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The Right to Information Act is not all about citizens' empowerment alone, it essentially redefines the concept of accountability." Discuss. ( UPSC CSE 2018 MAINS, GENERAL STUDIES IV )

The RTI Act is powerful tool that strengthens democracy and promotes good governance by promote transparency and accountability in administration. It empowers Indian citizens to seek information from a public authority, thus making the Government and its functionaries more accountable and responsible enhancing the citizen's ability to participate in the process.

In recent times, RTI has redefined the concept of accountability in following ways:

- Administrators are not only accountable for their routine work but they are accountable to provide information sought by citizens in time bound manner. The Act provides for penalty on the Public Information Officer, in case he fails to provide information.
- Further, RTI law provides for proactive disclosures for information by government agencies in public interest.

These strict provisions for ensuring dissemination of information have clearly enhanced and redefined accountability of government agencies. Until this Act, the Official Secrets Act, a legacy of the British colonial rule, led to secrecy and opaqueness in administration and was designed to deny information about government activities to the people. The RTI Act on the contrary laid the responsibility of information dissemination on bureaucracy itself.

In doing so, the Right to Information Act not only empowers citizens but also redefines the concept of accountability of public administration.

### Discuss the dimensions of India-Armenia relations

Armenia and India celebrated 30 years of bilateral diplomatic relations in 2022.

#### Historical Ties

- Armenia and India **maintain active political ties**. Effective cooperation exists between the two nations within international bodies.
- After Armenia's independence in 1991, **Armenian-Indian relations were reestablished**.
- Diplomatic relations were established between the Republic of Armenia and India in 1992.
- In 1999, the Indian Embassy in Yerevan began operations.
- If the Armenian-Indian political relations can be evaluated as "excellent", **Armenia is the only Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) country with which India had diplomatic relations in 1995 (other than Russia)**.
  - The CIS was founded in 1991 **after the dissolution of the Soviet Union**.
  - At present the CIS unites: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine.
- India and Armenia signed a **Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation in 1995**.

- But the trade and economic cooperation between the two countries cannot be deemed adequate.

#### Areas of Cooperation

- **Defence Relations:**

- Armenia had already shown interest in Indian military hardware before the 2020 war.
- In 2020, Armenia signed a USD 40 million arms deal with India for the supply of four SWATHI radars to detect the location of weapons.
- In October 2022, India signed an agreement with Armenia to export missiles, rockets & ammunition.
  - The missiles will also include Indigenous **Pinaka Multi-Barrel Rocket**
  - India may also export its **Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM)** to Armenia.
- **Supply Chain and Economy:**
  - In the contest over global supply chains, **Armenia provides a potential outpost for New Delhi in the Eurasian corridor** which extends from the **Persian Gulf** to Russia and Europe.
  - Armenia can also **prove a worthy developmental partner to India in domains such as agriculture**, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, and technology.
  - The collaboration can provide an outstanding substitute for the debt-fuelled Chinese **Belt and Road Initiative**
- Finally, it goes without saying that **Armenia growing purchases of Indian defence hardware would provide an impetus** to both public and private sector defence manufacturing in India.

#### Significance of Armenia for India

- **Countering Pan-Turkism:**

- **Turkey's imperial ambition of establishing a pan-Turkic empire**, administered from Ankara, is identifiable in the present-day Caucasus and other parts of Eurasia.
- **The racist doctrine envisions an empire comprising all nations and regions that speak a Turkic-type language**, disregarding the extent of difference between those languages and that spoken in Turkey as well as the approval of the regions' respective populaces.
- With recent exports of military hardware to Armenia, **New Delhi has openly positioned itself on Armenian side in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict** and has therefore chosen to counter Azerbaijan and its supporters including Turkey and Pakistan as well as Ankara's expansionist pan-Turkic ambitions.

- **Geo-Strategic Benefits:**

- As an ally of Azerbaijan, **Pakistan has been supplying men and military hardware to assist the former** in its conflicts.
- Azerbaijan has **returned the favour by offering geopolitical, geoeconomic, and geostrategic benefits** to its partners in Islamabad.



- **Azerbaijan's success in Armenia would significantly energize Pakistan**, with perilous consequences.
- The purpose of seizing Armenian territory forcibly is to gain unhindered access to Turkey, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, and the entire Turkic-oriented axis of nations, up to China.
  - Munitions and military hardware could utilise this route to arrive at the doorstep of Kashmir.
- To prevent this, **New Delhi can utilize its military skills and capabilities to assist Armenia** in securing itself against Azerbaijan's energy-funded superior military strength.
- **Economic Cooperation:**
  - Armenia can play an important role in the **Indian-backed International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** and the Iranian-backed **Black Sea-Persian Gulf Transport Corridor**.

#### Looking ahead

- Armenian-Indian cooperation **can become an integral part of broader contacts for Armenia with developed democracies**. For these ends, **high-quality and subtle diplomacy is imperative**.
- The structure of international relations are also changing, creating both potential threats and opportunities.
- In these shifting global relations, Armenia requires a deep diversification of foreign relations.
- The countries of the Global West may become the most auspicious directions.
- By sharing common values, **Armenia and the Community of States will be able to work closely together**.
  - It is the exact area of cooperation that will ensure the active implementation of the modernization theory, institutionalization, and, possibly, strengthen national defense.

Why indentured labour was taken by the British from India to their colonies? Have they been able to preserve their cultural identity over there?. ( UPSC CSE 2018 MAINS, GENERAL STUDIES I )

Indentured labour was a bonded labour under contract to work for an employer for a specific amount of time, to pay off his passage to a new country. It was instituted following the abolition of slavery throughout British Empire in 1833 as newly free men and women refused to work for low wages on sugar, tea plantations and rail construction projects in British colonies of West Indies, Fiji, Mauritius and Ceylon. Indians were recruited and transported to many labour-importing colonies of Africa and Asia.

#### **Reasons for indentured labour being taken by the British to their colonies:**

- **Industrial Demand:** The industrialisation of Britain followed by the other European countries accelerated the flow of trade, labour and capital across the

world. The growing urbanism in Europe especially in Britain increased the demand for food and agricultural goods since most of the labour force was consumed by the factories and firms. Colonies in Africa and Asia became the lucrative destinations for investing in agricultural and raw commodities.

- **End of slavery:** This provided for the immediate background for the Indentured labour system all over the world. British needed the labour to work in the plantation fields of African colonies. Hundreds of thousands of Indian and Chinese labourers went to work on plantations, in mines, and in road and railway construction projects around the world.
- **African worker reluctance:** The natives of African countries were self sufficient and completely relying on cattle farming. They were reluctant to work in the British factories and farms, so Indians became the obvious choice. The main destinations of Indian indentured migrants were the Caribbean islands (mainly Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam), Mauritius and Fiji. Closer to home, Tamil migrants went to Ceylon and Malaya. Indentured workers were also recruited for tea plantations in Assam.
- **Availability of labour:** Most Indian indentured workers came from the present-day regions of eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, central India and the dry districts of Tamil Nadu. In the mid-nineteenth century these regions experienced many changes – cottage industries declined, land rents rose, lands were cleared for mines and plantations. All this affected the lives of the poor. They failed to pay their rents, became deeply indebted and were forced to migrate in search of work.
- **Escape from poverty:** Many migrants agreed to take up work hoping to escape poverty or oppression in their home villages. Agents also tempted the prospective migrants by providing false information about final destinations, modes of travel, the nature of the work, and living and working conditions. Often migrants were not even told that they were to embark on a long sea voyage. Sometimes agents even forcibly abducted less willing migrants. Nineteenth-century indenture has been described as a 'new system of slavery'.
- **Indian labour suitability:** Indian workers were perceived as being quiet, docile and industrious by colonists and suitable for working in many plantation and construction works in different colonies of Britain. The recruitment and arrival were done by private parties initially later British government regulated the recruitment of indentured labour.

#### **Have they been able to preserve their cultural identities?**

- Many of the indentured labourers did not return to their native countries and settled back in the colonies. They came to these colonies with hope and expectations. On arrival at the plantations, labourers found conditions to be different from what they had imagined. Living and working conditions were harsh, and there were few legal rights. But workers discovered their own ways of surviving.
- Many of them escaped into the wilds, though if caught they faced severe punishment. Others developed new forms of individual and collective self-expression, blending different cultural forms, old and new.
- In Trinidad the annual Muharram procession was transformed into a riotous carnival called 'Hosay' (for Imam Hussain) in which workers of all races and religions joined.

- The protest religion of Rastafarianism (made famous by the Jamaican reggae star Bob Marley) is also said to reflect social and cultural links with Indian migrants to the Caribbean.
- 'Chutney music', popular in Trinidad and Guyana, is another creative contemporary expression of the post-indenture experience.

These forms of cultural fusion are part of the making of the global world, where things from different places get mixed, lose their original characteristics and become something entirely new. Most indentured workers stayed on after their contracts ended, or returned to their new homes after a short spell in India. Consequently, there are large communities of people of Indian descent in these countries. For example V.S Naipaul, Noble Prize winner writer had Indian roots. At the same time many of those who stayed back in the colonies elevated to highest positions after the process of decolonisation.

By embarking on a circular economy transformation, India could create direct economic benefits for businesses and citizens while reducing negative externalities. Explain.

- In recent years, the concept of **Circular Economy (CE)** has gained increasing attention as a way to **address a range of environmental and economic challenges**. With the growing recognition of the **finite nature of many resources** and the **negative impacts of waste and pollution**, the circular economy offers a more **sustainable and resilient alternative to the traditional linear model of economic growth**.
- Governments, businesses, and other organizations around the world are increasingly **exploring ways to adopt circular practices** and transition to a more circular economy. The **COP27** meet also brought to fore the **circular economy's relevance in mitigating carbon emissions for India** by ensuring responsible consumption and **sustainable resource management**.

#### Circular Economy

- A Circular Economy is the one **where products are designed for durability, reuse and recyclability** and thus **almost everything gets reused, remanufactured, and recycled** into a raw material or used as a source of energy.
- It includes **6 R's - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Refurbishment, Recover, and Repairing of materials**.
- **Need for Circular Economy:**
  - CE focuses on **minimising waste while maximising utilisation** and calls for a production model aiming to retain the most value to create a system that **promotes sustainability, longevity, reuse, and recycling**.
  - Though India has always had a culture of recycle and reuse, its **rapid economic growth, growing population**, impact of climate change and rising environmental pollution, the adoption of a circular economy is more imperative now.
  - CE can lead to the **emergence of more sustainable production and consumption patterns**, thus providing opportunities for developed and developing countries to achieve economic growth and **inclusive and**



**sustainable industrial development (ISID) in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

- **Global Response to Circular Economy:**
  - **Germany and Japan have used it as a binding principle** for reorganising its economy, whereas **China even has a law on it** (Circular Economy Promotion Law).
- **India's Initiatives to Promote Circular Economy:**
  - The **2022-23 Budget** recognised the importance of sustainable growth and in sync with a circular economy, the government formulated:
    - **Battery Waste Management Rules 2022**
    - **Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules 2022**
    - **e-Waste Management Rules 2022**
    - These rules **set out target waste disposal standards** for manufacturers, producers, importers, and bulk consumers, along with enabling transactions among stakeholders for **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) certificates**.
  - Action plans were also formulated across 10 sectors including **e-waste, lithium-ion batteries, end-of-life vehicles, scrap metal, municipal solid waste**, etc. emphasising the importance of **reusing secondary materials**.

#### Roadblocks to Achieve Circular Economy

- **Unclear Vision for CE:** Despite the Government's policy efforts the progress has been underwhelming; one of the major challenges is the **lack of a clear vision towards the end-goal of India's circular economy mission and gaps in actual implementation of the policies**.
  - Also, the **efforts for promoting CE are made at the very end of value chains**, resulting in sub-optimal economic and environmental outcomes.
- **Reluctance of Industries:** The Industries are reluctant in adopting the circular economy model **due to supply chain limitations, lack of incentives** to invest, **complex recycling processes** and **lack of information to support participation** in reusing/ recycling/re-manufacturing processes.
- **Lack of Awareness and Understanding:** Many **people in India are not aware of the concept** of a circular economy and its benefits making it **difficult to gain support** for implementing circular economy initiatives.
- **Infrastructure Challenges:** India's infrastructure is **not well-suited to support a circular economy**. For example, there is a **lack of recycling facilities**, which makes it difficult to recycle and reuse materials.
- **Cultural Challenges:** There is a **cultural resistance to the idea of reusing and recycling products** in India making it **difficult to change consumer behaviour** and shift towards a circular economy.

#### How to Promote Circular Economy?

- **Statutory Reforms:** The challenges mentioned above may be overcome through **legislative mandates for the procurement of recycled/ secondary raw materials** in the initial stages of the production cycle, **developing a unified legislation** addressing the circular economy from a regulatory perspective.

- A streamlined framework on **circular economy reporting, clarifying the mechanism surrounding trading** of EPR certificates and **providing fiscal incentives to businesses** to complete the supply chain will also help.
- **Syncing Laws with Implementation Strategies:** The government's initiatives need to be in **conjunction with implementable actions with industry collaboration** to reap the benefits of the circular economy.
  - A combination of the government's current efforts along with **relevant implementation strategies** will instil a sense of confidence in businesses to adopt the circular model of production.
- **R&D Investments:** The **renewable energy industry should invest in the research and development** of recycling technologies. Investments in R&D could **help discover new ways of recycling** that result in **higher efficiency** and a **less environmentally damaging footprint**.
  - **Industries should also explore technology transfers** with global recycling firms for establishing domestic waste recycling facilities.
- **Technology Driven Recycling:** Government should **encourage R&D in the field of waste recycling** at University and School levels to **promote active participation of masses** in technology enhancement in the field of waste management.
  - Also, **composting centres can be established** in cities to reuse organic waste, which will enhance soil carbon content and **eliminate the need for chemical fertilisers**.

India has a great scope and potential in manufacturing, given its demographic dividend and reasonably cheap labour. However, there are certain grey areas that need to be addressed. Examine.

- **India's manufacturing sector is a key contributor to the country's economic growth.** It accounts for about 15% of **India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** and employs around 12% of the country's workforce. The sector is diverse and includes a range of industries such as **textiles, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, and consumer durables**.
- In recent years, the Indian government has implemented a number of initiatives to boost the manufacturing sector, including the **"Make in India" campaign**, which aims to increase the share of **manufacturing in the country's GDP** and promote the growth of domestic manufacturing. The government has also set up a number of **special economic zones (SEZs)** to attract foreign investment in the sector.
- Despite these efforts, the **manufacturing sector in India has faced a number of challenges, including a lack of infrastructure, a shortage of skilled labor, and difficulties in obtaining credit.** In addition, the sector has been hit by a slowdown in global demand and increased competition from countries such as China.

- However, this offers opportunities for growth in the sector, and through sustainable reforms it is expected to continue to play a key role in the **development of the Indian economy.**

#### Drivers of the Manufacturing Sector in India

- **Increased Investment:**In Budget 2022-23, the government allocated **Rs. 2,403 crore** (US\$ 315 million) for **Promotion of Electronics and IT Hardware Manufacturing** and Rs. 757 crore (US\$ 104.25 million) for **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicle in India (FAME - India)** in Budget 2021-22.
- **Competitiveness:**India has all the necessary ingredients for its major industrial push - a **huge semi-skilled labour force**, multiple Government initiatives like **Make in India**, high investments and a big domestic market.
  - Government incentives like **free land to set up base and 24\*7 power supply is making India competitive** on a global scale.
- **Robust Demand:**By 2030, Indian **middle class is expected to have the second largest share in global consumption at 17%**. The appliances and consumer electronics (ACE) market in India is expected to grow to **USD 21 billion by 2025 from USD 11 billion in 2019.**
- **Potential to Become a Global Hub:** **India's manufacturing industry** is already moving in the **direction of industry 4.0** where everything will be connected, and every data point will be analyzed.
  - Indian companies are at the **forefront of R&D** and have already become global leaders in areas such as pharmaceuticals and textiles.
  - **Areas such as automation and robotics** are also receiving the required attention from the industry.

#### Challenges w.r.t. India's Manufacturing Sector

- **Inadequate Tech Based Infrastructure:****Technology-based infrastructure**, especially for communication, transportation, and skilled manpower are important for enhancing manufacturing competitiveness.
  - Telecom communication facilities are mainly confined to big cities. Most of the State Electricity Boards are running in loss and are in deplorable condition.
- **Access to Credit for MSME:**The **Micro, Small and Medium-sized enterprises (MSME)** sector appears to have less favorable access to credit and higher costs for working capital compared to medium and large-scale industrial and service sectors.
- **Skilled Labour Shortages:**There is a lack of trained and skilled labor in the manufacturing sector in India, which **limits the growth of the sector.**
- **Complex Regulations and Poor Supply Chain:**The manufacturing sector in India is subject to a number of **complex regulations like license, tender, audit**, which can be a burden for businesses and hinder their growth.
  - Also, the sector is often plagued by **poor supply chain management**, which can lead to inefficiencies and increased costs.
- **Competition from Other Countries and Imports:**India's manufacturing sector faces intense competition from other countries, which can make it difficult for domestic businesses to compete on the global market.

- Also, India is still **dependent on foreign imports for transport equipment, machinery (electrical and non-electrical)**, iron and steel, paper, chemicals and fertilizers, plastic material etc.

#### Looking ahead

- **Investing in Infrastructure:**Improving the **quality and availability of infrastructure, such as roads, ports, and power supply**, could help attract more investment and businesses to the manufacturing sector.
  - This could involve building **new infrastructure or upgrading existing infrastructure.**
- **Promoting Export-Oriented Manufacturing:**Encouraging the development of export-oriented manufacturing could help Indian businesses **tap into new markets and increase their competitiveness.**
  - This could involve **providing support for businesses looking to enter new markets, or implementing policies**that incentivize **export-oriented manufacturing.**
- **Fostering Innovation:**Supporting research and development in the manufacturing sector, and promoting the **adoption of new technologies and processes**, could help drive innovation and boost productivity.
- This could involve**providing funding for R&D or implementing policies** that encourage the adoption of new technologies.
- **Improving Access to Finance:**Making it easier for **small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the manufacturing sector to access credit** and other forms of financing could help support their growth and development.
  - This could involve implementing policies that**encourage banks and other financial institutions to lend to SMEs in the manufacturing sector** or providing government-backed loan guarantees to support SME lending.
- **Streamlining Regulations:**Simplifying and streamlining regulations could help **reduce the burden on businesses** and encourage more investment in the manufacturing sector.
  - This could involve **streamlining the process for obtaining licenses** and permits or simplifying compliance requirements.
- **Encouraging Skill Development:**Providing more **opportunities for training and skill development** could help address the shortage of skilled labor in the manufacturing sector and increase its competitiveness.
  - This could involve investing in **vocational training programs**, or implementing policies that encourage businesses to invest in employee training.

#### Additional Information

##### **Government Initiatives for Growth of the Industrial Sector in India**

- **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI)-** To scale up domestic manufacturing capability.
- **PM Gati Shakti- National Master Plan-** Multimodal connectivity infrastructure project.
- **Bharatmala Project-** To Improve connectivity in North East India
- **Start-up India-** To catalyze Startup culture in India

- **Make in India 2.0-** To transform India into a global design and manufacturing hub.
- **Atmanirbhar Bharat Campaign-** To cut down import dependence.

How has India fared with its blue economy plans?. Discuss the associated prospects and challenges.

- As the world's **seventh-largest country by land area**, it's no surprise that **India has a vast and diverse maritime territory**. From the **bustling port cities along the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal to the idyllic beaches of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands**, the country's **blue economy** plays a vital role in its economic growth and development.
- The government has also launched a number of initiatives to **support the growth of the blue economy, including the Sagar Mala Project**, which aims to modernise India's port infrastructure and improve connectivity to coastal areas, and the **Blue Economy Program**, which focuses on promoting **sustainable economic development** in coastal areas.
- There are a number of challenges related to the blue economy in India including **climate change, marine pollution and overexploitation of marine resources**. Therefore, there is a need to scrutinise the potential of the Blue economy to play a significant role in India's economic development and contribute to the country's long-term prosperity.

#### Blue Economy

- **Blue economy refers to the sustainable use of marine resources** for exploration, economic growth, improved livelihoods, and transport while preserving the health of marine and coastal ecosystems.
  - In India, the blue economy encompasses a wide range of sectors, including **shipping, tourism, fisheries, and offshore oil and gas exploration**.
- **80% of world trade happens using the seas, 40% of the world's population live near coastal areas**, and more than 3 billion people access the oceans for their livelihood.

#### Significance of the Blue Economy

- **Transport:** With an over **7,500-km-long coastline** spread across nine coastal states, 12 major, and 200 minor ports, India's blue economy supports **95% of the country's business through transportation** and contributes an estimated 4% to its **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**.
- **Expansion of Shipping Industry:** India is looking to expand its **presence in the shipping industry** and increase its capacity as a hub for **ship repair and maintenance, which can come with various economic and geopolitical benefits**.



- **Offshore Energy Production:** There are also opportunities to develop **offshore wind and solar energy in India**, which could help to meet the country's growing energy needs.
- **Aquaculture and Marine Biotechnology:** The blue economy can support the growth of these sectors, which have the **potential to contribute to the country's food security** and improve the health of the ocean ecosystem.
- **Synergy With SDG:** It supports all of the **United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, especially **SDG14 'life below water'**.

Steps taken by the Government to Promote the Blue Economy

- **Deep Ocean Mission**
- **India-Norway Task Force on Blue Economy for Sustainable Development**
- **Sagarmala Project**
- **O-SMART**
- **Integrated Coastal Zone Management**
- **National Fisheries Policy**
  
- **NavIC**

Challenges Related to India's Blue Economy

- **Lack of Infrastructure:** There is a lack of **ports, airports, and other infrastructure in many coastal areas of India**, which can make it difficult to develop and expand economic activities in these regions.
- **Overfishing:** **Overfishing** is a major challenge in India's coastal waters, as it can **lead to the depletion of fish stocks and harm the marine ecosystem**. This can have negative impacts on the fishing industry and other sectors of the blue economy.
- **Marine Pollution:** Pollution from sources such as **oil spills, plastic waste, and industrial effluent** can harm marine ecosystems and have negative impacts on the blue economy.
- **Climate Change: Rising sea levels, negative Indian Ocean dipole** and other impacts of climate change can pose risks to **coastal communities** and also have negative impacts on the blue economy.
- **India-Sri Lanka Fishing Conflict:** The boundary between **Indian and Sri Lankan waters in the Palk Bay is not clearly defined**, which has led to confusion and conflict between Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen.
  - To address this issue, both **India and Sri Lanka have attempted to negotiate agreements** to regulate fishing in the Palk Bay and establish clear boundaries. However, **these efforts have not always been successful in resolving the issue**.

Looking ahead

- **Sustainable Resource Management:** Implementing sustainable resource management practices, such as **setting catch limits, establishing marine protected areas, and enforcing regulations** to prevent overfishing and other forms of resource extraction, can help to ensure the **long-term viability of marine resources** and the industries that rely on them.

- **Investment in Infrastructure:** Investing in infrastructure such as **ports, airports, and other facilities in coastal areas** can help to support the growth and expansion of economic activities in these regions.
- **Research and Development:** Investing in **research and development to improve technologies and practices in the blue economy** can help to increase efficiency and reduce the negative impacts on the environment.
  - India must focus on **marine ICTs, and transport (shipping) and communication services, and the creation of a knowledge hub** for marine research and development.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Working with other countries, international organisations, and other stakeholders to **exchange knowledge and expertise, and to collaborate on projects and initiatives**, can help to support the growth and development of the blue economy.
  - Also, India should not look at its **oceans as just water bodies**, but as a global stage for continued **economic, social, and cultural dialogue**.

Examine the significance of Article 19 of Indian Constitution. How has the Supreme Court expanded its ambit and scope in recent times?

#### Article 19

- Article 19 of the Constitution of India guarantees the **right to freedom of speech and expression, and is typically invoked against the state**.
  - **Article 19(1)** in The Constitution Of India 1949, All citizens shall have the right
    - (a) to freedom of speech and expression;
    - (b) to assemble peaceably and without arms;
    - (c) to form associations or unions;
    - (d) to move freely throughout the territory of India;
    - (e) to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India; and
    - (f) omitted
    - (g) to practise any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business.
  - **Article 19(2)** in The Constitution Of India 1949,
    - Nothing in sub clause (a) of clause (1) shall affect the operation of any existing law, or prevent the State from making any **law, in so far as such law imposes reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub clause** in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.

- Some fundamental rights, such as those prohibiting untouchability, trafficking, and bonded labor, **are explicitly against both the state and other individuals.**

### SC's Ruling

Recently, the **Supreme Court** has ruled that a fundamental right under **Article 19/21 can be enforced** even against persons other than the State or its instrumentalities.

- The court took this view while ruling that the right of **free speech and expression guaranteed under the Article 19(1)(a) cannot be curbed by any additional grounds** other than those already laid down in Article 19(2).
- **Enforcing Rights against Private Entities:**
  - This interpretation **brings an obligation on the state to ensure that private entities also abide** by Constitutional norms.
  - It opens up **an array of possibilities in Constitutional law, potentially allowing for the enforcement of privacy rights against a private doctor** or the right to free speech against a private social media entity.
- **Reference to Previous Court Rulings:**
  - The Court referenced the **2017 verdict in Puttaswamy**, in which a nine-judge bench unanimously upheld **privacy as a fundamental right.**
  - The government had argued **that privacy is a right enforceable against other citizens and, therefore, cannot be elevated** to the status of a fundamental right against the state.
- **International Perspectives:**
  - The Court also looked to **foreign jurisdictions, contrasting the American approach with the European Courts.**
  - The US Supreme Court's ruling in **New York Times vs. Sullivan**, which found that **defamation law as applied by the state against The New York Times** was inconsistent with the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech and expression, was cited as an example of a shift in US law from a "purely vertical approach" to a "horizontal approach."
  - A **vertical application of rights** would mean it can be enforced only against the state while a **horizontal approach** would mean it is enforceable against other citizens.
    - For example, a horizontal application of the right to life would enable a citizen to bring a case against a private entity for causing pollution, which would be a violation of the right to a clean environment.

What is green hydrogen, what advantages does it have, what will the Govt's Mission entail?, Discuss the challenges associated with it.

### Green Hydrogen

- **Green hydrogen** is a type of hydrogen that is produced through the **electrolysis of water using renewable energy sources** such as solar or wind power.

- The **electrolysis process splits water into hydrogen and oxygen**, and the hydrogen produced can be used as a clean and renewable fuel.
- **Uses:**
  - **Chemical industry:** Manufacturing ammonia and fertilisers.
  - **Petrochemical industry:** Production of petroleum products.
  - Furthermore, it is starting to be used in the **steel industry**, a sector which is under considerable pressure in **Europe because of its polluting effect.**

#### Significance of Green Hydrogen

- **Achieving Emission Target:** Green hydrogen energy is vital for India to meet its **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Targets** and ensure **regional and national energy security**, access and availability.
  - Under the **Paris Climate Agreement**, India pledged to reduce the emission intensity of its economy by **33-35% from 2005 levels by 2030**. Green hydrogen can drive India's transition to clean energy, **combat climate change.**
- **Energy Storage and Mobility:** Green Hydrogen can act as an **energy storage option**, which would be essential to meet intermencies (of renewable energy) in the future.
  - In terms of mobility, for **long distance mobilizations** for either urban freight movement within cities and states or for passengers, **Green Hydrogen can be used in railways, large ships, buses or trucks,**
- **Reducing Import Dependence:** It will reduce **India's import dependency on fossil fuels. The localisation of electrolyser production** and the development of green hydrogen projects can **create a new green technologies** market in India worth **USD 18-20 billion** and thousands of jobs.

#### Challenges Related to Green Hydrogen

- **High Production Costs:** Currently, the **production of green hydrogen** is more expensive than hydrogen produced from fossil fuels.
  - This is because the **process of electrolysis**, which is used to produce green hydrogen, requires a large amount of **electricity**, and the cost of **renewable electricity** is still relatively high in India.
- **Lack of Infrastructure:** There is currently a lack of infrastructure in India for the **production, storage, and distribution of green hydrogen.**
  - This includes a lack of hydrogen refuelling stations and pipelines for transporting
- **Limited Adoption:** Despite the potential benefits of green hydrogen, there is currently **limited adoption of this technology** in India.
  - This is due to a **lack of awareness** and understanding of green hydrogen among the general public, as well as a **lack of incentives** for businesses to switch to this technology.
- **Economic Sustainability: Extraction of green hydrogen** is one of the biggest challenges facing the industry for using hydrogen commercially.
  - For transportation **fuel cells, hydrogen must be cost-competitive** with conventional fuels and technologies on a per-mile basis.

#### National Green Hydrogen Mission

The Mission states that India will develop green hydrogen production capacity of at least 5 million tonnes (MT) per annum with an associated renewable energy capacity addition of about 125 gigawatts (GW) in the country by 2030. This will entail over Rs 8 lakh crore of total investments and is expected to generate six lakh jobs. It will also lead to a cumulative reduction in fossil fuel imports by over Rs 1 lakh crore and an abatement of nearly 50 MT of annual greenhouse gas emissions.

Looking ahead

- **Increase the Capacity to Generate Renewable Electricity:** In order to reduce the cost of **green hydrogen production**, it is necessary to increase the capacity to generate renewable electricity in India.
  - This can be done through the **expansion of renewable energy sources** such as solar and wind power.
- **Developing Hydrogen Infrastructure:** There is a need to develop infrastructure for the **production, storage, and distribution of green hydrogen** to make this technology more accessible. This includes building **hydrogen refuelling stations and pipelines for transporting hydrogen**.
- **Implement Regulatory Incentives:** The government can play a key role in promoting the adoption of green hydrogen by implementing **regulatory incentives, such as tax credits and subsidies**, to encourage the production and use of this technology.
- **Raise Awareness and Understanding of Green Hydrogen:** It is important to educate the public about the **benefits of green hydrogen** and the role it can play in helping to reduce **greenhouse gas emissions**.
  - This can be done through public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives.

Do you think that Constitution of India does not accept principle of strict separation of powers rather it is based on the principle of 'checks and balance'? Explain. (UPSC CSE 2019 MAINS, GENERAL STUDIES II)

- The principle of separation of powers was propounded by French political thinker Montesquieu in his book 'The Spirit of Laws' as mechanism to save the individual liberty from the arbitrary powers of the government. Generally the Presidential form of governments (like the US) follow the principle of separation of powers. But even in the US, which is the best example of the separation of powers, this principle has been applied with the principle of Check and balance. If the Principle of check and balance is not applied it creates the problem of coordination among the three organs of government and ultimately undermines the unity of government. The gradual expansion of the principle of Judicial Review has led to evolution of the principle of **Judicial Supremacy** in America.
- Theoretically, the **Parliamentary form of governments** (UK, Canada, Australia, India) are not based on the principle of separation of power as the Parliament is



given more powers in comparison to other other organs of the government. In Britain, the principle of **supremacy of Parliament** is followed at least in theory.

- **But in India**, both in theory and practice, the **principle of supremacy of constitution** is adopted, by which each organ of the government: Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary has its designated powers and position, which has to be adhered to by them. However, we find in India the separation of power along with check and balance maintained by the Constitution:

**1. Legislature or Parliament** is primarily responsible for law making powers but its powers are not absolute (Like the British parliament) rather they are tempered by limitations of Constitution on the one hand and judicial review on the other.

2. **The executive** (The PM with Council of Ministers) enjoys the executive powers of the government, but its powers are limited by the constitution (responsibility to parliament) and judicial review.
3. **The judiciary** enjoys judicial power as well as judicial independence in India, but they are subject to removal by the government. The appointment of judges in higher judiciary is the joint responsibility of the executive and judiciary (collegium system).

Thus, in India, the separation of powers is not the feature of Parliamentary form of government, but mediated by and arises from the principle of supremacy of the Constitution. The Supremacy of Constitution is maintained through Checks and balances. The Constitutional Supremacy through checks and balances ensures that neither of organs of governance viz. The legislature, Judiciary or Executive doesn't become authoritative. The fourth pillar, free and vibrant media further acts as a check and balance measure for the three organs of governance.

[Why did the armies of the British East India Company – mostly comprising of Indian soldiers – win consistently against the more numerous and better equipped armies of the Indian rulers? Give reasons. \( UPSC CSE 2022 MAINS, GENERAL STUDIES I \)](#)

Indians were recruited for the British East India Company's army because they were familiar with the conditions in India. Indians were prepared to take lower wages. As a result, the East India Company's overall expenditures were cheaper than those of contracted British army men. Because of the immense distance that separated Britain from India, the British people were not willing to move India. The English had enforced every available means of war and administrative procedures in order to consolidate their own authority over India.

#### **Tactics and Strategy:**

- The British had cannon and assault rifles that were more advanced in terms of their range and shooting speed than Indian weapons.
- Many Indian rulers brought European weapons, but they were unable to develop war strategy like British authorities.

#### **Regulation and remuneration:**

- The British were very careful about a regular income and a rigid code of conduct that guaranteed the loyalty of the commanders and soldiers.
- The rulers of India lacked the resources necessary to make regular salary payments.
- Some of the kings were dependent on their own personal guards of unruly and disloyal mercenaries.

**Able leadership:**

- Robert Clive, Warren Hastings, Elphinstone, Munro, and others demonstrated exceptional leadership traits.
- The British also profited from second-line commanders like Sir Eyre Coote, Lord Lake, Arthur Wellesley, and others who stand up for their nation's interests and honor.
- While the Indian side had excellent commanders like Haider Ali, Tipu Sultan, Madhu Rao, Sindhia, and Jaswant Rao Holkar, they needed a second line of leadership.

**Financial strength:**

- A great deal of wealth was contributed to England by British trade, which led to government assistance in the form of money, materials, and other resources.

**Lack of national pride and unification:**

- Indian rulers lacked a cohesive political nationalism, which the British skillfully exploited to incite civil war among them.

The East India Company had a private army. The corporation utilized its armed power to impose terrible taxes, carry out officially approved plundering, subjugate Indian governments and principalities with which it had previously entered into commercial deals, and defend its economic exploitation of both skilled and unskilled Indian workers.

Explain the features of Emotional Intelligence in Buddhism. what are the value propositions of an emotionally intelligent leadership in a government set-up? What are the value propositions of an emotionally intelligent leadership in a government set-up?

- Emotional intelligence or EI is the ability to understand and manage your own emotions, and those of the people around you. People with a high degree of emotional intelligence know what they're feeling, what their emotions mean, and how these emotions can affect other people.
- **Buddhism and Emotional Intelligence**
  - **Right Mindfulness:** One of the key principles of Buddhism is the concept of mindfulness, which involves being aware of and present in the current moment without judgment.
    - This is similar to the modern concept of emotional intelligence, which includes the ability to recognize and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others.

- **Self-Awareness:** Another parallel between Buddhism and emotional intelligence is the importance placed on self-regulation and control of one's emotions.
  - In Buddhism, this is often referred to as "equanimity," which refers to the ability to remain balanced and undisturbed in the face of difficult emotions or circumstances.
- This is similar to the modern concept of emotional intelligence, which includes the ability to regulate and control one's emotions in a healthy and constructive way.
  - **Compassion:** Both Buddhism and emotional intelligence also emphasize the importance of empathy and understanding the emotions of others. In Buddhism, this is often referred to as "compassion," which involves understanding and caring for the suffering of others.
    - In emotional intelligence, the ability to understand and respond appropriately to the emotions of others is an important aspect of effective communication and relationship building.
- **Right View:** It is the intellectual aspect of wisdom. It implies penetrating the outward aspect of things, understanding the transient and imperfect nature.
- **Right Speech:** It is a route to moral discipline which sustains other virtues. Right speech consists of the following:
  - To abstain from telling lies and speaking deceitfully.
- To avoid malicious or slanderous speech.
- To refrain from using harsh words which hurt others.
- To abstain from idle chatter that lacks purpose or depth.
  - **Right Action:** It includes the acts that are kind and compassionate like to be honest, to respect the belongings of others; and to avoid sexual misconduct.
  - **Right Efforts:** It refers to psychic energy which produces either wholesome or unwholesome mental states. It can lead, for example, to aggression, envy, desire and violence. But the same energy can lead to self-discipline, honesty, altruism and compassion. One has to control mind through right efforts.

Thus, Buddhism and modern ideas on emotional intelligence both recognize the importance of being aware of and managing one's own emotions, as well as understanding and responding to the emotions of others, in order to lead a healthy and fulfilling life.

### **Value propositions of an emotionally intelligent leadership in a government set-up**

- Deepen and nuance self-awareness that permeates actions and outcomes.
- Understand how emotions can influence thoughts, behaviours, goals and decisions.
- Understand how managing emotions can drive engagement and productivity.
- Leverage findings of a psychometric instrument for personal and professional excellence ..
- Decipher one's core incompetence and create actions around it Enable the creation of personal insights that have the power to transform behaviours, actions and outcomes.
- Be change-ready: Driving actively radical change and transformation by serving those who serve others.

- Pursue happiness and productivity as a means of driving sustainable success and lasting greatness.

Give a detailed account of weather conditions and characteristics of the cold waves in India. Examine its impact.

- As per the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), a cold wave in the plains occurs when the temperature drops below 10 degrees Celsius and the minimum temperature falls below 4.5 degrees Celsius. The criterion for hills is that they must be 0 degrees Celsius. In the plains, a severe cold wave occurs when the temperature falls below 6.4 degrees Celsius or falls below 2 degrees Celsius. It's "a state of air temperature that becomes lethal to the human body when exposed," according to the IMD. Every five days, the 'normal' temperature is computed by computing the mean temperature for all these days over the previous 30 years.

#### Factors Responsible for this Cold Wave

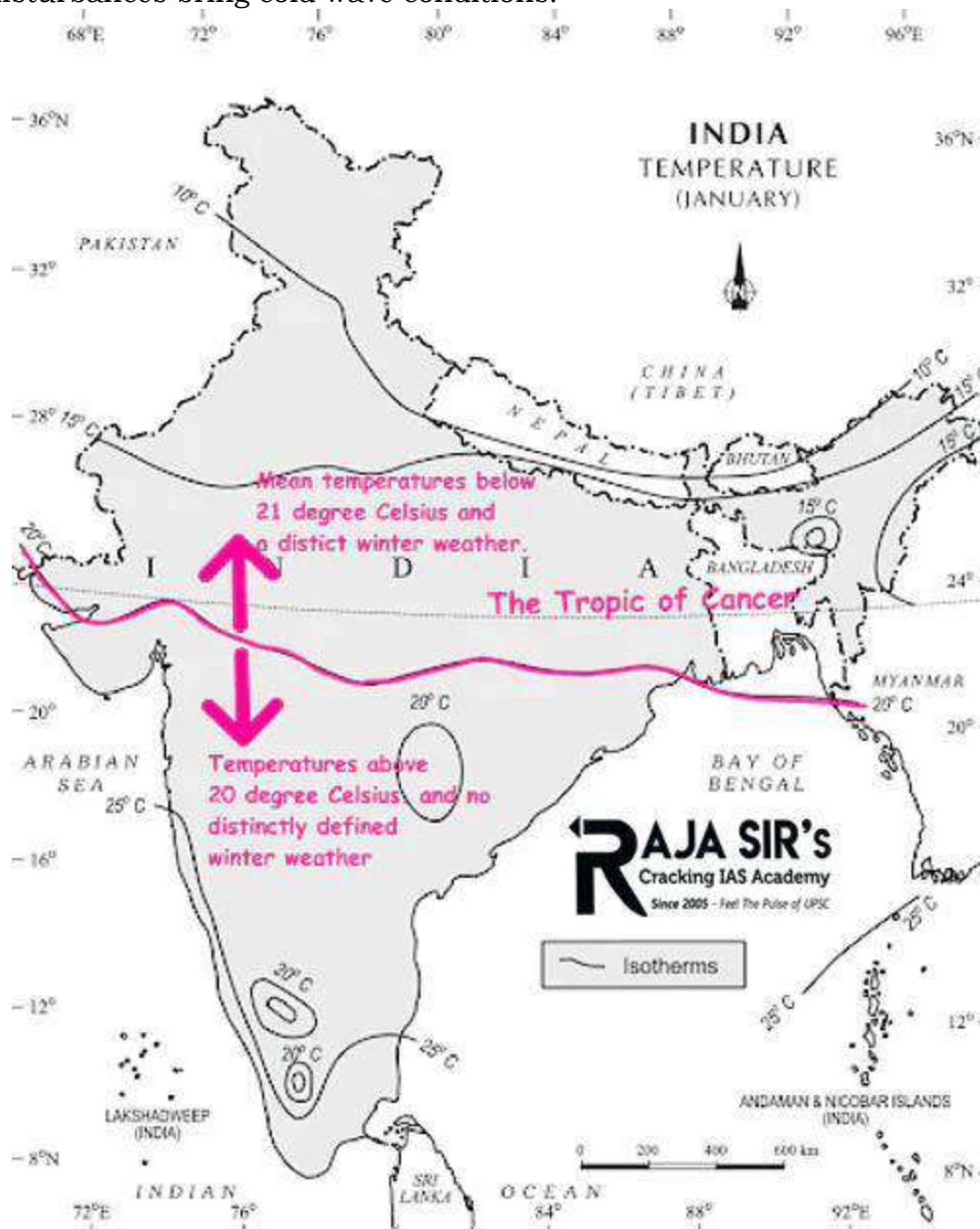
- **Large Scale Fog:**
  - One of the major factors contributing to colder than normal temperatures over north India in January 2023 is the **large-scale fog cover**, according to **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**.
  - Fog has been lasting for longer durations, **preventing sunlight from reaching the surface and affecting the radiation balance**. There is no heating in the day time, and then **there is the impact of the night**.
- **Foggy Nights:**
  - Foggy or cloudy nights are usually **associated with warmer nights, but if the fog remains for two or three days, cooling begins even at night**.
  - Light winds and **high moisture near the land surface have been contributing to the formation of a blanket of fog** over large swathes of the **Indo-Gangetic plains** in the morning.
- **Westerly Winds:**
  - Since there has not been any significant impact of **western disturbances** over the region, cold northwesterly winds have also been contributing to low temperatures.
  - Westerly and **northwesterly winds of around 5 to 10 kmph in the afternoon have also been contributing to the dip in temperature**

**India's 'core cold wave zone'** covers Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and Telangana.

#### Causes of Cold Wave in India

- **Absence of Cloud Cover in the Region:** Clouds trap some of the outgoing infrared radiation and radiate it back downward, warming the ground.
- Snowfall in the upper Himalayas that has blown cold winds towards the region.
- **Subsidence of Cold Air over the Region:** Subsidence is the downward movement of cold and dry air closer to the surface.
- **La Nina:** Prevailing **La Nina** conditions in the Pacific Ocean. La Nina is the abnormal cooler sea surface temperatures reported along the equatorial Pacific Ocean and it is known to favour cold waves.

- During La Nina years, the severity of cold conditions becomes intense. The frequency and area covered under the grip of a cold wave becomes larger.
- **Western Disturbances:** Western disturbances can cause cold waves in India. Western disturbances are weather systems that **originate in the Mediterranean Sea and move eastward**, bringing cold winds, precipitation and cloud cover to the northwest regions of India. These disturbances can lead to a drop in temperature and cause cold wave conditions. However, not all western disturbances bring cold wave conditions.



**Impact of Cold Wave**





- **Impact Agriculture:** Cold waves bring unexpected freeze and frost during the Rabi cropping season affecting crops, horticultural plantations/orchard, and other agricultural allied services.
- **Impact on livestock:** During a cold wave, the animals require a higher intake of nutrition. If the food is inadequate and there is exposure to low temperatures, animals may die of hypothermia or starvation.
- **Impact on Health:** The cold wave is extremely fatal to human health, and it could affect vulnerable people (infants, pregnant women, and elderly people) with chronic diseases.
- **Impact on energy sector:** The impact on the energy sector is well marked with a rise in the demand for fuels and electricity during cold wave conditions.
- **Impact visibility:** Fog formation associated with cold waves can affect visibility, which can cause more accidents, including fatalities.
- **Impact on infrastructure:** For instance, specific plumbing is required in colder regions. Similarly, antifreeze needs to be added to the car for it to function.

Additional Information

## MERCURIAL METER

Some of the new and cross-country benchmarks are listed below. Earlier, they used to vary from state to state

| <b>HEAT WAVES</b>   | <b>COLD WAVES</b>  |
|---|--|
|   |    |
| <p><b>Based on departure from normal</b></p> <p><b>Heat wave:</b> 4.5°C to 6.4°C above normal maximum</p> <hr/> <p><b>Severe heat wave:</b> More than 6.4°C above normal maximum</p>  | <p><b>Based on departure from normal</b></p> <p><b>Cold wave:</b> 4.5°C to 6.4°C below normal minimum</p> <hr/> <p><b>Severe cold wave:</b> Anything more than 6.4°C below normal minimum</p>  |
| <p><b>Based on actual maximum temperature</b></p> <p><b>Heat wave:</b> Temperature equal or greater than 45°C</p> <hr/> <p><b>Severe heat wave:</b> Equal or greater than 47°C</p>  | <p><b>Based on actual minimum temperature</b></p> <p><b>Cold wave:</b> Minimum temperature is 4°C or lower</p> <hr/> <p><b>Severe cold wave:</b> Minimum temperature is 2°C or lower</p>   |
| <p><b>Warm night:</b> (Will apply only when maximum temperature remains 40°C or more) Minimum temperature departure is 4.5°C to 6.4°C</p> <hr/> <p><b>Very warm night:</b> Minimum temperature departure is above 6.4°C</p> | <p><b>Cold day:</b> (Applies when minimum temperature is 10°C or lower in plains and 0°C or lower in hilly regions) Maximum temperature departure is minus 4.5°C to minus 6.4°C</p> <hr/> <p><b>Very cold day:</b> Maximum temperature departure is greater than minus 6.4°C</p> |

Does the governor have the right to skip the text of customary address to the assembly?.

- The Tamil Nadu Assembly was rocked by unprecedented scenes when Governor R N Ravi skipped certain portions from the customary speech submitted to him by the state government for reading at the start of the Assembly session.
- The article highlights the debate about the rising mistrust between the governor's office and chief ministers of opposition-led governments and the role of the governor in parliamentary democracy.

#### Genesis

- The conflict arose when the **Governor made changes to the prepared speech** he read out in the Assembly.
- The skipped portions of the Governor's address were about BR Ambedkar, Dravidian leaders, the Dravidian model of governance and the law-and-order situation in Tamil Nadu.
- As a result, **TN CM moved a resolution** demanding only the original printed speech in Tamil be put in records.
- **Governor** reacted to this in an unprecedented manner by **staging a walkout** from the House in protest even before the national anthem was played.
- Earlier West Bengal (1965), Rajasthan (1967), Punjab (1969), Tripura (2017) and Kerala (2018) Rajasthan Governors refused to read the address sent by the Government.

#### Governor's Address to the Legislature

- **Meaning:** The Governor's address contains a review of the government's activities and accomplishments in the previous year, its plans for the session, and policy and legislative proposals that the government plans to implement in the coming year.
  - It is **prepared and submitted by the state government** to the Governor beforehand.
- **Constitutional provisions:** The Governor is expected to address the **first Assembly session** of the state every year and the **first session of a new legislature** after the state assembly elections, under **Articles 175** and **176** of the Constitution.
  - **Article 175:** It empowers the Governor to address and send messages to the House or Houses and may for that purpose require the attendance of members.
  - **Articles 176:** Governor has the right to address the first session of the House after the elections to the Legislative Assembly and at the commencement of the first session of each year.
- **Convention:** On the lines of a British convention since 1829, the governor must read the full speech as it is and **without any deviation**, because it is essentially the government's message, for which the governor's office bears no responsibility.

### Observations by the Judiciary

- The Rajasthan HC (1967) held that even some portion read by the governor is good enough to deem the whole address as read.
- The Calcutta HC (1966) held that the governor cannot decline to deliver his address and refuse to fulfil his constitutional duty, implying that address under **Article 176** is mandatory.
  - However, the HC also held that when the governor walks out of the House after laying down the address on the table of the House, it is **mere irregularity, not illegality**.
  - Thus, his action is not questionable under **Article 212**, wherein the validity of the House proceedings cannot be challenged on the ground of mere irregularity in the procedure.
  - The Calcutta HC also (in other case) held the governor has the **right to delete or not read** irrelevant portions or portions which do not deal with the policy of the government.
- A five-judge SC bench (**in Nabam Rebia case 2016**) nullified the action of Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, who advanced the session of the assembly without the advice of the CM.
  - The court observed that Governor had exceeded his jurisdiction as he had no discretion in convening the assembly session.

### Implications of Governor's Deletion or Addition to his Address

- **It widens the trust deficit** between the governors and Opposition-ruled governments. Some Opposition CMs merely get the House adjourned (by Speaker), rather than prorogued (by Governor) to avoid the governor's address.
  - For instance, in 2022, the **Telangana** Governor was denied the opportunity to address the legislative assembly.
- **It may create a constitutional crisis**. For example, the CM **may refuse to defend the address** at the end of the debate on the governor's address and the **House may reject the resolution** on the governor's speech.
  - It is hence considered a **no-confidence motion** and the CM may need to resign.
  - This dissolution of government would not only be **grossly unjust** and **unethical** but absolutely **undemocratic**.
  - For example, the **CM of Punjab** in 1967 had **resigned** when the governor's address was defeated on the floor of the House.
  - **UP CM** (C B Gupta) too had to **resign** in similar circumstances when a resolution thanking the governor was defeated in the UP assembly.

### Constitutional Expert's Views

- Leading British constitutional law expert **Ivor Jennings** notes that Sovereign (king) can suggest changes or revisions in the address, but the **last word** remains with the **Cabinet**.
- **A B Keith** in his work, Constitutional Law, too holds that the speech by the **monarch** has to **merely state** what the government wants to do in the new session of the House.

- Author **Sibranjan Chatterjee** in his book, "Governor's Role in the Indian Constitution", said that the Constituent Assembly intended that Governor's address be prepared by the Council of Ministers.
  - If a Governor deletes any para of the address under the cloak of his discretionary power, his/her action may not be 'unlawful' from a rigid legalistic viewpoint but **would impact the norms of parliamentary system of government.**

#### Looking ahead

- The CMs too must show prudence and not include irrelevant facts or statements that have little to do with the jurisdiction of the state government.
- The governor principal job as a sagacious/wise adviser is "to be consulted, to warn and to encourage".
- Both governors and CMs, as constitutional functionaries, should respect each other and at least have a working relationship.

The Governor's address is an important aspect of constitutional symbolism, and as the head of the state, all governors must uphold their oath of "preserving, protecting, and defending" the Constitution.

#### How will Remote voting deepen democracy in India?.

##### **Remote Voting Facility (RVF)**

- It will enable a voter to cast his or her vote from any polling station in the country.
- It will remove the compulsion on voting only at the domicile polling station. (As the voter is registered in his domicile).
- The project is being developed by the IIT-Madras using **blockchain technology.**

##### **Blockchain Technology**

1. A blockchain is a distributed ledger of information which is replicated across various nodes on a "peer-to-peer" network (P2P Network)
2. The data exists on multiple computers at the same time. It constantly grows as new sets of recordings or blocks get added to it in a decentralization manner.
3. All transactions that occur on a standard Blockchain are **verified and signed with cryptography** to ensure **security and anonymity.**
  - Cryptography: It is the process of converting ordinary plain text into unintelligible text and vice-versa.
  - The intended person can encrypt the coded message and use them.
4. The ledger can record many transactions such as monetary transactions, property transfer, and even ballot storage.

##### **Probable working of Remote Voting Facility**

Blockchain is a decentralized, transparent, and an encrypted data technology. This **could potentially help to minimize election tampering.** Further, the Blockchain can



also **maximize polling** in elections. The probable implementation will include the following steps.

1. In the first stage, the user's voter identity will be **verified and authorized** through a multi-layered identification system. This system can have web cameras and biometric identification. This will prevent duplication.
2. In the second stage, a **blockchain-enabled personalized e-ballot paper** will be generated. The citizens will use this paper to cast his/her vote.
3. In the third stage, an **encrypted blockchain hashtag (#) will be created**. This hashtag will then be sent to all the people in the chain. So, the person cannot cheat his/her vote in other locations.

### **Significance of Remote Voting Facility (RVF)**

1. **Firstly, Higher Voter Turnout:** The voter turn in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections was 67.11% across 542 constituencies. The RVF can increase the voter turnout in the upcoming Lok Sabha election.
2. **Secondly, Promote Inclusivity:** Individuals who are 'on the move' like students, patients, migrant labourers, essential service providers, etc. will become part of the electoral process.
3. **Thirdly, Flexibility:** RVF gives more flexibility to voters. An individual can cast his/her vote from multiple locations and not solely from one registered polling station.
4. **Fourthly, Greater Political Accountability:** RVF will give a voice to unheard groups like migrant workers. The contesting candidates generally did not concern with them, as they will not vote in elections.
5. **Fifthly, Strengthens Representative Democracy:** RVF will ensure more eligible voters cast their vote. Thus, it will help in fulfilling the ambition of the representative democracy.
6. **And lastly, Fulfils Constitutional Mandate: Article 326** of the Indian Constitution has given voting rights to every individual above 18 years i.e. **universal adult suffrage**. The spirit of this article calls for ensuring universal voter turnout in elections and RVF can help us move closer towards this.

### **Challenges with Remote Voting Facility**

1. **Cyber Threats:** As RVF is based on blockchain, therefore it might be attacked by hackers which would distort the final result.
2. **Privacy Concern:** The process involves saving a user's biometrics and facial data. Any misuse of such by concerned authorities or hackers would undermine the right to privacy.
3. **Stakeholder's Confidence:** Nowadays, political parties and candidates are questioning the credibility of EVMs. Instilling trust over RVF will be a challenging task.
4. **Confidentiality of Voting:** As the RVF facility will be availed in front of an authorized officer, the secrecy of the voting process might get jeopardized.

### **Improving Remote Voting Facility**



1. The government has to do a **wider consultation** with all the concerned stakeholders before the rollout of RVF. This includes political parties and civil society groups (like the Association for Democratic reforms).
2. In the pilot phase, the Parties and candidates should **get timely notifications of RVF**. By providing real-time information can **strengthen trust** in the electoral process.
3. Also, The Election Commission should organise **the RVF hackathons** in order to build **greater public confidence**. So that the 'didn't want to vote' category people also cast their vote with confidence.
4. For ensuring a universal voter turnout, **awareness generation** should be done.
5. Further, till the RVF develops, **easing and enhancing the process of postal ballot** is desired.
  - India used the Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) in 2019 Lok Sabha Elections. The ETPBS helped the armed forces, central paramilitary forces and central government officers working in Indian missions abroad to cast their vote.

Technology has played a pivotal role in strengthening the electoral process of the world's largest democracy. For example, the introduction of EVMs, VVPAT machines, C- Vigil App, etc. The launch of RVF will be a significant step. But the apparent challenges have to be resolved first. This will make Remote Voting a safe, secure, trustworthy, and transparent process.

## Why Is Europe Experiencing A Record-Breaking January Heat Wave?

### Heat Dome

- A heat dome is an area of high-pressure that traps warm air over a region for an extended period of time, similar to a lid on a pot. The longer the air remains trapped, the more the sun works to heat it, resulting in warmer conditions. Heat domes can last for a few days or even weeks, potentially leading to deadly heat waves.
- When high pressure forces air to sink, it gets compressed and becomes even warmer. Additionally, as the air sinks, it becomes drier, further raising the temperature of the area.

### Heat Domes and the Jet Stream

- The formation of heat domes is related to the behaviour of the jet stream, a fast-moving area of air in the atmosphere with a wave-like pattern that moves from north to south and back again. When these waves become bigger and elongated, they can slow down or become stationary, leading to the formation of a high-pressure system and a heat dome.

### Climate Change and Heat Domes

- While heat domes are likely to have always existed, researchers suggest that climate change may be making them more intense and longer-lasting. As

temperatures rise, it is expected that the jet stream will become more wavy and have larger deviations, leading to more frequent extreme heat events.

### **Previous Instances of Heat Domes**

- In 2021, a heat dome formed over western Canada and the US, causing deadly heat waves. Portland saw temperatures reach 46°C, Washington hit 49°C, and Lytton in British Columbia saw temperatures soar to over 46°C. It is believed that hundreds of people died as a result of this extreme weather event.

Can Greater Restrictions Be Imposed On Freedom Of Speech Of Ministers, MPs And MLAs?. Discuss w.r.t. the recent verdict of Supreme Court in this context.

- In a recent verdict, the Supreme Court has shown sound restraint while examining the issue of misuse of free speech, especially by political functionaries holding public office.
- The Supreme Court has ruled that additional restrictions cannot be imposed on the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression of high public functionaries as exhaustive grounds already exist under the Constitution to curb that right.

### **The case**

- The case, **Kaushal Kishor v the State of Uttar Pradesh**, relates to the **Bulandshahar rape incident of 2016**, in which the then Minister of the State of Uttar Pradesh and Samajwadi Party leader Azam Khan termed the incident a 'political conspiracy and nothing else'.
- The case involved whether a minister can claim the right to "**freedom of speech and expression**" to speak contrary to the Central government's statute and policy and "whether restrictions can be imposed on a public functionary's right to freedom of speech and expression".

### **Article 19 of the Indian Constitution**

- **Article 19(1) guarantees to all citizens the six rights. These are**
  - Right to freedom of speech and expression.
  - Right to assemble peaceably and without arms.
  - Right to form associations or unions or co-operative societies.
  - Right to move freely throughout the territory of India.
  - Right to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India.
  - Right to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business.
- **Article 19(2)** relates to the powers of the State to make laws imposing reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right to freedom of speech and expression in

the interest of sovereignty and integrity of the **country, public order, decency, morality, etc.**

### **Supreme Court For Not Curbing Ministers' Free Speech**

- Like other citizens, ministers are guaranteed the right to freedom of expression under **Article 19(1) (a)**, governed by the reasonable restrictions laid out in Article 19(2) and those are exhaustive in themselves.
- What is missing is the political resolve and will of governments to act on instances of hate speech, especially when they involve one of their own, and there are no legal shortcuts to make up for that absence.

### **Issue of Inconsistency between Free speech of public functionary and rights of citizens:**

- On the issue of whether a statement by a minister inconsistent with the rights of a citizen constitutes a violation and is actionable, the Court argued that no one can either be taxed or penalised for holding an opinion which is not in conformity with the constitutional values.
- However, if as a consequence of such a statement, any act of omission or commission is done by the officers resulting in harm or loss to a person/citizen, then the same may be actionable as a constitutional tort.
- Thus, the restrictions to free speech while expressing views on sensitive matters apply to the **MPs, MLAs and other public officials** equally with all other citizens. In this context, the onus falls on the voters to force political parties concerned to have a code of conduct in place.

### **Ruling on the Collective Responsibility for Hateful Remarks Made by Individual Ministers:**

- The majority ruling made a valid distinction on the government's vicarious responsibility for ill-judged or hateful remarks made by its individual ministers.
- The court ruled that it is not possible to extend the concept of collective responsibility to "any and every statement orally made by a Minister outside the House of the People/Legislative Assembly".
- The problem of hate speech by ministers and others belonging to the party in power is real, but it is primarily political. The solution is not for the court to draw a new line, or even, as the minority judgment proposed, for Parliament to make another law.
- There are enough provisions in the Constitution to deal with speech that **promotes enmity and violence or results in cramping the freedoms of others.**

### **Expansion of Ambit of Article 19:**

- Observing that the State is under a duty to affirmatively protect the rights of a person under **Article 21 (Protection of life and personal liberty)** even by a non-State actor, the apex court held that a fundamental right under **Article 19 and 21** can be enforced even against persons other than the State or its instrumentalities.

- This interpretation could also bring an obligation on the state to ensure private entities also abide by Constitutional norms.
- This largely settles the question of whether these rights are only **'vertical'**, that is, enforceable only against the state, or **'horizontal' too**, that is enforceable by one person against another.

**Dissenting Opinions Against the Judgement:**

- The possible restraints on an **unwarranted and disparaging speech by public functionaries**, will apply with equal force to public functionaries, celebrities/influencers as well as all citizens of India, more so because technology is being used as a medium of communication which has a wide spectrum of impact across the globe.
- Public functionaries and other persons of **influence and celebrities, having regard to their reach, real or apparent authority**, and the impact they wield on the public or on a certain section thereof, owe a duty to the citizenry at large to be more responsible and restrained in their speech.
- While there can be little argument against the verdict upholding the principle of equality, it leaves room for debate on the subject of freedom of expression acquiring the potential to cause harm or incitement to discrimination, hostility, and violence. For, no law condones such acts.
- These times of social media, especially in a country as diverse as India, have given rise to increasing instances that trigger the dilemma of what constitutes freedom of speech and what is a **derogatory and vitriolic remark or work of art**.
- Consequently, the blurred line between the two leads to misuse of the provisions of the **law, biased behaviour, and shielding of erring people who wield power**.

**Summing up**

- Equality, liberty and fraternity are the foundational values embedded in the **Preamble of our Constitution**, and hate speech strikes at each of these foundational values, by marking out a society as being unequal.
- Freedom of speech and expression is a much needed right so that citizens are well informed and educated on governance.
- Thus, there should be a proper legal framework to define acts and omissions that amount to **'constitutional tort'**.
- The court's overall view that fundamental rights are enforceable even against private actors is indeed a welcome one.

Examine the challenges posed by the rise of "NEXT INTERNET" revolution. How can these challenges be tackled?.. (250 words)

The future of the Internet, such as the metaverse, virtual reality, augmented reality, and what all the above entails the "NEXT INTERNET" revolution.

- The Metaverse is an emerging concept in technology that refers to a created world, in which people can live under the rules defined by the creator. It is a combination of numerous components of technology, including augmented reality, virtual reality, and video.
- Further, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to think and learn like humans. AI systems are designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and language understanding.

As the Metaverse continues to gain popularity, it is important to consider the challenges posed by the rise of this technology and AI. The following are some of the major challenges posed by them are as follows:-

**Societal and Economic impacts:**

- AI and the Metaverse have the potential to disrupt traditional industries and change the way people work and interact, which could lead to job loss and income inequality.
- **Ethical concerns:**
  - AI systems and the Metaverse raise questions about bias, transparency, and accountability. There is also a risk that these technologies could be used to perpetuate or amplify societal problems such as discrimination and inequality.
- **Dependence on technology:**
  - As people increasingly rely on AI and the Metaverse for daily activities, there is a risk of people becoming too dependent on technology, which could lead to a loss of important life skills.
- **Governance:**
  - The Metaverse and AI are global and borderless, which makes it difficult to govern and regulate them. This may lead to lack of oversight and accountability.
- **Psychological and emotional effects:**
  - Spending excessive time in the Metaverse and interacting with AI systems may have negative effects on people's mental and emotional well-being.
- **Technical challenges:**
  - Building and maintaining the Metaverse and AI systems requires significant technical expertise and resources, which can be a challenge for both developers and users.
- **Impact on physical health and well-being:**



- As the Metaverse becomes more immersive, there is a risk that users will spend increasing amounts of time in virtual worlds, potentially at the expense of their physical health and well-being.
- **Data privacy and security:**
  - With the increasing amount of personal data being shared within the Metaverse, there is a risk of data breaches and other security threats.

**Further, to curb the challenges posed by metaverse and AI we need to implement the following measures like:**

- **Reduce Digital Divide:** Governance mechanisms for virtual worlds would need to be supported with strengthening and scaling efforts to promote digital literacy, safety and wellbeing so that participants can engage meaningfully in online communities while consciously navigating harmful content and behaviors.
- **Policy Backing:** It is the right time for the government to create the right policy background for its operation and leverage the metaverse for public services.
  - The government needs to focus on information accessibility, information utilization and information receptiveness.
- **Promote Safe and Secure Metaverse Ecosystem:** There is a strong need to develop and regulate effective ecosystems to address the distinct elements of safety, privacy, and security within the DNA of this technology.
  - Building a citizen-friendly meta-governance infrastructure will need a collaboration by experts from various disciplines, including designers, business model experts and lawyers, to mitigate any potential legal hurdles. Private sector intervention may be required as well.
- **Meta Help Desk:** In e-governance, essential information is released to a targeted audience through ICT. Meta-help desks or meta-divisions in a particular ministry/ other government agency can help in providing the critical data required.
- **Transparent and Consent-based Applications:** Technology companies will need to be more responsible and transparent in their data processing and safety practices.
  - Fostering an informed consent-based model while collecting personal data and abiding by the principles of data minimization and purpose limitation will be critical to prevent unchecked data processing and collection for commercial gains.
- **Global Cooperation:** As the metaverse continues to develop, we are seeing a glimpse of a more digitally advanced borderless world that is full of promise.
  - While this new world continues to expand, we have to be aware of the set of challenges it brings with every new development and to look forward towards uniform regulations across the globe.

The Metaverse and AI are emerging concepts in technology that presents a new way for people to interact and engage in a virtual world. However, this technology also poses a number of challenges but with proper set of governance and regulation, this technology could help humanity in unimaginable ways.

Identify five ethical traits on which one can plot the performance of a civil servant. Justify their inclusion in the matrix. Complete Analysis of (UPSC 2021 Ethics - GS-4)

Ethics are **subjective standard** of rights and wrong. For a civil servant, acting ethically is of utmost importance. A **matrix of ethical traits** can be helpful in **performance evaluation** of civil servants.

| <b>Ethical trait</b>  | <b>Reason for inclusion</b>   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Integrity</b>      | Integrity is important for elimination of corruption; Best utilization of public resources; Pursuit of professional excellence; Leadership quality to act as a role model for others. |
| <b>Selflessness</b>   | Helps in resolving conflicts of interest; Countering nepotism and cronyism; preventing misuse of entrusted public resources and authority.  |
| <b>Compassion</b>     | Brings empathy towards weaker section; Self-motivation to work for weak; Outcome and effectiveness orientation; An element of Emotional Intelligence                                  |
| <b>Objectivity</b>    | Makes a civil servant impartial and non-partisanship; Decisions based on merit without personal bias; Fairness in action; Efficiency orientation; Tolerance towards opposing views    |
| <b>Accountability</b> | Makes civil servants answerable for their conduct and decision; Makes administration transparent and public oriented; Build public trust; Deter unethical conduct.                    |

These five ethical traits form the **ethical foundation of a civil servant** and **other values** like non-partisanship, tolerance, responsiveness can **emanate** from them. These traits ensure that a civil servant **fulfils his professional obligation** even in adverse situations.

Do you think social justice the superior economic growth model?

- Economic policies have a significant impact on social justice in India. Social justice, in the context of India, refers to the fair distribution of wealth, opportunities, and resources among all citizens, regardless of their socio-economic status.
  - However, the current economic order in India has been criticized for exacerbating inequality and marginalization of certain groups, and for not promoting inclusive economic growth. Nevertheless, there had been

various instances where various government initiatives tried to reduce inequalities and promote inclusive economic growth.

- The key areas where economic policies have had an impact on social justice in India is sectors like:
  - **Education and Literacy:** As per the Union Budget 2022-2023 the allocation for education in India is around 3% of the total GDP, which is considered low compared to other countries.
- Therefore, the need to make efforts to increase the allocation for education in the budget to the 6% of the GDP level.
- **Wealth and Income Distribution:** Economic policies that promote distributive justice through **progressive taxation, social welfare programs**, and targeted investments in marginalized regions helped to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are shared more equitably.
  - For example, India's **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA)** provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year to adult members of rural households willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage.
- **Environmental Justice:** Economic policies promoted sustainable development, which helped in ensuring that marginalized communities are not disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and resource depletion.
  - For example, the **National Clean Energy Fund (NCEF)** in India is a fund set up by the Government of India to finance research and development activities in the field of clean energy.
- **Economic Justice:** There is need to implement inclusive economic policies to promote equitable distribution of wealth.
- Further, economic policies in India have often criticized for not promoting social equality and welfare. But there are various government initiatives that promotes economic justice so, that citizens have access to fair and equitable economic opportunities.
  - For example, **India's Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013** provides for fair compensation to the affected persons whose land is acquired, and also includes provisions for resettlement and rehabilitation of the affected persons.
- **Measures to ensure equitable and inclusive economic growth:**
  - **Leveraging technology for inclusive, sustainable and participatory development:** NITI Aayog's strategy also emphasizes the importance of leveraging technology to promote inclusive, sustainable, and participatory development.
    - This can include measures such as increasing access to digital infrastructure and services, promoting digital literacy, and encouraging the use of technology to improve social and economic outcomes.
- **Improving Education:** Improving the educational infrastructure and making sure that every child in India becomes literate is an important measure to ensure inclusive growth. Education is the primary need for the economic growth of any nation.

- **Equality in incomes, wealth, and opportunities:** The attainment of a wider measure of equality in incomes, wealth, and opportunities should form an integral part of economic development and social advance.
- **Improve health sector:** The percentage of GDP allocation has been around 1-1.5% of GDP. However, it is important to note that this is significantly lower than the recommended allocation of a 6%.

Economic policies have a significant impact on social justice in India. However, there are current economic policies that are trying to reduce inequality and marginalization by promoting inclusive economic growth.

Briefly explain the meaning of natural farming. Elucidate its role in ensuring food security and promoting sustainable agriculture in India. Examine the challenges that natural farmers in India face.

- Natural farming is an agricultural method that emphasizes the use of natural processes and locally adapted ecosystems to grow crops and raise animals, rather than relying on chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and genetically modified organisms.
- It often involves practices such as crop rotation, intercropping, and the use of cover crops to improve soil health and promote biodiversity. The goal of natural farming is to create a self-sustaining agricultural ecosystem that is in harmony with nature, rather than trying to control or manipulate it.

**Significance of natural farming in ensuring food security and promoting sustainable agriculture in India:**

- The aim of natural farming is to make farming viable and aspirational by increasing net incomes of farmers on account of cost reduction, reduced risks, similar yields, incomes from intercropping.
- **Food and nutrition security:** Natural farming can help to improve **food security for communities in India**, especially for small-scale farmers who may not have access to or be able to afford modern inputs.
  - By relying on natural techniques, farmers can produce healthy, nutritious food without incurring high costs.
- **Sustainable Agriculture:**
  - **Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF):** One of the key practices of natural farming is Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF).
    - This is the practice of growing crops without the use of any external inputs, such as pesticides and fertilizers.
- The phrase Zero Budget refers to all crops with zero production costs. The farmers' revenue is increased as a result of ZBNF's guidance towards sustainable farming methods that help to reduce costs and increase yields.
  - **Reduce cost of production:** It is based on the principles of working with natural processes, which helps to reduce the dependence on external

inputs such as pesticides and fertilizers. This results in a reduction in the overall cost of production, making it more viable for farmers.

- **Improves soil health:** Natural farming helps to improve soil health, which in turn increases crop yields and reduces the incidence of pest infestation.
- **Help in achieving SDG-2:** Natural farming is not a new concept in India, with farmers having tilled their land without the use of chemicals - largely relying on organic residues, cow dung, composts, etc. since time immemorial.
  - This is also in sync with the **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 targeting 'end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture'**.
- **Increase participation of women:** Rural areas may benefit from the creation of employment in labor-intensive organic agriculture and can also facilitate the participation of women who have less access to the formal credit market and often cannot purchase agricultural inputs.
- **Help in job creation and poverty reduction:** From the economic point of view, organic agriculture has several benefits for farmers, including cheaper inputs, higher and more stable prices, and organization in farmer cooperatives.
  - In an emerging country like India, sustainable agriculture can help in meeting twin challenges of food security and job creation it also helps in poverty reduction.
- **Challenges of natural farming in India:**
  - **Poor budgetary support:** The National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture in India receives only 0.8% of the agricultural budget, which is not sufficient to promote and support natural farming practices. Additionally, natural farming may not be the solution for controlling pest infestation during outbreaks, farmers may need chemical inputs during such situations.
- **Lack of Irrigation Facility:** At the national level, only 52% of India's Gross Cropped Area (GCA) is irrigated. The monsoon continues to restrict crop planting even though India has made significant strides since independence.
- **Lack of Agricultural Diversification:** In spite of the rapid commercialization of agriculture in India, most farmers assume cereals will always be their main crop (due to skewed Minimum Support Prices in favour of cereals) and ignore crop diversification.
- **Government initiatives related to natural farming:**
  - **National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP):** It aims to provide focused and well-directed development of natural agriculture and quality products.
- **National Centre for Organic Farming (NCOF):** Promotion of organic farming in the country through technical capacity building of all the stakeholders including human resource development, transfer of technology, promotion and production of quality organic and biological inputs.
- **National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA):** It seeks to address problems and issues regarding "Sustainable Agriculture" in the context of risks associated with climate change by devising appropriate adaptation and mitigation.
- **The Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY):** The scheme provides support to cluster formation, certification, training, and marketing.



- **Mission for Integrated Development for Horticulture (MIDH):** It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the holistic growth of the horticulture sector covering fruits, vegetables, root & tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, cocoa and Bamboo.
  - For India to become truly self-reliant, the Indian agriculture sector will need to undergo significant changes. To achieve this, it must fully embrace an approach that helps farmers earn more money, use fewer chemicals and pesticides, and produce nutritious food for the country while conserving natural resources.
- Indian agriculture can become sustainable if organic and natural farming becomes a widespread movement, i.e., more and more farmers successfully adopt organic and natural farming practices. For this to happen, governments at the national and state levels will need to take aggressive and well-coordinated measures to lead and support this change on a larger scale than current efforts. These measures must reflect the commitment of political leadership and be supported by adequate budgets.

[What Are the Normative Foundations for Public Administration Ethics?. Discuss the ideas of 'benevolent bureaucrat' propounded by David K Hart.](#)

'Ethics' is a system of accepted beliefs, mores and values, which influence human behaviour. More specifically, it is a system based on morals. Thus, ethics is the study of what is morally right, and what is not. Since the early 17th century, ethics has been accepted as the "Science of morals; the rules of conduct, the science of human duty." Hence, in common parlance, ethics is treated as moral principles that govern a person's or a group's behaviour. It includes both the science of the good and the nature of the right.

The normative foundations of public service ethics are those standards used to justify and defend one's conduct, i.e. reasoning about obligations, consequences and ultimate ends in specific situations. In addition to personal codes of conduct, leadership in the public sector requires the ability to apply ethical reasoning based on formal controls and technical standards.

Even though it is difficult to agree on what ethics should be put in place, there has been five major alternative themes that has been studied the past 30 years: regime values, constitutional theory, and founding thought, citizenship theory, social equity, virtue, or character based ethics, and the public interest. Regime values, constitutional theory, and founding thought argued that public administration ethics ought to be grounded in the American constitutional tradition and the regime values upon which it rests.

1. The three regime values identified by Rohr are freedom, equality, and property. Rohr called for public administrators to emerge in this evolving tradition of constitutional values because when one accepts employment in a regime, it is extremely important to be clear about its core values and whether one can uphold them.
2. Since the public administrative role is viewed and created by that of the citizen, public administrators hold the role of citizen in trust as they do what has been

done previously and now hand it over to professional citizen who has the time and resources to carry it out.

3. Social Equity is a third alternative originally associated with the so-called New Public Administration of the late 1960s and early 1970s. This addressed a number of administrative areas such as personnel management, fiscal federalism, the use of statistics in service delivery, and social service productivity. Social equity never achieved acceptance in the field as the single-central ethical principle, but clearly it has become one of the major normative touchstones for administrative ethics.
4. Virtue provides a different kind of answer from the others. Hart was a leading voice in calling attention to virtue, he outlined the desired character traits of public administrators as superior prudence, moral heroism, caring or love for humanity, trust in the citizenry, and a continuing quest for moral improvement. Virtue is clearly one of the elements of the normative foundations of public administration ethics.

**David K Hart's Views on Ethical Ideas:**

He propounded the idea of '**benevolent bureaucrat**' and '**moral exemplar**'. According to him the moral exemplar is one who serves as a model of ideal morality.

- He distinguishes public administration from business enterprise. Public servants, as compared to business managers, strive for a higher purpose.
- He describes public administration as a moral endeavour and distinguishes it from business enterprise and suggest public servant to adopt different personal traits and higher moral qualities than those of business managers.
- Therefore, public servants need a unique moral character and commitment to certain moral duties.
- The list of moral qualities which Hart mentions include:
  - Superior prudence,
  - Moral heroism,
  - Love of humanity,
  - Trust in common people,
- Continuing effort towards moral improvement.

Discuss the various problems faced by the Panchayati Raj. Discuss the prospects of Panchayati Raj and suggest conditions for its success.

More than three decades after the **73rd and 74th Amendment Acts**, which gave constitutional status to local governments, **State governments, through the local bureaucracy, continue to exercise considerable discretionary authority** and influence over panchayats.

In India, the **powers of local elected officials remain seriously restricted by State governments and local bureaucrats in multiple ways**, thereby diluting the spirit of the constitutional amendments seeking to empower local bodies.

Problems with the Functioning of the Panchayat

- **Lack of Financial Autonomy:**

- **Gram panchayats remain fiscally dependent on grants (both discretionary and non-discretionary grants)** from the State and the Centre for everyday activities.
- Broadly, **Panchayats have three main sources of Funds:**
  - **Own sources of revenue:** It constitutes a tiny proportion of overall panchayat funds. **For Example:** Local taxes, revenue from common property resources, etc.
  - **Grants in aid from the Centre and State governments:** Access to discretionary grants for panchayats **remains contingent on political and bureaucratic connections.**
  - **Discretionary or Scheme-Based Funds:**
    - One major issue with these funds in India is **that they are often subject to mismanagement and corruption.** This can occur when government officials misuse these funds for personal gain or when the funds are not used for the intended purpose.
    - Even when **higher levels of government allocate funds to local governments**, sarpanchs need help accessing them. The **slow transfer of approved funds to panchayat accounts stalls local development.**
- **Time Consuming Process of Seeking Approvals:**
  - Governments also bind local governments through **local bureaucracies.**
  - **Approval for public works projects often requires technical approval** (from the engineering department) and administrative approval from local officials of the rural development department, such as the block development officer.
  - Sarpanches **spend a substantial amount of time visiting government offices** and meeting local bureaucrats, and waiting to be seen or heard.
  - The ability of sarpanchs to **exercise administrative control over local employees is also limited.**
    - In many States, the recruitment of local functionaries reporting to the panchayat, such as village watchmen or sweepers, is conducted at the district or block level.
  - **Political Interference:**
    - Unlike elected officials at other levels, **sarpanchs can be dismissed while in office.**
    - Gram Panchayat Acts in many States have **empowered district-level bureaucrats, mostly district Collectors, to act against sarpanchs** for official misconduct.
      - For instance, **the Telangana Gram Panchayat Act allows District Collectors to suspend and dismiss incumbent sarpanchs.**
    - Across the country, there are regular instances of bureaucrats deciding to dismiss sarpanchs from office which is not merely a legal provision.
      - In Telangana, more than **100 sarpanchs have been dismissed from office in recent years.**

- **Lack of Trained Personnel:**
  - Lack of trained personnel is a **significant issue facing panchayats in India.**
  - Many panchayat members lack the necessary training and skills to effectively govern their communities.
  - This can lead to **poor decision-making, lack of accountability, and inefficiency** in the functioning of panchayats.
  - **Some reasons for this lack of training include:**
    - Limited access to training opportunities for panchayat members, particularly in rural and remote areas.
    - Insufficient budget allocation for training and capacity building of panchayat members.
    - Limited awareness among panchayat members about the importance of training and capacity building for effective governance.
  - **Inadequate Participation:**
    - There is often low participation from citizens in panchayat meetings and decision-making processes.
    - Some possible reasons include **lack of awareness about the meetings, lack of trust in the government or local leaders**, lack of time or resources for citizens to attend, or lack of interest in the issues being discussed.
    - Additionally, **some citizens may not feel that their voices will be heard** or that their concerns will be addressed, which can discourage participation.
  - **Corruption:**
    - Corruption is a major issue in many panchayats, with funds and resources being misused or embezzled.
    - Local government officials, such as **those in charge of land records and building permits, are often involved in corrupt practices**, such as accepting bribes in exchange for services.
    - This can lead to **delays and increased costs for citizens, and can also contribute to the illegal acquisition of land** and other resources.
    - Additionally, **corruption at the local level can impede economic development** and the delivery of essential services, such as healthcare and education.
  - **Gender Bias:**
    - **Women and marginalized groups are often under-represented in panchayats** and face discrimination in their participation and decision-making.
    - One **major barrier to women's participation in panchayats is societal attitudes** that view women as inferior and less capable than men.
    - This can lead to **a lack of support for women who seek to become panchayat leaders** and can make it difficult for them to gain the necessary skills and experience.
    - Another barrier is the **lack of reserved seats for women in the panchayat.**

■ Though India has introduced **reservations for women in the Panchayat Raj Institutions**, the reservation percentage varies from state to state and not all states have implemented it.

### Looking Forward

- **Increasing Central and State Government Allocations to Panchayats:**
  - This can be done through the transfer of funds directly to the panchayats, rather than routing them through intermediaries.
- **Decentralizing Decision-Making:**
  - **Panchayats should be empowered to make decisions about the allocation** and use of funds, rather than having decisions made for them by higher levels of government.
- **Building Capacity of Panchayats:**
  - This can be done **through training and capacity building programs for panchayat members and staff**, to enable them to effectively manage financial resources and implement development projects.
- **Addressing Gender Biasness:**
  - Gender bias at the **panchayat level in India can be addressed** by providing training and resources for women seeking to become panchayat leaders, and addressing cultural attitudes that perpetuate gender inequality.
- **Increasing Transparency and Accountability:**
  - Transparency and Accountability issues can be **addressed by Conducting regular meetings, Publicising information, Implementing an e-governance system**, Whistleblower protection and through social Audit.

### Additional information

#### Related Initiatives

- **SVAMITVA Scheme:**
  - **Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas (SVAMITVA)** scheme was launched on **National Panchayati Raj Day 2020** to enable economic progress of Rural India by providing “Record of Rights” to every rural household owner.
- **e-Gram Swaraj e-Financial Management System:**
  - e-Gram Swaraj is a Simplified Work Based Accounting Application for **Panchayati Raj**.
- **Geo-Tagging of Assets:**
  - The Ministry has developed “**mActionSoft**”, a mobile based solution to help in capturing photos with **Geo-Tags (i.e., GPS Coordinates) for the works which have assets as an output**.
- **Citizen Charter:**
  - In order to focus on the commitment of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) towards its Citizens in respects of Standard of Services, the Ministry has provided platform to upload Citizen Charter document with the slogan “**Meri Panchayat Mera Adhikaar – Jan Sevaayein Hamaare Dwaar**”.
- **Revamped Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (2022-23 to 2025-26):**



- The focus of the scheme of **Revamped RGSAis** on re-imagining Panchayati Raj Institutions as vibrant centers of local self-governance with special focus on **Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs)** at grassroot level adopting thematic approach through concerted and collaborative efforts of Central Ministries and State Line departments and other Stakeholders with 'Whole of Government and Whole of Society' approach.

### Examine the Issues and challenges in the implementation of POCSO Act.

- The Constitution of India has **incorporated several provisions to protect the rights of children and India has also been a signatory to landmark international instruments**, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, etc. However, India lacked any **dedicated provision against child sexual abuse**.
- **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012** came into effect on 14th November 2012 which was enacted in consequence to India's ratification of the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992**. The aim of this special law is to **address offences of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children**, which were either not specifically defined or in adequately penalised.

### Issues with the POCSO Act

- **Issue with the Investigation:**
  - **Low Representation of Women in the Police Force:**
    - The POCSO Act **provides for recording the statement of the affected child by a woman sub-inspector** at the child's residence or place of choice.
    - But it is **practically impossible to comply with this provision when the number of women in the police force is just 10%**, and many police stations hardly have women staff.
  - **Lapses in the Investigation:**
    - Though there is a provision to record statements using audio-video means, however, **there are still reports of lapses in the investigation and preservation of crime scenes** in some cases,
      - In **Shafhi Mohammad vs The State of Himachal Pradesh (2018)**, the Supreme Court held in cases of heinous crimes, it is the duty of the investigating officer to photograph and videograph the scene of crime and to preserve the same as evidence.
      - In the **absence of proper infrastructure to ensure the integrity of electronic evidence**, the admissibility of evidence recorded using any audio-video means will always remain a challenge.
  - **No Examination by Judicial Magistrates:**

- Another provision of the act **mandates the recording of the statement of the prosecutrix by a judicial magistrate.**
- Though such statements are recorded in most cases, **judicial magistrates are neither called for cross-examination** during trial nor are those who retract their statement punished. In such a scenario, such statements get nullified.
- **Issue of Age Determination:**
  - Though age determination of a juvenile delinquent is guided by the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act**, no such provision exists under the POCSO Act for juvenile victims.
    - In **Jarnail Singh vs State of Haryana (2013) case**, the **Supreme Court held that the given statutory provision should also be the basis** to help determine age even for a child who is a victim of crime.
    - However, in absence of any change in the law or even specific directions, **the investigating officers (IOs) continue to rely on the date of birth recorded in school admission-withdrawal registers.**
    - In most cases, parents (in the absence of hospital or any other authentic records) are not able to defend the age in the court.
  - Age estimation **based on medical opinion is generally so wide in scope** that in most cases minors are proved to be major.
    - Once a minor is proved to be a major, **the probability of acquittal increases based on other factors** such as consent or no injury to private parts.
  - **Delays in the Filing of Charges:**
    - As per the POCSO Act, **the investigation of a case under the act is to be completed within a period of one month** from the date of the commission of the offence, or from the date of the reporting of the offence.
    - However, in practice, the **completion of investigation often takes longer than one month due to various reasons** such as lack of adequate resources, delays in obtaining forensic evidence, or the complexity of the case.
    - This can **result in delays in the filing of charges and the commencement of trial**, which can affect the speed and effectiveness of justice for the victim.
  - **No Conditions to Prove Recent Intercourse:**
    - Courts are required to presume that the **accused committed the offence under the POCSO Act.**
    - The POCSO Act does not impose any conditions on the prosecution, contrary to the **Indian Evidence Act**, which clearly requires the prosecution to establish recent intercourse, as well as the consent of the prosecutrix.
    - However, **it has been observed that even after the minor age of the victim is proved**, no such presumption is taken up by the court during trial.

- Under such circumstances, **the expected increase in the conviction rate is unlikely to be achieved.**

### Looking Forward

- **Adequate Resources:**
  - The government **should provide adequate resources such as funding and personnel to investigating agencies** handling POCSO cases. This will help to ensure that investigations are conducted in a timely and efficient manner.
- **Training for Investigating Officers:**
  - Investigating officers **should be provided with proper training on the handling of POCSO cases.** This can include **training on the proper techniques for collecting and preserving evidence**, interviewing child victims and witnesses, and the legal requirements of the POCSO Act.
- **Special Courts for POCSO Cases:**
  - Setting up **special courts for POCSO cases can help to ensure that cases are handled promptly and efficiently.** This will also **help to speed up the trial process**, which can be important for the victim and their family.
- **Timely Medical Examination:**
  - The **medical examination of a child victim should be conducted as soon as possible after the abuse**, in order to establish recent intercourse.
- **Public Awareness:**
  - Raising public awareness about the POCSO Act, the importance of reporting child sexual abuse, and the rights of child victims can help to increase the reporting of cases and improve the investigation process.
- **Interagency Coordination:**
  - Coordination between different agencies such as police, child welfare committee, and medical professionals can help to ensure that cases are handled in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.
- **Monitoring and Review:**
  - The government **should establish a system of monitoring and review to ensure that investigations are conducted in accordance** with the POCSO Act and that the rights of child victims are protected.

### Additional Information

#### Features of the POCSO Act

- **Gender-Neutral Nature:**
  - The Act recognizes that **both girls and boys can be victims of sexual abuse** and that such abuse is a crime regardless of the gender of the victim.
    - This is in line with the principle that all children have the right to protection from sexual abuse and exploitation, and that laws should not discriminate based on gender.
  - Even though the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** has not published data on male and female victims separately, in Chhattisgarh, **male child victims accounted for about eight in every 1,000 POCSO cases (0.8%).**

- It shows that the **sexual exploitation of male children is also a serious issue** that has been largely unreported which is addressed by this act.
- **Ease in Reporting Cases:**
  - There is **insufficient general awareness now to report cases of sexual exploitation of children not only by individuals** but also by institutions as non-reporting has been made a specific offence under the POCSO Act. This has made it comparatively difficult to hide offences against children.
- **Explicit Definition of Terms:**
  - The storage of child pornography material has **been made a new offence.**
  - Further, the **offence of 'sexual assault' has been defined in explicit terms**(with increased minimum punishment) unlike an abstract definition of 'outraging modesty of a woman' in the **Indian Penal Code.**

#### Related Initiatives

- **Child Abuse Prevention and Investigation Unit**
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**
- **The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**
- **Child Marriage Prohibition Act (2006)**
- **Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, 2016**

Urban financing for India is a case of a top down approach that is over dependent on technocentric solutions and capital-intensive technologies. Comment

- **Urban finance** predominantly comes from the government. 48%, 24% and 15% of urban capital expenditure needs are derived from the central, State, and city governments, respectively. **Public-private partnership projects** contribute 3% and commercial debt 2%.
- Various reports have estimated a huge demand for funding urban infrastructure. The **Isher Judge Ahluwalia report** says that by 2030, nearly ₹ 2 lakh crore would be required. A **McKinsey report on urbanisation** has a figure of \$1.2 trillion, or ₹ 90 lakh crore.

#### World Bank report on urbanisation in India

- It estimates that nearly ₹ 70 lakh crore would be needed for investment in urban India to meet the growing demands of the population.

- It suggests **improving the fiscal base and creditworthiness** of the Indian cities. Cities must institute a **buoyant revenue base**. They must be able to recover the cost of providing its services.
- This report points out that nearly 85% of government revenue is from the cities.
- Its emphasis is on the levying of more burdens in the form of user charges on utilities, etc.
- It focuses on **private investments**
- **State-level management of urban water and sewerage functions** may be devolved in a time-bound manner.
- An improved **urban legal framework** that includes a stable and certain **fiscal transfer regime, accords financial powers** to ULBs will determine the future of cities.

### Issues with urbanisation in India

- The basic problem with the reports on urbanisation in India is that they are made using a **top to bottom approach**. They have too much of a focus on **technocentric solutions using very high capital-intensive technologies**.
- Cities primarily are run by **parastatals**. The city governments hardly have any role to play in the smooth functioning of such parastatals.

### Looking forward

- Plans must be **made from below** by engaging with the people and identifying their needs.
- **Empowering** the city governments and the people at large is the need of the day.
- The **national task force to review the 74th Constitutional Amendment by K.C. Sivaramakrishnan** provides many suggestions. It asks for empowering the people, transferring subjects to the city governments.
- It suggests that 10% of the income-tax collected from cities be given back to them and ensuring that this **corpus fund** was utilised only for infrastructure building.
- There is a need to improve urban governance. Regular elections should be held in cities and there must be empowerment through the transferring of the **three Fs: finances, functions, and functionaries**.

Machine learning and artificial intelligence are powerful technologies that have the potential to revolutionize a wide range of industries. However, there are some important challenges that need to be addressed. Explain.

- Machine learning is a method of teaching computers to learn from data, without being explicitly programmed. It involves using algorithms to analyze and draw insights from data, and then using those insights to make predictions or decisions. There are three main types of machine learning: supervised learning, unsupervised learning, and reinforcement learning.



- Artificial intelligence, or AI, is a broader term that encompasses both machine learning and other techniques for building intelligent systems. At its core, AI is the simulation of human intelligence in machines. It encompasses a wide range of techniques, including natural language processing, computer vision, and decision-making.

### Challenges Encountered

- One of the biggest challenges is ensuring that these technologies are fair and unbiased. Because machine learning algorithms are trained on large amounts of data, they can inadvertently perpetuate the biases that are present in that data. This can lead to **unfair or discriminatory outcomes**.
- One major challenge is the **availability of high-quality data**. Machine learning algorithms rely on large amounts of data to learn and make predictions. However, obtaining high-quality data can be difficult and time-consuming. Data may be incomplete, inconsistent, or biased, which can negatively impact the performance of the machine learning model. Additionally, the data may not be representative of the real-world environment in which the model will be used, which can lead to poor performance when the model is deployed.
- A further challenge is the **complexity of the models**. As machine learning models become more advanced, they can become increasingly complex and difficult to understand. This can make it difficult for practitioners to interpret the results of a model and make decisions based on those results. Additionally, complex models can be more difficult to debug and optimize, making it challenging to improve the model's performance.
- Another challenge is the **ability of the model to generalize** to new data. A model that is trained on a specific set of data may not perform well when presented with new, unseen data. This is known as overfitting, and it can be difficult to address without additional data or modifications to the model.
- There are also **ethical and societal challenges** to consider. As artificial intelligence becomes more sophisticated, there are concerns about its impact on privacy and accountability. For example, as more data is collected and analyzed, there is a risk of privacy violations and the misuse of data. Ensuring that artificial intelligence is developed and used in a responsible and ethical manner is crucial to its long-term success.
- Another challenge is **interpretability**, as machine learning models are often considered as "black boxes" which it is hard to understand how they make their predictions. This can make it difficult to trust the results of the model, particularly in sensitive areas such as medical diagnosis or credit risk assessment.
- Finally, there is the question of **job displacement**. As machines become better at performing certain tasks, there is a concern that they will replace human workers. This is particularly true in industries where repetitive and manual tasks are common, such as manufacturing and transportation. However, it's important to note that these technologies also have the potential to create new jobs and increase productivity.
- It's also important to consider that machine learning and AI can augment human capabilities, rather than replace them. For example, AI-assisted medical

diagnosis can help doctors make more accurate diagnoses, which can lead to better patient outcomes. Similarly, self-driving cars can reduce the number of accidents caused by human error, making our roads safer for everyone.

It's important that we continue to invest in research and development in these fields, to ensure that we can fully realize their potential and address any negative impacts that may arise.

Examine the relationship between the media and good governance. Identify the main opportunities and challenges in engaging in this area.

Good governance links government to the notion of responsibility for and to the citizenry as opposed to the traditional idea of authority over a nation--legitimacy emanating from popular assent to and participation in government, which is concerned with the welfare of its citizens. The role of the media in promoting good governance is clear. All aspects of good governance are facilitated by a strong and independent mediascape within a society. Only when journalists are free to monitor, investigate and criticize the public administration's policies and actions can good governance take hold. Freedom of speech and expression subject to reasonable restrictions is a fundamental right guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. India celebrates its freedom of press which has been played an important role in the evolution of the Indian society over the decades. The freedom of speech is bolstered by the Right to Information. Media is called the **fourth estate** of democracy.

### **Role of Media**

1. **Source of information:** An unbiased information is important for a democracy and its growth. Media help in providing critical information to citizens. E.g data on economy, health, education etc. must be correct and accurate without any bias toward government.
2. **Educate:** Media is important to educate people on issues that are of utmost important for the society. E.g Increasing number of rape cases are threat to society. It is important to report exact number of cases and help in sensitising the society.
3. **Awareness:** Media make society aware of their democratic rights and fight the three institutions of democracy.
4. **Ensuring Justice:** Media plays an important role in ensuring justice and benefits of the government policies reaching the weaker sections of the society. They act as a chain between the government and the citizens of the country.
5. **Watchdog:** Media reporting on public affairs and investigations into wrongdoing in the administration of public affairs is must for a healthy democracy. This includes exposing frauds or corruption cases that personally benefit politicians. This help citizens to vote the best government defeating corrupt and dishonest government.
6. **Good Governance:** Media plays an important role in audit of the government policies and spending. An unbiased media is important for transparent reporting.
7. **Accountability:** Media ensure accountability of government by exposing bad state of democracy. This lead to questioning of government by the people leading to accountability and answerability.

8. **Dissemination of government policies:** Media is important for spreading and disseminating various government policies and initiatives. E.g. media played an important role in spreading awareness about Swachh Bharat and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao.

**Challenges Faced by Media:**

1. **Fake News:** Seen as a worldwide problem, the dissemination of unverified and false information to people especially through social media is reducing the credibility of the media.
2. **Yellow Journalism:** Sensationalisation of news items and ignoring the key issues like poverty and employment have dented the role of media in good governance.
3. **Paid News:** The media houses are alleged to favour a particular political party/person/organisation in exchange for some considerations.
4. **Local Language Media:** It is alleged that more masala news is promoted in the local media compared to the national media. Local correspondents often lack formal training and their sole qualification is their place of residence.

**Suggestions:**

1. Media Houses should follow the Media ethics in their functioning. The guidelines given by News Broadcasters Associations can be made mandatory in this regard.
2. Awareness generation among citizens to verify the information received from credible sources like the Press Information Bureau.
3. Promoting innovative tools like WhatsApp have restricted the number of forwards at one time for a particular message to curb spreading of fake news.

If the media are to function in the public interest, governments have to protect the independent functioning of the media and allow various viewpoints to flourish in society. The checks and balances which media ensures by reporting issues in an objective manner can go a long way in ensuring that governance by government would be fair and fruitful.

[Do you think the entry of foreign universities in India could be a game changer?](#)

Internationalisation of Indian higher education is a salient **feature of National Education Policy 2020**. The draft regulations of the UGC on Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India 2023 pave the way for the entry of foreign universities into the groves of higher education in the country.

**A step forward for higher education in India**

- **Encourage competition:** This step would encourage competition mainly between existing private universities and foreign branch institutions.
- **Promotes new ideas:** about curriculum, pedagogy, and governance to Indian higher education.
- **Opportunity to learn business:** Foreign countries and universities will be providing opportunities for home campus students to learn about Indian business, society, and culture to participate in growing trade and other relations.

- It would be helpful in addressing skill requirements and providing examples of different approaches to higher education.
- The number of Indian students opting for higher education overseas grows annually and their abroad spending is set to grow from current annual \$28 billion to \$80 billion by 2024. Subsequently, it will help retain the best of Indian talent by **controlling the problem of brain drain**.

### Challenges

- It will **not be easy to attract** foreign universities to India and even more difficult to create the conditions for them to flourish.
- There is also an issue of **dilution of standards of teaching** and delivery in a foreign campus. There is a lot of investment in training local staff to adhere to standards and without a strong legal and financial structure it becomes a risky plan.
- A big challenge will be India's "well-known" bureaucracy, especially the **multiple regulators**.
- It would be difficult to ensure that the degrees offered by the foreign branch campuses would be accepted by the employers in the home countries of the campuses.
- The opaque salary structure of private higher education institutions remains a cause of concern to many and, in the **absence of tangible recruitment rules**, the gap would further widen once foreign branch campuses are operational in India.
- The challenge lies with **Humanities and Social Sciences** where multiple interpretations are popular, pushing the boundaries of knowledge. The foreign faculty members may find it difficult to balance state policies, sensibilities and laissez-faire intellectual standpoint.

Education can be an important source of soft power if it is pursued in the right direction. Lessons can be learnt from our **Yoga culture** which has gained tremendous recognition worldwide.

### Can the US dollar be supplanted as the world's currency?

The **dominant role of the dollar in the global economy provides the US a disproportionate amount of influence** over other economies. The US has for long used imposition of sanctions as a tool to achieve foreign policy goals.

#### Challenges with Dollarisation

- **Economic Sovereignty:**
  - Many countries believe that their **economic sovereignty is threatened by the dominance of the dollar in global trade**, as it gives the US government a significant amount of control over the global economy.
- **Currency Manipulation:**
  - The dominance of the dollar in global trade **allows the US government to manipulate its currency** to gain an economic advantage over other countries.

- **Risk of Financial Crisis:**
  - The dominance of the dollar in global trade also **increases the risk of a global financial crisis**, as a crisis in the US economy can have a ripple effect on the global economy.
- **Dependence on US:**
  - Global trade is largely conducted in dollars, so **countries that deal with the US a lot may become too dependent on the US economy.**
- **Geo-Politics:**
  - **Some countries wish to reduce their dependence on the US dollar** as it is seen as a way to reduce the US influence on their economy, and in some cases, as a form of resistance against the US dominance.

#### Advantages of Dollarisation

- **Reducing Dependence on the US Dollar:**
  - By using other currencies or a basket of currencies, **countries can reduce their dependence on the US dollar and the US economy**, which can help to mitigate the impact of economic and political changes in the US on their own economies.
- **Improving Economic Stability:**
  - By diversifying their reserves, **countries can reduce their exposure to currency fluctuations and interest rate changes**, which can help to improve economic stability and reduce the risk of financial crises.
- **Increasing Trade and Investment:**
  - By using other currencies, **countries can increase trade and investment with other countries that may not have a strong relationship** with the US, which can open up new markets and opportunities for growth.
- **Reducing US monetary Policy Influence:**
  - By reducing the use of the US dollar, countries can reduce the influence of US monetary policy on their own economies.

#### Challenges with the National Currencies

- **Not Fully Convertible:**
  - The challenge for national currencies is that **these are not fully convertible**. Thus, despite the rise of alternate systems of trade, and multiple currency circulation systems, the dollar still dominates.
- **Currency Fluctuations:**
  - National currencies can **fluctuate in value relative to the dollar**, which can make it difficult for countries to plan their economic policies and for businesses to make long-term investments.
- **Limited Use of National Currencies in International Trade:**
  - The dollar is **widely used in international trade, making it difficult for national currencies to compete**. This can make it **harder for countries to conduct trade with one another** and for businesses to expand internationally.
- **Dependence on the Dollar:**



- **Many countries are heavily dependent on the dollar for trade and financial transactions**, which can make them vulnerable to changes in the value of the dollar and to the policies of the US government.
- **Financial Instability:**
  - The dollar's dominance in the international financial system can **contribute to financial instability in other countries**, as they may be more susceptible to financial crises.
- **Monetary Sovereignty:**
  - The **hegemonic role of the dollar limits the monetary sovereignty of other countries** by making it difficult for them to use monetary policy to stabilize their economies.

#### Steps taken by Governments of Different Countries

- **Global Efforts:**
  - **Bilateral Currency Swaps:**
    - Bilateral **currency swaps** among **ASEAN countries**, China, Japan, South Korea are USD380 billion and rising.
    - Similarly, the South African rand is used by several African countries.
    - The Latin American countries are moving towards greater inter-regional trade.
  - **Initiation of Trade in National Currencies:**
    - **Asian central banks have over USD 400 billion of local currency swap lines** and trade amongst themselves.
    - The **BRICS's New Development Bank** encourages trade and investment in national currencies by disbursing up to 50% of its loans in national currencies since 2015.
    - China developed the Renminbi in 2015 and offers clearing and settlement services for **participants in cross-border yuan payments and trade**.
    - Russian banks have started using the China-based Cross-Border Interbank Payment System for international payments, as they are debarred from the **SWIFT international system**.
  - **India's Efforts:**
    - In July 2022, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) unveiled a rupee settlement system for international trade** by allowing special vostro accounts in designated Indian banks, a step towards internationalising the rupee.

#### Looking Forward

- **Diversifying Foreign Exchange Reserves:**
  - Governments can reduce their dependence on the dollar by **holding a greater proportion of their foreign exchange reserves** in other currencies, such as the Euro or the Chinese Yuan.
- **Encouraging the Use of Domestic Currencies in International Trade:**
  - Governments can **promote the use of their own currencies in international trade by providing incentives for businesses** to use them.

- Since 2019, **India has been paying Russia for fuel, oil, minerals** and specific defence imports in rupees on an informal basis.
- **Developing Alternative Payment Systems:**
  - Governments can **work to develop alternative payment systems**, such as the Chinese-led **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank**, that are not dependent on the dollar.
- **Building Economic Alliances:**
  - Governments can **form economic alliances with other countries to reduce their dependence on the dollar.**
- **Investing in Other Currencies:**

- Governments may **invest in other currencies to reduce the risk of currency fluctuations** or to counter the hegemony of the dollar.

De-dollarisation hence **refers to reducing the dollar's dominance of global markets. It is a process of substituting the US dollar** as the currency used for Trading oil and/ or other commodities, Buying US dollars for the **forex reserves**, Bilateral trade agreements, Dollar-denominated assets. The **de-dollarisation is driven by the desire to insulate the Central Banks of the Countries** from geopolitical risks, where the status of the US dollar as a reserve currency can be used as an offensive weapon.

India and Pakistan signed the Indus Waters Treaty on September 19, 1960, after nine years of negotiations. However time is ripe enough to revise and modification of the same. Discuss.

#### Indus Waters Treaty

- India and Pakistan signed the IWT in September, 1960 after nine years of negotiations, **with the World Bank being a signatory** to the pact.
- The treaty sets out a **mechanism for cooperation and information exchange between the two sides** on the use of the water of the Indus River and its five tributaries **Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Jhelum, and Chenab.**

#### Major Provisions

- **Water Sharing:**
  - The treaty prescribed **how water from the six rivers of the Indus River System would be shared between India and Pakistan.**
  - It allocated the three western rivers—Indus, Chenab and Jhelum—to Pakistan for unrestricted use, barring certain non-consumptive, agricultural and domestic uses by India and the three Eastern rivers—Ravi, Beas and Sutlej—were allocated to India for unrestricted usage. This means that 80% of the share of water went to Pakistan, while leaving the rest 20% of water for use by India.
- **Permanent Indus Commission:**

- It also required both the countries to establish a Permanent Indus Commission constituted by permanent commissioners on both sides.
- According to the provisions **of the IWT**, the Permanent Indus Commission is required to meet at least once a year.
- **Rights over Rivers:**
  - While Pakistan has rights over the waters of Jhelum, Chenab and Indus, Annexure C of the IWT allows India certain agricultural uses, while Annexure D allows it to **build 'run of the river' hydropower projects**, meaning projects not requiring live storage of water.
- **Dispute Resolution Mechanism:**
  - The IWT provides a three-step dispute resolution mechanism under **Article IX of the Indus Waters Treaty**, under which “questions” on both sides **can be resolved at the Permanent Commission**, or can also be taken up at the inter-government level.
  - In case of unresolved questions or “differences” between the countries on water-sharing, such as technical differences, either side can approach the **World Bank to appoint a Neutral Expert (NE)** to come to a decision.
- And eventually, if either party is not satisfied with the NE's decision or in case of “disputes” in the interpretation and extent of the treaty, matters can be referred to a **Court of Arbitration**.

#### Review needed

- Furthermore, it is time for India and Pakistan, as well as other countries in the region, to develop conservation policies rather than focusing on increasing storage capacity, as they have done for so long. Dams are complicated environmental challenges. They are costly to construct, entail habitat loss and heritage destruction, and require the evacuation of entire communities. Climate change is causing the melting of ice in the Tibetan plateau, which researchers believe will affect the river in future. Hence, water must be treated as a valuable commodity. It is critical to establish a joint organization with representatives from both countries, whose functions would include identifying the basin's short- and long-term supply capacity, as well as its integrated development, infrastructure development, and coordination of the various technical agencies' activities.
- Additionally, political factors must be taken into account, especially given the current state of distrust in India-Pakistan relations and their long history of resentment. Hence the two countries should seek international assistance, possibly with the World Bank as the primary negotiator for a comprehensive water sharing and utilization arrangement.

#### Additional Info


### The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)

- The distribution of waters of the Indus and its tributaries between India and Pakistan is governed by the Indus Water Treaty (IWT).
- Was signed on Sept 19, 1960, between India, Pakistan and a representative of World Bank after eight years of negotiations.
- Partition of India cut across the Indus river basin, which has the Indus river, plus five of its main tributaries.

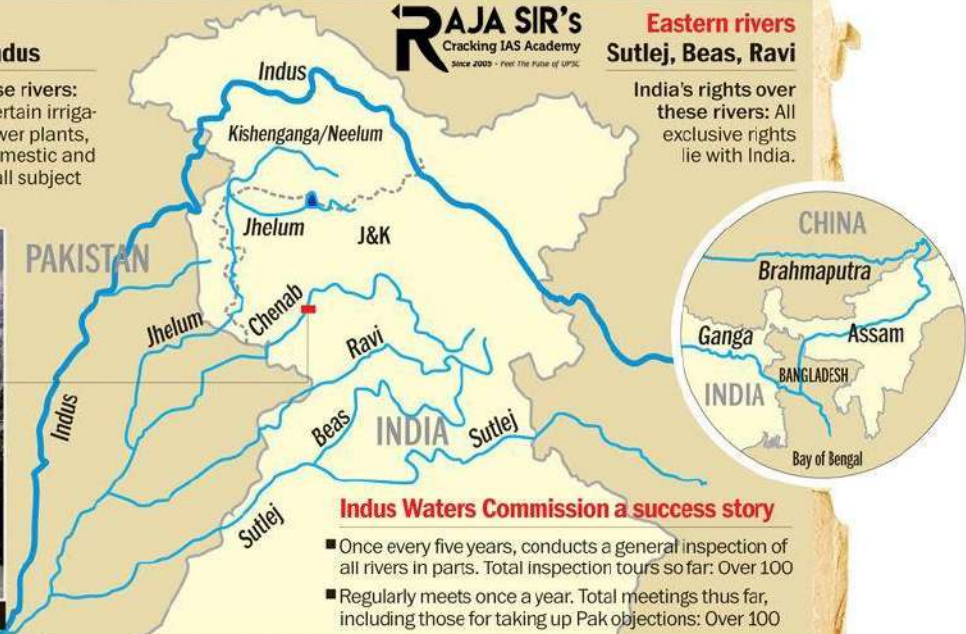
#### Western rivers

**Chenab, Jhelum, Indus**

India's rights over these rivers: Limited – can set up certain irrigation, run-of-the-river power plants, very limited storage, domestic and non-consumptive use, all subject to conditions



Baglihar dam on Chenab



RAJA SIR'S  
Cracking IAS Academy  
Since 2005 - Feel The Pulse of UPSC

#### Eastern rivers

**Sutlej, Beas, Ravi**

India's rights over these rivers: All exclusive rights lie with India.

#### Indus Waters Commission a success story

- Once every five years, conducts a general inspection of all rivers in parts. Total inspection tours so far: Over 100
- Regularly meets once a year. Total meetings thus far, including those for taking up Pak objections: Over 100

What are carbon markets in agriculture?. How prepared is the Indian agriculture sector in carbon trading?

### Carbon Trading in agriculture

- Carbon trading in the **agricultural sector refers to the buying and selling of carbon credits** that are generated by practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or increase carbon sequestration on farms and other agricultural lands.
  - These practices include things like conservation tillage, agroforestry, and other sustainable land management techniques.
- The concept of carbon trading in the **agricultural sector is seen as a way to provide financial incentives for farmers** to adopt environmentally friendly practices, which can help to mitigate the effects of climate change.

### Challenges of Trading Carbon Sequestered by Agriculture

- **Difficulty of Accurately Measuring and Verifying Carbon Sequestration:**
  - This is due to the complex nature of the carbon cycle in soils and the difficulty of distinguishing the effects of specific farming practices from other factors such as weather and soil type.
- **Issue of Revenue:**



- As a result of the adoption of carbon abatement practices, the expected additional revenue and the impact on crop yield must also be considered.
- A farmer will adopt a carbon abatement practice if **he expects that revenue from the sale of carbon credits would compensate for the loss in crop yield, if any, due to its adoption.**
- **Lack of Reliable Data:**
  - There is **alack of accurate and consistent data on carbon sequestration** by agricultural practices, making it difficult to quantify and trade carbon credits.
- **Complex Regulations:**
  - The **regulatory framework for carbon trading in India is complex and not yet fully developed**, making it difficult for farmers and other stakeholders to participate in carbon markets.
- **High Transaction Costs:**
  - The **costs associated with measuring, verifying, and trading carbon credits can be high**, making it difficult for small farmers and other stakeholders to participate in carbon markets.
- **Limited Demand:**
  - There is **currently limited demand for carbon credits from the agriculture sector**, making it difficult for farmers and other stakeholders to find buyers for their credits.
- **Lack of Awareness:**
  - Many farmers and other stakeholders in India **lack awareness of the opportunities and benefits of carbon trading**, and how to participate in carbon markets.

#### Looking forward

- **Evolving a Transparent Process of Quantification and Verification:**
  - The first step towards **creating a market for sequestered carbon is to evolve a transparent process of quantification and verification** of additional carbon generated by different farm practices.
  - It is possible to **assess the quantum of carbon sequestered using artificial intelligence and remote sensing.**
- **Facilitating Participation in Carbon Trading:**
  - In the voluntary carbon market, **selling carbon credits is a tedious process for individual farmers.**
  - Nonetheless, their participation in carbon trading **can be facilitated by collectives such as Farmer Producer Organization (FPOs), and cooperatives that can organise farmers to adopt carbon abatement practices** and sell the accrued carbon credits on their behalf.
    - A few agro-tech companies, for example, 'Boomitra' and 'Nurture. Farm', organise farmers through intermediaries to facilitate their participation in voluntary carbon markets.
  - **Creating Awareness among Farming Communities:**



- There is a **need to create awareness among farming communities on the benefits of the adoption of improved agricultural practices** and participation in carbon markets.

Additional Info

Benefits of Carbon Trading in the Agricultural Sector

- **Additional Revenue:**
  - Participating in carbon offset projects can **provide farmers with additional revenue through the sale of carbon credits.**
- **Climate Change Mitigation:**
  - Adopting carbon abatement farming practices can **help to sequester carbon in the soil, which can contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions** and help to mitigate the effects of climate change.
- **Soil Health Improvement:**
  - Many carbon abatement farming practices, such as conservation tillage and agroforestry, **can improve soil health, which can result in increased crop yields and improved water retention.**
- **Biodiversity Conservation:**
  - Some carbon abatement farming practices, such as agroforestry, can also **help to promote biodiversity and support the survival of wild species.**
- **Sustainable Land Use:**
  - Carbon offset projects can **provide an incentive for farmers to adopt sustainable land-use practices**, which can help to conserve natural resources and reduce environmental impacts.
- **Rural Development:**
  - Carbon trading in the agricultural sector can **also promote rural development, by creating jobs and income-generating opportunities** in rural areas, and by supporting the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in the sector.