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POLICY SHIFTS AND LEADERSHIP CHANGES: THE NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION'S VISION

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Former President Donald Trump has won the U.S. presidency, and Republicans have regained control of the Senate. Control of the House of Representatives—currently held by Republicans with a narrow majority—is still up in the air. If Republicans secure the House, a second Trump administration would gain broader authority to advance its tax, energy, trade, and regulatory agenda.



INDIA-USA RELATIONSHIP TIES TILL NOW:

1. Historical Background

Cold War Era (1947-1991): India's non-alignment and U.S. ties with Pakistan led to a cool relationship, with differences over issues like the Vietnam War and India's ties with the Soviet Union.

Post-Cold War (1991-2000s): India's economic reforms and nuclear tests (1998) initially strained ties, but the 2005 Civil Nuclear Agreement marked a shift toward closer cooperation.

2. Strategic Partnership

Defense Cooperation: India and the U.S. have built strong defence ties, including joint exercises and agreements on defence technology. India is now a "Major Defence Partner" of the U.S.

Counterterrorism & Regional Security: Both countries collaborate on regional security, particularly in the context of China's growing influence and tensions with Pakistan.

3. Economic Ties

Trade & Investment: Bilateral trade exceeds \$160 billion, with the U.S. being a major investor in India. Key sectors include IT, energy, and infrastructure.

FDI: The U.S. is one of the largest sources of foreign direct investment (FDI) into India, and India has increased its investments in the U.S.

4. Global & Regional Cooperation

Indo-Pacific & China: Both countries have a shared interest in countering China's influence, particularly through the Quad (India, U.S., Japan, Australia) framework.

Climate Change & Health: The U.S. and India work together on global issues like climate change, health, and space exploration.

5. People-to-People Ties

Indian Diaspora: The large and influential Indian-American community fosters stronger economic, political, and cultural ties between the two nations.

Education & Tech: There's significant collaboration in education and technology, with many Indian professionals leading U.S. companies.

FURTHERING AREAS OF COOPERATION UNDER THE NEW US ADMINISTRATION:

1. Continuity of Policy

Strategic Cooperation: Both countries have maintained a consistent partnership, emphasizing shared democratic values, security, and global stability.

2. Defense Cooperation

Key Agreements: Growing military ties, with agreements like LEMOA, COMCASA, and BECA, alongside joint exercises, especially in the Indo-Pacific.

Strategic Partnership: India is a major defence partner, strengthening regional security and countering China's influence.

3. People-to-People Ties

Indian Diaspora: The large Indian-American community fosters cultural, educational, and economic links.

Educational Exchange: Thousands of Indian students in the U.S. strengthen long-term ties.

4. Trump Administration's Approach

Stronger Ties: Focused on bolstering defence, trade, and diplomatic relations.

Pakistan: A tougher stance on Pakistan, aligning with India's security concerns.

China: Increased cooperation to counter China's rise in the Indo-Pacific.

5. Pakistan Sanctions

Terrorism & Security: U.S. sanctions and pressure on Pakistan for supporting terrorism aligned with India's security priorities.

6. China Policies

Indo-Pacific Strategy: Shared concerns about China led to stronger ties, including through the Quad (India, U.S., Japan, and Australia) to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific.

ISSUES THAT CAN HUNT INDIA- THE NEW US ADMINISTRATION:

1. Migrations & H-1B Visas

H-1B Visa Restrictions: U.S. visa restrictions for skilled workers, especially in tech, affect Indian professionals. There are concerns about job competition and tightening visa quotas.

2. Trade Issues

Tariffs: Both countries have imposed tariffs on each other's goods, particularly on steel, agricultural products, and tech.

Intellectual Property: Disagreements over U.S. intellectual property protections, particularly affecting India's generic drug industry.

Trade Imbalance: The growing U.S. trade deficit with India remains a concern.

3. Defense & Arms Restrictions

Sanctions: India's defence deals with Russia, like the S-400 missile system, have raised tensions, as U.S. law (CAATSA) sanctions countries that purchase Russian arms.

Cooperation vs. Procurement: While defence ties have strengthened, India's reliance on Russian military equipment complicates full alignment.

4. Regional Organizations & Alliances

China & Indo-Pacific: Both share concerns over China's influence, but India's cautious approach to organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) contrasts with U.S. policies in the Quad.

BRICS: India's participation in BRICS (alongside China) occasionally diverges from U.S.-led initiatives.

5. Global Governance (WTO, WHO)

WTO: Disagreements on agricultural subsidies and intellectual property rights.

WHO: Tensions over U.S. criticism of the WHO during the COVID-19 pandemic, though both countries are now cooperating more on global health issues.

6. Climate Change

Paris Agreement: Differences on climate financing and emission reduction commitments, with India seeking more financial support from developed nations.

7. Tech & Cybersecurity

Data Localization: India's laws requiring data storage within the country create friction with U.S. tech firms.

Cybersecurity: While collaboration on cybersecurity is growing, there are concerns over digital trade and foreign tech control.

MANAGING TIES WITH NEW US ADMINISTRATIONS:

1. Strategic Dialogue & Diplomacy

Regular High-Level Talks: Mechanisms like the 2+2 Dialogue (foreign and defence ministers) and Strategic and Commercial Dialogue can address security, trade, and technological cooperation.

Track-II Diplomacy: Encouraging informal discussions to build trust and resolve sensitive issues.

2. Cooperation in Science, Technology, & Health

Technology Collaboration: Joint ventures in AI, space, and green energy can drive innovation. The U.S. and India can focus on sustainable tech solutions to address global challenges like climate change.

Public Health: Post-COVID, both can collaborate on vaccine development, disease surveillance, and health data technology.

3. Managing Common Concerns (China)

Quad: The U.S., India, Japan, and Australia can counter China's influence by enhancing maritime security, infrastructure investment, and cybersecurity.

I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE, USA): Strengthening energy, water security, and technology ties as a counterbalance to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

4. Economic & Trade Relations

Trade Liberalization: Negotiate agreements to enhance market access and reduce trade barriers, particularly in agriculture and services.

Investment: Foster greater bilateral investments in tech, healthcare, and infrastructure.

5. Global Challenges: Collaborative Action

Climate Change: Both nations should lead global efforts to reduce emissions and invest in clean energy, especially for developing nations.

Geopolitical Stability: Partnering in conflict resolution, ensuring a rules-based international order, and promoting democracy in the Indo-Pacific.

CONCLUSION:

The India-U.S. relationship has evolved into a strategic partnership based on shared values of democracy, security, and economic growth. While challenges like trade disputes, defense procurement, and regional alliances persist, cooperation in areas such as defense, technology, and climate change has strengthened both nations' ties. Moving forward, continued dialogue and collaboration on global issues—particularly countering China's influence, advancing technology, and addressing climate change—will be key. Strengthening defense cooperation and resolving trade concerns will further solidify the partnership.

Prelims Question:

Q. The U.S. has designated India as a "Major Defense Partner" under which administration?

- A. Bill Clinton
- B. George W. Bush
- C. Barack Obama
- D. Donald Trump

Answer: C

Mains Question:

Q. Discuss the evolution of India-U.S. relations from the Cold War era to the present. What factors have contributed to the strengthening of this bilateral relationship?

(250 words, 15 marks)

STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNANCE: THE ROLE OF THE FIFTEENTH FINANCE COMMISSION GRANTS"

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Centre announced on Tuesday that it has disbursed the 15th Finance Commission grants for FY25 to rural local bodies in Kerala, amounting to Rs 266.8 crore. Additionally, Rs 27 crore has been allocated to rural local bodies in Meghalaya for FY22 to address location-specific needs.

This release marks the second instalment of untied grants for Kerala. The funds will be distributed across all eligible local bodies in the state, including 14 district panchayats, 152 block panchayats, and 941 gram panchayats, as per the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

WHAT IS A FINANCE COMMISSION?

A Finance Commission is a constitutional body in India tasked with recommending the distribution of financial resources between the central government and state governments, as well as among state governments themselves. It ensures equitable allocation of funds for the smooth functioning of government operations and supports fiscal decentralization. The Finance Commission is appointed every five years by the President of India.



CONSTITUTIONAL MANDATE:

1. Article 280: the Constitution of India mandates the establishment of a Finance Commission. It outlines the Commission's primary responsibility to recommend the distribution of financial resources between the Union and State governments. The article also empowers the Finance Commission to suggest measures to improve the financial health of the states and address issues related to fiscal imbalances.

2. First Finance Commission: The First Finance Commission was constituted in 1951 under the chairmanship of K. C. Neogy. It aimed to define the financial relations between the Centre and the states after the adoption of the Constitution. The Commission's recommendations helped establish a framework for revenue sharing and resource allocation between the different levels of government in India.

Recent Finance Commissions

Fourteenth Finance Commission (14th FC):

Chairman: Dr. Y.V. Reddy

Period: 2015-2020

Key Recommendation: The 14th FC increased the share of states in the central tax pool from 32% to 42%, marking the highest-ever allocation for states.

Fifteenth Finance Commission (2020-2025)

Chairman: N.K. Singh

Key Recommendations:

1. 41% share of central taxes for states.
2. Focus on grants to local bodies (rural and urban).
3. Performance-based grants for fiscal management and governance.
4. Increased allocation for disaster relief.
5. Special grants for Jammu and Kashmir post-Article 370 abrogation.
6. Fiscal deficit limit of 3% for states.

Major Recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission

1. Devolution of Taxes: The 15th FC recommended that 41% of the divisible pool of taxes be given to states, with adjustments based on the criteria of population, income, and fiscal discipline.

2. Grants to Local Bodies: It proposed untied grants to empower rural local bodies and urban local bodies, with a focus on addressing location-specific needs for better governance and service delivery.

3. Performance-based Grants: The Commission introduced performance-based grants to incentivize states for better fiscal management, improved governance, and achieving milestones in sectors like health and education.

4. Disaster Management: The 15th FC suggested a higher allocation for disaster relief, with an emphasis on a more transparent and effective system for managing natural disasters, particularly in states prone to such events.

5. Special Grants for Jammu and Kashmir: Given the unique circumstances of Jammu and Kashmir post-abrogation of Article 370, the 15th FC recommended special grants for the region.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINANCIAL COMMISSIONS IN STRENGTHENING FISCAL FEDERATIONS:

1. Resource Allocation: Recommends a fair distribution of central tax revenues, ensuring states have sufficient funds for development and governance.

2. Equity and Fairness: Uses criteria like population and income disparity to reduce regional imbalances and support weaker states.

3. Empowering Local Bodies: Allocates grants for local governments (panchayats and municipalities), strengthening decentralized governance.

4. Fiscal Discipline: Sets guidelines on fiscal deficits and borrowing, promoting responsible financial management by states.

5. Disaster Management: Ensures financial preparedness for states to handle natural disasters and unforeseen events.

6. Incentivizing Good Governance: Awards performance-based grants to states demonstrating improved fiscal management and governance.

7. Financial Autonomy: Increases states' financial independence, reducing reliance on central funding.

REASON FOR THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF THE FINANCE COMMISSION:

1. Political Interference: Political pressures often influence the Finance Commission's recommendations, especially when the Centre and states are governed by different parties. This can lead to biased recommendations or delays in the implementation of key suggestions.

2. Limited Implementation Power: While the Finance Commission can recommend resource allocations, it lacks enforcement power. Its recommendations are not binding on the government, and their actual implementation depends on political will and administrative capacity.

3. Inconsistent Fiscal Discipline: Many states struggle to adhere to the fiscal discipline guidelines set by the Commission. Despite recommendations on managing fiscal deficits and public debt, many states continue to overspend or fail to improve revenue generation, leading to fiscal imbalances.

4. Lack of Flexibility: The Finance Commission's framework is often rigid, based on specific criteria such as population and income disparities, which may not fully capture emerging fiscal challenges or the dynamic needs of states.

5. Unequal Resource Distribution: Despite efforts to reduce disparities, resource allocation between states remains unequal. Poorer states may still receive insufficient funds to bridge the development gap, especially when revenue generation and local capacity are weak.

6. Implementation Gaps at Local Levels: The devolution of funds to local bodies (panchayats, municipalities) often faces challenges such as inefficiency, lack of capacity, and corruption at the grassroots level, undermining the intended benefits of financial devolution.

SUGGESTION/RECOMMENDATION TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FINANCE COMMISSION:

1. Stable and Predictable Resource Allocation: Establish a more consistent and long-term formula for resource allocation to reduce uncertainty and provide states with a clearer financial roadmap. This can help states plan better and ensure sustainable development.

2. Enhanced Focus on Local Bodies: Increase the share of grants and devolution for local bodies (panchayats and municipalities) to ensure grassroots-level governance is effectively funded. This would help decentralize governance and improve service delivery at the local level.

3. Performance-Based Incentives: Introduce stronger performance-based grants to incentivize states to improve fiscal management, governance, and public service outcomes. This can encourage states to prioritize reforms and optimize public expenditure.

4. Greater Role in Inter-State Disparities: The Finance Commission should place a stronger emphasis on addressing inter-state fiscal disparities by allocating more resources to poorer and underdeveloped states, thereby ensuring a more equitable distribution of wealth and resources.

5. Simplified Tax Devolution Formula: Simplify the tax devolution formula to make it more transparent and based on easily measurable indicators, such as poverty levels, demographic characteristics, and fiscal performance. This will make the process more accountable and understandable.

6. Support for Fiscal Reforms: The Finance Commission should actively promote fiscal reforms at the state level, including encouraging states to adopt GST (Goods and Services Tax) reforms, implement taxation efficiency measures, and improve tax compliance.

7. Increased Financial Autonomy for States: Empower states with greater financial autonomy by reducing their reliance on Centre-controlled grants and encouraging them to generate their own revenue through tax reforms and better management of state resources.

CONCLUSION:

The Finance Commission is pivotal in ensuring fiscal federalism by recommending the distribution of resources between the Centre and states. However, its effectiveness is often limited by political interference, lack of enforcement powers, and implementation gaps at the local level. To improve its impact, the Finance Commission should focus on stable resource allocation, increase support for local bodies, and introduce performance-based incentives. Simplifying the tax devolution formula, promoting fiscal reforms, and granting greater financial autonomy to states will further strengthen governance and equitable development.

Prelims Question:

Q. Which of the following is the primary responsibility of the Finance Commission as per Article 280 of the Indian Constitution?

A. To recommend the allocation of the central govern-

ment’s budget among various ministries

B. To suggest measures for the distribution of financial resources between the Centre and the states

C. To manage the financial affairs of the Reserve Bank of India

D. To set up a system for the collection of income tax in India

Answer: B

Mains Question:

Q. In the context of the Fifteenth Finance Commission’s recommendations, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the formula used for the devolution of taxes to states. How could it be modified to better address the needs of poorer and underdeveloped states?

(250 words, 15 marks)

PRELIMS BITS: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

WHY IN THE NEWS?

In the 2024 presidential election, Donald Trump emerged victorious against Kamala Harris, marking a significant political event. Trump won several key swing states that were previously held by Biden in 2020. Notably, he flipped states such as Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, which were critical to his success.



PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN INDIA AND THE UNITED STATES:

Aspect	India	United States
Electoral Body	Election Commission of India	Concerned State authorities
Mode of Election	Indirect election	Indirect election
Electoral System	Proportional Representation through a Single Transferable Vote (STV)	Electoral College system (winner-takes-all in most states)
Voters Involved	Elected members of Parliament (MPs) and Legislative Assemblies (MLAs)	Electors chosen by voters in each state
Representation	Votes are weighted based on the population of states and Union Territories	Each state’s electors are equal to the total of its Congressional representation (Senators + House members)
Total Number of Voters	Approx. 4,896 (Elected MPs & MLAs)	538 electors in the Electoral College
Method of Voting	Single transferable vote (STV)	A plurality (winner-takes-all system in most states)
Term Length	5 years	4 years
Eligibility Criteria	Must be a citizen of India, at least 35 years old, eligible to be a member of Lok Sabha	Must be a natural-born citizen, at least 35 years old, resident for 14 years
Role of Voter	Voters cast a vote for one candidate; the value of votes differs by state population	Voters choose electors who then vote for the president
Candidates	Nominated by political parties, but independent candidates can also stand	Nominated by political parties; Independent candidates are also possible
Election Frequency	Every 5 years	Every 4 years

Result Declaration	After counting the votes and declaring the winner based on majority (after transfer)	After the Electoral College vote, officially certified by Congress
Involvement of Popular Vote	No direct role of public votes	Indirectly through electors, though popular vote may influence the outcome
Constitutional Reference	Articles 54 to 67 of the Indian Constitution	Article II of the U.S. Constitution and the 12th Amendment

Prelims Question:

Q. With reference to the constitutional qualifications for the President of India, consider the following statements:

1. The President is elected by a direct popular vote.
2. The Electoral College consists of electors from each state based on its congressional representation.
3. The President serves a term of six years without the possibility of re-election.

How many of the above-given statements are correct?

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

ANSWER: D

PRELIMS BITS: SOUTH ASIAN TELECOMMUNICATION REGULATORS' COUNCIL (SATRC) AND NTN TECHNOLOGY

WHY IN THE NEWS:

Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia recently inaugurated the 25th South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council (SATRC) meeting, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts to build a transparent, secure, and standards-driven future in telecommunications. This meeting focused on strengthening regional cooperation

among South Asian nations to address emerging challenges and foster sustainable digital growth.



WHAT IS SATRC?

The South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council (SATRC) is a collaborative platform that operates under the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) to address regulatory and policy issues related to telecommunications and information and communication technology (ICT) in South Asia. Established in 1997, SATRC aims to facilitate cooperation among telecommunication regulators in the region.

Origin

SATRC was formed as a result of an initiative by the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. Its establishment was driven by the need for a coordinated approach to address common regulatory challenges faced by South Asian countries in the rapidly evolving telecommunications landscape.

Members

The council comprises the heads of regulatory bodies from nine South Asian countries:

- Afghanistan
- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- India
- Iran
- Maldives
- Nepal
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka

Major Areas of Functions

Regulatory Coordination: Discussing and coordinating common regulatory issues among member countries.

Radio Frequency Coordination: Addressing issues related to the allocation and management of radio frequencies.

Standards Development: Promoting the establishment of standards in telecommunications to ensure compatibility and interoperability.

Regulatory Trends and Issues: Analyzing current regulatory trends and addressing emerging challenges in the telecommunications sector.

Telecommunication Development Strategies: Formulating strategies to enhance telecommunication infrastructure and services across the region.

International Affairs: Engaging in discussions related to international telecommunications policies and agreements.

Capacity Building: Facilitating seminars, training, and workshops to enhance the skills and knowledge of regulatory personnel.

NON-TERRESTRIAL NETWORKS (NTNS)

What is NTN?

Non-Terrestrial Networks (NTNs) are advanced wireless communication systems that operate above the Earth's surface. They utilize various platforms, including satellites in low Earth orbit (LEO), high-altitude platform stations (HAPS), and uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS). NTNs are designed to provide seamless connectivity, especially in remote and underserved areas where traditional terrestrial networks may not reach.

Key Features of NTNs

Global Coverage: NTNs extend wireless communication capabilities globally, ensuring connectivity over land, sea, and air, which is crucial for IoT applications and emergency services.

Integration with Terrestrial Networks: NTNs are not meant to replace terrestrial networks but to augment them, providing a hybrid solution that combines the strengths of both satellite and terrestrial communications.

Diverse Applications:

IoT Connectivity: Enabling global IoT deployments for asset tracking, environmental monitoring, and smart agriculture.

Emergency Services: Providing critical communication capabilities during disasters when terrestrial networks may be compromised.

Maritime and Aviation: Enhancing connectivity for vessels and aircraft, improving navigation and operational efficiency.

EVOLUTION OF NTNS

NTN-IoT and NTN-NR: The NTN framework includes two main aspects:

NTN-IoT: Focused on expanding IoT coverage, primarily operating at geostationary (GEO) and low Earth orbit (LEO) altitudes.

NTN-NR: Aimed at linking smartphones and 5G devices directly to satellite networks, facilitating low-data services, voice, and messaging.

Technological Advancements: The development of NTNs is supported by advancements in satellite technology, artificial intelligence, and software solutions that enhance connectivity and network management.

BENEFITS OF NTNS

Seamless Connectivity: NTNs provide uninterrupted access to communication services, regardless of geographical barriers, benefiting individuals and businesses alike.

Support for Emerging Technologies: NTNs are expected to play a significant role in the future of 6G, enabling new services and capabilities such as high-precision location services and integrated sensing.

Economic Growth: By improving connectivity in remote areas, NTNs can drive economic development, enhance public safety, and support critical infrastructure projects.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Growth Potential: The market for NTNs is anticipated to grow significantly, driven by increasing demand for global connectivity and advancements in satellite technology.

Strategic Importance: As nations invest in NTNs, they will play a crucial role in shaping the future of telecom-

munications, particularly in the context of national security and global competitiveness.

CONCLUSION:

Non-terrestrial networks represent a transformative approach to telecommunications, offering innovative solutions to connectivity challenges and paving the way for a more interconnected world.

Prelims Questions:

Q.1. Which of the following are applications of Non-Terrestrial Network (NTN) technology?

1. Global IoT connectivity
2. Emergency communication services
3. Terrestrial broadband internet
4. Maritime and aviation communication

Select the correct answer from the options below:

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

ANSWER: C

Q.2. Consider the following countries:

1. Afghanistan
2. Iran
3. Myanmar
4. Maldives
5. Bhutan

How many of these countries are members of the council comprising the heads of regulatory bodies under SATAC?

- Only two
- Only three
- Only four
- All four

ANSWER: C

“INDIA’S POLITICAL STABILITY STRENGTHENS ITS POSITION AS A GLOBAL APPAREL MANUFACTURING HUB”

WHY IN THE NEWS?

India’s rising prominence as a global apparel sourcing destination is further emphasized by a recent report from the U.S. International Trade Commission (USITC), which highlights political stability as a major factor encouraging U.S. buyers to increase their sourcing from India. As the global garment supply chain grows more intricate, India’s ability to ensure reliable production timelines and reduce the risks associated with political instability has made it an increasingly appealing choice for U.S. buyers.

INDIA’S MARKET SHARE IN U.S. APPAREL IMPORTS (2013-2023) :

Year	India’s Market Share in U.S. Apparel Imports	Value of India’s Apparel Exports to the U.S. (USD Billion)
2013	4%	\$4.2 Billion
2014	4.2%	\$4.6 Billion
2015	4.3%	\$4.9 Billion
2016	4.5%	\$5.1 Billion
2017	4.6%	\$5.3 Billion
2018	4.7%	\$5.6 Billion
2019	4.9%	\$5.9 Billion
2020	5.2%	\$6.2 Billion
2021	5.4%	\$6.7 Billion
2022	5.6%	\$7.1 Billion
2023	5.8%	\$4.6 Billion (Projected, YTD)

Key Observations:

1. Steady Growth: India’s market share in U.S. apparel imports has grown from 4% in 2013 to 5.8% in 2023, a steady increase of 1.8 percentage points over 10 years.

2. Value of Exports: In 2023, India’s apparel exports to the U.S. are projected to reach approximately \$4.6 billion despite fluctuations in global demand and market disruptions.

3. Competitiveness in High-Value Apparel: India has gradually increased its focus on high-value apparel, in-

cluding women's wear, knitted garments, and sustainable fashion, which has contributed to the rise in exports.

4. Shift Away from China: As U.S. buyers reduce their reliance on China, India has captured a larger share of the market, emerging as a reliable sourcing partner.



TEXTILE SECTOR IN INDIA:

1. Size: India is one of the world's largest textile and apparel producers, ranking second globally. The sector is a major source of employment, providing direct jobs to 45 million people, with an additional 100 million in related industries.

2. Production: India is the second-largest producer of silk and one of the top producers of cotton and jute. The country also accounts for 95% of the world's hand-woven fabric production.

3. Exports: India's textile exports are projected to hit \$100 billion by 2030. In 2022, exports reached \$44.4 billion, marking a 41% increase from the previous year.

4. GDP Contribution: The textile industry contributes 2.3% to India's GDP, 13% to industrial production, and 12% to national exports.

5. Industry History: India's textile industry is one of the oldest, with a rich legacy of craftsmanship, handloom traditions, and textile innovations that have shaped its modern growth.

6. Future Outlook: Driven by rising domestic consumption and strong export demand, India's textile industry is

poised for continued growth, with significant opportunities on the global stage.

INDIA'S STRENGTHS IN APPAREL PRODUCTION:

1. Vertical Integration: India's textile industry is highly vertically integrated, covering the entire production process—from cotton farming to spinning, weaving, dyeing, and garment manufacturing. This integration reduces dependence on external suppliers, ensuring more controlled and reliable production.

2. Skilled Labor Force: India boasts a large and skilled workforce, especially in garment finishing and high-quality stitching. This skilled labour is crucial for producing high-value fashion items, making Indian apparel particularly attractive to global markets.

3. Government Support: The Indian government has rolled out initiatives like the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme, aimed at boosting domestic manufacturing and exports. The scheme encourages apparel manufacturers to invest in production capacity, technology, and innovation, positioning India to meet growing international demand.

4. Cotton-Based Apparel: As one of the world's largest producers of cotton, India has a natural advantage in the production of cotton-based garments. This bolsters the country's apparel industry, especially in exports of cotton garments, particularly to the U.S. market.

5. Growing Export Market: India has steadily increased its share in the U.S. apparel market, becoming the fourth-largest supplier. In 2023, India's apparel exports to the U.S. totalled \$4.6 billion, highlighting its growing presence in global trade.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES BOOSTING INDIA'S APPAREL & TEXTILE SECTOR:

1. Khadi India: Promotes Khadi and village industries, supporting rural employment and sustainable fashion. The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) works to enhance production and global visibility.

2. Make in India: Encourages domestic manufacturing across sectors, including textiles, with a focus on modernizing production and attracting foreign investment to increase exports.

3. Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme: Offers financial incentives to manufacturers for producing high-quality textiles and apparel, driving capacity expansion.

sion, technology upgrades, and global competitiveness.

4. PM MITRA (Mega Textile Parks): Establishes textile parks with integrated facilities for spinning, weaving, and garment manufacturing, boosting production efficiency and exports.

5. Atmanirbhar Bharat: Aims to reduce dependence on imports by promoting self-reliance in textile manufacturing, using domestic raw materials and improving efficiency.

6. Handloom Development Program: Supports handloom weavers, providing financial assistance, training, and market access for traditional textile crafts.

7. National Textiles Policy (2019): Targets doubling textile exports to \$60 billion by 2024, creating 35 million jobs, and promoting sustainability and innovation.

8. Skill Development: Programs like the Textile Sector Skill Council (TSC) provide training in garment production, dyeing, and design to enhance industry skills and entrepreneurship.

CHALLENGES IN INDIA'S TEXTILE SECTOR:

1. Increasing Labor Costs: Rising wages in India are making the textile sector less competitive, especially compared to countries with cheaper labour like Bangladesh and Vietnam.

2. Limited Cotton Production: Despite being the largest producer of cotton, India faces fluctuations in supply due to climatic changes and pest attacks, impacting cotton-based garment production.

3. Infrastructure Gaps: Poor logistics and transportation infrastructure lead to high costs and delays, affecting both domestic production and exports.

4. Environmental Impact: The sector faces challenges related to water usage, chemical waste, and pollution, with growing pressure for sustainable practices.

5. Dependence on Imported Technology: India relies heavily on imported machinery and technology, limiting the industry's ability to modernize and stay competitive.

6. Global Competition: India faces stiff competition from China, Bangladesh, and Vietnam, who benefit from lower labour costs and government subsidies.

7. Skilled Labor Shortage: A lack of skilled labour in specialized areas such as designing and modern textile pro-

duction hinders growth in high-value segments.

8. Quality Control Issues: Inconsistent quality standards—especially among SMEs—impact India's reputation in the global market.

CONCLUSION:

India's textile sector is gaining ground globally, with its share of U.S. apparel imports growing from 4% in 2013 to 5.8% in 2023. This growth is fueled by political stability, skilled labour, vertical integration, and government initiatives like the PLI Scheme. While challenges like rising labour costs, cotton supply issues, and infrastructure gaps persist, India's focus on high-value apparel and sustainability strengthens its competitive edge. With ambitious export targets and a growing market presence, India is well-positioned to expand its share, though addressing key challenges will be crucial for sustained growth.

Prelims Question:

Q. Consider the following statements: (2020)

1. The value of Indo-Sri Lanka trade has consistently increased in the last decade.
2. "Textile and textile articles" constitute an important item of trade between India and Bangladesh.
3. In the last five years, Nepal has been the largest trading partner of India in South Asia.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: B

Mains Question:

Q. "Assess the role of international trade agreements and geopolitical dynamics in shaping the future of India's apparel sector. How can India use its political stability to capitalize on changing global trade patterns?"

(250 words, 15 marks)

REVOLUTION ON THE ROOFTOP: A NEW DAWN OF CHANGE”

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The government’s rooftop solar initiative has gained momentum, with 12 million households signing up for the PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana. This not only promises significant savings for families but also brings the country closer to achieving its renewable energy goals.

PLUTUS IAS
UPSC/PCS

**SOLAR ROOFTOP SYSTEMS
A DIY GUIDE**

₹50,000
Cost of an RTS installation for a 1 kW (kilowatt) system

4-5.5 Units
Electricity generated by a 1 kW solar power plant on a clear, sunny day

₹30,000
Government subsidy under Muft Bijli Yojana for 1 kW system (Consumer pays Rs 20,000). For 2 kW it's Rs 60,000 (consumer share Rs 40,000) and Rs 75,000 for 3 kW (consumer share Rs 65,000)

25 Years
Expected life of solar PV modules. For maintenance, periodic cleaning of solar panels is required

5.32 Years
Time taken to recover costs for a 3 kW RTS system through savings on power bills and sale of excess power to discoms, assuming average electricity charges of Rs 2,000 per month

WHAT IS PM-SURYA GHAR: MUFT BIJLI YOJANA?

PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana is a government initiative aimed at promoting the adoption of rooftop solar power systems across households in India. The scheme is designed to increase the use of renewable energy while providing economic benefits to citizens by reducing their electricity bills.

1. Objective:

The primary goal of the scheme is to promote solar energy use in households, reduce the reliance on grid power, and bring down electricity costs for families.

The scheme is also in line with India’s commitment to achieving 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030 and meeting its carbon reduction targets under the Paris Climate Agreement.

2. Target Beneficiaries:

12 million households are expected to benefit from this initiative.

The scheme is especially targeted at lower-income groups and underprivileged communities, enabling them to access affordable clean energy.

3. Free Solar Panels:

Under the scheme, eligible households will be provided with free rooftop solar panels. This means the government will cover the installation costs, making it accessible for people who cannot afford the initial investment in solar energy infrastructure.

4. Promoting Renewable Energy:

The scheme is part of India’s larger push to promote clean, green energy and reduce carbon emissions. It aims to add substantial capacity to India’s solar energy generation potential, aligning with the target to achieve 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030.

5. Government Support & Funding:

The scheme is being implemented with significant government support in the form of subsidies and financing options for installation and maintenance.

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) and state governments are collaborating to ensure smooth implementation.

6. Environmental Impact:

The widespread adoption of rooftop solar panels under this initiative is expected to reduce India’s carbon footprint, contributing significantly to global climate action efforts.

7. Economic Benefits:

Beyond energy savings, the scheme will create job opportunities in the renewable energy sector, including installation, maintenance, and servicing of solar systems.

It will also support India’s domestic solar manufacturing industry, helping the country become more self-reliant in terms of solar equipment production.

8. Implementation Agencies: The scheme will be executed at two levels.

National Level: Managed by the National Programme Implementation Agency (NPIA).

State Level: Managed by State Implementation Agencies (SIAs), which are the Distribution Utilities (DISCOMs) or Power/Energy Departments of the respective states or UTs. Implementation Agencies: The scheme will be executed at two levels.

SIGNIFICANCE OF PM SURYA GHAR-MUFT BIJLI YOJANA:

- 1. Promotes Renewable Energy:** Encourages the use of rooftop solar power, reducing dependence on fossil fuels.
- 2. Cost Savings for Households:** Free solar panel installation helps families cut electricity bills by 30-50%.
- 3. Accessibility for All:** Provides free installation and financial support, making solar power affordable, especially for low-income households.
- 4. Environmental Benefits:** Reduces carbon emissions and supports India's climate commitments.
- 5. Job Creation:** Generates employment in solar energy installation, maintenance, and manufacturing.
- 6. Relieves Grid Pressure:** Decentralizes energy production, easing the burden on the national grid.
- 7. Empowers Rural Communities:** Improves energy access and quality of life for rural and marginalized groups.
- 8. Supports National Goals:** Contributes to India's renewable energy targets and sustainable development.

CHALLENGES OF PM SURYA GHAR-MUFT BIJLI YOJANA:

- 1. Awareness Issues:** Lack of awareness and understanding of solar technology, especially in rural areas.
- 2. Roof Space Limitations:** Not all households have enough roof space for solar installations.
- 3. Maintenance Challenges:** Regular maintenance and technical support may be lacking in remote areas.
- 4. Financial Constraints:** Potential delays in funding and long-term sustainability concerns.
- 5. Geographic Variability:** Solar power effectiveness varies by region due to sunlight availability and weather conditions.
- 6. Technological Gaps:** Issues with system efficiency and lack of affordable energy storage solutions.
- 7. Bureaucratic Delays:** Slow application processing and complicated procedures may hinder implementation.
- 8. Skilled Workforce Shortage:** Insufficiently trained technicians for installation and maintenance, particularly in rural areas.
- 9. Financing Barriers:** Some households may face diffi-

culties in securing additional funding for wiring or grid connectivity.

WAY FORWARD:

- 1. Increase Awareness:** Launch targeted campaigns to educate households, especially in rural areas, about the benefits of solar energy.
- 2. Simplify Processes:** Streamline application procedures and create digital platforms for easy registration and support.
- 3. Infrastructure Support:** Provide roof assessments and region-specific solutions for solar installations.
- 4. Enhance Maintenance:** Train local technicians and offer robust customer support for system upkeep.
- 5. Financial Accessibility:** Introduce low-interest loans and additional subsidies for low-income groups.
- 6. Promote Technological Innovation:** Invest in affordable energy storage and improve solar panel efficiency.
- 7. Monitor Progress:** Regularly assess the impact of the scheme and collect feedback from beneficiaries.
- 8. Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborate with private companies for scaling up installations and long-term maintenance.

CONCLUSION:

The PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana is a game-changing initiative by the Indian government to promote rooftop solar power, reduce electricity bills, and support renewable energy goals. By providing free solar panels to 12 million households it helps drive India's transition to clean energy while generating jobs and reducing carbon emissions. However, challenges like limited awareness, roof space, maintenance, and regional disparities remain. To ensure success, the government must streamline processes, enhance local support, and invest in infrastructure and technology. With these steps, the scheme can significantly contribute to India's energy future, making solar power accessible and sustainable for millions.

Prelims Question:

Q. With reference to the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA), which of the following statements is/are correct? (2015)

1. It is a Public Limited Government Company.
2. It is a Non-Banking Financial Company.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: C

Mains Question:

Q. Critically analyze the challenges and opportunities involved in adopting solar energy for small households in India.

(250 words, 15 marks)

PRELIMS BITS: KALIDASA AND HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO INDIAN ART AND CULTURE

WHY IN THE NEWS:

The Vice President recently inaugurated the 66th 'All India Kalidasa Festival' in Ujjain, celebrating the life and works of Kalidasa, one of ancient India's greatest poets and playwrights. This annual festival honors Kalidasa's contributions to Sanskrit literature and showcases performances and discussions inspired by his works, fostering cultural heritage and classical Indian arts.



KALIDASA AND HIS MAJOR LITERARY WORKS:

LIFE AND BACKGROUND

Period: Likely lived around the 4th-5th century CE during the Gupta era.

Court Poet: Associated with King Vikramāditya, possibly Chandragupta II.

Location: Speculated to have ties to Ujjain, Kashmir, and Kalinga.

Legacy: Considered one of ancient India's greatest poets and playwrights, revered as one of the "seven avatars of Brahma" in Sikh texts.

EPIC POEMS:

Kumārasambhava: Focuses on the birth and youth of Pārvaṭī, her union with Śiva, and the birth of their son, Kumāra (Kartikeya).

Raghuvamśa: Chronicles the lineage and stories of the Raghu dynasty, including celebrated kings like Raghu and Rāma.

Minor Poems:

Meghadūta (The Cloud Messenger): A love poem in which a Yakṣa sends a message to his beloved through a cloud, known for its lyrical beauty.

Shyamala Dandakam: Describes the beauty of the goddess Matangi.

PLAYS:

Abhijñānaśākuntalam (Recognition of Śakuntalā): Tells the story of Śakuntalā and King Duṣyanta, celebrated internationally and translated widely.

Mālavikāgnimitram (Pertaining to Mālavikā and Agnimitra): Explores King Agnimitra's love for a servant girl, who is revealed to be a princess.

Vikramōrvaśīyam (Ūrvaśī Won by Valor): The tale of King Pururavas and the celestial nymph Ūrvaśī, involving love, separation, and reunion.

INFLUENCE AND TRANSLATIONS

Global Impact: Works like Abhijñānaśākuntalam influenced European literature; admired by Goethe and translated into multiple languages.

Translations: Sir William Jones published an English

translation of Śakuntalā in 1791, introducing Kalidasa's work to Western audiences.

LEGACY AND RECOGNITION

Cultural Icon: His name appears in inscriptions from as early as 634 CE and is honored in both Indian and Western literary traditions.

Popular Recognition: Revered in Indian culture and celebrated for his refined expression of nature, human emotions, and philosophical themes.

KALIDASA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO INDIAN CULTURE:

Masterful Poet and Playwright: Kalidasa is regarded as one of ancient India's greatest poets and playwrights, with works that exemplify the richness of Sanskrit literature.

Epic Narratives: His epic poems, such as Kumārasambhava and Raghuvamśa, explore themes of love, heroism, and divine relationships, contributing significantly to the narrative tradition in Indian literature.

Influential Plays: His play Abhijñānaśākuntalam is celebrated for its emotional depth and intricate character development, influencing both Indian and global theatrical traditions.

Cultural Symbol: Revered as one of the "seven avatars of Brahma" in Sikh texts, Kalidasa's works are integral to the spiritual and cultural fabric of India.

Nature and Emotion: His poetry is renowned for its exquisite depiction of nature and human emotions, reflecting the philosophical and aesthetic ideals of the time.

Global Impact: His works, particularly Abhijñānaśākuntalam, have had a profound influence on European literature, inspiring writers like Goethe and being translated into numerous languages.

Enduring Legacy: Kalidasa's contributions have left an indelible mark on Indian culture, fostering a lasting appreciation for poetry, drama, and the arts that continues to thrive today.

Prelims Question:

Q. Which of the following statements about Kalidasa is/are correct?

1. Kalidasa is believed to have lived during the Gupta era

and is associated with King Vikramāditya.

2. His notable works include the epic poems Kumarasambhava and Raghuvamśa

3. Kalidasa is recognized as one of the "seven avatars of Brahma" in Hindu texts.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1, 2, and 3

D. 1 only

ANSWER: C

"INDIA'S IP SURGE: TOP 10 IN PATENTS, TRADEMARKS, AND INDUSTRIAL DESIGNS – WIPO 2024"

WHY IN THE NEWS?

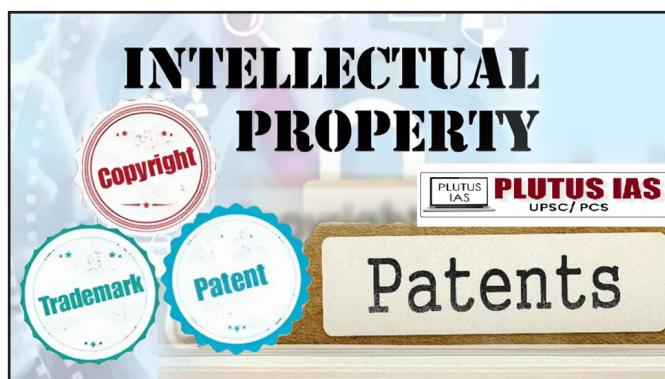
The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has released its **World Intellectual Property Indicators (WIPI) 2024**, highlighting global trends in intellectual property (IP) filings. The report shows a significant rise in patent, trademark, and industrial design applications across leading economies. India has secured a place among the global top 10 for all three major IP categories—patents, trademarks, and industrial designs—solidifying its position as a key player in the global IP arena and marking notable achievements in IP activity.

In 2023, India experienced the fastest growth in patent filings (+15.7%) among the top 20 countries, achieving double-digit growth for the fifth consecutive year. With **64,480 patent applications**, India now ranks **sixth** globally in patents, with resident filings comprising over half of the total submissions (**55.2%**), a first for the nation. Additionally, the Indian patent office granted **149.4% more patents** in 2023 compared to the previous year, highlighting the rapid development of the country's IP ecosystem.

PATENT SCENARIO IN INDIA:

A patent is a statutory right granted for an invention by the Government, which gives the patentee exclusive

rights to make, use, sell, or import the patented product or process for a limited period, typically 20 years. This right is granted in exchange for full public disclosure of the invention, allowing others to understand how it works but preventing them from exploiting it without the consent of the patentee. In India, the patent system is regulated by the Patents Act of 1970, which has been amended over time, including significant changes through the Patents (Amendment) Act of 2005 and the Patents Rules 2003. These laws have been consistently updated to keep pace with global standards and technological advancements, with the most recent updates being made under the Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2021.



Key Features of a Patent

1. Exclusive Rights: The patentee can exclude others from making, using, selling, or importing the patented invention without permission for the term of the patent.

2. Term of Patent: The standard term is 20 years from the filing date of the application. However, for international applications filed under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), the term is 20 years from the international filing date.

3. Patentability Criteria:

Novelty: The invention must be new and not have been disclosed before.

Inventive Step: The invention must demonstrate an element of innovation that is not obvious to an expert in the relevant field.

Industrial Application: It must be capable of being made or used in an industry.

Exclusions: The invention should not fall under the provisions of Section 3 and Section 4 of the Patents Act, which outline non-patentable inventions (e.g., abstract theories, scientific principles, and certain living organisms).

4. Scope of Protection: The patent is a territorial right, meaning its protection is only valid in the country or region where it is granted. Filing a patent in India does not automatically grant protection elsewhere. However, the applicant may seek protection in other countries or regions through the PCT system or by filing directly in those countries, typically within 12 months of the initial filing.

TYPES OF PATENT:

The Indian Patents Act of 1970 covers three types of patents:

Utility patents: These patents protect the function of a machine, composition, or process. They are the most common type of patent sought.

Design patents: These patents protect the appearance of an object, including its shape, configuration, or surface ornamentation.

Plant patents: These patents protect plants.

PATENTS ACT, 1970 (AND AMENDMENTS):

The Patents Act 1970 is the principal law governing patents in India, which came into effect in 1972, replacing the Indian Patents and Designs Act of 1911. Major amendments to the Act include:

1. Patents (Amendment) Act, 2005: Extended product patents to all fields of technology, including food, drugs, chemicals, and microorganisms. This change was part of India's compliance with the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement under the World Trade Organization (WTO).

2. Compulsory Licensing: Introduced provisions for granting compulsory licenses, allowing others to manufacture a patented product or use a patented process under specific conditions (e.g., if the patent holder is not exploiting the invention or if the product is not available at an affordable price).

3. Pre-Grant and Post-Grant Opposition: Allowed third parties to challenge a patent either before it is granted (pre-grant opposition) or after it has been granted (post-grant opposition). This ensures that patents are not granted for inventions that do not meet the criteria for patentability.

PATENT PROTECTION AND TERRITORIALITY

Patent protection is territorial, meaning it only applies in the country or region where the patent is granted. In

India, patent protection is provided by the Indian government, but this does not extend to other countries. To obtain patent protection in other jurisdictions, the applicant can file separate patent applications in those countries, or they can use the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) system. This allows the applicant to file a single international patent application, which can be used as the basis for seeking patents in multiple countries.

ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONS AND MINISTRIES:

1. Ministry of Commerce and Industry: The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), which operates under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, is responsible for overseeing intellectual property rights, including patents.

2. Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks (CGPDTM): The CGPDTM is the central authority in India responsible for the administration of the Patents Act. It is responsible for granting patents, conducting oppositions, and managing the overall patent system in India.

3. World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO): India is a member of the World Intellectual Property Organization and has adopted the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), which allows Indian inventors to seek international patent protection through a single application.

3. Indian Patent Office: This office is responsible for the processing of patent applications and issuing patents. It is located in four cities: Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata.

4. Patent Facilitation Centers (PFCs): These centres provide assistance to inventors and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in filing patent applications and understanding the patent process.

5. Intellectual Property Appellate Board (IPAB): The IPAB is a quasi-judicial body that hears appeals from decisions made by the Indian Patent Office, such as patent refusals or revocations.

RECENT AMENDMENTS TO THE PATENTS RULES (2021):

The Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2021, were introduced to streamline the patent application process, making it more efficient and in line with international standards. Some notable amendments include:

Facilitation of E-filing: The rules encourage electronic

filing of patent applications, making the process more efficient and accessible.

Extension of Time: The timelines for submitting certain documents and responses to the Patent Office have been extended.

Fee Reduction: The amendments also include provisions to reduce the filing fees for certain categories of applicants, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and individual inventors.

THE KEY FACTORS DRIVING THE SIGNIFICANT GROWTH OF PATENTS:

1. Innovation and Technological Advancements: Rapid advancements in technology and the increasing pace of innovation have led to a surge in new inventions, prompting more patent filings.

2. Globalization: As companies expand globally, they seek to protect their intellectual property across different markets, leading to an increase in patent applications worldwide.

3. Increased Investment in Research and Development (R&D): More businesses and institutions are investing in R&D, resulting in a greater number of novel ideas and inventions that require patent protection.

4. Stronger Intellectual Property Laws: Improvements in intellectual property rights enforcement and the establishment of more robust patent systems have encouraged innovation and patent filings.

5. Market Competition: To gain a competitive edge, companies are increasingly patenting their inventions to safeguard their innovations and prevent rivals from copying their technologies.

6. Patent Commercialization: The rise of patent monetization and licensing as business strategies has encouraged companies and individuals to patent their inventions in order to generate revenue through licensing agreements or sales.

7. Increased Awareness and Education: As awareness of intellectual property rights grows, more inventors and businesses are recognizing the value of patents in protecting their ideas and fostering business growth.

CHALLENGES STILL PERSIST:

1. Patent Thickets: The proliferation of overlapping patents in certain technologies, such as telecommunications and software, can create complex patent thickets

that hinder innovation and lead to costly litigation.

2. Patent Trolls: The rise of entities that acquire patents solely for the purpose of filing lawsuits (often referred to as “patent trolls”) continues to be a significant issue, as they exploit the patent system without contributing to innovation.

3. Patent Backlogs: Many patent offices around the world face significant backlogs, leading to delays in the examination and granting of patents, which can hinder the commercialization of new inventions.

4. Quality vs. Quantity: The growing volume of patent filings has raised concerns about the quality of patents being granted. Patents that are overly broad or not sufficiently innovative can clog the system and result in legal disputes.

5. Global Patent Harmonization: While efforts to harmonize patent laws internationally have made progress, differences in patent systems across countries still present challenges for global protection and enforcement.

6. Costs of Patent Protection: For small businesses and individual inventors, the cost of filing and maintaining patents can be prohibitive, limiting access to the patent system and discouraging innovation.

7. Patent Infringement and Litigation: Ongoing patent disputes and the potential for costly litigation can create uncertainties for businesses, deterring them from investing in new technologies or expanding into new markets.

8. Ethical and Legal Concerns: Issues such as the patenting of essential medicines, genetic material, and artificial intelligence inventions raise ethical questions and legal challenges regarding what should be patentable.

WAY FORWARD:

1. Streamline Patent Processes: Reform patent systems to reduce backlogs, improve examination efficiency, and ensure high-quality patents. This includes better training for examiners and stricter standards for granting patents to protect only truly innovative ideas.

2. Focus on Patent Quality: Address patent trolling and overly broad patents by enforcing rigorous examination standards. Post-grant reviews and opposition procedures can help eliminate weak patents, ensuring that only commercially valuable innovations are protected.

3. International Harmonization: Expand global coordination of patent laws to reduce complexity for business-

es operating across borders. Enhance frameworks like the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) to simplify filing and enforcement worldwide.

4. Reduce Patent Litigation: Tackle excessive litigation by introducing fee-shifting for meritless lawsuits and establishing specialized patent courts to expedite dispute resolution.

5. Affordable Protection for SMEs and Innovators: Introduce programs offering subsidies, grants, or reduced fees to make patent protection more accessible for small businesses and individual inventors.

6. Promote Open Innovation: Encourage collaboration across industry, academia, and government, fostering open-source licensing and patent pools—especially in sectors like healthcare and renewable energy—to share technology for broader societal benefit.

7. Enhance Public Awareness: Educate inventors and businesses on patent value and navigate the system to avoid pitfalls and maximize benefits.

8. Address Ethical Concerns: Develop ethical guidelines for emerging technologies, ensuring patents do not hinder access to critical innovations, such as life-saving medicines or essential technologies.

CONCLUSION:

India’s rising prominence in global patent filings underscores its growing role as a centre of innovation. The country has made significant strides in patenting activity, driven by advancements in technology, increased R&D investment, and stronger intellectual property laws. However, challenges such as patent thickets, litigation, and the cost of protection for small businesses must be addressed to sustain this growth. By streamlining patent processes, improving patent quality, and fostering international collaboration, India can strengthen its IP ecosystem and create a more supportive environment for innovation. With continued reforms, India is well-positioned to become a global leader in intellectual property, driving both economic growth and technological advancement.

Prelims Question:

Q. With reference to the ‘National Intellectual Property Rights Policy’, consider the following statements: (2017)

1. It reiterates India’s commitment to the Doha Develop-

ment Agenda and the TRIPS Agreement.

2. The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion is the nodal agency for regulating intellectual property rights in India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: C

Mains Question:

Q. In a globalized world, Intellectual Property Rights assume significance and are a source of litigation. Broadly distinguish between the terms—Copyrights, Patents and Trade Secrets. (2014)

(250 words, 15 marks)

EMPOWERING TRIBAL SOCIETY: INITIATIVES FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WHY IN THE NEWS?

To honor the legacy and heritage of tribal communities, India has been observing Janjatiya Diwas on November 15th, the birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda, a revered leader among tribal groups. Birsa Munda is remembered for his courageous fight against the exploitative British colonial rule and his leadership in the freedom struggle. Since 2021, Janjatiya Gaurav Divas has been celebrated across the country to pay tribute to the sacrifices of tribal freedom fighters. This year, marking the 150th birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, the Prime Minister will unveil a special commemorative coin and postal stamp. Additionally, development projects worth over Rs 6,640 crore will be launched to improve the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities, especially in rural and remote areas.

INTRODUCTION

India's Scheduled Tribe (ST) population, comprising

10.42 million people (8.6% of the total population) across over 705 distinct groups, often resides in remote areas. To uplift these communities, the government has introduced various welfare schemes aimed at socio-economic empowerment, sustainable development, and the preservation of their rich cultural heritage. These initiatives are designed to improve living standards, promote education, and ensure inclusive growth for tribal populations.



SCHEDULED TRIBE (ST) POPULATION:

- 1. Tribal Population:** 104.28 million (approximately 8.6% of the total Indian population).
- 2. Tribal Groups:** Over 705 distinct tribes are recognized across India.
- 3. Geographic Distribution:** Tribes are predominantly found in remote, rural, and forested regions, often in states like Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and the North-Eastern states.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR SCHEDULED TRIBES (ST) IN INDIA:

The Constitution of India contains various provisions to protect and promote the rights of Scheduled Tribes (STs), ensuring their social, educational, cultural, and political upliftment. While the term 'tribe' is not explicitly defined in the Constitution, the category of Scheduled Tribes (STs) is recognized through the following key provisions:

- 1. Article 342:** Definition and Notification of Scheduled Tribes:

Article 342 empowers the President of India to specify, through a public notification, the tribes or tribal communities or parts of tribes that shall be recognized as

Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of the Constitution.

2. Fifth Schedule: Tribal Areas and Advisory Council

The Fifth Schedule provides for the establishment of a Tribes' Advisory Council in each state that has Scheduled Areas. This Council advises the state government on matters related to the welfare and development of Scheduled Tribes.

3. Educational & Cultural Safeguards

Article 15(4): Provides special provisions for the advancement of backward classes, including Scheduled Tribes.

Article 29: Protects the cultural and educational rights of minorities, including STs, allowing them to conserve their distinct language, script, and culture.

Article 46: The State is obligated to promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections, particularly Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), and protect them from social injustice and exploitation.

Article 350: Grants the right to conserve a distinct language, script, or culture, which applies to tribal communities.

4. Political Safeguards

Article 330: Provides for the reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha (House of the People).

Article 332: Ensures the reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in the State Legislative Assemblies.

Article 243: Ensures the reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in Panchayats (local bodies), enabling political participation at the grassroots level.

5. Administrative Safeguard

Article 275: Provides for special funds from the Union Government to the States for the welfare and administration of Scheduled Tribes, ensuring better governance and resource allocation.

ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS – SC, ST (PREVENTION OF ATROCITIES) ACT

1. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989:

This Act aims to prevent atrocities and discrimination

against SCs and STs. It punishes acts of atrocity, exploitation, or discrimination committed against members of these communities.

It ensures that offenders committing such crimes are prosecuted and punished under special provisions.

The Act also provides for the establishment of Special Courts to try cases related to atrocities against SCs and STs.

2. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2015:

The 2015 Amendment further strengthened the provisions, ensuring quicker justice and harsher penalties for crimes committed against SC/ST individuals.

It also makes provisions for economic support, rehabilitation, and restoration of the social status of victims of atrocities.

KEY TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES:

1. Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan:

Launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 2, 2024, in Hazaribag, Jharkhand, this program has an outlay of over ₹79,156 crore. It aims to bridge critical gaps in social infrastructure, health, education, and livelihood development across 63,843 tribal villages. The goal is to improve the quality of life for tribal communities and enhance their socio-economic conditions.

2. Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN):

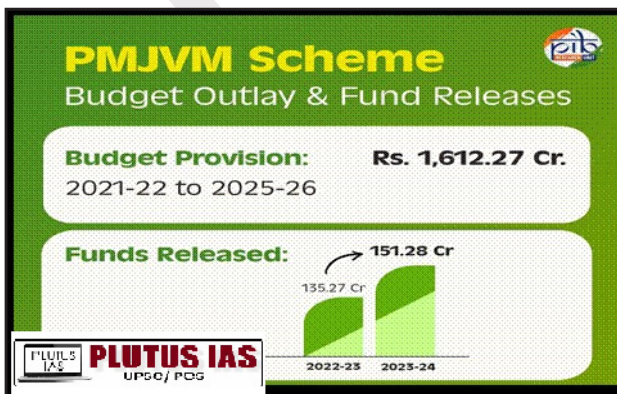
On November 15, 2023, during Janjatiya Gaurav Divas in Khunti, Jharkhand, the PM-JANMAN was launched to uplift Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). The scheme focuses on improving housing, clean drinking water, education, healthcare, road and telecom connectivity, electrification, and sustainable livelihoods for these communities.

Key Tribal Welfare Schemes and Budgets			
1	PM-JANMAN Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana	Year	2023-24 to 2025-26
		Budget	Rs. 24,104 Crore
2	PMAAGY Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana	Year	2024-25
		Budget	Rs. 1,000 Crore
3	PMJVM Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission	Year	2021-22 to 2025-26
		Budget	Rs. 1,612.27 Crore
4	PMVKY Pradhan Mantri Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana	Year	2021-22 to 2025-26
		Budget	Rs. 26,135.46 Crore

3. Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAAGY): Originally launched in 1977-78 as the Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Scheme (SCA to TSS), it was revamped in 2021-22 as the Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAAGY). This scheme focuses on providing basic infrastructure in tribal-dominated villages. 36,428 villages with at least 50% tribal population, including those in Aspirational Districts, have been identified for development under this initiative.

4. Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS): Launched in 2018-19, the Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) aim to provide quality education to tribal students, focusing on academic, cultural, and skill development. On October 2, 2024, 40 EMRS were inaugurated, and the foundation for 25 more was laid. The scheme has an investment of over ₹2,800 crore, and 728 EMRS have been approved across the country to date.

5. Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM): PMJVM focuses on promoting tribal entrepreneurship and the “Vocal for Local by Tribal” initiative. It supports tribal communities in making better use of Minor Forest Products (MFPs) and non-MFPs to create local product-based businesses, empowering tribal communities economically and socially.



6. Pradhan Mantri Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana (PMVKY): Launched on October 28, 2014, PMVKY is a transformative initiative designed to address the unique challenges faced by India’s tribal communities. This program aims to empower tribes, enhance their socio-economic conditions, and preserve their cultural heritage by focusing on development in health, education, infrastructure, and livelihood.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT SCHEMES FOR TRIBAL COMMUNITIES:

To empower tribal communities economically, the government has launched several financial support schemes focused on income generation, self-employment, and economic development. These initiatives aim to provide financial resources and opportunities for tribal individuals and groups to start and sustain their businesses.

1. National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC):

Term Loan Scheme: Offers loans for projects up to ₹50 lakh per unit to support income-generating activities.

Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana (AMSY): Aimed at empowering tribal women, this scheme provides loans up to ₹2 lakh per unit for women’s income-generating activities.

Micro Credit Scheme for Self-Help Groups (SHGs): Provides loans of up to ₹5 lakh per Self-Help Group and ₹50,000 per member to promote group-based economic activities.

Adivasi Shiksha Rin Yojana (Education Loan): Offers loans of up to ₹10 lakh for Scheduled Tribe students pursuing professional or technical education in India.

HEALTH INITIATIVES FOR TRIBAL COMMUNITIES:

1. Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission (Launched on July 1, 2023): Aiming to eliminate Sickle Cell Disease (SCD), this mission focuses on awareness campaigns, universal screening, and providing affordable care, particularly for tribal communities in Central, Western, and Southern India.

2. Mission Indradhanush: This initiative focuses on providing full immunization to children up to 2 years of age and pregnant women, with a special emphasis on tribal areas. The mission has also expanded to provide free COVID-19 vaccines to tribal populations.

3. Nikshay Mitra Initiative: This program supports tu-

berculosis (TB) patients, many of whom are from tribal areas. It provides diagnostic, nutritional, and vocational support to improve TB treatment outcomes and promote better health.

RESEARCH AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION INITIATIVES:

In addition to welfare programs, the government has implemented initiatives focusing on the preservation and promotion of tribal cultures, traditions, and languages, as well as research to understand socio-economic challenges better.

1. Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs): Development ProgramThe Ministry of Tribal Affairs has been implementing this scheme to promote the socio-economic development and welfare of the most vulnerable tribal communities. Initially, 75 PVTGs were identified for focused development. From 2023-24, this program has been integrated into the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) initiative.

2. Support to Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs): TRIs play a crucial role in documenting and preserving tribal cultures, languages, and medicinal practices. The Support to TRIs scheme promotes research and organizes cultural festivals and exchange programs, helping raise awareness about tribal traditions and promoting their welfare.

3. Tribal Research Information, Education, Communication and Events (TRI-ECE): The TRI-ECE scheme supports public awareness initiatives, including advertisements, exhibitions, and cultural events. It also organizes Republic Day celebrations, festivals, and other events aimed at promoting tribal culture. The funding for this scheme has increased from ₹15 crore in 2022-23 to ₹25 crore in 2023-24, with specific allocations for advertising, publicity, and general charges.

CHALLENGES IN ENSURING TRIBAL GROWTH AND INCLUSION:

1. Land Alienation: Tribal communities face loss of land due to encroachment, displacement, and land acquisitions, threatening their livelihood and traditional practices.

2. Inadequate Healthcare: Many tribal areas lack sufficient healthcare infrastructure, resulting in higher rates of malnutrition, disease, and mortality.

3. Social Discrimination: Tribals often experience discrimination, exploitation, and marginalization, despite legal protections, leading to social exclusion and human rights violations.

4. Limited Economic Opportunities: Despite various welfare schemes, tribal communities often lack access to sustainable employment and income-generating opportunities, resulting in continued poverty.

5. Education Gaps: High dropout rates and lack of quality education in tribal regions limit future opportunities, keeping many in a cycle of underdevelopment.

6. Infrastructure Deficiencies: Poor road connectivity, inadequate electricity, and lack of clean drinking water and sanitation in tribal areas hinder overall development and access to basic services.

CONCLUSION:

The government's multi-faceted approach to tribal welfare focuses on empowerment, self-sufficiency, education, health, and cultural preservation. Through schemes such as financial support for self-employment, education loans, health initiatives like the Sick Cell Anaemia Mission, and research programs for cultural preservation, tribal communities are being uplifted and integrated into the broader development framework of the nation.

These initiatives align with the "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" vision, ensuring that tribal communities are not left behind in India's progress. By fostering inclusive development, these programs enable tribal communities to preserve their cultural identity while benefiting from improved socio-economic conditions and opportunities for growth.

Prelims Question:

Q. Under which Schedule of the Constitution of India can the transfer of tribal land to private parties for mining be declared null and void? (2019)

- A. Third Schedule
- B. Fifth Schedule
- C. Ninth Schedule
- D. Twelfth Schedule

Answer: B

Mains Question:

Q. How do you explain the statistics that show that the sex ratio in Tribes in India is more favourable to women than the sex ratio among Scheduled Castes? (2015)

(250 words, 15 marks)