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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

A recent report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology has brought up certain issues with India's Fintech industry. Concerns have been voiced by the committee regarding the dominance of foreign-owned fintech apps in the Indian ecosystem. Additionally, it has suggested that financial applications held by regional players be promoted.

SIGNIFICANT OBSERVATIONS OF THE REPORT

- **Indian Fintech Apps Struggle for Acceptance: BHIM UPI's Uphill Battle for Market Share**

Despite the surge in fintech popularity, Indian apps face an uphill battle for consumer preference. The market share for NPCI's BHIM UPI languishes at a meagre 0.22% in terms of transaction volume, reflecting a low adoption rate.

- **Fraud to Sales Ratio: A Steadfast Guardian Amidst Rising Transaction Tides**

As the fintech transaction volume has skyrocketed over the past five years, the Fraud-to-Sales ratio remains resilient at **0.0015%**. This metric signifies the proportion of fraudulent transactions to the total, underscoring a commendable security track record.

- **Fintech's Dark Side: Unraveling the Web of Money Laundering Through Financial Apps**

The shadowy underbelly of fintech emerges as scamsters exploit these platforms for money laundering schemes. A glaring example is the Abu Dhabi-based app Pyppl, manipulated by Chinese investment scamsters to launder illicit funds within the Indian borders.

- **Foreign Titans Rule the Roost in Indian Fintech: A Duel between Walmart's PhonePe and Google's Dominance**

gle's Dominance

The landscape of Indian fintech is unmistakably coloured by global giants, with Walmart-backed PhonePe and Google-supported Google Pay reigning supreme. PhonePe commands an impressive 46.91% of the market share in transaction volume, closely trailed by Google Pay at 36.39%.

- **Regulatory Conundrum: Navigating the Challenges of Governing Local vs. Foreign Fintech Apps**

Delving into the complexities of regulation, the committee scrutinises the feasibility of entities like RBI and NPCI in overseeing local apps versus their foreign counterparts. The inherent challenges lie in the multi-jurisdictional operations of foreign apps, posing a formidable regulatory conundrum.

IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE REPORT

- **Sculpting the Digital Payment Landscape: Amplifying Consumer Reach for UPI Growth**

Pioneering a vision for market equilibrium, the committee suggests a multifaceted approach. Both existing and emerging players, be they banks or non-banking entities, are encouraged to broaden their consumer outreach. This concerted effort aims to propel the growth of UPI payments through diverse platforms, painting a landscape where market equilibrium becomes an achievable reality.

- **Navigating Transaction Seas: Imposing a 30% Volume Cap on Third-Party Apps.**

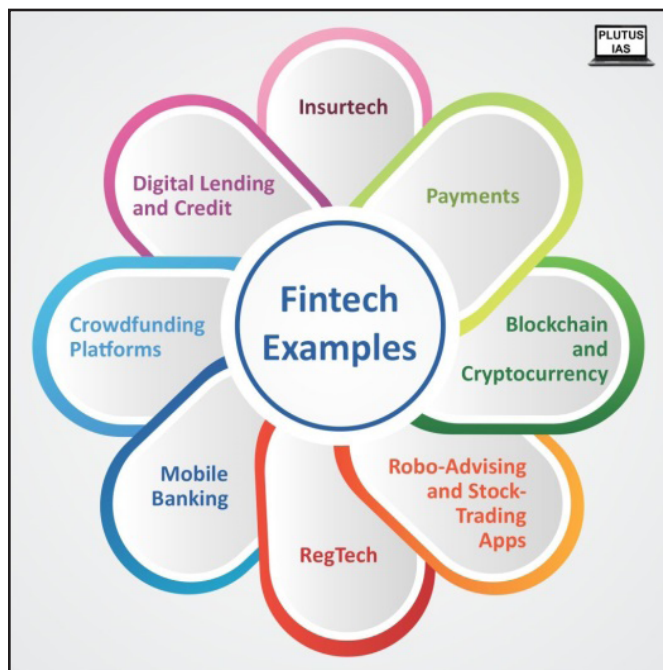
In a bid to maintain a fair playing field, the committee proposes a cap, limiting individual third-party apps such as PhonePe and Amazon Pay to initiate transactions, ensuring they do not surpass 30% of the cumulative transactions executed across interfaces in the preceding three months. This aligns seamlessly with NPCI's earlier guidelines.

- **Harmonising the Digital Symphony: A Call for Robust Regulation in Payment Apps**

With the surge of digital platforms transforming payment landscapes in India, the committee advocates for robust regulatory frameworks for digital payment apps. This recommendation underscores the need for effective oversight to navigate the evolving digital payment ecosystem securely.

WHAT IS FINTECH?

The fintech sector, a blend of finance and technology, is reshaping the financial landscape with innovative solutions. Leveraging technologies like AI and blockchain, fintech offers streamlined and accessible financial services. From mobile payments to robo-advisors, it enhances efficiency, accessibility, and inclusivity. However, regulatory challenges and cybersecurity concerns underscore the need for a careful balance between innovation and security in this rapidly evolving domain.



ABOUT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

- In India, parliamentary committees play a crucial role in **scrutinising and overseeing various aspects of governance, ensuring transparency and accountability**. These committees are instrumental in the effective functioning of the parliamentary system, providing a platform for in-depth examination of issues beyond the scope of regular parliamentary proceedings.
- There are **two main types of parliamenta-**

ry committees in India: **Standing Committees** and **Ad Hoc Committees**.

- **Standing Committees** are permanent bodies that are constituted for a specific purpose and continue to exist from one House to another. Examples included are the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the Estimates Committee, and the Committee on Public Undertakings.
- **Ad Hoc Committees** are temporary and are formed for a specific task or inquiry, disbanding once their assigned work is completed.
- The **functions of these committees are diverse and extensive**. They review bills referred to them, examine budget allocations, scrutinise the performance of government ministries, and conduct inquiries into matters of public importance. The Public Accounts Committee, for instance, focuses on auditing government expenditures to ensure fiscal responsibility, while the Estimates Committee assesses budget proposals for their feasibility and efficiency.

JUDICIAL CLARITY ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH

WHY IN THE NEWS ?



- Recently, a judicial decision given by Justice Gautam Patel of Bombay High Court in the Kunal Kamra case on 31 January 2024 has sparked a debate on the importance of constitutional fundamentals regarding the right to free speech on social media.
- The decision of the Bombay High Court in this case has recognized the rights of free speech from a constitutional point of view.

- It is being said that the protection of important rights of free speech recognizes the logic of judicial review as a safeguard. He has represented the convergence of constitutional principles and the sensibilities of the nation towards the vital rights of free speech.
- This decision validates the logic of judicial review as a safeguard against the excesses of majoritarian assemblies and arbitrary power.
- This judicial decision by Justice Gautam Patel of the Bombay High Court is based on the amended Rule 3(1)(B)(v) of the IT Rules 2021, which contains a legislation widely considered arbitrary and unjust. . This makes it clear that the judicial decision has recognized the argument being made by judicial review towards protecting important rights of free speech.
- The judgment also states that freedom should not be tampered with except under the restrictions provided for in Article 19(2), (6) and there should be clear protection against State encroachment against the Constitution. The decision reiterates the primacy of the important rights of free speech and seeks to secure it from a constitutional perspective.
- The judge, while interpreting freedom of expression, has described the need for full protection of freedom except for reasonable restrictions as per Article 19(2) and (6). In this he has also said that there should not be any effective and effective restriction by the state to snatch away this freedom of the individual.
- This decision makes it clear that the judge supports allowing the curtailment or restriction of speech on social media, as long as it does not include objectionable and immoral content. In this, freedom of speech on social media is being significantly protected from a legal and judicial perspective.



FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION AND JUDICIAL CLARITY IN INDIA :

CITIZEN'S RIGHT TO CRITICIZE :

- Every Indian in India has the right to criticize the government and the then unconstitutional policies of the government, and this cannot be defined as sedition. It gives citizens the opportunity to express their opinions and ideas freely. This right is the fundamental basis of democracy and it is also necessary for social change in India.

DEFINITION OF TREASON IN INDIA :

- Every Indian as a citizen has the right to criticize the government and its current policies and such criticism cannot be defined as treason. If criticism is defined as sedition, India's democracy will turn into a police state.

SEDITION :



- In India, it is necessary to clearly define the laws related to sedition and treason by the Indian Constitution, so that it is not misused by any citizen of India and the fundamental rights granted by the Indian Constitution to the citizens of India can be protected.
- Section 124 (A) of the Indian Penal Code defines sedition as any attempt to cause widespread damage to the unity and integrity of the country. Treason includes the following activities –
 - **Anti-government activity and its support.**
 - **Attempt to degrade the Constitution of the country.**

- **Any direct or indirect, written or oral act which creates dissatisfaction with the system of the country at the social level.**

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION :

- Freedom of Expression: Under Article 19 of the Constitution of India, the citizens of India have been provided the right to freedom of expression to express their opinion in written and oral form.
- The right to freedom of expression is not absolute in India. Reasonable restrictions also apply on this. This right can be disrupted in the event of a threat to the unity, integrity and sovereignty of India, in the event of adverse impact on foreign relations, or in the event of contempt of court.
- All citizens of India have freedom of thought, speech and propagation of their own and others' views. Press/Journalism is also a means of propagating ideas, hence freedom of the press is also included in Article 19 of the Indian Constitution.
- It should be used in the interest of unity and strategic prosperity of the country.



TO ENCOURAGE INNOVATION AND CURIOSITY IN THE COUNTRY OR SOCIETY :

- According to the Indian Constitution, innovation and curiosity should be encouraged in the Indian society, because only these lead to the development of the society.
- The basis of progress of a society is the tendency of innovation present in that society. The decline in innovation and curiosity in society

reflects its inertia. Due to lack of curiosity, the development of the society stops and it lags behind other immediate societies.

RIGHT OF DISSATISFACTION :

- In any country or state with a democratic system, the right to dissent given to its citizens is important for a healthy and mature democracy, it can bring many improvements in Indian society.
- Rights that are not clearly written in the Constitution such as the Right to Freedom of Opinion, the Right to Freedom of Conscience and the Right to Dissent are included in a healthy and mature democracy. Should be given an important place. Only after such arrangements, people's participation in democracy will increase.
- The situation of not keeping up with the changing times takes a frightening form one day and this type of dissatisfaction is destructive due to which the society has to suffer extensive and long-term losses.

ENFORCEMENT OF RIGHTS :

- Even though not clearly written rights should be given a place in the Indian Constitution, such as freedom of thought, freedom of conscience and right to dissent.

CHANGES IN SOCIAL RULES ACCORDING TO TIME :

- For progress in Indian society, there is a need to change the rules set with the changing times, so that the Indian society can accept new ideas and India's governance system can become more mature and democratic.
- Every society has some established rules. Changes in these rules are necessary with time. If the society remains bound by the inertia of these rules then the development of the society stops.
- New ideas in the society are born only on the basis of disagreement with the accepted norms of the immediate society. If everyone follows the old rules and ideas, there will be a lack of innovations in the society, for example, new

ideas and religious practices are developed only when disagreement with the old practices is expressed.

SOCIAL DISCONTENTS :



- In India Social unrest should be seen as a solution and people's views should be supported in political systems.
- Social dissatisfaction spread in large areas of India is due to lack of participation of their ideas in these political systems. In a country with a mixed culture like India, all citizens like theists, atheists and spiritual have the right to express themselves. It is the ultimate duty of democracy to listen to their views, it is the responsibility of the country's governance system to remove from their views those thoughts which are irrelevant to the society.

RIGHT TO RELIGIOUS FREEDOM :

- Indian society should include all classes, religions, and ideologies, so that all citizens can express their views freely and share in prosperity.
- All citizens in India have the right to religious freedom, and listening to and supporting their views will only make the Indian democratic system more mature, inclusive and equitable for all.

CONCLUSION / PATH TO SOLUTION :

- Freedom of expression is the key to a prosperous and independent outlook coupled with judicial clarity in a society. This means that people have the right to freely express their thoughts, feelings, and expressions and the judicial structure in society should be in place to support this

freedom.

- The Indian Constitution contains important subsections to ensure freedom of expression. Section 19(1)(a) clearly states that **"Every citizen has the right to express his views freely"**, This is an important norm that ensures that the foundation of prosperity and justice is based on freedom of expression.
- Judicial clarity plays an important role in India, as it ensures that the right to freedom of expression remains intact without any objections or objections. Judicial clarity refers to a situation in which free expression contributes to society and can be freely expressed without fear or restriction.
- Having judicial clarity in the society helps in ensuring freedom of expression. The judicial structure should be designed in such a way that any person has the right to express his views and expressions freely, if he is not causing harm to anyone and there is no attempt to prejudge social security or the process of justice. is unlikely.
- Judicial clarity is the foundation of a safe country/state or a safe society which commits itself to freedom of expression in the right direction. It ensures that without any restrictions or objections people can share their thoughts and ideas and move towards prosperity.
- Combined with social prosperity and judicial clarity, freedom of expression is protected and people can boldly express their views, leading to an exchange of prosperity and harmony. Thus, judicial clarity on freedom of expression creates a well-educated and vibrant society with prosperity and justice.



Through these key points, strong and structured steps should be taken to reform, democratize and develop the Indian society.

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23 OF NATIONAL COMMISSION OF SCHEDULE CASTES (NCSC)

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The President of India recently received the **National Commission of Schedule Castes' (NCSC) Annual Report 2022-23** from the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. The findings provide numerous suggestions on the topics entrusted to the Commission regarding the protection of Constitutional Safeguards for Scheduled Castes (SCs) as stipulated in India's Constitution.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCHEDULED CASTES (NCSC)

- The **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)** is a constitutional authority that works to protect the rights of scheduled castes (SC) in India. **Article 338** of India's constitution addresses this commission.
- It establishes a National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, tasked with investigating and monitoring all matters relating to the safeguards provided for them, investigating specific complaints, and participating in and advising on the socioeconomic development planning process, among other things.
- **Composition:**
 - Chairperson.
 - Vice-chairperson.
 - Three other members.

They are appointed by the President of India through a warrant bearing his hand and seal.

FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCHEDULED CASTES

SAFEGUARDING RIGHTS:

One of the core functions of the NCSC is to work

towards the effective implementation of constitutional safeguards and protections provided for Scheduled Castes. This includes overseeing the reservation policies, ensuring equal opportunities, and preventing discrimination.

INQUIRING INTO COMPLAINTS:

The Commission has the jurisdiction to investigate particular complaints and concerns concerning the Scheduled Castes' denial of rights and safeguards. It can investigate cases of discrimination, atrocities, or denial of benefits and recommend necessary actions to the concerned authorities.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING SAFEGUARD IMPLEMENTATION:

NCSC is tasked with monitoring and evaluating the implementation of various safeguards and programs intended for the welfare of Scheduled Castes. This involves reviewing the progress of initiatives aimed at their educational, economic, and social advancement.

ADVISORY ROLE:

The Commission provides advice to the President of India on matters related to the welfare and development of Scheduled Castes. It can offer recommendations for policy formulation, legislative measures, and executive actions to improve the conditions of the Scheduled Castes.

INQUIRING INTO SPECIFIC CASES OF ATROCITIES:

NCSC investigates and inquires into specific cases of atrocities committed against Scheduled Castes. This includes offences such as untouchability, harassment, violence, or any form of discrimination based on caste, and the Commission recommends actions against the perpetrators.

PROMOTING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

NCSC works towards the socio-economic development of Scheduled Castes by advocating for their rights in various sectors, such as education, employment, and healthcare. The Commission strives to bridge the gaps in development indicators between Scheduled Castes and other communities.

REVIEWING CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL SAFE-

GUARDS:

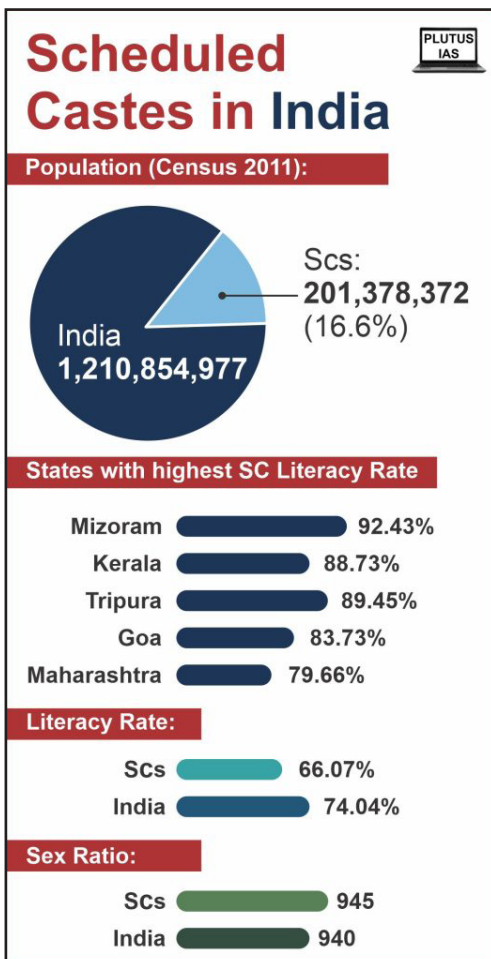
The Commission reviews the safeguards provided in the Constitution and other laws for the Scheduled Castes and recommends amendments or modifications as deemed necessary to ensure their effective implementation.

RAISING AWARENESS AND SENSITIZATION:

NCSC undertakes initiatives to raise awareness and sensitisation about the rights and issues faced by Scheduled Castes. This includes organising campaigns, workshops, and outreach programs to promote social inclusion and eliminate discrimination.

FACILITATING SOCIAL JUSTICE:

The Commission plays a crucial role in facilitating social justice by ensuring that Scheduled Castes have equal access to opportunities, resources, and benefits. It aims to create an environment where individuals from Scheduled Castes can lead dignified lives without facing discrimination.

**ISSUES RELATED TO THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCHEDULED CASTES****IMPLEMENTATION GAP:**

Despite the constitutional mandate, there is often a significant gap between the policies formulated for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and their effective implementation. The NCSC faces challenges in ensuring that the intended benefits reach the targeted population due to bureaucratic hurdles and lack of accountability.

DELAYED REDRESSAL:

One major issue is the delay in addressing complaints and grievances filed by members of Scheduled Castes. The lengthy bureaucratic processes and procedural complexities often result in delayed justice, undermining the purpose of the Commission's existence.

LIMITED ENFORCEMENT POWERS:

The NCSC lacks enforcement powers, limiting its ability to ensure the implementation of its recommendations. While it can make recommendations and report on violations, the Commission relies on other authorities to enforce its directives, which may not always be effective.

INADEQUATE REPRESENTATION:

Some critics argue that the composition of the NCSC does not always adequately represent the diversity within Scheduled Castes. Issues related to gender, regional disparities, and sub-caste variations may not receive sufficient attention, affecting the Commission's ability to address the nuanced challenges faced by different sections.

POLITICAL INTERFERENCE:

There have been instances where the NCSC has faced allegations of political interference, impacting its independence. Political considerations in appointments and decision-making processes may compromise the Commission's ability to function impartially.

LIMITED AWARENESS:

Lack of awareness among Scheduled Castes about

their rights and the role of the NCSC remains a challenge. This hinders the Commission's outreach efforts and its ability to address issues at the grass-roots level.

INSUFFICIENT RESOURCES:

The NCSC often faces challenges due to inadequate financial and human resources. Insufficient staff and budget constraints limit the Commission's capacity to handle the increasing volume of complaints and conduct comprehensive reviews of welfare programs.

NEED FOR JUDICIAL POWERS:

Critics argue that providing the NCSC with judicial powers would enhance its effectiveness. Currently, the Commission relies on other institutions for legal action, and empowering it with direct judicial authority could expedite the resolution of cases.

MONITORING PRIVATE SECTOR:

The NCSC faces challenges in monitoring and addressing discrimination against Scheduled Castes in the private sector. While it can intervene in public sector cases, its jurisdiction over private enterprises is limited, creating a gap in safeguarding the rights of Scheduled Castes in various employment sectors.

COORDINATION WITH STATES:

The effectiveness of the NCSC depends on effective coordination with state governments. Issues arise when there is a lack of cooperation or differing priorities between the national and state authorities, hindering the seamless implementation of welfare measures.

AMENDMENT IN SURROGACY LAW

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Central government has amended the Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022, to permit the use of donor gametes, which consist of sperm and egg cells.

ABOUT THE AMENDMENT

- The recent alterations to surrogacy regulations

by the Central government now allow married couples facing medical complications and opting for surrogacy to utilise donor gametes, offering substantial relief. Under the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021, married couples were initially prohibited from using donor gametes.

- As defined, gametes are reproductive cells, with female gametes termed as ova or egg cells and male gametes referred to as sperm. A notification issued by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on 21 February outlined that couples engaging in surrogacy should generally utilise their own gametes for conceiving a surrogate child.
- However, if a District Magistrate Board certifies a medical condition for either the husband or wife, the couple is permitted to use a donor gamete. It's important to note that the notification allows only one of the two partners, either the wife or husband, to utilise a donor gamete.
- According to the updated regulations, a child born through surrogacy must have at least one gamete from the intended parents. Consequently, a married couple wherein both partners face medical challenges or are incapable of using their own gametes cannot opt for surrogacy.

ABOUT SURROGACY

Surrogacy is an arrangement wherein a woman, known as the surrogate, agrees to undergo pregnancy and childbirth on behalf of another individual or couple, referred to as the intended parent/s. The surrogate, also sometimes called a gestational carrier, is a woman who becomes pregnant, carries, and gives birth to a child for the intended parent/s.

- **Altruistic Surrogacy:** This form of surrogacy involves no financial compensation for the surrogate mother, except for covering medical expenses and providing insurance coverage during pregnancy.
- **Commercial Surrogacy:** In contrast, commercial surrogacy encompasses surrogacy arrangements or associated procedures conducted for financial gain or rewards, whether in cash or

kind, surpassing the basic coverage of medical expenses and insurance.

SIGNIFICANT PROVISIONS OF THE SURROGACY (REGULATION) ACT, 2021

Enacted in 2021, the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act aims to establish a framework for ethical and responsible surrogacy practices in India. Here's an overview of its key provisions:

- **Altruistic Surrogacy Only:** The Act prohibits commercial surrogacy, where intended parents pay the surrogate mother for carrying the child. This provision aims to prevent the exploitation and commodification of women's bodies. Only altruistic surrogacy is allowed, where the surrogate mother is not financially compensated beyond reasonable medical expenses and insurance coverage.
- **Eligibility Criteria:** The Act specifies strict eligibility criteria for both intending parents and surrogate mothers.

Intending parents:

- Must be a legally married Indian couple with one spouse being infertile.
- The intending woman must be between 25 and 50 years old, and the intending man must be between 26 and 55 years old.
- Neither can have a biological, adopted, or previously surrogate child.

Surrogate mother:

- Must be a close relative (sister, sister-in-law, daughter, daughter-in-law, niece) of the intending couple, between 25 and 45 years old.
- She must have delivered her own child previously.
- Cannot act as a surrogate more than twice in her lifetime.
- **Informed Consent and Protection:** The Act mandates written informed consent from the surrogate mother, obtained at least two weeks before embryo implantation. This en-

sures she fully understands the process, its risks, and her rights.

Although the Act:

- Prohibits abandonment of the child born through surrogacy by the intending couple.
- Guarantees rights and inheritance for the surrogate child, just as any biological child.
- Regulates the number of embryos allowed for implantation to minimise risks.
- Prohibits sex selection for the embryo.
 - **Regulatory Framework:** The Act establishes a National Assisted Reproductive Technology and Surrogacy Board to oversee the implementation of the legislation. State-level boards are also established for monitoring and grievance redressal.
 - **Registration and Oversight:** The Act mandates registration of all surrogacy clinics and strict adherence to ethical guidelines during the process.

CHALLENGES:

- **The Exploitation of the Surrogate and the Child:** The prohibition of commercial surrogacy shifts the approach from one centred on rights to one based on needs, thereby infringing upon women's autonomy in making their reproductive choices and their right to parenthood. While the intent may be to prevent the exploitation of economically disadvantaged women in surrogacy and safeguard the child's right to be born, the existing Act fails to strike a balance between these two interests.
- **Reinforces Patriarchal Norms:** The legislation reinforces traditional patriarchal norms in society, devaluing women's work by assigning no economic value. This directly impacts women's fundamental rights to reproductive freedom as guaranteed under Article 21 of the constitution.
- **Emotional Complications:** Engaging a friend or relative as a surrogate in altruistic surrogacy can lead to emotional complexities for both intending parents and the surrogate child. The

risk of straining relationships during and after the surrogacy period is considerable. Moreover, the limited pool of willing relatives restricts the options for intending couples in selecting a surrogate mother.

- **No Third-Party Involvement:** Altruistic surrogacy lacks the participation of a third party. The absence of a third party means that the intending couple bears all medical and miscellaneous expenses during the surrogacy process. Third-party involvement is beneficial in guiding both the intending couple and the surrogate mother through the intricate process, which may be challenging in the case of altruistic surrogacy.

INTERNET SHUTDOWN AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

WHY IN THE NEWS ?

- Twitter/X had approached the Karnataka High Court to challenge several blanket blocking orders issued by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology during the first round of farmers' protest in India in the year 2020 – 21. The single bench judge of the Karnataka High Court had initially rejected this petition of X, but later the appeal of Twitter/X firm was accepted by the Karnataka High Court and the hearing is going on.
- The current judgment of the Karnataka High Court has reinforced the idea that government authorities can block any content or block any level of content on the basis of valid reasoning without the need to give notice to the originators of the content or even call for an account. But has wide authority in issuing orders.
- The appeal of social media Twitter/X in the recent judgment given by the Karnataka High Court will definitely clarify the rights and obligations of social media companies in India to show or disseminate any content on their platforms.
- As far as the government is concerned, it is not at all concerned about the impact such actions have on India's reputation as a free, open and democratic society, which is just one of the social media companies in the country. Beyond the presence of a large consumer base is a major reason for working.
- Recently, the issue of internet shutdowns and arbitrary restrictions on social media by governments in various states of India has become a cause of major controversy, raising questions of freedom of expression regarding political and social protests in India.
- The state governments of Haryana and Rajasthan and the central government have been seen getting involved in this dispute during the farmers' movement. State governments have raised this issue without any prior notice and without any solid and sound strategic reasons, which is not only reducing public support but also creating debate on the right to freedom of expression granted to Indian citizens by the Constitution of India. It has started.
- The central government in India has decided to issue notices to social media platforms using their tools to block accounts that they associate with those who oppose them negatively.
- In India, this may be a remedial measure for the governments in power, but it is important to be careful that this behavior of the governments does not infringe the freedom of expression of the individual.
- Yet social media platform
- This dispute between social media platforms and governments shows the need for caution and justice in the exercise of power.
- In India, it is important for both governments and citizens to ensure that the idea of freedom and diverse streams of thought in the society and a pluralistic society are supported, but it should not be misused so that it can harm India's prosperity and the country's unity and integrity. There should be no shortage of any kind nor should there be any impact on the unity and integrity of the country.

PROVISIONS RELATED TO INTERNET SHUTDOWN :

According to Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph

Act 1885, the rules related to temporary suspension of telecommunication services include the following provisions –

INDIAN TELEGRAPH ACT 1885, SECTION 5(2) :

- Under this section, temporary suspension of telecommunication services is allowed. In case of public emergency and public safety, the Home Secretary of the Union or State is empowered to order suspension of telegraph or wire service (including the Internet). It requires review by a committee within five days, and cannot be issued for more than 15 days at a time. In case of extreme necessity in any particular situation, the Home Secretary of the Union or State or an authorized Joint Secretary level or above officer can issue an order.

REQUIREMENT OF REVIEW COMMITTEE :

- According to this, whenever such an order is issued, it should be reviewed by a review committee within five days.

DURATION OF THE ORDER TO TEMPORARILY SUSPEND TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICES :

- The duration of such order issued at a time cannot exceed 15 days.

AUTHORIZED ORDERS IN CASE OF EMERGENCY :

- If there is an urgent situation, an officer of Joint Secretary level or above authorized by the Union or State Home Secretary can also issue orders.

SECTION 144 OF THE CODE OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE :

- Under this section, the District Magistrate, Sub-Divisional Magistrate or any other Executive Magistrate is empowered to issue orders specifically prescribed by the State Government for prohibiting or preventing nuisance or disturbance of public peace. Suspension of Internet services: Such order may also include suspension of Internet services in a particular area for a specified period.
- Thus, these provisions clearly establish the rules related to Internet shutdown and empower the

government to take necessary steps in situations of public safety or emergency.

EFFECTS OF INTERNET SHUTDOWN :

- Internet shutdown violates the fundamental rights provided under Article 19(1) (a) and Article 19(1) (g). **Supreme Court case Anuradha Bhasin vs Union of India (2020)** I hold that freedom of speech and expression and freedom to practice any profession through the Internet enjoys constitutional protection under Article 19(1)(a) and Article 19(1)(g).
- **Internet shutdown also violates the Right to Information** Which has been declared a fundamental right under Article 19 by the Supreme Court in the case of Raj Narayan vs. State of Uttar Pradesh (1975).
- **It also violates the Right to Internet which was declared a fundamental right under Article 21 by the Kerala High Court in the case Fahima Sheerin vs. State of Kerala.**

FINANCIAL RESULTS :

- Internet shutdowns can have serious economic consequences. Businesses that depend on the Internet for operations, sales, and communications may suffer financial losses. Startups and small businesses may be particularly affected by this.
- According to 'Top 10 VPN There was a loss of Rs 2,091 crore (\$255.2 million) in the first half of 2023 due to internet shutdown in India.

OBSTACLES AND DISRUPTIONS ARISING IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION:

- In India, Many educational institutions use online platforms for teaching and learning. Internet shutdowns disrupt students' access to educational resources, making it difficult for students to continue their studies. Due to which there may be obstacles and disruptions in their education.

CENSORSHIP AND TRUST CONCERNS :

- Internet shutdowns can lead to a lack of trust in the government and authorities. They may

also raise concerns about censorship and lack of transparency.

DISRUPTION IN THE EVENT OF A DISASTER OR RESPONSE :

- from internet shutdown Communication and coordination of people can be affected, especially in case of any kind of emergency and during any crisis. A United Nations (UN)-backed report highlights that internet shutdowns affect people's security and well-being, hindering information flows and humanitarian aid.

DISRUPTION IN THE FIELD OF HEALTH CARE :

- The reasons caused due to internet shutdown Various studies have shown that internet shutdowns have a significant impact on the delivery of immediate medical care, hampering the supply of essential medicines and maintenance of equipment, limiting the exchange of health information between medical workers, and disrupting essential mental health support. have a significant impact on health systems.

INTERNATIONAL RESULTS :

- Internet shutdowns may also attract international attention and condemnation. This can harm a country's reputation and its relations with other countries. It is noteworthy that India ranks third in the world in terms of internet shutdowns. India ranked second in the world in terms of internet shutdowns in the first half of the year 2023. According to a report by US-based digital rights advocacy group Access Now, 58% of all recorded shutdowns globally occurred in India alone.

IMPACT ON JOURNALISM AND REPORTING :

- Journalists rely on the Internet to report events and share news with the general public. Internet shutdowns can hamper their ability to collect and disseminate information, thereby compromising the public's right to know.
- The right to freedom of the press was declared a fundamental right by the Supreme Court in the cases Indian Express vs. Union of India (1986) and Bennett Coleman vs. Union of India (1972).

ARGUMENTS GIVEN IN FAVOR OF INTERNET SHUT-DOWN :

STOPPING HATE SPEECH AND FAKE NEWS :

- According to one argument given in favor of internet shutdown, by shutting down the internet in India, the spread of unrealistic information like hate speech and fake news can be stopped in India, which can prevent violence and riots on communal or caste basis. Is .
- For example – the Indian government announced an internet shutdown during the farmers' agitation and demonstrations, in an effort to stop rumors and misconceptions from spreading during the farmers' agitation and demonstrations.

FOR SMOOTH FUNCTIONING OF PUBLIC ORDER AND MAINTENANCE OF PEACE AND SECURITY :

- According to another argument given in favor of internet shutdown, by controlling the protests in India, through internet shutdown, the government can maintain public order, people's safety and peace in the society, which will help the experts and security forces to prevent any untoward incident. Indications regarding the incident are given even before it happens. For example – After the removal of Article 370 in India, an attempt was made to maintain security authority by shutting down the internet in Kashmir.

FOR NATIONAL SECURITY :

- According to another argument given in favor of Internet shutdown, through Internet shutdown in India, the government can deal with cyber attacks and protect itself from external threats by being conscious of national security. For example – during the standoff with China, national security was protected by suspending internet services in border areas.

CONTROL OVER DISSEMINATION AND PROMOTION OF OBJECTIONABLE MATERIAL :

- According to another argument given in favor of Internet shutdown, Internet shutdown in India can control the distribution and consump-

tion of such material or its dissemination and promotion can also be controlled which may be harmful or objectionable. For example – in some areas the government has blocked Internet access to prevent the spread of objectionable images or videos.

ARGUMENT GIVEN IN OPPOSITION REGARDING INTERNET SHUTDOWN :

- Many thinkers who oppose Internet shutdowns have argued that such harsh restrictions could risk undermining democracy and accountability. He says that the Internet provides a means for citizens to access information, express opinions, participate in public debate and hold officials accountable for their actions. It could follow that an Internet shutdown would destroy all these qualities and governments might be unable to keep their followers vigilant about their rights.
- Furthermore, Internet shutdowns may enable authoritarian governments to silence critics and create distorted information echo chambers. In a way, it can support authoritarianism and create a medium for spreading objectionable ideas, which can increase social disintegration.
- Some thinkers insist that an Internet shutdown is an ineffective and counterproductive measure, as it does not address the root causes of the problems it is supposed to solve. For example, it may not succeed in preventing violence and terrorism, but may instead increase anger and resentment among affected populations.
- Additionally, an Internet shutdown may not stop the spread of fake news and hate speech, but may instead create an information vacuum that actors can take advantage of. This may increase the disintegration of various prosperity and weaken social harmony.
- Some thinkers also believe that Internet shutdowns can be considered arbitrary measures and open to abuse, as they are often implemented without due process, transparency, or judicial oversight. This could lead to the danger of giving too much power to local authorities, allowing them to use it to resort to their own

political interference. This proves that as an arbitrary measure of Internet shutdown, governments should ensure that it is imposed only in special circumstances, and that it meets all levels of judicial process and quality standards.

WAYS TO DEAL WITH INTERNET SHUTDOWN :

The following suggestions can be made in terms of appropriate steps to deal with Internet shutdown-

STRENGTHENING THE LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK :

- Both the central and state governments in India should ensure that the legal and regulatory frameworks governing Internet shutdowns are strong and fully comply with international human rights standards.
- The government should amend the Telegraph Act and its regulations so that they fully comply with constitutional and human rights standards.

ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY OF OFFICIALS :

- Increase transparency and ensure accountability of authorized officials of both the Central and State governments in India who order and enforce Internet shutdowns.
- Provide effective remedies for people/citizens affected by internet shutdown and ensure their safety is guaranteed.

LOOKING FOR ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS :

- In India, the government should consider other less intrusive measures instead of internet shutdown, such as correcting law and order disturbances, dealing with communal violence and terrorism, blocking specific websites or content, issuing warnings, civil society And this could include engaging the media, deploying more security forces.

TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE GUIDELINES OF THE SUPREME COURT :

- Governments in India should fully comply with the Internet shutdown guidelines given by the Supreme Court of India, which provide for Internet suspension to limit access only for a

temporary period. The orders issued under the suspension rules for internet shutdown should fully follow the principle of proportionality and the government should avoid extending their duration.

If the governments in India take steps in the right direction by adopting these suggestions, then the social and economic impact regarding internet shutdown can be reduced and human rights can be fully observed in India.

CONCLUSION/PATH TO SOLUTION :

- The Supreme Court, High Court or other courts in India should take action against governments issuing orders blocking content on social media.
 - Internet shutdowns and the use of arbitrary restrictions on freedom of expression on social media can be a harmonious way to raise social, political and cultural questions, but their impact can be both positive and negative.
 - Internet shutdown can be used for security and self-defense purposes. In case of any unsafe situation or objection, governments may try to protect people by shutting down internet services. This may be an uncomfortable procedure, but it may be necessary to save life.
 - Banning freedom of expression on social media can increase mutual opposition in the society. This can lead to the suppression of independent and thoughtful ideas, leading to people becoming retail. A state of conflict of views can arise between people looking at social media from different viewpoints, which can cause deep conflicts in the society.
 - The use of such restrictions by governments can stifle opposition criticism of ruling structures and render people's voices invisible or mute. Social media can be a crowdsourcing tool that can bring people together and make them aware of social and political issues.
 - Instead of internet shutdowns or banning social media, positive and lively dialogue should be promoted so that people can freely and openly share their ideas with each other.
- Internet shutdowns and restrictions on freedom of expression on social media may be used in necessary situations, but must be done carefully and harmoniously. To maintain prosperity, justice, and harmony in society, governments should take steps in the appropriate direction, so that people can have greater participation and express their views freely.

PRELIMS QUESTION

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Estimates Committee examines the annual reports of ministries and departments
2. President appoints the chairpersons of parliamentary committees in India
3. Committee on Petitions focuses on conducting inquiries into matters of public importance
4. SEBI developed and launched the UPI platform in India

How many of the statements above are correct?

- (A) Only one
(B) Only two
(C) Only three
(D) All four

Q2. Consider the following statements in the context of judicial clarity on freedom of speech in India.

1. Section 124 (A) of the Indian Penal Code defines sedition as any attempt to cause widespread damage to the unity and integrity of the country.
2. In India, the right to freedom of expression is not absolute because reasonable restrictions also apply to it.
3. Criticism of the government in India is defined as treason, because in such a situation India's democracy would turn into a police state.
4. Judicial clarity on freedom of expression cre-

ates an uneducated and lifeless society with no prosperity and justice.

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

- (A) Only 1, 2 and 3
- (B) Only 2 and 4
- (C) Only 1 and 3
- (D) Only 1 and 2

Q3. What is the NCSC's primary role in terms of advising the President of India

- (A) Legislative drafting
- (B) Constitutional amendments
- (C) Advisory on matters related to Scheduled Castes
- (D) International diplomacy

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding Internet shutdown and freedom of expression in India.

1. The Central Government has decided to block social media accounts by issuing notices to social media platforms, calling them an example of negative deterrence.
2. Twitter/X had filed an appeal in the Karnataka High Court to challenge several blanket blocking orders issued by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in India.
3. Internet shutdowns by governments in India cannot stop the spread of hate speech and fake news.
4. Internet shutdown is an ineffective and counterproductive measure, as it does not address the root causes of the problems.

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

- (A) Only 1, and 3
- (B) Only 2, 3 and 4
- (C) Only 1 and 4

(D) Only 1, 2 and 4

ANSWERS

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

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Examine the significance of parliamentary committees in controlling and overseeing government finances. How do these committees act as watchdogs, ensuring responsible fiscal management and preventing financial irregularities? Provide examples to illustrate their impact.

Q2. Highlighting the Main provisions of treason/ Sedition in India, discuss how Sedition has current relevance in independent India in the context of judicial clarity on freedom of speech in India ?

Q3. Evaluate the role of the NCSC in addressing complaints and grievances filed by Scheduled Castes. How effective has the Commission been in providing redressal and ensuring justice for instances of discrimination or atrocities?

Q4. What do you understand about Internet shutdown and freedom of expression? Discuss that in India Internet shutdown for citizens how does it violate freedom of expression ? Give a logical explanation.

Q5. How do you view the balance between a woman's autonomy in reproductive decisions and the potential for exploitation in commercial surrogacy?

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

NORTHERN IRELAND PROTOCOL

WHY IN THE NEWS?

After two years of deadlock, Northern Ireland now has a functioning administration led by Michelle O'Neill of Sinn Féin and Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly of the Alliance Party.

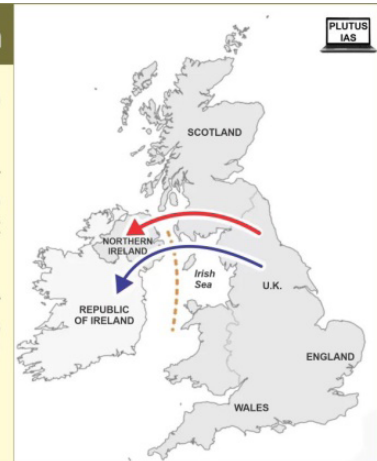
THE NORTHERN IRELAND PROTOCOL

- After the United Kingdom left the European Union, **Northern Ireland remained the sole constituent, having a land border with another EU member, the Republic of Ireland.** The United Kingdom is made up of Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales), as well as Northern Ireland.
- Because the EU and the UK have **distinct product standards**, border inspections would be required before products could be transported from Northern Ireland to Ireland. However, a free border between the two was critical to the 1998 Good Friday deal.
- Keeping this in mind, the **Northern Ireland Protocol** was **negotiated in 2020 between the United Kingdom and the EU.** The protocol is a trade deal negotiated in 2020 by the United Kingdom and the European Union.
- Under this agreement, both the **United Kingdom and the European Union agreed that products would be inspected between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.** This agreement effectively established a de facto border across the Irish Sea between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.
- Northern Ireland continues to obey many of the EU's laws, allowing vehicles to move across the border without being inspected. The protocol was signed as part of the Brexit departure deal, which has now been confirmed under international law.

- However, **this protocol infuriated unionists**, who saw it as undermining Northern Ireland's relationship with the United Kingdom. As a result, the Unionists refused to allow a government to form after Northern Ireland's May 2022 elections, and Stormont was unable to function.

The UK's new plan

- The goods are split into two different lanes.
- Goods destined only for Northern Ireland go into the **Red Lane** and are not checked
- Goods destined for Ireland and the EU go into the **Blue Lane** and checks are carried out



EFFORTS MADE TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE

WINDSOR FRAMEWORK

The framework comprises **two essential components**:

- The implementation of a system with **designated green and red lanes for goods remaining in Northern Ireland and those bound for the EU, respectively.**
- Additionally, it introduces the **'Stormont Brake,'** empowering Northern Ireland legislators and the UK government to reject any EU regulations perceived as detrimental to the region.
- **British goods designated for Northern Ireland will utilise the green lane at ports,** streamlining the process with minimal paperwork and checks. Conversely, goods intended for Ireland or other EU destinations must use the **red lane**, subject to customary customs procedures and inspections.
- The newly introduced Stormont Brake enables the elected Northern Ireland Assembly to chal-

lenge proposed EU regulations affecting the region significantly and persistently. To enact this opposition, the Assembly requires the support of 30 members from at least two political parties, after which the British government holds the authority to veto the legislation.

A NEW PLAN TITLED 'SAFEGUARDING THE UNION' BY THE UK

A recent agreement has been achieved following the **rejection of the Windsor Framework by Unionists** who deemed the proposed measures insufficient. The UK government has now unveiled a new arrangement outlined in a document titled '**Safe-guarding the Union.**'

The **key provisions of this agreement are** as follows:

- The **green lane** is now referred to as the UK Internal Market channel, where checks and customs paperwork have been further reduced to encompass only "risk and intelligence-based checks" related to "criminality, smuggling, and disease."
- The "**Internal Market Guarantee**" provision stipulates that a minimum of 80% of goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland will utilise this channel.
- The UK government is committed to providing a **financial assistance package of £3.3 billion** to support the fiscal needs of Northern Ireland.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM OF IRELAND

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Northern Ireland, **established in May 1921** through the partitioning of Ireland, encompasses the six northeastern counties of the island. **In 1922**, the remaining part of Ireland gained independence from British rule, becoming the present-day Republic of Ireland, with Dublin as its capital. Despite this, Northern Ireland maintained its affiliation with the United Kingdom, leading to tensions between those loyal to the Crown and those advocating for integration with the Republic. **Presently, individuals aligned with the British Union are known as unionists, while those supporting a unified and in-**

dependent Ireland are referred to as nationalists.

BELFAST AGREEMENT OR THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT:

By the late **1960s, a violent conflict had erupted in Northern Ireland** between those favouring continued UK affiliation and those aspiring to join Ireland. In 1998, the Good Friday Agreement was signed, bringing an end to the hostilities and establishing a distinctive governance system for Northern Ireland.

DISTINCTIVE GOVERNANCE SYSTEM OF IRELAND:

Stormont, located in the Parliament buildings in Belfast, **serves as the seat of power where both unionists and nationalists** actively participate in a shared governance arrangement. Cooperation between both factions is essential for the effective functioning of the government. The political group securing the majority of votes in elections assumes the role of First Minister, while the opposing side takes the position of Deputy First Minister, holding equal authority in this unique system.

INDIA – GREECE BILATERAL RELATIONS

WHY IN THE NEWS ?



- India -Greece Under bilateral relations, with the aim of further deepening the strategic partnership between the two countries, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis will visit India on a two-day (21-22 February 2024) state visit on 21 February 2024.
- This is the first visit of a Greek head of state to India after a gap of 15 years.
- During his state visit to India, Greek Prime Min-

ister Kyriakos Mitsotakis will be the chief guest and keynote speaker at the Raisina Dialogue in the national capital.

- The Prime Minister of Greece will also be accompanied by senior officials and a high-level business delegation. Before returning to Athens he will also visit Mumbai.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Greece on 25 August 2023 was the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Greece in the last 40 years.
- On this occasion, the President of Greece Katerina Sakellariopoulou addressed the Prime Minister of India **"The Grand Cross of the Order of Honour"** Honored with.
- Prime Minister of India in Athens **'Tomb of the Unknown Soldier'** But tribute was also paid.
- Before this visit of the Prime Minister of India in 2021, Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar had visited Greece. Following his visit, Greek Foreign Minister Nicos Dendias visited India in March 2022.
- The 13th bilateral Foreign Office Consultations were held in June 2023, further strengthening the relationship between the two countries under the India-Greece bilateral relationship.
- Prime Minister Modi's visit to Greece further strengthened the cultural, economic, and political relations between India and Greece under the bilateral strategic partnership and opened new possibilities for cooperation in various fields between the two countries.
- This visit of the Indian Prime Minister sets an example to help foster better understanding and fraternal energy between the Indian and Greek citizens (people).
- Bilateral talks between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis India-Greece bilateral relations underpinned shared cultural values, commitment to promote economic growth, security and defence, maritime cooperation, bilateral trade, investment, energy The aim is to deepen cooperation in areas such as migration, infra-

structure, tourism, connectivity, agriculture and regional and global issues.



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN INDIA AND GREECE :

There are several major areas of cooperation under the strategic partnership between India and Greece, some of which are as follows –

DEFENSE AND SECURITY :

- India and Greece have agreed to cooperate in maritime security, counter-terrorism, cyber security, and defense industry. Furthermore, decisions have been taken in the India-Greece dialogue at the level of National Security Advisors (NSAs).

MARITIME SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL LAW :

- Both India and Greece have agreed to abide by the provisions of maritime law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), with both the countries having ancient and long-standing maritime perspectives on seafaring.

CULTURE AND TOURISM :

- Both India and Greece have attempted to cooperate in promoting all forms of art and preserving ancient sites. This also includes cooperation within UNESCO.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT :

- India and Greece aim to double bilateral trade by 2030 and have agreed to explore new opportunities to cooperate in various sectors such as new energy, infrastructure, pharmaceuticals,

agriculture and innovation.

MOBILITY AND MIGRATION PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (MMPA) :

- The leaders of both India and Greece have exchanged views on the Mobility and Migration Partnership Agreement (MMPA) to enhance dialogue in areas such as digital payments, shipping, pharmaceuticals, and education.
- Through this partnership, India and Greece have opened the way for partnership and co-operation in various fields, which will help in empowerment and promotion of partnership between the two countries.

Important facts :

The 'Grand Cross of the Order of Honor' is the second highest civilian honor in Greece, after the 'Grand Cross of the Order of the Redeemer'. The award was established in 1975 and features the head of the goddess Athena, with the inscription "Only the righteous/just should be honored". The award is presented to individuals who have played a significant role in the fields of politics, diplomacy, culture, science, or social service in promoting the interests and values of Greece.

BEGINNING OF HISTORICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND GREECE :



- Historical relations between Greece and India began 2500 years ago, when Alexander the Great expanded his campaigns to the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent. Diplomatic, trade, and cultural relations between India and Greece are mentioned by the Greek traveler Megasthenes in the fourth century BC.

Chanakya has also described the achievement of ambassadorship between India and Greece in his Arthashastra.

- Currently, trade between India and Greece is growing, and trade between the two countries is expected to reach US\$2 billion in the year 2022-23. India also sends aluminum, organic chemicals, fish, and crustaceans (crab and shrimp) to Greece, while Greece sends mineral fuels, mineral oils, and aluminum foil to India.
- India hosted Greece's largest commercial exhibition, '**Honored Country**' at the **84th Thessaloniki International Fair (TIF), 2019** Participated as. Furthermore, both the countries are cooperating with each other in various fields such as education, cultural exchange, and economic development.

CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND GREECE :



- Dimitrios Galanos, a Greek Indologist, spent 47 years in India and translated many Hindu texts into Greek.
- A "Dimitrios Galanos" Chair for Hellenic Studies was established in September 2000 at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.
- Indian Council for Cultural Relations is offering annual scholarships for Greek students to study in India. Greek Indologist Professor Nicholas Kazanas was honored with the Padma Shri award in 2021.

POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND GREECE :

- Mutual diplomatic relations between India and Greece were established in May 1950. Greece

opened its embassy in Delhi in 1950 and India opened its embassy in Athens in 1978. Greece is known to support each other on issues of core national interest such as Kashmir and Cyprus. Greece also supports India's demand for permanent membership of the expanded United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

DEFENSE RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND GREECE :



- The year 1998 saw a spurt in defense cooperation between India and Greece, which envisages cooperation in areas such as military training, joint training, defense industry cooperation, etc. The Indian Air Force participated in INIOCHOS-23. The exercise was conducted at Andravida Air Base, Greece from 24 April 2023 to 04 May 2023. Indian Air Force (IAF) with four Su-30 MKI and two C-17 aircraft organized by the Hellenic Air Force **A multinational air exercise INIOCHOS-23** participated in.

One of the main facts about Greece is that it is located in Southern Europe, bordered by Albania, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Turkey. Greece is one of the oldest civilizations in the world and is considered the birthplace of Western civilization. Its capital is Athens and the language is Greek. The longest river in Greece is the Aliakmon River and the highest mountain in Greece is Mount Olympus. It is the birthplace of democracy, philosophy, theater, and the Olympic Games, with a parliamentary republican form of government and dominated by the Pindus and Taurus mountains. Its currency is Euro.

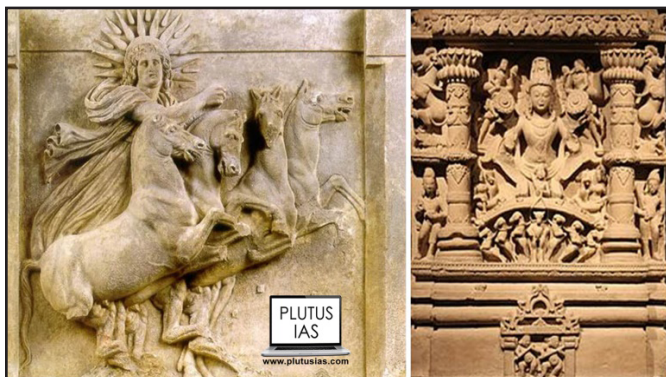
CONCLUSION/ WAY FORWARD:

- Bilateral relations between India and Greece are extremely important from historical, cultural, and philosophical perspectives. There has been

a mixture of cultures between these two countries, dialogue with each other, and exchange of abstract and abstract knowledge towards each other.

- Historically, relations between India and Greece began during the time of the Maurya dynasty emperor Chandragupta Maurya and the Greek emperor Alexander. Alexander fought with the Indian kingdoms and reached India with his army. In India, Chandragupta Maurya defeated him and created a great empire in the Indian subcontinent. Thus, relations between India and Greece continued even after the time of Alexander.
- Culturally, India and Greece have maintained their unique cultural heritage. Greek literature, art, and philosophical thought influenced Western cultural development in India, while Indian literature, scriptures, and art have retained their distinct identity. It is this diversity and richness that strengthens the ties between Indian and Greek cultures.
- Philosophically, there has been a parallel trend between Indian and Greek philosophers, although there have been differences between them at the ideological level. Greek philosophers made significant contributions in the field of logic and renaissance, while Indian philosophers have maintained their preference towards spirituality and enlightenment. Thus, both these cultural traditions have been learning from each other and contributing to each other's prosperity.
- From a social and materialistic point of view, there has been trade and cultural exchange between India and Greece. European travelers and traders came to India and thus Indian textiles, jewelry, and other goods reached Europe. After this, even though Greece's constitutional relations with India diminished, there has been continuity in trade and cultural relations.
- Thus, the relations between India and Greece have been a source of rich heritage and diversity. Studying these relationships and exploring their impact in detail is important in the field of history and cultural studies, as it allows us to

understand our cultural heritage and learn from each other.



PRELIMS QUESTION

Q1. Consider the following pairs: (UPSC Prelims-2020)

International agreement/ set-up Subject

1. Alma-Ata Declaration – Healthcare of the people
2. Hague Convention – Biological and Chemical Weapons
3. Talanoa Dialogue – Global Climate Change
4. Under2 Coalition – Child Rights

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 4 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 2,3 and 4 only

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. The Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community, a precursor to the European Union
2. The European Commission is the EU's executive branch responsible for implementing decisions and managing policies
3. The Treaty of Lisbon, signed in 2007, aimed to enhance the EU's democratic governance

How many of the statements above are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Q3. Consider the following statements in the context of India-Greek bilateral relations.

1. This is the first visit of a Greek head of state to India after a gap of 25 years.
2. India honored Greek Indologist Professor Nicholas Kazanas with the Padma Shri award in 2021.
3. The Grand Cross of the Order of Honor is Greece's highest civilian honour.
4. Greece opened its embassy in Delhi in 1950 and India opened its embassy in Athens in 1978.

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

- (A) Only 1 and 3
- (B) Only 2 and 4
- (C) Only 1, 2 and 4
- (D) Only 1 and 4

ANSWERS

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

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. How has the European Union influenced immigration policies and the free movement of people within its borders?

Q2. In the context of current Geo-political relations, discuss how Greece is the gateway to Asia and India is the gateway to Europe ?

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) : VERSUS RECALIBRATING COMPETENCY

WHY IN THE NEWS?



- The concept of meritocracy, in which individuals are rewarded and promoted based on their abilities, achievements and hard work rather than on their social status or their family, ethnic, gender, racial or social background, has recently become popular among policy makers across the globe. Is extended, but there has been a very large and detailed debate. Proponents and critics of meritocracy have argued about its effects on society, highlighting its merits and shortcomings. Influenced by the criticisms and analyzes of thinkers such as British sociologists Michael Young, Michael Sandel and Adrian Wooldridge, significant changes are being seen in the development of meritocracy all over the world.
- British sociologist Michael Young in his satirical book '**The Rise of the Meritocracy (1958)**' predicted a dystopian meritocratic world.
- He envisioned a future by 2034, as a society where social class and mobility were determined entirely by intelligence and effort, as measured through standardized testing and educational achievement. This was a criticism of the then emerging trend towards a merit-based

system, which he feared would lead to a new form of social stratification.

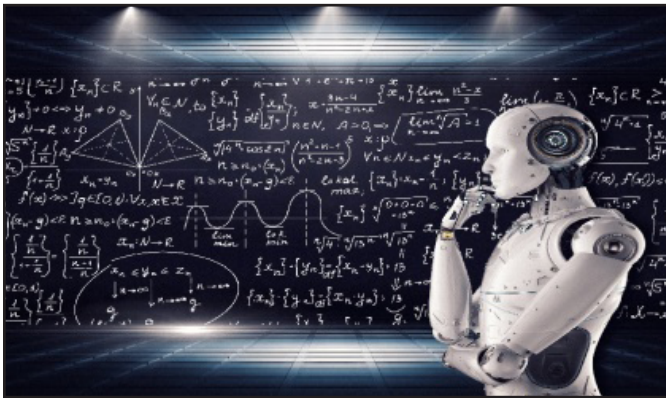
- Artificial intelligence technology is a special branch that studies giving machines the ability to function with intelligence.
- Under this branch, various techniques are studied to enable machines to learn on their own and develop the ability to solve problems.
- The main objective of artificial intelligence technology is to provide machines with the ability to take actions with the same intelligence as humans.
- Artificial intelligence technology includes many sub-branches which are adopted in different fields.
- Machine learning is a technology in which machines learn and take decisions on their own from the data fed into them.
- Deep learning provides machines with the ability to learn directly on their own rather than using a multi-system approach. In robotics technology, machines are given the ability to perform physical actions. Peripheral technology and the Internet of Things study devices embedded in the human body and the technologies to connect them to the Internet.
- By combining these techniques, artificial intelligence technology is finding application in many fields. These technologies are being used to make human life simpler and safer. For example – robots for sanitation, automated vehicles, and artificial intelligence are being used in health services.
- Thus, artificial intelligence technology is ushering in a new era in which machines are working together with humans to make human life even more convenient.

INTRODUCTION TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGY :

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a field that is bringing unprecedented changes in the areas of tech-

nological and scientific advancement. In this, machines are made to feel intelligent, so that they can perform assigned tasks independently. This, along with new technologies, is creating new challenging contexts that require new definitions and standards of competency.

- The main objective of the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (AI) released by Niti Aayog is to ensure effective access of AI to all people and to empower them to develop technical capabilities. To be made capable.



OBJECTIVE OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY RELATED TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ANNOUNCED BY NITI AAYOG :

- This national strategy aims to address and promote the lack of skilled expertise in the field of artificial intelligence in India. NITI Aayog also believes that the disproportionate challenges in the field of artificial intelligence should be addressed to enhance and empower human capabilities.
- The main objective of this National Strategy of NITI Aayog is to effectively implement various initiatives in the field of Artificial Intelligence, develop solutions for emerging economies through their effective implementation, promote research and thereby accelerate economic development activities. have to give.
- The objective of this national strategy announced by NITI Aayog is to tackle not only national level challenges but also global level challenges through AI.
- Under this National Strategy, the objectives re-

lated to Artificial Intelligence in India include extending the technological benefits to all through mutual cooperation and partnerships in this field, so that all-round prosperity can be achieved.

- The objectives of the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence announced by NITI Aayog also include #AI for All (#AI for All) i.e. opening the doors of artificial intelligence to all people and encouraging them to use it.

To promote artificial intelligence in India, NITI Aayog has set out three main components that will work towards the 'Greater Good'. These three components are as follows –

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR GREATER GOOD FOR SOCIAL AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT :

- Through this component, efforts are being made to rapidly promote the process of social development and inclusive growth. This includes improving the quality of life, equality of access for people, and social inclusion in prosperity.

USEFULNESS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE ECONOMIC SECTOR FOR INDIA:

- Under this component, high-growth technological and intelligence opportunities are being harnessed to promote the utility of Artificial Intelligence in the Indian economic sector.

'ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE GARAGE' FOR 40% OF THE WORLD'S PEOPLE:

- Through this component, India is working to develop its artificial intelligence with an aim to share it with the people of the world and create an 'Artificial Intelligence Garage' globally.
- Through these three components, NITI Aayog has attempted to work in the most critical areas to enhance the country's artificial intelligence at the social, economic, and global levels. This will not only lead to development in India, but will also contribute to world prosperity.

This could provide an opportunity for India to use artificial intelligence in many ways in the economic

sector. NITI Aayog has considered it a part of the national strategy and has accepted it as an important tool for economic development.



- **Increase in Production:** Increase in the area of production in India through artificial intelligence technology will lead to growth in the economic sector. This could provide an opportunity to innovate and produce at a faster pace, leading to entry of new products and services into the Indian market.
- **Industrial Development :** Artificial intelligence technology can encourage innovations in the industrial sector. This will not only increase productivity, but will also promote economic growth.
- **Improvement in the Service Sector :** Artificial intelligence can also improve the service sector. This will speed up delivery of services and improve quality.
- **Accelerating Economic growth:** The use of artificial intelligence can accelerate economic growth. According to NITI Aayog, this technology can increase India's growth rate.
- **Solution to the problems of the World economy :** This use of India can provide an ideal arena for enterprises and institutions across the world to find scalable solutions to various problems. This can help in improving the world economy.
- **Research towards factors of climate change :** With the help of artificial intelligence technology, factors of climate change can be researched, which are important in the field of agriculture. This can provide useful technical solutions for India as well as other developing countries of the world.
- In the discussion of sectors selected by NITI Aayog under the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in India, NITI Aayog has chosen five sectors namely education and skills sector, agriculture sector, health sector, smart mobility and transportation, smart cities and infrastructure. The aim is to promote development in these areas through artificial intelligence technology.
- NITI Aayog has also taken many initiatives in this direction. For example – **Organization of 'Responsible Artificial Intelligence for Social Empowerment 2020' (RAISE 2020) Summit, launch of 'Responsible Artificial Intelligence Program for Youth', and launch of 'US India Artificial Intelligence Initiative' (USIAI) with the United States** etc. Apart from this, India has also made several plans at the global level by joining the 'Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence' (GPAI) group.
- Along with this, Indian institutions have also contributed in the discovery and development of various technological advancements in the field of 'Artificial Intelligence' in India. In this **Chatbot 'AskDisha' developed by a branch of Indian Railways, 'Artificial Leaf' developed by researchers at the Indian Institute of Science and Serpent robot developed by the Indian Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO)** Examples include. Through these initiatives, India is moving towards independence and social development and is playing an important role in the field of artificial intelligence.

The promotion of Artificial Intelligence is being guided by the National Strategy of five areas selected by NITI Aayog. These five areas are considered to have the highest potential for development, and artificial intelligence technology has an important place in it. The selection of these five areas is as follows –

- **Education and Skills Sector :** It involves modernizing India's education system through applications of artificial intelligence technology in education and exposing students to new tech-

nologies.

- **Agricultural sector** : Artificial Intelligence technology in India involves improving productivity and quality in the agricultural sector by using cutting edge technological measures.
- **Health sector** : The medical or public health sector in India involves improving the diagnosis and treatment of diseases by using new techniques of artificial intelligence technology.
- **Smart Mobility and Transportation**: By using artificial intelligence in the transport sector of India, the transport sector can be integrated and made smart.
- **Smart cities and Infrastructure**: Urban development in India involves improving the design of smart cities by making maximum use of artificial intelligence technology and pursuing new and safer technologies in infrastructure.

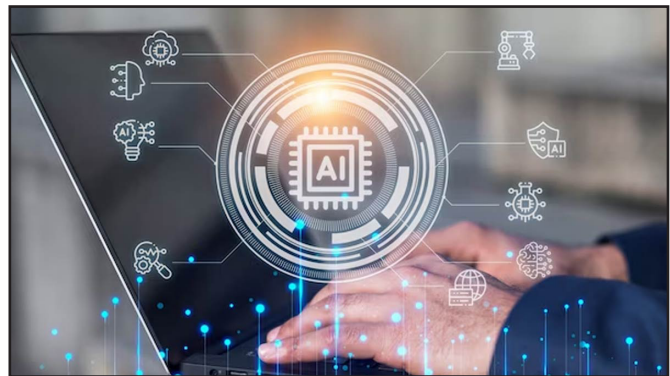
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGY AND INDIA :

- India is the second most populous country in the world. Therefore, in India, apart from having many types of problems, their quantity is also increasing and the complications related to it are also there. In such a situation, artificial intelligence technology can provide an important solution for India. Policy makers and experts believe that the development of artificial intelligence can transform India into a model region. Therefore, the Government of India should try to promote more and more research in this field.
- NITI Aayog has analyzed India's potential based on artificial intelligence technology and studied that if used properly, it can add about \$1 trillion to India's economy by 2035. According to this survey, India still has great potential for the development of artificial intelligence technology, but there are some shortcomings in its development at present.
- According to a report, if artificial intelligence technology is used properly in India, it can contribute about 3 percent to the country's economic growth by the year 2035. Therefore, NITI

Aayog has stressed the need to encourage more research in this area.

- Artificial Intelligence technology can be helpful in bringing a positive change for India, and the government needs to take more steps in this direction.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS BEFORE INDIA IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGY :



- **Population and Education** : Despite the large population in India, there is development in the education sector, but there is a need to integrate it in technical education in a better way. Artificial intelligence technology should be included as a major tool in education so that students have increased interest and understanding in it.
- **Investment and Research** : The development of artificial intelligence technology requires more investment and research. The government and the private sector should be encouraged to invest together so that new technologies can be studied and developed.
- **Social and Ethical Issues** : in India it is important to take into account ethical and social issues in the use of artificial intelligence technology. High ethical standards must be followed to support and ensure that this technological development is accompanied by social change.
- **Foreign Investment** : India needs foreign investment in artificial intelligence technology. India can also motivate foreign companies to invest in this sector so that the pace of India's technological development increases.

- **Solution to Unemployment :** The development of artificial intelligence technology can also create new employment opportunities in India. It should work with the government and the private sector to help reduce unemployment.
- **Environmental effect :** Environmental impacts must be taken into account when developing artificial intelligence technology. It should lead to minimization of the impact of products and processes to make them compatible with the environment.

DISADVANTAGES OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGY IN INDIA :

- **Requirement of large amounts of data:** Using artificial intelligence technology requires large amounts of data, and if there is a lack of data, it can impact technical performance.
- **Increase in energy consumption:** Devices based on artificial intelligence technology can consume more energy, especially requiring more energy to cool them.
- **Environmental effect :** The increase in chemical waste and carbon footprint resulting from the use of artificial intelligence technology can be harmful to the environment.
- **Possibility of violation of privacy :** Big data collection arising from artificial intelligence technology may increase the risk to individual privacy. Which can also be seen as a violation of a person's privacy.
- **Possibility of cyber attacks and fraud:** The potential for cyber attacks and fraud through artificial intelligence technology may increase, leading to new challenges in cyber security.
- **Increase in economic inequality:** With the use of artificial intelligence technology, developed countries are becoming more capable, while developing and poor countries are lagging behind in it, which may increase economic inequality.
- **Data localization issue:** Data localization efforts can also be a challenge for artificial intelligence technology companies, causing higher costs

and greater difficulty in controlling them.

Despite these disadvantages, it is important that ethics, security, and governance systems are strengthened when interpreting artificial intelligence technology so that it can be used for social and economic improvement.

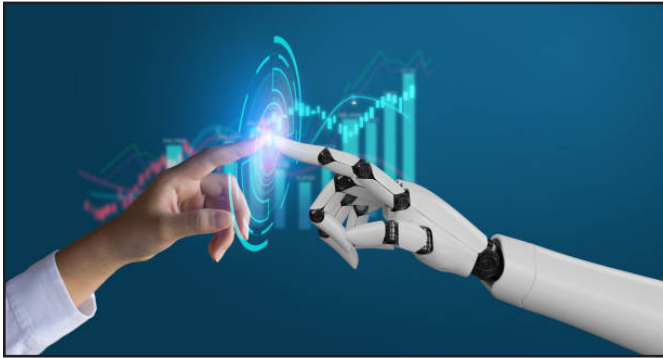
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ABILITY :

Artificial intelligence technology is developing rapidly and has rapidly increased the demand for unique abilities in many fields. Technologies like machine learning, neural networks, deep learning, and natural language processing are helping to increase efficiency. Through these techniques, artificial intelligence technology systems can learn on their own and even correct their errors. Additionally, artificial intelligence technologies can accept new information, thereby improving efficiency.

- **Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO):** DRDO has made many important efforts in the field of artificial intelligence technology for the Indian Army. This includes the supercomputing systems developed by them, robotics, high security equipment, and security systems based on artificial intelligence.
- **National Strategy of NITI Aayog:** NITI Aayog has announced 'A National Strategy on Artificial Intelligence' in 2018, in which it outlines ways to use artificial intelligence to boost Indian potential.
- **Other Institutions:** Various institutions in India such as the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), and other research institutions are also studying and researching the latest technology in the field of artificial intelligence.
- **Liberalization:** NITI Aayog has also raised the issue of promoting global cooperation and liberalization in its strategy. With this, India can gain the ability to progress globally.

Through these efforts, India is moving ahead in the field of artificial intelligence technology and is also playing an important role at the global level.

WAYS TO REORGANIZE COMPETENCY IN THE ERA OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:



- **Following new systems in education :** In the age of artificial intelligence, it is important to pursue new systems in education. In this, Artificial Intelligence can be used to give individual attention to the students and develop their abilities.
- **Development of human-machine companion :** To organize competence in the era of artificial intelligence, it is necessary to develop a human-machine partner. This can help the employees to utilize their abilities properly and improve their qualifications.
- **Competency based learning :** Artificial intelligence can be used for competency based learning. This can ensure that training programs and learning processes firmly maintain competency.
- **Focus on health and Mental health :** Artificial intelligence can be used to enhance competency in the fields of health and mental health. It can help provide personalized health suggestions through neural networks, helping people stay healthy.
- **Establishment of standards of qualification :** In the age of artificial intelligence, it is important to establish standards of competency in various fields. These standards will determine whether there is evidence of improvement in the competency of individuals and organizations and will provide a sustainable way of measuring competency.
- **Ethical and Safe use :** It is extremely important to use artificial intelligence in an ethical and

safe manner. It should be ensured that it is used carefully for enhancing competency and does not give rise to any social or ethical problems.

CONCLUSION / PATH TO SOLUTION :

- Artificial Intelligence Reorganizing meritocracy in the age of 1980 is a socially, economically, and technologically important issue. By using it in the right direction and in the right way, we can move towards an advanced, powerful, excellent and prosperous society.
- The possibilities hidden in artificial intelligence technology can have more positive impacts than challenges. Therefore, all communities in the world should together strive to promote artificial intelligence technology and use it towards global well-being and human welfare.
- To move ahead in the field of artificial intelligence, a generous spirit and dedication is required, so that the challenges coming from this technology can be eliminated and human society can be helped in getting benefits from it.
- Looking at India's progress in the field of artificial intelligence, it appears that the country has taken significant steps in this field and is poised to take it forward. India should invest more in research and development, so that the real benefits of this technology can be reaped.
- India will also be able to achieve its sustainable development goals by getting real benefits from artificial intelligence technology and making maximum use of it, due to which artificial intelligence technology can play an important role in India's prosperity and progress.

INDIAN SPACE POLICY 2023 IN THE NEW ERA OF INDIA'S SPACE SECTOR

Why in the News ?

- Government of India, on 21 February 2024, 100 per cent in "manufacturing of components and systems/sub-systems for satellites, ground segment and user segment" – up to 74 per cent in satellite-manufacturing, operations and data

products; And opened the door for foreign direct investment (FDI) up to 49 per cent in launch vehicles, space ports and their related systems.



- India's journey of achievement and development in the space sector is growing rapidly. At present, India has taken many important steps in its space program which are taking this field to new heights.
- Recently, the Government of India has allowed private companies to participate in India's space sector and the space policy has been reformed. This will help in attracting new investors and development of new technological products and services in the space sector.
- India has allowed foreign direct investment (FDI) to private companies in the space sector, which can provide higher capital for new and innovative projects in this sector. This policy can help India position itself more positively in the competition with China in the space sector.
- Encouraging private companies in the space sector will ensure that new technological products and services continue to be developed that support space research, satellite services, and other space operations.
- India has begun to move on this path with state-led reforms in the 2020s. Through this, India has opened its space sector to private companies and new policies like 'Geospatial Guidelines' and 'Indian Space Policy' have been implemented.
- The government is focusing on the need to maintain a clear regulatory environment, reduce red tape, increase public support and ease access for Indian companies to foreign markets. Along with this, measures are also being taken to promote public support and access of private companies to foreign markets.
- India has taken steps to strengthen its presence in the space sector and giving a role to private companies in this will support them even more positively. With this, new possibilities can be faced in the space sector and India can become a world class space power.
- India's space sector is beginning a new era in which the private sector is also getting a larger share.
- In this new round, the government has opened the door for foreign investment in manufacturing of satellites, ground segment, components and systems/subsystems for the user segment. This will provide an opportunity to private companies to invest in large amounts and will help in developing this sector. This will make India more capable of competing with China in the space sector and will motivate foreign investors to invest in India.
- Indian start-ups have invested a "significant" portion of the US\$37.1 billion raised globally in 2021-23 as space start-ups. This will help these companies to grow and attract new investors.



The Indian space sector began with success in various spacecraft and satellite launches. India has taken many important steps for development and improvement in the space sector. Therefore, some important reforms adopted by India for development in space sector are as follows –

- **Adopting policy and corrective initiatives for**

manufacturing advanced technological products in the space sector : India has adopted new policies in the space sector in which private companies have got the opportunity to participate in the space sector. This is leading to creation of new and advanced technological products and is also developing expertise in the space sector.

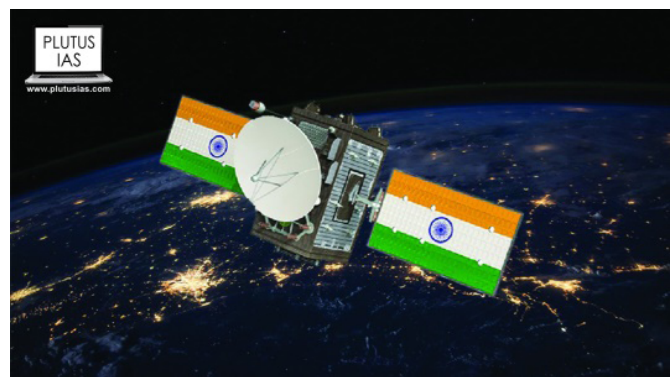
- **Indian Space Policy :** According to the Indian space policy, private companies can also operate in various space-related sectors such as satellite manufacturing, satellite operations, and data products.
- **Telecommunications Act 2023 :** By this Act, India has made provision to promote satellite broadband services, which will also provide space related facilities to the common people.
- **Opening doors for private investment :** India has opened the door to promote private investment for research and technological development in the space sector, allowing various world-class companies to invest in research in the Indian space sector.
- **To provide incentives to set up start-ups in the space sector :** Facilities are being provided to set up various types of start-ups in the field of space in India, thereby promoting various new and advanced ideas in the field of space to India.
- India is taking positive steps for the development of its space sector and is becoming a world class champion by involving private companies in it.
- The financial, socio-economic and geopolitical implications of space have replaced romantic notions of space. Space-related technologies and spaceflight are expensive and risky endeavors in which for decades only national agencies were qualified to engage. This is no longer true as private sector companies are increasingly expected to play complementary, enhancing and/or leading roles by identifying market opportunities and innovating rapidly.

Indian Space Policy 2023 :



- The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) this year released the Indian Space Policy 2023, on which it had been working for a few years. The policy has been welcomed as a progress towards India's entry into the new space age.
- Until the early 1990s, India's space industry and space economy were defined by ISRO. In these, private sector participation was limited to supporting ISRO's design and specifications.
- The Indian Space Policy 2023 is an initiative by the Government of India to allow entry of private enterprises in all activities ranging from launching satellites and rockets into space to operating earth stations.

India has also taken several steps to improve the space sector in the past. Which are as follows –



- **First Satellite Communication Policy:** This policy was introduced in 1997, in which guidelines were issued regarding Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the satellite industry. However, it was later liberalized, but First in private sector towards satellite communication policy There was not much enthusiasm to be seen.

- **Remote Sensing Data Policy:** This policy was introduced in 2001, revised in 2011 and then replaced as the National Geospatial Policy in 2016, further liberalized in 2022. .
- **Draft Space Activities Bill :** This bill was introduced in 2017, which lapsed with the dissolution of the then Lok Sabha in 2019. The Government of India was expected to introduce a new bill in the year 2021, but the Government of India seems to be probably satisfied with the new policy issued by ISRO.

Reasons for India's involvement of private investors in the space sector:

- **Backwardness of India :** India's share in the global space economy is low, and this can be strengthened by India involving private sector investors.
- **Tapping the full potential of the Indian space sector :** Promoting this can increase India's space economy, thereby creating more employment opportunities.
- **Revolution initiated by the private sector in the space sector :** Promoting private companies can revolutionize new technological and entrepreneurial areas in the space sector.
- **Safety and Security :** Use of indigenous satellites by India can improve self-reliance in the security and defense sector.
- **Promoting entrepreneurship in the space sector:** : Promoting private companies in India's space sector can make Indian youth and entrepreneurs more interested in the field of entrepreneurship in the space sector.
- **To make the Indian space industry at par with global industry :** Encouraging the private sector may have the potential to keep the Indian space program a seller in the global space market.
- **Improvement in economy :** Inclusion of private investors can increase the space economy, thereby strengthening India's position at the international level.
- **Achieving self-reliance in the space sector** : With the support of private sector investors, India can achieve self-reliance in the space sector.
- **Creation of employment opportunities :** The growth of the private sector in India's space sector can create new employment opportunities, which can create a vibrant sector for youth and entrepreneurship.
- **Support in global competition :** Promoting the private sector can make India's space program globally competitive.
- **Promoting private entrepreneurship in space and high technology :** Enabling Indian youth and entrepreneurs in private sector activities in India's space sector can lead to new innovations for new energy and products in the high technology sector.
- **Improvement in science and technology in the space sector :** India's partnership with the private sector can improve new technologies and science in the space sector.

Thus, by involving private sector investors, India can move forward in the space sector and become more powerful in the global space market.

Objective of Indian Space Policy 2023 :



The objective of the Indian Space Policy 2023 is to – 'Enable, encourage and develop a thriving commercial presence in space. A summary of the main points of this policy can be provided:

- **Indian National Space Augmentation and Authorization Center (InSPaCe) :** Under this policy, InSPaCe has been created which will act as a single window clearance and authorization for

space launches, launch pad establishment, purchase and sale of satellites and high-resolution data dissemination. This will also include partnerships with non-governmental bodies and government companies. INSPaCe will create a stable and predictable regulatory framework.

- **New Space India Limited (NSIL)** : Its purpose is to be responsible for the commercialization of space-related components, technologies, and platforms as well as the buying and selling of created space technologies.
- **Department of Space** : This department provides overall policy formulation and guidelines related to India's space sector and is the nodal department for implementing space technologies in India. It will also work with the Ministry of External Affairs towards international cooperation and coordination in the field of global space governance and programmes. The objective of this department is to create a mechanism to resolve disputes related to space activities.
- **Role of ISRO** : According to this policy, ISRO will now get a chance to move out of the traditional role with industries and transfer mature systems for commercial use. This will give ISRO the opportunity to develop more technologies, new systems, and finance long-term projects.

Thus, the Indian Space Policy 2023 aims to take significant steps towards a prosperous and developed space sector.

Result of investment by private sector in India's space sector :



- With investment by the private sector in the space sector in India, it is playing an important

role in space activities.

- In this, established private sector companies (NGEs) are obtaining permission to set up and conduct all types of activities in the space sector.
- This includes space objects, ground-based assets, communications, remote sensing, navigation, and other related services.
- Satellites can be self-owned and can be bought or leased with investment by private sector investors.
- Communication services can be received from India or abroad and remote sensing data can be transmitted within India or abroad.
- NGEs can design and operate launch vehicles and establish their own infrastructure for space transportation.
- NGEs can now file with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and facilitate the commercial return of satellite resources. This gives them international recognition and an opportunity to collaborate with various organizations.
- This makes it clear that the entire scope of space activities is now open to the private sector. Security agencies may task NGEs to provide solutions to meet specific needs.
- The private sector in India's space exploration and research has given a new direction to the space activities and can help in providing a viable solution to meet the specific needs of India's security agencies.

Shortcomings prevalent in the policy of investment by private sector investors in the space sector in India :

Some suggestions to overcome the shortcomings in the policy for investment by private sector investors in the space sector in India and lack of timelines for IN-SPaCe phases –

- **Determining the time limit:**
 - The Government of India should set a sta-

ble time frame for IN-SPACe to ensure its establishment and operationalization, and so that IN-SPACe can obtain authorization from the legislature.

- **To determine clarity of FDI and licensing rules:**

- The Government of India needs clear rules and regulations regarding FDI and licensing in the envisaged policy framework. Clear rules for government procurement, liability in case of violations and dispute settlement should be set for new space start-ups.

- **Providing legislative authority to IN-SPACe:**

- The Government of India should pass a bill for this sector, so that IN-SPACe can get statutory status. The bill should set timelines for ISRO and IN-SPACe and also include directions for foreign investment and government support.

- **To promote more support and discipline:**

- The Government of India should develop a positive discipline and support system in the space sector, providing government support to new space start-ups. The Government of India should make schemes to promote investment and provide support to new enterprises.

- **To develop constitutional and prosperity structure:**

- India's space sector should maintain its prosperity structure for growth, so that space start-ups can get the necessary constitutional, technical and financial support. Through these means, the government and IN-SPACe can develop and take new energetic and successful actions in the space sector.

Conclusion / Path to solution :

- IN-SPACe is a regulatory body but does not have legislative authority. Therefore, the Government of India should make it a legislative authority by amending the Indian Constitution.
- The government should keep the regulatory en-

vironment of the space sector clear.

- Space Policy 2023 is a forward-looking document that reflects good intentions and vision. But it is not enough. There is an urgent need to set a timeline to provide the necessary legal framework to turn this vision into reality so that India can be successfully launched into the Second Space Age. The government should bring a bill that provides statutory status to IN-SPACe and also sets a timeline for both ISRO and IN-SPACe. The Bill should also address ambiguities related to foreign investment, government support for new space startups, etc.
- In this process, the government needs to maintain a clear regulatory environment, reduce red tape, increase public support and facilitate Indian companies' access to foreign markets. Without this, the full benefits of liberal policies that increase this support cannot be realized. Thus, India's space sector is moving towards new heights and providing a new opportunity for private companies to play a role in it.
- The government needs to ensure the regulatory environment allows the space sector to function and meet high quality and safety standards.



PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding measures to realign merit in the age of Artificial Intelligence.

1. In the age of artificial intelligence, it is important to pursue new systems in education.
2. To organize competence in the era of artificial intelligence, it is necessary to develop a hu-

man-machine partner.

3. Artificial intelligence can be used to enhance competency in the fields of health and mental health.
4. The use of artificial intelligence technology can also be seen as an invasion of an individual's privacy.

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

- (A) Only 1 and 3
- (B) Only 2 and 4
- (C) None of these.
- (D) All of these.

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Indian Space Policy 2023 in the new era of India's space sector.

1. India's space sector is ushering in a new era in which private sector investors are getting the right to invest 100 percent.
2. The Remote Sensing Data Policy was introduced in 2001, which was replaced by the National Geospatial Policy in 2016.
3. The objective of the Indian Space Policy 2023 is to – 'Enable, encourage and develop a thriving commercial presence in space'.
4. The Government of India should issue a guideline to ISRO, so that IN-SPACe can get statutory status.

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

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

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	D
2.	D

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. What do you understand about Artificial Intelligence technology? In front of a developing country like India Discuss in detail the challenges arising in the development of artificial intelligence technology and its solutions.

Q2. Highlighting the main provisions of ISRO's role in India's space sector, discuss how India can become self-reliant and a global leader in the space sector with the participation of private investors under the Indian Space Policy 2023 in the new era of India's space sector. Can play the role of a major space power? Give a logical explanation.

ECONOMY

END OF DISCRIMINATION VS GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

WHY IN THE NEWS?



- Recently, the Supreme Court of India in the case “Union of India and Others vs. Former Lieutenant Selina John” has taken a strong stand against the patriarchal mentality and archaic idea and has ruled that the rules punishing female employees for getting married are unconstitutional. .
- The Supreme Court of India, while giving its judgment in this case, remarked that –**“Termination of a woman’s employment because she gets married is a serious case of discrimination and inequality. “Acceptance of such patriarchal norms undermines human dignity and the right to non-discriminatory and fair treatment by the State.”**
- The Supreme Court has upheld the rights of Selina John, a former Lieutenant and Permanent Commissioner of the Military Nursing Service of the Indian Army. Celina was dismissed from service in 1988 because she got married.
- A bench headed by Justice Sanjiv Khanna directed the Central government to pay Rs 60 lakh as compensation to Ms John within eight weeks.
- The government had appealed in the apex court against a decision of the Lucknow bench of the Armed Forces Tribunal.
- The tribunal bench had ruled in favor of Celina in 2016. Pointing out that her dismissal was “wrongful and illegal”, the court said the rule against marriage was applicable only to female nursing officers.
- Women in India have been fighting a long and hard battle for gender equality in the military.
- Women in India were granted permanent commission to women in the Indian Army and Armed Forces in 2020 and 2021 following the decisions given by the Supreme Court.
- The Supreme Court said that –**“The armed forces in India need to translate into action the statement that the Indian Army is encouraging more and more women to join the force.”**
- The situation for women in India is not much better even in the civilian sector and women are often asked uncomfortable personal questions during job interviews. They are also questioned about future plans related to marriage and motherhood.
- Labor force participation of women in the labor force – According to the latest periodic labor force data (October-December 2023), the participation of women of all ages in India is only 19.9 percent.
- Even today in India, girls in rural areas, especially from poorer sections, have to leave school due to various reasons ranging from financial to lack of proper toilets.
- In terms of gender equality, the UN Gender Snapshot Report 2023 states that unless reform measures are taken from a gender equality perspective, future generations of women will continue to spend a disproportionate amount of time on household chores and duties compared to men and Will stay away from leadership roles.
- Overall Gender Gap: According to the Gender

Gap Report, 2023 – India ranks 127th out of 146 countries in terms of gender equality.

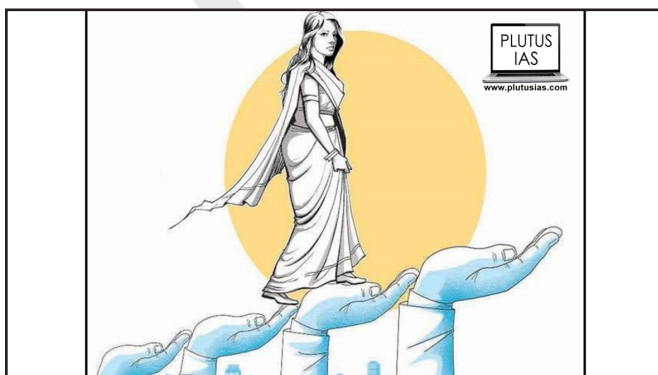
Meaning of gender equality:

- Gender equality means that men and women or boys and girls should have equal rights, responsibilities and equal opportunities. It is not just a social issue, but it is also a human right that provides all individuals with the right to live with a sense of prosperity and dignity through equality.
- According to UN Women – Gender equality does not mean that women and men are equal, but it means that they should have equal rights, freedoms, and opportunities based on their capabilities and choices. Its objective is to increase social awareness against gender discrimination, violence against women, and other gender problems and to establish a sense of equality in the society.
- It also includes that the achievement of gender equality is essential for a well-educated and well-governed society, where all individuals have equal rights and opportunities based on their willingness and ability. This brings harmony and prosperity in the society which helps in the direction of prosperity and progress. Gender equality is not only an ideal but also the cornerstone of a prosperous and prosperous society.

Meaning of women empowerment:

- The objective of women empowerment is to empower women at social, economic, political, and personal levels. The purpose of this process is to provide women with the right to freedom and equality in all spheres of their lives.

Major components of women empowerment:



Following are the main five components of women empowerment –

- **self respect** :It is very important for women to have a sense of self-respect. Through this, they recognize their capabilities and abilities and by knowing the right to equality in the society, they remain conscious of their rights.
- **Right to choose options and take decisions**: Women should have the right to make free choices and decisions in their lives, be it at home or in the workplace, women should have the right to make free choices and decisions everywhere and in every situation in their lives. There should be a right to take.
- **Access to opportunities and resources**::Women must have access to education, employment, healthcare, and other resources so that they can truly develop their capabilities.
- **Women have the right to control their lives**:- Women should be positively involved in the decisions of their lives, whether inside or outside the home. Women should have the right to freely control their lives everywhere and in every situation.
- **Ability to participate in social change at national and international level**: Women must be empowered to actively plan and participate in equitable transformation of the social and economic system.

Following are the three main dimensions of women empowerment –

- **Socio-cultural empowerment**: To provide women with the ability to express their views freely and participate in social change. The main dimension of empowerment is?
- **economic empowerment** :Making women economically independent and providing them the ability to actively participate in economic development is a major dimension of women empowerment.
- **Political empowerment**: Making women understand their increasing role in participating in political processes, increasing participation

in policies, and representation is also a major dimension of women empowerment.

All these dimensions together indicate the process of making women capable, independent, and equal as human beings.

Relationship between gender equality and women empowerment:

- The relationship between women empowerment and gender equality is a deep and reciprocal relationship and it is important to understand the interrelationship of the two. To achieve gender equality, women must have equal rights, opportunities, and equal status in society. Women empowerment also means that women have control over their lives, express their opinions, and are empowered in various areas of life.
- In Indian society, women have had the privilege of worshiping goddesses since ancient-medieval times, but with time there were many obstacles for women to reach higher positions in the society. Despite this, many powerful women leaders and politicians have also emerged in Indian history, who have not only made significant contributions in their fields but have also caused change in the society.
- In India, from the ancient-medieval period to the pre-independence period, women have been worshiped through special religious and cultural titles, but they have not enjoyed full equality in society. The society changed through many reforms like Women's Welfare Movement, Sati Abolition Act, Widow Remarriage Act, Child Marriage Restraint Act.
- The socio-religious reform movement (19th century) also took many steps towards women empowerment. Religious reforms against the practice of Sati, the passage of laws such as the Widow Remarriage Act, and the Child Marriage Restraint Act led to social change and women gained more rights.
- In pre-independence India, socio-religious reform movements brought positive changes in terms of women empowerment. Besides, wom-

en's organizations also raised their voice on the issue of gender equality and spread awareness in the society.

- During the independence movement, Mahatma Gandhi gave women a leading role in bringing about positive changes in the society. She inspired women to participate in the freedom struggle and made them courageous to demand their rights in the political and social sphere. Even in the freedom struggle led by Gandhiji, women remained conscious of their contribution and got a chance to play a bigger role in the society.
- After independence, the Indian Women's Council, Indian Women's Association, and other women's organizations have been struggling for gender equality and women's empowerment in India. These organizations have inspired women to fight for their rights and bring positive changes in their lives.
- Thus, the struggle for women empowerment and gender equality is going on simultaneously and it is progressing towards equality and justice in the society. To promote this, it is important to positively support the society and encourage gender equality.
- In the present time, support towards women empowerment and gender equality is increasing rapidly and everyone should get the right to equality in the society. It is necessary for all of us to support this path forward through improvements in education, employment, health, and social harmony.

In post-independence India, there was a renewal of women's empowerment and gender equality movements during the peace period. This happened mainly due to the following reasons –

After independence most of the women workers became involved in nation building work: After independence, many women became more active in public life and played roles in politics, education, and other fields.

The trauma of the partition of India diverted attention from contemporary women's issues: Due

to divisions in India's traditional society, women's issues were not the focus. After independence, this situation changed and women's issues started being discussed.

After the 1970s, there was a renewal of women's empowerment and gender equality movements in India.

Known as the second phase of the Indian women's movement, major women's organizations launched several important initiatives to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. As –

Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA): This organization worked to improve the condition of women working in the unorganized sector and provided them support for self-employment.

Annapurna Mahila Mandal (AMM): This organization worked for the welfare of women and girls and provided them support in education, health, and other areas.

Current status and challenges of women in India:



Recently, the government has launched several schemes to promote gender equality and women empowerment. Although there has been some improvement, there are still many challenges in providing equal opportunities to women in India and discrimination against them continues.

The government has launched several new initiatives to empower women in various fields, such as entrepreneurship support, education, health services and social status.

The objective of these efforts is to provide equality, freedom, and protection of rights to women in the society. Although these problems still exist, steps are

being taken towards positive efforts and change.

The current situation of women in India is a complex mix that includes both prosperity and challenges. Here are some key aspects to look at:

- **Gender inequality:** Due to old cultural trends and caste system in India, problems of gender inequality still exist. Sex ratio, maternal mortality rate, and inequality in education are the main evidence of this.
- **Socio-cultural inequality:** As a result of social and cultural norms of Indian society, women are often deprived of various opportunities. Child marriage and unequal male rights are also examples of this.
- **Economic inequality:** Women's pay gap, informal employment, and under-representation in the highest positions exacerbate this.
- **Political inequality:** At the social and political level, women are under-represented. The lack of women members in Parliament and state assemblies challenges this.
- **Gender based violence:** The commonness of gender-based violence against women makes it a serious problem.
- **Education :** The best and most important way for the progress and better future of any society is education, but even in this, women have not yet got equal opportunity in many areas. Facing these problems, there is a need for policies and steps to enable empowerment of women at literacy, health, employment, and political levels in the society. People should promote gender equality and mutual harmony so that every person gets equal opportunities and can move towards prosperity.

Importance of gender equality and women empowerment:



- Women empowerment and achieving gender equality is an important process to create a prosperous and equitable society. Its overall importance lies in social, economic, political, and cultural changes.

Social Justice :

Accepting gender equality increases the feeling of justice in the society. Women empowerment gives them proper status in the society and helps in reducing social inequality.

To play an important role in the progress of the nation:

The positive contribution of women plays an important role in the progress of the nation. If we want to include all members of the society, it is necessary to empower women.

Socio-cultural importance:

Gender equality and women empowerment lead to steps towards building a peaceful and equitable society. This reduces violence against women and maintains harmony in the society.

Economic importance:

Giving women equal rights and opportunities also improves economic prosperity. They are capable and contribute to their families and society, which also benefits the nation.

Political importance:

- Supporting women and promoting them into leadership roles helps in better decision making in the political process. A positive environment towards women is created in the society through women MPs and Mahila leaders.
- Gender equality and women empowerment lead to prosperity, harmony, and an empowered society against injustice. Thus, gender equality and women empowerment have social, economic, political, and cultural significance, which helps in establishing prosperity, harmony, and justice in the society.

The Indian Constitution has many provisions for gender equality and women empowerment. Some

major provisions for gender equality and women empowerment are as follows –

- **Fundamental Rights (Article 14):** All citizens have the right to equality and protection under the common law, which also includes women.
- **Fundamental Rights (Article 15):** Under this right, the consequences for women There is a ban on discrimination, which prevents gender discrimination.
- **Fundamental Rights (Article 16):** Under this right, all citizens of India have the right to equality in government employment and jobs, due to which women have also been included.
- **Fundamental Rights (Article 21):** Under this right, direct citizens of India The right to security of life and personal liberty includes the right of women to live with decency and dignity.
- **Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 39):** Under the Directive Principles of State Policy, there is a provision of equal pay for equal work to every citizen of India, which also includes women.
- **Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 42):** Under this, there is a provision of maternity relief and leave for fair and humane conditions of work for women as citizens of India, thereby including women.
- **Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 44):** Under this, there is a provision of Uniform Civil Code, which gives equal rights to women in marriage, divorce, inheritance etc.
- **Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 45):** Under Article 45 mentioned in the Constitution of India, every citizen of India has the provision of early childhood care and education for their children, which also includes the girl child.
- **Fundamental Duties (Article 51A):** As a fundamental right granted to the citizens of India, every citizen has a fundamental duty to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
- **Fundamental Duties (Article 51A):** Under this, every parent/guardian in India has a fundamen-

tal duty to provide educational opportunities to their children.

- **Nari Shakti Vandan Act (Women's Reservation Act) 2023:** Under Women's Reservation Act 2023 The provision includes one-third reserved seats for women in the Lok Sabha, Legislative Assembly and Delhi Assembly.

Through these provisions, the Indian Constitution has encouraged women empowerment and equality, thereby attempting to reduce gender discrimination in Indian society.

Provisions for gender equality and women empowerment in India:

There are many legal provisions for women empowerment and gender equality in India, which attempt to keep women safe in the society and provide protection to their rights as citizens of India –

Socio-cultural empowerment of women:

Indian Penal Code (IPC): : It takes cognizance of crimes against women including rape, sexual harassment, dowry deaths, and acid attacks and ensures strict action against them.

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005: This Act allows victims of domestic violence to obtain protection orders and residence rights, which helps them stay safe.

Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 : Under this, giving and taking dowry is prohibited and there is a provision for punishment for its violation.

Sati (Prevention) Commission Act, 1987: Under this, the practice of Sati has been declared a punishable offence, due to which this practice is prohibited.

Child Marriage Prohibition Act, 2006: Due to this, to prevent child marriage, the minimum marriage age for girls has been made 18 years.

Economic empowerment of women:

Minimum Wage Act, 1948: This Act determines the minimum wage for all workers, including women.

Equal Remuneration Act, 1976: This helps in achieving

the goal of gender equality in the workplace, as it prohibits discrimination in wages and salaries on the basis of gender.

Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 : Through this Act, maternity leave and other benefits are provided to working women.

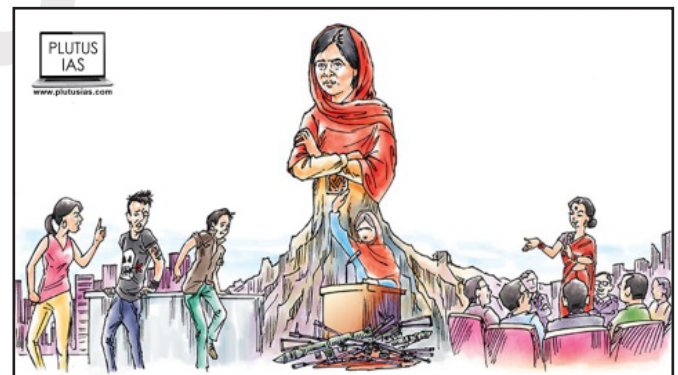
Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013: This has created a system to prevent and redress sexual harassment in workplaces which helps women feel safe and supported.

Political empowerment of women:

Representation of the People Act, 1950 : With this, women have been given the right to vote and contest elections equal to men.

Delimitation Commission Act, 2002 : Due to this, it has been ordered to consider the number of women voters while determining the constituencies, which increases the electoral capacity of women.

Government schemes for women empowerment and gender equality in India:



The Government of India has launched many schemes in the field of women empowerment and gender equality, which aim to make women active and independent in the society. The main goal of these schemes is to provide rights, education, health, and economic independence to women.

- **National Women Empowerment Policy:** The objective of this policy is to promote the overall development of women, including strengthening their education, health, and economic status.

- **National Mission for Women Empowerment (NMEW):** The mission provides support to women in various areas for empowerment, such as education, employment, and health.
- **Gender Budget:** This budget is implemented to promote gender equality between women and men, so that they get equal status in the society.
- **BayT Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana (BBBP):** The main objective of this scheme is to improve the population of daughters and make them educated.
- **Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY):** Through this scheme, women get quality health services, which improves their health condition.
- **Stand Up India Scheme:** Under this scheme, entrepreneurship is being promoted by providing loans to women from Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and minority communities.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY):** Through this scheme, basic banking services are being provided to women, which improves their economic condition.
- **Women Leadership Development Programme:** Under this programme, women are being trained in political roles so that they can play a greater role in the society.

Through these schemes, the government is trying to provide a positive environment for empowerment of Indian women in the society. These programs are helping women take steps towards prosperity and equality by involving them in various fields.

Challenges for women empowerment and gender equality:

Despite the hard work done towards gender equality and women empowerment in India, there are many challenges that hinder this effort.

Social challenges facing women:

- **Discriminatory Social Norms:** Due to historical reasons, there is discrimination in democratic and cultural norms in India, due to which women move towards equal rights in the society.

- **Stereotypical portrayal of women's role::** The conservative thinking in Indian society has made women interested only in domestic work, due to which they are finding it difficult to progress in outside fields.
- **Low literacy rate of women::** In many states and areas of India, the literacy rate of women is still very low, which is having a direct impact on their social and economic status.



Economic challenges facing women:

- **Less employment opportunities:** Women do not get many opportunities in the field of employment, and when they do, they are mostly placed in insecure and low-paying fields.
- **Glass Ceiling:** Women have difficulty reaching the top positions, known as the "glass ceiling". This hinders them from reaching promotions and good positions.
- **Economic inequalities:** Most women in India are facing economic inequality, which is preventing them from becoming independent and capable.

Political challenges facing women:

- **Low Political Representation:** Women have very low political representation in India, which results in them having little voice in public decisions.
- **'Mukhiya Pati' or 'Sarpanch Pati' Culture:** In most places in the rural areas of many states of India, women have only nominal political representation, and even this remains with their husbands or male relatives.

Other challenges facing women:

- **Inadequate implementation of laws:**

There should be official and positive implementation of laws in India so that women can properly utilize their rights.

- **Challenges emerging as a result of globalization:**

As a result of globalization and urbanization in India, women are also facing new challenges in which they need adequate protection and support. To meet these challenges, society must collectively cooperate and ensure women have access to higher education, more employment opportunities, and support.

Conclusion / Path to solution :



Following are some of the major measures suggested for women empowerment and gender equality in India –

Social empowerment of women:

- **Change in social attitude:**

To expand social awareness to change social attitudes and explain the importance of gender equality in society.

- **Providing better educational opportunities to women**

To provide higher education opportunities to women for equality in the society and to improve the quality of education to make them competent in various fields.

- **Ensuring women's safety:**

Legal measures: Taking tough legal action for the safety of women and maintaining strong laws.

- **Social change:** Making people understand the importance of gender equality through social change and encouraging collective movements to support it.

Economic empowerment of women:

- **skill development among women** To provide necessary skills and training to women so that they can become competent in various economic sectors.
- **Access to credit:** To provide positive credit facilities to women to make them financially independent and enable them to participate in business.

Political empowerment of women:

- **Promoting political participation:** To encourage women to actively participate in political processes and promote them into leadership roles.
- **Developing leadership among women:** To train women through leadership development programs so that they can play leadership roles in the society.
- There is a need for collective efforts towards women empowerment and gender equality in India so that we can move towards prosperity and a harmonious, equal and cohesive society with all sections of the society.
- The Court's opinion on the unconstitutionality of rules that exclude marriage and domestic partnership of women employees as grounds for ineligibility should be heeded by all organizations so that workplaces become enabling for women rather than hindering them.
- Women in India will have to break the barriers to education, employment and opportunities.

WTO AGREEMENT ON FISHING: INDIA'S PERSPECTIVES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SMALL-SCALE FARMING

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The National Fishworkers Forum requested that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry persuade the World Trade Organisation to exclude small-scale fishing from fisheries subsidies ahead of the organisation's 13th Ministerial Conference.

STATUS OF INDIA'S MARINE FISHING

- **Production:** India ranks third globally in fish production, boasting an 8% share and 4.12 million tonnes in 2021-22. This contributes significantly to food security and livelihoods.
- **Sustainability Efforts:** Recent assessments indicate that 82.5% of India's marine fish stocks are within sustainable levels, reflecting progress in management practices.
- **Economic Contribution:** The sector generates significant income, employing millions and contributing 1.1% to India's GDP.
- The **National Fishworkers Forum** requested that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry persuade the World Trade Organisation to exclude small-scale fishing from fisheries subsidies ahead of the organisation's **13th Ministerial Conference**.
- India is the only nation with a high population of small-scale fishermen.

ABOUT WTO AGREEMENT ON FISHERIES SUBSIDIES

- The Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies is the first-ever multilateral trade deal built on the foundation of environmental sustainability.
- Adopted at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference, it directly addresses Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.6, aiming to end harmful fishing subsidies by 2020.
- This tackles **three key issues**: **1)** overfish-

ing, **2)** excess fishing capacity, and **3)** illegal fishing fueled by subsidies.

- The Agreement bans several types of harmful subsidies:
 - Those that encourage illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing
 - Those that support fishing overfished stocks
 - Those given to fishing activities in unregulated high seas
- **Transparency is Key:** The Agreement strengthens the notification of fisheries subsidies by WTO members, allowing for better monitoring and ensuring compliance.
- **Funding for Sustainability:** A voluntary funding mechanism established by the WTO will support developing countries in integrating sustainability into their fisheries policies, strengthening management systems, and improving transparency.
- **Building Capacity:** Recognizing the challenges faced by developing nations, the Agreement includes targeted technical assistance and capacity building to help them implement its provisions.
- **Walking the Extra Mile:** Members are encouraged to take special care when granting subsidies to foreign vessels or activities targeting unknown fish stocks.
- **Special Considerations:** To ensure fairness, the Agreement includes special and differential treatment for developing countries and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). For example, dispute settlement mechanisms won't apply to them under certain conditions.

INDIA'S STANCE ON FISHERIES SUBSIDIES BOILS DOWN TO THESE CRITICAL POINTS:

- **Small Fry, Big Responsibility:** India argues it's a low-subsidy nation with a large, dependent fishing community relying on sustainable practices, unlike some advanced nations with bigger subsidies and industrial practices.

- **IUUs, Out!:** The Agreement's ban on subsidies for Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing is seen as a win, protecting coastal resources and livelihoods.
- **Polluters Pay:** India believes developed nations with a history of large-scale fishing and depletion should shoulder greater responsibility in reducing subsidies, following the "polluter pays" principle.
- **Gradual Shift, Not Sudden Drop:** India pushes for flexible timelines for developing countries to adjust, considering livelihood challenges and ensuring food security for fishing communities.

SUBSIDIES BY THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT IN THE FISHERY SECTOR

- **Prime Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY):** Aiming to bridge substantial gaps in productivity and production within the fisheries sector, instil innovation, and integrate cutting-edge technology, among other initiatives.
- **2020 National Fisheries Policy:** Unveiling a comprehensive and unified 'National Fisheries Policy, 2020' that amalgamates the National Policy on Marine Fisheries, 2017 (NPMF), the Draft National Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy (NIFAP), and the Draft National Mariculture Policy (NMP), incorporating elements of post-harvest practices.
- **Sagar Parikrama:** Embarking on a maritime journey along the coastal belt to showcase solidarity with fish farmers and stakeholders, embodying the spirit of the 75th Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Amber Box's category of subsidies is subject to reduction commitments under the Agreement on Agriculture
2. Uruguay Round of WTO negotiations led to the creation of the Agreement on Agriculture
3. The primary objective of the WTO Agreement

on Agriculture is to enhance global agricultural trade

How many of the statements above are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Q2. What are the three pillars of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture?

- A. Subsidies, Tariffs, and Export Quotas
- B. Market Access, Domestic Support, and Export Subsidies
- C. Intellectual Property, Sanitary Measures, and Technical Barriers
- D. Trade Facilitation, Services, and Dispute Settlement

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	B
2.	B

MAINS QUESTION

Q1. Examine the challenges and opportunities presented by the Agreement on Agriculture for small-scale farmers in India. How can these challenges be addressed to ensure inclusive growth in the agricultural sector?

Q2. Analyse the impact of the Peace Clause on India's domestic support policies. How does this clause influence the country's ability to implement agricultural support programs without facing trade disputes?

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

REPORT ON RENEWABLE ENERGY BY CLIMATE ANALYTICS

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Think-Tank Climate Analytics recently released a report titled “Tripling renewables by 2030: Interpreting the global goal at the regional level,” which estimates the necessary investments and describes what a 1.5°C-aligned rollout of renewables would entail locally.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

TRIPLING RENEWABLE EFFORTS FOR ACHIEVING THE 1.5°C TARGET:

To meet the 1.5°C goal outlined in the Paris Agreement, the global capacity for renewables must increase to 11.5 TW by 2030, marking a 3.4-fold rise from 2022 levels. This necessitates diverse regions to adapt at varying rates, influenced by the imperative to phase out fossil fuels and anticipated growth in electricity demand.

INVESTMENT REQUIREMENTS:

Meeting the 1.5°C-aligned target demands a USD 12 trillion investment in the power system by 2030, averaging USD 2 trillion annually from 2024 onward. Approximately two-thirds of this investment would be allocated to renewable installations, with the remainder dedicated to grid and storage infrastructure.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM DIFFERENT REGIONS:

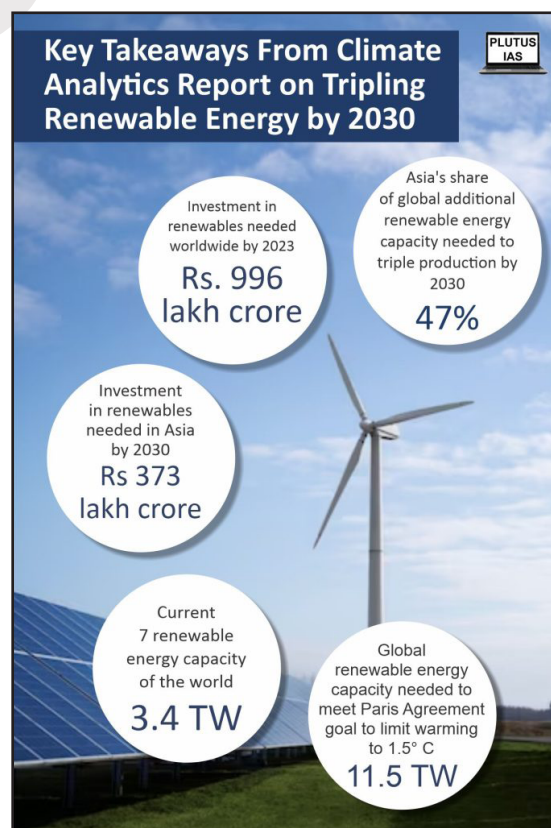
Asian Region: Asia emerges as the most substantial contributor, accounting for approximately 47% of the required 8.1 TW additions in global renewable capacity by 2030. Asia is notably the region making significant progress in tripling renewables in line with the 1.5°C goal, **driven by notable growth in China and India, compensating for slower advancements in countries like South Korea.**

However, the persistent construction of coal-fired

power plants in China and India poses a considerable risk, potentially jeopardising a 1.5°C-aligned transition in the power sector or resulting in substantial stranded assets.

Sub-Saharan Africa: Scaling rapidly at 6.6 times, Sub-Saharan Africa benefits from low existing renewable capacity and high energy access needs. The forecasted 66% per capita growth in electricity demand from 2020 to 2030 in the region contributes to a renewables scale-up rate double the global average. However, achieving this accelerated rollout requires a significant increase in international climate finance.

OECD Region: The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) contributes the second-largest share of global capacity additions, **accounting for approximately 36%.** Renewable scaling in this region occurs at a slower pace of 3.1 times due to modest electricity demand growth and a higher existing renewable capacity in 2022.



INVESTMENT GAP AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

A substantial investment gap exists, with the world projected to fall short by USD 5 trillion between 2024 and 2030. Bridging this gap could be achieved entirely by redirecting investments from fossil fuels to renewables and grids, aligning the power sector with the 1.5°C target.

POLICY GUIDELINES:

Alongside escalating renewable efforts, governments must terminate public support and subsidies for fossil fuels to effectively reduce emissions. To steer endeavours towards this goal, governments require a transparent roadmap and information on investment and climate finance needs. Civil society needs benchmarks to hold governments accountable for their commitments.

CHALLENGES AND URGENCY:

Sub-Saharan Africa confronts significant challenges, including insufficient investment and international support, potentially denying millions the advantages of renewable energy. Urgent action is imperative to secure financing and support renewable deployment in less affluent regions, ensuring the fulfilment of the COP28 pledge.

INDIAN INITIATIVES TOWARD CLEAN ENERGY

India has been at the forefront of adopting and promoting initiatives aimed at transitioning towards cleaner and more sustainable energy sources. These efforts align with the global push to combat climate change and enhance environmental sustainability. Several key initiatives exemplify India's commitment to clean energy:

NATIONAL SOLAR MISSION (NSM):

Launched in 2010, NSM sets an ambitious target of deploying 100 GW of solar power capacity by 2022. This mission focuses on increasing the share of solar energy in the country's energy mix, promoting solar technology adoption, and fostering research and development in the solar sector.

PRADHAN MANTRI UJJWALA YOJANA (PMUY):

While not exclusively an energy initiative, PMUY, launched in 2016, aims to provide clean cooking

fuel to households below the poverty line. By distributing LPG connections, the program reduces reliance on traditional biomass for cooking, contributing to a cleaner environment.

NATIONAL WIND-SOLAR HYBRID POLICY:

Introduced in 2018, this policy encourages the development of hybrid projects that combine both wind and solar energy generation. By leveraging the complementary nature of wind and solar resources, India seeks to enhance overall renewable energy capacity and grid stability.

FAME INDIA SCHEME:

The Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME) India Scheme, initiated in 2015, aims to accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) and their manufacturing. By incentivising EV adoption, the scheme contributes to reducing vehicular emissions and promoting a cleaner transportation system.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS**Q1. Consider the following statements:**

1. The Kyoto Protocol aims to protect the ozone layer
2. The main objective of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is conservation of Biodiversity
3. GEF acts as the financial mechanism for the Montreal Protocol
4. Basel Convention is associated with addressing the transboundary movement of hazardous waste

How many of the statements above is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. Only three
- D. All four

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	C

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the economic challenges associated with establishing clean energy infrastructure nationally. How can countries overcome financial barriers to invest in renewable technologies and transition away from traditional energy sources?