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CONTENTS

Polity and Governance 1

Anti-Defection Law 1

Anganwadi Centres..... 3

Prelims Questions..... 5

Mains Questions..... 6

International Relations 7

Iran-Pakistan Conflict..... 7

Prelims Questions..... 8

Mains Questions..... 9

Economy 10

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016..... 10

Lentil Production in India 12

Prelims Questions..... 14

Mains Questions..... 15

Social Issues 16

PM Janman Scheme 16

Multidimensional Poverty in India 17

Prelims Questions..... 19

Mains Questions..... 19

History and Culture 21

Oldest Living City Of India 21

Prelims Questions..... 22

Mains Questions..... 23

Ecology and Environment 24

Snowless Kashmir 24

Prelims Questions..... 25

Mains Questions..... 26

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

ANTI-DEFECTION LAW

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Speaker of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly has declined to disqualify 40 MLAs from the Eknath Shinde faction after accepting it as the legitimate Shiv Sena.

WHAT IS DEFECTION

- In the legislature, a defector is someone who abandons allegiance to one party to make way for allegiance to another, switching sides in an unlawful manner according to the first party.
- In India, parliamentarians' defections from their parent parties in the 1960s and 1970s caused political instability in numerous states, bringing down elected administrations.
- To protect the stability of democratically elected governments, the 52nd constitutional amendment, enacted under the Tenth Schedule in 1985, included a 'anti-defection' provision.

ABOUT THE ANTI-DEFECTION LAW

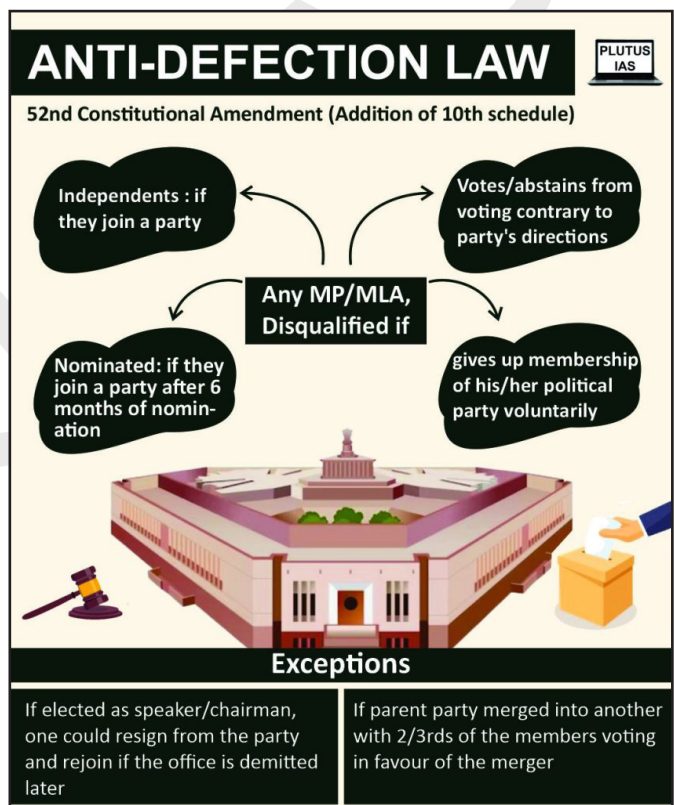
- The 52nd Amendment Act of 1985 disqualified members of Parliament and state legislatures for defecting from one political party to another. This amendment added a new Schedule, Schedule 10, to the Constitution. This statute is also known as the '**anti-defection law**'.
- Later, the **91st Amendment Act of 2003** made one alteration to the requirements of the Tenth Schedule. It deleted an exemption provision, which said that disqualification based on defection would not apply in the event of a split.

SOME IMPORTANT FEATURES OF THE ACT

DISQUALIFICATION:

- If he or she deliberately leaves a political party.
- In **Ravi S. Naik vs. Union of India (1994)**, the Su-

preme Court clarified that an MP/MLA does not need to formally resign from their party to be disqualified under the anti-defection law. The Supreme Court clarified that "voluntarily giving up his membership" does not imply resignation. Even in the absence of a formal resignation from membership, a member's actions can be interpreted as indicating that he has willingly resigned from the political party to which he belongs.



- If one participates in or refrains from voting in the House, as opposed to any order issued by his or her political party or anybody authorised to do so, without seeking prior approval.
- If any **independently elected member** decides to join a political party. The Supreme Court ruled in **Balchandra L. Jarkiholi Vs. B.S. Yeddyurappa (2010)** that any Independent member of Legislative Assembly who joins the Ministry in a coalition government without joining the main party will retain their independence. So becoming

a member of the Council of Ministers does not preclude one's candidature.

- If a **nominated member** of a House joins a political party after the **6 month** period that ends on the day that he assumes his seat in the House, he loses his eligibility to serve in that House.

EXCEPTIONS:

- In the event that a party merges with another party and a member leaves the party. When the consent of two-thirds of the party involved is obtained, a merger occurs.
- If a member, after having been elected as the speaker of the House, willfully gives up or re-joins his party after he ceases to hold

DECIDING AUTHORITY:

Any question of disqualification arising from defection will be decided by the House's presiding officer. In the **Kihoto Hollohan case (1993)**, the Supreme Court ruled that when considering an issue under the Tenth Schedule, the presiding officer acts as a tribunal. Thus, his decision is open to review by the court on the basis of mala fides, perversity, etc.

ISSUES WITH THE ANTI DEFECTION LAW

- **Undermine Democracy:** It undermines democracy by limiting politicians' freedom of speech and holding them answerable to party leaders rather than their constituents.
- **No fixed time frame:** The system lacks a time frame for determining defection cases and relies on presiding officers' discretion, which may be influenced by political influences. However, in **Keisham Meghachandra Singh vs Speaker Manipur Legislative Assembly & Ors (2020)**, the Supreme Court declared that Speakers of Assembly and Parliament must determine disqualification petitions within three months, unless there are unusual circumstances.
- **Defections still happening:** A group of members can defect to another party without punishment if they make up at least two-thirds of their previous party. This allows for opportunistic and unscrupulous party mergers and splits,

undermining the political system's stability and integrity. This supports the practice of "horse trading," or the buying and selling of legislators.

- **Underlying issues still persisting:** It does not address the underlying causes of defection, which include a lack of intra-party democracy, corruption, and electoral malpractice. It also does not preclude the parties from persuading or accepting defectors, making it ineffective in discouraging defection.

ADVANTAGES OF ANTI-DEFECTION LAW

- It promotes political stability by limiting parliamentarians' ability to switch parties.
- Reduces Horse trading and Money power.
- It allows the democratic realignment of parties in the legislature through party mergers.
- It decreases political corruption and non-developmental expenditures associated with irregular elections.

DIFFERENT COMMITTEES FOR THE ANTI-DEFECTION LAW

- **Dinesh Goswami committee:** Disqualification should be limited to members who willingly leave their membership. and For members who behave or vote contrary to the confidence of their party. The decision to disqualify shall be made by the President/Governor on the guidance of the Election Commission.
- According to the **Law Commission's (170th Report, 1999)**, splits and mergers would no longer be considered an exception to disqualification. Pre-poll electoral fronts should be classed as political parties under the anti-defection legislation.

CONCLUSION:

The Anti-Defection Law of the Indian Constitution attempts to promote democratic stability by limiting political defections. Regardless of its importance, concerns such as limiting legislators' flexibility and procedural issues highlight the need for reform. Inspired by worldwide experiences, the proposed initiatives seek to strike a balance between stability

and accountability.

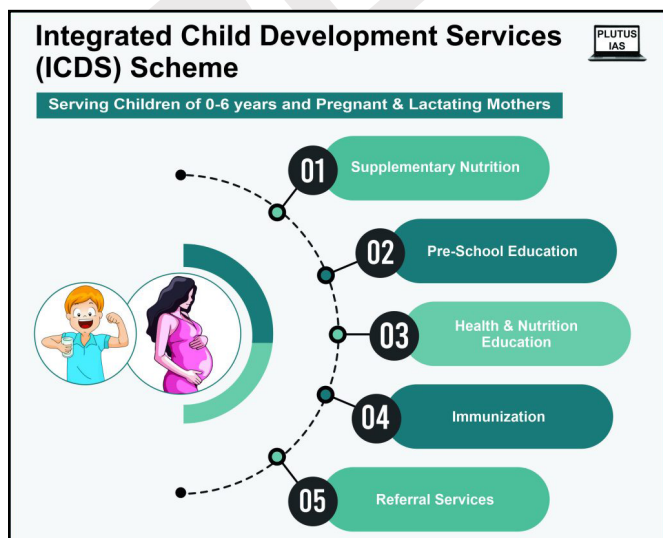
ANGANWADI CENTRES

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Andhra Pradesh's anganwadi workers are on strike in protest of their pay and benefits. The protesting Anganwadi staff and assistants have been subject to legal action by the State government under the Essential Services and Maintenance Act (ESMA), 1971.

ABOUT ICDS SCHEME

- The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) initiative is the Government of India's flagship programme dedicated to fostering the holistic development of children under the age of six, pregnant women, and breastfeeding mothers.
- ICDS, founded in 1975, represents a holistic strategy to meet the complex needs of early children development, maternal health, and nutrition.
- The ICDS scheme's key goals include improving children's nutritional and health status, lowering infant and maternal mortality rates, and promoting early children's learning and cognitive development.
- The concept acknowledges the crucial role of the first six years in forming a child's physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development, setting the groundwork for their future well-being.



ANGANWADI CENTRES

- The **anganwadi centres**, which are administered under the Integrated Child Development Services system, are the village's first point of contact for nutrition, health, and early learning.
- Anganwadis are centres for early childhood care and education (ECCE). They additionally offer basic health-care services in Indian villages. It is part of India's public healthcare system.
- **Anganwadi staff and helpers**, who are generally local women, play an important role in service delivery and community reform. The ICDS scheme encourages participation from the community by including local leaders and volunteers in service planning and monitoring, resulting in a community-driven project.

IMPORTANCE OF ANGANWADI SCHEMES

HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Anganwadi centers serve as community hubs that offer a range of essential services, including supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check-ups, and pre-school education. By addressing multiple aspects of development, the scheme contributes to the holistic growth of children under six years of age.

NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT

One of the primary objectives of the Anganwadi Scheme is to combat malnutrition. The centers provide supplementary nutrition to pregnant women, lactating mothers, and young children, ensuring they receive the essential nutrients for optimal growth and development.

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Through regular health check-ups, immunization programs, and antenatal care, Anganwadi workers play a vital role in monitoring the health of pregnant women and children. This proactive approach helps in reducing infant and maternal mortality rates and addressing health-related concerns at an early stage.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Anganwadi Scheme places a strong emphasis

on early childhood education. Anganwadi workers conduct pre-school activities that focus on cognitive, social, and emotional development, preparing children for formal schooling. This early stimulation is crucial for laying a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

● POVERTY ALLEVIATION

By addressing the health and nutritional needs of vulnerable populations, particularly in rural and marginalized areas, the Anganwadi Scheme contributes to poverty alleviation. Healthy and well-nourished children are more likely to perform better in school and, later in life, break the cycle of poverty.

● COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The scheme promotes community participation and empowers local communities. Anganwadi workers, often recruited from the local community, act as a bridge between the government and the community, facilitating awareness and participation in health and development programs.

● WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Anganwadi workers, predominantly women, are provided with employment opportunities through the scheme. This not only addresses the issue of unemployment but also empowers women by providing them with a platform to contribute meaningfully to the well-being of their communities.

CHALLENGES FACED BY ANGANWADI CENTRES

● NUTRITION AND HEALTH CHALLENGES

Ensuring regular and adequate supply of nutritious meals and supplements is a persistent challenge. Supply chain issues, delays in procurement, and lack of awareness among beneficiaries about the importance of nutrition contribute to difficulties in achieving desired health outcomes.

● INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

Many Anganwadi centers operate in inadequate or substandard facilities, lacking proper infrastructure. Insufficient space, lack of amenities, and inadequate equipment hinder the quality of services provided. Limited resources, including funds and

materials, often compromise the centers' ability to function optimally.

● QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

While Anganwadi centers are meant to provide pre-school education, the quality of early childhood education can vary. Insufficient training for Anganwadi workers in educational methodologies, lack of educational resources, and limited focus on skill development can affect the learning outcomes of children.

● SHORTAGE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Anganwadi workers and helpers, who are pivotal to the functioning of these centers, often face challenges such as understaffing and inadequate training. The workload can be overwhelming, making it difficult for them to deliver services effectively. Additionally, there may be a lack of qualified personnel to handle specialized tasks like early childhood education.

● COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND AWARENESS

Limited community involvement and awareness about the services offered by Anganwadi centers pose a challenge. Mobilizing communities to actively engage with the centers and understand the importance of early childhood education, health check-ups, and nutrition remains a continuous struggle.

● MONITORING AND EVALUATION

There is a need for robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact and effectiveness of Anganwadi services. Insufficient data collection, monitoring, and evaluation processes may hinder the ability to identify gaps and make informed policy decisions for improvement.

● TECHNOLOGICAL INTEGRATION

The lack of technological integration in managing data, monitoring services, and communication hampers the efficiency of Anganwadi operations. Introducing technology-driven solutions could enhance record-keeping, reporting, and overall management of the centers.

REMEDIES TO DEAL WITH ISSUES IN ANGANWADI

CENTRES

- **INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT**

Invest in upgrading the infrastructure of Anganwadi centers, ensuring they have adequate space, amenities, and necessary equipment for effective service delivery.

- **TECHNOLOGICAL INTEGRATION**

Introduce technology-driven solutions for record-keeping, reporting, and communication. Implement digital tools for data management, attendance tracking, and resource allocation.

- **HUMAN RESOURCE STRENGTHENING**

Recruit and train additional staff to address understaffing. Provide regular training programs for Anganwadi workers and helpers, focusing on early childhood education, nutrition, and healthcare.

- **CAPACITY BUILDING FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

Implement programs that focus on empowering women within the community. Provide skill development and training opportunities for women to actively participate in the management and decision-making processes of the centers.

- **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND AWARENESS**

Conduct community awareness programs to educate parents and caregivers about the importance of Anganwadi services. Encourage active participation and involvement in monitoring and supporting the centers.

- **MONITORING AND EVALUATION MECHANISMS**

Establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the performance of Anganwadi centers. Implement data-driven decision-making processes for timely identification of issues and informed policy decisions.

PRELIMS QUESTION

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the ICDS scheme

- 1) 0 to 5 years age group is the primarily target age group under ICDS scheme
- 2) Elementary education is provided by the Anganwadi centers under the ICDS scheme

Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. What is the main objective of the ICDS scheme regarding maternal health?

- 1) To provide prenatal care
- 2) To promote family planning
- 3) To reduce maternal mortality

Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) 1,2 and 3

Q3. Regarding India's anti-defection legislation, consider the following statements:

- 1) A legislator nominated to the House is prohibited by law from joining any political party for a period of six months after their appointment.
- 2) There is no deadline set by law for the presiding officer to make a decision in a defection case.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b)

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the implementation of anti-defection law:

1. If an elected member voluntarily leaves the political party;
2. If an elected member participates in or refrains from voting in such House opposed to any order promulgated by his political party or anybody authorised to do so, without getting any prior approval.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	A
2.	D
3.	B
4.	B

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q1. Analyze the role of the Speaker or Chairman in deciding on disqualification cases under the Anti-Defection Law. How can the impartiality of this process be ensured, given the political nature of the decisions?

Q2. Critically evaluate the exceptions provided in the Anti-Defection Law for mergers. In your opinion, do these provisions effectively address the concerns of political defections, or do they create potential loopholes?

Q3. Assess the impact of the ICDS scheme on reducing malnutrition among children in India. Discuss the key strategies employed by the program

and analyze the effectiveness of these interventions in addressing nutritional challenges.

Q4. Explore the socio-economic impact of the ICDS scheme on women in local communities. Assess how the involvement of women in Anganwadi centers contributes to their empowerment and discuss any challenges or barriers that may hinder this process.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

IRAN-PAKISTAN CONFLICT

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Iran has blasted two sites of militant group Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan's Balochistan province with missiles and drones. This incident has killed 2 children and wounded another three. As a result, Pakistan withdrew its ambassador and dismissed the Iranian diplomat.

WHY IRAN ATTACKED PAKISTAN:

- Iran has described the missile strikes as a retaliation for terrorist acts that have occurred inside its borders.
- Iran launched an attack on the Kurdistan region of Iraq, while the target in Pakistan was the Balochistan province, which is close to the Iranian border and home to the base of the Sunni Muslim extremist group **Jaish al-Adl**. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps was responsible for carrying out the strikes.
- According to Iran, terrorist organisations were the intended targets of the suicide attack that claimed 84 lives during a Qassim Suleimani mourning parade.
- The attacks on an Iranian police post in the southeast region of Sistan-Baluchistan prompted the missile strikes on targets in Pakistan as well.

ABOUT SISTAN-BALUCHISTAN

- There are one to four million members of the Baluch minority in Iran, most of whom are concentrated in Sistan-Baluchistan's southeast.
- The area is undeveloped and impoverished. It is made up of rough, rocky terrain, it has developed into a sanctuary for opium and heroin smugglers from over the border in nearby Afghanistan and Pakistan.

- **Demography of Sistan-Baluchistan:** The majority of the Baluchs that reside there are Sunni Muslims who consider themselves to be members of a historic tradition distinct from the Persian ethnic group of Iran. Shia people make up the bulk of Iran's population. They have a strong sense of identity with the Baluch communities in Pakistan, across the border.



ABOUT JAISH AL-ADL

- Jaish al-Adl, which translates to "Army of Justice," is a violent Sunni Salafist organisation based in the Balochistan province of Pakistan.
- These terrorists operate in Pakistan's and Iran's mountainous border regions. According to Iranian officials, it was created in 2012 and mostly functions in Pakistan.
- This group's militants claim that they are fighting for Asli Balochistan, the province of Sistan and Baluchistan, to become independent. This province, which borders the Indian Ocean and the province of Balochistan in Pakistan, is situated in southeast Iran.
- The group has purportedly carried out a number of violent operations in Iran, claiming to have bombed targets and abducted Iranian border police officers.
- Jaish al-Adl took credit for a suicide bombing that killed 27 members of Iran's Revolutionary

Guard paramilitary group in 2019 and was directed towards a bus.

- Iran has suspicions that militants are being hosted by Sunni-majority Pakistan, potentially with Saudi Arabia's request.

INSTABILITY IN THE REGION

● SPREAD OF WAR

Global observers are of the opinion that the disastrous war in Gaza may escalate into a more extensive and deadly regional confrontation in central Asia.

● CONTINUED AMERICAN TROOP PRESENCE IN IRAQ

The attack may lead to the continued deployment of American forces in Iraq.

● RESURGENCE OF KURDISH MILITIA

Tensions between Iranian Kurds and Kurds may increase as a result of the onslaught on Kurdish territories.

● START OF A PROXY WAR

Iran's actions could lead to a conflict between Iran and the United States and its allies.

● ESCALATION OF TENSIONS

Since the end of the Afghan civil war, the region of central Asia has been quiet. Things could soon change.

HOW IS IT GOING TO IMPACT INDIA?

● IMPACTS ON CHABAHAR PROJECT

The instability may have an impact on the Chabahar port project, which is situated in the Sistan-Baluchistan area of Iran.

● INDIAN STAKES IN AFGHANISTAN

India has interests in development projects in Afghanistan, where the conflicts could expand.

● PAKISTAN'S SECURITY DILEMMA

Should Pakistan fall apart, India doesn't want nu-

clear weapons to end up in the hands of non-state actors.

● A SURGE IN INSURGENCY IN J&K

Pakistan can intensify insurgency in the region to deflect attention away from its own citizens during election season.

INDIA'S POSITION ON TERRORISM

● ZERO TOLERANCE

When it comes to terrorism, India maintains an unwavering stance.

● NON-STATE ACTORS

India opposes using force against a state in order to combat terrorism, but it supports using force against non-state actors.

● LABELLING

India is against categorising acts of terrorism according to the reasons behind them.

● SELF-DEFENSE

India is aware of the measures other nations take to protect themselves. India acknowledges the legitimate national liberation groups' right to self-defense.

● COOPERATION

India is in favour of greater international cooperation in the battle against terrorism.

PRELIMS QUESTION

Q1. Which of the following strait connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea:

1. Strait of Hormuz
2. Strait of Malacca
3. Bering strait
4. Sunda strait

Q2. Which of the following are NOT correctly

matched?

- 1) Strait of Bab-el- Mandeb – between Red Sea and Gulf of Aden
- 2) Strait of Malacca – between Peninsular Malaysia and Sumatra
- 3) Strait of Hormuz – between Oman and Iran

Select from the following codes

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 only
- d) None

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	A
2.	D

MAINS QUESTION

Q1. Discuss the potential economic implications for India in the event of war or instability between Iran and Pakistan. Consider factors such as trade routes, energy resources, and economic partnerships.

Q2. Explore the impact on regional security if there is a conflict or instability between Iran and Pakistan, and its consequences for India's security concerns. Discuss potential measures India could take to address these challenges.

ECONOMY

INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY CODE, 2016

Why in the News?

Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Shaktikanta Das, has advocated for a clear structure for the country's group insolvency system and a thriving market for distressed assets in order to enhance the efficiency of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

What is the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)?

- **Insolvency vs Bankruptcy:** The difference between insolvency and bankruptcy is that the former arises when a person files an application with an official requesting being declared bankrupt, a process that will last until the obligation is discharged, while the latter happens when a person is unable to pay bills because they do not have any assets.
- **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) 2016 :** The Indian bankruptcy law aims to unify the current system by establishing a unified bankruptcy and insolvency law. It is a one-stop shop for insolvency resolution, which used to be a drawn-out procedure without a workable conclusion. It seeks to lessen the burdensome nature of executing commercial transactions and safeguard the interests of small investors.

What is the need for IBC, 2016.

- Growing Non-Performing Assets have been a problem for the banking industry for a number of years for a variety of reasons.
- In India, the average time to resolve an insolvency case was 4.3 years as of 2015. In comparison to other nations like the United States of America (1.5 years) and the United Kingdom (1 year), this was higher.
- A strong, comprehensive and efficient insol-

vency system was therefore formed with the enactment of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC). Therefore, the intent behind the enactment of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) was to expedite the process of resolving insolvency cases.

- In order to improve the formal financial condition resolution process and liquidation, the code aimed to create an entirely new institutional structure with a regulator, financial condition specialists, data utilities, and assessment procedures.

Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code, 2016



To speed up resolution of stressed assets in the country



Applicable to: Individuals, partnerships, LLPs and Corporates



Authority to decide insolvency application within 180 days (90 days extension allowed)

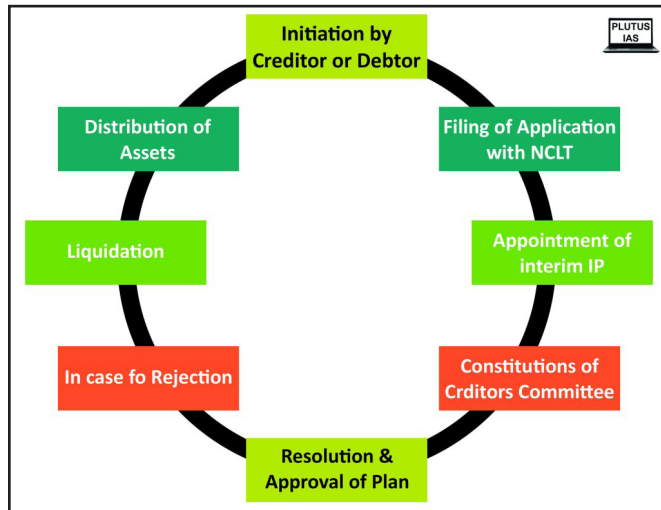


Fast track process of 90 days available for specified entities



Adjudicating authority: NCLT for corporates, DRT for individuals & partnership firms

Process followed under the IBC



- IBC is applicable to individuals, partnerships, and businesses. It offers a time-limited procedure for resolving insolvency.
- Creditors take control of a debtor's assets and are forced to make choices regarding the debtor's insolvency when an insolvency in repayment occurs. IBC permits both the debtor and the creditor to initiate "recovery" actions against one another.
- Either the creditor or the debtor may request the start of a CIRP when a corporate debtor (CD), or a firm that has borrowed money to operate, fails on its loan payments. The Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) is governed by Section 6 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.
- Previously, a creditor or debtor had to experience a minimum amount of default of ₹1 lakh before they could file for bankruptcy. But, the government raised the minimum sum to ₹1 crore in light of the pandemic's strain on businesses.
- Applying for insolvency requires going through a designated adjudicating authority (AA) under the Indian Bankruptcy Code (IBC); these AAs are the different benches of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) located throughout India.
- The Tribunal has 14 days to accept or deny the application, or if entry is delayed, to give a jus-

tification. The resolution process, also known as CIRP, starts as soon as the AA accepts an application. The resolution process must be completed within the revised, mandated time frame of 330 days.

Key Goals of the Code

- To reform and combine the legislation pertaining to corporate, partnership, and individual insolvency resolution and reorganisation.
- To establish deadlines for the law's performance in a time-bound insolvency resolution (i.e., 180 days).
- To increase the worth of interested parties' assets.
- In order to encourage entrepreneurship and startup culture.
- To make credit more widely available.
- To weigh the interests of all parties involved, including modification. The remaining amount must be paid in the order that government obligations are due.
- To create an Indian Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board to serve as the country's bankruptcy and insolvency law regulatory authority.
- To give an easy revival mechanism for entities.
- To address international insolvency.
- To build an archive of defaulters in order to address India's bad debt issue.

Group Insolvency

- Group insolvency is a legal framework that allows several corporate group entities that become insolvent to have their resolutions consolidated in a single court. This allows the group to be revamped as a whole and to use its combined assets in a way that serves the interests of the debtor and the group corporate.
- Group insolvency has two distinct aspects on a global scale. Certain jurisdictions have opted for either substantive consolidation or procedural coordination.

- The term “substantive consolidation” refers to the combination of several entities’ operations, assets, and liabilities into one group while retaining their individual legal entity status.
- But, under procedural coordination, the strategy is restricted to coordinating procedural elements such as filing requirements, timetables, and coordination; it does not involve mixing the entities in and of themselves.
- Without a defined structure, the group insolvency procedure in India has been developing under the direction of the courts.

The necessity of the Group Insolvency Mechanism in India under IBC Process

- The length of time it takes to resolve disputes and the degree of haircuts compared to the admitted claims are the two main areas of criticism directed at the IBC.
- As of Sept 2023, 67% of the current CIRP cases have surpassed the total time period of 270 days including an extension period of 90 days.
- In FY 2020–21 and FY 2021–22, the average time it took to admit a case was 468 days and 650 days, respectively. The market value of the assets
- will be significantly diminished by such a protracted period of delays. The Committee of Creditors (CoC) determines whether a defaulting corporation is economically viable enough to be restructured and offered a fresh start, or liquidated. The AA has expressed concerns about the CoC’s actions on multiple occasions. This comprises – (a)not showing up to the CoC meetings, (b) Ineffective communication or ineffective cooperation between creditors, (c)When creating resolution plans, creditors’ individual interests are disproportionately prioritised over their group interests, which can be detrimental to the plan itself.

LENTIL PRODUCTION IN INDIA

Why in the News?

According to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, in-

creased acreage would cause India to overtake other countries as the world’s leading producer of lentils (masoor) in the 2023–24 crop year. On larger acreage, the nation’s lentil production is predicted to reach an all-time high of 1.6 million tonnes in the 2023–24 rabi season. Based on official data, the nation produced 1.56 million tonnes of lentils during the 2022–2023 crop year.

About Lentils

- Lentil is a bushy perennial herbaceous plant belonging to the legume family
- These are edible legumes distinguished by their flat, disc-shaped, lens-shaped seeds.
- Usually small in stature, lentil plants produce blooms that pollinate themselves.
- Lentil grains serve as excellent sources of calories, carbs, protein, fat, fibres, phosphorus, iron, zinc, carotene, vitamins, and antioxidants.
- It is an important food source for humans, mainly eaten as dry seeds.
- It is primarily eaten as “Dal” in India, which involves removing the outer peel and splitting the cotyledons.
- Another name for lentils is Masur and Malka (bold seeded).

Climatic conditions needed for Lentils

- Lentil needs a cool environment. It is quite resilient and can withstand a lot of cold and a harsh winter.
- When it is growing vegetatively, it needs cold temperatures, and when it reaches maturity, it needs warm temperatures.
- **Temperature:** 18 to 30 degrees Celsius is the ideal range for growth. Its cultivation range reaches as high as 3,500 metres in the highlands to the northwest.
- **Soil:** Neutral-reaction, well-drained loam soils are ideal for lentil farming. It is not suitable to cultivate lentils in acidic soils. The ideal pH for soil would be about 7. Flooding and soggy

weather are intolerable to lentils.

Health Benefits of Lentils:

- **Rich in Nutrients:** Lentils are a nutritional powerhouse, containing high levels of protein, fiber, vitamins, and minerals. They provide essential nutrients like folate, iron, potassium, and manganese.
- **Heart Health:** The high fiber content in lentils contributes to lower cholesterol levels, reducing the risk of heart disease. Lentils also contain potassium, which supports healthy blood pressure.
- **Digestive Health:** Lentils are an excellent source of dietary fiber, promoting digestive health and preventing constipation. The fiber content helps maintain a healthy gut microbiota.
- **Blood Sugar Regulation:** Lentils have a low glycemic index, which means they release glucose slowly, preventing spikes in blood sugar levels. This makes them a suitable food for individuals with diabetes.
- **Weight Management:** The combination of fiber and protein in lentils helps increase satiety, making people feel fuller for longer periods. This assists in weight management and prevents oneself from overeating.
- **Source of Plant-Based Protein:** Lentils are a valuable source of protein, especially for individuals following vegetarian or vegan diets. They offer a protein-rich alternative to animal products.
- **Antioxidant Properties:** Lentils contain antioxidants that help neutralize harmful free radicals in the body, potentially reducing the risk of chronic diseases and inflammation.

Benefits of Growing Lentils for farmers and Environment:

- **Crop Rotation and Soil Health:** Lentils are nitrogen-fixing crops, enriching the soil by converting atmospheric nitrogen into a form that plants can use. This makes lentils an excellent rotational crop, improving soil fertility.

- **Drought Tolerance:** Lentils are relatively drought-tolerant compared to some other crops. They require less water, making them suitable for cultivation in regions with limited water availability.
- **Short Growth Cycle:** Lentils typically have a shorter growth cycle compared to other crops, allowing farmers to cultivate multiple crops in a single growing season. This versatility can contribute to increased yields and income for farmers.
- **Income Diversification:** Lentils offer farmers an opportunity to diversify their crops and income streams. The demand for lentils in the global market provides a potential source of revenue for farmers.
- **Reduced Need for Fertilizers:** As legumes, lentils have the ability to fix nitrogen in the soil. This reduces the dependence on synthetic fertilizers, resulting in cost savings for farmers and promoting sustainable agriculture.
- **Adaptability to Various Climates:** Lentils can grow in various climates, from cool temperate to warm conditions. This adaptability makes lentils a versatile crop suitable for cultivation in different regions around the world.
- **Sustainable Agriculture:** Lentils can be part of a sustainable agricultural system, promoting practices that are environmentally friendly and socially responsible. Their ability to improve soil health, reduce reliance on chemical inputs, and adapt to various climates aligns with sustainable agriculture principles.

Lentils growing region

- It is widely grown throughout Europe, Asia, and North Africa.
- The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reports that Canada, India, Australia, Turkey, and Russia were the leading lentil producers worldwide in 2022.
- India, the world's second-largest producer of lentils, has up until now relied on imports to cover its domestic needs, primarily from Turkey,

Australia, Canada, and Russia.

- West Bengal, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Chhattisgarh are the primary states where it is grown.
- Considered as a lentil bowl, Bundelkhand region, which is part of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh provides around 25% of the nation's lentil crop.

Initiatives by the Indian Government to Increase Pulse Production

- Procurement of the pulses by offering “Minimum Support Prices (**MSP**)” to the farmers via National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (**NAFED**) as well as lately through Small Farmers Agri Consortium (**SFAC**).
- **National Food Security Mission – Pulses (NFSM-P)**: Launched under the National Food Security Mission, this scheme aims to enhance the production of pulses by promoting the adoption of improved technologies, high-yielding varieties, and better agronomic practices. It also focuses on increasing the area under pulses cultivation.
- **Research and Development**: The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (**ICAR**) is a key player in developing new varieties and doing research that can improve the productivity potential of pulse crops. ICAR produces production packages and high-yielding cultivars tailored to specific locations.

State of Pulse production in India

- India is the world's biggest **importer** (14%), **user** (27% of global consumption), and **producer** (25% of global output) of pulses.
- While pulses are grown in both the **Rabi** and **Kharif** seasons, over 60% of the overall production comes from Rabi pulses.
- Pulses make up about 20% of the land planted to grains and make up between 7 and 10% of the nation's overall grain production.
- The most common pulse, accounting for around 40% of the overall production, is gramme. It is

followed in order of importance by Tur/Arhar (15–20%), Urad/Black Matpe, and Moong (8–10%).

- Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh are the top five states that produce pulses.

PRELIMS QUESTION

Q1. Which of the following is not a type of pulse?

- 1) Lentils
- 2) Chickpeas
- 3) Quinoa

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

- A) 1 only
- B) 2 only
- C) 3 only
- D) 1 and 3

Q2. What role do pulses play in sustainable agriculture practices?

- 1) They deplete soil nutrients.
- 2) They enhance soil fertility through nitrogen fixation.
- 3) They contribute to water pollution.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

- A) 1 only
- B) 2 only
- C) 3 only
- D) 2 and 3

Q1. Which of the following statements regarding the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016 is correct?

The IBC applies only to individual bankruptcies. The IBC is primarily concerned with regulating banking practices.

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) is the sole adjudicating authority under the IBC. Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

- A) 1 only
- B) 1 and 2
- C) 2 and 3
- D) 1 and 3

Q4. What role does the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) play in the insolvency resolution process under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)?

1. It acts as the appellate authority for insolvency cases.
2. It is the adjudicating authority for corporate insolvency resolution matters.
3. It has no jurisdiction over matters related to insolvency.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

- A) 1 only
- B) 2 only
- C) 3 only
- D) 2 and 3

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	C
2.	B
3.	C
4.	B

MAINS QUESTION

Q1. Examine the role of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) in the insolvency resolution process under the IBC, 2016. Analyze the challenges faced by the NCLT in adjudicating insolvency cases and suggest potential improvements.

Q2. Examine the environmental sustainability

of pulse cultivation. How do pulses impact soil health and contribute to sustainable agriculture practices?

Q3. Analyze the role of pulses in addressing global food security. How can the widespread cultivation and consumption of pulses contribute to combating hunger and malnutrition on a global scale?

SOCIAL ISSUES

PM JANMAN SCHEME

WHY IN THE NEWS?

In continuation of its tribal policy, the government will distribute the first installment of Rs 540 crore for pucca dwellings to one lakh beneficiaries under the PM-JANMAN. On this occasion, the Prime Minister will digitally interact with the beneficiaries of PM-JANMAN, the flagship central project inaugurated in November 2023 for the socioeconomic welfare of especially vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs).

ABOUT PM JANMAN SCHEME

- **PM JANMAN** is an Indian government programme that tries to integrate tribal groups into society.
- The scheme (which includes both Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes) would be executed in partnership with state governments and PVTG communities by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- The project will focus on **11 important interventions** that will be managed by **9 Ministries**, ensuring the execution of existing schemes in PVTG communities.
- It includes safe housing under the **PM-AWAS** Scheme, access to clean drinking water, enhanced medical care, schooling, nourishment, road and telecommunications connectivity, and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.
- The plan also calls for the setting up of **Van Dhan Vikas Kendras** for the trading of forest produce, off-grid solar power systems for 1 lakh families, and solar street lights.
- The plan is expected to improve the PVTGs' quality of life and well-being by addressing their various and intersecting forms of discrimination and exclusion, as well as recognising and re-

specting their unique and priceless contribution to national and global development.

PM JANMAN

(Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan)

A Visionary Initiative toward Tribal Welfare

-  **Sabka Pucca Ghar**
-  **Har Ghar Nal Se Jal**
-  **Gaon-Gaon Tak Sadak**
-  **Har Ghar Bijli**
-  **Shiksha Ke Liye Hostel**
-  **Kaushal Vikas**
-  **Door Daraz Gaon Tak Mobile Medical Unit**
-  **Sabko Poshan**
-  **Unnat Aajeevika**
-  **Door Daraz Gaon Tak Mobile Network**



IMPLEMENTATION DIFFICULTIES:

- The **lack of updated data** on PVTGs is a serious barrier, as the most recent available census data for PVTGs is from 2001, when there were around 27.6 lakh people in these groups. Although the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has begun baseline surveys, an accurate and up-to-date dataset of PVTG populations has yet to be compiled. The lack of current data makes it difficult to accurately assess the needs and progress of PVTG communities.
- The complexity and diversity of PVTG needs and capacities among regions and states, as well as the necessity for customised and flexible approaches and interventions.
- The stigma and discrimination experienced by PVTGs in mainstream society and the state, as well as the necessity for enlightenment and

public awareness among stakeholders and the general public.

- The scheme's coordination and convergence with current schemes and programmes of the federal and state governments, as well as the necessity for effective and efficient delivery and utilisation of resources and services.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE PM-JANMAN WAS LAUNCHED

- According to the **2011 census**, India is home to a ST population of 10.45 crore, with 75 PVTG groups distributed in 18 states and the UT of Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- The **Dhebar Commission** revealed discrepancies among Scheduled Tribes in 1960-61, resulting in the introduction of the Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG) category.
- **PVTGs** – pre-agricultural lifestyles, low literacy, tiny or stagnant populations, and subsistence economies – were renamed in 2006. These PVTGs keep on encountering social, economic, and educational challenges.
- As announced in the **Budget Speech 2023-24**, to boost the socio-economic circumstances of the PVTGs, the **PM PVTG of Development Mission** is going to be launched.
- As a result, PVTG families and habitations will be fully supplied with basic amenities like secure housing, hygienic drinking water, and increased access to healthcare, nutrition, and education.
- By the Development Action Plan for the Scheduled Tribes (**DAPST**), Rs. 15 billion would be made available to carry out the Mission over the following three years.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY IN INDIA

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The NITI Aayog has produced a Discussion Paper titled "Multidimensional Poverty in India since 2005-06," which states that 24.82 crore individuals have escaped Multidimensional Poverty over the last

nine years. To further understand long-term poverty patterns, the discussion paper draws on data from National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) conducted in 2005-06, 2015-16, and 2019-21.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

• SUBSTANTIAL DROP IN MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY:

India's multidimensional poverty has decreased significantly, from 29.17% in 2013-14 to 11.28% in 2022-23, a 17.89% point decline. Approximately 24.82 crore people have left multidimensional poverty over the last nine years (2013-14 to 2022-23).

• STATE-WISE DECLINE:

Uttar Pradesh experienced the greatest drop, with 5.94 crore people leaving multidimensional poverty, followed by Bihar (3.77 crore), Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan.

• SUCCESSFUL ACHIEVEMENT OF SDG OBJECTIVES

Target 1.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is expected to be accomplished by India well before 2030. The target 1.2 targets "at least by half the proportion of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions."

- All **12 MPI indicators** have improved significantly, demonstrating development in the Health, Education, and Standard of Living dimensions.

• LEVEL OF DEPRIVATION

- Compared to 2005-06 and 2013-14, the **Severity of Deprivation (SoD)** decreased at a marginally slower rate between 2015-16 and 2019-21. Deprivations that the typical multidimensionally poor individual experiences are measured by SoD.
- In addition, because fewer years had passed since 2015-16, the decline in the proportion of MPI poor people in the overall population was faster than it had been during the previous ten years. The percentage of MPI poor people in India's overall population in

2005–06 was 55.34%.

● A FEW NOTABLE INITIATIVES WHICH THE REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Deprivation has dramatically decreased as a result of initiatives like **Poshan Abhiyan** and **Anaemia Mukht Bharat**, both of which have greatly improved access to healthcare facilities.
- Under the **National Food Security Act**, the Targeted Public Distribution System, which is one of the biggest food security programmes in the world, serves **81.35 crore beneficiaries** by supplying food grains to both urban and rural areas.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY

- A poor individual may have several disadvantages at once, such as poor health or malnourishment, a lack of power or clean water, low-quality employment, or insufficient education. To fully grasp the actual nature of poverty, only one factor—such as income is not enough to capture the true reality of poverty.
- Multidimensional poverty is defined as having income or consumption below the \$2.15 worldwide poverty level (as defined by the World Bank) in addition to deprivations in education and access to basic infrastructure. The World Bank sets the daily purchasing power parity (PPP) threshold for the international poverty line at USD 2.15.

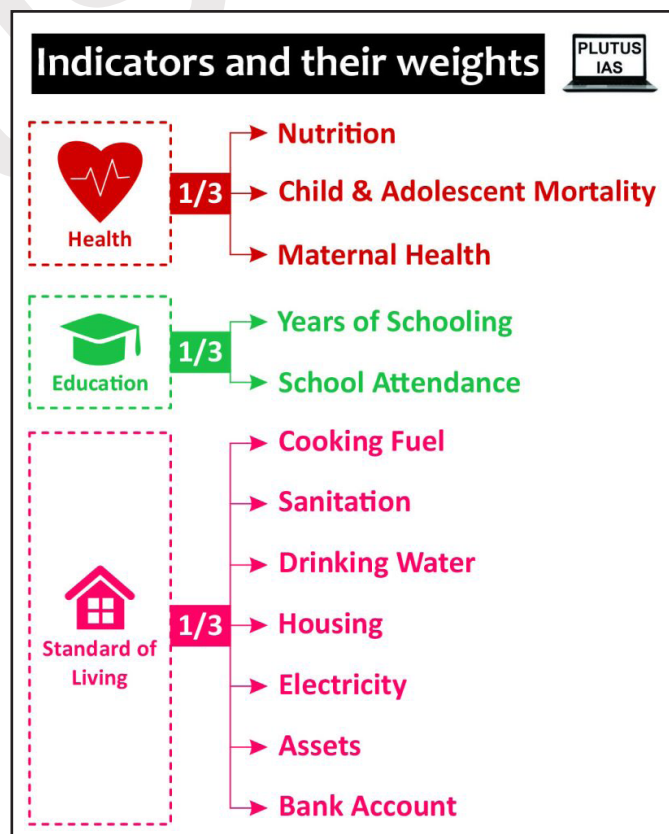
WHAT IS THE NATIONAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX?

- Since 2010, the United Nations Development Programme (**UNDP**) has incorporated MPI into its flagship Human Development Report. In this regard, the first edition of the national Multidimensional Poverty Index for India was released in **2021** by NITI Aayog.
- **Goal:** Since a nation's national MPI statistic is customised to fit its priorities, each nation selects its own set of dimensions, indicators, weights, and cutoffs based on its own goals and circumstances.

- The headcount ratio and intensity of multidimensional poverty at the national, state/UT, and local levels are thoroughly examined in this research. The **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-4** reference period for 2015–16 served as the basis for the first report.

MPI PARAMETERS & METHODOLOGY

- The **solid Alkire and Foster (AF) technique** is used in MPI's worldwide methodology, which defines people as poor based on widely accepted criteria intended to assess acute poverty and also provides a complementary viewpoint to traditional monetary poverty measures.
- However, the **National MPI** covers **12 indicators** while global MPI covers **10 indicators**. Nutrition, maternal health, child and adolescent mortality, years of education, electricity, school attendance, assets, fuel for cooking, cleanliness, drinking water, housing, and bank accounts are a few of these.



PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. What is Multidimensional Poverty?

- a) A concept that solely focuses on economic well-being
- b) A measure that considers various dimensions of poverty beyond income
- c) A term used to describe poverty in only one specific region
- d) An approach that excludes education and health from poverty assessment.

Q2. Which of the following is covered by the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index developed by Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative

- 1) Lack of access to resources, services, health care, and education at the household level
- 2) Parity in purchasing power at the national level
- 3) The size of the national budget deficit and GDP growth rate

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q3. Examine the following claims on India's Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs):

- 1) 18 States along with one Union Territory are home to PVTGs.
- 2) One of the factors used to determine PVTG status is a population that is either stationary or declining.
- 3) Thus far, 95 PVTGs have been formally notified throughout the nation.
- 4) The tribes of Konda Reddi and Irular are listed as PVTGs.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3
- (b) 2, 3 and 4
- (c) 1, 2 and 4
- (d) 1, 3 and 4

Q4. Which of the following statements regarding Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) is correct?

- 1) PVTGs are not entitled to any special protection or privileges.
- 2) PVTGs are identified based on criteria such as pre-agricultural technology, low literacy rates, and a stagnant or declining population.
- 3) PVTGs have unrestricted access to mainstream education and healthcare services.

Which of the following statements are incorrect?

- A) 1 only
- B) 2 only
- C) 1 and 3
- D) 2 and 3

ANSWERS

S. No	Answers
1.	B
2.	A
3.	C
4.	D

MAINS QUESTION

Q1. Describe the socio-economic challenges faced by PVTGs in accessing education and healthcare services. How can these challenges be addressed to improve their overall well-being?

Q2. Discuss the criteria used for the identification of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

and explain why these criteria are considered important for their recognition.

Q3. Discuss the concept of multidimensional poverty and how it differs from traditional measures of poverty.

Q4. Explore the interlinkages between multidimensional poverty and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). How can addressing multidimensional poverty contribute to achieving the broader goals of sustainable development?

HISTORY & CULTURE

OLDEST LIVING CITY OF INDIA

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Evidence of cultural continuity in Vadnagar, Gujarat, even after the fall of the Harappans has been discovered by a joint study of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and Indian Institute of Technology (Kharagpur). The research disproves the idea of a “Dark Age ” by showing that Vadnagar’s culture persisted even after the Harappan civilization fell.

Evidence of human settlement as old as 800 BCE found in Vadnagar



- It raises question on the idea of **DARK AGE**
- It is home to one of the oldest **Buddhist monasteries**
- Vadnagar is recognised as a multicultural and multireligious community, having **Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, and Islamic** influences.



IMPORTANT FINDINGS OF THE VADNAGAR EXCAVATION

- **Age of Settlement:** Evidence from the study points to a human settlement at Vadnagar that may have existed as early as 800 BCE. This dates the town to the oligarchic republic or late Vedic/pre-Buddhist Mahajanapadas period.
- **Settlement Characterised by Pluralism and Multireligion:** Vadnagar is characterised as a multicultural settlement with influences from Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Islam.
- **Seven cultural phases (periods) were discovered during the excavation:** the Mauryan, the Indo-Greek, the Indo-Scythian, the Hindu-Solankis, the Sultanate-Mughal, and the Gaekwad-British colonial administration.
- **Climate Influence:** It is hypothesised that extreme climate variations, such as variations in rainfall or droughts, are what caused the rise and fall of several kingdoms during a 3,000-year period and the repeated invasions by warriors from Central Asia.
- **Radiocarbon Dates:** The idea of a **Dark Age** is called into question by unpublished radiocarbon dates that point to a settlement that may have existed as early as 1400 BCE. In Indian history, the “Dark Age” is the time between the fall of the Indus Valley Civilization and the rise of the Iron Age with cities such as Gandhar, Koshal, and Avanti. If accurate, it suggests that India’s culture has been stable for the past 5500 years.
- **Buddhist Monastery:** One of the major finds is that Vadnagar is home to one of the oldest Buddhist monasteries, which contributes to the settlement’s historical and cultural diversity.
- **Archaeological Relics:** During the excavation, a number of archaeological objects were found, including pottery, copper, gold, silver, and iron objects. The discoveries also contain coin moulds and bangles with elaborate designs

from the Indo-Greek era.

ABOUT VADNAGAR

● GEOGRAPHY AND LOCATION:

Gujarat, India's Mehsana district has the town of Vadnagar. Located around 107 kilometres north-west of Ahmedabad, the state capital, Vadnagar lies in the northern region of Gujarat. Its stunning location is enhanced by the surrounding lush flora and its location on the banks of the Shedhi River.

● CULTURAL LEGACY

1. Hatshepsut Temple

Located near Vadnagar, this ancient temple is thought to have been constructed in the Gupta era. The temple honours the Egyptian queen Hatshepsut and showcases the variety of cultures present in the town.

2. Hatkeswar Mahadev Temple

One of Vadnagar's most well-known religious sites, this temple honours Lord Shiva. Both tourists and devotees are drawn to the architecture and the religious celebrations.

3. Tana Riri Samadhi

Known for their contributions to classical music, the holy brothers Tana and Riri are honoured in this memorial. It is a significant Vadnagar cultural landmark.

● WONDERS OF ARCHITECTURE

1. Toran

Vadnagar is home to an impressively constructed historic toran, or beautiful arch. Traditional arches known as torans are frequently connected to cultural and religious importance.

2. Sharmishtha Lake

Sharmishtha Lake is a prominent body of water in Vadnagar that is encircled by ghats and temples. It enhances the town's visual charm.

3. Kirti Toran

Originally serving as the entryway of a Buddhist

monastery, Kirti Toran is an archway from antiquity. It displays the impact of Buddhism on the area.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), established in 1861, is a leading organization responsible for archaeological research and cultural heritage conservation in India.
- Under the Ministry of Culture, ASI conducts extensive archaeological explorations, focusing on ancient sites, artifacts, and monuments. It also plays a crucial role in identifying and nominating Indian sites for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List, such as the Taj Mahal, Qutub Minar, and Ajanta Caves.
- ASI manages numerous archaeological museums, providing insights into India's cultural heritage. It conducts epigraphical studies, deciphering and documenting inscriptions on ancient monuments, to understand historical, cultural, and linguistic aspects.
- ASI also promotes public awareness and appreciation of India's archaeological heritage through exhibitions, lectures, and outreach activities.
- It implements legislation and regulations to protect archaeological sites and prevent illegal excavations.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings not only change the historical story of Vadnagar, but also add significantly to our knowledge of India's ancient cultural continuity, challenging traditionally held beliefs of a Dark Age. The archaeological discoveries and extensive research presented in the study highlight the significance of Vadnagar in unravelling the complexity of India's long and diverse past.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Which architectural style is prominently featured in the Sun Temple at Modhera in Gujarat?

a) Mughal

- b) Indo-Aryan
- c) Dravidian
- d) Persian

Q2. What is the cultural significance of Vadnagar, a town in Gujarat, as disclosed by the recent archaeological discoveries?

- a) It is the birthplace of a notable freedom fighter.
- b) India's oldest surviving city, with evidence going back to 800 BCE
- c) It is the location of the first Buddhist Council in ancient India.
- d) Location of the largest mediaeval fortification in India.

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	B
2.	B

MAINS QUESTION

Q1. Analyze the impact of ASI's archaeological excavations on our understanding of India's past. How have these excavations contributed to the reconstruction of historical narratives and cultural practices?

ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

SNOWLESS KASHMIR

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The main Indian tourist attractions, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, have seen little snowfall or rainfall this winter, which has resulted in a drop in visitors.

SCENARIO THIS YEAR

- In Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, **winter precipitation** primarily takes the form of **snowfall**. The first snowfall often occurs in the first part of December and lasts through most of January in this area.
- However, **this season** has been generally **dry**. The whole of Jammu and Kashmir as well as Ladakh have mostly avoided rain or snow this winter, despite the fact that the absence of snow is most noticeable in **Gulmarg**, a popular tourist destination at this time of year.
- According to data from the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**, Jammu and Kashmir experienced an **80%** rainfall shortfall in December and a **100% (none at all)** deficiency in January thus far. There has been absolutely no precipitation in Ladakh in December or January.

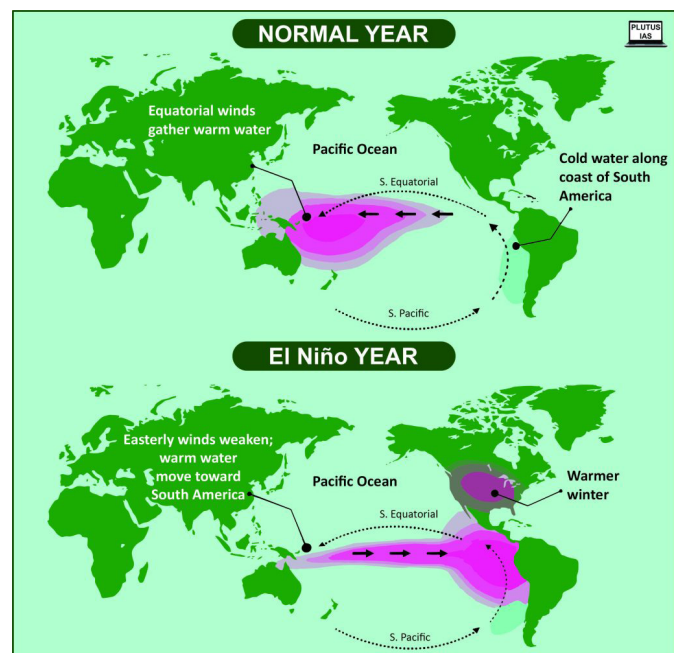
WHAT CAUSES SNOWLESS KASHMIR?

- **WESTERN DISTURBANCE**
 - A progressive rise in temperatures, perhaps caused by climate change, and a decrease in Western Disturbance episodes have been linked to the overall trend of decreased snowfall. The main cause of winter precipitation in the Himalayan region is Western Disturbances.
 - There has been a downward tendency in the quantity of Western Disturbance events, which has led to a decrease in total precipitation over the winter.

- Large rain-bearing wind systems known as “Western Disturbances” originate outside of Afghanistan and Iran and move eastward, bringing moisture with them from as far away as the Atlantic and Mediterranean Seas.

• ROLE OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND EL NINO

- Numerous research have shown that Kashmir’s decreasing snowfall is partly due to climate change.
- Snowfall is further impacted by the faster rate of temperature increase in upper elevation places compared to the lowlands.
- It is proposed that an additional element influencing global air circulation and contributing to the region’s precipitation shortfall is the ongoing El Nino event in the eastern Pacific Ocean.
- In the past ten years, Jammu & Kashmir has experienced a few relatively dry winters with very little snowfall, including in 2022, 2018, and 2015.



El Niño is a climate phenomenon characterized by the periodic warming of sea surface temperatures in the **central and eastern equatorial Pacific**. This disrupts normal weather patterns, leading to droughts, floods, and other extreme conditions globally. El Niño events occur irregularly, impacting agriculture, fisheries, and weather-related disasters across regions.

● CLIMATE AND WEATHER PATTERN

This winter, there has been little snowfall or rain in any part of Jammu and Kashmir or Ladakh, with substantial deficits of 80% in December 2023 and 100% in January 2024 (i.e., no rain). In these areas, winter precipitation primarily takes the form of snowfall, which is essential to the local climate.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF DRY WINTER OR SNOWLESS CONDITION IN KASHMIR?

● LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS

- reduced production of hydroelectricity
- An upsurge in the glacier melting rate
- Negative effect on the drinking water supply since there is limited groundwater recharge due to the sparse snowfall.

● SHORT TERM IMPLICATIONS

- An upsurge in forest fires may occur during a dry spell.
- Drought affecting agriculture
- Decrease in crop yield.

● ON AGRICULTURE

Winter crops, especially horticulture, depend on the winter snow because it keeps the soil moist. When there is not enough snowfall, the yields of apples and saffron get negatively impacted.

● LESS TOURISTS:

Due to a lack of snow, Gulmarg, a popular winter tourist destination in Kashmir, is experiencing a dramatic drop in visitor numbers this year. Even with a significant influx of tourists in 2023, officials anticipate a minimum 60% decrease in foot traffic. The

local economy is getting negatively impacted as ski resorts and other companies aren't generating enough profit due to the lack of snow.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding El-Nino

- 1) It occurs in every 2 years
- 2) It causes droughts in South America
- 3) La Nina is the opposite phenomenon of El-Nino

Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 3
- b) 1 and 2
- c) 1 only
- d) 2 and 3

Q2) With reference to 'Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)' sometimes mentioned in the news while forecasting Indian monsoon, which of the following statements is/are correct? (UPSC Prelims 2017)

- 1) The IOD phenomenon is characterised by a difference in sea surface temperature between tropical Western Indian Ocean and tropical Eastern Pacific Ocean.
- 2) An IOD phenomenon can influence an El Nino's impact on the monsoon.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	D
2.	B

MAINS QUESTION

Q1. Compare and contrast the effects of El Niño and La Niña on the Indian climate. Highlight the distinct characteristics of these phenomena and their varied impacts on monsoons, temperatures, and extreme weather events in different parts of the country.

Q2. Explain the role of Western Disturbances in influencing the weather in northern parts of India. How do these disturbances contribute to winter precipitation and temperature variations? Provide specific instances to illustrate their impact.