demand and access their data in a machine-readable format, so that it can be used by them meaningfully.

However, there are many issues with the data privacy which raises voices for the Data secrecy:

- The Andhra Pradesh government websites publicly displayed the Aadhaar number of women, their reproductive history, whether they had an abortion and so on.
- Another website exposed the name and number of every person who purchased medicines from government-run stores, including those buying pills for erectile dysfunction.
- Three Gujarat-based websites were found disclosing Aadhaar numbers of the beneficiaries on their websites.
- **Cambridge Analytica Scandal:** It involved the collection of personally identifiable information of up to 87 million Facebook users. The data was allegedly used to attempt to influence voter opinion.

Thus, there have been instances of data privacy breach from both State and private entities. With Right to privacy becoming a fundamental right now in India, there are requirements to safeguard the data of the individuals.

Measures needed:

- It is important to **strike a right balance between digital economy and privacy protection.**
- **Robust data privacy laws** are needed to allow citizens enjoy the right to privacy. The law should encompass all the aspects- data collection, processing and sharing practices.
- **Privacy should not be used to undermine government transparency.** Data protection law should be framed such that it **does not make government opaque and unaccountable.**

- To utilize the data subject to user consent and appropriate privacy and fairness related constraints.
- The choice to share the individually linked data will always be with the citizen under the **Data Access Fiduciary Architecture**.
- Each department of the government must be made responsible for making available the data they hold as a data provider.
- These departments must take care to appropriately treat private data and public data with the standards they require.
- Check unauthorized leaks, hacking, cyber crimes, and frauds.
- **Improve business process, and secure digital payments.**
- **Restrict use of data by data colonising** companies such as Facebook, Whatsapp etc.

Conclusion:
- The principle is that most data are generated by the people, of the people and should be used for the people.
- Enabling the sharing of information across datasets would improve the delivery of social welfare, empower people to make better decisions, and democratize an important public good.
- Maximising public good but also safeguarding against harm must be the mantra for the new digital India.

Topic –India and its neighborhood- relations,

Q) India-Bhutan relations not only reflects the contemporary nature of their relationship but also lay the foundation for their future development in the 21ˢᵗ century. Elucidate the statement in the backdrop of India's emphasis on neighborhood-first policy.   (250 words)

livemint

Why this question:
Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Bhutan on 17-18 August to underline his government's emphasis on India's "neighborhood first" policy, as well as the country's special relationship with the strategically located Himalayan nation.

Key demand of the question:
The answer must analyse India- Bhutan relations at a broader picture with special focus on India's neighborhood first policy.

Directive:
Elucidate – Give a detailed account as to how and why it occurred, or what is the particular context. You must be defining key terms where ever appropriate, and substantiate with relevant associated facts.

Structure of the answer:
Introduction:
Discuss the context of the question.

Body:
The answer must discuss in detail India- Bhutan relations.
Diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan were established in 1968 with the appointment of a resident representative of India in Thimphu.
Before this India's relations with Bhutan were looked after by India's Political Officer in Sikkim.
The basic framework of India- Bhutan bilateral relations was the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1949 between the two countries, which was revised in February 2007.
The India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty not only reflects the contemporary nature of their relationship but also lays the foundation for their future development in the 21st century.
Discuss the role India's neighborhood first policy would have on India-Bhutan relations.

Conclusion:
Conclude with way forward.

Introduction:
- Bhutan, nestled in the Himalayas, has shared a cordial relations with India based on our **long-standing diplomatic, economic and cultural relations**. India has been an **all-weather friend** of Bhutan since the latter's independence.

- The **India –Bhutan treaty of friendship and cooperation** was signed in **1949** and was updated in **2007,** subjecting the Himalayan nation's security needs to supervision. The Treaty provides for **perpetual peace and friendship, free trade and commerce, and equal justice to each other's citizens**.

Body:
- To underline the government's emphasis on India's "neighbourhood first" policy, as well as the country's special relationship with the strategically located Himalayan nation, Prime Minister is expected to visit Bhutan very soon.

India Bhutan relations in past:
- India and Bhutan have enjoyed a "special" relationship, according to analysts. "India and Bhutan have closely aligned their foreign policy on many occasions. E.g.: the common position both countries have taken with regard to China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative.
- The two countries have also taken a common position vis-à-vis terrorism referring to Bhutan joining India in pulling out of the 2016 South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Summit, which was to be hosted by Pakistan, following a string of terrorist attacks in India.
- The two sides have agreed to "cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests", in line with the 2007 India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty.

Assured by India for its **distinct identity and autonomy** since India's independence Bhutan has been in the good book of India since the very beginning. There has arisen a need to revisit the India's Bhutan policy and address issues that have come up in the past few years.

- **Hydro-power projects:**
  - **Three** hydro-electric projects (HEPs) totalling **1416 MW**, (336 MW **Chukha** HEP, the 60 MW **Kurichu** HEP, and the 1020 MW **Tala** HEP), are already exporting electricity to India.
  - Delays in constructing and commissioning in Bhutan by Indian companies have led to the country's burgeoning national debt.
  - India's power-surplus status and the advent of other renewable energies like wind and solar power will make it more difficult for Bhutan to ensure that its hydropower sector becomes profitable.
  - Unless India finds ways to help, it will be accused of the same sort of "debt-trapping" that China is accused of today.
- **Trade and Commerce:**
  - India is Bhutan's **largest trading partner**. India and Bhutan have signed an Agreement on Trade, Commerce and Transit in 2016, which provides for a free trade regime between the two countries aimed at boosting the bilateral trade for mutual benefit.
  - The goods and services tax still hurts Bhutanese exporters, and demonetisation has left lasting scars on the banking system.
  - Government's decision to **cut cooking gas subsidy** just before the 2013 elections in Bhutan has often been shown as proof of Indian interference.
- **Security Issues:**
  - Doklam crisis and incidences of Indian presence being mistakenly represented as Indian encroachment have the potential to deteriorate the relationship between the two countries and push Bhutan into the lap of China.
  - It has even raised doubts of a few that India is acting as a "**Big Brother".**
- **Joint Ventures:**
  - The joint ventures are stuck because the Indian PSEs insist on having more managerial control and have refused to come up with agreed financing.
- **Connectivity:**
  - India's plan for regional connectivity seems to have hit a dead-end with Bhutan.
  - The Bhutanese Parliament didn't ratify the implementation of **BBIN project** which will further affect the connectivity.

The measures for **continuing the cohesive and durable relationship with Bhutan** are:
- The principles of **Panchsheel and Gujral doctrine** must drive our relations towards Bhutan.
- The hydropower projects, where delays in construction and commissioning by the Indian companies took place, have led to the Country's increase in the national debt. **The tariffs need to be re-negotiated.**
- The advent of wind / solar energy in India makes it more difficult for Bhutan to ensure that its hydropower sector becomes profitable. This concern must be addressed.

- India must be careful **not to seem bossy**, and end up souring up its relationship with Bhutan as was done in the case of Nepal. Considering this legacy of Independent democracy, **India should refrain from interfering in sovereign matters of Bhutan**.
- A **politically stable Bhutan** is important to India. An unstable and restive Bhutan would not only jeopardize India's investments in that country but also provide a safe haven for anti-India activities and anti-India militant groups.
- India needs to focus on **policing cross-border trade.**
- India needs to **discard the tradition of offering economic subsidies and negotiating project proposals with neighbouring capitals** and focus instead on enabling agreements, and let market forces leverage the existing economic and geographic complementarities.
- **Standby credit facility** extended to Bhutan need to be reassessed as per current exchange rates and economic stability.
- **The Doklam crisis** can be taken as a wake-up call and be used as an opportunity rather than as a continuing threat with China.
- **More people to people contact**: Steps should be taken to involve people in national, regional or cultural events so that close and strong relations between the two countries could be sustained.
- India needs to give more attention in inviting Bhutanese youth to study in India at all levels.
- **Media**, particularly **social media**, needs to be harnessed to reach out to Bhutanese policymakers and common people to give them the confidence that India will stand by them for their economic and cultural development.

Future of the relations:
- There are many potential areas ideas like **organic farming, eco-tourism, developing north eastern states**that can be explored and cooperation to be strengthened.
- There are high **level groups on security, water management, power, trade, investment, culture** which can smoothen the relations between nations.
- India looks for the **opportunity for Bhutanese students** in every kind of institutions and the scholarship for them has also been expanded.
- In cultural aspect, there is a **Nehru-Wangchuck Cultural Centre** in Bhutan and they also have very rich culture where exchanges do have a broad opportunity.
- India being the fast growing economy has to **align itself with Bhutanese ideas of sustainable development** in various aspects.

Conclusion:
- **Hydro-electric power** generated by Bhutan's run-of-the river dams is the **economic bedrock of the India-Bhutan relationship.**
- India needs to **act robustly to address Bhutanese concerns** that are weakening the traditionally strong India-Bhutan bilateral bond, as a strong relationship with India could reduce the chances of Bhutan succumbing to Chinese pressure.

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

Q) Do you agree India's strategy for Indo-Pacific needs to recognise the importance of the continent of Africa? Critically analyse.   (250 words)

Indianexpress

Why this question:
The article talks about the need to focus on the continent of Africa from a newer perspective essential for the changing Indo-Pacific needs.

Demand of the question:
One has to appreciate the role of the African continent with the Indi-pacific perspective.

Directive word:

Critically analyze – When asked to analyze, you have to examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them as a whole in a summary. When 'critically' is suffixed or prefixed to a directive, one needs to look at the good and bad of the topic and give a fair judgement.

Introduction:
- Indo-Pacific region is a **multi-polar region**, contributing more than half of the world's GDP and population. Countries falling in the direct hinterland of the vast Indian and Pacific oceanic expanse are termed 'Indo-Pacific countries'.
- The attributes of the Indo-Pacific are also highly appealing. The region comprises **at least 38 countries that share 44 percent of world surface area and 65 per cent of world population, and account for 62 per cent of world–GDP and 46 per cent of the world's merchandise trade**.

Body:
Importance of Africa for India's strategy for Indo-Pacific:
- Africa has turned from "The Hopeless Continent" to "A Hopeful Continent" given its demography, resources, market etc.
- India and Africa share historical ties, the 1955 Bandung Conference was not just about Asia or non-alignment but promoting Afro-Asian solidarity.
- Africa assumes strategic importance for India in relation to:
  - **Geopolitical interest:** South-South cooperation, UNSC reforms, Competition with China, Cooperation in global issues such as climate change and WTO reforms.
  - **Geo-economic interest:** Energy security – Oil (Nigeria), the supply of Uranium (South Africa), huge mineral resources of Africa, growing population of Africa provides for new opportunities for goods and services exports from India.
  - **Geostrategic interest:** Maritime security – East coast countries are important for peace and prosperity of the Indian Ocean region, trade relations across and beyond Africa and interests of Indian diaspora in Africa.
- Since the rise of Asia and Africa, these continents are reconstituting the geographies of the eastern hemisphere and breaking down the artificial mental maps that emerged in the 20th century.
- Thus, India must recognise the growing importance of Africa for the security and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific.

However, there are **several issues that impede India's engagement with Africa**
- Africa is witnessing a phenomenon called the **"New Scramble for Africa".**
- If Europe and North America dominated Africa's economic relationship in the past, China, India, Japan, South Korea and the ASEAN share the geopolitical space today with the US and EU. China, Japan, Korea and India are also major investors in Africa as well as providers of development assistance
- China's Belt and Road Initiative is about connecting China's eastern seaboard with the Indian Ocean littoral.
- China is involved in the development of 47 ports in sub-Saharan Africa.
- China's expanding defence and security engagement in Africa. Over the last few years, China has emerged as the largest major arms supplier to Sub-Saharan Africa.
- The US, which was focused on terrorism and other non-military threats after 9/11, is paying attention to Africa's new geopolitics.
- Russia, which seemed to turn its back on Africa after the collapse of the Soviet Union, is now returning with some vigour.
- Many regional actors like Iran, UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey are taking a growing interest in African security affairs.
- India lacks diplomatic presence in Africa as India has an embassy only in 29 out of 54 African countries.
- A lot of African countries are suffering from political instability.

- Thus pan African strategy is not working as Africa is not homogenous
- The general perception is that "India promises and China delivers". India's implementation and delivery have been flawed.

Way Forward:
- India should focus on its comparative advantages like services sector, pharma and private sector relationship.
- India has leverage over China as the latter's investments are perceived as neo-colonial whereas India is engaged in partnership based on mutual benefit and capacity building
- Africa is too big for both India and China, so they both must cooperate and wherever there is competition it must be constructive.
- India elevated the engagement with Africa by hosting a summit in Delhi for all the African leaders, unveiling sustained high-level political contact, expanding India's diplomatic footprint, strengthening economic engagement and boosting military diplomacy.
- But the scale and speed of Africa's current transformation need to be a priority on India's strategic map.

Conclusion:
- Indian foreign policy has always envisaged a rules-based order anchored upon international law, openness, transparency, inclusivity and commitment to advancing economic engagement in the region.
- In this regard India can focus on four areas of cooperation with Africa i.e. maritime cooperation; connectivity; UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030; and economic development.

Q) At a time when the geopolitical contestation between China and the United States is escalating, do you think it has become imperative for the ASEAN to reclaim the strategic narrative in its favour in order to underscore its centrality in the emerging regional order ? Examine.   (250 words)

The hindu

Why this question:
At the 34th summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Bangkok in June, its member states finally managed to articulate a collective vision for the Indo-Pacific region in a document titled "The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific".

Demand of the question:
The answer must capture a detailed analysis of the role of ASEAN and its emerging role in the Indo-Pacific region.

Directive word:
Examine – When asked to 'Examine', we have to look into the topic (content words) in detail, inspect it, investigate it and establish the key facts and issues related to the topic in question. While doing so we should explain why these facts and issues are important and their implications.

Structure of the answer:
Introduction
In brief explain the context of the question.
Body
First explain that the for a long time, the ASEAN has been reluctant to frontally engage with the Indo-Pacific discourse as the perception was that it may antagonize China. But there was soon a realization that such an approach might allow others to shape the regional architecture and marginalize the ASEAN itself. And so, the final outlook that the ASEAN has come up with effectively seeks to take its own position rather than following any one power's lead.
Explain then in what way ASEAN is redefining the Indo-pacific narrative.
Explain the stakes of US and china in the regions, discuss the effects of the turf between the two.
Conclusion
Conclude with significance of ASEAN in the Indo-pacific narrative.

Introduction:
- The geography of the Indo-Pacific stretches from the eastern coast of Africa to Oceania (from the shores of Africa to that of the Americas) which also includes in its fold the Pacific Island countries.
- At a time when the geopolitical disputes between China and the United States are escalating, it has become imperative for the ASEAN to reclaim the strategic narrative in its favour in order to highlight its centrality in the emerging regional order.

Body:
- At the 34th summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Bangkok in June, its member states finally managed to articulate a collective vision for the Indo-Pacific region in a document titled "The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific".

Highlights of document and its significance:
- It underlines the need for an inclusive and rules-based framework to generate momentum for building strategic trust and win-win cooperation in the region.
- It says that the rise of material powers (economic and military) requires avoiding the deepening of mistrust, miscalculation and patterns of behaviour based on a zero-sum game.
- It could complement existing frameworks of cooperation at the regional and sub-regional levels.
- It could generate tangible and concrete deliverables for the benefit of the region's peoples.
- Despite individual differences and bilateral engagements ASEAN states have with the U.S. and China, the regional grouping can now claim to have a common approach as far as the Indo-Pacific region is concerned.
- Though there were divisions among ASEAN member states in the run-up to the summit, they still managed to come up with this document.

Previous stance of ASEAN about Indo-Pacific:
- ASEAN had the perception that it may antagonise China if it engages with the Indo-Pacific discourse.
- But there was soon a realisation that such an approach might allow others to shape the regional architecture and marginalise the ASEAN.

ASEAN and Indo-Pacific:
- The ASEAN outlook does not see the Indo-Pacific as one continuous territorial space, it emphasises development and connectivity, underlining the need for maritime cooperation, infrastructure connectivity and broader economic cooperation.
- The ASEAN is signalling that it would seek to avoid making the region a platform for major power competition.
- Instead its frame of reference is economic cooperation and dialogue.
- The fact that the ASEAN has gone ahead and articulated an Indo-Pacific outlook is in itself a seeming challenge to China which refuses to validate the concept.
- But the ASEAN's approach is aimed at placating China by not allowing itself to align with the U.S.'s vision for the region completely.

Way forward for India:
- India has welcomed the ASEAN's outlook on the Indo-Pacific as it sees important elements of convergence with its own approach towards the region.
- India must continue to focus on further strengthening collaboration with ASEAN nations and others.
- India's bureaucratic shift is an important move to articulate its regional policy more cogently, coherently and with a renewed sense of purpose.
- Partners must work to promote economic revival, seek strategic cooperation to fight terrorism, and enhance maritime security and defence cooperation.
- Soft power such as Buddhism, tourism, people-to-people contacts, and cultural ties with the region must continue to be harnessed.
- Beyond, but linked to ASEAN, India must further strengthen strategic and economic ties with the U.S., Japan, Korea, Australia, and also with China.
- Important sectors like technology transfer, civilian nuclear cooperation, defence, and innovation should be given priority
- Continuous engagement with China too is necessary to expand cooperation, particularly on the economic front.

Conclusion:
- With the ASEAN finally coming to terms with its own role in the Indo-Pacific, the ball is now in the court of other regional stakeholders to work with the regional grouping to shape a balance of power in the region which favours inclusivity, stability and economic prosperity.

Q) "The U.S.-Iran conflict is often portrayed in the media as one that involves two flawed actors struggling for supremacy on a complex West Asian stage". Critically analyse. (250 words)

The hindu

> **Why this question:**
> More than a year ago, the U.S. unilaterally abrogated the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). After this, the U.S. began to squeeze the Iranian economy using sanctions. The latest round of sanctions was announced in June 2019.Post this, Iran announced that it had exceeded a limit set by the JCPOA on its stockpile of nuclear fuel.
>
> **Key demand of the question:**
> The answer must bring out the prevailing situation between US-Iran. Factors responsible for the conflict between the two and what needs to be done to address the challenge.
>
> **Directive:**
> **Critically analyze** – When asked to analyse, you have to examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them as a whole in a summary. When 'critically' is suffixed or prefixed to a directive, one needs to look at the good and bad of the topic and give a fair judgement.
>
> **Structure of the answer:**
> **Introduction:**
> Briefly narrate the ongoing conflict with some background of the issue.
>
> **Body:**
> One can explain that a closer look of the situation reveals a simpler underlying reality that the Donald Trump administration is using the U.S.'s clout in an old-fashioned attempt to assert the country's hegemony; Iran is just doing whatever it can to resist U.S. pressure.
> Then provide a brief history of relations between the two countries.
> Discuss about the impact the conflict has on India and what should be the way forward.
>
> **Conclusion:**
> What needs to be done to resolve the conflict and in what way India should absorb the possible repercussions.

Introduction:

- The United States was all set to carry out military strikes against Iran recently. The United States and Iran have a long history of tensions, but the latest escalation started when American officials blamed Iran for attacking two oil tankers on June 13 in or near the Strait of Hormuz.
- The roots of the latest Iran-US crisis go back to 2018, when US President Donald Trump walked away from the Iranian nuclear deal, one of the signature achievements of his predecessor Barack Obama, and reimposed harsh sanctions on the country.

 Body:

Brief history of US-Iran Relations:

- United States and Iran established diplomatic relations in 1883.
- US-Iran wasn't very complex before World War II, but it soon turned chaotic when the US's CIA helped stage a coup to overthrow Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadek in 1953. CIA activities like bribing newspaper editors to spread fake news, hiring anti-social elements to fuel unrest in the Iran created a chaotic condition in the Iran.
- Later after several years the US offered Iran a nuclear reactor and weapons-grade nuclear fuel in 1967
- During a revolution in Iran, the government backed by CIA was overthrown and the U.S. embassy in Tehran is overtaken and staff were held hostage for more than a year leading to diplomatic crisis between the two countries.
- US President Jimmy Carter ordered to cut off diplomatic ties with Iran and authorizes a rescue mission to get the American hostages out in 1980. But the mission failed and eight U.S. service members were killed during the operation.
- But Iran releases the hostages minutes after Ronald Reagan's inauguration in 1981

- US President Reagan, in his second term, admits to a secret arms deal with Iran. It became a huge scandal known as "The Iran Contra affair." (1983)
- Once again, the diplomatic crisis erupted in 1988, When a US Navy ship was shot down an Iranian passenger plane, killing 290 people who were onboard.
- With complete diplomatic closure existed between the two countries over the next 15 years.
- US President George W. Bush names Iran as part of an "Axis of Evil" along with North Korea and Iraq in 2012. But, US President George W. Bush pushes for talks with Iran regarding nuclear deal.
- The deal never moves forwards as the new US President Barack Obama falls silent and stays away from the negotiation.
- Obama government enforces a new law that put the squeeze on Iran in financial sector. Lots of countries followed, US to cut back on buying Iranian oil. Iranian economy takes a big hit. The following year, Hassan Rouhani was elected president in Iran.
- The **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action**, commonly known as the **Iran deal**, was signed on July 14, 2015 between Iran, the U.S., China, France, Russia, the U.K., Germany and the European Union. It was considered a landmark deal which would eventually bring peace and harmony to the turmoil-stricken Middle East.
- However, President Donald Trump recently decided to unilaterally pull the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal and to re-imposing nuclear sanctions against Iran as he claims latter is supporting militant groups in the gulf.

Implications for India:

- **Oil and Gas:**
  - The impact on world oil prices will be the immediately visible impact of the U.S. decision.
  - Iran is presently India's third biggest supplier (after Iraq and Saudi Arabia), and any increase in prices will hit both inflation levels as well as the Indian rupee.
  - The negotiations on the **Farzad-B gas field** remain stuck, with both sides blaming the other for shifting the goalposts. It was remained on paper because of Iranian unhappiness over India's stand in the IAEA.
- **Chahbahar port:**
  - India's moves over the last few years to develop berths at the Shahid Beheshti port in Chahbahar was a key part of its plans to circumvent Pakistan's blocks on trade with Afghanistan.
  - India has already committed about $85 million to Chabahar development with plans for a total of $500 million on the port, while a railway line to Afghanistan could cost as much as $1.6 billion.
- **INSTC:**
  - Beyond Chahbahar, India has been a founder of the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) since it was ratified in 2002.
  - It starts from Iran and aims to cut right across Central Asia to Russia over a 7,200-km multi-mode network, cutting down transportation and time taken by trade by about 30%.
  - New U.S. sanctions will affect these plans immediately, especially if any of the countries along the route or banking and insurance companies dealing with the INSTC plan also decide to adhere to U.S. restrictions on trade with Iran.
- **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation:**
  - India joined the SCO along with Pakistan last year, and both were formally admitted in June 2018, when Prime Minister travelled to the Chinese city of Qingdao for the SCO summit.
  - Chinese officials say they will consider inducting Iran into the 8-member Eurasian security organisation.
  - If the proposal is accepted by the SCO, which is led by China and Russia, India will become a member of a bloc that will be seen as anti-American, and will run counter to some of the government's other initiatives like the Indo-Pacific quadrilateral with the U.S., Australia and Japan.
  - The move may also rile other adversaries of Iran, like Saudi Arabia, UAE and Israel, with whom the government has strengthened ties in an effort to balance its West Asia policy.
- **Rules-based order:**
  - India has long been a proponent of a "rules-based order" that depends on multilateral consensus and an adherence to commitments made by countries on the international stage.
  - By walking out of the JCPOA, the U.S. government has overturned the precept that such international agreements are made by "States" not just with prevailing governments or regimes.

Way forward for India:
- Allowing Indian investment in rupees and initiating new banking channels to go ahead with oil trade.
- The near-term developments in its neighbourhood are a priority for Tehran even as India tries to find a balance with his stated preference to develop closer ties with both the U.S. and Israel.
- India and Iran are looking to swiftly conclude a preferential trade agreement and a bilateral investment treaty.
- Newly relaxed visa norms announced by Iran in addition to India's proposal for Indian businesses to invest in rupees in Iran are all moves in the right direction.
- Nonetheless, they may be insufficient to cement commercial ties if USA sanctions do return.
- India should give its full support for the effective implementation of the JCPOA. Only successful implementation of the JCPOA over a period of time can create the political space for additional negotiations.
- Both the nations can take leverage of their historical and civilisational relations to steer ties so much. The visit proved to be a much-needed reality check to the India-Iran partnership.

Conclusion:
- The U.S. and Iran differ on many issues not just on foreign affairs, but internal functioning of the government. But the US has the upper hand by sticking with the complex relationship due to its federal structure and economic power.
- But US cannot change Iran, and Iran cannot defeat US in the Middle East. So, both the countries should join the hands together which affect both, including the Islamic State.

Q) "The confrontation between the U.S. and Iran in West Asia could snowball with damaging economic consequences". Comment. (250 words)

The hindu

Why this question:

Iran recently announced that it would begin enriching uranium above a concentration of 3.67% permitted under the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA); the steps come in the wake of increasing tensions between the U.S. and Iran following the shooting down of an unmanned U.S. drone over the Strait of Hormuz in June.

Demand of the question:

The answer must evaluate in what way the increasing tensions between the two countries may lead to damaging economic consequences.

Directive word:

Comment– here we have to express our knowledge and understanding of the issue and form an overall opinion thereupon.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction

Draw a sketch of the background of the ongoing conflict between Iran and the US.

Body

The answer should discuss the following facets:
- What is the Iran Nuclear deal about? Why did Iran agree to the deal? Why has US pulled out of the deal?
- What are the implications of US sanctions on Iran?
- Global Implications of the ongoing conflict in the economic domain.
- Discuss specific impact it would have on India.

Conclusion

Conclude with need for urgent resolution of the conflict for the global good.

Introduction:
- The **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action**, commonly known as the **Iran deal**, was signed on July 14, 2015 between Iran, the U.S., China, France, Russia, the U.K., Germany and the European Union.
- It was considered a landmark deal which would eventually bring peace and harmony to the turmoil-stricken Middle East.
- However, President Donald Trump recently decided to unilaterally pull the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal and to re-imposing nuclear sanctions against that country.

Body:
Details of the deal:
- Under this deal, Iran agreed not to build any more heavy water facilities, eliminate its stockpile or medium-enriched uranium, cut its stockpile of low-enriched uranium, and reduce the number of its gas centrifuges.
- Other nuclear facilities in Iran would have to be converted into non-nuclear facilities.
- In return, Iran will recover assets worth $100 billion frozen in overseas banks, and sanctions on the country by the U.S., the U.N. and the E.U. will be lifted.

Impact on geopolitics of world:
- The United States pulling out does create more than a few uncertainties for regional security, for non-proliferation, and for American credibility more generally.
- Undermining it despite no clear evidence of Iranian violations could hasten an arms race or outright regional conflict.
- The JCPOA is a model for what diplomacy can accomplish its inspections and verification regime is precisely what the United States should be working to put in place with North Korea.
- Indeed, at a time when world is rooting for diplomacy with North Korea to succeed, walking away from the JCPOA risks losing a deal that accomplishes with Iran the very outcome that world is pursuing with the North Koreans.
- Keeping the deal's constraints on Iran's nuclear program will also help counter Tehran's aggressive regional behaviour.
- A number of French firms have signed billion dollar agreements with Iran since the nuclear accord was signed in 2015.
- Aside from Airbus, they include French oil giant Total and the car makers Renault and Peugeot. Companies would have to wind up investments by November or face US sanctions.

Implications for India:
- **Oil and Gas:**
  - The impact on world oil prices will be the immediately visible impact of the U.S. decision.
  - Iran is presently India's third biggest supplier (after Iraq and Saudi Arabia), and any increase in prices will hit both inflation levels as well as the Indian rupee.
  - The negotiations on the **Farzad-B gas field** remain stuck, with both sides blaming the other for shifting the goalposts. It was remained on paper because of Iranian unhappiness over India's stand in the IAEA.
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  - It starts from Iran and aims to cut right across Central Asia to Russia over a 7,200-km multi-mode network, cutting down transportation and time taken by trade by about 30%.
  - New U.S. sanctions will affect these plans immediately, especially if any of the countries along the route or banking and insurance companies dealing with the INSTC plan also decide to adhere to U.S. restrictions on trade with Iran.
- **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation:**
  - India joined the SCO along with Pakistan last year, and both were formally admitted in June 2018, when Prime Minister travelled to the Chinese city of Qingdao for the SCO summit.
  - Chinese officials say they will consider inducting Iran into the 8-member Eurasian security organisation.
  - If the proposal is accepted by the SCO, which is led by China and Russia, India will become a member of a bloc that will be seen as anti-American, and will run counter to some of the government's other initiatives like the Indo-Pacific quadrilateral with the U.S., Australia and Japan.
  - The move may also rile other adversaries of Iran, like Saudi Arabia, UAE and Israel, with whom the government has strengthened ties in an effort to balance its West Asia policy.

- **Rules-based order:**
  - o India has long been a proponent of a "rules-based order" that depends on multilateral consensus and an adherence to commitments made by countries on the international stage.
  - o By walking out of the JCPOA, the U.S. government has overturned the precept that such international agreements are made by "States" not just with prevailing governments or regimes.

Way forward for India:
- Allowing Indian investment in rupees and initiating new banking channels to go ahead with oil trade.
- The near-term developments in its neighbourhood are a priority for Tehran even as India tries to find a balance with his stated preference to develop closer ties with both the U.S. and Israel.
- India and Iran are looking to swiftly conclude a preferential trade agreement and a bilateral investment treaty.
- Newly relaxed visa norms announced by Iran in addition to India's proposal for Indian businesses to invest in rupees in Iran are all moves in the right direction.
- Nonetheless, they may be insufficient to cement commercial ties if USA sanctions do return.
- India should give its full support for the effective implementation of the JCPOA. Only successful implementation of the JCPOA over a period of time can create the political space for additional negotiations.
- Both the nations can take leverage of their historical and civilizational relations to steer ties so much. The visit proved to be a much-needed reality check to the India-Iran partnership.

Q) In a climate of uncertainty and open hostility between nations, the Geneva Conventions play an important role in tempering the aggression of war with a touch of compassion. Discuss. (250 words)

Hindustantimes

Why this question:
The article discusses the significance of Geneva convention in providing for compassion to the individual soldiers who deserve better treatment at the hands of opposition powers.

Demand of the question:
The article must provide for significance of Geneva convention.

Directive word:
Discuss – This is an all-encompassing directive – you have to debate on paper by going through the details of the issues concerned by examining each one of them. You have to give reasons for both for and against arguments.

Structure of the answer:
Introduction
In general, discuss the relevance of the convention.

Body
The question is straightforward and there isn't much to deliberate, students must take hints from the article and discuss how Geneva convention is a step in the right direction that ensures compassion to the prisoners of war, to individual soldiers.

Conclusion
Conclude by reasserting importance.

Introduction:
- The Geneva Conventions is a body of Public International Law, also known as the Humanitarian Law of Armed Conflicts, whose purpose is **to provide minimum protections, standards of humane treatment, and fundamental guarantees of respect to individuals who become victims of armed conflicts.**

Body:
The provisions for Prisoners of War:
- The convention is very exhaustive and deals with every kind of situation that may arise for a captive and captor, including the place of internment, religious needs, recreation, financial resources, the kinds of work that captors can make PoWs do, the treatment of captured officers, and the repatriation of prisoners.
- Any unlawful act or omission by the Detaining Power causing death or seriously endangering the health of a prisoner of war in its custody is prohibited and will be regarded as a serious breach of the present Convention.
- In particular, no prisoner of war may be subjected to physical mutilation or to medical or scientific experiments of any kind which are not justified by the medical, dental or hospital treatment of the prisoner concerned and carried out in his interest.

- Likewise, prisoners of war must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity.

Importance of Geneva Conventions in today's world of uncertainty:

- The Geneva Convention reminds us to look at the individual even in spaces such as war between nations.
- The agreement set down the rules for the treatment of prisoners taken in a war situation, explicitly putting down that prisoners of war (POWs) would be prisoners of the Power which holds them, and not of the unit that had captured them; and that they must be treated with honour, and allowed to live in humane conditions.
- The protocol also established that prisoners of war need only truthfully give their names and ranks, and that they cannot be coerced to reveal other details about themselves or the operations they have been involved in.
- All these caveats are to establish the individual as the linchpin of humanity.
- The Geneva Conventions that originally only addressed the treatment of combatants was later expanded to include non-combatants and civilians as well.

GENEVA CONVENTIONS OF 12 AUGUST 1949

Geneva Convention I Improving the conditions of the sick and wounded, members of the armed forces in the field	**Geneva Convention II** Improving the conditions of shipwrecked sailors, members of armed forces at sea
Geneva Convention III Treatment of prisoners of war (POW)	**Geneva Convention IV** Protection of civilians in time of war

Conclusion:

- How one treats those who stand in opposition to that which we hold dear — be it our country, a cause, or a faith — will always be an important defining characteristic of a nation, a people, and even individuals.
- In a world where the treatments of immigrants and refugees is one of the bigger problems we all face, it is a good time to remember that we are honour-bound to extend compassion and dignity to everyone — even those we may be ready to kill.

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

Q) Do you think the recent G20 summits have turned into talking shops rather than getting down to brass tacks ? Critically analyse.   (250 words)

Livemint

Why this question:

World leaders from 19 countries and the European Union met recently in Osaka, Japan for latest edition of G20 summit.

Key demand of the question:

The answer requires one to analyse the possible inconclusiveness of the G20 summits off late and evaluation of the causes behind it. One should also suggest as to what needs to be done.

Directive:

Critically analyze – When asked to analyze, you have to examine methodically the structure or nature of the topic by separating it into component parts and present them as a whole in a summary. When 'critically' is suffixed or prefixed to a directive, one needs to look at the good and bad of the topic and give a fair judgement.

Structure of the answer:

Introduction:

Begin by explaining what is G20, quote some facts like – annual meeting of leaders from the countries with the largest and fastest-growing economies. Its members account for 85% of the world's GDP, and two-thirds of its population.

Body:

Discussion should include the following:

- Discuss the key features of G20, its establishment.
- Role played by it in ensuring world economy on right track.
- What have been the issues facing it off late?
- What needs to be done to resolve the current concerns/issues.

Conclusion:
Conclude by reasserting its significance and need for a revamp in its functioning to ensure crisis free world economy.

Introduction:
- The G20 is an annual meeting of leaders from the countries with the largest and fastest-growing economies. Its members account for 85% of the world's GDP, and two-thirds of its population.
- The G20 Summit is formally known as the "Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy". Recently the 11th G20 Summit was held in Osaka, Japan on 28th-29th June, 2019.

Body:
- After the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997-1998, it was acknowledged that the participation of major emerging market countries is needed on discussions on the international financial system, and G7 finance ministers agreed to establish the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting in 1999.

Its relevance in changing times:
- As globalization progresses and various issues become more intricately intertwined, the recent G20 summits have focused not only on macro-economy and trade, but also on a wide range of global issues which have an immense impact on the global economy, such as development, climate change and energy, health, counter-terrorism, as well as migration and refugees.
- The G20 has sought to realize an inclusive and sustainable world through its contributions towards resolving these global issues.
- The increased participation of emerging countries in global issues,
- the reform of international financial institutions,
- the monitoring of national financial institutions,
- The improvement in the regulations of the economies whose problems led to the crisis and the creation of safety nets to prevent problems in the future.
- The G20 also specifically helped to provide emergency funds during the 2008 crisis and plays an important role in financing for development.

The relevance of the G20 has been questioned for some time now. The reasons for the same are:
- The G20 has merely meandered around important challenges to the world economy, doing precious little about it. Consequently, in the past few years, there has been persistent criticism of the G20. Many regard it as one more place to talk shop and photo-op.
- The G20 summit faces the risk of being reduced to a G2 event. Bilateral meetings are more prominent.
- The international media, at any rate, seems to have very little interest in the summit's official agenda – future of work, infrastructure for development and sustainable food future – and remain focused largely on the bilateral talks like USA-China in the garb of trade wars.
- The irony is that the single most important challenge to global economic stability today is being posed in an area that the G20 refused to include in its initial agenda at the time of its formation in 2008-09, namely, international trade.
- While the director-general of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is an invitee to the G20, multilateral trade was consciously kept outside the G20's ambit so that the G7 could continue to manipulate the WTO agenda.
- Yet, when faced with the current challenge to global growth from the unilateral trade policy actions of the US, the G20 will together talk only about long-term issues like the future of work, infrastructure and food, while immediate trade-related issues arising from US unilateralism will only be discussed in bilateral on the sidelines.

Conclusion:
- The G20 is small enough to allow concrete face-to-face discussions that adapt to the new challenges of the international agenda and is large enough to represent the vast majority of world economic production.
- In the medium term, there has to be a revival of multilateralism in trade and the G20 must be the forum that ensures this.
- Trade must get on to the G20 agenda. Above all, the G20 must focus on building a roadmap for mutual understanding that promotes development and cooperation among all the members.

Q) The health emergency declared by WHO can counter the risk of a global spread. Analyze. (250 words)

The hindu
Indianexpress

Introduction:
- Ebola virus disease (EVD), formerly known as Ebola haemorrhagic fever, is a severe, often fatal illness in humans.
- The World Health Organization has declared the Ebola virus disease outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. More than 1,600 people have died since August in the second-worst outbreak of the disease in history.

Body:
- Public health emergency of international concern is defined as an "extraordinary event that is determined to constitute a public health risk to other States through the international spread of disease and to potentially require a coordinated international response."
- The public emergency announcement is the highest level of alarm that is only raised during the gravest of outbreaks.

Challenges in interrupting the virus transmission cycle and containing the spread
- Funding issues
- Lack of vaccines
- Reluctance in the community
- Attacks on health workers
- Delays in case-detection and isolation
- Challenges in contact-tracing.

Importance of declaration:
- This is the fifth time in history that WHO has declared a public health emergency. The previous declarations were for the devastating Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014-2016 that took lives of more than 11000 people, spread of Zika virus in Latin America, 2009 Swine flu epidemic and for polio in 2014.
- WHO only declares a disease or outbreak a global emergency when it threatens to affect other countries and requires a coordinated international response.
- The declaration of a global health emergency will bring larger international focus on the alarming issue.
- It will also help bring in more financial and technical support.
- At the same time, the declaration can cause governments of neighbouring nations to panic and overreact by shutting down borders.

Conclusion:
- Compared with the situation during 2014-2016, the availability of a candidate vaccine has greatly helped.
- Though the vaccine has not been licensed in any country, the ring vaccination strategy where people who come into contact with infected people, as well as the contacts of those contacts are immunised, has helped

Q) What is the International Court of Justice? Discuss its Role and Activities? Trace India's relationship with ICJ post independence.   (250 words)

Reference

Introduction:
- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial body of the UN. Established in 1946 to replace the Permanent Court of International Justice, the ICJ mainly operates under the statute of its predecessor, which is included in the UN Charter.
- It has two primary functions: **to settle legal disputes submitted by States in accordance with established international laws**, and **to act as an advisory board on issues submitted to it by authorized international organizations.**

Body:

Roles and activities:
- ICJ acts as a World Court and is the principal legal organ body of the UN. The court's jurisdiction is two-fold:

Contentious Cases
- ICJ, in accordance with International Law, settles the disputes of legal nature that are submitted to it by states.
- Only states may apply to and appear before the ICJ. International Organizations, other authorities, and private individuals are not entitled to institute proceedings before the court.
- Article 35 defines the conditions under which States may access the Court. It states that court is open to the state parties to the Statute, and is intended to regulate access to the Court by the states which are not parties to the Statute.

- The Court can only deal with a dispute when the States concerned have recognized its jurisdiction.

Advisory Opinions

- Advisory Procedure is available to five UN Organs, fifteen Specialized Agencies, and one Related Organization.
- Advisory Proceedings begin with the filing of a written request for an advisory opinion addressed to the Registrar by the UN Secretary-General or the Director or Secretary General of the Entity requesting the opinion.
- In urgent cases, the Court may take all appropriate measures to speed up the proceedings. It is even empowered to hold written and oral proceedings.
- Despite having no-binding force, the Court's advisory opinions nevertheless, carry great legal weight and moral authority and thus help in the development and clarification of International Laws.

India's relationship with ICJ:

India has remained involved in cases at ICJ on six occasions, including the present Jadhav case. Pakistan was the opposing party in the four out of six cases.

- In 1955, Portugal claimed the right of passage through the territory of India to ensure communications between its territory of Daman and its enclave territories of Dadra and Nagar-Haveli.
- India contended that the events that took place in Dadra on 21st & 22nd July 1954 overthrew Portuguese authority in these enclaves creating tension in the surrounding Indian Territory.
  - o Verdict: The ICJ did not find fault with India and ruled that India has not acted contrary to its obligations.
- In 1971, India said that the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) had no jurisdiction on a complaint filed by Pakistan.
  - o Verdict: ICJ held that ICAO is indeed competent to entertain the complaint made to it by Pakistan.
- In 1973, Pakistan sought proceedings against India on the charges of genocide against 195 Pakistani nationals, prisoners of war or civilian internees in the Indian custody.
- The case ended after both India and Pakistan governments held discussions and came to an agreement on the issue.
- In 1999, Pakistan entered into a dispute on the destruction of a Pakistani aircraft by India in 1999. Pakistan said that the ICJ had jurisdiction in this issue.
  - o Verdict: ICJ concluded that it had no jurisdiction to entertain the application filed by Pakistan.
- In 2014, The Republic of the Marshall Islands instituted proceedings against all nuclear weapon states, including India, contending breach of customary law obligations on nuclear disarmament.
- India said that the ICJ had no jurisdiction in the case.
  - o Verdict: ICJ accepted that it cannot proceed to the merits of the case because of lack of jurisdiction.
- In 2017, India filed a case on illegal detention of former Indian Navy Officer Kulbhushan Jadhav by Pakistan. The case is in progress at ICJ.
  - o Verdict: ICJ has directed Pakistan to review conviction order of Kulbhushan Jadhav and India should be granted consular access to the Navy officer as per **Article 36 of Vienna Convention of Consular Relations, 1963** and Pakistan should recon

Conclusion:

- The International Court of Justice is endowed with both a privileged institutional status and procedural instruments whose potential is frequently underestimated.
- The Court's contribution to the institutional law of the United Nations was threefold. Its jurisprudence had helped to consolidate the Organization's role and place in the international legal order by clarifying its legal status as an international organization and the scope of powers with which it was entrusted.
- Its decisions had also shed light, within the institution itself, on the functioning and responsibilities of the Organization's principal organs and on those functions' limits.