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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

LOW POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN INDIA VS: WOMEN'S RESERVATION BILL ACT 2023

WHY IN THE NEWS?



- Recently, after the Indian Parliament passed the Nari Shakti Vandan Bill or Women's Reservation Bill Act, 2023 and it was decided that 33 percent participation of women in the mainstream politics of India has been decided, the debate has ended whether Providing reservation within political parties or in Parliament and state legislatures could be the best route to increase women's representation in Indian politics.
- The Nari Shakti Vandan Bill or Women's Reservation Bill Act, 2023, the 106th constitutional amendment to the Constitution of India, reserves one-third of the seats for women in the Lok Sabha, state legislatures and the Delhi Assembly. This will also apply to seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.
- Legislative Assembly elections were held in Rajasthan on 25 November 2023 to elect 199 members of the 200 members of the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly following the death of Congress candidate Gurmeet Singh Cooner. Who's counting of votes and announcement of election results took place on 3 December 2023.

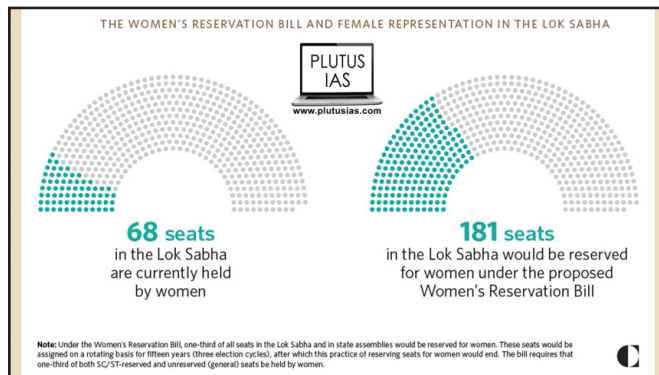
The election for the remaining 1 seat has been postponed. According to the Election Commission of India, this time 74.13% voting has been recorded in Rajasthan.

- The assembly elections held in Rajasthan showed that the only way to increase political participation of women is to provide them reservation in Parliament and state assemblies. Women candidates of both Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have performed disappointingly in the elections.
- The distribution of tickets to women by all political parties in the Rajasthan Assembly elections was highlighted and criticized by all. Major political party BJP fielded 20 women candidates in the assembly elections, out of which only 9 women candidates could win the assembly elections. The success rate of BJP's female candidates was 45%, which was much lower than the success rate of Bharatiya Janata Party's male candidates.
- Out of 179 male candidates contesting in Rajasthan Assembly elections, i.e. total 60% male candidates, 106 male candidates have registered their victory.

IMPORTANT CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES MADE BY THE WOMEN'S RESERVATION BILL 2023 :

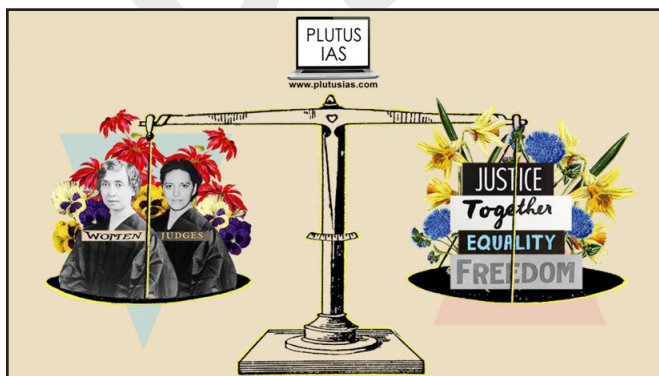
- Article 330 (A): The Bill has included Article 330 (A) which is inspired by the provisions of Article 330 on reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- Article 332 (A): This Article, introduced by the Women's Reservation Bill, provides for reservation of seats for women in every State Assembly.
- Amendment in Article 239 (AA): It has been added in the Bill that this law made by the Parliament, Article 239AA (2)(B) will also apply to Delhi, National Capital Territory.

KEY FEATURES OF WOMEN'S RESERVATION ACT 2023 :



- The Women's Reservation Bill 2023 aims to reserve one-third of all seats in the Lok Sabha and state legislatures for women.
- This Act will also reserve seats for women among the reserved seats. The allocation of reserved seats will be determined by the authority appointed by the President of India.
- This Act will also reserve one-third seats for women in the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories.
- The reserved seats will be allocated by rotation in different constituencies in different states or union territories of India.
- Period of Reservation: This Act will remain in force only for 15 years from the date of commencement.

BACKGROUND OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN POLITICS :



- **Women have been historically marginalized in politics:** Women, who constitute almost half

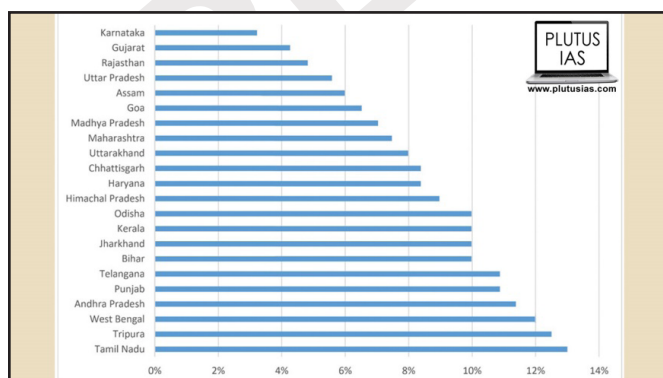
of the world's population (49.58 percent), have historically been politically marginalized in both developed and developing countries.

- **Social reforms started in the 19th century:** Starting from the middle of the 19th century, social reform movements not only attempted to bring about comprehensive improvements in the social status of women in the society but these movements were also successful in improving the social status of women.
- **United Nations Charter of 1945:** The Charter of the United Nations Organization (UNO), started in 1945, supports women's rights.
- **International Bill of Rights of Women:** With the rise of the feminist movements of the 1960s and 70s, in 1979 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which is often considered an international bill. Article 7 of this convention includes the rights of women and the right of women to hold political and public office.
- **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): In 2000 :** UN member states adopted the Millennium Declaration and outlined eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015, including promoting gender equality. It was done.
- **Achieving gender equality under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Empowering women:** In January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focused on women's right to equal participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. Target 5 of which aims to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", thereby ensuring "full and effective" rights for women.

CURRENT STATUS OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN WORLD POLITICS :

- **Above average representation:** Women's representation in politics in the Americas, Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa is at or above the global average.

- **Below average representation:** In Asia, the Pacific, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), women are below average in politics.
- **Global average female representation in politics:** As of May 2022, the global average of women's representation in politics in the national parliaments of different countries was 26.2 percent.
- **Diverse representation in Asian countries:** The situation in South Asian countries is worse than others. IPU data for May 2022 shows that women's representation in politics was 34 percent in Nepal, 21 percent in Bangladesh, 20 percent in Pakistan, 17 percent in Bhutan and 5 percent in Sri Lanka.
- The political representation of women in India's Lok Sabha (lower house) has been slightly less than 15 percent.
- According to 2021 World Bank data, female representation in Afghanistan's previous parliament was 27 percent.
- According to the United Nations, as of September 2022, 28 out of 193 UN member states had 30 women serving as elected heads of state and/or government.
- **Paradox in active participation:** There is a contradiction between the rapid increase in women's participation as voters in elections and other political activities and the slow growth of women's representation in parliament.



MAJOR COMPONENTS TO ASSESS THE REPRESENTATION AND DIRECT PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INDIAN POLITICS:

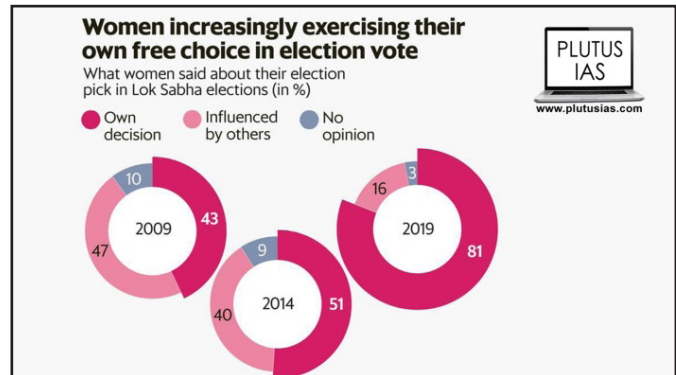
Following are the main criteria or major components to assess the representation and direct participation of women in Indian politics –

- **Women as voters:** In the last Lok Sabha elections in 2019, women voted almost at the same rate as men, which was seen as an important contribution towards gender equality in Indian politics and India's progress. It was also called the "silent revolution of self-empowerment" of women in Indian politics. The increased participation of women in democracy and mainstream politics of India, especially since the 1990s, is attributable to several factors.
- **Women as candidates:** With the changing times in India, the number of women candidates in parliamentary elections has increased significantly, but their ratio is still very low compared to male candidates. In the Lok Sabha elections held in the year 2019, only less than 9 percent of the total 8,049 candidates contested the Lok Sabha elections.
- **Women's representation in the Indian Parliament:** Women's participation as voters has increased significantly in elections in recent years. The data on women's representation in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha shows that the proportion of women representatives has been very low compared to their male counterparts.
- The proportion of women representatives elected to the Lok Sabha was the highest so far in the 2019 elections, and was less than 15 percent as a proportion of total MPs.
- The number of women candidates and MPs varies significantly from state to state and from party to party.
- In the current Lok Sabha (17th), Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal have the highest number of women MPs. In percentage terms, Goa and Manipur had fielded the highest proportion of women candidates.

MAJOR REASONS FOR LOW FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT AND STATE LEGISLATURES :

- **Inaccessibility to family-political ties or institutions:** Most political parties in India may, in theory, promise to provide adequate representation to women in their party constitutions, but in practice, Indian political parties give very few tickets to women candidates. Let's give. A study found that a large section of women who get party tickets have family-political connections, or are 'dynastic' politicians. With normal avenues of access into mainstream politics limited, such political connections are often the entry point for women.
- **Perception that women have less chances of winning elections in India:** Even at present, it is widely believed in the political circles of India that women candidates have less chances of winning elections as compared to male candidates. As a result, various political parties provide fewer tickets to women in elections.
- **Challenging Structural Conditions:** Election campaigns in India are extremely demanding and time consuming. Female politicians with family commitments and child care responsibilities often have difficulty participating fully.
- **Extremely unsafe environment for women:** Women politicians face frequent insults, inappropriate comments, abuse and threats of abuse, making participation and contesting elections extremely challenging.
- **Expensive and expensive electoral system:** The electoral system in India is extremely costly and expensive. As a result, election financing is also a major obstacle in India as many women are financially dependent on their families. Contesting parliamentary elections can be extremely expensive, and requires massive financial resources to be able to mount a strong contest. In the absence of adequate support from their parties, women candidates are forced to arrange their campaign financing on their own. This is a major challenge that hinders their participation.
- **Internalized Patriarchal System:** Indian societies are known to have an 'internalized patriarchal system', where many women consider it their duty to give priority to family and home

rather than political ambitions.



IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LAW MAKING PROCESS :



- **Political empowerment of women:** Legislative representation is fundamental to political empowerment, enabling participation in the law making process. Legislatures play an important role in enhancing debates and discussions on various aspects of governance and holding the government to account.
- **For gender equality:** A key indicator of the extent of gender equality in parliamentary politics is in providing appropriate representation to women in the Parliament of India.
- **Women bring diversity and skills to politics:** According to political scientist Anne, "Women bring diverse skills to politics and provide role models for future generations; They appeal for justice between the sexes."
- **To facilitate women's specific interests and policy-making:** Inclusion of women in Indian politics facilitates the representation of women's specific interests in state policy-making and creates conditions for a revitalized democracy

that is based on representation and participation. Bridges the gap between.

- **Less likely to be criminal and corrupt and highly effective:** Women legislators perform better on economic indicators than their male counterparts in their constituencies, a study found. Additionally, women legislators are less likely to be criminal and corrupt. They are more influential and less susceptible to political opportunism.

CONCLUSION/ SOLUTION :

- The organic change towards giving place to women in Indian parliamentary politics has been slow. There is a need to provide more women's representation on these platforms to change the discourse on governance and policy-making and bring India closer to becoming a truly inclusive and representative democracy.
- Adequate representation of women is extremely important in the politics of a democratic country. India is one of the largest and most flexible parliamentary democracies in the world. Since India's independence, the representation of women in the Parliament of India has gradually improved. It is an important component and indicator to evaluate progress in bridging gender disparities in the country.
- At present, providing quota for women in Parliament and State Legislatures appears to be the only way to increase their political representation.
- Despite the patriarchal mindset in India, the country is witnessing an increase in women's political participation, in parallel with higher levels of education and increasing financial independence.
- The number of women contesting parliamentary and state assembly elections is limited.
- Wherever the state or political party has provided constitutionally mandated reservation of seats for women at the local self-government level, the representation of women has increased rapidly.

- Even after 75 years of Indian independence, political parties, the primary means of electoral politics, remain largely inaccessible and difficult for women to contest parliamentary and legislative elections.
- It should be made legally mandatory for every registered political party to give one-third of the total number of party tickets distributed in every election to women. To make this strategy successful, the Representation of the People Act, 1950 will have to be amended.
- If party-level reforms prove difficult for political parties in India, the Women's Reservation Bill 2008 will have to be revived and the Nari Shakti Vandan Bill or the Women's Reservation Bill Act, 2023 followed, which would provide for women to have a one-third parliamentary seat. And reservation of state assembly seats is mandatory.

FLOOR TEST IN BIHAR ASSEMBLY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

On February 12, the Bihar Legislative Assembly took a floor test amid the current political change in the state. Nitish Kumar, the chief minister of Bihar, was elected again.

ABOUT FLOOR TEST

- The term refers to the **majority test**. If there are any doubts about a State's Chief Minister (CM), he or she can be required to show the House's majority. In the event of a coalition administration, the CM may be expected to call a vote of confidence and secure a majority.
- **When there is no clear majority** and more than one individual has a stake in forming the government, the Governor may call a special session to determine who has the majority.
- Some legislators may be absent or decide not to vote. The numbers are then calculated using only the MLAs who were present to vote.
- **Article 174** of the Constitution grants the Governor the authority to summon, dissolve, and prorogue the state legislative assembly. Addi-

tionally, **Article 174(2)(b)** empowers the Governor to dissolve the Assembly based on the advice of the cabinet, but discretion is allowed when doubts arise about the Chief Minister's majority.

- **Article 175(2)** enables the Governor to summon the House and call for a floor test to ascertain the government's numerical strength. However, these actions are constrained by **Article 163**, which mandates the Governor to act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, led by the Chief Minister.

DISCRETIONARY POWER OF GOVERNOR

- When the Assembly is in session, the Speaker can initiate a floor test, but during recess, **Article 163 provides the Governor with residual powers to call for a floor test**. The discretionary powers of the Governor, as outlined in **Article 163(1)**, are limited to situations expressly specified by the Constitution, where independent decision-making is necessary.
- The Governor can exercise discretionary power under **Article 174** when the Chief Minister loses support and the majority is questionable.

JUDGEMENTS AND CASE LAWS

- The Supreme Court's observations on the Governor's role in calling for a floor test include the 2016 case of **Nabam Rebia and Bamang Felix vs Deputy Speaker**, where the court held that **the Governor's power to summon the House should be exercised in consultation with the Council of Ministers**. The court highlighted that the Governor, as a nominee of the President, does not have overriding authority over the elected representatives of the people in the State Legislature.
- In the **Shivraj Singh Chouhan & Ors versus Speaker 2020 case**, the Supreme Court upheld the Speaker's powers to call for a floor test when there is a prima facie belief that the government has lost its majority. The Governor retains the authority to order a floor test if the available material indicates the need to assess the government's confidence through such a

test.

ABOUT COMPOSITE FLOOR TEST

- The **Composite Floor Test** is employed when multiple individuals assert their claim to establish a government. If the majority is unclear, the governor may convene a special session to determine which contender commands the majority support.
- The **majority is calculated based on the members present and voting**. This process can be executed through a **voice vote**, where members express their support verbally, or through division voting. It is important to note that some legislators may be absent or opt not to cast their votes. In division voting, electronic gadgets, ballots, or slips may be utilized for the voting process.
- The individual with the majority will assume the responsibility of forming the government. However, in the event of a tie, the speaker may exercise the casting vote to break the deadlock.

SMART GRAM PANCHAYAT PROJECT

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Union Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj recently launched the 'Smart Gramme Panchayat: Revolution towards Digitization of Gram Panchayat' Project at Paproun Gram Panchayat in Begusarai District, Bihar, signifying a significant step forward in rural India's digital empowerment.

ABOUT SMART GRAM PANCHAYAT PROJECT

- The initiative seeks to **expand the Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI) Service to Gram Panchayats** in Begusarai, representing a significant shift in rural connectivity. Begusarai is at the forefront of digital transformation in Bihar, providing Wi-Fi services to all Gram Panchayats under the PM-WANI Scheme.
- The PM-WANI initiative seeks to provide **Wi-Fi connectivity to all Gramme Panchayats in the district by 2026**.

- The project, financed under the redesigned Rashtriya Gramme Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), aims to reach 455 Gramme Panchayats spanning 37 Blocks in Begusarai and Rohtas Districts, with execution monitored by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
- The **focus is on leveraging technology to enhance access to online services in vital sectors** such as health, education, and skills, aiming to elevate the quality of life in rural areas. Beneficiaries include students, farmers, artisans, and Women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
- The initiative plans to establish robust mechanisms for **Operation & Maintenance (O&M)** to ensure the sustained impact of the project over time. The plan would enable the government to realise its commitment to promoting inclusive growth and empowerment, including the ambitious objective of **transforming 3 crore women into 'Lakhpati Didis'**.
- The overarching goals include **bridging the rural-urban divide**, promoting accountability and efficiency in local self-governance, and empowering communities through digital footprints.

ABOUT PM-WANI

The PM-WANI initiative, **launched by the Department of Telecom (DoT)** in December 2020, serves as a pivotal scheme **aimed at enhancing the proliferation of public WiFi hotspots**. Its primary objective is to establish a robust digital communication infrastructure, particularly in rural areas.

FRAMEWORK:

PM-WANI functions as a framework empowering various entities, including shopkeepers, tea stall owners, or Kirana store proprietors, to establish public Wi-Fi hotspots and offer internet services to customers. **This framework aligns with the National Digital Communications Policy, 2018 (NDCP)**, which emphasizes building a resilient digital communications infrastructure.

SIGNIFICANCE:

To facilitate a conducive environment for local businesses and small establishments to become Wi-Fi

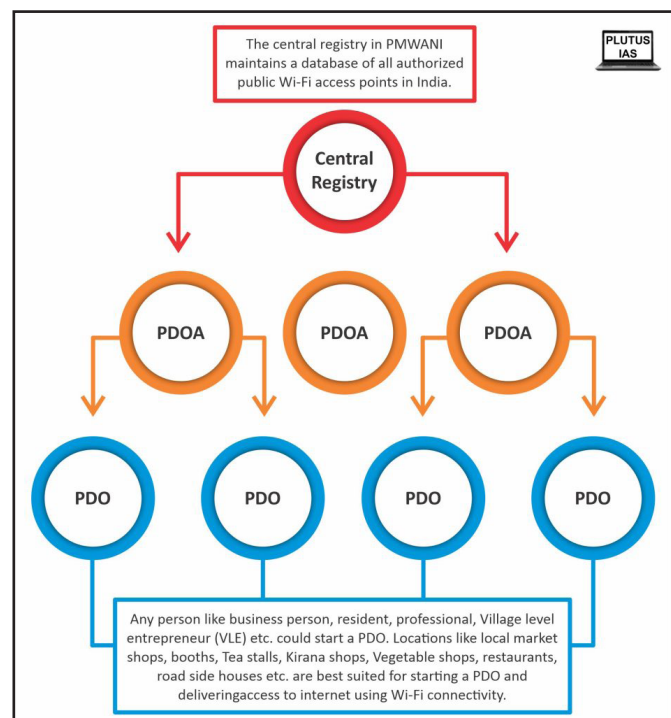
providers, PM-WANI exempts last-mile Public Wi-Fi providers from licensing, registration, and fees payable to DoT.

PM-WANI ECOSYSTEM:

The PM-WANI ecosystem comprises **four key elements**:

- **Public Data Office (PDO):** Responsible for establishing, maintaining, and operating Wi-Fi hotspots, PDOs procure internet bandwidth from telecom or internet service providers to provide last-mile connectivity.
- **Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA):** This entity **provides PDOs with aggregation services** such as authentication and accounting, allowing them to deliver services to end users more efficiently.
- **App Provider:** The entity developing applications for user registration, discovering PM-WANI compliant Wi-Fi hotspots, and authenticating potential users.
- **Central Registry:** The Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DoT) maintains information on App Providers, PDOAs, and PDOs.

BENEFITS OF PM-WANI:



- Expansion of Internet access in rural and remote areas.
- Affordability and convenience compared to high-cost mobile technologies like 5G.
- Stimulating innovation and fostering competition in the internet market.

ABOUT RASHTRIYA GRAM SWARAJ ABHIYAN (RGSA)

The RGSA, initiated by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in 2018, underwent a revamp and received approval as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, slated for implementation from 2022-23 to 2025-26. This revamped scheme focuses on enhancing the capacity of Elected Representatives (ERs) of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

OBJECTIVES:

The primary goal of the revamped RGSA is to augment the governance capabilities of Panchayats, enabling them to effectively contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) falling within the jurisdiction of Panchayats.

TRAINING COMPONENTS:

Under this scheme, it is mandated to provide basic orientation training for ERs of Panchayats within six months of their election, along with refresher training within two years. The funding structure for State components follows a 60:40 ratio between Central and States, except for Northeast Hilly States and UT of J & K, where the ratio is 90:10. In other Union Territories, the Central share stands at 100%.

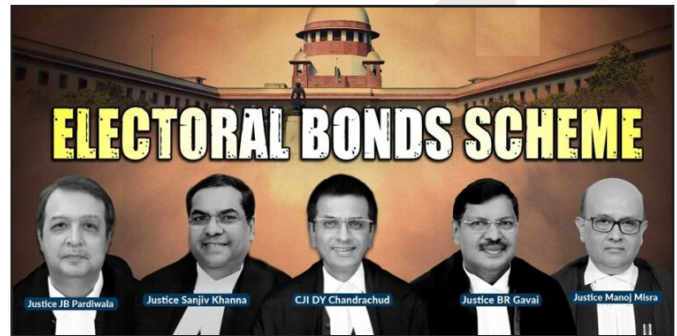
KEY FOCUS AREAS OF RGSA:

- **Strengthening Panchayat-SHG Convergence:** The scheme emphasizes reinforcing the synergy between Panchayats and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and provides training at various levels on e-governance and the Localization of SDGs.
- **Utilization of Emerging Technologies:** RGSA places emphasis on leveraging emerging technologies for interactive capacity building and standardized training methods.
- **Digital Literacy and Leadership Roles:** The

scheme is dedicated to capacitating PRIs by imparting knowledge on digital literacy. It enhances leadership roles to align with contemporary governance practices.

ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME VS: VIOLATION OF RIGHT TO INFORMATION AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

WHY IN THE NEWS?



- On 15 February 2024, the Supreme Court of India canceled the electoral bond scheme launched by the Central Government, calling it unconstitutional.
- According to the Supreme Court, this is a violation of freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(A) of the Constitution.
- During the hearing of this case, the Supreme Court said that Indian citizens have the right to information provided by the Indian Constitution.
- The Supreme Court has asked the State Bank of India to give all the information to the Election Commission from the month of April 2023 till now and the Election Commission of India has also asked to give this complete information to the Supreme Court.

GRADUAL DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO THE VALIDITY OF THE ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME IN INDIA :

Electoral bond scheme in India is a way of funding various political parties. In a case related to the

validity of the electoral bond scheme, a five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court has given a historic verdict on 15 February 2024, canceling it.



- In India, the Electoral Bond Scheme was introduced in the Parliament through the Finance Bill in the year 2017.
- On September 14, 2017, an NGO called 'Association for Democratic Reforms' (ADR) filed a challenge in the Supreme Court against this scheme as the lead petitioner.
- On October 03, 2017, the Supreme Court issued notice to the Central Government and the Election Commission of India on the PIL filed by that NGO.
- On January 2, 2018, the Central Government notified the Electoral Bond Scheme in India.
- On November 7, 2022, the electoral bond scheme was amended to increase the number of sale days in a year from 70 to 85, where any assembly election can be scheduled.
- On October 6, 2023, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India D.Y. The Supreme Court bench headed by Chandrachud referred the petitions against the scheme to a five-judge constitution bench.
- On October 31, 2023, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India D.Y. A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chandrachud began hearing petitions against the plan.
- On November 2, 2023, the Supreme Court reserved its decision on this scheme.
- On February 15, 2024, the Supreme Court of India

gave a unanimous verdict striking down the electoral bond scheme, saying that it violates the constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression as well as the right to information guaranteed to Indian citizens by the Indian Constitution. Does.

The Supreme Court of India had agreed to focus mainly on two important issues during the hearing related to the electoral bond scheme. Those two important issues are as follows –

- Violations of citizens' right to information about the legality of secret donations to political parties and the financing of political parties, potentially fueling corruption.
- These issues relate to violation of Constitutional Articles 19, 14 and 21.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME :

- The electoral bond system in India was introduced in the Parliament through a Finance Bill in the year 2017 and was also implemented in the year 2018.
- Electoral bonds in India serve as a vehicle for individuals and institutions to make donations to registered political parties under the scheme without keeping the names of the donors secret or making public.

Electoral Bonds Scheme Notified

To help cleanse the political funding system in the country

<p>Nature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bearer instrument in the nature of a Promissory Note • Interest free banking instrument 		<p>Lifespan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelf life of only 15 days • Can be used for making donation only to the political parties registered u/s 29A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951
<p>Eligibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A citizen of India or a body incorporated in India • On fulfillment of all the extant KYC norms • By making payment from a bank account 	<p>Value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issued/ Purchased in multiples of Rs.1,000, Rs.10,000, Rs.1,00,000, Rs.10,00,000 and Rs.1,00,00,000 • Available from the Specified Branches of the State Bank of India (SBI) 	<p>Period of Purchase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available for purchase for a period of 10 days each in the months of January, April, July and October, as may be specified by the Government

FEATURES OF ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME :

- Under the electoral bond scheme in India, State Bank of India issues bonds of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore.
- This bond issued by State Bank of India is inter-

est free and is payable on demand by the holder.

- This bond can be purchased by any Indian citizen or any institutions established in India.
- Electoral bonds in India can also be purchased individually or jointly.
- This electoral bond issued by State Bank of India is valid only for 15 days from the date of issue.

AUTHORIZED ISSUING BANKS FOR ELECTORAL BONDS IN INDIA :



- The authorized issuing bank for electoral bonds in India is the State Bank of India.
- In India, electoral bonds are issued only through designated State Bank of India branches.

ELIGIBILITY OF POLITICAL PARTIES TO BUY ELECTORAL BONDS IN INDIA :

- Under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, only those political parties registered in India, which have secured at least 1% of the votes cast for the Lok Sabha or the Legislative Assembly in the last general election, can issue this electoral bond. Are eligible to purchase.

- In India, electoral bonds can be purchased only through digital medium or cheque.
- In India, encashment of electoral bonds can be done only through the authorized bank account of the political party.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY TOWARDS ELECTORAL BONDS :

- Political parties in India are required to disclose their bank account details to the Election Commission of India.
- To ensure transparency in electoral bonds, donations are made through banking channels.
- In India, it is mandatory for various political parties to give details of the use of money received from electoral bonds.

BENEFITS OF ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME IN INDIA :

- The money received under the Electoral Bond Scheme in India increases the transparency of the election funding expenses of various political parties in India.
- Political parties are liable to disclose the use of funds received under the Electoral Bond Scheme or as donations.
- Under the Electoral Bond Scheme there is a reduction in cash in kind or cash transactions.
- Donors' names are kept secret or the confidentiality of the donor's identity is protected.

MAIN CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES RELATED TO ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME IN INDIA :

ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME BEING CONTRARY TO ITS BASIC IDEA :

- The main reason for criticism of the electoral bond scheme in India is that it works completely contrary to its basic idea or objective, which is to bring transparency in electoral funding.
- A section of critics regarding the electoral bond scheme in India argue that the secrecy of electoral bonds is applicable only to the public and opposition parties and does not apply to political parties receiving donations.

STRONG POSSIBILITY OF EXTORTION UNDER ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME :

- In India, electoral bonds are sold through the state-owned bank (SBI), which allows the ruling government to know who is funding its opponents' parties.
- Under the Electoral Bond Scheme it provides the facility to the ruling party or the current government to recover money especially from the big companies or sometimes it facilitates the ruling party to harass that person or that company for not giving money to the ruling party. It also shows the strong possibility of it somehow provides an unfair advantage to the ruling party.

STRONG POSSIBILITY OF THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION BEING COMPROMISED :

- The Supreme Court of India has long held that the right to information is an integral part of the right to freedom of expression (Article 19) under the Indian Constitution, especially in the context of elections.
- In India, the Central Government made several amendments to the Electoral Bond Scheme through two Finance Acts, Finance Act, 2017 and Finance Act, 2016, both Finance Acts were passed in the Lok Sabha as '**Money Bills**'.
- Petitioners had challenged the electoral bond scheme in the Supreme Court of India, calling these amendments '**unconstitutional, a violation of the 'principles of separation of powers' and a series of 'fundamental rights'**'.

AGAINST FAIR AND FREE ELECTION PROCESS :

- Electoral bonds in India do not provide any details of the source of funds received by Indian citizens.
- Keeping the names of donors given in the form of electoral bonds secret or not making their names public, the effect of the said anonymity does not apply to the then ruling political parties or the government, which always demands data from the State Bank of India (SBI). By doing this you can access the details of the donor.

- This means that the government in power can take advantage of this information and disrupt free and fair elections.

AGAINST THE BASIC CONCEPT OF INDIAN DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM :

- In India, the Central Government, through an amendment in the Finance Act 2017, has given exemption to political parties to declare the name of donations received through electoral bonds.
- No citizen or voter of India ever knows which person, which company or which organization has provided how much funds to which party through electoral bonds.
- In a representative democracy of any country with a democratic system, citizens cast their votes for those who represent them in the Parliament. Therefore, the citizens of India should have the right to know how much money any political party has received through electoral bonds.

FOCUSING ON THE PROFITS OF BIG CORPORATE HOUSES AND BIG BUSINESS HOUSES :

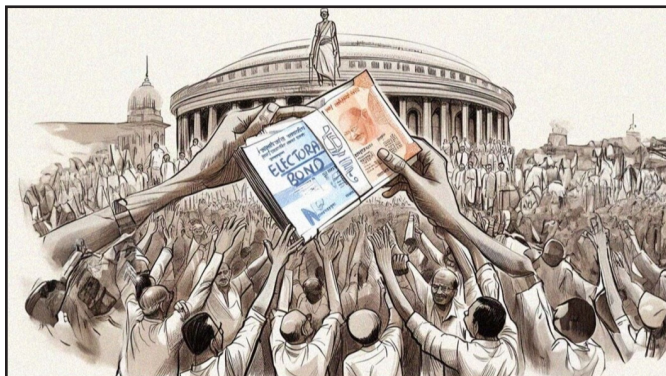
- The electoral bond scheme in India has opened the door to unlimited corporate donations and secret financing by Indian and foreign companies to various political parties in India, which can have serious implications for Indian democracy.
- Big business houses benefit from 100% tax exemption on donations made by corporate and even foreign entities in India under the electoral bond scheme.

PROMOTION OF CRONY CAPITALISM :

- The electoral bond scheme in India removes all previously existing limits on political donations and allows corporations with effective resources to finance elections. As a result, the path to crony capitalism is paved.
- Crony capitalism is a capitalist economic system characterized by close, mutually beneficial collusion between businessmen and government

officials. Due to which there may be a threat to India's democratic system.

CONCLUSION / SOLUTION :



- There is an urgent need to implement measures to increase transparency in the electoral bond scheme in India.
- There should be strict rules regarding disclosure to the Election Commission regarding receipt of donations by political parties in India and the Election Commission of India should be empowered to investigate any kind of donations and both electoral bonds and money spent on elections and elections. There should be a strict provision for clarification regarding
- There is an urgent need to identify and address the existing shortcomings in electoral bonds to prevent risks such as potential misuse, violation of donation limits and crony capitalism and flow of black money in respect of funds raised from the electoral bond scheme in India.
- Time bound implementation of the Electoral Bond Scheme through judicial scrutiny, periodic review and public participation to address emerging concerns about democracy in the current Indian democratic system, to adapt to changing political scenarios and to ensure a more inclusive decision making process in a democracy. There is an urgent need to ensure monitoring.
- There is an urgent need for bold reforms at the political level as well as effective regulation of political financing to stop the vicious cycle of corruption prevalent in India's democracy and bureaucracy and the decline in the quality of

democratic politics.

- To make the entire governance system more accountable and transparent in India's democracy, it is extremely important to remove the loopholes in the existing laws regarding the Electoral Bond Scheme.
- In Indian democracy, significant changes can be brought about in the existing electoral bond scheme by starting voter awareness campaigns.
- In Indian democracy, if the voters become aware of the basic principles of democracy and reject those candidates and political parties who spend more money in elections or bribe the voters, then Indian democracy will move a step forward towards its basic objective. Will go. Which is a sign of a bright future for the democracy of the Indian democratic system.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND ESSENTIAL MEDICINES IN INDIA: NEED FOR NEW RESEARCH

WHY IN THE NEWS ?



- Recently a free trade agreement has been signed between India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).
- **The Central Government is headed by the Chairman of the 15th Finance Commission, N. K. Singh has presented his recommendations for creating a dedicated Development Financial Institution (DFI) to invest in the health care sector.**
- One bone of contention in the free trade agreement between India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is related to intellec-

tual property rights, which has been an issue since 2008.

- Switzerland and Norway, which are key members of EFTA, also have many pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies from India underpinning the health care sector globally.
- The nature of the pharmaceutical industry is such that it costs a lot of money to discover a useful effective drug and it costs relatively little to make generic copies. Its demand is much higher than its capacity. As a result, there are constant disputes between inventors and generic drugs.
- Companies. Patenting, or reciprocal rights granting to originators an exclusive monopoly for a certain number of years and issuing directives leading to 'compulsory licensing' by governments, has led to such monopolies being maintained by global pharma in the interest of the public health industry for decades.
- New legal innovations such as data exclusivity continue to insert themselves into free trade negotiations. Under this provision, all clinical-trial data that relates to the safety and efficacy of the drug generated by the originator firm becomes proprietary and off limits for a period of at least six years.
- Permission to make a generic drug is possible only if a country's regulator can rely on the clinical trial data supplied to approve a drug. For this, generic manufacturers usually rely on the originator's published data.

INTRODUCTION TO PRIMARY HEALTH CARE :

- Primary health care health and well-being in society, which is based on the needs and priorities of individuals, families and communities. It addresses more comprehensive determinants of health and focuses on the broader and inter-related aspects of physical, mental and social health and well-being.
- It provides holistic care for health needs throughout life and not just for specific diseases. Primary health care involves the treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care of individuals

as best they can, taking into account the daily needs of the individual and the wider environment.

- Primary health care is rooted in a commitment to justice and equity and recognition of the fundamental right to the highest attainable standard of health.
- According to Article 25 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights – **"Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and essential social services"**
- Primary health care is often considered an important component of human development, taking into account economic, social and political aspects. Which is also called selective primary health care.

MEANING OF PUBLIC HEALTH CARE BY WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION :

The World Health Organization has given a comprehensive definition of public health care based on three components. Which are as follows –

- Meeting the health needs of people through comprehensive promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative care throughout a person's life, with primary care strategically placed as central components of integrated health services. To prioritize vital health care services through and through public health actions targeted at families and populations.
- Systematically addressing the broad determinants of health through evidence-informed public policies and actions across all sectors, including health services at the social, economic, environmental and behavioral levels of individuals. And
- As advocates of policies that promote and protect individual and public health and well-being, as co-developers of health and social services, and as caregivers and providers of care to others to maximize health This includes empowering individuals, families and communities.

IMPORTANCE OF PRIMARY HEALTH CARE IN PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM :



Modernizing primary health care and placing it at the center of efforts to improve health and well-being is extremely important for the following three reasons:

- Primary health care needs to respond to rapid economic, technological and population changes that affect the health and well-being of all. Drawing on the broad spectrum of primary health care, it examines and modifies policies to address the social, economic, environmental and occupational determinants of health and well-being. Treating people and communities as key actors in producing their own health and well-being is vital to understanding and responding to the complexities of our changing world.
- Primary health care has proven to be a highly effective and efficient approach to address the major causes and threats to health and well-being today, as well as to handle emerging challenges that threaten health and well-being in the future.
- Investing in public health has also proven to be a good value investment, as there is evidence that quality primary health care reduces total health care services costs and increases efficiency by reducing the rate of hospitalization of individuals.
- Addressing increasingly complex health problems requires a multidisciplinary approach, integrating health-promoting and preventive policies.
- Public health solutions that impact human communities and health services that are people-centered. Primary health care includes

important components of health care, and is essential in improving health security and preventing health threats such as epidemics and antimicrobial resistance, through community engagement and education, prudential assessment, and necessary public health actions, such as: This is possible only through supervision.

- Developing community and public health care systems contributes to health sector sustainability, which is important for the health system to withstand shocks.
- Public health services and stronger primary health care are critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and universal health coverage. It will contribute to the achievement of other goals beyond the Health Goals (SDG-3), including reducing poverty, hunger, gender equality, clean water and security, work and economic growth, inequality and climate risks.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION'S RESPONSE TO PUBLIC HEALTH CARE :

The World Health Organization recognizes the central role of primary health care in achieving health and well-being for all. WHO works closely with both developed and developing countries of the world for the following reasons :

- The World Health Organization recognizes the central role of primary health care in achieving health and well-being for all. WHO works with other countries to:
 - To enable countries to develop inclusive policies, country leadership based on primary health care and health systems that work to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and universal health coverage.
 - Addressing widespread inequity and the determinants of health through multi-sector work.
- Key Takeaways**
- Primary health care covers most of the health needs across the lifespan, including prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care.
 - At least half the world's 730 million people do not receive full coverage of essential health ser-

vices.

- Of the 30 countries for which data are available, only 8 spend more than \$40 per American per year on primary health care.
- A workforce qualified for the purpose is essential to deliver primary health care, yet the world has an estimated shortfall of approximately 190 million health workers.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF TRANSFERRING 'HEALTH' TO THE CONCURRENT LIST :

Increase in responsibility of the Centre : Moving health to the concurrent list will give the Center more scope to implement regulatory changes, provide better healthcare and strengthen the responsibilities of all parties.

Rationalization and Simplification of Acts : The health sector has a plethora of acts, rules and regulations and rapidly growing institutions, yet the sector is not properly regulated. Uniformity in functioning can be ensured by transferring health to the concurrent list.

Centre's Expertise : The central government is technologically superior to the states in the health sector as it is supported by a number of research bodies and departments dedicated to the management of public health. States, on the other hand, do not have the technical expertise to independently design comprehensive public health policies.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST TRANSFERRING 'HEALTH' TO THE CONCURRENT LIST :

Right to Health : It is neither necessary nor sufficient to guarantee the provision of accessible, affordable and adequate health care to all. The right to health is already provided through Article 21 of the Constitution which guarantees protection of life and liberty.

Challenges of Federal Structure : Transferring more subjects from the State List to the Union List will weaken the federal nature of India. Trust Co-operative Federalism: The Center has to use its powers in such a way that it helps the states in fulfilling their constitutional obligations like providing adequate, accessible and affordable health care to all.

More responsibility at the Centre : The Center already has more responsibilities, which it struggles to deal with. Taking on more responsibilities will help neither the states nor the Center discharge their constitutional responsibilities.

Encouraging States : 41% of the taxes collected by the state go to the central government. The Center should encourage the states to discharge the expected responsibilities, at the same time the Center should also focus on fulfilling its responsibilities by using its own resources.



CONCLUSION/ SOLUTION :



- Even though health is a subject in the state list, the states should accept the Centre's construc-

tive cooperation on it.

- NITI Aayog's health index, financial assistance through insurance-based programs (Ayushman Bharat), better regulatory environment for healthcare providers and medical education are examples that can nudge states in the right direction.
- Public health and sanitary hospitals and dispensaries are listed in the State List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India.
- State List – It contains the subjects under which the state can make laws.
- The principle of data exclusivity exists in agreements involving European countries as well as many developing countries. Had it been effective in India, it could have significantly disrupted the Indian pharmaceutical industry.
- India is also a major exporter of affordable medicines.
- Indian officials have rejected data exclusivity as a negotiating point in the FTA, although a leaked draft of the agreement suggests it is still on the table or in existence.
- India's rise in the drug manufacturing chain over the past few decades means it must invest in an ecosystem that can conduct clinical drug trials and create new clinical treatment systems in the health sector.
- The development of generic medicines in public healthcare will always be expensive and limited to Western countries or European countries.
- India also has a great need for new and sustainable research in public health services. Because India saw the development of several innovative technology approaches to develop vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- As a preparation for any future pandemic, India should invest significantly in fundamental research to develop the local pharmaceutical industry in the future. So that India can become a self-reliant country regarding generic medicines and public health services.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q.1. Consider the following statements regarding low political representation of women in India.

1. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were designed to promote gender equality.
2. The actual structure of Indian society is not based on patriarchal nature, but India has a matriarchal system.
3. In India, women's usual avenues of access to mainstream politics are limited. That is why often only 'dynastic' women are able to enter politics.
4. The Women's Reservation Bill 2023 aims to reserve two-thirds of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha and state legislatures.

Which of the above statement/statements is correct?

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

Q2. Which of the following are the discretionary powers given to the Governor of a State? (UPSC PRELIMS-2014)

1. Sending a report to the President of India for imposing the President's rule Appointing the Ministers
2. Reserving certain bills passed by the State Legislature for consideration of the President of India
3. Making the rules to conduct the business of the State Government

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only

(d) 2, 3 and 4 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q3. Which of the following is/are the aim/aims of the "Digital India" Plan of the Government of India? (UPSC Prelims-2018)

1. Formation of India's own Internet companies like China did.
2. Establish a policy framework to encourage overseas multinational corporations that collect Big Data to build their large data centres within our national geographical boundaries.
3. Connect many of our villages to the Internet and bring Wi-Fi to many of our schools, public places and major tourist centres.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 3 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q4. The fundamental object of the Panchayati Raj system is to ensure which among the following? (UPSC Prelims-2015)

1. People's participation in development
2. Political accountability
3. Democratic decentralisation
4. Financial mobilisation

Select the correct answer using the code given below

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

(b) 2 and 4 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding electoral bonds.

1. In India, the Electoral Bond Scheme was introduced in the Parliament through the Finance Bill in the year 2017.
2. The authorized issuing bank for electoral bonds in India is the Reserve Bank of India.
3. Electoral bonds in India can be purchased through cash, digital medium, demand draft, ATM and cheque.
4. Electoral bonds are interest free and payable on demand by the holder.

Which of the above statement / statements is/ are correct ?

(a) Only 1 and 3.

(b) Only 2 and 3

(c) Only 2 and 4

(d) Only 1 and 4

Q6. Health care in India comes under which list of the Constitution?

- (a) It is listed in the State List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India.
- (b) It is listed in the Concurrent List of the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution of India.
- (c) It is listed in the Union List of the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution of India.
- (d) It is listed under the Fundamental Duties under the Preamble of the Constitution of India.

Explanation :

- There are mainly three lists in the Constitution of India. They are – State List, Concurrent List and Union List.
- State List – It contains those subjects under which only the concerned State Government can make laws.
- Public health and sanitary hospitals and dispensaries are listed in the State List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. **Hence option A is the correct answer.**

ANSWERS

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

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Highlighting the main reasons for low political representation of women in India, discuss how the Women's Reservation Bill 2023 unties the 'knots of patriarchy' or is it a violation of equality of opportunity.

Q2. Discuss the essential conditions for exercise of the legislative powers by the Governor. Discuss the legality of re-promulgation of ordinances by the Governor without placing them before the Legislature. (UPSC Mains-2022)

Q3. Discuss the role of Panchayati Raj in promoting grassroots governance. How it contributes to the overall development of rural areas.

Q4. Evaluate the effectiveness of reservation for women in Panchayati Raj institutions as a strategy for women's empowerment. Discuss the challenges and successes associated with this approach.

Q5. Highlighting the key provisions of the Electoral Bond Scheme versus the interrelationship between Right to Information and Freedom of Expression, discuss how electoral bonds affect the democratic system of a fair and free electoral process ?

Q6. Highlighting the shortcomings in public health services in India, explain why there is a need to invest more in developing generic drugs and new research methods in public health services in India?

ECONOMY

RBI'S REPORT "FINANCES OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS"

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released a report titled 'Finances of Panchayati Raj Institutions' for fiscal year 2022-23, which throws light on the financial dynamics of India's Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI). According to the report, local taxes and levies provided only 1.1 per cent of Panchayats' overall revenue.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

STATE REVENUE SHARE AND DISPARITIES:

Panchayats continue to get a little portion of their state's revenue. For instance, **in Andhra Pradesh, revenue receipts of Panchayats constitute only 0.1% of the State's own revenue**, while in **Uttar Pradesh**, it comprises **2.5%**, the highest among states. There are significant variations among states in terms of the average revenue earned per Panchayat, with Kerala and West Bengal leading with average revenues exceeding Rs 60 lakh and Rs 57 lakh per Panchayat, respectively.

FINANCIAL STATISTICS:

In the fiscal year 2022-23, Panchayats registered a total revenue of **Rs 35,354 crore**. A meagre **Rs 737 crore** was generated through their own tax revenue, which includes taxes on professions and trades, land revenue, stamps and registration fees, property taxes, and service tax. **Non-tax revenue** amounted to **Rs 1,494 crore**, mainly from interest payments and Panchayati Raj programs. Notably, **Panchayats received Rs 24,699 crore in grants from the Central government and Rs 8,148 crore from State governments**.

Chart 1: The chart shows the revenue receipts of panchayats in 2022-23. Figures in %

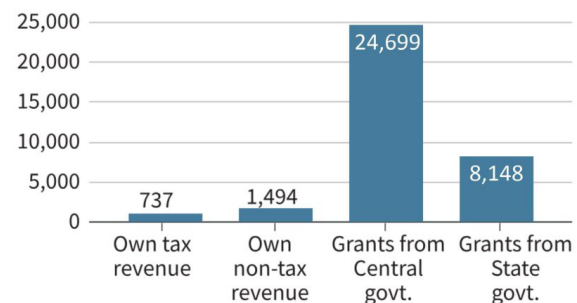
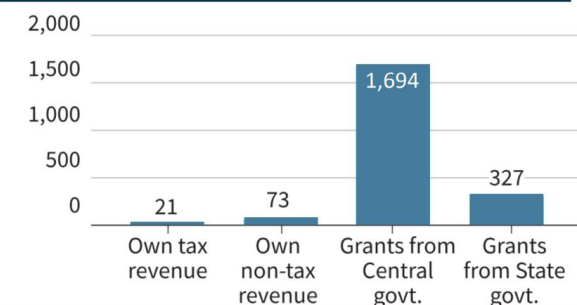


Chart 2: The chart shows the average revenue per panchayat in 2022-23. Figures in Rs. thousand



REVENUE STRUCTURE:

Only **1% of the revenue collected by Panchayats is derived from taxes**, with the majority originating from grants provided by the Central and State governments. Data indicates that **80% of the revenue** is sourced from Central government grants, while 15% is obtained from State government grants.

PER PANCHAYAT REVENUE:

On average, each Panchayat earned only **Rs 21,000 from its own tax revenue and Rs 73,000 from non-tax revenue**. Conversely, grants from the Central government totalled approximately Rs 17 lakh per Panchayat, with State government grants reaching over Rs 3.25 lakh per Panchayat.

RBI RECOMMENDATIONS:

The RBI advocates for **promoting greater decentralization and empowering local leaders and officials**. It suggests measures to enhance the financial autonomy and sustainability of Panchayati Raj, emphasizing transparent budgeting, fiscal discipline,

community involvement in development prioritization, staff training, and rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, the report underscores the importance of raising public awareness about PRI functions and encouraging citizen participation for effective local governance.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS (PRIS) ARE:

Funding originates from the **Central Finance Commission**, specifically through tax devolution, and additional grants allocated by the Central Government.

- Finances collected by the State government on behalf of local bodies, known as State Finance Commissions Transfer, encompass tolls, taxes, duties, fees, and grants-in-aid.
- In accordance with **Article 243-H**, PRIs have the authority to impose, gather, and allocate taxes, duties, tolls, and fees.

FUNDING ISSUES FACED BY PANCHAYATS:

Dependency on Grants: Panchayats heavily rely on grants from the Central and State governments, making them financially dependent. Inadequate grants can hinder their ability to implement developmental projects and provide essential services.

Inadequate Own Revenue Generation: Panchayats face challenges in generating sufficient revenue through local taxes and fees. Limited financial autonomy restricts their ability to fund local initiatives and reduces self-sustainability.

Unequal Distribution of Funds: The distribution of funds among Panchayats is often unequal, leading to disparities in resource availability. Some Panchayats receive more financial support than others, exacerbating regional imbalances in development.

Limited Fiscal Devolution: The devolution of financial powers to Panchayats is not always comprehensive. This limited fiscal devolution impedes their ability to make independent financial decisions and address local needs effectively.

Lack of Transparency in Fund Allocation: In some cases, the allocation and utilization of funds may

lack transparency, leading to mismanagement and corruption. This can undermine the intended impact of funds on local development.

Insufficient Capacity Building: Panchayats may face challenges in effectively utilizing funds due to a lack of administrative and financial management capacity. Adequate training and capacity-building programs are essential to enhance their financial management skills.

Unpredictable Funding Patterns: The unpredictability of fund releases from higher levels of government can create uncertainty for Panchayats in planning and executing long-term projects. Timely and consistent funding is crucial for sustained development.

INDIAN AGRICULTURE: CURRENT PROBLEMS AND LONG TERM SOLUTIONS

WHY IN THE NEWS ?



- In February 2024, thousands of farmers from Punjab gathered at three places on the Haryana border, where they had been stopped from marching to Delhi.
- The major demands of these protesting farmers include legally guaranteed MSP for crops from the central government of India, loan waiver, cancellation of international agreements affecting the agriculture sector and a minimum pension of Rs 5,000 for farmers and agricultural workers. Some of these demands were raised during their first protest in 2021-22, which was called off after the central government withdrew three contentious laws demanding reforms in the agriculture sector.

- The protest is being led by SKM (Non-Political), a breakaway group from the body that had earlier led the protest. The split marks a rift among interest groups in Haryana, Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh. And Rajasthan. At least three other types of protests are gaining momentum.
- People affected by the Kisan Jewar Airport Project and Yamuna Expressway in Western UP are also facing the government in protests.
- Farmers in Sonapat, Haryana are protesting against land acquisition for electricity cable.
- SKM and several trade unions have called for further industrial strikes at the national level on February 16 with overlapping and additional demands which include repeal of the four labor laws.
- The central government has started talks with the farmers of Punjab, but there seems to be no possibility of legal guarantee of MSP.
- The police in Haryana and Delhi have stopped the farmers more than 200 km away from Delhi as they will not allow the farmers to enter inside the limits of the national capital again in the year 2021-22 due to the farmers' protest in Delhi. An unconstitutional act was committed by anti-social elements at the Red Fort.
- MSP-based procurement by the Food Corporation of India has been the cornerstone of food security. Surplus producers of grains have benefited from the MSP scheme, but the scheme ignores subsistence farmers in poor areas.
- The government's neglect of farmers has also been considered a major reason for the defeat of the ruling BJP in the recent assembly elections held in three states. There were continuous reports that farmers did not get the right price for their produce. Such reports were also discussed that due to not being able to meet the cost of crops like potato and onion, farmers destroyed their crops in the fields themselves. Apart from this, farmers also do not get fair prices for other agricultural produce.
- The biggest reason for the dissatisfaction of farmers across the country is not getting the

right price for their produce and this is their biggest problem. The problems of farmers are not new; But honest efforts for their solution were never seen. News of farmers committing suicide have also been in the news for the last several years. The huge rallies taken out by farmers in different parts of the country are enough to express their dissatisfaction.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM OF INDIAN AGRICULTURE :

- Since 1947 till now, every region of the country has made substantial development. Today India's space program is among the most successful space programs in the world. The Indian Army is one of the most powerful armies in the world and India's economy is one of the five strongest economies in the world. India is regularly writing new development stories in other areas as well.
- Despite these achievements, there is one area which is still lagging behind in the race of development. The agriculture sector, which plays an important role in areas like food security and rural employment, has still not reached a situation that can be considered satisfactory. The result of this is that crores of people of the country dependent on agriculture are still forced to live in extreme poverty and many times they are not able to fulfill even their basic needs through agriculture.

THE BASIC PROBLEM OF INADEQUATE DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN AGRICULTURE :



There are some problems at the root of inadequate development of Indian agriculture, without removing which development of the agriculture sector in India is not possible. These problems are as follows –

- There is still a lack of irrigation facilities in most parts of India. Only those farmers who have sufficient capital are able to manage irrigation facilities privately because the cost of installing irrigation equipment like tube wells is so much that it is not possible for poor farmers to afford it. In this way, most of the farmers become dependent on monsoon and if there is no timely rain, their crops get spoiled and sometimes they are not able to produce enough for subsistence. Similarly, due to excessive rainfall or various natural disasters, crops get spoiled and the farmer gets trapped in the quagmire of poverty.
- A large population of Indian farmers have only a small amount of cultivable land available. A major reason for this is the increasing population. As a result, agriculture has become a means of subsistence rather than a means of earning profit for the farmers, in which they are somehow able to support themselves and their families. The Indian agriculture sector is also facing the problem of hidden unemployment.
- Farmers often do not get adequate prices for their produce, a major reason for this is that they sell their crops at prices below the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for various reasons such as to repay loans. Due to which they have to face a lot of loss.
- Problems like inability to use modern equipment and techniques in India's agricultural sector, lack of transportation facilities, lack of storage facilities, lack of transportation facilities, lack of other basic facilities and reduction in yield due to poor quality of soil etc. Are included.
- Most of the farmers in India lack/lack the capital to invest in agriculture. Even today, most of the farmers of the country are not able to avail the benefit of institutional credit facilities in practical terms. Many times farmers do not even have enough capital to arrange for basic things like seeds, fertilizers and irrigation. The result is that farmers are not able to produce crops on time or due to insufficient nutrients the crops are not of adequate quality. Besides this, due to lack of capital, the farmer has to take loans from pri-

vate individuals at high interest rates, which increases his problems instead of reducing them. In this regard, the Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme launched by the Government of India is proving to be very helpful for the farmers. This helps to a great extent in meeting the basic agricultural needs of the farmers.

IMPORTANT INITIATIVES LAUNCHED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA FOR REFORMS IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR :



A 7- Point strategic initiative has been launched by the Government of India for infrastructural reforms in the agriculture sector and doubling the income of farmers. Which are as follows –

- The Government of India is increasing investment on warehouses and cold storage to prevent agricultural produce from getting destroyed. This will prevent wastage of produce, strengthen the food security situation and the remaining produce can also be exported to international markets.
- Emphasis has been laid by the Central Government on the creation of a National Agricultural Market to provide the farmers the right price for their agricultural produce. This will bring uniformity in the prices of agricultural produce across the country and farmers of all the states of India will be able to get adequate benefits.
- At present in India, emphasis is being laid on using high quality seeds in the agricultural sector and also awareness is being spread to use the same amount of fertilizers in the fields as prescribed by the Soil Health Card and the soil. It is appropriate to use it according to fertility. This will not only improve the quality of the soil but will also effective-

ly reduce the expenditure on fertilizers. This will also reduce soil and water pollution.

- Per Drop More Crop Strategy – Under this strategy, emphasis is being laid on micro irrigation. This will reduce the amount of water used in agriculture. This will not only conserve water but also reduce the cost of irrigation. This strategy is particularly beneficial in water-scarce areas.
- Emphasis is being laid on using high quality seeds in the agriculture sector. Along with this, awareness is being spread to use the same amount of fertilizers in the fields as is appropriate according to the soil health card. This will improve the quality of the soil and will also effectively reduce the expenditure on fertilizers. This will also reduce soil and water pollution.
- Value addition in the agricultural sector is being promoted through food processing. There is immense potential in the food processing sector in India.
- Every year in India, crops are adversely affected due to natural disasters like drought, fire, cyclone, heavy rain, hailstorm etc. in different areas. To mitigate these risks, crop insurance has been made available at affordable prices. However, its actual benefits have not yet reached enough farmers. The Government of India should take measures at the central level to ensure that its benefits reach most of the people/farmers.

LONG TERM SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF INDIAN AGRICULTURE :



For a long-term solution to the problems of Indian agriculture and Indian farmers, some such reforms are necessary which both the state governments and the central government need to implement

honestly and without delay. Those improvements are as follows –

- The need for direct income and investment support by governments.
- Support of minimum support price of crops.
- Loan waiver of farmers.

DIRECT INCOME AND INVESTMENT SUPPORT BY GOVERNMENTS :

- Keeping in mind the interests of farmers, the Telangana State Government started this option. Which has been named '**Rythu Bandhu**'. **Rythu Bandhu means – 'Friend of farmers'**. It is a farmer investment assistance scheme, under which the Government of Telangana provides financial assistance to farmers for Rabi and Kharif crops. Under this scheme, Telangana State Government is providing financial assistance of Rs 4000 per acre to the farmers per crop season/season to support agricultural investment. This financial assistance is provided twice annually for Rabi and Kharif seasons i.e. financial assistance of Rs 4000 per acre annually. Under this scheme, the assistance amount is paid to the farmers in the form of a check from the office of the Mandal (Sub-District) Agriculture Officer. This is a top priority scheme of the Telangana Government and is carefully monitored. Apart from this scheme, insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh is also being given to farmers in Telangana.

STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR REFORMS IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN INDIA :

To bring about reforms in the agricultural sector in India and to solve the problems of Indian farmers, there is a need to bring about radical changes in the agricultural markets. Along with this, new direction can be provided to Indian agriculture and the condition of Indian farmers through the following initiatives by the governments –

- Expanding the scope of the Minimum Price Support (MSP) system by strengthening it.
- To break the web of Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs) and eliminate brokers and middlemen.

- To develop supply chains to take the agricultural products of farmers to the markets.
- To develop better linkages between consumers, farmers and markets.
- To improve the negotiable warehouse receipt system.
- To amend the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 in India.
- Simplifying laws related to land and consolidation etc.
- Promote contract farming
- To create a simple and favorable environment for increasing agricultural exports of Indian farmers.
- To develop food processing facilities.

ISSUE OF LOAN WAIVER OF FARMERS :

- The loan waiver scheme of farmers in India has not proved to be a permanent solution to the problems of farmers, because only 20 to 30 per cent of the farmers in India get its benefit. Due to this limited reach of the government, the widespread grievances and problems of Indian farmers cannot be resolved. Because in reality, interim measures like loan waiver do not solve the real problem of continuously decreasing income from agriculture.

NEED FOR STRUCTURAL REFORMS IN INDIAN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR :



- In the present situation of Indian farmers, it

has been seen that with the passage of time, instead of improving, the condition of Indian farmers has become worse. The measures taken from time to time by the country's policy makers at the government level to satisfy the farmers provide immediate relief. Under these measures, steps are taken to woo the farmers, whereas what is needed is such structural measures which are long term and can solve the problems of the farmers permanently. Like running a scheme like Universal Basic Income. This will ensure a fixed income every month and farmers will not be forced to sell their produce at throwaway prices. But the reality is that we are not succeeding in solving the common problems of the farmers like electricity, water, fertilizers, agricultural infrastructure, marketing and ability to face risks etc.

INDIAN AGRICULTURE IS DEPRIVED OF MODERN AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY AND AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT :

- Today, when technology is being used in every field of human activities all over the world, most of the Indian agriculture is still dependent on age-old patterns and traditional methods. Till date no special technology is being used in Indian agriculture. BT cotton started being used 15 years ago, but after that no such experiment has been done in the agriculture sector. Today humans have various types of technologies available, such as biotechnology, information and communication technology, satellite technology, nuclear agriculture technology and nanotechnology for food processing. All these cannot be used in the Indian agricultural sector.

FEATURES OF AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN INDIA AND MEASURES TO IMPROVE IT:

A radical change can be brought about in the Indian agricultural sector by adopting the following 6-point plan to improve the agricultural sector in India. Which can have a positive impact in the interest of Indian farmers –

- Strengthening the input delivery system.
- Rapid expansion of irrigation facilities.

- Using diverse technologies in the Indian agriculture sector.
- Investing in the rural infrastructure sector.
- To make maximum use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian agriculture sector.
- To develop capacity building of Indian farmers.

CONCLUSION / SOLUTION :

- Agriculture in India is a state subject and every state decides its agricultural policies according to its convenience and circumstances. There is a need for the Center and the states to work together when it comes to the agriculture sector in India. But the bitter and real truth of the present times is that Indian farmers deserve much more than the income they are getting from farming. But it is not possible to increase the income of Indian farmers through short-term measures taken by the Central and State Governments. This will require long-term commitment and systematic solutions, only then can there be any improvement in the economic condition of Indian farmers.
- The uneven geographical spread of procurement by the Food Corporation of India has also led to unsustainable farming practices in some areas, while farmers in other areas of the country remain perpetually on the brink of poverty.
- Seeks to improve public support for farming in the Indian agricultural sector, which is necessary for reasons including national food security. This can be better achieved through broader political consultation and by encouraging beneficiaries of the existing system to diversify production and increase productivity. The mutual interests of political parties at the root of farmers' protests before the Lok Sabha elections cannot be ignored. The agricultural sector needs a new model of public support. It cannot be left at the mercy of the market. The government should lead efforts to build national consensus on this question.
- Most of the country's population is dependent on agriculture. Therefore, poverty eradication,

increase in employment, eradication of hunger etc. in the country is possible only when the condition of agriculture and farmers is improved. If the above measures are implemented effectively then the condition of agriculture can definitely improve. This will reduce the despair prevalent in this sector, farmer suicides will stop, and people who have given up farming will start taking interest in this sector again.

- The Government of India is laying emphasis on the development of agricultural supporting sectors like dairy, animal husbandry, beekeeping, poultry, fisheries etc. through various schemes at the central level. Since most of the farmers of the country are already connected with these things. Hence, they can get direct benefit from it. Now there is a need to create awareness among the farmers in India, so that factors like breed improvement of animals can be worked on effectively.
- The Central Government should resolve the grievances of the farmers through talks with the farmers sitting on strike on the border of the country's capital.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. The fundamental object of the Panchayati Raj system is to ensure which among the following? (UPSC Prelims-2015)

1. People's participation in development
2. Political accountability
3. Democratic decentralisation
4. Financial mobilisation

Select the correct answer using the code given below

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

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. The role of the District Planning Committee in Panchayati Raj is to Coordinate development activities in the district
2. The term duration for Panchayats as per the 73rd Amendment Act is 5 years
3. 21 years is the minimum age to contest elections for the post of a Panchayat Samiti member

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) None

ANSWER: B**Q3. Agriculture in India is related to which of the following?**

- (a) It comes under the subjects of the Union List.
- (b) It comes under the subjects of concurrent list.
- (c) It deals with the Directive Principles, Preamble and Fundamental Rights of the State.
- (d) It comes under the subjects of the state list.

ANSWERS

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

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. To what extent has the decentralisation of power in India changed the governance landscape at the grassroots? (UPSC Mains-2022)

Q2. In the absence of a well-educated and organised local-level government system, 'Panchayats' and 'Samitis' have remained mainly political in-

stitutions and not effective instruments of governance. Critically discuss. (UPSC Mains-2015)

Q3. What do you understand about the Minimum support price? Underline the basic problems of the agricultural sector in India and discuss in detail the measures for its long-term solution.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

ATMOSPHERIC RIVER

WHY IN THE NEWS?

California, US, is currently dealing with an exceptional weather event known as an Atmospheric River, also known as the Pineapple Express Storm, which has the potential to dump up to 8 trillion gallons of rain in California.

WHAT IS AN ATMOSPHERIC RIVER?

- An atmospheric river is a **plume of moisture, or water vapour**, that flows from the tropics to deposit heavy rain or snow on a location. **Atmospheric rivers are thin bands that form on the eastern side of powerful mid-latitude storms.**
- On average, the Earth contains **four to five active atmospheric rivers** at any given time. Each transports a comparable amount of liquid water that flows past the mouth of the Amazon River. When this atmospheric river reaches land, it discharges moisture, resulting in severe snowfall and rain.
- The rain in California is part of a meteorological pattern known as the **Pineapple Express**, an atmospheric river that originates in the subtropical waters surrounding Hawaii.
- According to studies, atmospheric rivers endure about 20 hours along a coastline. A single atmospheric river can travel across the ocean for up to five days.
- Furthermore, an atmospheric river can cause a single region along the coast to be swamped with torrential rains for 12 to 72 hours.

IMPACT OF EL NIÑO ON ATMOSPHERIC RIVERS

- El Niño is a natural climate trend **when warm ocean temperatures in the tropical Pacific cause heavy rainfall and storms.** Every year, an average of seven to ten strong atmospheric rivers make landfall in California.

- El Niño years **deliver greater moisture, increasing the frequency of atmospheric rivers along the West Coast of the United States.** However, it is unclear if El Niño is solely responsible for increased precipitation and storm intensity.

PINEAPPLE EXPRESS

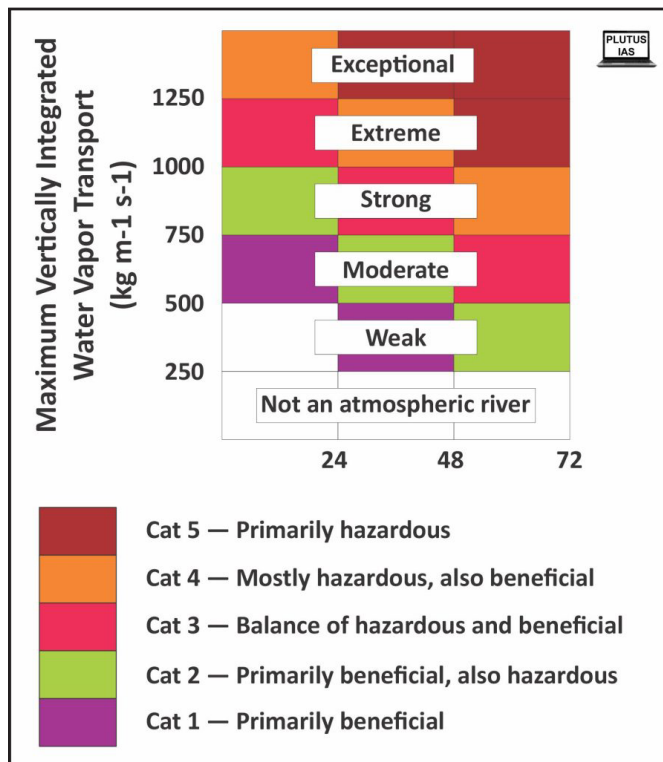
- The **“Pineapple Express”** is a well-known **example of an atmospheric river storm** that dumps torrential rains on the US West Coast, particularly California.
- This name comes from the fact that **these storms draw moisture from the tropical waters around the Hawaiian Islands**, simulating an “express” train of moisture from Hawaii, which is sometimes connected with pineapples.
- This atmospheric river, powered by a strong southern branch of the polar jet stream, transports moist, warm mT air from as far away as the Hawaiian Islands.

CATEGORIES:

- **Category 1 (Weak):** In this category, an atmospheric river is a milder and shorter weather event that has largely favourable impacts, such as 24 hours of light rain.
- **Category 2 (Moderate):** A Category 2 atmospheric river is an ordinary storm that has largely positive impacts but is also potentially hazardous.
- **Category 3 (Strong):** A Category 3 atmospheric river is more strong and lasts longer, having both helpful and harmful effects. For example, a storm in this category could dump 5-10 inches of rain over 36 hours, replenishing reservoirs while also bringing some rivers close to flood stage.
- **Category 4 (Extreme):** A Category 4 atmospheric river is largely harmful, but it also has some advantages. A storm with this rating might produce enough heavy rain over several days to

cause several rivers to flood.

- **Category 5 (Exceptional):** A Category 5 atmospheric river is mostly dangerous. An atmospheric river that lasted more than 100 hours over the Central California coast during the 1996-97 New Year's holiday season. The severe rain and runoff caused more than \$100 billion in damage.



THE INFLUENCE OF ATMOSPHERIC RIVER

- The **consequences of atmospheric rivers** can be profound in the regions they impact. The intense precipitation associated with these phenomena can result in **floods, landslides, and mudslides, causing damage to properties and, unfortunately, loss of life.** Moreover, atmospheric rivers have the potential to disrupt water availability by overwhelming reservoirs and other water-related infrastructure. In specific instances, these weather systems can induce conditions resembling **droughts by diverting moisture away from areas crucial for agriculture and other industries.**
- However, it is crucial to recognize that not all atmospheric rivers lead to adverse effects. Many are mild systems that bring **beneficial rain or snow**, playing a vital role in maintaining water

supplies. Some regions heavily depend on these systems for a substantial portion of their **yearly precipitation.** Appreciating the possible outcomes of atmospheric rivers is essential for readiness and effective management, considering these systems are integral components of the Earth's water cycle.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Troposphere layer is most directly affected by humidity
2. The atmospheric rivers in the context of drought-like conditions can exacerbate droughts
3. The winter season is typically associated with the highest frequency of atmospheric rivers in certain regions

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	C

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Explore the various weather phenomena associated with atmospheric rivers. How can these weather events impact local ecosystems, agriculture, and infrastructure?

Q2. Examine the challenges associated with predicting and forecasting atmospheric rivers. How do advances in meteorological technologies contribute to improved understanding and preparedness for these weather events?

SOCIAL ISSUE

GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY

WHY IN THE NEWS?



- 'Alliance for Global Good – Gender Equity and Equality' program launched by India at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting held in Davos, Switzerland from January 15-19, 2024.
- The World Economic Forum (WEF) has lauded India's inclusive and remarkable growth story under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for its agenda of **"Women-led growth"** and its philosophy of **"Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas"**. The government has been praised.

GLOBAL GOOD-GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY COALITION :

- The initiative **"Women-led Development"** agenda launched by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi has been globally supported at the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2024, with the committed support of more than 10,000 businesses from across the WEF world.
- At the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF), India participated in the spirit of **"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"**, aligning with

the WEF's overarching theme **"Rebuilding Trust"** for a shared future marked by global co-operation. Ready to shape.

- At WEF 2024, the Indian official delegation is led by **Union Minister of Women and Child Development Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani**, **Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Housing and Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep Singh Puri**, **Union Minister of Railways, Communications, Electronics and IT Shri Ashwini Vaishnav**, **Shri RK Singh, Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry** and other senior officials of the Government of India participated.
- The Forum meeting announced the launch of the **"Global Good-Gender Equity and Equality"** with the support and collaboration of WEF and the Government of India.
- Announcing the launch of this alliance, Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani said – **"In a place where only politics is involved with the flow of money, we are here to join hands with industry, enterprise and humanity in this grand alliance. Being able to bring together the best."**
- The collaboration has received support from industry leaders including Mastercard, Uber, Tata, TVS, Bayer, Godrej, Serum Institute of India, IMD Lausanne and over 10,000 industry partners.
- The alliance was organized and led by the CII Center for Women's Leadership and supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- The World Economic Forum has joined the alliance as a 'Network Partner' and Invest India as an 'Institutional Partner'.
- In view of India's enduring commitment to **'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'** and its continuous efforts towards **"Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas and Sabka Prayas"** for **'One Earth, One Family,**

One Future', the Global Alliance for Gender Equality ('Alliance for Global Good – Gender Equity and Equality') will definitely advance all gender related issues strongly.

- This year's unique initiative at WEF was the first-ever Women's Leadership Lounge (We Lead Lounge) by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), led by the Union Minister of Women and Child Development.
- The lounge hosted various panel discussions and meetings on the topics of "women-led development" and increasing women's participation in the economy, bridging the digital gender gap, promoting women's health, etc.
- The **"We Lead"** lounge also showcased handicrafts made by women entrepreneurs and products made by the Tea and Coffee Board of India for women-driven global prosperity.
- Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani participated in eight sessions of this annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF). These include **'Restoring Confidence in Global Systems', 'BRICS in Expansion', 'Can India Seize Its Moment' and 'Country Strategy Dialogue on India'**. Her meaningful interventions in these sessions focused the attention of all the countries attending the meeting on the policies and initiatives of the Government of India with special emphasis on gender equality and women-led development.
- Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani, Additional Union Minister of WEF, held bilateral meetings with leaders from across the world. She met Her Excellency Noor Ali Alkhulaif, Minister of Sustainable Development of Bahrain, Her Excellency Mrs. Karien van Gennep, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Employment of the Netherlands and Her Excellency Ms. Caroline Edstadler, also discussed issues of mutual interest and potential cooperation with Her Excellency Ms. Caroline Edstadler, Federal Minister for the European Union and the Constitution, Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria.



WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM :

- The World Economic Forum was founded in 1971 as a non-profit organization and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The World Economic Forum engages society's foremost political, cultural, business and other leaders to shape the regional and industry agenda at the global level.

SOME MAJOR REPORTS ISSUED OR PUBLISHED BY THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM :

- Global Energy Transition Index
- Global Competitiveness Report
- Global IT Report (joint report with INSEAD and Cornell University)
- global gender gap index report
- Global Travel and Tourism Report

UN WOMEN :

- UN Women was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2010 to accelerate progress in meeting the needs and rights of women and girls around the world.
- UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards to achieve gender equality and engages governments and citizens to design and implement laws, policies, programs and services that benefit women and girls. Work together with society.
- UN Women's four key strategies focus on strategic priorities such as women's leadership and political participation, women's economic em-

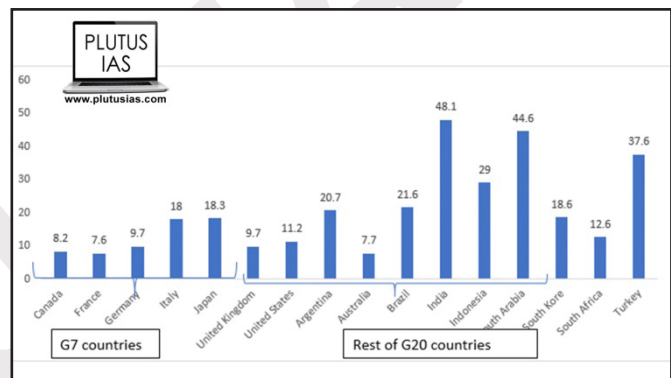
powerment, ending violence against women, and peace, security and humanitarian action.

INITIATIVES STARTED BY INDIA TO REDUCE GENDER GAP :

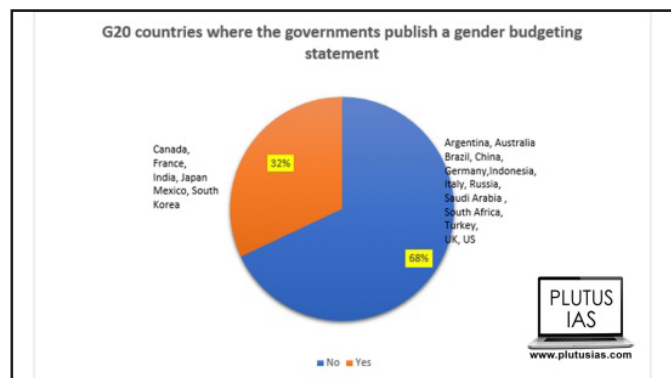


Following are some of the major initiatives launched by India to reduce the gender gap in social, economic and political life –

- **Mahila Shakti Kendras** : Mahila Shakti Kendras have been established by the Government of India with the aim of empowering rural women by enhancing their skill development and connecting them with employment opportunities.
- **Kasturba Gandhi Girls Schools** : In India, Kasturba Gandhi Girls Schools have been started by establishing them in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs).
- **Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana** : Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana has been started by the Government of India. Through this scheme, girls have been empowered financially by opening bank accounts.
- **Women Entrepreneurship** : To promote women entrepreneurship, the government has launched programs like Stand-up India and Mahila e-Haat (online marketing platform to support women entrepreneurs/SHGs/NGOs), Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Program (ESSDP). Have done.
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**: The main objective of launching the 'Beti Bachao – Beti Padhao' program by the Government of India is to increase the number of girl children in the country and to ensure the guarantee of safety, survival and education of the girl child.
- **Rashtriya Mahila Kosh**: The main objective of Rashtriya Mahila Kosh launched by the Government of India is to provide various livelihood opportunities to poor women and loans at concessional rates and terms for income generating activities through an apex microfinance organization. Have to provide.
- **Political Reservation**: The government has reserved 33% seats in Panchayati Raj institutions for women.
- **Capacity building aimed at empowering elected women representatives**: The main objective of this program is to empower women to participate effectively in governance processes and make them self-reliant.



CONCLUSION / SOLUTION :



- According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2023, there has been a slight improvement in India's ranking in terms of gender equality. However, despite this, India is still far behind the countries around the world. Despite an improvement of eight points in India's ranking this time compared to last year, India's ranking is at 127th among 146

countries across the world. In the World Economic Forum's 2022 report, India's ranking was 135 among 146 countries.

- In terms of gender equality, the ranking of India's neighboring countries Nepal, Bhutan, China, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh is much better than India. In which Bangladesh has got 59th rank, China has got 107th rank, Nepal has got 116th rank, Bhutan has got 103rd rank and Sri Lanka has got 115th rank. Whereas Pakistan has been placed at 142nd rank.
- The World Economic Forum report states that Iceland has had the best performance among countries around the world, which has reduced the gender gap by more than 90 percent for the 14th consecutive year.
- This report states that while equality in pay and income has increased in India, the share of women in senior positions and technical roles has decreased compared to last year. Whereas in terms of political empowerment, India has recorded equality of 25.3 percent, which is the highest since the report came in 2006.
- The share of women in ministerial positions is very low in countries around the world. 75 countries of the world have about 20 percent or less women ministers. Countries like India, Turkey and China have less than seven percent women ministers, while countries like Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon have almost zero women ministers.



- The report states that gender equality has reached pre-Covid levels, but its pace has become quite stagnant and slow. Till now no country in the world has achieved complete gender

equality.

- According to this report, the top-9 countries included in the ranking have closed 80 percent of the gap in gender inequality. Along with this, the report also states that it may take about 131 years to bridge the gender gap in the world, while it may take 169 years for economic equality on the basis of gender and 162 years for political equality.
- The idea of a global alliance for gender equality and equity emerged from the G-20 Leaders' Declaration and India's enduring commitment to women-led development as enunciated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.
- The primary and stated objective of this new alliance is to bring together global best practices, knowledge sharing and investment in the identified areas of women's health, education and entrepreneurship.
- The Alliance will build on the commitments of G20 Leaders for the benefit of the larger global community, as a follow-up to the activities of the Engagement Group and the Business G20 Women and G20 Empowerment (G20 Empowerment – EMPOWER) initiative under the G20 framework.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q.1. Consider the following statements regarding the Global Alliance for Gender Equality and Equity.

1. The Global Coalition for Gender Equality and Equity is organized by the World Economic Forum.
2. In the year 2024, the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum was held in Davos, Switzerland.
3. The theme of the World Economic Forum in the year 2024 was 'Rebuilding Trust'.
4. The alliance was organized and coordinated by the CII Center for Women's Leadership and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Which of the above statement / statements is/ are correct?

- (a) Only 1, 2 and 3
- (b) Only 2, 3 and 4
- (c) None of these.
- (d) All of these.

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	D

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q.1. Explaining the various dimensions of the Global Alliance for Gender Equality and Equality, discuss what are the obstacles in the way of gender equality and equality for men and women in India? Present a rational opinion.

SECURITY

UAPA

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Supreme Court recently refused bail to Gurwinder Singh, an accused in an alleged Khalistan module. He has been accused of being involved in a bigger conspiracy with Sikhs for Justice, a pro-Khalistan organisation banned by the Indian government. Courts have occasionally granted bail under the UAPA, despite its tougher bail terms. They have construed Section 43D (5) to permit bail in some extraordinary circumstances.

ABOUT UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES (PREVENTION) ACT (UAPA)

This Act aims to deal with terrorist activities, activities that threaten India's integrity and sovereignty, and the more effective prevention of certain illegal activities by people and groups.

ABOUT UAPA

- The law covers the entirety of India and is applicable to both Indian citizens and foreign nationals. In addition, this Act's provisions also apply to: (a) Indian citizens living abroad; (b) those working for the government, wherever they may be; and (c) individuals on ships and planes registered in India, wherever they may be.

KEY PROVISIONS OF UAPA:

- Declaration of Unlawfulness:** The Act confers absolute authority upon the central government. If the government deems any association to be or to have become an unlawful association, it can declare such an association as unlawful through an official notification in the Gazette.
- Chargesheet Filing:** The investigating agency is permitted to file a chargesheet within a maximum period of 180 days following arrests, with the possibility of further extensions after in-

forming the court.

- Punishments:** The Act prescribes the death penalty and life imprisonment as the most severe punishments.
- Section 3** of the UAPA Act grants the government the authority to designate an association "unlawful". Declaring an entity as unlawful includes criminalising its membership and forfeiting the organization's assets.
- Section 4:** To have the prohibition approved, the government must send a notification to the Unlawful Activities Prevention Tribunal within 30 days of publishing the gazette notification.
- Section 7:** The government has the authority to ban the use of funds from an unlawful group.
- Section 8:** All locations used by the illegal association can be reported and seized.

AMENDMENTS TO THE ACT TILL NOW

Evolution of Prominent Anti-Terror Laws in India:

1967

The Unlawful Activities (prevention) Act, 1967

1987

Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act. 1907 (TADA)

1999

The Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act.1999 (MCOCA)

2002

Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), 2002

2008

The National Investigation Agency Act, 2008

- **2004 Amendment:** In 2004, the inclusion of the “terrorist act” in the list of offenses allowed the banning of organizations engaged in terrorist activities. Prior to this amendment, “unlawful” activities were associated with actions related to secession and cession of territory.
- **2019 Amendment:** The 2019 amendment grants the Central Government the authority to identify individuals as terrorists based on specific grounds. It also **authorizes the Director-General of the National Investigation Agency (NIA)** to approve the seizure or attachment of property during NIA investigations. Additionally, officers of the NIA, with a rank of Inspector or above, are now empowered to investigate terrorism cases, a responsibility previously limited to officers with the rank of Deputy Superintendent or Assistant Commissioner of Police.

SUPREME COURT’S STANCE ON SECTION 43D(5) OF UAPA:

- The Supreme Court, through various rulings, has shaped the interpretation of **Section 43D(5)**. In the 2019 **case of Zahoor Ahmed Shah Watali**, the court emphasized accepting the state’s case without delving into its merits while considering bail applications.
- Subsequent cases, such as **Union of India v K A Najeer** in January 2021, acknowledged bail as an exception under UAPA. The Court acknowledged that it could override the legislative intent against bail if there was a significant delay in completing the trial, and if the period of incarceration exceeded a substantial portion of the prescribed sentence.
- However, in July 2023, the Supreme Court, in the **case of Vernon Gonsalves v State of Maharashtra**, diverged from the Watali ruling on the application of the “prima facie true” test. The court must conduct some basic analysis of the evidence’s value during the bail examination and be convinced of the quality of evidence for the test to be satisfied.
- The existence of conflicting opinions from benches with an equal number of judges raises the prospect of future benches resolving the

discrepancy. Should significant disagreement persist, a larger bench may be required to settle the legal interpretation.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Section 43D(5) of UAPA sets strict criteria making bail difficult
2. State Government has the power to declare an association as unlawful under UAPA

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

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	A

MAINS QUESTION

Q1. Discuss the implications of Section 43D(5) of the UAPA on an individual’s right to freedom of speech and expression. How does the stringent bail provision potentially affect the exercise of this fundamental right in the context of counter-terrorism measures?

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INDIA – UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE) RELATIONS

WHY IN THE NEWS?



- The visit of the Indian Prime Minister to the UAE in February 2024 is significant from the point of view that he has gone there to inaugurate a temple built by Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan, a resident of Bochasan in Abu Dhabi. This is the seventh visit of the Indian Prime Minister since 2015, reflecting the growing importance of bilateral relations.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Indian community at the **'Ahlan Modi'** event in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, on 13 February 2024. During this, he interacted directly with about 65 thousand people of the Indian community living in the UAE. India's PM Modi said- **"Across the ocean, I have brought to you the fragrance of the soil in which you were born. I have come with a message, another message for your 140 crore Indian brothers and sisters that India is proud of you."**
- The program organized in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, started with the national anthems of both the countries. As Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi entered the open-air stadium, members of the Indian diaspora chanted **'Har Har Modi, Ghar-Ghar Modi', 'We Love Modi', 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai', and 'Jai**

Shri Ram'. He was welcomed with the proclamation of.

- The Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, has visited the UAE for the third time in the last eight months. He paid a bilateral visit in July 2023 and then traveled to COP28 in November, where he was given the rare honor of being the only guest to address the formal opening session.
- Sheikh Mohammed also visited Delhi in September 2023 for the G-20 summit as one of India's special invitees.
- Sheikh Mohammed visited India to participate in the **Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in January 2024** as the chief guest.
- At a time when diplomatic relations in global politics are widely considered important for mutual trade, the deep personal relationship between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan is a testament to India and the United Arab Emirates. The long standing bilateral relations between the Emirates are being viewed globally as a new relationship in the making.
- This is a relationship between India and the UAE where trust and credibility are more important than diplomatic reciprocity and protocol, where convergence of strategic interests is driven by regular interactions to lay the foundation of one of India's most dynamic and consequential bilateral relations. Get a boost.
- The Prime Minister greeted the people of Indian origin who participated in the 'Ahlan Modi' program by saying 'Namaskar' amid slogans of 'Modi Modi' at the Zayed Sports Stadium in Abu Dhabi. He said he was overwhelmed by the affection from the Indian community at the event.
- In the context of current global political and diplomatic relations, India and the UAE are part-

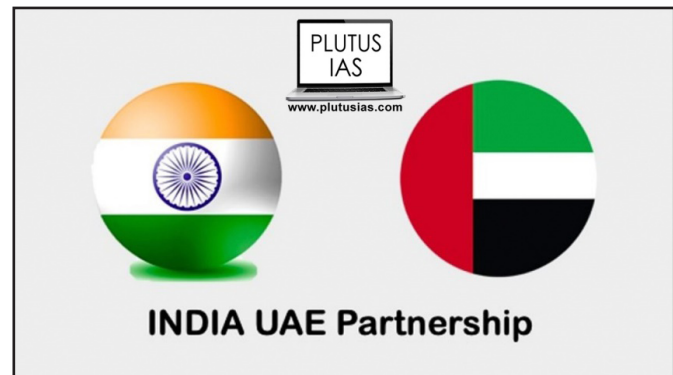
ners in progress and the relationship between India and the UAE is one of talent, innovation and culture.

- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been awarded the '**Order of Zayed**', the highest civilian honor of the United Arab Emirates.
- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has gone on a two-day visit to the United Arab Emirates. He inaugurated the largest Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi, the capital of UAE on 14 February 2024.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CURRENT VISIT OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES :

- This current visit of the Prime Minister of India is also important because it is scheduled by the religious calendar for the '**inauguration of the grand Hindu temple**' in Abu Dhabi, UAE.
- The presence of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also seen as a reminder that during his first visit in August 2015, he had requested the UAE leadership to provide land for a Hindu temple in the UAE. Will cater to the religious and spiritual needs of the emirate's large Hindu community.
- The inauguration of the Hindu Temple by the Prime Minister of India in Abu Dhabi, UAE on 14 February 2024 has no doubt created excitement among the 3.5 million Indian people/Indian citizens in the UAE. A mega event named Ahlan (Welcome Modi) was also organized at the Zayed Sports City Stadium in Abu Dhabi.
- Also includes the Prime Minister of India's address as the guest of honor at the 11th World Government Summit in Dubai.
- Often referred to as Dubai's version of Davos, it is a major annual conference that attracts government leaders, heads of international organizations, leading industrialists and thinkers from around the world.
- The main theme of this year's summit is '**Shaping the Governments of the Future**' and provides an important platform for India to present its views to an influential global audience.

BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND UNITED ARAB EMIRATES :



- In 1972, bilateral diplomatic relations were established between India and the United Arab Emirates.
- The visit of the Prime Minister of India to the UAE in August 2015 marked the beginning of bilateral relations and a new strategic partnership between the two countries.
- Following the visit of the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to India as the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations of India in 2017, India and the UAE took forward bilateral relations and worked towards building a comprehensive strategic partnership. Started.
- Under this, the bilateral relations between India and the United Arab Emirates were given impetus to start negotiations for the **India-UAE comprehensive economic partnership agreement**.

BILATERAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND UNITED ARAB EMIRATES :



- Under the mutual bilateral relations between India and UAE, mutual economic partnership

between India and UAE has increased. As a result, in the year 2022-23, bilateral trade between India and UAE will reach US \$ 85 billion. UAE is India's third largest trading partner and second largest exporter.

- Under the mutual bilateral relations between India and UAE, a target has been set to increase bilateral goods trade to more than US\$ 100 billion and services trade to US\$ 15 billion in the coming five years.
- The UAE's investments in India are estimated to be around US\$11.67 billion, making it the ninth largest investor in India, as a trade agreement also enables two-way investment flows.
- Many Indian companies have set up their manufacturing units in the UAE as joint ventures or in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for cement, building materials, textiles, engineering products, consumer electronics, etc.
- Many Indian companies have also invested in tourism, hospitality, catering, healthcare, retail and education sectors in the UAE.
- Under India's revised strategy of Free Trade Agreements (FTA), the Government of India has provided priority to at least six countries/territories, with UAE topping the list for Early Harvest Deals (or Interim Trade Agreements). The UK, European Union, Australia, Canada, Israel and a group of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are some of the other such countries/regions.
- The UAE had also earlier announced plans to pursue bilateral economic agreements with India and seven other countries (UK, Turkey, South Korea, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Israel and Kenya).

TO REVIVE AND STRENGTHEN BILATERAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND UAE :

- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also expected to launch the much-awaited Bharat Mart in Dubai, which is also a major initiative of Dubai-based DP World and India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Which will promote the exports of Indian micro, small and medium enterprises by providing them retail, warehousing and facilities.

ing and facilities.

- Logistics facilities in the Jebel Ali Free Zone area of Dubai, DP World to allow Indian manufacturers of machinery, electrical and electronics products, auto components, medical devices, furniture, apparel, processed foods, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and handicrafts to ship their products. will build approximately 800 showrooms and 18 warehouses over the next 24 months on a 1.3 million square feet plot to showcase and reach buyers and markets in Iran, Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East. ,
- The Bharat Mart project comes on the heels of the ambitious India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which completed its first year in 2023 and has already seen India's trade with the UAE grow by 16% to \$85 billion. This has strengthened the UAE's position as India's third largest trading partner and second largest export destination.



REGIONAL ISSUES :

- The talks between Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi and Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed also reviewed the ongoing war in Gaza, Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and the deteriorating situation in the region in the context of the clear and present danger.
- Longer shipping times, higher freight costs and a potential rise in oil prices could pose significant risks to India's economic growth in trade relations between India and the UAE.
- It is important for the Indian government to coordinate closely with key regional partners such as the UAE as well as countries such as Saudi

Arabia. At the same time, Egypt will also have to ensure that India's interests are protected.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as 'partners in progress'. PM Modi, while greeting the people of Indian origin in an event organized in Abu Dhabi on 13 February 2024, described the relationship between the two countries as an ideal for other countries of the world. He said that both the countries are creating new history in the third decade of the 21st century. India wishes that our partnership continues to grow stronger every day.



CONCLUSION / SOLUTION:

- In the current global politics, the unique combination of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between India and the UAE and Bharat Mart has the potential to provide a strong boost to India's manufactured goods exports. Even though early steps to start trading in national currencies promise to reduce transaction costs. The MoU signed at the bilateral talks will further strengthen economic relations between India and the UAE.
- There are many other major achievements that both India and the UAE can legitimately take credit for.
- Indian Institute of Technology Delhi has launched its Master's Program in Energy Transition and Sustainability at its interim campus in Abu Dhabi.
- Growing investment from the UAE has made it the fourth largest source of foreign direct investment in India in 2022-23. Abu Dhabi Invest-

ment Authority (ADIA) will soon open an office in GIFT City, Gujarat. A 14-year agreement has been signed by Indian Oil Corporation Limited to purchase 1.2 million metric tonnes of liquefied natural gas per year from Abu Dhabi National Oil Company during 2026-39 to boost India's energy security.

- Discussions on several sensitive areas of defense cooperation between India and UAE and joint military exercises between the two countries are progressing well.
- The UAE is now India's third largest trading partner and seventh largest investor.
- Today India is leading the global discussion on many fronts. Both India and UAE are partnering on ease of living and ease of doing business. Today the aim of every Indian is to make India a developed nation by 2047. In such a situation, the mutual relationship between India and the United Arab Emirates will prove to be a '**milestone**' in India's economic development.
- The mutual achievements of India and the UAE in terms of community and culture are serving as an exemplary model for other countries of the world.
- India and the United Arab Emirates have shared community and cultural ties between the two countries since ancient times.
- Both India and UAE are writing the script of a better future in the '**book of the world**' with the '**pen of time**'.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q.1. Consider the following statements in the context of mutual relations between India and the United Arab Emirates.

1. The Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, has visited the UAE four times in the last eight months.
2. Sheikh Mohammed visited India to participate in the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in January 2024 as the chief guest.

3. The Indian community was addressed by India's Defense Minister Rajnath Singh at the 'Ahlan Modi' event in Abu Dhabi.
4. India's Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar has been awarded the 'Order of Zayed', the highest civilian honor of the United Arab Emirates.

Which of the above statement / statements is/ are correct?

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

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	D

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Highlight the key provisions of the India-United Arab Emirates Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement and discuss how the economic, strategic and strategic relationship between India and the United Arab Emirates is playing a supporting role in making India a developed nation?