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CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

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News Analysis

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February 2025

1. IMPORTANT TOPICS OF THE MONTH

1.1	Tax

Why in news?

The Income Tax Bill, 2025 is expected to be tabled soon that will introduce changes in Standard Deduction, which will go on to benefit individual salaried taxpayers and pensioners.

What is Tax?

- A tax is a ***mandatory financial charge or levy*** imposed by the government on individuals, businesses, or organizations to fund public expenditures.

- It is enforced under the authority of law, and non-compliance leads to legal penalties.

- **Legality** – ***Article 265*** of the Indian Constitution states that "*No tax shall be levied or collected except by authority of law.*"

  - o **Union List (Entry 82-92A)** – Empowers the central government to impose taxes like Income Tax, Corporate Tax, and GST on interstate trade.

  - o **State List (Entry 46-63)** – Allows states to levy *Property Tax, Excise on Liquor, and GST on intrastate trade*.

  - o **Concurrent List (Entry 35)** – Includes *Stamp Duty* and other shared taxes.

- **Tax evasion** – Is a criminal offense under *Income Tax Act, 1961 (Section 276C)* and can lead to *penalties or imprisonment*.

- **GST fraud or evasion** – Is punishable under GST Act, 2017 (Section 122-138).

What are the types of taxes in India?

Direct Taxes
- Taxes levied directly on individuals or organizations and the burden of taxation cannot be transferred to others.
- Direct Taxes (Income Tax, Corporate Tax) are governed by *Income Tax Act, 1961*.
o **Income** Tax – Levied on an individual's earnings based on slabs.
o **Corporate Tax** – Imposed on the net profits of companies.
o **Capital Gains Tax** – Charged on profits from the sale of assets like property or stocks.
o **Securities Transaction Tax (STT)** – Applied to trades on stock exchanges.
Indirect Taxes
- Taxes *imposed on goods and services*, where the *burden can be shifted*.
- Indirect Taxes (GST, Excise and Customs) are governed by *GST Act, 2017, Customs Act, 1962*, etc.
- **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** – A comprehensive indirect tax replacing multiple previous levies.
- **Customs Duty** – Applied on imports and exports.
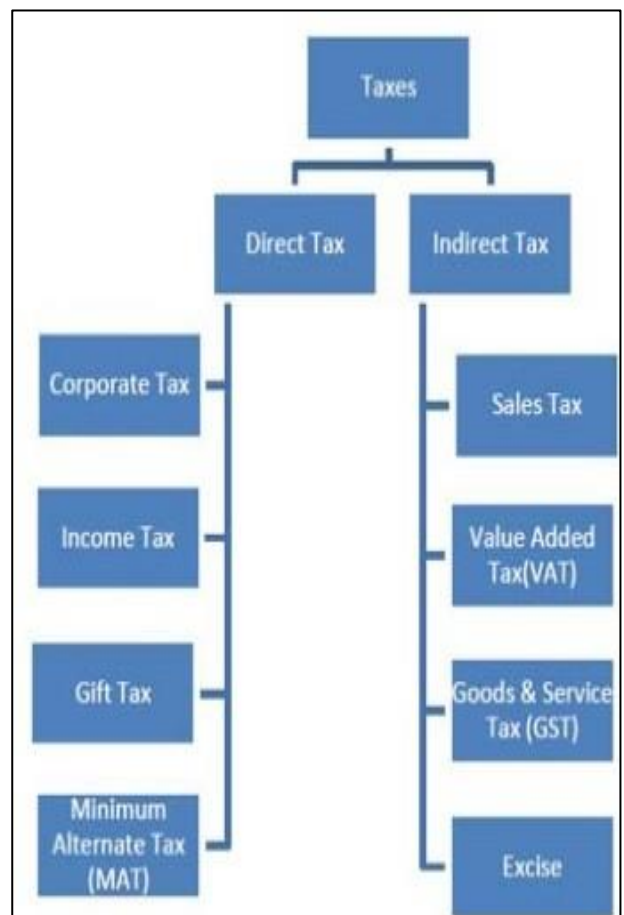
- **Excise Duty** – Previously levied on manufacturing; now mainly applies to petroleum and alcohol.

> In **Progressive Taxation**, higher earners pay a larger share (e.g., Income Tax, Corporate Tax). In **Regressive Taxation**, lower-income groups are affected more (e.g., GST, Fuel Taxes, Toll Taxes).

What are the recent reforms in taxation?

- **GST Implementation (2017)** – Unified multiple indirect taxes, reducing tax complexity.

- **Faceless Tax Assessments (2020)** – Aims to reduce corruption by making tax scrutiny digital.

- **Corporate Tax Cut (2019)** – Reduced corporate tax rates from 30% to 22% for existing firms and 15% for new manufacturing firms.

- **New Income Tax Regime (2020)** – Introduced lower tax rates with fewer exemptions.

- **New Income Tax Regime (Budget 2025-26)** – Incomes up to 12 lakh rupees are exempt from taxation under the new regime.

- **Rationalization of Direct Tax Code** – Ongoing reforms to simplify tax laws and reduce litigation.

What are the impacts of the Revised Income Tax Regime?

> No Tax for people earning below 12 lakh crore

Economic Impact

- **Boost to Consumption** – _Higher disposable income_ can _increase demand_ for goods and services, particularly in urban areas.

- **Multiplier Effect** – Increased spending can _stimulate production and job creation_, benefiting industries like retail, real estate.

- **Fiscal Cost** – The estimated cost of tax exemptions is around _1 lakh crore rupees_, potentially affecting government revenue.

Social Impact

- **Middle-Class Relief** – Provides _financial relief_ to the middle class, improving their savings and investment capacity.

- **Widening Inequality Concerns** – High-income groups still benefit more from tax cuts, while lower-income groups primarily bear the indirect tax burden.

- **Encouragement for Formal Employment** – Lower tax rates could _incentivize individuals to move towards formal jobs_ where income is taxable.

Impacts of the Revised Income Tax Regime: Economic Impact, Social Impact, Behavioral and Compliance Impact, Business and Investment Impact, Impact on Government Revenue, Fiscal Impacts

Business and Investment Impact

- **Increased Savings and Investment** – Higher disposable income may _encourage household savings_ in financial instruments like _mutual funds, PPF and insurance_.

- **Sectoral Growth** – Increased spending can benefit sectors like automobiles, housing, tourism, and consumer goods.

- **Impact on MSMEs** – Small businesses may benefit from increased consumer demand, leading to higher sales and expansion opportunities.

Government Revenue and Fiscal Management

- **Short-Term Revenue Loss** – Reduction in tax collection might _increase fiscal deficit concerns_.

- **Shift towards Indirect Taxes** – Lower income tax collection may push the government to _rely more on GST and excise duties_.

- **Impact on Social Sector Spending** – Reduced tax revenue may lead to _constraints in spending on health, education, and infrastructure development_.

Behavioral and Compliance Impact

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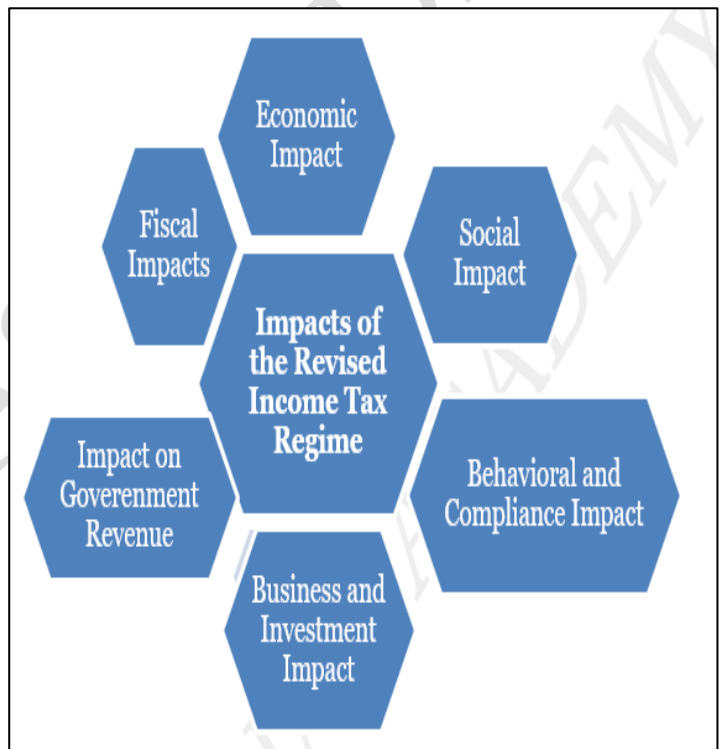
- **Simplified Tax Filing** – The revised regime, with fewer exemptions, *reduces complexities and makes tax compliance easier*.

- **Lower Tax Evasion** – A simpler structure may reduce incentives for underreporting income.

- **Financial Planning Shift** – Taxpayers might reduce reliance on tax-saving investments (like insurance and PF) due to the removal of deductions in the new regime.

What are the Challenges in Tax Administration?

- **Tax Evasion and Black Money** – A significant portion of income remains untaxed due to underreporting and offshore accounts.

  o *Informal economy* transactions *often escape the tax net.*

- **Low Tax Base** – Only around *6.68% of Indians file Income Tax Returns* (FY 2023-24).

  o *Dependence on indirect taxes* (which are regressive) is high.

- **Complex Tax Compliance** – Frequent GST rate changes and compliance burdens for small businesses.

  o Different tax slabs and multiple exemptions create administrative inefficiencies.

- **Litigation and Dispute Resolution Issues** – Over *4.8 lakh direct tax cases* are pending in various courts.

  o *Transfer pricing issues and corporate tax disputes* are time-consuming.

- **GST Implementation Challenges** – Revenue collection inconsistencies due to evasion and refund frauds.

  o States' dependence on GST compensation grants from the Centre.

What lies ahead?

- **Expand the Tax Base** – Formalize the informal sector and promote digital transactions.

  o Implement *Aadhaar-PAN linkage to track high-value transactions*.

- **Simplify Tax Laws and Compliance** – Further streamline GST slabs for better predictability.

  o Introduce a *Direct Tax Code (DTC)* to reduce ambiguities.

- **Strengthen Tax Enforcement and Reduce Evasion** – Use of AI and data analytics for better fraud detection.

  o Strengthen *anti-money laundering mechanisms* to curb black money.

- **Improve Dispute Resolution Mechanisms** – Increase the efficiency of tribunals like *ITAT (Income Tax Appellate Tribunal)*.

  o Implement *fast-track resolution schemes* for pending cases.

- **Reduce Dependence on Indirect Taxes** – Make direct taxes more progressive to reduce the burden on the poor.

  o Increase wealth and capital gains tax contributions to government revenue.

1.2   Recent India-US Summit: Key Outcomes and Impacts

Why in news?

During Narendra Modi's recent visit to USA both PM Modi and U.S. President Trump discussed a wide range of issues ranging from weapons sales, extradition of 26/11 accused Tahawwur Rana, trade deals.

What are the Key outcomes of Recent Modi-Trump Summit?

Trade and Economic Relations
Bilateral Trade Goals – An ambitious target to *double bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030.*   **Tariff Discussions** – President Trump emphasized the need to address trade imbalances and *criticized India's high import duties,* referring to India as the "tariff king."   **Energy Trade** – India committed to *increasing imports of U.S. oil and gas,* aiming to *reduce the trade deficit and enhance energy security.*

Defense and Security Cooperation

- **Military Sales** – Discussions included potential sales of advanced U.S. military equipment to India, such as _F-35 fighter jets_, to bolster India's defense capabilities.

- **Indo-Pacific Strategy** – Both nations agreed to deepen _security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region_, aiming to _counterbalance China's influence_ and ensure regional stability.

- **Extradition Agreement** – President Trump supported India's request for the _extradition of Tahawwur Hussain Rana_, accused in the 2008 Mumbai attacks, signaling strong counterterrorism collaboration.

Immigration and Human Resources

- **Illegal Immigration** – Prime Minister Modi assured cooperation in _repatriating Indian citizens residing illegally in the U.S._, with recent actions including the acceptance of 104 migrants returned on a U.S. military aircraft.

- **Educational Collaboration** – Discussions were held about _U.S. universities establishing campuses in India_, aiming to enhance educational ties and provide more opportunities for Indian students.

Technology and Space Exploration

- **Space Cooperation** – Indian Prime Minister met with Elon Musk to discuss potential collaborations in space technology, reflecting India's interest in advancing its space exploration capabilities.

What are the Impacts of the Recent India-US Summit on India?

Impact of the Recent India-US Summit on USA

Impact on Economy

- **Market Expansion for U.S. Firms** – U.S. companies gain access to India's growing digital and consumer markets.
  - **Example:** _Apple and Tesla expanding manufacturing in India._

- **Job Creation in the U.S** – Indian IT investments in the U.S. generate high-paying tech jobs.

- **Reduction in Trade Deficit** – India pledged to buy more U.S. defense and energy products.

- **Strengthening Alternative Supply Chain** – Reduced dependency on China for critical minerals and semiconductors.
  - **Example:** India-U.S. partnership _in rare earth minerals_ to counter China's monopoly.

- **Enhancing Agricultural Exports** – India agreed to ease restrictions on certain U.S. agricultural products.

Impact on Strategy & Defense

- **Expanded Defense Market in India** – U.S. companies gain billion-dollar contracts for arms sales.

- **Strengthening the QUAD Alliance** – India's cooperation reinforces U.S. Indo-Pacific security strategy.
  - **Example:** India's commitment to _free navigation in the South China Sea._

- **Countering China's Influence in Asia** – Strengthening India helps the U.S. create a strategic balance against China.
  - **Example:** U.S. support for _India's leadership in ASEAN and BRICS._

- **Increased Military Footprint in the Indian Ocean** – The U.S. secures more military cooperation with India to _counter Chinese bases._
  - **Example:** U.S. Navy gaining greater access to Indian ports like _Andaman & Nicobar._

- **Greater Arms Cooperation** – Co-production agreements allow U.S. firms to manufacture in India.
  - **Example:** _GE Aerospace and HAL agreement for jet engine production in India._

Impact on Technology & Digital
Access to India's AI Talent – U.S. firm's benefit from India's skilled workforce in AI and automation.   **Example:** Google expanding its _AI research center in Bengaluru._   **Strengthened Semiconductor Supply Chains** – India as an alternative to Chinese chip production.   **Example:** _U.S. CHIPS Act investment in India-based chip assembly units_.   **Cybersecurity Partnership** – India-U.S. joint efforts to counter cyber threats from China and Russia.   **Expansion of Cloud Computing & Data Centers** – U.S. tech giants investing in Indian cloud infrastructure.   **Example:** Microsoft and AWS launching new data centers in India.   **Space & Satellite Collaboration** – NASA collaborating with ISRO for future lunar missions.
Impact on Social & Immigration
Skilled Workforce from India – Indian tech professionals fill _U.S. labor shortages._   **Example:** Majority of _H-1B visa holders are from India._   **Stronger People-to-People Ties** – U.S. benefits from Indian students and professionals contributing to innovation.   **Increased Collaboration in Healthcare** – India-U.S. cooperation in pharma and healthcare.   **Example:** Joint research in vaccine production.   **Cultural Influence & Soft Power** – Bollywood, yoga, and Indian cuisine gaining popularity in the U.S.   **Example:** Growing demand for Indian food chains in the U.S.   **Demographic Advantage** – U.S. leveraging India's young population for global talent acquisition.   **Example:** _Indian professionals in Silicon Valley leading_ AI innovations.

1.3 Constitutional Morality

Why in news?

In the recent past, our constitutional courts have embraced the polysemous concept of "constitutional morality" as a tool to interpret and as a test to adjudicate upon the constitutional validity of statutes.

What is Constitutional Morality?
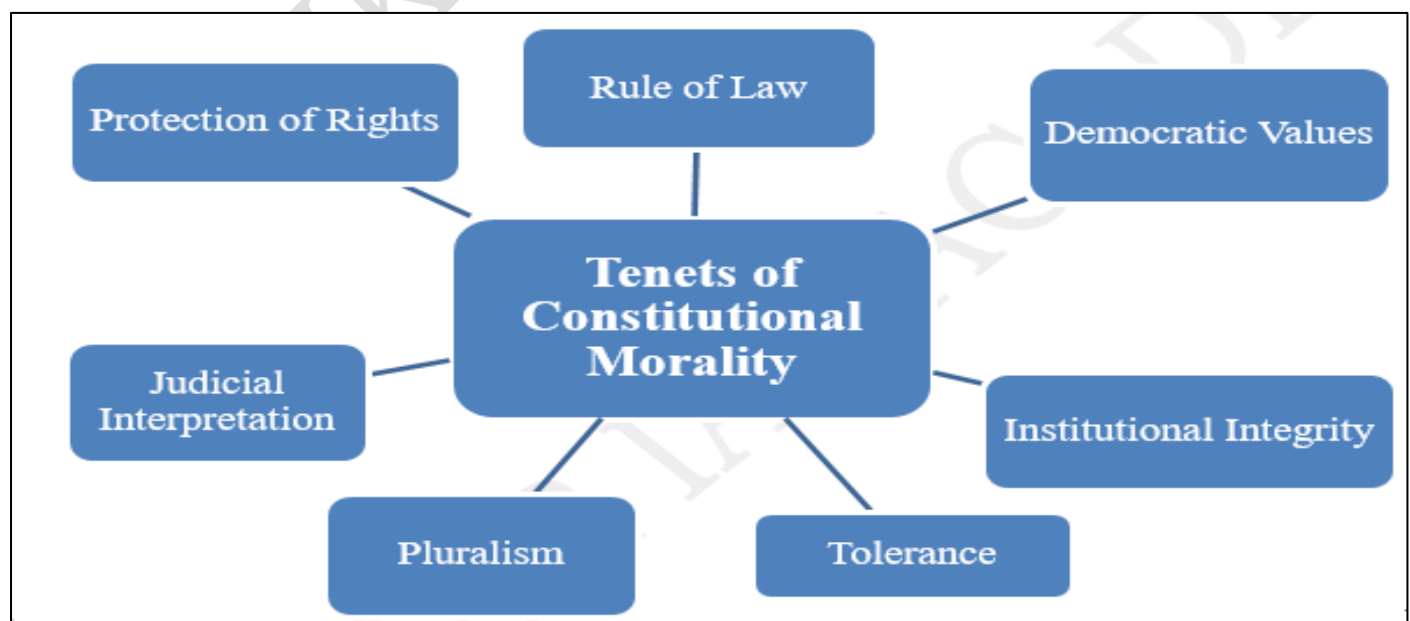
- Constitutional morality refers to the *adherence to the fundamental principles and values enshrined in a nation's constitution*.

- It ensures that both the government and citizens uphold democratic principles, justice, equality, liberty, and fraternity, rather than merely following the literal text of the constitution.

- **Rule of Law** – All individuals and institutions must operate within the framework of the constitution.

- **Democratic Values** – Upholding democracy, secularism, and justice for all.

- **Protection of Rights** – Ensuring fundamental rights, such as equality, freedom of speech, and protection against discrimination.

- **Institutional Integrity** – Strengthening institutions like the judiciary, legislature, and executive to function fairly and independently.

- **Tolerance & Pluralism** – Respecting diverse views, cultures, and beliefs within society.

- **Judicial Interpretation** – Courts often use constitutional morality to interpret laws in a progressive and rights-oriented manner.

What are the Constitutional provisions that upholds the Constitutional Morality?

Fundamental Rights (Part III)
The Fundamental Rights (Articles 12-35) – Ensure individual liberty and equality, preventing Majoritarianism and authoritarianism.   **Article 14 (Right to Equality)** – *Ensures equality before the law* and equal protection of laws, preventing discrimination.   **Article 19 (Freedom of Speech and Expression)** – Allows *public reasoning* and critique, essential for constitutional morality.   **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty)** – Guarantees dignity and due process, which courts have expanded to include rights like *privacy, autonomy, and freedom of choice*.   **Article 25-28 (Freedom of Religion)** – Ensures freedom of religion while maintaining constitutional morality by preventing religious practices that violate individual rights (e.g., **Sabarimala judgment**).
Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) (Part IV)
- Though ***not enforceable in courts***, the **DPSPs (Articles 36-51)** provide a framework for **good governance and social justice**, which are essential to constitutional morality.   **Article 38** – Promotes **justice—social, economic, and political**.   **Article 39A** – Ensures **equal access to justice** through free legal aid.   **Article 44 (Uniform Civil Code)** – Promotes *secularism and equality* in personal laws.
Preamble – The Spirit of Constitutional Morality
- The **Preamble** embodies constitutional morality by declaring India to be: **Sovereign, Socialist, Secular & Democratic Republic** – Ensures governance based on democratic principles.   **Justice, Liberty, Equality & Fraternity** – Upholds individual dignity and collective harmony.
Separation of Powers and Judicial Review
Article 50 – Ensures separation of the judiciary from the executive, *preventing arbitrary rule*.   **Article 32 & 226** – Empower the *Supreme Court and High Courts to enforce fundamental rights* through *judicial review*, upholding constitutional morality by striking down unconstitutional laws.
Amendments and Reforms (Article 368)

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- **Article 368** – Allows for **constitutional amendments**, ensuring the Constitution evolves while maintaining its core principles.
- **Basic Structure Doctrine (Kesavananda Bharati Case, 1973)** – Prevents arbitrary changes that violate constitutional morality.

Special Provisions for Social Justice

- **Article 15(3) & 15(4)** – Allow *affirmative action* for women, SCs, STs, and socially disadvantaged groups.
- **Article 17** – *Abolishes untouchability*, ensuring equality in society.
- **Article 330 & 332** – Provide *reservations* in legislatures to empower marginalized communities.

What are the aspects that can make Constitutional morality a Dangerous tool?

- Constitutional morality is considered a "dangerous tool" by few because it gives courts and *institutions significant interpretative power*, which can sometimes lead to judicial overreach, moral subjectivity, or the undermining of democratic decision-making.
- **Judicial Overreach** – Critics argue that *constitutional morality allows courts to overstep their boundaries* and act as moral arbiters rather than interpreters of the law.
  - **Example**: In ***Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018)*** (decriminalization of homosexuality), the Supreme Court overruled legislative inaction, which some saw as the judiciary stepping into policymaking.
- **Subjectivity and Moral Relativism** – *What constitutes the constitutional morality is not clearly defined* and can be interpreted differently by different judges.
- This could lead to *subjective rulings* based on personal views rather than a consistent legal standard.
- **Undermining Democratic Will and Public Morality** – In a democracy, laws are meant to reflect the will of the people, but constitutional morality *can override majoritarian decisions*, leading to accusations of elitism.
- Example: In *Sabarimala Case (2018),* the Supreme Court allowed women's entry into the temple despite strong public opposition, leading to debates on whether courts should interfere in religious traditions.
- **Arbitrary Use in Select Cases** – The concept is not *uniformly applied in courts* that invoke it in *some cases but not others*, making it seem arbitrary.
- Example: Courts have used constitutional morality to *strike down discriminatory laws* but have avoided using it in cases involving political corruption or economic policies.
- **Potential for Misuse by the State** – Governments could *weaponize constitutional morality* to justify *limiting free speech or suppressing dissent* under the guise of protecting constitutional values.
- Example: A government might use the argument of "constitutional morality" to *curtail protests or online expression* if they claim it disrupts social harmony.

What is the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar opinion about Constitutional Morality?

- **Not a natural sentiment** – In his speech, Ambedkar stated that *constitutional morality was not a natural sentiment in India but had to be cultivated.*
- **Respect constitutional** – He emphasized that for democracy to survive, people must *respect constitutional principles over personal or majoritarian interests*.
- **Constitutional limits** – He warned against arbitrary rule and stressed the need for institutions and individuals to function within *constitutional limits.*

Key Supreme Court Cases that Upholds the Constitutional Morality	
Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973)	*Basic structure doctrine* prevents unconstitutional amendments.
Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018)	*Decriminalized homosexuality* (struck down Section 377).

Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala (2018) (Sabarimala Case)	Allowed women entry into Sabarimala temple, rejecting religious patriarchy.
Shayara Bano v. Union of India (2017)	*Struck down triple talaq*, ensuring gender justice.

What lies ahead?

- While constitutional morality is crucial for upholding fundamental rights, its vague nature, judicial overreach, and potential to override democratic will make it a double-edged sword.

- The challenge is to strike a balance between upholding constitutional values and respecting democratic processes.

1.4	Affirmative Action for Muslims in India: Beyond Reservations

Why in news?

To address the recent report that advocates a broader, religion-agnostic approach to Muslim upliftment, there is the need for affirmative action for Muslims beyond just reservations, highlighting socio-educational disadvantages.

Muslims in India

• **Population Share** – According to the 2011 Census, Muslims constitute 14.2% of India's total population.
 	
• **State-wise Distribution** – According to the 2011 Census:
 	
  o **Highest Muslim population states** – Uttar Pradesh, followed by West Bengal and Bihar.
 	
  o **States with highest Muslim percentage (proportion to total state population)** – Jammu & Kashmir, followed by Assam and West Bengal.

What are the Constitutional and Legal Framework for Reservation in India?

- **Article 15(4)** – Empowers the State to make special provisions for the advancement of *socially and educationally backward classes (SEBSc).*

- This clause forms the basis for *educational reservations and affirmative action for SEBCs.*

- **Article 16(4)** – Allows the State to provide *reservation in appointments* or posts in favor of any backward class of citizens *not adequately represented in public services.*

- Facilitates *employment reservations for SEBCs* to ensure adequate representation in government jobs.

- **Article 16(4)** – Authorizes the *President to appoint a commission to investigate the conditions of backward classes* and recommend measures for their improvement.

- Led to the establishment of commissions like the *Kaka Kalelkar Commission and the Mandal Commission* to identify SEBCs and suggest welfare measures.

- **Article 342A** – Inserted by the 102nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2018.

- It grants the President the authority to *specify SEBCs* for each state and union territory in consultation with the respective Governor.

- Aims to *create a uniform Central List of SEBCs*, though states retain the power to identify SEBCs for their purposes.

What are the Criteria for Identification for SEBC?

- **Social Backwardness** – Communities with *historically limited access to education and social mobility.*

- Presence of social discrimination or stigma.

- **Educational Backwardness** – *Lower literacy rates* compared to the national or state average.

- *High dropout rates and low enrollment in higher education.*

- **Economic Backwardness** – Low per capita income and asset ownership.

- *Predominance in low-paying or unorganized sectors* of employment.

What are the Committees and Reports on Muslim Backwardness?

Sachar Committee Report (2006)

- **Appointed by** – Then-Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to examine the social, economic, and educational status of the Muslim community in India.

Key Findings:

- **Educational Status** – Muslims had lower literacy rates than the national average, with a significant dropout rate at the school level.

- Poor access to education, with _only 4% of Muslims in higher education compared to 7% for SCs/STs_.

- **Economic Conditions** – High incidence of poverty among Muslims, with limited representation in formal employment sectors.

- **Social Indicators** – Poor access to healthcare and basic amenities in Muslim-concentrated areas.

- **Representation in Public Services** – Underrepresentation of Muslims in government jobs and public sector enterprises.

- Only _5% representation in government jobs_ despite being 14% of the population.

- **Recommendations:**

- **Enhance Access to Education** – Establish more schools in Muslim-majority areas and provide scholarships to Muslim students.

- **Economic Opportunities** – Facilitate access to credit for Muslim entrepreneurs and promote skill development programs.

- **Improvement of Infrastructure** – Develop infrastructure in areas with a high Muslim population to ensure better living conditions.

Ranganath Mishra Commission Report (2007)

- **Objective** – To examine the _status of religious and linguistic minorities_ and recommended measures for their socio-economic upliftment.

- **Key Findings:**

- **Social and Educational Backwardness –** Many Muslims were at par with or even _worse than (SCs) and (STs)_ in education and employment.

- _Low literacy rates and high dropout rates_, especially among Muslim girls.

- Poor access to higher education and lack of representation in professional and technical fields.

- **Economic Backwardness –** _High incidence of poverty_ among Muslims, with a majority engaged in low-income and informal sector jobs.

- Very **low representation** in government jobs and public sector enterprises.

- _Lack of access to institutional credit_, leading to financial exclusion.

- **Political Representation –** _Underrepresentation_ of Muslims in elected bodies and decision-making positions.

- **Key Recommendation** – _10% reservation for Muslims in government jobs and education under the OBC quota._

- In states where Muslims were already classified as OBCs, an _additional 6% reservation_ should be given.

- _Legal recognition of Dalit Muslims under Scheduled Caste (SC)_ category, allowing them access to SC-specific reservations and welfare schemes.

- Creation of an _Equal Opportunity Commission_ to address discrimination in employment and education.

What are the Judicial Stance on Muslim Reservation?

- **Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992)** – The Supreme Court _upheld the 27% reservation for OBCs_ but emphasized that classification for reservations should be _based on social and educational backwardness, not solely on religion._

- **P.A. Inamdar v. State of Maharashtra (2005)** – The Supreme Court ruled that the _state cannot impose reservations based on religion in private unaided institutions_, reiterating that affirmative action should _focus on backwardness criteria rather than religious identity._

- **Calcutta High Court Judgment on OBC Classification (2023):**
  - **Background** – The West Bengal government had classified certain Muslim communities as OBCs, granting them reservations.
  - **Ruling** – The High Court quashed this classification, ruling that reservations _cannot be granted on the basis of religion alone._

What are the Challenges with Reservation for Muslims?

- **Legal-constitutional issues** – The Indian Constitution does not explicitly recognize Muslims as a 'socially and educationally backward class.'

- The judiciary has _rejected previous attempts to classify Muslims collectively for reservations._

- **Diversity within the Muslim Community –** Muslims are not a homogeneous group; they consist of hundreds of biradaris (clans) with varying social, educational, and economic statuses.

- Some Muslim castes face _similar disadvantages as Hindu Dalits_**,** while others are relatively better off.

- **Political and Administrative Hurdles** – There is _resistance from the state and political parties_ to implement reservations for Muslims.

- West Bengal and Karnataka have introduced sub-quotas, but this approach is debated.

What are the Alternative Strategies for Muslim Upliftment?

- **Targeted Public Infrastructure Development** – The report suggests a "spatial approach" by improving infrastructure in Muslim-concentrated areas (schools, roads, health centers).

- **Economic and Educational Boost** – Expanding scholarships, skill training, and self-employment programs for economically backward Muslims.

- **Implementation of schemes** – Such as Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship Schemes, Merit-cum-Means Scholarships, and the Maulana Azad National Fellowship to support Muslim students.

- **PM's new 15-Point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities** – Aim to enhance opportunities for education, employment, and economic empowerment among Muslims.

What lies ahead?

- The current reservation debate is too narrow; a broader approach is needed.

- Muslim backwardness should be tackled through multiple dimensions such as education, economy and infrastructure.

- The future of affirmative action should focus on community upliftment beyond quotas.

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2. HISTORY

2.1   The Panchayat Raj Movement

Why in the news?

In recent times, the Panchayati Raj system is declining relevance and effectiveness, caused by reduced public participation, overdependence on central schemes, fiscal constraints, and the impact of rapid urbanization and technological changes.

What is the Historical Perspective on Panchayati Raj?

- **Ancient India** – Village autonomy was a hallmark of governance in Vedic times and during the Mauryan and Gupta periods.

- Ancient texts mention Sabhas, Samitis, and Gram Sanghas, which were self-governing village institutions responsible for dispute resolution, resource management, and administration.

- **Medieval India** – Under the **Delhi Sultanate and Mughal rule**, local self-governance declined as the administration became more centralized.

- However, village panchayats **continued informally** in many regions.

- **British Era** – the British introduced **centralized administration,** weakening traditional local governance structures.

- **Ripon's Resolution (1882)** is considered the **first step towards modern local self-government**, emphasizing **local representation**.

- The **Government of India Act, 1919 & 1935** introduced elected local bodies but with limited powers.

- **Post-Independence Developments** – Gandhian Vision of Gram Swaraj by Mahatma Gandhi emphasized self-sufficient village republics as the foundation of democracy.

- Community Development Program (1952) and Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957) recommended a three-tier system of local governance, leading to the first structured Panchati Raj System (1959) in Rajasthan.

- Ashok Mehta Committee (1978) further emphasized constitutional status for Panchayati Raj, leading to the 73rd Amendment in 1992.
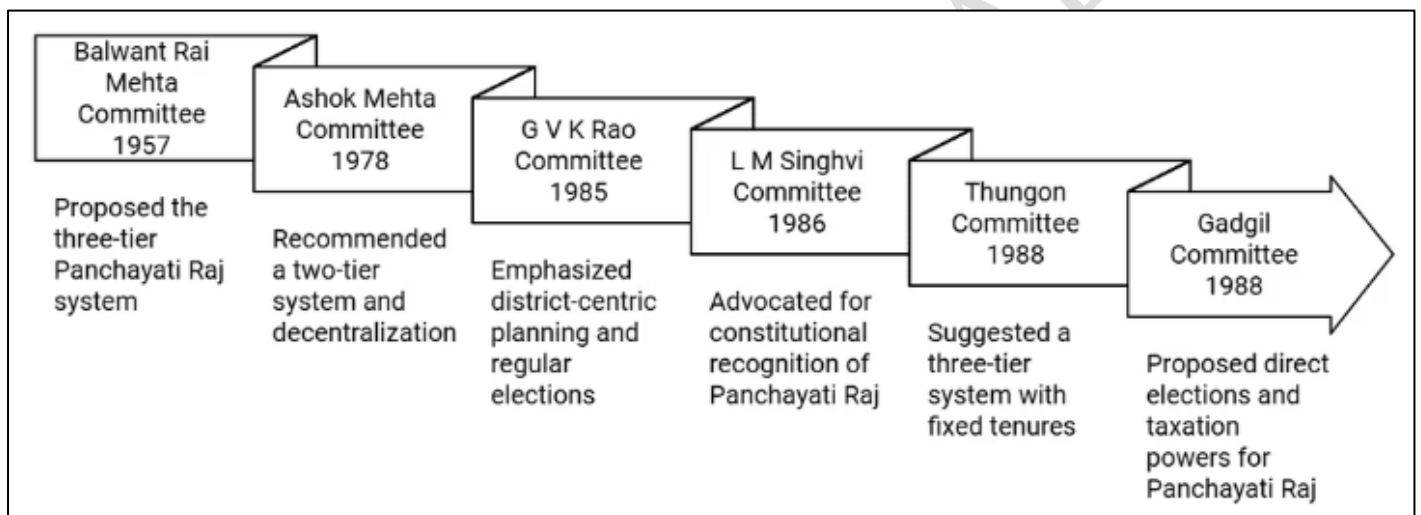
What are the Current Challenges of Panchayati Raj?

- **Administrative Constraints** – _Lack of functional devolution of power_ to panchayats.

- State governments are reluctant to delegate staff and key responsibilities to local bodies.

- Excessive control by bureaucracy and centralization of decision-making has weakened local autonomy.

- **Financial Issues** – Reduction in direct fund transfers to panchayats.

- _Grants from the 15th Finance Commission were cut_ from 85% to 60%.

- States are increasingly controlling welfare schemes through central agencies, bypassing panchayats.

- Panchayats have _not been granted enough financial independence_, making them dependent on state and central funds.

- **Politicization of panchayats –** Party-sponsored elections and interference from political elites reduce local autonomy.

- **Power dynamics** – Local elections often become a battle for control rather than focusing on grassroots development.

- **11th Schedule** – _Lack of enforcement of the Eleventh Schedule_ (which lists subjects under Panchayati Raj) by states.

- **Impact of Urbanization**

- **Declining rural population** – In 1990, three-fourths of Indians lived in villages; today, urbanization has reduced this to **two-thirds**, leading to a shrinking role for panchayats.

- Migration for jobs has weakened the connection between rural governance and people's needs.

What lies ahead?

- **Administrative Reforms –** Proper implementation of the Eleventh Schedule by ensuring functional devolution of powers.

- Decentralization of key governance functions to increase local participation.

- **Financial Strengthening** – Ensure direct fiscal transfers to panchayats, reducing state government control.

- Strengthen revenue generation at the local level through property tax, user fees, and local resources.

- Implement transparent auditing mechanisms to avoid fund misuse.

- **Political and Electoral Reforms** – Reduce political interference by limiting centralized control over local elections.

- Promote independent grassroots leadership rather than party-sponsored candidates.

- **Using Technology for Good Governance** – Expand e-governance and digital monitoring systems to improve panchayat efficiency.

- Promote citizen engagement platforms to ensure accountability.

- **Expanding the Role of Panchayats** – Involve them in migration support, rural risk management, climate resilience, and employment generation.

- Strengthen panchayats as decision-making bodies in disaster management, social welfare, and economic development.

3. GEOGRAPHY

3.1   The Yamuna Story

Why in News?

Yamuna River, vital for Delhi's drinking water supply and ecological balance is under threat.

What are the concerns related to the Yamuna and its significance in Delhi's water supply?

- **Drinking Water Supply -** It is a key source of drinking water for Delhi.

- Most of this water comes from Haryana, particularly from the Wazirabad Barrage.

- During lean seasons the availability of water is highly uncertain.

- This creates anxiety for Delhi's residents, as the drinking water supply depends on Haryana's releases.

- There is often a lack of transparency in water sharing agreements. Delhi regularly faces water shortages because of limited releases from Haryana.

- **Pollution of the Yamuna -** Primary pollutants include untreated sewage, industrial effluents, and solid waste.

- The discharge of untreated water into the river comes from both Delhi and upstream states.

- Certain drains, such as the Najafgarh and Shahdara drains, are major contributors to pollution in Delhi.

- **National Green Tribunal's (NGT) Role -** NGT had set up a Yamuna Monitoring Committee to check pollution levels.

- However, there has been limited success due to inadequate action by stakeholders.

- **Environmental Flow -** Means ensuring the river has enough water to sustain its ecosystem.

- This is critical for maintaining the ecological health of the river and the well-being of communities that depend on it.

- **National Institute of Hydrology** - emphasized the need for better regulation of upstream water releases and stricter pollution control measures.
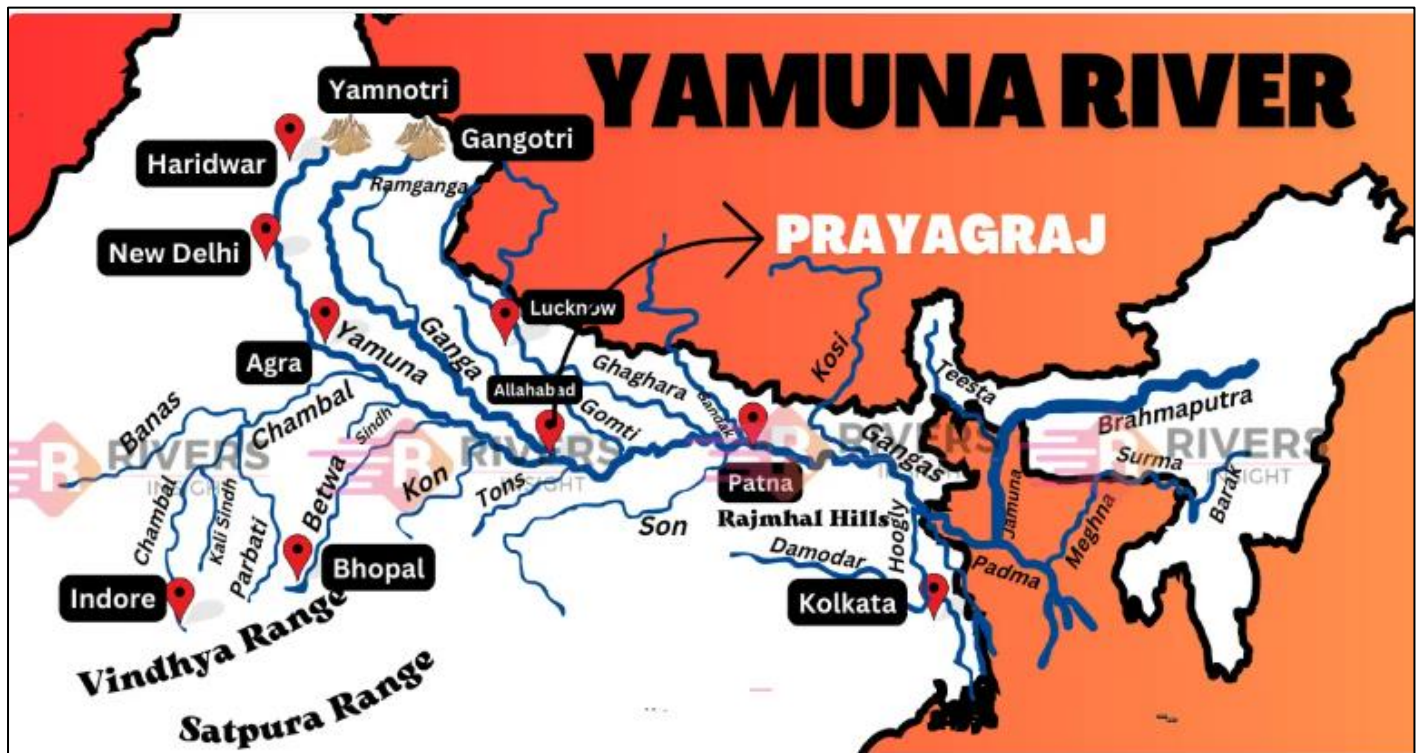
What are Challenges in Restoring Yamuna River Health?

- The challenges in improving the condition of the Yamuna River are both specific to the region and general to water management and pollution control efforts.

- **Inter-State Disputes -** States like Haryana and Delhi often clash over the allocation and release of water, especially during lean seasons.

- **Political Blame Game**- Instead of addressing the root causes, political parties use the issue for electoral gains, delaying effective solutions.

- **Inadequate Pollution Control –** A significant portion of untreated sewage from Delhi and upstream areas flows directly into the river.

- **Industrial Waste -** Factories and industries discharge toxic chemicals and heavy metals into the Yamuna without proper treatment.

- **Solid Waste Dumping -** Plastic and other non-biodegradable waste accumulate in the river, choking its flow and harming aquatic life.

- **Lack of Environmental Flow -** The River often runs dry in several stretches due to excessive withdrawal of water for drinking and irrigation.

- Low water levels reduce the river's ability to dilute pollutants, exacerbating its pollution levels.

- **Urbanization and Encroachments -** Rapid urban growth along the Yamuna floodplains has led to encroachments, shrinking the river's natural course.

- River Flow gets obstructed and rise in pollution levels due Construction activities and illegal settlements.

- **Institutional Inefficiencies - Fragmented Governance -** Multiple agencies, such as municipal corporations, state governments, and central authorities, fail to coordinate effectively.

- **Weak Implementation -** Even when pollution control measures are mandated, they are poorly implemented due to lack of resources or political will.

- **Legal and Bureaucratic Hurdles - Prolonged court cases and disputes -** delay the implementation of effective measures.

- **Overlapping jurisdictions -** of agencies like the NGT, the Delhi Jal Board, and Haryana's water authorities create confusion.

- **Lack of Public Awareness -** Citizens contribute to pollution by dumping waste into the river or using it as a sewer.

- There is insufficient awareness about the ecological importance of the Yamuna and how individual actions affect its health.

What lies ahead?

- **Building Consensus** -The issue requires collaboration between states and agencies, instead of political blame games.

- **Clear Accountability** - Transparent systems should be put in place to ensure fair water sharing and pollution management.

- **Strengthening Monitoring Systems** - Independent mechanisms, like those suggested by the Yamuna Monitoring Committee, need to be empowered to enforce strict pollution control measures.

- **Reducing Pollution** - Ensuring that untreated sewage and industrial effluents are processed before being discharged into the river.

- Addressing water distribution, pollution, and environmental flow demands collaborative solutions, as piecemeal strategies will fall short.

- Restoring the river's health necessitates commitment from governments, industries, and local communities.

4. SOCIAL ISSUES

4.1   Growing Arc of Violence

Why in News?

The current global situation is unpredictable, with violence raging in Europe and West Asia, and various regions facing internecine conflicts, indicating irretrievable breakdown of the world order after 1945.

What is Terrorism?

- **Definition** – According to Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967 Terrorism is defined as acts committed with intent to threaten the unity, integrity, security, or sovereignty of India.

- **Impacts** – It causes death, injury, damage to property, or disruption of essential services and Use of bombs, dynamite, firearms, or hazardous substances to create fear or coercion.

- **Cyber Terrorism -** Cyber terrorism involves acts committed with the intent to threaten a nation's unity, integrity, security, or sovereignty, or to instill terror among its people.

- **Lone-Wolf Attacks -** Lone-wolf attacks are carried out by individuals acting independently without direct orders from terrorist organizations, making them challenging to predict and prevent.

- **Online Radicalization -** The internet plays a significant role in the self-radicalization of lone actors, who consume extremist content online without direct contact with terrorist groups.

State Sponsored Terrorism

Ideological Based Terrorism

Ethno-terrorism

Bio-terrorism

Narco-terrorism

Cyber Terrorism
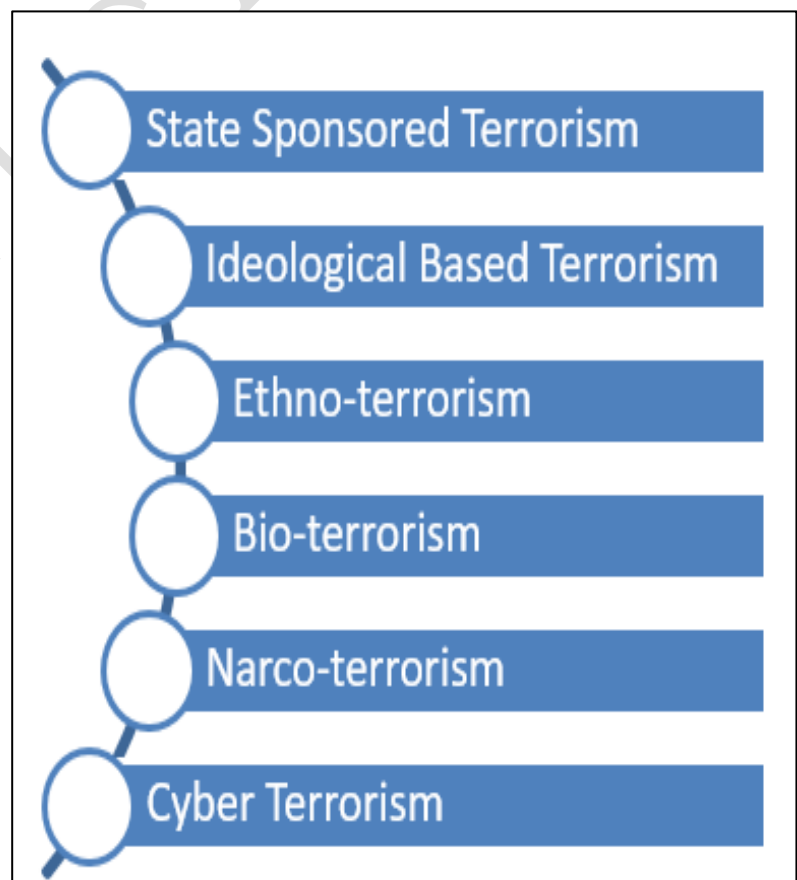
What are the challenges in curbing Terrorism?

- **Decentralized Networks -** Terrorist groups operate independently in small units, making them harder to track and counter.

- **Encrypted Communication -** They use secure messaging apps to plan attacks secretly, avoiding detection by intelligence agencies.

- **Covert Recruitment** - Recruitment happens in hidden online forums and private groups, keeping their networks undetected.

- **Financial Concealment -** They fund activities through cryptocurrencies and fake businesses, making it tough to trace their money flow.

- **Sleeper Cells -** Inactive members remain hidden for years, activating only when needed for attacks.

- **Social Media Influence** - Terrorist groups use social media to spread propaganda and attract followers worldwide.

- **Echo Chambers -** Algorithms reinforce extremist views, making radicalization easier.

- **Virtual Communities -** Online groups give isolated individuals a sense of belonging, drawing them into extremist ideologies.

- **Anonymity & Accessibility -** The internet allows users to explore extremist content without fear of exposure.

- **Gamification of Terror -** Some groups use game-like tactics to attract and radicalize young recruits.

- **Challenges in Detection -** Due to the solitary nature, lone-wolf attackers often leave minimal communication trails, complicating efforts by intelligence agencies to identify and monitor.

What are the measures taken to curb Terrorism?

- **United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy -** Established in 2006.

  o Addressing conditions conducive to terrorism.

  o Preventing and combating terrorism.

  o Building state capacity and strengthening the UN's role.

  o Ensuring human rights and the rule of law.

- **Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) -** Launched in 2011.

- GCTF is an informal, multilateral platform aimed at reducing global vulnerability to terrorism by mobilizing resources and expertise.

  o Criminal justice and rule of law.

  o Countering violent extremism.

  o Capacity-building in regions like the Sahel and Horn of Africa.

- **Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Compliance** - India aligns with FATF recommendations to prevent terrorist financing, including monitoring virtual currencies and online transactions.

- **Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT)** - Established by major tech companies, including Meta, YouTube, and Microsoft, to prevent terrorists from exploiting digital platforms.

Counter terrorism Initiatives in India

Cybersecurity Initiatives	
National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal	• The Ministry of Home Affairs operates this portal to facilitate public reporting of cybercrimes, enhancing law enforcement's ability to address cyber threats.
Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)	• Established to combat cybercrime comprehensively, I4C focuses on research, training, and capacity building.
Cyber Swachhta Kendra	• Launched by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, this initiative aims to detect and clean malicious software from devices, promoting safer cyberspace.
Counter-Radicalization Efforts	

Counter Terrorism and Counter Radicalization Division (CTCR)	• The Ministry of Home Affairs established the CTCR Division to formulate policies and strategies aimed at preventing radicalization and enhancing counter-terrorism efforts.
Monitoring Online Content	• Agencies actively monitor online platforms to identify and remove extremist content, collaborating with service providers to curb the spread of radical ideologies.

Strengthening Intelligence and Law Enforcement	
National Investigation Agency (NIA)	• Established in 2008. • It is a statutory body under the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008. • Chairperson - The Union Home Minister is the ex-officio chairperson of the NIA Governing Council. • The Director-General (DG) of NIA heads the agency. • Empowered to investigate and prosecute offenses related to terrorism, including those involving digital platforms.
Multi-Agency Centre (MAC)	• Facilitates intelligence sharing among various agencies to ensure timely dissemination of information regarding potential threats.

Legal Framework for Counter terrorism	
Arms Act, 1959	• Regulates possession, sale, and transport of firearms to prevent misuse in terror activities.
Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967	• Prevents unlawful activities and terrorist organizations. • Allows banning of terror groups and designation of individuals as terrorists. • Provides for stringent punishment and preventive detention.
Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000	• Covers cyber terrorism, digital radicalization, and misuse of the internet for terror activities
Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002	• Prevents terror financing by monitoring suspicious financial transactions. • Empowers authorities to seize properties linked to terror funding.

What lies ahead?

• The international community must combat terrorism universally, establish a global definition of terrorism, and impose sanctions on state sponsors.

• Strengthening national security, curbing terrorist financing, and developing a robust cyber-defense mechanism are essential steps. These strategies ensure global security and peace.

4.2   China's Dam

Why in News?

China's plan to construct a massive hydroelectric dam on the lower Yarlung Zangbo River in Tibet and its potential impact on India and neighboring countries.

What is China's Yarlung Zangbo Dam Project?

• **China's planned hydropower project -** It is on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo River (Brahmaputra in India) has raised major concerns in India.

• The dam is part of China's broader strategy to transition from coal-based power to renewable energy.

- However, it has serious implications for India and Bangladesh, particularly in terms of water security, environmental sustainability, and geopolitical tensions.

CHINA'S TSANGPO PROJECT WILL BE WORLD'S LARGEST

What are the Geopolitical and Strategic Implications?

- **India's Water Dependency on the Brahmaputra -** 30% of India's total freshwater supply comes from rivers originating in Tibet.

- The Brahmaputra River is crucial for northeastern states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam) and Bangladesh.

- Any reduction or control over its flow will directly impact agriculture, livelihoods, and water availability.

Why China's Uses Water as a Geopolitical Tool?

- **China has been using Transboundary Rivers** - as a strategic asset against its neighbors.

- In the past, China has restricted hydrological data to India, particularly during the 2017 Doklam standoff.

- Controlling Brahmaputra's flow could be used to pressure India diplomatically.

- Water is becoming a national security concern, similar to disputes over land and trade.

- China's aggressive nationalism and unilateral approach increase the risk of weaponizing water resources.

- Future water disputes could lead to tensions, similar to the India-China border conflicts.

What are the implications for India-Bangladesh Relations?

- **Bangladesh relies** - on the Brahmaputra for irrigation and drinking water.

- However, Bangladesh has not strongly opposed the dam, likely due to its growing economic ties with China.

- India may face diplomatic challenges in aligning Bangladesh's interests with its own.

What are the Legal and Institutional Challenges?

- **Absence of a Strong International Legal Framework -** The UN Watercourses Convention (1997) mandates equitable and reasonable water use.

- China is not a signatory, allowing it to avoid legal commitments on transboundary river sharing.

- Lack of legal pressure limits India's ability to demand transparency and cooperation.

- **Expired India-China MoUs on Water Data Sharing-** India and China had MoUs for sharing hydrological data on the Brahmaputra and Sutlej rivers.

- These MoUs have expired, making it harder for India to track water levels and flood risks.

- There is a possibility of renewal, but negotiations remain uncertain.

- **Role of the Expert Level Mechanism (ELM) -** The ELM is the only functional dialogue mechanism between India and China for water-related issues.
- In the absence of a binding agreement, ELM discussions are limited in impact.

What are the Environmental Risks and Concerns?

- **Seismic and Geological Risks -** The proposed dam is in one of the most earthquake-prone regions in the world.
- In 2025, an earthquake in Tibet killed over 120 people, raising concerns about dam safety.
- If an earthquake damages the dam, it could lead to catastrophic floods downstream in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.
- **Disruption of the Brahmaputra's Natural Flow -** The dam may alter the river's flow, affecting monsoon patterns and groundwater recharge.
- India's agriculture and fisheries in the Northeast could suffer.
- **Loss of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Impact-** The construction may lead to habitat destruction for aquatic and terrestrial species.
- Riverbank erosion could worsen, leading to land loss and displacement of communities.

What is South Asian Water Politics and Regional Challenges?

- **Lack of a Regional Water Governance Framework -** Unlike the Indus Water Treaty, there is no structured regional framework for Brahmaputra water management.
- South Asian nations have weak coordination, giving China a strategic advantage.
- **Challenges for Nepal, Bhutan, and Pakistan-** Other riparian countries (Nepal, Bhutan, and Pakistan) also depend on rivers originating in Tibet.
- China's unilateral projects on transboundary rivers could eventually affect them, leading to regional water disputes.
- **Political Uncertainty in Bangladesh -** India-Bangladesh water-sharing agreements are already sensitive (e.g., Teesta River dispute).
- If China gains influence over Bangladesh, India's diplomatic position on water-sharing could weaken.

How should India Respond?

- **Strengthening Water Diplomacy with China -** India must actively engage in diplomatic talks to renew the MoUs on water data sharing.
- Encouraging greater transparency through ELM discussions is crucial.
- **Enhancing Regional Coordination -** India should work with Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan to develop a South Asian Water Council.
- A unified regional stance can increase negotiation leverage with China.
- **Strengthening India's Hydrological Surveillance -** India must invest in remote sensing and satellite-based monitoring of Brahmaputra's water flow.
- This will allow India to track changes in real time and respond proactively.
- **Developing Counter-Dams and Water Management Infrastructure -** India should explore counter-dam projects in Arunachal Pradesh to maintain river balance.
- Improved irrigation and water storage infrastructure can reduce dependency on Brahmaputra flow.
- **Engaging in International Advocacy -** India can highlight China's unilateral water policies in global forums (e.g., UN, ASEAN, G20).
- Creating global pressure can encourage China to cooperate on water-sharing mechanisms.

What lies the ahead?

- India faces a significant threat from China's mega-dam project, affecting water security, ecology, and diplomatic interests.
- The issue reflects larger geopolitical tensions, and India must adopt a multi-dimensional strategy including diplomacy, regional coordination, water surveillance, and infrastructure development to safeguard its interests.

4.3 China's Supply Chain Tactics and India's Electronics Industry

Why in the news?

In recent times, China's geopolitical tactics has disrupted India's electronics supply chain, particularly affecting Apple-Foxconn's production.

What is China's Supply Chain Restrictions?

- **Restriction on engineers** – In January 2025, China restricted travel for its engineers in Foxconn's Indian facilities and curbed exports of critical manufacturing equipment, which led to:
  - Crippling Apple-Foxconn's operations and impacting India's manufacturing ambitions.
- **Geo-political weapon** – *Beijing uses supply chain disruptions as a geopolitical weapon*, leveraging its dominance in advanced machinery and electronics to slow India's production.

What are the significance about Electronic Industry/Sector?

- **Dynamic industry** – The electronics sector is a vast and dynamic industry that encompasses the design, development, production, and distribution of electronic devices and components.
- **Driving innovation** – It's a critical part of the global economy, driving innovation and impacting nearly every aspect of modern life.
- **12 million jobs job creation** – The electronics sector in India is expected to create *12 million jobs by 2027*, including both direct and indirect roles.
- **3.4% of GDP** – According to the department of commerce, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, the electronic sector contributes 3.4 % to the GDP.

What are the Key Components of Electronic Sector?

- **Semiconductors** – The backbone of modern electronics, used in everything from smartphones to cars.
- **Consumer Electronics** – Products for everyday use, including smartphones, computers, televisions, audio equipment and home appliances.
- **Electronic Components** – Individual parts that make up electronic devices, such as resistors, capacitors and transistors.
- **Industrial Electronics** – Equipment used in manufacturing, automation, and other industrial applications.
- **Telecommunication** – Infrastructure and devices for communication, including networks, mobile phones, and routers.

What are the Recent Developments in the Electronics Sector?

| Advancements in Semiconductors |
|---|
| - **Chiplet Design** – Improves performance and efficiency by combining smaller chips. |
| - **Higher Transistor Density** – Boosts chip performance and reduces power use. |
| - **AI at the Edge** – AI-powered devices enable faster, local data processing for automation and smart systems. |
| - *Neuromorphic Computing* mimics the human brain for efficient AI processing. |
| - **Sustainability Focus** – Efforts to *reduce e-waste* through better recycling and longer product lifecycles. |
| - Development of *energy-efficient electronics* to lower environmental impact. |
| - **Internet of Things (IoT) Growth** – Increasing connected devices drive *data collection and automation.* |
| - *Industrial IoT (IIoT)* improves efficiency in manufacturing and logistics. |

5G & Future Connectivity
- **5G expansion** – Enables faster speeds and new tech applications.
- **6G research** – Is already underway for even greater connectivity.
- **Flexible & Wearable Electronics**
- **Foldable displays** – Are advancing for use in phones, wearables, and signage

- **Wearable tech** – Like smartwatches continues to evolve with new features.

- **Quantum Computing Progress** – Still in early stages, but has potential in *drug discovery, materials science, and cryptography.*

- Research is ongoing to develop *powerful and stable quantum computers.*

What are the Major Challenges in the Electronics Sector?

- **Supply Chain Disruptions** – Dependence on limited suppliers, especially China, leads to vulnerabilities.

  - Geopolitical tensions and global crises impact the availability of key components.

- **Semiconductor Shortages** – High demand and limited production capacity cause delays in manufacturing.

  - Need for more semiconductor fabrication plants (fabs) outside dominant regions.

- **High Dependence on Imports** – Many countries, including India, rely heavily on imported electronic components.

  - Lack of local ecosystem for semiconductor manufacturing.

- **Rapid Technological Changes** – Constant innovation requires frequent upgrades and heavy R&D investments.

  - Businesses struggle to keep pace with emerging technologies like AI, IoT, and 5G.

- **E-Waste Management & Sustainability** – Rising electronic waste due to short product life cycles.

  - Need for better recycling processes and use of eco-friendly materials.

- **Cybersecurity & Data Privacy Risks** – Increased connectivity (IoT, 5G) raises risks of hacking and data breaches.

  - Strengthening digital security measures is crucial.

- **High Manufacturing Costs** – Setting up advanced fabrication units and R&D centres requires huge investments.

  - Labour and operational costs impact competitiveness.

- **Skilled Workforce Shortage** – Demand for skilled professionals in semiconductor design, AI, and quantum computing is growing.

  - Need for better training and education programs.

What are the Government Initiatives to Boost Electronics Manufacturing in India?
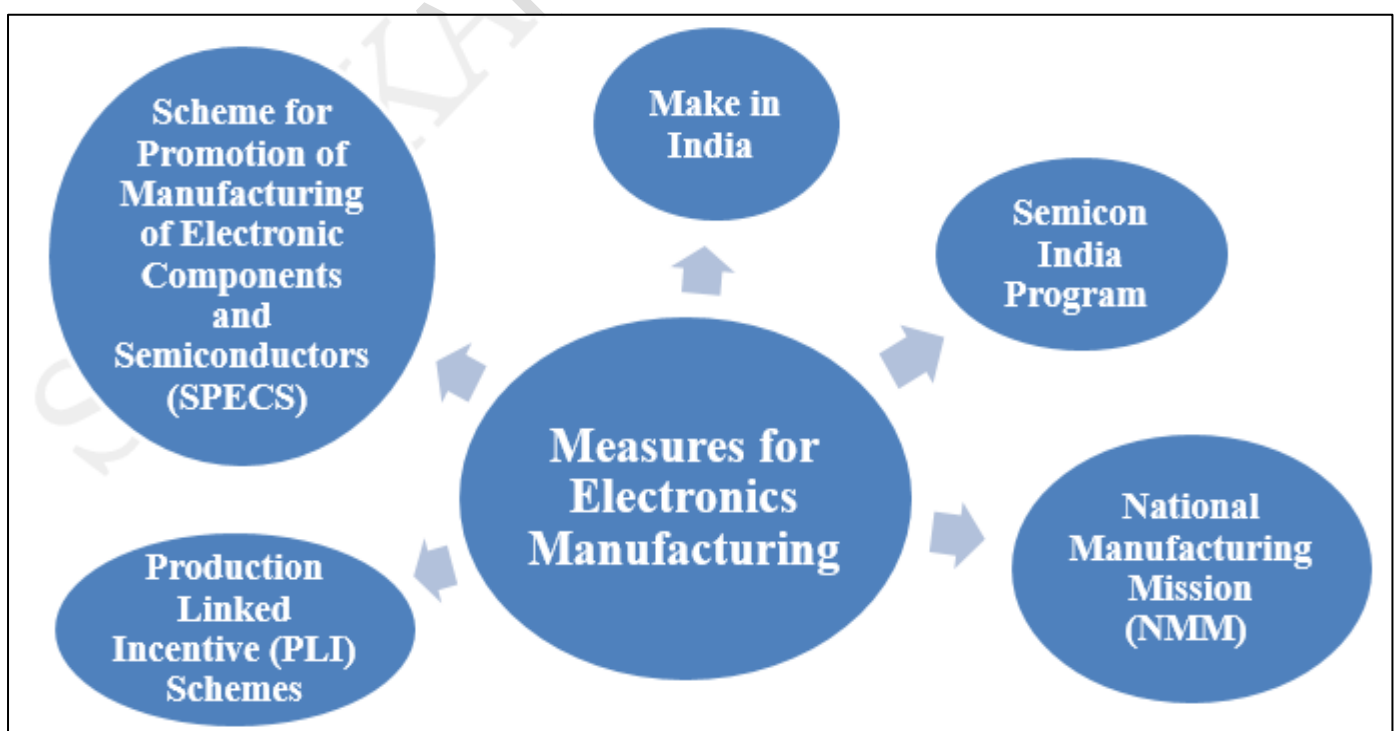
- **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes**

- **PLI for Large-Scale Electronics** – Provides financial incentives for mobile phone and electronic component manufacturing to attract investments and increase domestic value addition.

- **PLI for IT Hardware** – Encourages local production of laptops, tablets, PCs, and servers to position India as a global IT hardware hub.

- **Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors (SPECS)** – Offers financial support for manufacturing semiconductors, electronic components, and display fabs to reduce import dependence.

- **Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC 2.0) Scheme** – Supports infrastructure development for electronics manufacturing hubs with financial assistance for shared facilities and investments.

- **Semicon India Program** – Promotes semiconductor design and manufacturing by offering incentives for setting up fabs and attracting global semiconductor companies.

- **Make in India** – Encourages domestic manufacturing across industries, including electronics, by improving the ease of doing business.

- **Digital India** – Boosts demand for electronic devices and components by promoting digital technologies across various sectors.

- **National Manufacturing Mission (NMM)** – Aims to boost India's manufacturing sector and increase its _GDP share to 25% by 2025._

- It was announced during the ___Union Budget (2025- 2026)___.

- It supports small, medium, and large industries under **"Make in India"** while enhancing self-reliance and global competitiveness.

What lies ahead?

- _Boost local manufacturing_ through incentives like India's PLI scheme.

- _Invest in R&D_ to stay competitive in emerging technologies.

- _Enhance recycling & sustainability efforts_ to tackle e-waste.

- _Strengthen cybersecurity measures_ to protect data and devices.

4.4	India's Role in Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict

Why in news?

India's involvement in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, focusing on the 13th Amendment, with India supports the 13th Amendment, promoting provincial autonomy.

What are the Background of Ethnic Conflict in Srilanka?

- **Ethnic Composition** - Sri Lanka has a multi-ethnic society, primarily composed of Sinhalese (majority), Tamils (minority), and Muslims.

- The conflict primarily involved the Sinhalese and Tamil communities.

- **Colonial Roots -** British colonial policies favored Tamils in education and administration, creating resentment among the Sinhalese majority.

- **Post-Independence Discrimination -** After gaining independence in 1948, successive Sri Lankan governments implemented policies favoring the Sinhalese, such as:

  o **Sinhala Only Act (1956)** – Made Sinhala the sole official language, marginalizing Tamils.

  o **University Quotas** – Reduced Tamil students' access to higher education.

- **Rise of Tamil Nationalism** - led to the demand for autonomy by Tamil political parties, resulting in the formation of militant groups like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

- **Civil War (1983–2009) -** The ethnic tensions escalated into a full-scale war between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE, seeking an independent Tamil Eelam in the north and east.

- **Indo-Lanka Accord (1987) -** The Indo-Lanka Accord was signed on 1987, between India and Sri Lanka to address the ongoing ethnic conflict and civil unrest in Sri Lanka.

- **Indian Peacekeeping-** The agreement aimed to establish peace and normalcy in Sri Lanka, with India playing a role in overseeing the cessation of hostilities.

- **Territorial Integrity -** Both nations affirmed the unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

- **Devolution of Power -**The accord proposed the devolution of powers to provincial councils to meet the aspirations of all communities.

- **Tamil Language Recognition-** It recognized Tamil as an official language of Sri Lanka, alongside Sinhala.

INSURGENCY HISTORY
- **1976** Tamil Tigers rebel group forms in northeast
- **1983** Civil war between Sinhalese majority and Tamil separatists starts
- **1987-90** Temporary deployment of Indian peacekeepers
- **1993** President Ranasinghe Premadasa killed by rebel bomb
- **2002** Government and rebels agree to cease-fire
- **2006** Heavy fighting resumes
- **2009** Sri Lankan Army takes main rebel bases

What are the features of 13th Amendment?

- Enacted in November 1987, created Provincial Councils in Sri Lanka.

- **Legislative Powers -** These councils were granted legislative powers over specified subjects, including education, health, and agriculture.

- **Executive Authority -** Each council had an executive committee headed by a Chief Minister, facilitating local governance.

- **Financial Autonomy -** Provincial Councils were empowered to manage their finances, including taxation within their jurisdiction.

> *By End of the War (2009) Sri Lankan military defeated the LTTE, but Tamil grievances over political representation, devolution, and human rights violations persist.*

What are the Current Challenges in implementing the 13th Amendment?

- Political opposition from Sri Lankan parties, including the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP).

- Supreme Court annulled Northern and Eastern Province merger in 2006, limiting Tamil political aspirations.

- Delay in conducting Provincial Council elections, leading to concerns over devolution of power.

What are Potential Impacts on India?

- **Regional Stability** - Unrest among Sri Lanka's Tamil population could lead to instability in South Asia, affecting security in the region.

- **Ethnic Relations -**The situation of Tamils in Sri Lanka directly impacts Tamil Nadu, influencing India's domestic politics and inter-community relations.

- **Refugee Influx -** Rising tensions could force Sri Lankan Tamils to seek refuge in India, creating humanitarian and logistical challenges.

- **Strategic Interests -** Instability in Sri Lanka could allow external powers to increase their influence in the Indian Ocean, affecting India's security.

- **Bilateral Relations -**Strained ethnic relations in Sri Lanka could impact India-Sri Lanka ties, affecting trade, security, and regional cooperation.

What are India's Recent Diplomatic Approach?

- PM urged full implementation of Sri Lanka's Constitution, including the 13th Amendment.

- No explicit reference to the amendment during Sri Lankan Minister's visit to Delhi in 2024 raised concerns.

- India's silence may reflect a strategic shift in its diplomatic stance on the Tamil issue.

What Steps India Can Take?

- **Diplomatic Engagement -** Urge Sri Lanka to fully implement the 13th Amendment, ensuring proper devolution of power to Tamil-majority regions.

- **Support Reconciliation -** Share India's federalism and diversity management experiences to help Sri Lanka in its reconciliation efforts.

- **Humanitarian Assistance-** Be prepared to support Tamil refugees if tensions escalate while working with Sri Lanka to prevent displacement.

- **Regional Cooperation-** Collaborate with South Asian nations to promote stability and address concerns arising from Sri Lanka's internal issues.

- **Monitor External Influence -** Keep an eye on foreign involvement in Sri Lanka to safeguard India's strategic interests in the Indian Ocean region.

What lies ahead?

- India's role in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict is complex. Implementing the 13th Amendment is important for lasting peace.

- India must balance its interests while encouraging Sri Lanka to meet the needs of the Tamil minority.

- This situation needs careful diplomacy, ongoing involvement, and a deep understanding of the historical and political background.

G. S. PAPER II

5. INDIAN POLITY

5.1 Endurance of India's Constitution

Why in News?

India's Constitution, though criticized for being lengthy, derivative, and non-Indian, has lasted 75 years under review.

What is the Journey of Indian Constitution?

India's Constitutional Journey	
1946	Cabinet mission is dispatched to India to discuss modalities for transfer of power
9 Dec 1946	Constituent assembly convenes for the first time.
29 Aug 1947	Establishment of drafting committee.
4 Nov 1949	Draft is finalized and submitted.
26 Nov 1949	Constituent Assembly adopts final draft making it official.
26 Jan 1950	Entry into force of the new constitution.

What is the supremacy of the Indian Constitution?

- **Fundamental Law -** A constitution is the fundamental law of a nation.

- It outlines the basic principles and laws that determine the powers and duties of the government and guarantee certain rights to the people.

- **Supreme Legal Authority -** Serves as the supreme legal document, against which all other laws are measured.

- **Expression of Sovereignty -** Reflects the sovereign will of the people, often established through a constituent assembly or similar body.

The Constituent Assembly took 2 years, 11 months and 17 days to complete drafting the Constitution for Independent India. During this period, it held 11 sessions covering a total of 165 days.

- **Living Document** - While foundational, constitutions often include provisions for amendments to adapt to changing societal needs.

What is Constitutional Government?

- **Limited Government -** A constitutional government operates under a constitution that limits the powers of political authorities, ensuring they act within established legal frameworks.

- **Rule of Law -** Emphasizes that all individuals and institutions, including the government, are subject to the law.

- **Separation of Powers -** Distributes governmental powers among separate branches to prevent abuse and provide checks and balances.

- **Protection of Fundamental Rights -** Guarantees individual liberties and rights, safeguarding citizens against government overreach.

- **Democratic Principles** - Often incorporates democratic processes, allowing for representation and participation of the people in governance.

- **Judicial Review** - Courts have the power to interpret and review laws to ensure they follow the Constitution.
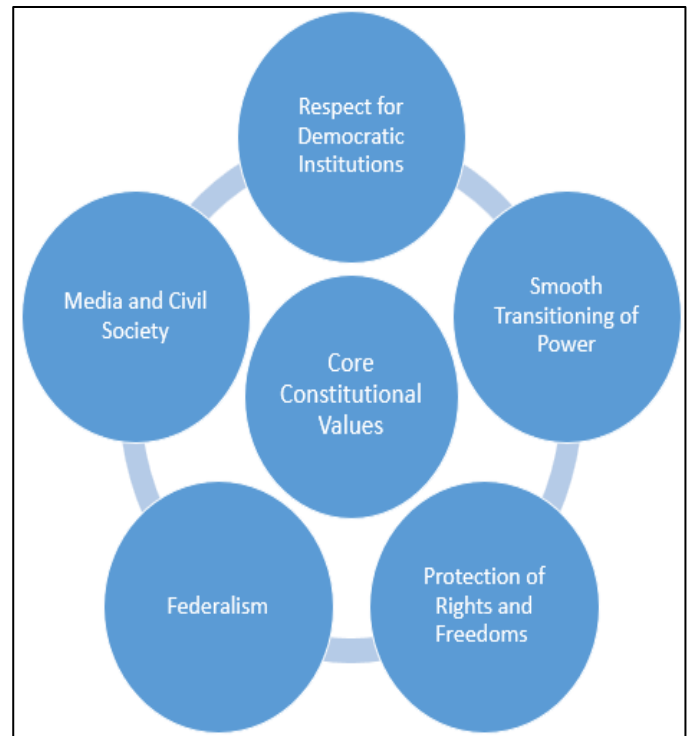
What is Constitutional Morality?

- The term was taken from George Grote's study of ___Athenian democracy.___

- **Adherence to Constitutional Values** - Dr. B.R. Ambedkar emphasized that governance must follow constitutional principles, not personal beliefs.

- **Supporting democracy -** It involves supporting a democratic political process that serves both individual and collective interests.

- **Respecting rights -** It involves respecting and protecting the fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution.

- **Balancing freedom and restraint -** It involves citizens submitting to constitutional authorities while also having the freedom to criticize those in power.

- **Judicial Interpretation -** Courts use it to safeguard democratic principles.
  - **Example** - In the Navtej Singh Johar Case (2018), the Supreme Court decriminalized homosexuality (Section 377), citing constitutional morality.

India's Need for Constitutional Morality
- **To Prevent Majoritarian Rule -** Ensures democracy functions beyond electoral politics.   - **Protection of Minority Rights** -Reservations (Articles 15 & 16) protect marginalized communities.   - **Role of Institutions -** Ensures institutions function independently and impartially.   - **Example -** The Sabarimala Temple Case (2018) upheld women's entry, enforcing constitutional morality over religious practices.

What are the Challenges to Indian Constitution?

- **Communalism and Religious Conflicts** - Religious tensions challenge the secular Constitution.
  - **Example** -Ram Janmabhoomi Babri Masjid dispute caused legal battles and violence.

- **Caste based discrimination** - persists despite Article 15 & 16 reservations.
  - **Example**- Dalit atrocities and honor killings under SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989

- **Corruption in Public Institutions** - Corruption undermines governance and citizens' rights

- **Example**- Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 aims to reduce corruption
- **Threats to Secularism** - Rising religious intolerance impacts harmony and pluralism
  - **Example**- Hate speech and mob lynching incidents raise Article 25 concerns
- **Misuse of Laws for Political Gains** - Laws like UAPA are criticized for limiting dissent and free speech
  - **Example**- Sedition cases filed against journalists and activists
- **Growing Economic Inequality** - Rich poor gap has widened despite economic growth
  - **Example-** Multidimensional Poverty Index indicates economic inequalities
- **Unemployment and Job Creation Issues** - Job creation remains difficult despite schemes like PMEGP
  - **Example** - Unemployment rate rose during COVID 19 lockdowns
- **Agrarian Crisis and Farmers' Protests** - Issues like low MSP, water shortages, and land acquisition unresolved.
- **Climate Change and Environmental Degradation-** Environmental issues often conflict with economic development.

What are the Reasons for the Indian Constitution's Survival for 75+ Years?

Strong Democratic Institutions	Constitutional Adaptability	Socio-Political Stability
-Independent Judiciary -Election Commission -Media and Civil Society	-Flexible Amendments -Judicial Activism and PILs	-Federalism -Secularism -Welfare Policies

Strong Democratic Institutions

- **Independent Judiciary-** Protects constitutional rights.
  - **Example**- Basic Structure Doctrine (Kesavananda Bharati Case, 1973).
- **Election Commission –** It's role in free and fair elections.
  - **Example**: Introduction of EVMs, VVPAT for transparency.
- **Media and Civil Society-** Keep the government accountable.
  - **Example**: Right to Information Act (2005) empowers citizens.

Constitutional Adaptability

- **Flexible Amendments** - Keep it relevant.
  - **Example-** 73rd & 74th Amendments (Panchayati Raj, 1992).
- **Judicial Activism and PILs** - Expand constitutional rights.
  - **Example** -**Vishaka Case (1997)** led to sexual harassment laws.

Socio-Political Stability

- **Federalism -** Balances Centre-State relations.
  - **Example-** GST Council ensures cooperative federalism.
- **Secularism -** Maintains religious harmony
  - **Example-**Special Marriage Act, 1954 allows interfaith marriages.
- **Welfare Policies -** Reduce inequalities.
  - **Example-**Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act **(MGNREGA).**
- **Robust Defense** - Rights through NHRC and SC.

- o **Example-Decriminalization of Triple Talaq (2019).**
- **People's Faith in Democracy -** Sustains the Constitution.
    - o **Example -** High voter turnout in Lok Sabha elections.

What Lies ahead?

- The Indian Constitution has survived over 75 years due to strong democratic institutions, adaptability through amendments, and socio-political stability.
- Key factors include an independent judiciary, a robust election process, media accountability, and citizens' faith in democracy evidenced by high voter turnout.

5.2   Uniform Civil Code (UCC)'s Implications for Individual Rights and Societal Norms

Why in news?

The Uttarakhand's UCC draft, has ignited a debate on the balance between individual liberties (specifically the right to privacy under Article 21) and the need for legal safeguards, particularly for women and children in such relationships.

What is Uniform Civil Code (UCC)?

- **Article 44 (DPSP)** – States that the State shall endeavor to secure a Uniform Civil Code for all citizens of India.
- **Fundamental Rights vs. DPSP** – While the right to religious freedom (Article 25) exists, *UCC aims for legal uniformity.*
- **Judicial Interpretation** – Supreme Court in ***Shah Bano Case (1985) and Sarla Mudgal Case (1995)*** *supported UCC's necessity.*
- **Government Stance** – Law Commission Report (2018) suggested reforms in personal laws instead of imposing UCC.
- **State-Specific Developments** – Uttarakhand's UCC draft is the first major initiative. Other states like Goa already follow a civil code.

What are the Objectives of UCC?

- **Legal Uniformity** – Replacing diverse personal laws (Hindu, Muslim, Christian, etc.) with a *single legal framework*.
- **Gender Equality** – *Prevents discriminatory practices like triple talaq* and unequal inheritance rights.
- **National Integration** – A common civil code *strengthens secularism and unity*.
- **Simplification of Laws** – Reduces legal complexities and contradictions in different religious personal laws.
- **Alignment with Global Standards** – Many countries have secular civil codes to ensure equality before the law.

What are the Challenges in Implementation?

- **Religious Sensitivities** – Opposition from various communities fearing erosion of their traditions.
- **Diverse Legal Systems** – Different laws govern Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Parsis, making integration difficult.
- **Judicial Conflicts** – Courts have ruled both for and against aspects of UCC in different cases.
- **Political Hesitation** – Successive governments have avoided enforcing UCC due to electoral concerns.
- **Need for Consensus** – A well-researched legal framework is required for fair implementation.

What are the rules about Live-in Relationships in Uttarakhand UCC draft?

- **Mandatory Registration** – Uttarakhand's draft proposes *compulsory registration* of live-in relationships.
- **Police Verification Clause** – Couples may have to report to authorities, raising privacy concerns.
- **Protecting Women & Children** – *Ensures legal safeguards* for partners and children born from such unions.
- **Impact on Personal Freedom** – Critics argue this could *restrict Article 21 (Right to Privacy)*.
- **State-Wide Implementation** – If successful, it may set a precedent for other states.

What is the status and provisions of Live-in Relationships in India?

Legal Recognition

- **No Specific Law** – _Not explicitly mentioned in Indian law_ but recognized through judicial rulings.

- **Supreme Court Rulings** – In the _**S. Khushboo v. Kanniammal (2010)**_, the court ruled that Live-in relationships are _**not illegal**_.

- **Judicial Protection –** Courts have _granted legal safeguards_ in cases of abuse or maintenance disputes.

Judicial Precedents of Live-in Relationships in India	
Indra Sarma vs. V.K. Sarma (2013)	Defined live-in relationships under "relationships in the nature of marriage."
Velusamy vs. D. Patchaiammal (2010)	Maintenance rights granted if cohabitation is long-term.
D. Velusamy Case (2010)	Rights of women and children in live-in relationships reinforced.
Supreme Court Ruling (2015)	Children born out of live-in relationships are considered legitimate.

Property and Inheritance Rights

- **No Automatic Inheritance Rights** – Live-in partners do not inherit property like married couples.

- **Hindu Succession Act (1956)** – Does not extend property rights to live-in partners.

- **Judicial Intervention** – Courts decide inheritance disputes on case-specific grounds.

- **Need for Legal Clarity** – Amendments required to avoid legal ambiguities.

- **Comparisons with Marriage** – Unlike marriage, live-in partners must prove cohabitation for legal claims.

Protection under Domestic Violence Act (2005)

- **Recognizes Live-in Partners** – Women in live-in relationships can seek protection.

- **Right to Residence** – Protects a woman's right to live in a shared household.

- **Domestic Violence Cases** – Can be filed under the Act even if partners are not legally married.

- **Prevention of Harassment** – Protects against physical, mental, or financial abuse.

- **Supreme Court Interpretation** – Expanded legal protections for victims in abusive live-in relationships.

Concerns of Over-Policing which impact the Individual Freedom

- **Right to Privacy (Article 21)** – Mandatory registration may violate constitutional privacy rights.

- **Government Surveillance** – Legal documentation could lead to unwarranted state intervention.

- **Impact on Women** – Could increase social stigma rather than provide protection.

- **Fear of Misuse** – Possibility of using laws to harass couples, especially interfaith or inter-caste partners.

- **Judicial Review Needed** – The Supreme Court may need to balance laws with fundamental rights.

What lies ahead?

- **Legal Clarity** – Clearly _define rights and responsibilities_ of live-in partners in law.
  - Amend existing laws to ensure protection for live-in relationships.
  - Establish _legal safeguards against misuse and ambiguity_ in interpretations.

- **Privacy and Regulation** – Keep live-in relationship registration voluntary to protect privacy.
  - _Prevent misuse of laws_ for harassment or moral policing.
  - Promote legal awareness programs on privacy rights and individual freedom.

- **Women's Rights Protection** – Ensure maintenance, property, and inheritance rights for women.
  - _Provide legal aid and support mechanisms_ for vulnerable partners.

- **Judicial and Policy Reforms** – Set up fast-track courts for live-in relationship disputes.
  - Train law enforcement and judiciary on handling related legal cases.
  - *Update personal laws and policies* to reflect changing social norms.

5.3   Fairness and objectivity of Election Commission of India

Why in News?

The Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) act on the appointment of the CEC and ECs has come up for hearing in the Court.

What are the provisions of the new bill?

Constitutional Provisions for Election Commission	
About	**Description**
Election Commission	It is a permanent and an independent body established by the Constitution of India directly to ensure free and fair elections in the country.
Article 324	It provides the power of superintendence, direction and control of elections to parliament, State legislatures, the office of President of India and the office of Vice-President of India shall be vested in the Election Commission.
Composition	It consists of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two other Election Commissioners (ECs)
Appointment	The CEC and EC appointment is subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament, be made by the *President*.

- **New bill** – The new act replaces the previous Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991.
- **Selection Committee**- The Selection Committee will consist of
  - Prime Minister as Chairperson
  - Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha as member,
  - Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister as member.
- **Search Committee** – It is headed by the Law Minister and two senior bureaucrats and will prepare a panel of five names for consideration.
- The selection committee will choose one person from the recommended list.
- **Security of Tenure** - The tenure of the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners remains **_6 years or until the age of 65_**, whichever is earlier.
- Qualifications for CEC and EC- Persons who are holding or have held posts equivalent to the rank of Secretary to the Central Government.
  - Persons having expertise in managing and conducting elections.
- **Service conditions** - The salary and conditions of service of the CEC and ECs will be equivalent to that of Cabinet Secretary.
  - Under the 1991 Act, it was equivalent to the salary of a Supreme Court Judge.

What are the issues with new act?

- **Lack of independence of the members** - When the chairperson nominates one cabinet minister, this candidate will undoubtedly be subservient to the chairperson.

> *Historically, the Supreme Court has ruled that election commissioners should be individuals of high integrity, competence, and impartiality.*

- **Infirmities in the selection process**– Dominance of the executive, Prime Minister and Cabinet Minister, affects the fairness of selection of process.
- **Threat to EC independence** - Government retains significant influence over appointments, compromising the neutrality of the ECI.

- **Mandate of the select committee** - It is mandatory for the President to appoint persons recommended by the select committee.

- **Constitutional violation** - The selection of the CEC and other ECs has a vital bearing on the conduct of free and fair elections which is a part of the basic structure of the Constitution.

- **Weakening of checks and balances** - Removing the CJI from the committee eliminates an impartial voice, reducing transparency in appointments.

- **Undermining the authority of EC** – Equating Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) to the Cabinet secretary reduces the constitutional position of CEC sub servient to the executive.

- **Potential for electoral manipulation** - A government-backed Election Commission could make decisions favoring the ruling party.

- **Limited eligibility criteria**- Limiting the selection field to senior bureaucrats, exclude other suitable candidates especially those who have judicial experience or expertise.

What can be done to ensure the independence of EC?

- **Restoring judicial oversight** - The Supreme Court's earlier recommendation of including the Chief Justice of India (CJI) in the selection committee should be reconsidered.

- **Strengthening appointment mechanisms** - A more transparent appointment process with public disclosures of shortlisted candidates could enhance accountability.

- **Ensuring financial and functional independence** - The Election Commission should have financial autonomy, similar to the judiciary, to reduce government influence.

- **Expand the selection pool** – Include judicial role in the eligibility criteria for chief election commissioner.

6. GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

6.1	Transgender Rights in India

Why in News?

As the US imposes restrictions on gender-affirming services, India's legal framework, including the NALSA judgment and the Transgender Persons Act (2019), offers a contrasting approach.

## What is the definition of Transgender Persons?

- According to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, a transgender person is someone whose gender identity does not align with their sex assigned at birth. This includes,

- **Hijras, Aravanis**– Traditional transgender communities in India (Legally recognized terms in India by the NALSA 2014).

- **Trans men and Trans women** – Individuals who identify with a gender different from their birth sex.

- **Genderqueer and Non-binary** – Those who do not conform to traditional gender categories.

What are the Constitutional and Legal Backing for Transgender Rights in India?

- **Constitutional Provisions - Article 14 (Right to Equality)** – Ensures transgender persons are treated equally under the law.

- **Article 15 & 16 (Prohibition of Discrimination)** – Bars discrimination based on sex and gender identity.

- **Article 19 (Freedom of Expression)** – Recognizes the right of individuals to express their gender identity.

- **Article 21 (Right to Life and Dignity)** – Affirmed in the NALSA judgment, upholding dignity and personal liberty for transgender individuals.

- **Legal Framework -** Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 - Prohibits discrimination in education, healthcare, employment, and housing.

- Provides the right to self-perceived gender identity.

- Establishes National Council for Transgender Persons for policy oversight.

- **Other Legal Provisions - Mental Healthcare Act, 2017** – Provides transgender persons the right to mental health services without discrimination.
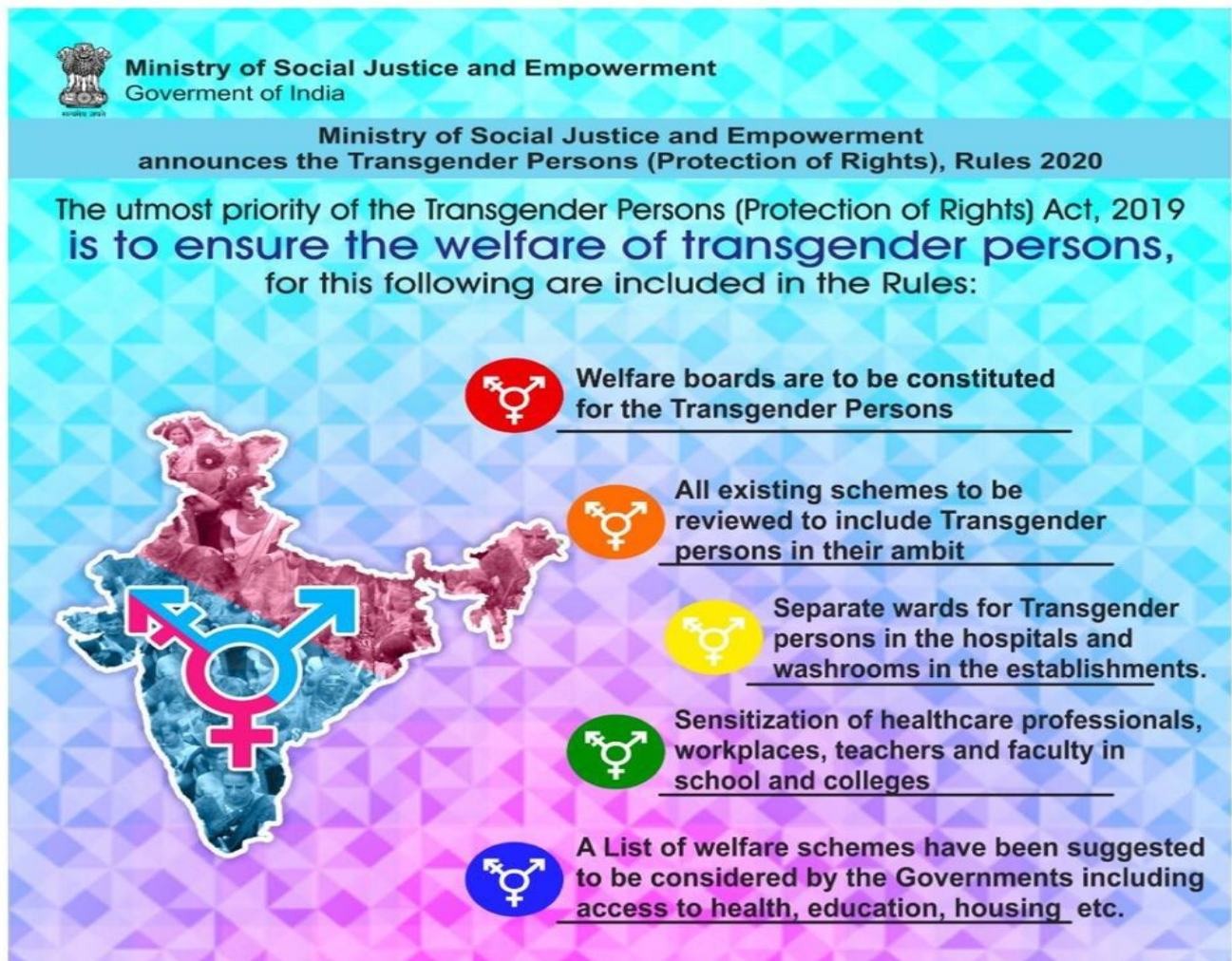
- **SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 (Amendment, 2015)** – Hijra and transgender Dalits are often victims of caste-based violence.

- **Landmark Judgments - National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) v. Union of India (2014) -** Recognized transgender people as a third gender.

- Directed the government to provide reservations in education and employment.

- Affirmed that gender identity is based on self-identification rather than medical tests.

- **Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018)** - Decriminalized homosexuality (Section 377 IPC), strengthening LGBTQ+ rights.

- **SMILE -** Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise - Welfare measures for both transgender persons and persons who are engaged in the act of begging.

- **Sub-schemes**

  o Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation for Welfare of Transgender Persons' and

  o 'Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of persons engaged in the act of Begging'.

What is the comparison of Transgender Rights in India and the U.S.?

- In Donald Trump's administration, transgender rights faced significant restrictions in the US.

- The federal government recognized only male and female genders, denying transgender individuals the right to change gender on official documents.

- Federal funding for gender-affirming care was banned, and several states criminalized such treatments for minors.

- A military ban on transgender individuals was reinstated but later reversed.

- Transgender girls were barred from women's sports, and discussions on gender identity were restricted in schools.

- Some states allowed businesses to deny services to transgender people, and workplace anti-discrimination protections were rolled back.

Aspect	India	United States
Legal Recognition	Recognized as the third gender (NALSA, 2014)	No uniform federal recognition; varies by state.
Healthcare Access	Govt. schemes announced, but implementation lags	Restrictive policies in some states, blocking gender-affirming care.
Anti-discrimination Laws	The 2019 Act prohibits discrimination	Civil Rights Act does not explicitly cover gender identity in all areas.
Sports Inclusion	Policy evolving but some Restrictions exist	Many states have banned transgender athletes from competing in categories aligning with gender identity.

What are the challenges in implementing initiatives for Transgender Persons in India?

- **Challenges in Accessing Healthcare - Lack of Specialized Medical Training** – Doctors lack training in hormone therapy and gender-affirming surgeries.

- **Social Stigma** – Fear of discrimination in hospitals discourages transgender persons from seeking healthcare.

- **Limited Government Support** – Government hospitals offering gender-affirming surgery are minimal.

- **Mental Health Issues** – Transgender individuals face high levels of depression, anxiety, and suicide risk.

- **What are the Challenges in Transgender Rights Implementation?**

Challenges	Details
Social Stigma	Widespread prejudice, discrimination, and family rejection.
Legal GapsL	The 2019 Act lacks clear provisions on reservation and gender recognition.
Economic Marginalization	Transgender individuals have low employment opportunities, forcing many into begging and sex work.
Healthcare Barriers	Lack of gender-affirming surgeries and insufficient government hospitals offering such services.
Hate Crimes & Violence	Transgender persons are often subjected to violence, abuse, and police harassment.

What lies ahead?

- Strengthening Legal Protections by Amending the 2019 Act to include reservations in education and employment.

- Implement Ayushman Bharat TG Plus scheme effectively.

- Introduce gender diversity programs in schools and colleges.

- Promote transgender entrepreneurship programs.

- Promote India as a medical tourism hub for gender-affirming surgeries.

- Encourage PPP (Public-Private Partnership) in transgender healthcare.

| 6.2	Reclaiming India's cooperative dream

Why in News?

Recently, Union Home and Cooperation Minister has announced a target of establishing two lakh Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) within five years.

What are PACS?

- **PACS** - Primary Agricultural Credit Societies are the grass root level arms of the short-term co-operative credit structure.

- **Objective** – PCAS was designed to democratise credit, empower rural populations, and combat exploitative practices by intermediaries.

- **Evolution** - Cooperatives became instrumental in enabling agricultural credit, dairy development, and marketing.

> *The formation of PACS dates back to 1904 when the first Co-operative Credit Societies Act was passed.*
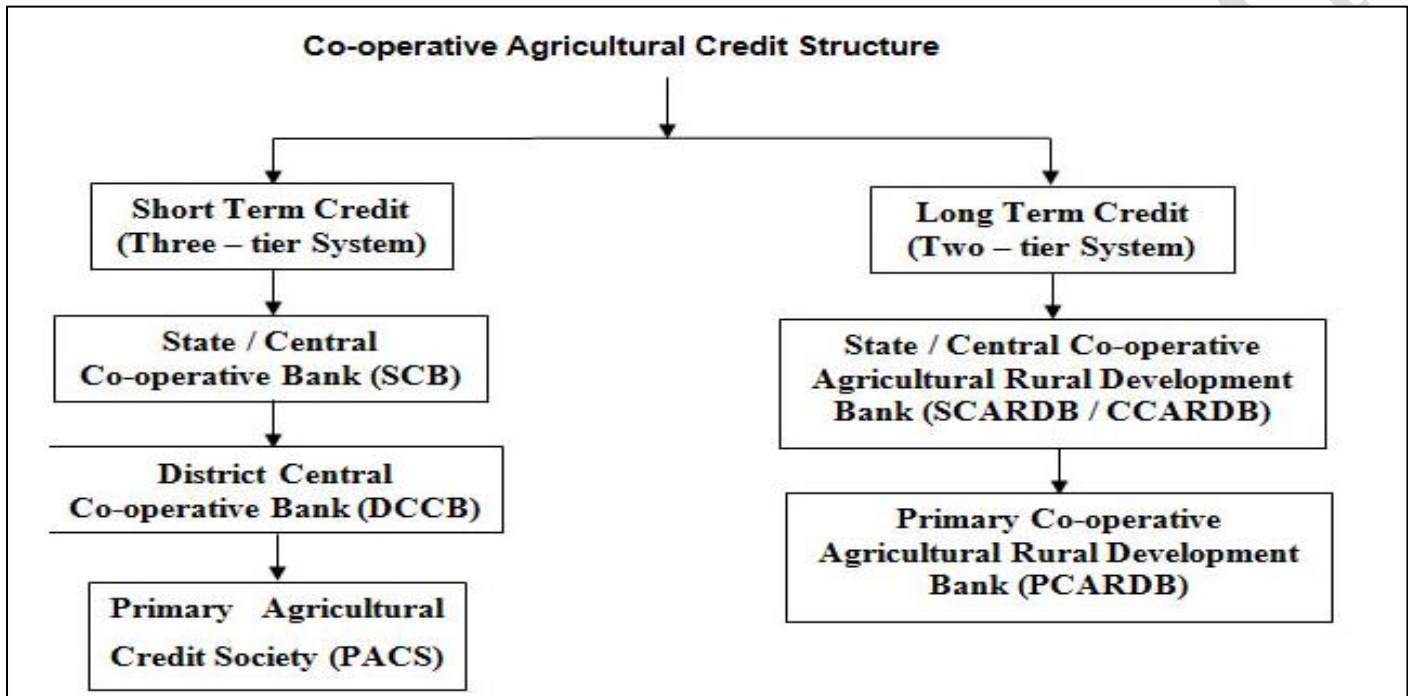
- **Function** - PACS deals directly with the rural (agricultural) borrowers
  - Give loans and collect repayments of loans
  - Undertake distribution and marketing functions

- **Financial bridge** - It serves as the final link between the ultimate borrowers on the one hand and the higher financing agencies, namely the Scheduled Commercial Banks, and the RBI/NABARD on the other hand.

- **Organisational Structure of PACS**
  - **General Body of PACS** - Exercise the control over board as well as management.
  - **Management Committee** - Elected by the general body to perform the work as prescribed by the society's rules, acts, and by-laws.
  - **Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary** - Work for the benefit of the members by performing their roles and duties as assigned to them

What hindered the potential of PACS movement?

- **Political interference** - Many cooperatives became heavily politicised, often controlled by local elites with vested interests.

- **Inefficient management** - The governance structure of cooperatives has frequently lacked professionalism, leading to poor financial management and unsustainable operations.

- **Dependence on State funds** - Cooperatives have traditionally relied on government subsidies, making them financially fragile and incapable of competing with private enterprises.

- **Limited inclusivity** - Women, Dalits, and other marginalised groups have often been excluded from decision-making roles, undermining the equitable objectives of cooperatives.

- **Fragmented approach** - Most cooperatives have focused on a narrow set of activities without integrating themselves into broader supply chains, thereby failing to achieve economies of scale or market competitiveness.

What are the recent government initiatives for cooperatives promotion?

- **New model bylaws** - The adoption of bylaws allowing cooperatives to operate in territories beyond their traditional core areas aligns with the need for modernisation and diversification.

- **Phased rollout** - Dividing the establishment of PACS into two phases, with significant involvement from the NABARD, NDDB NFDB ensures that resources and expertise are focused on sectors that require immediate attention.

- **Liquidation of defunct PACS** - Introducing standard operating procedures for liquidating non-functional PACS is a step towards streamlining the cooperative ecosystem.

- **Inclusivity focus** - The explicit emphasis on the participation of women, Dalits, and tribal to foster social harmony and economic equity.

- **Integration into global supply chains** - Using PACS as conduits for robust forward and backward linkages in global markets facilitates market competitiveness and scalability.

What are the challenges in empowering cooperative movement?

- **Avoiding political interference** -There must be strong checks and balances and clear guidelines on governance and accountability in place to prevent political capture of the new PACS.

- **Capacity building and professional management** - Providing training to PACS members on modern management practices.

- **Sustainable financial model** – Curtailing over-reliance on subsidies to guide toward self-sufficiency through income-generating activities and effective revenue models.

- **Ensuring inclusivity** - Quotas for women, Dalit's, and other vulnerable sections in leadership roles to empower marginalized groups.

- **Technological integration** - The new PACS must leverage digital tools for accounting, credit disbursal, and market access.

- Issuing micro-ATMs and RuPay Kisan Credit Cards is a positive start, but comprehensive digital infrastructure is needed.

- **Effective liquidation process** - Ensuring fairness and efficiency in liquidating defunct cooperatives.

- Mismanagement during this process could lead to legal disputes or financial losses.

- **Monitoring and evaluation** - The government must establish independent monitoring agencies to periodically assess the progress and impact of the new PACS.

What needs to be done to strengthen the movement?

- **Data-driven approach** - Identifying areas where PACS are most needed through comprehensive surveys to optimise resource allocation and to avoid duplication of efforts.

- **Grassroots participation** - Involving local communities in decision-making and planning will foster a sense of ownership and accountability among beneficiaries.

- **Collaboration with the private sector** - Public-private partnerships can provide access to modern technology and global markets, enhancing the competitiveness of cooperatives.

- **Policy consistency** - Long-term success depends on consistency in policy implementation across different States.

- **Value addition** - PACS must venture into value-added services such as food processing, cold storage, and export facilitation to boost farmer incomes.
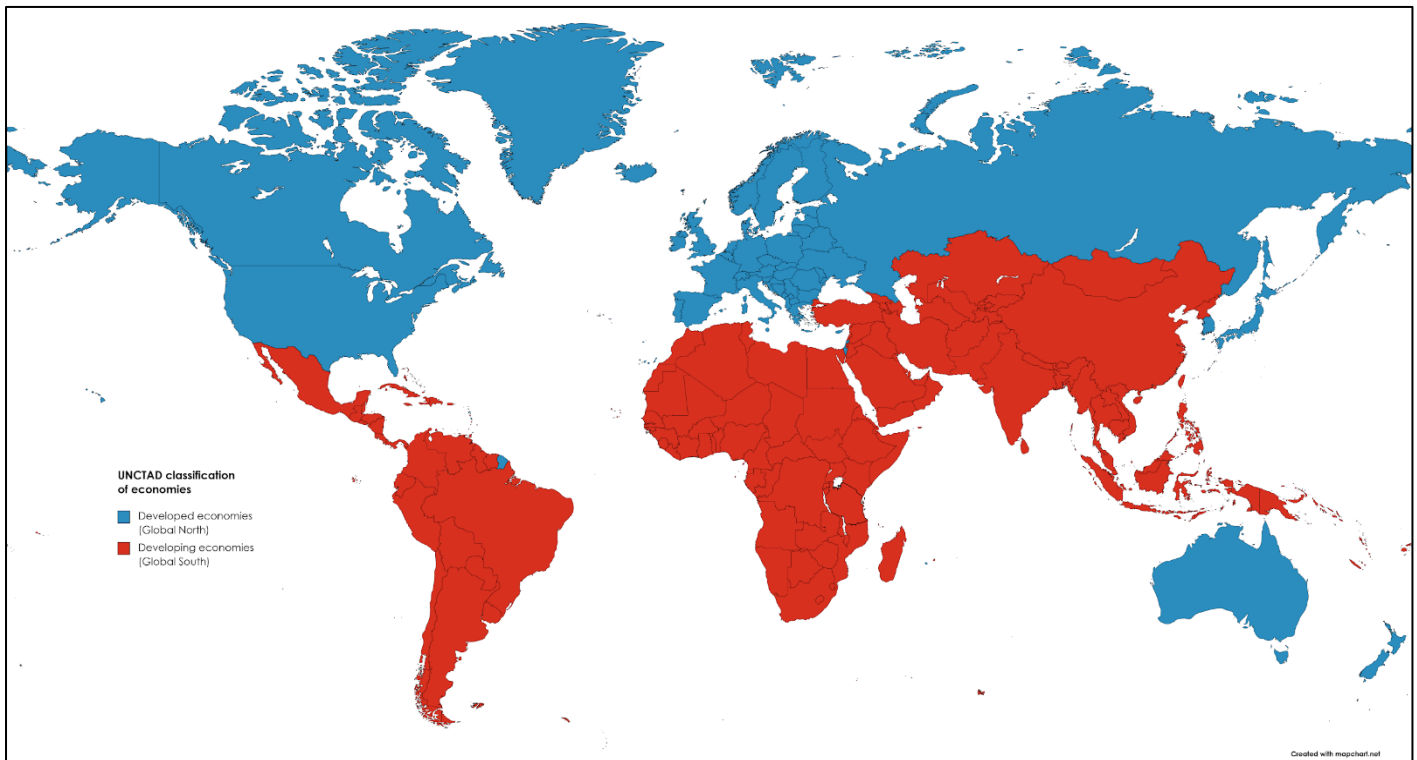
6.3   India as a Global North-South Bridge

Why in the news?

The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi while addressing the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention stated that "today's India not only firmly asserts its own point but also strongly amplifies the voice of the Global South".

What is Global North-South divide?

- The **Global North-South divide** refers to the economic and political differences between developed nations (Global North) and developing nations (Global South).

- The **Global North** consists of **wealthier, industrialized nations** (e.g., USA, Europe, Japan, Australia), while the **Global South** comprises **developing and least developed countries** (e.g., India, Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia).

- India aspires to bridge this gap by **representing the interests of the Global South** while maintaining strategic partnerships with the Global North.

UNCTAD classification of economies
- Developed economies (Global North)
- Developing economies (Global South)

Created with mapchart.net

What are the Causes for the Divide?

- **Colonial Legacy –** European colonialism extracted resources from the Global South, leaving these nations underdeveloped.

- **Economic Inequality –** The **Global North controls most global wealth, trade, and technology**, while the South lags in industrialization.

- **Institutional Disparities – Global financial institutions (IMF, World Bank, WTO)** favor the North, imposing stringent conditions on the South.

- **Climate Change Responsibility –** Developed countries **historically contributed more to carbon emissions**, but developing nations bear the brunt of climate disasters.

What are the Current Issues that Widen the Divide?

- **Unfair Trade Practices –** Developed countries impose **protectionist measures (tariffs, subsidies, WTO disputes)** against Global South exports.

- **Technology and Digital Divide –** AI, cybersecurity, and digital infrastructure are **dominated by Western corporations**, leaving developing countries behind.

- **Debt Crisis in Developing Nations –** Many Global South nations face **unsustainable debt** due to high-interest loans from global institutions.

What is India's Role in Bridging the Divide?

Geopolitical Leadership

- **G20 Presidency (2023)** – India prioritized **Global South concerns**, pushing for debt relief, food security, and digital inclusion.

> *India aims to be the voice of the Global South and Focus on economic challenges, debt, and global influence while strengthening diplomatic ties with both blocs.*

- Hosted the **'Voice of Global South' Summit**, amplifying Southern nations' voices in global governance.

G-20 and the Global South
India is one of seven economies in the Group of 20 and the Global South

Global South only ■ G-20 only ■ Both Global South and G-20
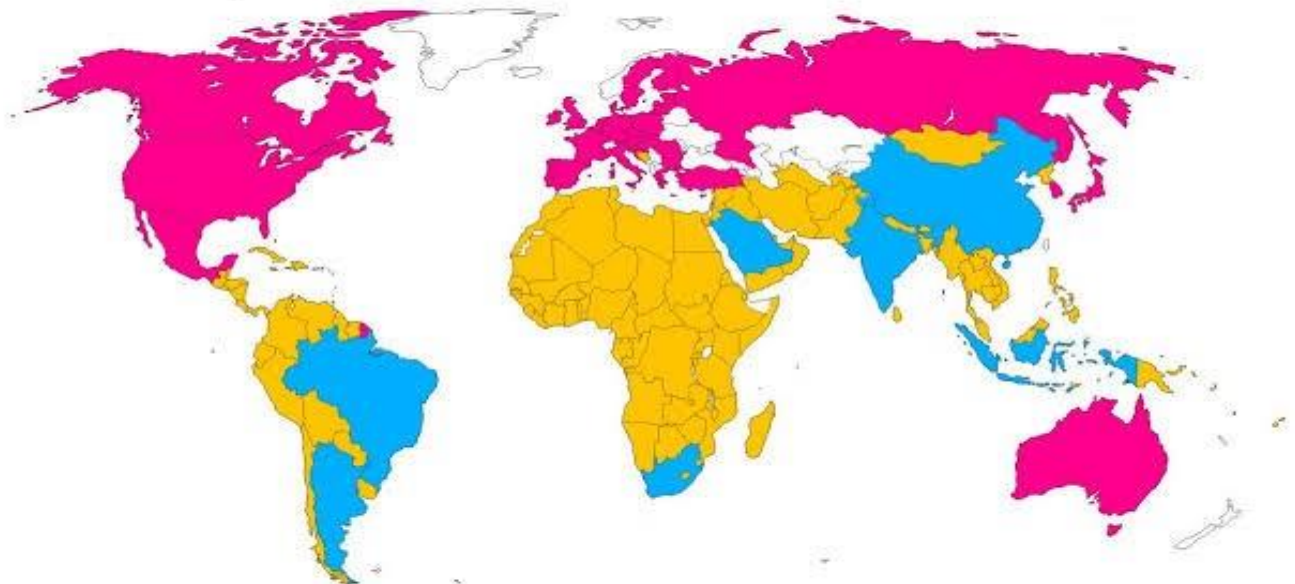
Sources: Finance Center for South-South Cooperation; Bloomberg
Notes: Mapped data show the 78 economies defined by the Finance Center for
South-South Cooperation and UN-led efforts as the Global South, and the G-20,
which counts the European Union as a member.

Bloomberg

- **BRICS & SCO Engagement** – Promotes **multi-polarity**, advocating for reforms in global governance institutions (UN, IMF, WTO).
- **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Legacy** – India continues its NAM stance by **engaging both the West and emerging economies strategically**.

Economic and Trade Partnerships

- **South-South Cooperation** – India strengthens ties with *Africa, Latin America, and ASEAN* through trade, infrastructure projects, and technology sharing.
    - **Example***: India-Africa Forum Summit* focuses on healthcare, agriculture, and skill development.
- **WTO & Trade Reform Advocacy** – India opposes *Western agricultural subsidies* that distort trade.
- Advocates for *TRIPS waiver on COVID-19 vaccines* to ensure equitable access for developing nations.
- **Atmanirbhar Bharat & Global Trade** – India's self-reliance strategy aims to boost domestic manufacturing while integrating with global markets.

Climate & Energy Leadership

- **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** – Launched by India to promote *solar energy cooperation* among developing countries.
- **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)** – Aims to *climate-proof infrastructure* in vulnerable nations.
- **Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) Initiative** – Advocates *sustainable lifestyles* to counter excessive consumption patterns of the Global North.

Technology & Development Partnerships

- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** – India promotes *UPI, Aadhaar, and CoWIN models* for developing countries to adopt.

- **Vaccine Diplomacy (Vaccine Maitri)** – Supplied _COVID-19 vaccines to over 100 countries_, strengthening South-South cooperation.

- **Space Collaboration with Global South** – ISRO provides _satellite technology and remote sensing data_ for African and Asian nations.

What are the Challenges in India's Role?

- **Economic Limitations** – India itself faces domestic _challenges (poverty, infrastructure gaps, fiscal constraints)_ while aiding others.

- **Balancing Strategic Interests** – Managing ties with China (BRICS partner) while countering its influence in Global South.

- Maintaining good relations with Western allies (US, EU) without alienating developing nations.

- **Institutional Resistance** – Western-led financial institutions resist India's push for governance reforms.

What lies ahead?

- **India's Unique Position** – As a developing _economy strategically with global influence,_ India can act as a mediator.

- **Strengthening Partnerships** – Expand _South-South cooperation, regional connectivity, and development financing._

- **Leading Global Governance Reforms** – Continue pushing for _UNSC expansion, WTO reforms, and fair financial systems._

- **Promoting Climate Justice & Sustainable Growth** – Advocate for _equitable green finance and technology transfer._

- **Significance** – India's leadership in bridging the Global North-South divide is _crucial for a fair, inclusive, and multipolar world order._

7. HEALTH

7.1	Food Insecurity and Malnutrition in Tribal Communities of India

Why in news?

Food insecurity and undernutrition are ongoing issues in tribal communities in India, even with government welfare programs in place.

What are the Recent Findings in Malnutrition regarding Tribal Communities?

- **National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA) report** – It reveals the alarming poverty rates and malnutrition among _Odisha's tribal population_.

- **Severe impacted districts** – Kandhamal, Rayagada and Koraput.

- **Kandhamal district** – Due to mango kernel (a waste product of mango fruit canning industry) consumption the dire state of food insecurity among Odisha's tribal communities.

- It reminds the earlier incidents of illnesses and multiple deaths in Kashipur, Rayagada in 1987, 1995 and 2001 due to the consumption of mango kernels.

What are the Challenges of Food Insecurity and Undernutrition in Tribal Areas?

- **Limited Dietary Diversity** - Tribal diets mostly consist of staple crops such as rice and maize, with little access to vegetables, fruits, and protein-rich foods.

- This causes deficiencies in essential micronutrients, leading to malnutrition-related diseases.

- Traditional eating habits neglect various nutritious foods

- **High Malnutrition Rates** - NFHS-5 (2019-21) data shows

    o 43% of children under five in Koraput are stunted.

    o 33% are underweight.

    o 50% are anemic.

- o Malnutrition impacts children's physical and cognitive development and increases mortality rates.

- **Lack of Awareness and Nutrition Education** - Limited understanding of balanced diets and nutrient-rich foods among tribal communities.

- Low awareness about nutrition programs like the Mid-Day Meal Scheme and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).

- Poor infant feeding practices lead to early childhood malnutrition.

- **Marginal and Small Land Holdings** - Most tribal families focus on subsistence farming, limiting their access to diverse, nutrient-rich crops.

- Many lack access to modern farming techniques and face seasonal food shortages.

- **Gender Inequality in Nutrition** - Women and girls often eat last and receive less nutritious food than men.

- Pregnant and lactating women face inadequate nutrition, resulting in high maternal and child malnutrition.

- Women's limited decision-making power in food choices impacts family nutrition.

What are the Features of the Koraput Model?

- **The Koraput Model –** It is a community- based Approach to Food Security.

- To address these issues, the MSSRF implemented a community-driven intervention from 2013 to 2022 in Koraput, focusing on nutrition literacy, sustainable farming, and collective decision-making.

Koraput Model

| Community Nutrition Literacy | Diversified Agriculture | Collective Decision-Making & Social Engagement |
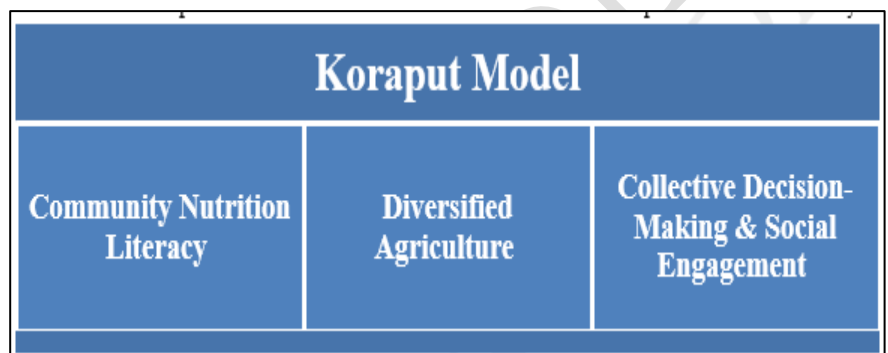
- **Community Nutrition Literacy** -Training programs educated villagers on dietary diversity and balanced diets.

- Women and children received priority in access to better nutrition.

- Local champions were trained to promote healthy eating.

- **Diversified Agriculture -**Villagers were encouraged to grow a variety of crops which enhanced food security.

- Successful initiatives included home gardens, mushroom production, vermi-composting, and crop diversification.

- **Collective Decision-Making & Social Engagement** - Group discussions on food choices and farming were conducted.

- Women-led groups promoted nutrition awareness.

- Nutrition messages were shared through community engagement activities.

- **Integration with Government Programs -** The initiative connected villagers to key nutrition schemes.

- Nutrition champions helped ensure awareness and utilization of available resources.

What are the Impact of the Koraput Model?

- **Intervention -** Significantly improved food security and nutrition in Koraput. Increased dietary diversity by cultivating various crops.

- Higher consumption of vegetables, fruits, and dairy, especially among women and children.

- Empowered women in nutrition-related decision-making.

- Strengthened local food security, reducing dependence on external sources.

What are the Government Initiatives related to Tribal Communities Food Insecurity and Malnutrition?

- **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) Development Program** – Targets the most vulnerable tribal communities on improving access to healthcare, education, clean water, and electricity.

- **Nikshay Mitra Initiative** – Aims to tackle _tuberculosis (TB) patients_ effectively and additional diagnostic, nutritional, and vocational support to many of whom belong to tribal communities.

- **Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission** – Aims to provide affordable, accessible care and quality of care to all Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) patients through awareness creation, in affected districts of tribal areas.

- **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan** – Aims to address critical gaps in social infrastructure, health, education, and livelihood development across approximately 63,000 tribal villages in Hazaribag, Jharkhand.

What lies ahead?

- The Koraput model illustrates that a community-driven approach, combined with sustainable farming and nutrition education, can effectively address food insecurity and malnutrition.

- This model can serve as a valuable blueprint for improving food security and health outcomes in other tribal areas across India.

7.2   Traditional Medicine in ICD-11

Why in News?

International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) was recently updated to integrate traditional medicine systems of healthcare practices related to Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani.

What is International Classification of Diseases (ICD)?

- **International Classification of Diseases (ICD)** – Serves as the _cornerstone of global health data_, providing a standardized language for classifying diseases, injuries, and causes of death.

- **Foundation of Global Health Data** – For over a century, the ICD has been instrumental in _tracking health trends, informing public health policies, and facilitating research_.

- It _enables comparisons of mortality and morbidity data across countries_ and time, providing crucial insights into disease burden and healthcare needs.

- **Latest version** – ICD-11.

Core Purpose	Serves as the universal language for health professionals worldwide.
	Standardizes the recording, analysis, and interpretation of mortality and morbidity data.
	Enables comparison of health data across countries and time periods.

What is Key Features and Advancements in ICD-11?

- **Adopted by** – The _World Health Assembly in 2019_ and effective since 2022, represents a significant leap forward.

- It is more comprehensive, digitally adaptable and incorporates contemporary medical knowledge.

- **Enhanced Interoperability** – ICD-11 seamlessly _integrates with other health information systems_ and standards like Orphanet and MedDRA, facilitating data exchange and analysis.

> _FHIR stands for **Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources**. It is a standard for exchanging healthcare information electronically._

- The 2025 update enhances this with FHIR API integration and advanced Natural Language Processing (NLP), enabling _real-time data exchange and improved accuracy_.

- **Improved Accuracy and Ease of Use** – Features like enhanced spelling correction and language variation recognition minimize errors in data entry.

- This, coupled with a user-friendly design, makes ICD-11 more accessible and efficient for healthcare professionals.

- **Multilingual Expansion** – _Available in 14 languages_ with ongoing expansion, ICD-11 promotes global accessibility and inclusivity.

- **Digital Integration** – ICD-11 is _designed for the digital age_, offering online and offline access, APIs, and tools that enhance data collection, analysis, and reporting.

- This digital focus is crucial for _leveraging AI and advanced analytics in healthcare_.

- **Conceptual Framework** – ICD-11's framework is independent of language and culture, ensuring its applicability across diverse populations and healthcare settings.

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What are the significance of integrating Traditional Medicine with ICD 11?

- **Traditional medicine** – One of the most ground-breaking aspects of the ICD-11, particularly highlighted in the 2025 update, is the inclusion of a module for traditional medicine conditions.

- This module specifically addresses _**Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani**_, recognizing their significant role in healthcare, especially in certain regions.

- **Policy Development** – Supports evidence-based policymaking for integrating traditional medicine into national health systems

- Guides insurance coverage decisions for traditional treatments.

- **Global Recognition** – This inclusion marks a pivotal moment for traditional medicine, elevating its status in global health reporting, research and policymaking.

- It facilitates the _systematic tracking of traditional medicine services_, enabling evidence-based policymaking and resource allocation.

- **Quality and Safety** – Standardizes terminology for better quality monitoring.

- Improves safety through systematic documentation.

- **Dual Coding** – The module _allows for dual coding, where both traditional and conventional diagnoses can be recorded_.

- This comprehensive approach provides a more holistic understanding of patient health and facilitates research into the effectiveness of traditional practices.

- **Data Collection and Research** – By providing standardized terminology, the module enhances data collection on the use and outcomes of traditional medicine by:
  - Paving the way for rigorous research and evidence-based integration into healthcare systems.

- **Cultural Sensitivity** – Recognizing and incorporating traditional medicine reflects a growing understanding of the importance of culturally sensitive and holistic healthcare approaches.

- **Economic Impact** – Creates framework for _insurance coverage of traditional treatments_.

- Supports development of traditional medicine industry.

- **Patient Care Enhancement** – Enables comprehensive patient records across different medical systems.

- Supports informed decision-making in treatment choices.

What are its Implications for Global Health?

- **Improved Data Quality** – Enhanced accuracy and interoperability lead to better data quality, which is *essential for informed decision-making in public health*.

- **Strengthened Health Systems** – By facilitating efficient data management and analysis, ICD-11 contributes to strengthening health systems at national and global levels.

- **Enhanced Research** – The standardized framework enables large-scale research, including comparative studies of different treatment approaches, *both conventional and traditional*.

- **Universal Health Coverage** – The inclusion of traditional medicine supports the WHO's goal of universal health coverage by recognizing the diverse healthcare needs of populations and promoting integrated healthcare approaches.

- **Progress towards SDGs** – ICD-11 contributes to achieving health-related Sustainable Development Goals by providing the data and tools necessary to monitor progress and address health inequalities.

What are the Challenges?

- **Implementation** – Effective implementation requires training healthcare professionals, updating health information systems and ensuring data quality.

- **Data Analysis** – Leveraging the vast amount of data generated by ICD-11 requires robust analytical capabilities and infrastructure.

- **Ongoing Updates** – The dynamic nature of medical science necessitates continuous updates and revisions to ICD-11 to reflect new discoveries and evolving understanding of diseases.

8. GOVERNANCE

8.1 Challenges in Effective Implementation of RTI

Why in News?

Recently, Supreme Court of India questioned the large number of vacancies in the central and some State Information Commissions.

What is RTI Act 2005?

- **Definition** – Section 2(j) of the RTI Act defines "right to information," as the right to information accessible under this Act which is held by or under the control of any public authority.

- It mandates *timely response to citizen requests* for government information.

- **Legality** – Apart from being a statutory right, it is also a ***fundamental right under Article 19 (1) (a)*** of the Constitution.

- **Nodal agency for implementation** – Department of Personnel and Training under Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions.

- **Information commissions** – They *hear appeals from members of the public* who have been denied access to information or have failed to elicit a response from designated information officers.

- **Coverage** – Only those private bodies or organizations which are owned, controlled, or substantially financed by the Government are directly covered.

What are the objectives and rights under RTI Act?

- **Objectives** – It is to empower the citizens, *promote transparency and accountability* in the working of the Government.

- It aims to *contain corruption*, and make our democracy work for the people in real sense.

Rights under RTI act
• Seek any information which is held by any public authority.
• Take copies of government documents.
• Inspect works, documents, and records of government.

- Take notes, extracts, or certified copies of government documents or records.

- Take certified samples of Government work.

- Obtain information in the form of diskettes, floppies, tapes, video cassettes, or in any other electronic mode or through printouts.

- **Significance** – It empowered the citizens to seek information from the government, with dignity and respect.

- An informed citizen is better equipped to keep necessary *vigil on the instruments of governance* and make the government more accountable to the governed.

> ***RTI Portal Gateway*** *is to enable the citizens to access to RTI related information / disclosures published on the web by various Public Authorities under Union and State Governments. It gives for quick search of information on the details of first Appellate Authorities, PIOs etc. amongst others.*

What are the issues in effective implementation of RTI?

- **Vacancy of posts** – The governments *delayed appointing commissioners*, which only increased the backlogs.

  o There are 8 vacancies in Information Commissioners in the Central Information Commission (CIC).

- **Lack of responsible personnel** – Most of the 'information commissioner' were taken up by retired bureaucrats, many of whom look at these jobs as post-retirement sinecures.

- **Lack of CIC autonomy** – The government *removed the fixed 5-year tenure*.

- **Lack of time limit** – While the law mandated 30 days for the information and the same period for the first appellate authorities, it did *not specify any time limit for the commissioners*.

- **Pendency of cases** – The national average of disposal of cases by the commissioners was lesser than the potential.

- Many commissions began to have pendency of over a year.

  o There are 23,000 appeals are pending before the information commissions.

- **Toothless body** – While the act has penal provisions, most information commissioners were reluctant to use them.

- **Exemptions from RTI** – *Section 8* of the Act deals with the exemption from disclosure of information.

- **Right to deny information** – In *Girish Ramchandra Deshpande vs Cen. Information Commr. & Ors., in 2012,* court had denied RTI using the exemption under Section 8(1) (j).

- It is to note that the information which would not be denied to Parliament or legislature would not be denied to any person.

  o **The Girish Ramchandra Deshpande case** has been used as a precedent in 6 subsequent Court judgments and has become the gold standard to convert RTI into an RDI, or Right to Deny Information.

> *In CBSE & Anr. vs Aditya Bandopadhyay & Ors 2011*, the Supreme Court had held that section 8 of RTI Act should be construed strictly, literally and narrowly.

> *Section 8(1) (j) of RTI* exempts information relates to personal information the disclosure of which has no relationship to any public activity or interest, or which would cause unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual.

What lies ahead?

- Centre and States shall have definite timelines for completion of the appointment process when there is a vacancy in the Information Commission.

- Citizens and the media must take up the responsibility to discuss and defend it.

# 9. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

9.1   India Europe Relationship

Why in News?

Recently, EU's College of Commissioners led by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen visited India.

How has the India – Europe Relationship evolved?

- **First diplomatic relation** - India established diplomatic relations with the European Economic Community — the first pillar of the future European Union — back in 1962.
  - o Joint Political Statement was signed in 1993
  - o Cooperation Agreement was signed in 1994
- **India-EU Summits** - The first Summit was held in Lisbon in June 2000 and 15 of which have been held so far.
- **Strategic Partnership** - The bilateral relationship was upgraded to a Strategic Partnership at the 5th India - EU Summit in The Hague in 2004.
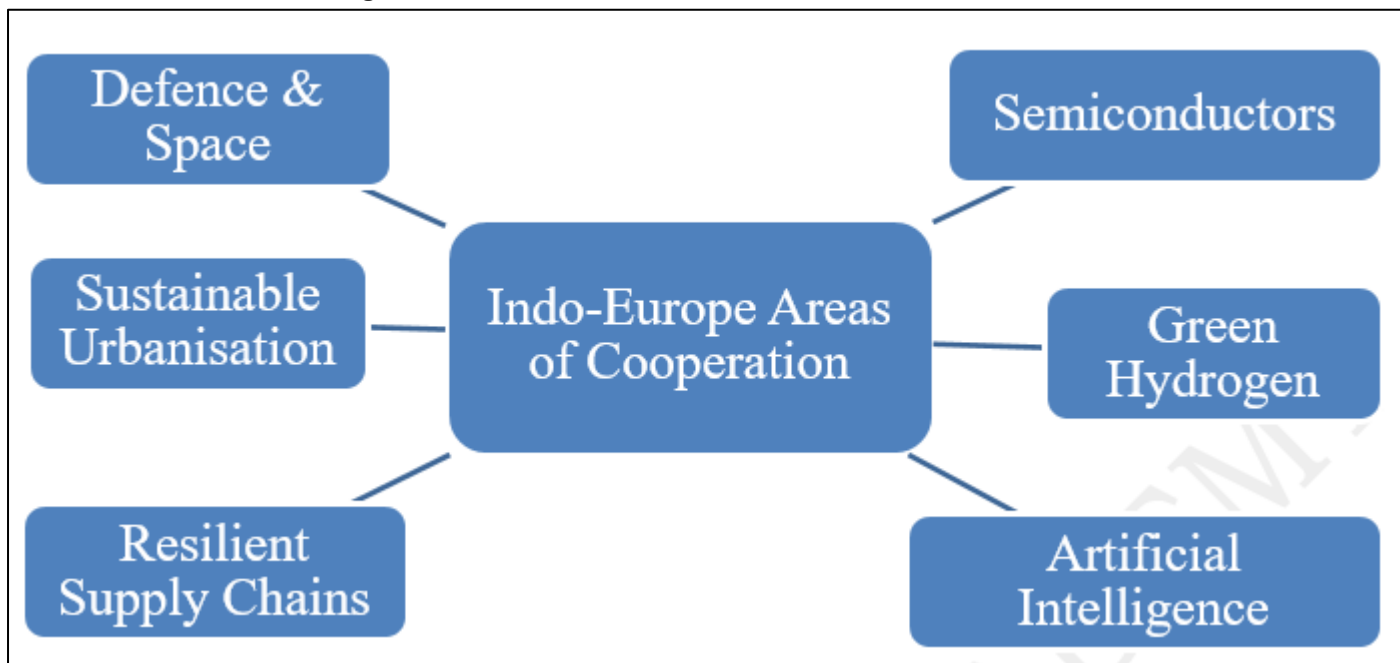
- **India - EU Trade** - EU is India's largest trading partner in goods, and bilateral trade has increased 90% over the past decade.
- **Goods trade** - Bilateral trade in goods was $135 billion in FY 2023-24, with Indian exports to the EU accounting for $76 billion and imports for $59 billion.
- **Services trade** - Bilateral trade in services in 2023 stood at $53 billion, comprising Indian exports of $30 billion and imports of $23 billion.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** - Cumulative FDI flows from the EU during the period April 2000 to September 2024 was $117.4 billion, which represented 16.6% of the total FDI equity inflow.
- Indian FDI outflows to the EU are valued at approximately $40.04 billion for the period April 2000 to March 2024.
- **Technology cooperation** - Bilateral science and technology cooperation is carried out within the framework of the Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement of 2007.
- **Clean Energy and Climate Partnership** - India-EU Clean Energy and Climate Partnership was agreed at the EU-India Summit on 30 March 2016.
- **High Performance Computing (HPC) Cooperation** - The India-EU Intent of Cooperation in High Performance Computing (HPC) was signed in November 2022.
- **India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC)** – It was established in 2022 as a strategic coordination mechanism to tackle challenges at the nexus of trade, trusted technology, and security.

The First Ministerial Meeting of the TTC was held in May 2023.Initiative for Critical and Emerging Technologies was signed with the US and the Technology Security Initiative with the United Kingdom.

India EU TTC Areas of Cooperation
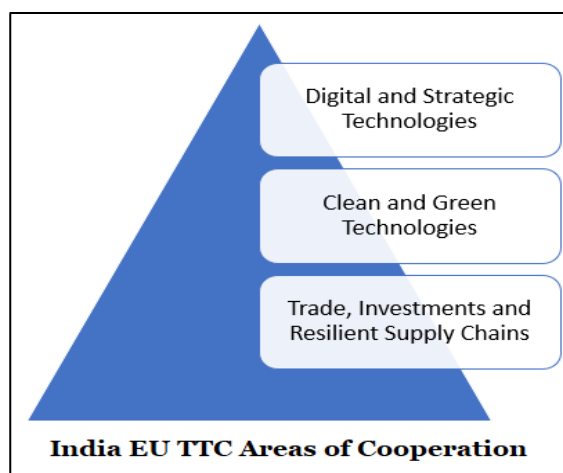
- **People-to-people ties** - The growing Indian diaspora in the EU contains large numbers of students, researchers, and skilled professionals.

- Indian professionals received the largest share — more than 20% — of EU Blue Cards issued in 2023-24.

- **Defence partnership** - India and the EU are strengthening their defence cooperation, especially in maritime security and the Indo-Pacific region under ESIWA+ (Enhanced Security in and with Asia) security programme.

- **Space collaboration** - The Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO's) PSLV successfully launched the EU's PROBA-3 mission in December 2024.

- ISRO and the European Space Agency (ESA) have cooperated on the Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya-L1 missions, and signed an MoU for cooperation on Gaganyaan, India's human spaceflight mission.

- **Erasmus scholarships** - Over the last 20 years, more than 6,000 Erasmus scholarships have been awarded to Indian students, making them among the top recipients of the scholarships.

- **Marie - Curie Scholarship** - More than 2,700 Indian researchers have been funded by Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions (part of the EU's research and innovation programme Horizon Europe) since 2014 — the most in the world.

What are the recent developments?

- **Meeting at the leaders' level** - Prime Minister Narendra Modi and EC President Ursula von der Leyen have met at least seven times in the past.

- **Presidential visit** - The EC President paid an official visit to India in April 2022, during which she participated in the Raisina Dialogue as Chief Guest

- **Roadmap** - The India-EU Strategic Partnership, A Roadmap to 2025, was adopted at the last India-EU Summit in July 2020.

- **FTA negotiation** - At the Leaders' Meeting in May 2021, the two sides announced the resumption of negotiations for a comprehensive free trade and investment agreement.

- **Connectivity partnership** - Brussels and New Delhi have committed to increase cooperation on connectivity initiatives by signing the "EU-India Connectivity Partnership" in 2021.

- **Semiconductor MoU** - In November 2023, the two sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding on semiconductor R&D cooperation.

- **GPAI Summit** - EU participated in the Global Partnership on AI Summit in New Delhi in 2024.

- **3rd phase of Climate an Energy partnership** - The third phase of the Partnership (2025–2028) focuses on green hydrogen, offshore wind energy, electricity market integration, energy efficiency and climate diplomacy, driving a sustainable, interconnected energy future.

- **Green Hydrogen Cooperation** – India-EU Green Hydrogen Cooperation initiative in 2024 facilitates cooperation in infrastructure, technology development.

  o The European Investment Bank has committed to supporting Indian hydrogen projects with funding of 1 billion euros.

- Indian and European companies are collaborating in the renewable and hydrogen sectors with the aim of developing a green hydrogen ecosystem in India by 2030.

G.S PAPER III

10.   ECONOMY

10.1   India's Employment Strategy for Sustainable Growth

Why in News?

India's economy and population growth need long-term job creation; the 2024 Union Budget launched Employment Linked Incentives to create 4 crore jobs in 5 years.

What are the Key Points?

- **Need for Climate Resilient Jobs** - India was the 7th most climate-affected country in 2019, suffering $159 billion in losses in 2021.

- The RBI estimates that climate adaptation will cost nearly $1 trillion by 2030.

- Climate change impacts agriculture, labour productivity, and rural livelihoods, necessitating investment in adaptation and green jobs.

- **Electrification of Rural Mobility** - Providing 3-4 state-subsidized e-rickshaws per village (in 6,00,000 villages) can create two million jobs, particularly for women.

- **Biogas and Renewable Energy -** Bridging the gap in compressed biogas plants- (82 plants set up vs. 5,000 target) can boost rural employment.

- Accelerating the 500GW non-fossil energy capacity target can generate over one million jobs.

- Decentralized solar power projects (like rooftop solar) are 7x more labor-intensive than large-scale solar farms.

- **Ecosystem Restoration -** Large-scale mangrove and wetland restoration projects can generate rural employment and enhance climate resilience.

- **Impact of AI on Employment**- McKinsey estimates 50% automation adoption in India within 10 years.

- Generative AI is disrupting IT, customer service, and content industries, reducing traditional employment opportunities.

- India's IT and business service sector, which contributes 70% of service exports, may see slower job growth as labour costs rise relative to automation.

- **Need for Jobs Aligned with Aspirations -** Rural youth, despite engagement with startups and digital platforms, face low confidence due to poor foundational education.

- Overdependence on government jobs and coaching culture limits entrepreneurship and private-sector employment.

- Lack of off-farm employment and rural infrastructure hinders economic mobility.

What are the Policy Measures needed?

- **Expanding Health & Education Sectors**- Increasing healthcare budgets can fill the shortage of healthcare professionals (millions of vacancies).

- Strengthening education budgets can create teaching jobs, improving learning outcomes and employment.

- **Strengthening National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) -** Financing urban and global market linkages for rural artisans and farmers can create sustainable jobs.

- Leveraging AI and digital platforms to market rural handicrafts, organic products, and indigenous knowledge.

- **Supporting AI-Augmented Jobs**- Encouraging human-centric roles in AI-assisted fields, such as cybersecurity, digital marketing, and creative sectors.

- **Rural Infrastructure & Agri-Processing**- Building 70,000 integrated pack-houses to plug the 95% infrastructure gap, creating two million jobs.

- Boosting processing and value addition in high-import agri-products like oilseeds, soybean, and sunflower to reduce India's 57% edible oil import dependency.

- **Technology & Social Media in Rural Job Creation**- Using digital platforms to enhance branding and e-commerce for rural products (e.g., Khadi, handicrafts, and organic farming).

- Promoting cold-pressed oils, millet-based products, and local food processing through startup incubation centers in rural areas.

- **PPP Model for Large-Scale Job Creation** - Encouraging public-private partnerships (PPP) in infrastructure, manufacturing, and vocational training to align skill development with market needs.

What Lies ahead?

- Tax reliefs in the Budget may support urban spending for a short time, but lasting job growth requires structural changes and strategic investments.

- India must aim for climate-resilient, AI-resilient jobs to engage youth and improve rural employment for inclusive growth.

- A Viksit Bharat needs a broad approach that combines technology, policy incentives, and sustainable economic models to generate jobs in a changing world.

| 10.2	Maternity entitlements

Why in News?

Recently deficiencies in maternity entitlements and their implementation came under scrutiny.

What are the maternity entitlements available in India?

- **Fundamental right** - *Article 21 of Right to life* guarantees the right to health and medical care, encompassing maternal health.

- **Directive principles to state** - *Article 42* of Directive Principles of State Policy directs the State to make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.

- **The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961** – The act provides *26 weeks of maternity leave* at the time of delivery.

- **National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013** – All pregnant women (except those already covered in the formal sector) are entitled to maternity *benefits of Rs.6,000 a child*.

- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**- It provides nutritional support and partial wage compensation to pregnant and lactating women.

What are the challenges in ensuring maternity entitlements?

- **Declining coverage** - Effective coverage was only 36% in 2019-20 and declined sharply after that, except for a partial revival in 2022-23.

- **Low allocation of funds** - Central government spending on the PMMVY was at an all-time low of Rs.870 crore in 2023-24, barely one third of the corresponding figure five years earlier

Estimated coverage of Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana
Percentage of pregnant women who received at least one PMMVY instalment
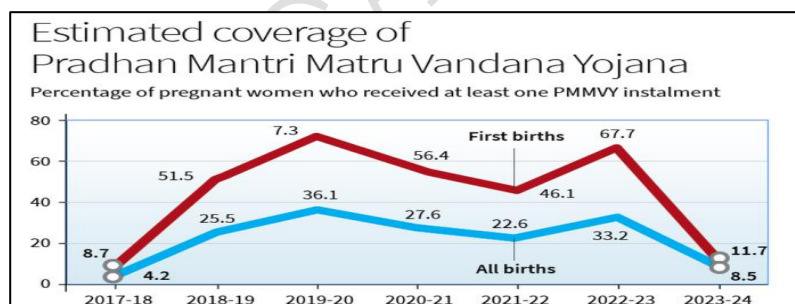
- **Regional disparities** - Maternal health services vary widely across regions, rural and poorer areas often lag behind.

- **Socio-economic inequalities** - Poorer households have limited access to maternal healthcare.

- **Urban-Rural divide** - Urban women generally receive better care compared to rural women.

- **Resource shortages -** A lack of healthcare professionals, facilities, and efficient referral systems hampers quality care.

- **Overcrowded facilities** - Urban health centers are often overburdened, reducing service quality.

- **Awareness gaps** - Many women are unaware of the available maternal health services.

- **Cultural barriers** - Language differences and cultural practices, especially among migrants, can deter women from seeking care.

- **Implementation gaps** - Discrepancies between policy design and actual execution result in inconsistent service delivery.

What can be done to improve it?

- **Universal maternity entitlements** - Expand benefits to cover every birth, not just the first and Simplify eligibility by removing restrictive conditions.

- **Increase benefit amount** - Raise the benefit to at least Rs.12,000 (inflation-adjusted).

- **Timely disbursement** - Ensure timely, structured disbursement (e.g., trimester-wise payments).

- **Integrated implementation** - Integrate maternity programs with nutrition and healthcare programs like POSHAN Abhiyaan.

- **Remove bureaucratic hurdles** - Simplify documentation by reducing Aadhaar dependency and allowing alternative IDs.

- **Transparency** - Regularly publish data on beneficiaries, fund usage, and coverage gaps.

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- **Accountability** - Strengthen grievance redressal with effective helplines and complaint systems and Promote independent audits and social monitoring.
- **Learn from state-level best practices** - Emulate Tamil Nadu's model and Adopt Odisha's integrated approach (cash benefits plus robust interventions).

10.3   Domestic Workers in India

Why in news?

Domestic workers play an essential role in India's informal workforce but often face neglect.

Who are Domestic Workers?

- Domestic workers are people who perform services for a private household, such as cleaning, cooking, and caring for children.
- They can work full-time or part-time, and may live in the same household as their employer or live elsewhere.
- Associated works- Cleaning, washing, and ironing clothes, Cooking, Taking care of children, the elderly, or sick people, Gardening, Driving for the family and Taking care of pets.
- The ILO's Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189) defines domestic work as work performed in or for a household.
- The convention defines a domestic worker as someone who is employed to perform domestic work.

What are Key Points?

- They are primarily women and belong to marginalized groups.
- Lack of legal protections makes them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.
- They are not included in important labor laws like the Minimum Wages Act and Equal Remuneration Act.
- The Supreme Court's recent directive shows the need for a specific law for Title

What are the Challenges Faced by Domestic Workers?

- **Exclusion from Labor Laws**- Domestic workers are not included under key labor laws, like the Minimum Wages Act and the Equal Remuneration Act, resulting in a lack of fair wage rights.
- **Lack of Social Security** -They don't have access to benefits such as health insurance or maternity leave, with limited welfare support in some states.
- **Migrant Vulnerability** - Many are internal migrants facing poor living conditions and exploitation in urban areas.
- **Unregulated Placement Agencies** - These agencies often exploit workers, with cases of trafficking, particularly of underage girls.
- **Harassment and Abuse** - Domestic workers frequently suffer from various forms of abuse, exemplified by well-known cases of violence against them.
- **Gender Bias and Social Perception**- The work is undervalued due to gender biases, undermining their dignity.
- **Informality of Work Arrangements**- Without formal contracts, workers struggle to obtain legal protection against issues like wrongful termination.

What are the Measures to Address Challenges?

- **Formalization of Work -** A separate law would establish clear terms for employment, including contracts, wages, and working hours.
  - o   Example - Countries like **_South Africa_** have enacted domestic workers' protection laws, setting a precedent for India.
- **Safeguarding Vulnerable Workers-** Domestic workers are highly isolated within private households, making them vulnerable to exploitation. A legal framework would act as a deterrent for abuse.
- **Recognition of Dignity -** Enacting a dedicated law would elevate the status of domestic work to that of formal labor, ensuring respect and dignity for workers.

- **Comprehensive Coverage-** Unlike the Code on Wages (2019), which does not explicitly address domestic workers, a separate law would cater to the unique challenges of this sector.

- **Legislative Reforms-** Enact a comprehensive Domestic Workers (Regulation of Employment, Conditions of Service, and Social Security) Act.

  o Ensure provisions for minimum wages, work hours, paid leave, and overtime payments.

- Mandate registration of domestic workers and placement agencies.

  o Example - The Domestic Workers Welfare Board Act in Kerala serves as a model.

- **Universal Social Security -** Include domestic workers under schemes like the Employees' State Insurance Scheme and the Employees' Provident Fund.

- Expand the scope of the _**Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act (2008)**_ to provide maternity benefits, accident coverage, and pensions.

- **Awareness Campaigns -** Conduct campaigns to educate domestic workers and employers about their rights and responsibilities.

  o Example- NGOs like **SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association)** work toward empowering domestic workers with legal literacy.

- **Strengthen Institutions-** Set up grievance redressal mechanisms at the district and state levels to handle disputes related to wages, abuse, or termination.

  o **Example-** In Delhi, the State Domestic Workers Welfare Board has been set up to address these issues, but its scope needs to expand.

- **Provide skill**-training programs through initiatives like the _**Skill India Mission**_ to enhance the employability and income potential of domestic workers.

  o **Example-** The National Skill Development Corporation offers training for domestic work, but it needs wider implementation.

- **Technology Integration -** Develop digital platforms to register domestic workers, track employment contracts, and ensure timely wage payments.

  o **Example** -Platforms like _**Helper4U**_ connect employers with verified domestic workers in a transparent manner.

- **Encourage Unionization-** Promote the formation of domestic worker unions and collectives to amplify their voices.

  o **Example-** The National Domestic Workers Movement has been instrumental in advocating for workers' rights at the national level.

- **Ratify ILO Convention 189 -** Ratifying the International Labour Organization's Convention on Domestic Workers would align India's policies with global standards and enhance worker protection.

What are the Positive Models?

- **Kerala's Welfare Board -** Provides financial aid, medical benefits, and pension schemes to registered domestic workers.

- **Delhi's Draft Policy for Domestic Workers-** Proposes mandatory registration, written contracts, and social security provisions for domestic workers.

- **South Africa's Domestic Workers Act-** Recognizes domestic work as formal employment, ensuring minimum wages, social benefits, and protection from abuse.

What lies ahead?

- Domestic workers are a crucial but often overlooked segment of India's economy.

- Their lack of protection under labor laws shows a larger issue of neglect.

- However, recent court rulings and advocacy present a chance for progress.

- A dedicated law for domestic workers, with strong support, can promote their dignity and rights, fostering inclusive growth and fairness.

11. ENVIRONMENT

11.1   Rising Urban Rats and Global Warming Study

Why in News?

A study examined how urban rat populations are affected by global warming, human density, and food waste.

What are Rodents?

- **Definition**- Rodents are small mammals belonging to the order Rodentia, characterized by a single pair of continuously growing incisors in each jaw.

Common Species in India

- **House Rat (*Rattus rattus*)** - Often found in urban settings, particularly in homes and commercial establishments.

- **Norway Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*)** - Prefers subterranean habitats like sewers and basements.

- **Bandicoot Rat (*Bandicota bengalensis*)** - Commonly inhabits agricultural fields and urban areas.

- **Habitats** - These rodents thrive in diverse environments, including residential buildings, commercial spaces, agricultural fields, and urban infrastructures.

What are the factors that led to the rising urban rat population?

> Rat populations rose in 11 of 16 cities studied. Warmer temperatures help rats survive, increasing disease risks.

- **Global Warming -** Rising temperatures due to global warming create favorable conditions for rats.

- **Urban heat island –** It effect exacerbates this, allowing rats to survive and reproduce more efficiently.

- **Warmer temperatures -** lead to lower mortality rates among rats, enabling them to stay active for longer periods.

- **Human Density -** High population density in cities leads to increased food waste and shelter opportunities for rodents.

- More urban structures provide numerous hiding and breeding spaces for rats.

- **Food Waste -** Abundant food waste supports a growing and thriving rat population.

- More waste means a steady and accessible food supply, ensuring better survival and reproduction rates.

What is the Legal Framework for Controlling Rodent Pests in India?

The Insecticides Act, 1968

- **Purpose** - Regulates the import, manufacture, sale, transport, distribution, and use of insecticides, including rodenticides.

- **Implementation** - Accompanied by the Insecticides Rules, 1971, which provide a structured framework for enforcement.

Legal Framework for Controlling Rodent Pests

Insecticides Act, 1968
Destructive Insects and Pests Act, 1914
Environment Protection Act, 1986
Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006

The Destructive Insects and Pests Act, 1914

- **Objective** - Empowers the government to prevent the introduction and spread of pests and diseases destructive to crops and plants.

- **Provisions**- Allows for quarantine measures and control strategies against both indigenous and exotic pests.

The Environment Protection Act, 1986

- **Scope** - Provides a framework for the protection and improvement of the environment, indirectly influencing rodent control through waste management regulations.

The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006

- **Mandate** - Ensures the safety and hygiene of food products, which includes measures to prevent rodent contamination in food storage and processing units.

What are the Impacts of Rodent Pests especially in Urban Areas?

Public Health Risks

- **Disease Transmission** - Rodents are vectors for diseases such as leptospirosis, hantavirus, and salmonellosis, posing significant health risks in densely populated urban areas.

Economic Damages

- **Infrastructure Damage** - Rodents gnaw on electrical wiring, leading to potential fire hazards and costly repairs.
- **Food Contamination** - Contamination of stored food products results in economic losses for businesses and increased public health concerns.

Environmental Impact

- **Biodiversity Threats** - Rodent infestations can disrupt local ecosystems, leading to a decline in native species and overall biodiversity.

What are control measures and shortcomings in the existing framework?

Current Control Strategies

- **Chemical Control** - Use of rodenticides regulated under the Insecticides Act, 1968.
- **Biological Control** - Encouraging natural predators, though less effective in urban settings.
- **Physical Control** - Implementation of traps and barriers.
- **Sanitation and Waste Management** - Proper waste disposal to eliminate food sources.

Shortcomings

- **Resistance Development** - Over-reliance on chemical rodenticides has led to resistance in rodent populations.
- **Lack of Integrated Approach** - Absence of a comprehensive Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategy in urban planning.
- **Inadequate Public Awareness** - Limited community engagement and awareness about effective rodent control measures.

What are steps to be taken?

Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

- **Implementing**- IPM strategies that combine biological, chemical, and physical control methods.
- **Policy Support** - Formulating policies that promote IPM practices in urban planning and development.

Strengthening Legal Frameworks

- **Regular Updates** - Periodic review and updating of existing laws to address emerging challenges in rodent control.
- **Enforcement -** Enhancing the enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with rodent control regulations.

Public Participation and Awareness

- **Community Engagement -** Encouraging public participation in sanitation drives and rodent control programs.
- **Educational Campaigns -** Launching awareness campaigns to inform citizens about preventive measures and the importance of rodent control**.**

Research and Development

- **Innovative Solutions-** Investing in research to develop new, eco-friendly rodent control methods.
- **Monitoring and Surveillance -** Establishing robust systems for monitoring rodent populations and assessing the effectiveness of control measures.

What Lies ahead?

- The study highlights significant concerns regarding urban rat populations as influenced by environmental and social factors.
- Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts in management and public involvement to mitigate risks.

11.2	Human wildlife conflict

Why in News?

Recent human fatalities due to wild animal attacks, deep inside forests, in forest-fringed human habitations, and even within villages, have highlighted growing human-wildlife conflict in Kerala.

What is human wild life conflict?

- **Human-wildlife conflict (HWC)** – It refers to any interaction between humans and wildlife that leads to negative consequences for either party.

- It occurs when wild animals pose a direct threat to human life, livelihoods, or property, and in response, humans take actions that harm wildlife populations or their habitats

- **Recent trend** - Overall, human deaths from wildlife encounters have decreased from 146 in 2018 to 57 last year.

- Many victims are from tribal communities, traditionally adept at coexisting with wildlife.

- **Elephant conflict** - With an estimated population of around 31,000 across 29 reserves, India is home to the largest number of wild Asian elephants globally.

- Tragically, encounters with these majestic creatures result in over 500 human fatalities annually.

- **Elephant death** - More than 100 elephants succumb to human-induced activities such as encroachments, mining, quarrying, ivory poaching, poisoning, encounters with electric fences, and collisions with trains.

- **Tiger conflict** - India is home to more than 2,960 tigers — 75 per cent of the world's wild tiger population.

What are the causes of human wild life conflict?

- **Habitat loss & fragmentation** - Deforestation, urban expansion, and agricultural encroachment force animals into human settlements.

- Frequent crop raiding and property damage due to shrinking forest cover.

- **Climate change** - Altered weather patterns impact food and water availability, leading wildlife to move into human areas.

- Rising sea levels force tigers into human settlements.

- **Human encroachment** - Expanding infrastructure like roads and dams disrupts wildlife corridors.

- Increased leopards' sightings in urban areas due to habitat fragmentation.

- **Food scarcity** - Overgrazing, monoculture farming, and depletion of natural prey drive animals to seek alternative food sources in human areas.

- **Invasive species** - Non-native species like Senna spectabilis disrupt wildlife feeding patterns, ecosystems balance and increases competition for resources.

What are the impacts of Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC)?

- **Loss of human life and injuries** - Attacks by elephants, leopards, and snakes lead to fatalities and severe injuries.

- **Crop and livestock damage** - Animals like wild boars, elephants, and nilgai destroy crops, affecting farmers' livelihoods.

- **Infrastructure damage** - Elephants and other large animals damage houses, roads, and power lines.

- **Threat to conservation efforts** - Conflict creates negative perceptions of wildlife, reducing local support for conservation.

- **Economic losses** - Farmers face financial losses due to crop destruction and livestock predation.

- Governments spend crores on compensation and mitigation measures.

- **Psychological and social impact** - Fear of wildlife attacks causes stress and anxiety in rural communities which lead to retaliatory killings of animals.

- **Biodiversity and ecological imbalance** - Retaliatory killings disrupt food chains and ecosystems.

Why did kerala classified HWC as a State-Specific Disaster?

> *Kerala is the first state to classify HWC as a state-specific disaster under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.*

- **Faster relief** - Victims get quick financial aid from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).

- **Better coordination** - Forest, Disaster Management, Revenue, and Local Departments work together to handle conflicts.

- **Stronger prevention** - Funds support solar fencing, elephant-proof trenches, and habitat conservation.

- **Improved compensation** - HWC victims get faster payouts, including for crop and livestock losses.

- **Community involvement** - Locals are included in disaster plans and encouraged to adopt eco-friendly development.

What are the steps taken by the Indian government to address HWC?

- **Policy framework and guidelines** - National Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan provides a structured approach to reduce HWC across India.

- **Regulation** - The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 provides regulatory functions for dealing with human wildlife conflict situations.

- **Species-specific guidelines** - In 2023, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) released 14 guidelines to address conflicts involving elephants, leopards, snakes, and other species.

- **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** - The government has issued SOPs to manage encounters with tigers and leopards, ensuring effective and timely responses.

- **Habitat development** - Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats, Project Tiger, and Project Elephant' provide financial assistance to states for habitat improvement and conflict mitigation.

- **Compensation mechanisms** - The government provides compensation for human casualties, livestock predation, and crop damage caused by wildlife.

- **Community engagement and capacity building** - States like West Bengal and Assam have set up special squads to prevent wildlife intrusions into human settlements.

- **Public awareness programs** - The 'Gaj Yatra' campaign by the Wildlife Trust of India (with MoEFCC) spreads awareness about human-elephant conflict mitigation.

- **Habitat conservation and restoration** - Establishment of protected area network like national parks, sanctuaries, conservation reserves, and community reserves to safeguard wildlife.

- **Habitat enrichment** - Efforts include improving water and fodder availability within Protected Areas to prevent wildlife from straying into human settlements.

- **Early Warning Systems** - The 'Surakshya' mobile app in Odisha notifies locals about elephant movements, helping prevent conflicts.

What can be done?

- Emphasise participatory forest and wildlife management.

- Document and assess the traditional knowledge of Kerala's 36 tribal communities in tackling wildlife encounters.

- Given the region-specific nature of the problem, a multi-agency approach involving the Disaster Management, Revenue, Local Self-Government, Tribal Welfare, Agriculture, Health and Forest Departments is crucial to balancing human safety and sustainable wildlife management.

- Promotion of crops in forest fringe areas which are unpalatable to wild animals.

- Agro forestry models which include cash crops like chillies, lemon grass, khus grass etc. suitably mixed with tree/shrub species.

12.   INTERNAL SECURITY

12.1   Chhattisgarh's Crackdown on Maoist Insurgency

Why in news?

Chhattisgarh has intensified its crackdown on Maoist insurgents since December 2023, resulting in many arrests and surrenders.

What is Maoism?

- It is a form of communism developed by Mao Tse Tung.

- It is a doctrine to capture State power through armed insurgency, mass mobilization, and strategic alliances.

- The Maoists also use propaganda and disinformation against State institutions.

- Mao called this process the 'Protracted People's War,' focusing on the 'military line' to capture power.

- Prioritizes rural agrarian communities as the primary revolutionary force.

What are the Most Affected Regions?

- Ministry of Home Affairs identifies the following states as affected by Left Wing Extremism, though to varying degrees:
  - Chhattisgarh
  - Jharkhand
  - Odisha
  - West Bengal
  - Andhra Pradesh
  - Telangana
  - Maharashtra
  - Madhya Pradesh
  - Kerala

- **Decline of Maoist Influence -** in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Bihar, where they once had influence.

- **Reduction in Affected Areas -** have decreased from 220 (early 2000s) to less than 40 (as per Ministry of Home Affairs reports).

- Violence is now concentrated in a few pockets of Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra.
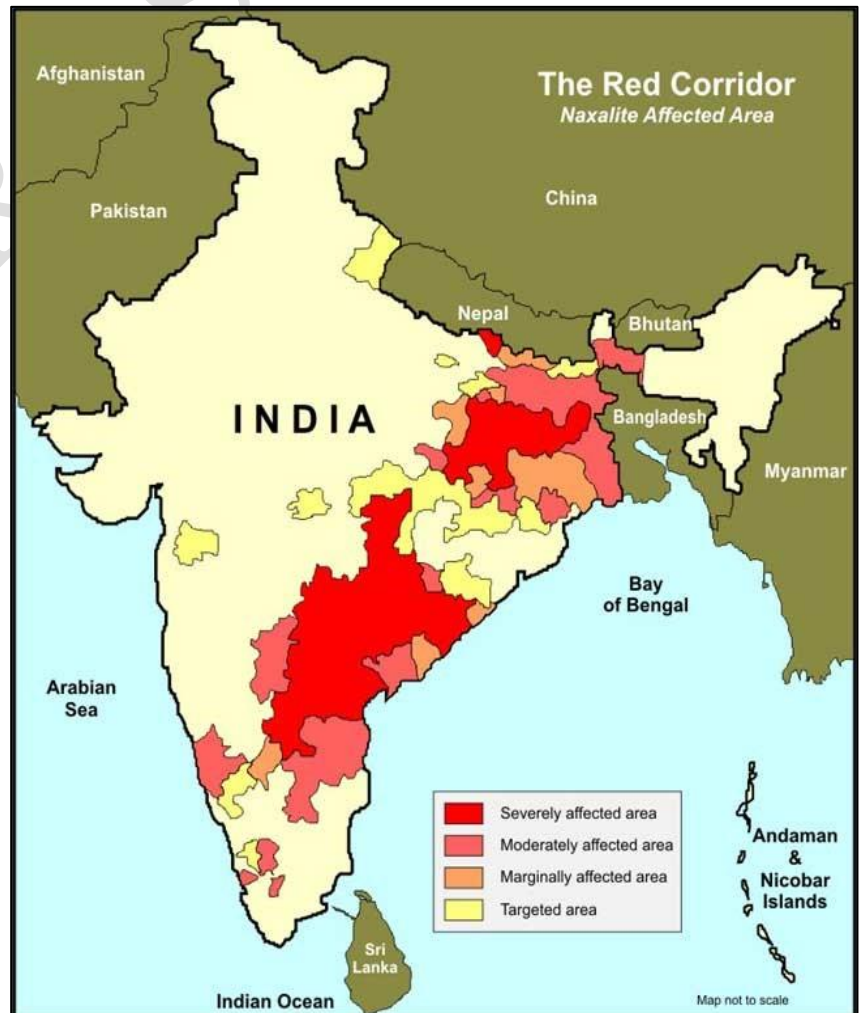
What are the Challenges in Dealing with Maoism?

- **Security Challenges - Entrenched Insurgency -** Maoists control remote tribal regions, creating a security vacuum and running parallel governance systems.

- **Violence & Intimidation -** Maoist cadres use terror tactics to suppress local resistance and hinder governance.

- **Socio-Economic Challenges - Underdevelopment -** Lack of roads, healthcare, and education fuels discontent, which Maoists exploit.

- **Tribal Displacement-** Infrastructure projects cause displacement, providing Maoists with easy recruits.

- **Administrative Challenges - Governance Vacuum -** Weak state presence allows Maoists to dominate and control local administration.

- **Coordination Issues -** Differences between central and state agencies hinder counter-insurgency efforts.

- **Ideological & Perception Challenges - Public Sympathy -** Some intellectuals and activists support Maoist ideology, complicating efforts to counter extremism.

- **Human Rights Concerns -** Aggressive security actions risk civilian casualties, fueling further alienation.

What are Legal Framework to Deal with Maoism?

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967

- **Objective-** Prevent unlawful activities that threaten India's sovereignty.

- **Key Provisions - Unlawful Associations-** Govt. can ban organizations disrupting national integrity.

- **Terrorist Organizations-** CPI (Maoist) designated as a terrorist outfit (2009).

- **Strict Penalties-** Criminalizes membership, support, and fundraising for such groups.

- **Extended Detention-** Allows detention without charge for up to 180 days.

Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), 1958

- **Objectives-** Empower armed forces to maintain public order in disturbed areas.

- **Key Provisions - Disturbed Areas-** Govt. can declare regions as disturbed under AFSPA.

- **Special Powers-** Armed forces can use force, arrest without a warrant, and conduct searches.

- **Legal Immunity-** Protection from prosecution without central govt. approval.

National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act, 2008

- **Objective-** Establish NIA as India's central counter-terrorism agency.

- **Key Provisions - NIA Formation-** Investigates offenses related to national security.

- **Scheduled Offenses-** Covers laws like UAPA, Atomic Energy Act, etc.

- **Concurrent Jurisdiction-** NIA can take over state police cases with central approval.

Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996

- **Objective -** Strengthen self-governance in tribal regions.

- **Key Provisions - Empowers Gram Sabhas -** Control over natural resources and local disputes.

- **Consultation on Land Issues -** Required before land acquisition in Scheduled Areas.

- **Local Governance -** Enhances tribal autonomy over development programs.

What are Steps Taken by the Indian Government to Counter Maoism?

Security Measures

- **Operation SAMADHAN -** A focused counter-insurgency strategy integrating intelligence, modern technology, and security forces.

- **Deployment of CAPFs -** Increased presence of CRPF, BSF, ITBP, and state police in affected areas.

- **Special Forces -** Formation of elite anti-Maoist units like Greyhounds (Telangana), CoBRA (CRPF), and STF (various states).

- **Unified Command -** Coordination between state and central forces for joint operations.

Development Initiatives

- **Road Connectivity Project for LWE Areas-** Focuses on constructing roads in Maoist-affected districts.

- **Skill Development Schemes** - Programs like ROSHNI and Skill Development Scheme in 47 LWE districts to provide employment.

- **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) -** Set up for tribal children to improve education access.

Steps to Counter Maoism

Operation SAMADHAN
Deployment of CAPFs
Road Connectivity Project for LWE Areas
Skill Development Schemes
Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)
Special Central Assistance (SCA)

- **Special Central Assistance (SCA) -** Additional funding for LWE-affected districts for infrastructure and welfare projects.

- **Surrender and Rehabilitation Scheme -** Financial assistance, vocational training, and housing support for surrendered Maoists.

- **Relief for Affected Families -** Compensation for civilians and security personnel affected by Maoist violence.

What Lies ahead?

- Dealing with Naxalism in India needs a balanced strategy.

- Focus on both security measures and root causes like poverty.

- Improve infrastructure, education, and job opportunities in affected areas.

- Engage in open dialogue with local populations to strengthen ties.

- Combining security efforts with socio-economic development and community engagement can help India effectively address Naxalism and create a safer future.

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