



Weekly Current Affairs

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CONTENTS

1. India-Sri Lanka Relations: Opportunities and Challenges	1
2. PRELIMS BIT: REMOVAL OF THE JUDGES OF THE HIGHER JUDICIARY.....	4
3. RTI act vital in fostering a citizen-centric governance model: Dr Jitendra Singh	6
4. PRELIMS BIT: PRELIMS BIT: IMPEACHMENT OF THE PRESIDENT	9
5. India's FDI Journey: Milestone Achievement of \$1 Trillion.....	12
6. Public Sector Banks: A Resurgent Force.....	16
7. Empowering Minorities: Building Inclusive India! ...	19
8. La Niña: The Blessing in Disguise for India's Weather Patterns	21
9. Prelims Bits: INS Tushil.....	24
10. Unlocking the Power of Nano Bubbles: A Revolution in Technology.....	25
11. Terrorism: A Growing Challenge to Internal Security ..	28

INDIA-SRI LANKA RELATIONS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

WHY IN THE NEWS?

President of Sri Lanka, H.E. Mr. Anura Kumara Dis-sanayaka, will embark on his first State visit to India following Sri Lanka’s recent presidential and parlia-mentary elections. During the visit, he is set to meet with Rashtrapati Ji and hold talks with Prime Min-ister Shri Narendra Modi to discuss bilateral issues of mutual interest. President Dissanayaka will also participate in a business event in Delhi, focusing on enhancing investment opportunities and commer-cial linkages between India and Sri Lanka.



INDIA – SRILANKA RELATIONSHIP EVALUATION:

Area	Details
Political Engagement	Frequent high-level visits (e.g., PM Modi and Sri Lankan leaders) strengthen diplomatic ties.
Trade and Economic Coop-eration	India is Sri Lanka’s largest trade partner (USD 5.5 billion in 2023-24). Major investments in energy, telecommunications, and infrastructure.
Development and Humani-tarian Assistance	Over USD 5 billion in aid, including major projects like the Indian Housing Project, education, healthcare, and digital identity grants.
Connectivity and Tourism	Resumed air links (Chennai-Jaffna) and ferry services (Nagapattinam-KKS). India is the largest source of tourists to Sri Lanka.
Defence and Security	Strong defence ties, joint exercises, maritime security cooperation, and re-gional security collaboration through the Colombo Security Conclave.
Cultural and Educational Ties	Support through cultural centres, scholarships, and academic programs to en-hance people-to-people links.
Strategic Partnership	Cooperation on regional security, counter-terrorism, and disaster response.

INDIA SRILANKA BILATERAL ENGAGEMENT:

- 1. Trade Ties:** Bilateral trade reached USD 5.5 billion in FY 2023-24, with India’s exports at USD 4.1 billion. India has USD 2.2 billion in FDI, mainly in energy and infrastructure. Negotiations for the ETCA are ongoing to boost trade and services.
- 2. Defence & Security:** India and Sri Lanka conduct annual SLINEX (naval) and MITRA SHAKTI (army) exercises, with India supporting Sri Lanka’s maritime surveillance through MRCC installation. The Colombo Security Conclave strengthens regional security, focusing on counter-terrorism.
- 3. Cultural Ties:** India supports Sri Lanka’s Buddhist heritage, including the Kapilavastu relics and Indian Gallery in Kandy, while promoting cultural exchange through the Indian Cultural Centre and Bharat-Kosh at the Colombo Library.
- 4. Health Cooperation:** India provided 500,000 COVISHIELD vaccines and 100,000 RAT kits during COVID-19 and supports healthcare development, including a multi-specialty hospital in Dickoya.
- 5. Education & Capacity Building:** India offers 710 scholarships annually to Sri Lankan students and 402 ITEC training slots alongside various professional development programs.

6. **People-to-People Ties:** India's 1.6 million IOTs in Sri Lanka contribute to business and agriculture with ongoing cultural and educational exchanges, including STEM training for plantation school teachers.
7. **Regional Relations & LTTE:** India plays a key role in SAARC for regional trade and security, supporting Sri Lanka's sovereignty and reconciliation efforts while addressing Tamil issues diplomatically.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SRILANKA FOR INDIA:

1. **Strategic Location:** Sri Lanka's proximity to India enhances regional security, maritime trade routes, and naval cooperation in the Indian Ocean.
2. **Cultural & Historical Ties:** Shared civilizational links, including Buddhism and long-standing cultural exchanges, deepen bilateral relations.
3. **Economic Partnership:** Sri Lanka is a major trade partner, with India being the largest investor, focusing on energy, infrastructure, and development projects.
4. **Regional Security Cooperation:** India and Sri Lanka collaborate on defence, including joint exercises (SLINEX, MITRA SHAKTI) and regional security frameworks like the Colombo Security Conclave.
5. **People-to-People Relations:** A large Indian-origin Tamil community in Sri Lanka fosters deep social and economic connections, bolstered by educational and cultural exchanges.
6. **Support during Crises:** India provided significant humanitarian aid and financial support during Sri Lanka's economic crisis, including food, fuel, and medical assistance.
7. **Counter-Terrorism & LTTE Issues:** India supports Sri Lanka's sovereignty and peace-building efforts while addressing Tamil issues through diplomatic channels, ensuring regional stability.

AREAS OF CONCERN:

1. **Ethnic Tensions:** The ongoing Tamil ethnic issues and reconciliation efforts remain a sensitive topic, with Sri Lanka's treatment of Tamil minorities causing occasional strains.
2. **China's Influence:** Sri Lanka's increasing engagement with China, particularly in infrastructure projects like the Hambantota Port, is a concern for India's strategic interests in the region.
3. **Fishing Disputes:** Frequent conflicts between Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen over maritime boundaries, particularly in the Palk Straits, create tensions.
4. **Debt Crisis:** Sri Lanka's economic instability, exacerbated by high debt levels, places pressure on India's support, particularly in financial aid and trade.
5. **Security Challenges:** The presence of radical elements and concerns over Sri Lanka's security policies, particularly post-Easter Sunday attacks, pose risks to regional stability.
6. **Regional Influence:** India's competition with China for influence in Sri Lanka can impact bilateral ties and regional cooperation, requiring careful diplomatic balancing.
7. **Environmental Concerns:** Environmental issues such as the oil spill from the MT New Diamond and the impact of industrial activities pose challenges to both nations' maritime cooperation and environmental policies.
8. **Border Issues:** Disputes over maritime boundaries, particularly in the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay, involve disagreements on fishing rights and the delimitation of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ).

WAY FORWARD:

Area	Way Forward
Strengthening Economic Ties	Expand trade, investment, and infrastructure projects, especially in energy, ports, and renewable energy sectors. Finalize the Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA).
Enhanced Maritime Cooperation	Deepen collaboration on maritime security, joint surveillance, environmental protection, and improve connectivity through ferry and air services.
Addressing Ethnic Issues	Support Sri Lanka's reconciliation process, focusing on Tamil rights, by implementing 13 constitutional amendments fostering peaceful co-existence and promoting inclusive growth in Tamil-majority areas.
Expanding People-to-People Exchanges	Increase educational, cultural, and tourism exchanges. Expand scholarships, joint research, and STEM training programs to build future cooperation.
Defence and Security Cooperation	Strengthen defence collaboration through joint military exercises and regional security initiatives like the Colombo Security Conclave.
Managing External Influences	Balance Sri Lanka's relationships with China by enhancing India's strategic presence in key sectors and promoting Indian interests in infrastructure and regional connectivity.
Collaborative Regional Initiatives	Promote Sri Lanka's active role in SAARC and BIMSTEC for regional cooperation on trade, security, and disaster management.

CONCLUSION

India and Sri Lanka share a deep, multifaceted relationship that spans political, economic, cultural, and security domains. While both nations enjoy strong ties, they also face challenges such as ethnic tensions, external influence from China, and environmental concerns. Moving forward, both countries must continue to address these challenges through enhanced cooperation, mutual respect, and shared strategic interests to strengthen their partnership for regional peace, prosperity, and stability.

PRELIMS QUESTION:**Q. Consider the following statements:**

1. Sri Lanka plays a significant role in ensuring regional security, particularly through cooperation on maritime security and counter-terrorism efforts.
2. Sri Lanka's cultural and historical ties with India, particularly in relation to Buddhism, enhance bilateral relations.

3. Sri Lanka is not a significant trade partner for India.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: B

MAINS QUESTION:

Q. Evaluate the significance of Sri Lanka for India in terms of strategic, economic, and cultural relations. Discuss the key areas of concern and suggest the way forward for strengthening bilateral ties.

(250 words, 15 marks)

PRELIMS BIT: REMOVAL OF THE JUDGES OF THE HIGHER JUDICIARY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Fifty-five Members of Parliament (MPs) from the Rajya Sabha have submitted a motion to remove a sitting judge of the Allahabad High Court. This move is significant as it underscores concerns regarding judicial accountability and independence, highlighting the rare and serious process of judicial removal in India.



PROCEDURE FOR REMOVAL OF JUDGES OF HIGHER JUDICIARY

Constitutional Provisions: Articles 124 and 217 of the Constitution provide for the removal of Supreme Court and High Court judges.

Grounds for removal:

1. Proved misbehavior
2. Incapacity

Role of the President: The President removes the judge after a motion is passed in both Houses of Parliament.

Parliamentary Approval:

1. The motion must be passed:
2. By a majority of the total membership of that House.
3. By a special majority: At least two-thirds of members present and voting in the same session.

Definition of Grounds: The Constitution does not define the terms 'proved misbehavior' or 'incapacity.'

Supreme Court's Interpretation:

Misbehavior includes willful misconduct, corruption, lack of integrity, or moral turpitude. Incapacity refers to medical conditions, including physical or mental incapacity.

THE JUDGES (INQUIRY) ACT, 1968:

Initiation of Motion: It requires signatures from at least 50 members of the Rajya Sabha or 100 members of the Lok Sabha.

Admittance of Motion: After consultation, the Chairman (Rajya Sabha) or Speaker (Lok Sabha) may admit or reject the motion.

Investigation by a Committee: If admitted, a three-member committee is formed consisting of:

1. A Supreme Court judge
2. A High Court judge
3. A distinguished jurist

The committee investigates the charges.

Committee Findings:

If the judge is absolved of charges, the motion cannot proceed further.

If found guilty of misbehavior or incapacity:

The committee submits its report to Parliament.

Final Parliamentary Approval: The motion is debated in both Houses of Parliament. Each House must pass the motion with a **special majority**

Presidential Removal: Once the motion is passed, the President issues an order for the removal of the judge.

1950-2024: Till date no higher judiciary judge has been removed. following is the past attempts.

PAST REMOVAL ATTEMPTS:

JUDGE	COURT	YEAR	ALLEGATIONS	OUTCOME
Justice V. Ramaswami	Punjab & Haryana High Court	1993	Accused of extravagant spending on his official residence.	The motion failed as Congress MPs abstained from voting despite the committee finding him guilty.
Justice Soumitra Sen	Calcutta High Court	2011	Accused of misappropriation of funds . Refused to resign even after being found guilty.	Motion passed in Rajya Sabha but before Lok Sabha could vote, he resigned .
Justice P.D. Dinakaran	Sikkim High Court	2011	Accused of corruption during consideration for elevation to the Supreme Court.	Objected to committee member's bias; later resigned , alleging unfair treatment as he was Dalit.
Justice J.B. Pardiwala	Gujarat High Court	2015	Made casteist remarks on reservations in a sedition case.	Remarks were expunged from the judgment; the motion did not proceed further.
Justice S.K. Gangele	Madhya Pradesh High Court	2015	Alleged sexual harassment by a woman employee.	The in-house committee found insufficient material to prove the allegations; the motion did not proceed.
Justice C.V. Nagarjuna Reddy	Andhra Pradesh & Telangana HC	2016-2017	Accused of victimizing a Dalit judge , casteism, and amassing wealth.	Both motions failed as supporting MPs withdrew , dropping below the required number of signatories.
Justice Dipak Misra	Chief Justice of India (CJI)	2018	Accused of arbitrarily assigning cases and showing preferential treatment to judges.	The motion was rejected by the Chairman, Venkaiah Naidu, as allegations related to internal matters.

Justice S.N. Shukla	Allahabad High Court	2018	Accused of involvement in a medical college admission scam .	Refused to resign; no cases were assigned until re-tirement. CBI filed corruption charges in 2023.
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PRELIMS QUESTION:

Q. With reference to the removal of the judges in the higher judiciary Consider the following statement:

1. The judges of the Supreme Court and High Court can be removed on the same grounds.
2. The Constitution does not define the grounds given in the Constitution for the removal of the judges in the Higher Judiciary.
3. The removal procedure of the judges in the higher judiciary is a quasi-judicial procedure.

How many of the above-given statements are correct?

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

ANSWER: C

RTI ACT VITAL IN FOSTERING A CITIZEN-CENTRIC GOVERNANCE MODEL: DR JITENDRA SINGH

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The 16th Annual Convention of the Central Information Commission was inaugurated at Bharat Mandapam by Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh.

In his address, he highlighted the importance of the Right to Information (RTI) Act in promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance. The event, themed “Contribution of RTI in a journey towards Viksit Bharat,” underscored the government’s commitment to transparency, citing Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s principle of “Minimum Government, Maximum Governance” as a guiding force. The convention brought together Chief Information Commissioners, State Information Commissioners, senior government officials, and civil society representatives.



RTI IN INDIA:

The Right to Information (RTI) Act of 2005 is a transformative legislation in India that allows citizens to access information from public authorities, promoting government transparency, accountability, and responsiveness.

Key Features of the RTI Act:

1. **Access to Information:** Citizens can request information from public authorities on matters of public interest, including government records, policies, and actions.
2. **Public Authorities:** The Act applies to central, state, and local governments, public sector enterprises, and NGOs funded by the government.

3. **Time-Bound Response:** Authorities must respond within 30 days (or 48 hours in cases involving life or liberty). Delayed responses allow for appeals.
4. **Exemptions:** Certain information, such as national security-related details or matters impacting privacy and investigations, is exempt. However, information may still be disclosed if deemed in the public interest.
5. **RTI Fees:** A nominal fee (typically Rs. 10) is charged for filing applications, with additional costs for copies or printouts.
6. **Appeals and Complaints:** Dissatisfied citizens can appeal to a First Appellate Authority and, if unresolved, can approach the Central Information Commission (CIC) or State Information Commissions.
7. **Information Commissions:** These quasi-judicial bodies oversee RTI implementation, can order disclosures, and impose penalties for non-compliance.

CENTRAL INFORMATION COMMISSION COMPOSITION AND MEMBERS:

1. **Appointment:** The Central Information Commission consists of a Chief Information Commissioner and up to ten Information Commissioners. They are appointed by the President of India based on recommendations from a committee, which includes the Prime Minister (Chairperson), the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.
2. **Chief Information Commissioner (CIC):** Appointed by the President of India for a term of 3 years or until 65 years of age, the Chief Information Commissioner oversees the CIC and handles RTI appeals.
3. **Information Commissioners:** Up to 10 members assist the CIC, with a term of 3 years or until 65 years of age.
4. **Qualifications:** Must be eminent in law, governance, or public administration. Must be impartial, with no political affiliations.

KEY FEATURES OF THE RTI ACT:

1. **Access to Information:** Citizens can request information from any public authority, which encompasses government departments, agencies, and government-funded NGOs.
2. **Transparency:** The Act aims to enhance transparency in government operations, ensuring that citizens are informed about governmental actions, decisions, and policies.
3. **Accountability:** It holds government bodies accountable to the public by mandating timely and accurate responses to information requests.
4. **Timely Response:** Public authorities must respond to RTI requests within 30 days. For requests concerning life or liberty, the response time is reduced to 48 hours.
5. **Written or Electronic Requests:** Citizens can submit RTI requests in writing or electronically, allowing for greater accessibility and convenience.
6. **Appeals:** If a citizen is dissatisfied with the Public Information Officer's response, they can appeal to the First Appellate Authority (FAA), and if still unresolved, escalate the matter to the Information Commission at the state or central level.
7. **Central/State Public Information Officer:** The Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) or State Public Information Officer (SPIO) is designated to handle RTI requests, ensuring the effective implementation of the Act by providing the requested information or directing requests to the appropriate authorities.

RTI MILESTONE IN ACHIEVING CITIZEN-CENTRIC GOVERNANCE:

1. **Empowering Citizens:** The RTI Act empowers citizens to request information from public authorities, promoting transparency and accountability. With over 6 million RTI applications filed annually, it encourages active public participation and ensures government actions are scrutinized, fostering a more informed citizenry.

2. **Mining Activity in Meghalaya:** RTI exposed illegal mining in Meghalaya, revealing environmental damage and prompting stricter regulations and government intervention.
 3. **Puja Khedkar – RTI Activist:** Puja Khedkar used RTI to uncover fraud in government schemes, leading to the exposure of misappropriated funds and reforms to prevent corruption.
 4. **Delivery of Public Goods (PDS):** RTI improved transparency in PDS, recovering over ₹200 crore of misallocated supplies in states like Rajasthan and Bihar, ensuring better food security.
 5. **Making Local to Central Officials Accountable:** RTI holds officials accountable at all levels. In 2019, over 90,000 appeals were filed to the Central Information Commission, challenging non-disclosure of information.
 6. **Upholding Fundamental Rights:** RTI ensures transparency in governance related to health, education, and welfare. The Supreme Court has upheld it as a key tool for protecting democratic rights.
5. **Denial of Information:** Many government departments, including the Ministry of Home Affairs, have increasingly rejected RTI requests or provided incomplete information, restricting access to vital data.
 6. **High Penalties for Non-Compliance:** The imposition of hefty penalties on public authorities for non-compliance with RTI rules has led to a more defensive approach, with authorities either avoiding or delaying responses to requests.
 7. **Increased Use of Exemptions:** Authorities have increasingly invoked exemptions like national security or foreign relations to avoid disclosing information, often without proper justification, limiting transparency.

STRENGTHENING RTI:

STIFLING RTI OVER THE YEARS:

1. **Appointment and Tenure in Security (2019 Amendment):** The 2019 amendment to the RTI Act reduced the tenure of Information Commissioners and gave the government more control over their appointments, weakening the independence of the RTI regime.
 2. **Delay in Appointment:** Delays in the appointment of Information Commissioners at central and state levels have created backlogs, causing slower responses and undermining the effectiveness of the RTI process.
 3. **Misuse of Public Interest Provision:** The public interest provision of the RTI Act has been misused to deny information under the guise of national security or public interest, limiting transparency.
 4. **Manpower Shortages:** The lack of adequate staff in the Information Commissions has led to significant delays in processing RTI requests and appeals, affecting the overall efficiency of the system.
1. **Timely Appointments:** Ensuring timely appointments of Information Commissioners at both central and state levels can reduce backlogs and improve the efficiency of the RTI process.
 2. **Restoring Independence:** Reversing the amendments that reduced the tenure of Information Commissioners and gave the government more control over appointments would help preserve the independence of the Information Commissions, which is crucial for ensuring transparency and accountability.
 3. **Improved Training and Staffing:** Addressing the manpower shortages by increasing the number of trained staff within the Information Commissions would expedite the processing of RTI applications and appeals.
 4. **Minimizing Misuse of Exemptions:** Ensuring that exemptions under the RTI Act are used judiciously and not as a blanket excuse to deny information would enhance the Act's transparency goals.
 5. **Stronger Enforcement and Penalties:** Strengthening enforcement mechanisms and ensuring that penalties for non-compliance are

effectively applied would reduce the tendency of public authorities to delay or withhold information.

6. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Increasing public awareness about the RTI Act and its benefits can encourage more citizens to use the Act and hold public authorities accountable for their actions.
7. **Digitization of RTI Processes:** Digitizing the RTI filing and appeal processes can make it more accessible, reduce delays, and ensure greater transparency in handling requests.

CONCLUSION

The RTI Act remains a powerful tool for ensuring government transparency and accountability. However, over the years, various challenges have emerged that threaten its effectiveness, including delays in appointments, misuse of exemptions, and staffing shortages. By addressing these issues and strengthening the legal and procedural frameworks around the RTI Act, India can continue its journey toward a more transparent and accountable governance system, ultimately achieving the goal of a “Viksit Bharat” (Developed India).

PRELIMS QUESTION:

Q. With reference to the challenges facing the RTI Act, consider the following statements:

1. Delays in appointing Information Commissioners have led to backlogs in processing RTI applications.
2. The 2019 amendment to the RTI Act has enhanced the independence of Information Commissioners.
3. A lack of manpower in Information Commissions is a significant challenge in the timely processing of RTI requests.

How many of the above-given statements are correct?

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

Answer: A

MAINS QUESTION:

Q. The Right to Information (RTI) Act is a crucial tool for promoting transparency and accountability in governance. In light of the challenges it faces, discuss the key issues stifling the RTI Act and suggest measures to strengthen its implementation.

(250 words, 15 marks)

PRELIMS BIT: PRELIMS BIT: IMPEACHMENT OF THE PRESIDENT

WHY IN THE NEWS?

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol has been impeached by lawmakers following his controversial declaration of martial law, which led to mass public outrage and a constitutional crisis. In a significant vote held in the 300-member National Assembly, 204 lawmakers supported the impeachment motion, while 85 voted against it. As a result, President Yoon’s powers have been suspended pending a review by the Constitutional Court. This development underscores the growing political tension in South Korea and the backlash caused by the president’s decision to impose martial law.

SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT IMPEACHMENT PROCEDURE:

Initiation by the National Assembly:

Proposal: An impeachment motion against the president requires the support of a majority of the total members of the National Assembly.
Approval: To pass the motion, at least two-thirds of the total members (200 out of 300) must vote in favor.

Suspension of Presidential Powers:

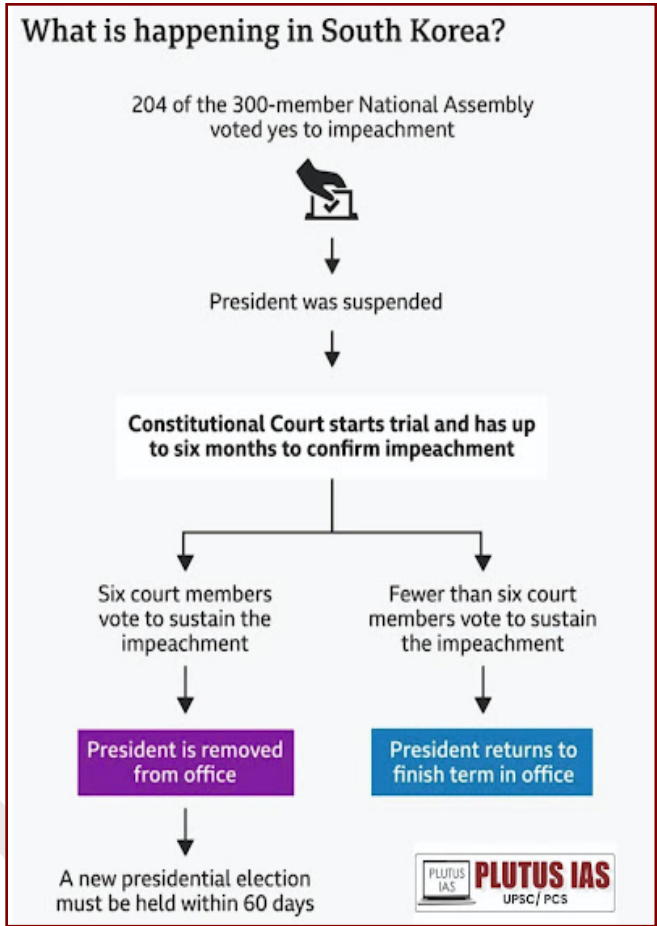
Once the impeachment motion is passed, the president’s powers are immediately suspended pending the outcome of the judicial review.

Review by the Constitutional Court:

Timeline: The Constitutional Court is required to render a decision within 180 days of receiving the impeachment case. **Decision Requirement:** At least six of the nine justices must concur to uphold the impeachment.

Outcome: Removal from Office: If the Constitutional Court upholds the impeachment, the president is removed from office, and a presidential election must be held within 60 days.

Reinstatement: If the court overturns the impeachment, the president is reinstated with full powers. This process ensures a system of checks and balances, allowing for the removal of a president who has violated the Constitution or other laws, while also providing safeguards against arbitrary or politically motivated actions.



INDIAN PRESIDENT IMPEACHMENT PROCEDURE:

CRITERIA	PROCESS
Constitutional Basis	Governed by Article 61 of the Constitution. Grounds: Violation of the Constitution. The process involves both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.
Initiation of Impeachment	Can be initiated in either House of Parliament. Requires a notice signed by at least one-fourth of the total members of that House. Grounds: Clear statement of violation of the Constitution.
Investigation and Charges	After receiving the notice: A committee may be formed to investigate the charges. If sufficient grounds are found, charges are presented in writing.
Voting Procedure	First Stage (Rajya Sabha): Requires a two-thirds majority of members present and voting. Second Stage (Lok Sabha): The resolution requires a two-thirds majority of members present and voting.
Final Outcome	If both Houses pass the resolution: The President is impeached. The President ceases to hold office immediately.

Historical Context	No President has been successfully impeached so far. Attempts were made against Presidents like Zakir Husain and Giani Zail Singh, but they did not succeed.
Conclusion	Ensures accountability while preventing arbitrary removal of the President. Uphold's constitutional safeguards and due process.

COMPARISON OF IMPEACHMENT PROCESS BETWEEN INDIA AND SOUTH KOREA

CRITERIA	INDIA	SOUTH KOREA
Governing Law	Article 61 of the Indian Constitution.	Article 65 of the South Korean Constitution.
Grounds for Impeachment	Violation of the Constitution.	Violation of the Constitution or other laws.
Initiation	Can be initiated in either House of Parliament. – Notice signed by 1/4 of members of that House.	Initiated in the National Assembly. – Requires a majority vote to propose impeachment.
Voting Threshold in Legislature	Passed with a two-thirds majority in both Houses: Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.	Requires two-thirds approval of the total members of the National Assembly (200/300).
Investigation Process	A committee may be formed to investigate the charges before presenting them formally.	No separate investigation by the legislature; case directly proceeds to the Constitutional Court.
Judicial Review	No direct judicial review; the process is fully carried out by Parliament.	The Constitutional Court reviews the impeachment case. – Must decide within 180 days.
Final Decision Authority	Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha).	Constitutional Court (requires approval of 6 out of 9 judges).
Immediate Impact	The President remains in office until both Houses pass the resolution.	The President's powers are immediately suspended once the motion is passed in the Assembly.
Outcome	If impeachment passes in both Houses, the President ceases to hold office immediately.	If upheld by the Constitutional Court, the President is removed; otherwise, reinstated.
Historical Instances	No Indian President has been successfully impeached to date.	One significant impeachment: President Yoon Suk Yeol in 2024

KEY DIFFERENCES:

Judicial Involvement: In South Korea, the Constitutional Court plays a crucial role, whereas in India, Parliament alone decides the outcome.

Immediate Suspension: In South Korea, the

President's powers are suspended once the motion passes the National Assembly; in India, the President remains in office until the entire process concludes.

Threshold for Initiation: South Korea requires a simple majority for initiation, whereas India

requires support from one-fourth of the members of the initiating House.

PRELIMS QUESTION:

Q. Which of the following statements is correct with respect to the impeachment of the President of India?

1. The president of India is impeached only on the grounds of violation of the constitution.
2. The president of India can be impeached by the Lok Sabha Only.
3. To impeach, the president of India substantive motion must be moved before the House.

How many of the above-given statements are correct?

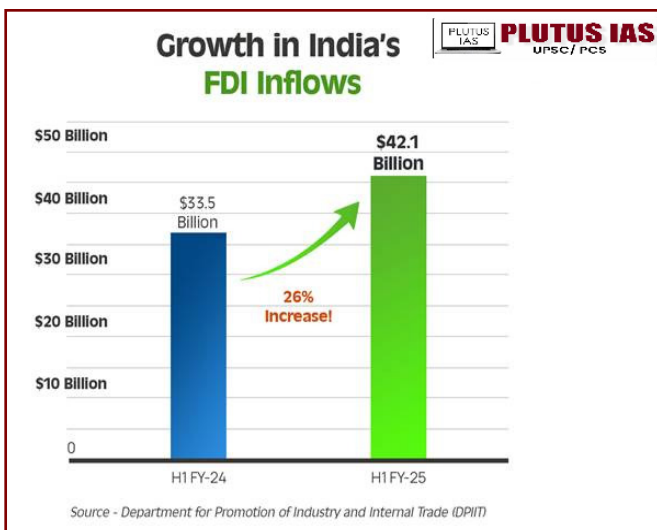
- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

ANSWER: B

INDIA'S FDI JOURNEY: MILESTONE ACHIEVEMENT OF \$1 TRILLION

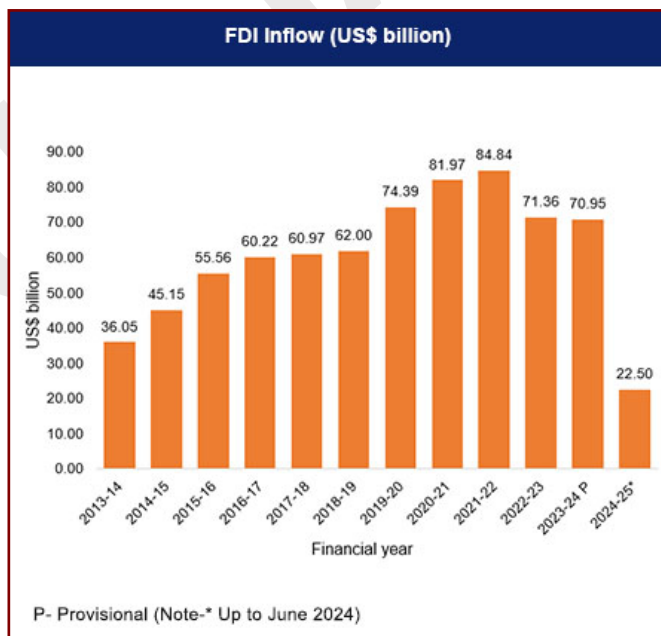
WHY IN THE NEWS?

India has reached a significant milestone, with gross foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows crossing \$1 trillion since April 2000. This achievement is further highlighted by a 26% year-on-year increase in FDI inflows, amounting to \$42.1 billion in the first half of FY 2024-25. The growth reflects India's rising appeal as a global investment hub, supported by proactive policies like "Make in India," liberalized sectoral reforms, and strategic incentives fostering a dynamic and competitive business environment.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT DATA:

Year-on-year growth of the FDI:



MAJOR SOURCE COUNTRIES FOR FDI (APRIL 2000 – JUNE 2024)

- Mauritius:** FDI Inflows: US\$ 175.05 billion. Share: 25%
- Singapore:** FDI Inflows: US\$ 163.85 billion. Share: 24%
- USA:** FDI Inflows: US\$ 66.70 billion. Share: 10%
- Netherlands:** FDI Inflows: US\$ 51.13 billion. Share: 7%
- Japan:** FDI Inflows: US\$ 42.54 billion. Share: 6%

SERVICES SECTOR ATTRACTS HIGHEST FDI

The services sector, which includes financial services, IT, and consultancy, has been the leading recipient of FDI in India. Between April 2000 and September 2024, it received \$115.19 billion, accounting for 16% of India's total foreign direct investment. This highlights the sector's significant role in driving FDI inflows into the country.

SECTORS AND FDI IN INDIA:

- 100% FDI under Automatic Route:** Most sectors in India allow 100% FDI under the automatic route, which means foreign investors can invest freely without requiring prior government approval. Such sectors require Only a post-investment notification to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is required. Examples are Infrastructure, Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM), Automotive, Railways (except operations), Chemicals, Textiles, and Airlines.
- Sectors Requiring Government Approval:** Certain sectors like telecommunications, media, and insurance require government approval before foreign investments can be made.
- Prohibited Sectors:** Gambling and lotteries, real estate businesses, and tobacco manufacturing are prohibited for FDI, reflecting India's focus on ethical and strategic investments.

TOP FDI RECIPIENT STATES:

1. Maharashtra, 2. Gujarat, 3. Delhi, 4. Tamil Nadu, 5. Telangana, 6. Karnataka, 7. Uttar Pradesh, 8. Andhra Pradesh, 9. West Bengal, and 10. Madhya Pradesh.

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI)

Definition: Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) refers to an investment made by an entity based in one country into a business in another country, involving a controlling ownership stake. It is distinct from foreign portfolio investment, which does not entail direct control.

FDI Definition In India: The Indian government defines Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as an

investment made by a **non-resident in an Indian company**, meeting the following criteria:

- Unlisted Companies:** The investor holds equity in an unlisted Indian company.
- Listed Companies:** The investor holds at least 10% of the paid-up equity capital of a listed Indian company.

Regulation of FDI in India: The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry regulates Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The DPIIT formulates the FDI Policy. While RBI and respective ministries are also involved in the Approval process. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approves the FDI above certain limits.

KEY FEATURES:

Forms of FDI: Mergers and acquisitions. Establishing new facilities. Reinvesting profits from overseas operations. Intra-company loans.

Components: Equity capital. Long-term capital, Short-term capital (as reflected in the balance of payments).

Scope: Participation in management. Joint ventures. Transfer of technology and expertise.

Stock of FDI: Net cumulative FDI over a given period, calculated as outward FDI minus inward FDI.

Exclusions: Investments via share purchases where the investor owns less than 10% of the company's shares, as it does not constitute direct control.

TYPES OF FDI

Horizontal FDI: A business expands its operations to another country, performing the same activities abroad as in its home country. Example: A car manufacturer establishing production facilities in another country.

Vertical FDI: A business expands to another country by operating at a different stage of the supply chain. Activities overseas are related but distinct from the core business—for example, A clothing retailer acquiring a textile manufacturing plant in another country.

Conglomerate FDI: A business undertakes unrelated activities in a foreign country, entering an entirely new market. This type is rare due to the challenges of entering both a new country and a new industry. Example: A tech company investing in a foreign real estate venture.

Platform FDI: A business expands into one country but exports the output to a third country. Example: A company establishing a manufacturing unit in Country A to supply goods to Country B.

GREENFIELD VS. BROWNFIELD INVESTMENTS:

- 1. Greenfield Investment:** A company starts a new venture in another country by building new facilities, such as production plants, offices, and distribution centers. The company does not buy an existing facility but creates everything from scratch. Example: A car manufacturer from Germany builds a new factory in India to produce vehicles, complete with offices and distribution centers.
- 2. Brownfield Investment:** A company buys or leases an existing facility to start new production. This option saves time and money since there's no need to build new structures. Example: A technology company from the USA purchases an existing office space and factory in China to start assembling smartphones.

FACTORS DRIVING THE FDI IN INDIA

India's achievement of attracting \$1 trillion in FDI can be credited to several key factors:

- 1. Competitiveness and Innovation:** World Competitive Index 2024: Improved ranking from 43rd in 2021 to 40th. Global Innovation Index 2023: Ranked 40th among 132 economies, up from 81st in 2015, reflecting significant progress in innovation and competitiveness.
- 2. Global Investment Standing:** Greenfield Projects: India ranked 3rd globally, with 1,008 greenfield project announcements (World Investment Report 2023). International Project Finance Deals: Recorded a 64% increase, ranking 2nd globally for the number of such deals, highlighting India's appeal to international investors.

- 3. Improved Business Environment:** Ease of Doing Business: Improved ranking from 142nd in 2014 to 63rd in the World Bank's Doing Business Report 2020, showcasing efforts to simplify regulations and reduce bureaucratic barriers. Enhanced investor confidence through streamlined processes and business-friendly initiatives.
- 4. Policy Reforms:** Liberalised FDI Policies: 100% FDI permitted under the automatic route in most sectors, excluding strategically important ones.
- 5. Tax Reforms:** Abolished angel tax to boost startup investments. Reduced income tax rates for foreign companies through amendments in the Income Tax Act, 1961 (2024).

KEY INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE INVESTMENT

Make in India: Encourages manufacturing and investment in diverse sectors.

Startup India: Boosts entrepreneurship and innovation, attracting FDI in startups.

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme: Provides sector-specific incentives to enhance manufacturing capabilities.

PM GatiShakti: Focuses on multimodal connectivity to improve infrastructure and logistics.

National Industrial Corridor Programme: Develops world-class industrial corridors to support investment.

Project Development Cells (PDCs): Established in all Ministries to fast-track investments and facilitate approvals.

India Industrial Land Bank: Provides real-time information on available industrial land to aid investors.

Project Monitoring Group (PMG): Resolves bottlenecks for large-scale projects.

Indian Footwear and Leather Development Programme (IFLDP): Promotes investments in the leather industry.

FDI in Strategic Sectors: Allowed increased FDI in sectors like space and defense to attract global investors.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FDI

Helps the Economy: FDI creates new job opportunities across various sectors, from manufacturing to operations. As companies expand their operations, they generate more employment, positively impacting the Indian economy.

Increases Exports: FDI boosts exports by allowing companies to explore new markets. Indian companies can leverage foreign investments to serve international businesses, increasing revenue and supporting India’s tax earnings, which strengthens the economy.

Improves Exchange Rates: Foreign investments lead to an inflow of foreign currency, helping the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) maintain foreign reserves. This contributes to stabilizing the Indian rupee’s exchange rate.

Creates a Competitive Market: The entry of foreign entities raises industry standards, forcing domestic competitors to enhance their practices to maintain market share. This healthy competition benefits consumers by improving product quality and service.

Promotes Technological Advancements: FDI often brings advanced technologies and expertise to India. This knowledge transfer helps improve local industries’ efficiency and innovation, contributing to economic growth and development.

Infrastructure Development: Foreign investments often lead to the development of critical infrastructure, such as transportation networks, logistics facilities, and manufacturing plants.

Enhances Capital Availability: FDI brings in much-needed capital, which is essential for funding development projects and businesses. This helps bridge the gap in domestic savings and promotes economic growth.

CONCLUSION

India’s \$1 trillion FDI milestone, supported by \$42.1 billion inflows in the first half of FY 2024-25, reflects its enhanced competitiveness, innovation, and business-friendly reforms. Initiatives like “Make in India,” sectoral liberalization and space sector reforms highlight its proactive approach. Aligned with global trends, India is set to strengthen its global economic role, driving sustainable growth.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Q. Consider the following Pairs:

	Column 1	Column 2
1	Horizontal FDI	Showing interest in the supply chain of own product in a foreign country
2	Vertical FDI	The same type of business but in another country
3	Conglomerate FDI	A company starting a completely new business from the existing one in another country.

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

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

ANSWER: A

MAINS QUESTION:

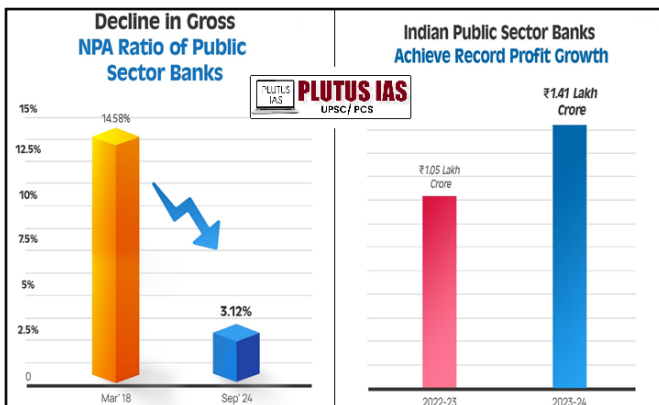
“India’s milestone achievement of reaching \$1 trillion in foreign direct investment (FDI) reflects strong government support and favorable economic conditions.” comment.

(Answer in 150 words)

PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS: A RESURGENT FORCE

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Public Sector Banks (PSBs) in India have achieved a historic milestone by reporting their highest-ever aggregate net profit of ₹1.41 lakh crore in the financial year 2023-24. This remarkable success highlights the sector's impressive recovery, driven by a significant improvement in asset quality. The Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) ratio saw a sharp decline, falling to 3.12% in September 2024. Continuing this strong performance, PSBs posted a net profit of ₹85,520.6 crore in the first half of 2024-25. Moreover, they have delivered substantial shareholder returns, distributing ₹61,964 crore in dividends over the last three years. This exceptional growth reflects the sector's enhanced operational efficiency, better asset quality, and stronger capital base.

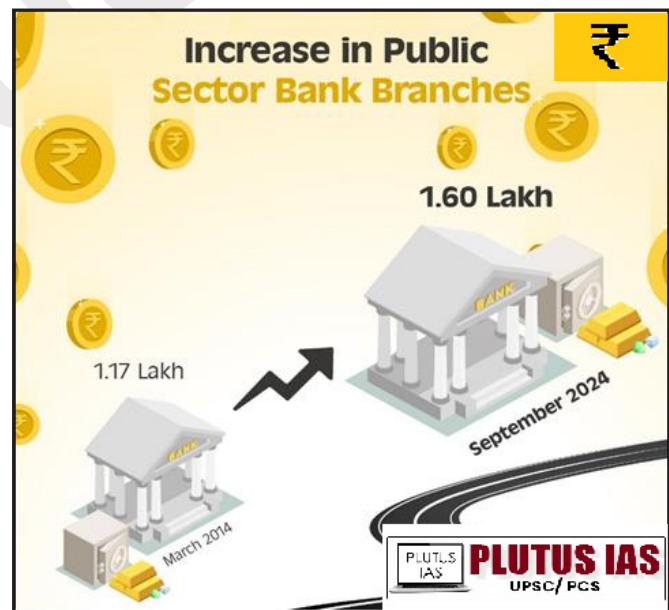


MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT:

- Strengthening PSB Resilience:** The Gross NPA ratio of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) has improved significantly, declining from 14.58% in March 2018 to 3.12% in September 2024, reflecting the success of targeted interventions.
- Expanding Financial Inclusion:** PSBs and SCBs are boosting financial inclusion by opening 54 crore Jan Dhan accounts and sanctioning over 52 crore collateral-free loans under schemes like PM Mudra, Stand-Up India, PM-SVANidhi, and PM Vishwakarma.
- Expansion of Bank Branches:** The number of bank branches increased from 1,17,990 in

March 2014 to 1,60,501 in September 2024. 1,00,686 of these branches are located in Rural and Semi-Urban (RUSU) areas.

- Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme:** Total operative KCC accounts as of September 2024 stood at 7.71 crore, with an outstanding amount of ₹9.88 lakh crore. This scheme provides short-term crop loans to farmers.
- Support to MSME Sector:** The Government of India has supported the MSME sector through affordable credit initiatives. MSME advances grew at a CAGR of 15% over the last 3 years, with total advances reaching ₹28.04 lakh crore by March 31, 2024, reflecting a 17.2% annual growth.
- Growth in Gross Advances of Scheduled Commercial Banks:** The gross advances of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) grew from ₹8.5 lakh crore to ₹61 lakh crore between 2004 and 2014 and have further surged to ₹175 lakh crore by March 2024.



GOVT. INITIATIVES TO STRENGTHEN PSBS:

- SASHAKT programme:** The SASHAKT (Systematic Assessment of Health Care Providers Knowledge and Training) portal is developed to support states in the implementation and monitoring of training and provide real-time updates on the progression of training.

2. Ease Framework: The Government has introduced the Enhanced Access & Service Excellence (EASE) framework to improve the financial health of Public Sector Banks (PSBs). This framework institutionalizes a process of incremental reforms, focusing on governance, prudent lending, risk management, and technology-driven banking.



3. R-4:

Recognition: Identifying the true financial health of banks, especially by acknowledging non-performing assets (NPAs) and bad loans, to ensure transparency.

Resolution: Addressing problematic assets through restructuring, selling off bad loans, or other mechanisms to stabilize banks and reduce toxic debt.

Recapitalisation: Infusing fresh capital into banks, ensuring they are financially strong, able to withstand shocks, and operate above global norms, supporting continued lending and economic growth.

Reforms: Implementing governance, regulatory, and operational changes to align banks with global best practices, enhancing efficiency and sustainability.

4. Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC): The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), enacted in 2016, consolidates and amends India's laws on insolvency and bankruptcy. Its primary goal is to streamline and expedite the resolution of insolvency claims, making the process more efficient.

5. FSIB set up: The Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) was set up by the Government of India on July 1, 2022, to recommend candidates for senior roles in government-owned financial institutions. Its main function is to identify and select the right talent for these positions.

STILL ISSUES PRESIST:

1. High NPA (Non-Performing Assets) Ratio: As of March 2023, PSBs in India had an NPA ratio of 6.5%, which is significantly higher than the private sector banks' NPA ratio of around 2.6%. The high NPA ratio continues to burden PSBs, limiting their ability to lend and increasing financial strain.

2. Delay in Resolution: The resolution of bad loans often takes years. For instance, the average time taken to resolve insolvency cases under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) is approximately 400-500 days, which is significantly higher than global standards.

3. Twin Balance Sheet Problem: The twin balance sheet problem refers to the stress faced by both corporate borrowers and banks. As of FY 2021-22, India's corporate sector had nearly \$460 billion in outstanding debt, much of which was classified as stressed or bad loans. This issue has led to a slowdown in credit growth and economic recovery.

4. Manpower Shortage: PSBs have faced a consistent manpower shortage. As of 2022, the vacancy rate in PSBs was reported to be around 20%, with over 2 lakh positions unfilled. This shortage affects operational efficiency and the ability to scale up banking services.

5. Lack of Advanced Technology: Many PSBs still lag behind private sector banks in adopting digital banking technologies. In a 2021 report,

it was found that PSBs accounted for just 14% of total digital banking transactions, while private banks accounted for over 60%. This technological gap hampers their competitiveness in the digital age.

6. **Corruption by Officials:** High-profile cases like the 2018 Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam, where a \$2 billion fraud was committed by a few officials in collusion with private firms, highlighted corruption issues. This case caused a major loss to the bank and dented the credibility of PSBs.
7. **Interference by Political Executives:** Political interference in the functioning of PSBs has been a longstanding issue. In the case of the PNB scam, there were allegations of political influence on the management of the bank, which may have contributed to weak oversight and eventual fraud. This has led to a lack of accountability and inefficiency within PSBs.

WAY FORWARD:

1. **Strengthen Regulatory Frameworks:** Adapt and enhance regulations to address emerging risks in the financial sector.
2. **Focus on Digital Transformation:** Leverage technology to improve customer outreach, operational efficiency, and service delivery.
3. **Support for MSME and Agriculture Sectors:** Increase funding and resources to promote growth and financial accessibility for MSMEs and the agricultural sector.
4. **Continue R-4 Reforms:** Persist with reforms under the Recognition, Resolution, Recapitalisation, and Reforms (R-4) strategy to maintain financial stability and improve banking practices.
5. **Improve Insolvency Resolution Process:** Enhance the efficiency of the insolvency and bankruptcy process for quicker resolution and recovery of bad debts.

CONCLUSION

Public Sector Banks in India have made remarkable strides in recent years, achieving unprecedented financial milestones and contributing significantly to the nation's economic stability and growth. The decline in Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) and improved Capital to Risk (Weighted) Assets Ratio (CRAR) reflect the sector's resilience and sound risk management practices. The EASE framework has been crucial in institutionalising reforms, promoting prudent lending, and leveraging technology for better banking services. The focus on financial inclusion has expanded access to banking, empowering millions with affordable credit and insurance. With a stronger financial base and improved asset quality, PSBs are well-positioned to support India's development agenda and drive inclusive economic growth.

PRELIMS QUESTION:

Q. Consider the following initiatives introduced by the Government of India to improve the financial health of Public Sector Banks (PSBs):

1. Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)
2. EASE Framework
3. Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB)
4. Sashakt Programme

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: B

MAINS QUESTION:

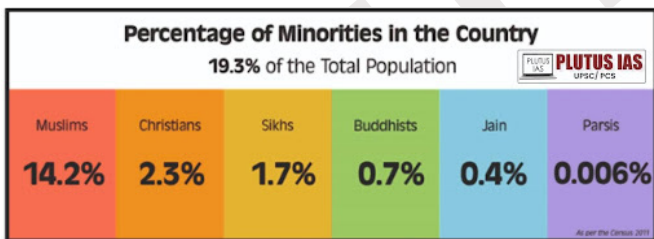
Q. Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have shown a remarkable recovery in recent years, but challenges remain.” Discuss the achievements, challenges, and way forward for the Public Sector Banking sector in India.

(250 words, 15 marks)

EMPOWERING MINORITIES: BUILDING INCLUSIVE INDIA!

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Ministry of Minority Affairs has launched multiple schemes targeting the six notified minority communities—Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Zoroastrians (Parsis)—which collectively make up 19.3% of India’s population. Recent updates highlight the identification of 90 Minority Concentration Districts, 710 Blocks, and 66 Towns, where resources are being focused to uplift these communities.

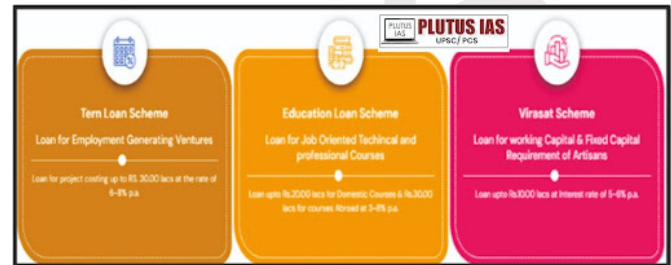


INITIATIVES AND INSTITUTIONS FOR THE MINORITY:

- 1. Ministry of Minority Affairs:** Established on 29th January 2006 with primary mandate includes policy formulation, coordination, evaluation, and oversight of development programs for minority communities.
- 2. National Commission for Minorities (NCM):** Set up under the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992, the NCM works to safeguard the rights of minorities in India.

- 3. The Waqf Act, 1995:** Administered by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, this Act governs waqf properties and establishes the Central Waqf Council (CWC), a statutory body to oversee the administration of waqf properties.
- 4. Dargah Khwaja Saheb, Ajmer:** Administered under the Durgah Khawaja Saheb Act, 1955, the Dargah Committee facilitates millions of devotees visiting the shrine of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti.

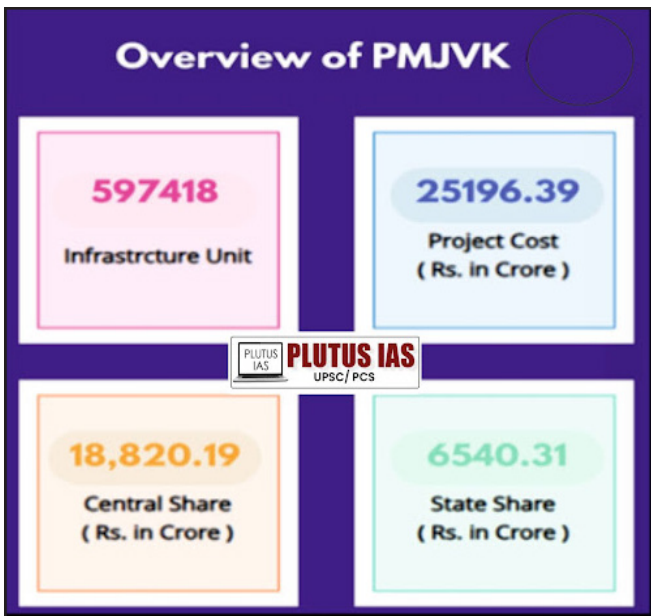
5. Education Promotion Schemes:



- 6. Skill Development Initiatives:** PM VIKAS (Pradhan Mantri Virasat Ka Samvardhan): Focuses on industry-relevant skills training for youth. USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills and Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development): Aims to preserve and develop traditional arts and crafts.
- 7. Economic Empowerment:** The National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC), established in 1994, provides financial assistance to minority entrepreneurs. Till 2023-24, Rs 8,771.88 crore were disbursed to 23.85 lakh beneficiaries through various credit programs.
- 8. PMJVK (Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram):** This infrastructure development scheme addresses socio-economic gaps in minority-concentrated areas.
- 9. Preserving Cultural Heritage:** The Jiyo Parsi Scheme and Hamari Dharohar Scheme aim to preserve minority cultural heritage

CHALLENGES FACED BY MINORITIES IN INDIA:

Discrimination and Stigmatization: Minorities in India, particularly religious and ethnic groups, often face systemic discrimination and stigmatization.



Violence and Communal Riots: Communal violence remains a significant challenge for minorities in India. In 2023, over 200 people were killed in Manipur due to clashes between ethnic groups, with minorities disproportionately affected.

Legal Constraints on Minority Rights: Laws such as the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act limit funding for NGOs that advocate for minority rights, restricting their ability to support these communities.

Systemic Biases and Trust Issues in Law Enforcement: Minority communities face extrajudicial actions and arbitrary detentions, which undermine trust in law enforcement and the justice system.

Lower Income Levels: According to the Sachar Committee Report, Muslim households have lower average income levels than their Hindu counterparts, reflecting widespread economic disadvantage.

Unemployment Rates: The Employment-Unemployment Survey (2017-18) revealed that Muslims, in particular, have higher unemployment rates than other religious groups.

Restrictions on Freedom of Expression: According to the 2023 World Press Freedom Index, India ranked 161st out of 180 countries, signaling increased suppression of dissenting voices for minorities' rights.

Cultural Erosion: The dominance of majority cultural narratives often overshadows minority traditions, leading to cultural erosion.

Lack of Representation: The eighteenth Lok Sabha has the lowest share of Muslim Members of Parliament (MPs) in six decades, with less than 5% of its members belonging to the Muslim community, despite Muslims constituting over 15% of India's population. Currently, there are only 24 Muslim MPs, making up just 4.4% of the Lok Sabha.

WAYS TO EMPOWER MINORITIES IN INDIA

Enhance Legal Protections: The Sachar Committee Report (2006) highlighted the socio-economic disadvantages faced by Muslim minorities in India, recommending enhanced legal protections. The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) works to protect the rights of minorities by addressing grievances and ensuring legal safeguards.

Promote Inclusive Education: The Kundu Committee Report (2011) on the Social, Educational, and Economic Status of Muslims recommends measures to improve education, especially for the backward classes within the community.

Improve Economic Opportunities: The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) aims to provide financial inclusion for marginalized communities, including minorities, by promoting access to banking services.

Strengthen Healthcare Access: The Ranganath Misra Commission Report (2004) identified the health challenges faced by minorities and recommended increased healthcare services in minority-populated areas.

Encourage Political Representation: Implement policies to ensure greater political participation and representation of minorities at local, state, and national levels. Support leadership development programs for minority youth and women to encourage active participation in governance.

Curb Discrimination and Promote Social Integration: The Equitable Growth Program promotes social integration through educational scholarships and financial empowerment for minorities.

Strengthen Law Enforcement Accountability:

Ensure that law enforcement agencies are trained in handling minority-related issues and held accountable for actions that violate minority rights.

Foster Community-Based Initiatives:

Support the establishment of regional networks and organizations that advocate for minority rights and community welfare.

Empower Minority Women and Youth:

Provide targeted programs for women and youth in minority communities to improve their educational, economic, and social opportunities.

CONCLUSION:

Government minority welfare programs focus on empowering marginalized communities by improving access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. These initiatives promote inclusivity, helping minorities thrive and contribute to India's social and economic development. The goal is to build an equitable society where every citizen has the resources to succeed and drive the nation's progress.

PRELIMS QUESTION:

Q. The main objective of the USTTAD Scheme is:

- A. Preservation of the traditional art and crafts
- B. Employing the Minority community
- C. women empowerment through technical training
- D. Doubling the farmer's income by 2030

ANSWER: A

Mains question

Q. Despite various government policies to empower minority communities, significant challenges persist. Discuss the key challenges faced by minorities in India and suggest effective solutions.

(Answer in 250 words)

LA NIÑA: THE BLESSING IN DISGUISE FOR INDIA'S WEATHER PATTERNS**WHY IN THE NEWS?**

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasts a La Niña event by late 2024 or early 2025, leading to a milder winter due to its delayed onset. This follows a rare "Triple Dip La Niña" from 2020 to 2022, succeeded by an El Niño in 2023. The alternating La Niña and El Niño events significantly impact India's weather, including monsoon shifts, temperature changes, and agricultural patterns, making this development crucial for climate planning and resilience.

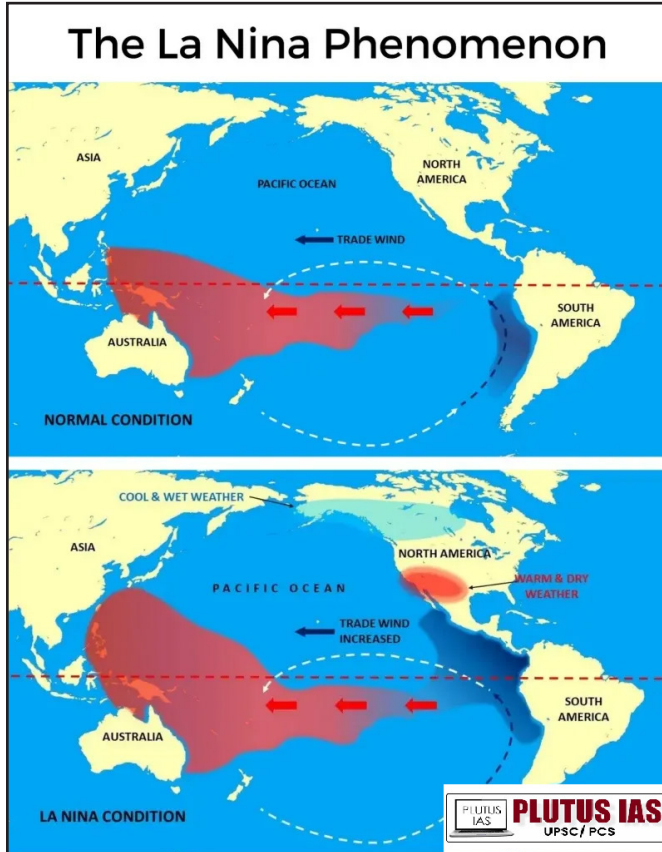
WHAT IS LA NIÑA?

La Niña is the cold phase of the El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle, which represents a periodic fluctuation in sea surface temperatures and atmospheric pressures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean. During La Niña, cooler-than-average sea surface temperatures occur in the central and eastern Pacific, leading to significant shifts in global weather patterns. Features of La Niña:

- 1. Cooler Sea Surface Temperatures:** La Niña is characterized by below-average sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean.
- 2. Atmospheric Changes:** The cooling of the ocean leads to stronger-than-normal trade winds that push warm water toward the western Pacific, leading to higher-than-usual sea surface temperatures in the western Pacific and around Indonesia.
- 3. Global Weather Impacts:** Warmer and drier conditions in parts of the southern United States, the southern tier of the U.S., and parts of the Gulf Coast. Increased rainfall in countries like Indonesia, the Philippines, and northern Australia. Colder winters in the northern U.S. and Canada. Drier conditions in parts of South America, especially the western coast, like Peru and Ecuador.

- 4. **Tropical Cyclone Disruption:** La Niña increases hurricane activity in the Atlantic while reducing storms in the Pacific.
- 5. **Agricultural Impact:** La Niña causes droughts in South America (e.g., Argentina, Brazil) and floods in Southeast Asia, disrupting crop yields.

- 4. **Regional Temperature Variations:** Shifts in the jet stream and atmospheric patterns. Warmer-than-normal winter temperatures in the southern U.S. and cooler-than-normal temperatures in the northern U.S. and Canada.
- 5. **Droughts and Flooding:** La Niña causes abnormal rainfall patterns. Drought in the southern U.S., with heavy rains and flooding in the Pacific Northwest and parts of Canada



IMPACTS OF LA NIÑA ON GLOBAL CLIMATE:

- 1. **Stronger Trade Winds:** During La Niña, trade winds strengthen, pushing more warm water toward Asia. Results in cooler-than-average sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific.
- 2. **Upwelling and Ocean Conditions:** The cooler waters caused by La Niña increase upwelling off the west coast of the Americas. Nutrient-rich, cold water rises, impacting marine ecosystems and fisheries.
- 3. **Jet Stream Shift:** Cold Pacific waters push the jet stream northward. Alters weather patterns, with drier conditions in the southern U.S. and wetter conditions in the Pacific Northwest and Canada.

IMPACTS OF LA NIÑA ON INDIAN CLIMATE:

Impact	Description
Rainfall	La Niña often brings above-normal rainfall during the southwest monsoon, benefiting agriculture by providing water for crops, but excessive rainfall can cause flooding.
Temperature	Colder-than-usual winters in northern India, with slightly warmer daytime temperatures, which may affect energy consumption and agricultural cycles.
Summer	Reduced intensity of summer heat, providing relief from heatwaves, especially in northern and central India, mitigating heat stress on people and crops.
Air Quality	Higher wind speeds help disperse air pollution, improving air quality, particularly in urban areas like Delhi, which face chronic pollution issues.
Agriculture	Increased rainfall can support crop growth, but excessive rainfall in flood-prone areas may damage crops, reducing yields and causing losses for farmers.
Fisheries	Cooling of ocean waters supports marine life, improving fishing conditions off India's coasts, but may also affect fish species diversity.

Impact	Description
Wildfires	Reduced heat and increased rainfall lower the risk of wildfires in regions like the Western Ghats, though flooding could still cause landslides and erosion.
Economy	Above-normal rainfall and flooding can impact crop production, food supply, and exports. The fishing sector may benefit from improved conditions, supporting the coastal economy.
Flooding	Excessive rainfall can lead to flooding in low-lying areas and river basins, disrupting transportation, displacing people, and causing economic damage.

SIGNIFICANCE OF LA NIÑA:

- Enhanced Rainfall:** Above-normal monsoon rains boost agriculture, especially in water-scarce regions, leading to higher crop yields.
- Reduced Summer Heat:** La Niña helps lower the intensity of heatwaves, offering relief to both people and crops.
- Improved Air Quality:** Stronger winds disperse air pollution, improving air quality, particularly in urban areas like Delhi.
- Boost to Fisheries:** Cooler ocean waters support marine life, benefiting coastal fisheries with better fishing conditions.
- Lower Wildfire Risk:** Increased rainfall and cooler temperatures reduce the chances of wildfires in vulnerable regions.
- Drought Mitigation:** Extra rainfall helps mitigate drought conditions, supporting agriculture and water supplies.

CONCLUSION:

La Niña, forecasted to occur in late 2024 or early 2025, brings both challenges and benefits to

India. It can enhance monsoon rainfall, support agriculture in water-scarce regions, and reduce summer heat, offering relief from heat waves. Cooler ocean temperatures benefit fisheries, while stronger winds improve air quality in urban areas like Delhi. Additionally, lower wildfire risk and drought mitigation are key advantages. However, the potential for flooding requires careful management to minimize disruptions. Overall, La Niña presents opportunities for agriculture, energy, and the environment but also demands proactive planning.

PRELIMS QUESTION:

Q. Which of the following statements regarding La Niña are correct?

- La Niña is characterized by cooler-than-average sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Oceans.
- La Niña tends to cause drought in Southeast Asia and flooding in South America.
- During La Niña, the jet stream shifts northward, bringing drier conditions to the southern United States and wetter conditions to the Pacific Northwest.
- La Niña has no significant impact on India's monsoon season.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- 1, 3 only
- 1, 2, 3 only
- 2, 4 only
- 1, 3, 4 only

Answer: A

MAINS QUESTION:

Q. Briefly explain the significant effects of La Niña on global and regional weather patterns. Discuss the impacts of La Niña on India's climate, agriculture, and economy.

(250 words, 15 marks)

PRELIMS BITS: INS TUSHIL.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

India and Russia are entering a new era of collaboration by leveraging expertise in key areas like Artificial Intelligence, cyber security, space exploration, and counter-terrorism. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh highlighted this during the commissioning of the stealth-guided missile frigate INS Tushil into the Indian Navy on December 9, 2024, in Kaliningrad, Russia.



KEY FACTS: INS TUSHIL

Ship Overview

Type: Multi-role stealth guided missile frigate.
Built in: Kaliningrad, Russia.
Commissioning: 09 Dec 2024, by Hon'ble Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh.

HISTORY:

India decided to acquire two Admiral Grigorovich-class frigates in 2016. Engines were sourced from Zorya-Mashproekt, Ukraine, due to the Ukrainian conflict. Contract signed in October 2018 for ₹8,000 crore (\$1.3 billion in 2023) for two frigates: Admiral Butakov renamed INS Tushil. Admiral Istomin was renamed INS Tamala.

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Charter of Indian Navy: Diplomatic, military, and constabulary roles.

Joint Activities: Patrolling, maritime partnership exercises with various navies, including in piracy-prone regions.

Capability Building: During port visits, collaboration with host navies and military/government leadership.

STRATEGIC AIMS

1. Strengthening India's maritime cooperation with littoral nations.
2. Engaging with the Indian diaspora in the region
3. Demonstrating the Indian Navy's commitment to safeguarding the global seafaring community
4. Deployment: INS Tushil is set to conduct joint exercises, patrols, and maritime cooperation en route to India.
5. Capability: Enhances the Indian Navy's blue-water operational capacity and diplomatic engagement.

STEALTH TECHNOLOGY:

Aspect	Details
Definition	Military tactics and countermeasures to reduce visibility to radar, infrared, sonar, etc.
Objective	Operate or hide without alerting enemy forces to the presence of personnel or equipment.
Applications	Aircraft, ships, submarines, missiles, satellites, ground vehicles, and military uniforms.
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Shape Design: Reduces radar detection by re-directing waves. – Radiation-Absorbent Materials (RAM): Blocks radar signals. – Multi-Spectral Camouflage: Adapts to radar, visual, and infrared spectra. – Infrared Reduction: Chemicals applied to uniforms/vehicles reduce heat signatures.

Aspect	Details
History	– Began in 1958 in the U.S. to counter Soviet radar tracking during the Cold War.
	– Initial efforts focused on U-2 spy planes.
	– Expanded to include advanced stealth designs like the B-2 Spirit.
Notable Example	Northrop Grumman B-2 Spirit Stealth Bomber.
Strategic Importance	– Mitigates advancements in radar, infrared tracking, and surface-to-air missile technologies.
	– Tailored spectral signatures for specific detection threats.



WHAT IS NANO BUBBLE TECHNOLOGY?

Nano Bubble Technology is an advanced gas delivery technology that utilizes ultra-small gas bubbles to enhance water quality, improve chemistry, and address a variety of environmental challenges. These bubbles, known as nanobubbles or ultrafine bubbles, are spherical gas bubbles with a diameter smaller than 1 micrometre, typically ranging from 50 to 200 nanometers.

KEY FEATURES OF NANO BUBBLES:

- 1. Size:** Nanobubbles are incredibly tiny, with a diameter of less than 1 micrometre (1000 nanometers), which allows them to behave differently from larger bubbles.
- 2. Stability:** Unlike larger gas bubbles that rise quickly and dissipate, nanobubbles remain stable in liquid for much longer periods. This makes them highly effective in processes where sustained gas presence is necessary.
- 3. High Surface Area:** Due to their small size, nanobubbles have a high surface area-to-volume ratio. This allows them to interact more efficiently with surrounding liquids, leading to more effective chemical reactions.
- 4. Unique Behavior:** Nanobubbles can stay suspended in liquids without rising to the surface, which is a key feature that distinguishes them from larger bubbles.

APPLICATIONS OF NANO BUBBLE TECHNOLOGY:

- 1. Water Treatment:** Nanobubbles can enhance water quality by increasing the dissolved oxygen

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Q. The primary objective of stealth technology in military applications is:

- Increase weapon firepower
- Enhance the visibility of military assets
- Reduce detectability to radar, infrared, and other detection systems
- Improve communication range

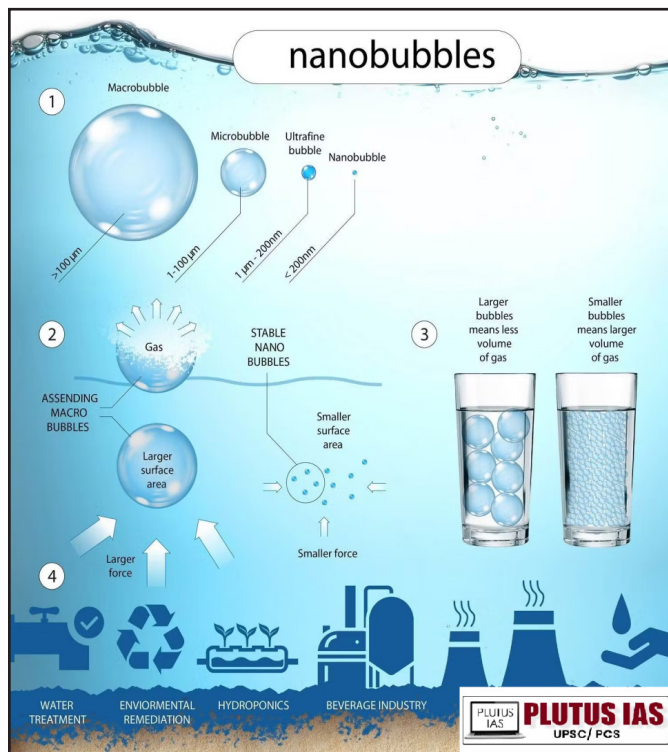
ANSWER: C.

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF NANO BUBBLES: A REVOLUTION IN TECHNOLOGY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Nano Bubble Technology was launched by the Union Minister of State for Forest, Environment, and Climate Change at the National Zoological Park, Delhi, marking a groundbreaking approach to water purification.”

content in water, aiding in the breakdown of contaminants, improving 2. microbial activity, and enhancing the efficiency of water purification processes.



- 2. Environmental Protection:** They help in treating industrial wastewater by increasing oxygenation, which supports the breakdown of pollutants and improves water quality. Nanobubbles are also used in environmental cleanup to remove oils, heavy metals, and other contaminants from water and air.
- 3. Agriculture:** In agriculture, nanobubbles are used to enhance irrigation systems, improving oxygen levels in soil and water, which boosts plant health, root growth, and overall crop yield.
- 4. Aquaculture:** In fish farming and aquaculture, nanobubbles provide a continuous supply of oxygen to fish tanks, improving fish health, growth rates, and survival.
- 5. Medical and Healthcare:** Research is exploring the use of nanobubbles for drug delivery systems, where they can transport medications more effectively to targeted areas in the body.

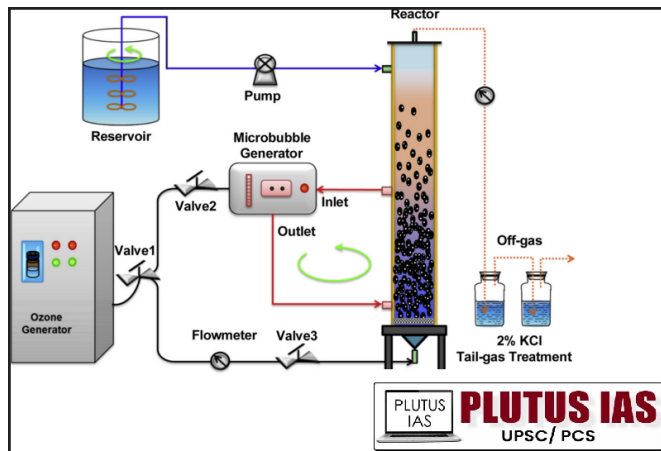
- 6. Cleaning and Disinfection:** Nanobubbles are used in cleaning processes because of their ability to break down oils, dirt, and other contaminants more effectively, leading to more efficient disinfection.

HOW NANO BUBBLE TECHNOLOGY CLEANS & PURIFIES WATER:

- 1. Algae Removal:** Nanobubbles break down algae and prevent its buildup in stagnant water, improving clarity and preventing harmful blooms.
- 2. Waste Treatment:** They efficiently digest biological waste and separate oils, fats, and grease, accelerating wastewater treatment.
- 3. Gas Transfer:** Nanobubbles enhance oxygen transfer, supporting aerobic microorganisms that break down pollutants and improve water quality.
- 4. Surface Cleaning:** They remove organic materials from surfaces without chemicals, effectively cleaning pipes, tanks, and equipment.
- 5. Odor Control:** Nanobubbles help neutralize odours by breaking down organic compounds responsible for unpleasant smells in water.
- 6. Enhanced Filtration:** They assist in particle removal by agglomerating smaller contaminants, improving water clarity and filtration performance.
- 7. Disinfection:** Ozone-infused nanobubbles disinfect water by killing harmful bacteria, viruses, and pathogens, offering an eco-friendly alternative to chemicals.
- 8. Heavy Metal Removal:** Nanobubbles aid in removing heavy metals like lead and mercury, making water safer for use.

ISSUES HINDERING THE POTENTIAL OF NANOTECHNOLOGY:

- 1. High Production Costs:** Creating nanobubbles requires specialized, costly equipment, limiting its affordability for large-scale use.



2. **Scalability:** Expanding nano bubble applications from small to large systems is challenging and expensive.
3. **Lack of Standardization:** A lack of consistent methods and protocols makes it difficult to evaluate or replicate results.
4. **Limited Long-Term Research:** More studies are needed to understand the long-term effects on ecosystems, health, and industry.
5. **Regulatory Concerns:** Safety and regulatory challenges exist, particularly in food, agriculture, and medical applications.
6. **Energy Consumption:** Nanobubble generation consumes significant energy, which can reduce environmental benefits if not optimized.
7. **Unclear Mechanisms:** The exact interactions of nanobubbles with contaminants or materials are still not fully understood.
8. **Equipment & Maintenance:** The need for specialized, high-maintenance equipment adds to operational costs.
9. **Environmental Variability:** Water conditions like temperature or contaminants can reduce the effectiveness of nanobubbles.

WAY FORWARD:

1. **Reduce Costs:** Innovate more cost-effective manufacturing processes and materials to make nanotechnology accessible for widespread use.
2. **Enhance Scalability:** Focus on developing scalable methods that can be applied in large industries, ensuring efficiency and affordability.

3. **Establish Standards:** Create global standards and regulations for nanotechnology to ensure consistency, safety, and effective implementation across sectors.
4. **Promote Research:** Invest in long-term, interdisciplinary research to understand the full capabilities and risks of nanomaterials and their applications. Address
5. **Address Regulatory Concerns:** Work with governments and regulatory bodies to ensure clear guidelines for safe and responsible use in areas like healthcare and food.
6. **Optimize Energy Use:** Improve energy efficiency in nanotechnology processes to ensure sustainability and reduce the environmental footprint.

CONCLUSION:

Nano Bubble Technology offers significant potential for improving water quality and addressing environmental challenges across various sectors. It enhances water treatment, boosts agricultural productivity, and supports aquaculture, among other benefits. High costs, scalability issues, lack of standards, and energy demands limit its widespread use. To unlock its full potential, efforts must focus on reducing costs, improving scalability, conducting more research, and establishing clear regulations. With these advancements, Nano Bubble Technology could play a pivotal role in sustainable development and environmental protection.

PRELIMS QUESTION:

Q. With reference to Nano Bubble Technology, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Nanobubbles have a diameter smaller than 1 micrometre, typically ranging from 50 to 200 nanometers
2. Nanobubbles have a very short lifespan and dissipate quickly in liquids.

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: A

MAINS QUESTION:

Q. Discuss the potential applications and challenges of Nano Bubble Technology in water purification and environmental protection.

(250 words, 15 marks)

TERRORISM: A GROWING CHALLENGE TO INTERNAL SECURITY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The news highlights the reason behind Union Home Minister Amit Shah’s review meeting on the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir it marks the first such review since the assembly elections were held in the region during September-October. The meeting, attended by key figures like J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, senior officers from the Army, paramilitary forces, intelligence agencies, and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), underscores the government’s ongoing focus on maintaining security and stability in Jammu and Kashmir following the recent elections.



TERRORISM:

Terrorism is the deliberate use of violence, or the threat of violence, against individuals, groups, property, or systems with the aim of achieving specific ideological, political, religious, or economic objectives.

Forms of Terrorism

1. International Terrorism: International terrorism is driven by foreign terrorist organizations or external influences, often transcending national borders.

Indian Context: India has been a victim of cross-border terrorism, especially from Pakistan-based groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM). Example The 26/11 Mumbai attacks (2008), carried out by LeT, involved coordinated assaults on public spaces, killing over 170 people.

2. Domestic Terrorism: Domestic terrorism arises from social, political, or ideological objectives within the terrorist’s home country.

Indian Context: India faces domestic terrorism challenges such as Maoist insurgency (Left-Wing Extremism), which operates in states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha. Example The Dantewada Naxal attack (2010), in which 76 CRPF personnel were killed by Maoist insurgents.

WHY TERRORISM IS A MAJOR CHALLENGE TO INTERNAL SECURITY

Challenge	Description
Threat to Safety	Terrorist attacks cause the loss of innocent lives, leading to widespread fear and insecurity in society.
Political Instability	Terrorism undermines government authority, challenges legitimacy, and erodes public trust in institutions.

Challenge	Description
Economic Impact	Destruction of infrastructure, disrupted commerce, and increased security costs harm the economy.
Social Division	Terrorism induces fear, trauma, and social divisions, leading to mistrust and potential radicalization.
Unpredictable Tactics	Terrorists use unconventional tactics, making it difficult for national security forces to predict or prevent attacks.
Radicalization	Terrorism fosters radicalization, especially among vulnerable groups, leading to the growth of extremist ideologies.
International Strain	Cross-border terrorism strains diplomatic relations and reduces international cooperation.
Long-term Effects	The aftermath of attacks continues to affect national security, with heightened security measures and public trauma.

WHY TERRORISM IS MORE PRELEVANT IN JAMMU & KASHMIR:

- Geopolitical Conflict:** Jammu & Kashmir is a disputed region between India and Pakistan, fueling cross-border terrorism.
- Cross-Border Infiltration:** Pakistan-based militant groups infiltrate the region, increasing terrorist activities.
- Religious and Ideological Goals:** Militant groups seek to establish an Islamic state or separate Kashmir from India.
- Local Grievances:** Political unrest, alienation, and dissatisfaction create fertile ground for extremism.

- Youth Radicalization:** Limited economic opportunities and political discontent led to recruitment by militant groups.
- Strategic Importance:** The region’s location makes it a focal point for external and internal security concerns.
- Article 370 Abrogation:** The removal of Jammu & Kashmir’s special status increased unrest and violence.
- Security Operations:** Military actions often lead to civilian casualties, further fueling radicalization.
- Social Media:** Terrorist groups use social media for propaganda and recruitment.

VARIOUS COUNTER-TERRORISM MEASURES:

Counter-Terrorism Measure	Purpose
UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act)	Designates organizations as terrorist groups and allows detention without charge.
NIA (National Investigation Agency)	Investigates terrorism cases, especially those with international links.
ATS (Anti-Terrorism Squad) – State Level	Focuses on preventing and responding to local terrorist threats.
NSA (National Security Act) – 1980	Allows preventive detention of individuals threatening national security.
Fencing of Borders	Prevents cross-border infiltration by terrorists.
Surveillance & Intelligence Sharing	Enhances monitoring of suspected terrorists and shares intelligence across agencies.
Counter-Radicalization Programs	Focuses on preventing recruitment by extremist groups through community engagement.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES IN COUNTER-TERRORISM EFFORTS?

1. **Lack of International Cooperation:** Countries often prioritize different interests, hindering information sharing and global coordination.
2. **Radicalization:** Extremist ideologies spread through social media, leading to increased recruitment, especially among youth.
3. **State-Sponsored Terrorism:** Some nations support or shelter terrorist groups, complicating global counter-terrorism efforts.
4. **Lack of Coordination Among Security Agencies:** Fragmented agencies lead to inefficiencies, delays, and missed opportunities in responding to threats.
5. **Human Rights Violations:** Counter-terrorism measures sometimes infringe on human rights, causing distrust and alienation among communities.
6. **Evolving Tactics of Terrorists:** Terrorists adapt to new technologies and tactics, such as cyber-attacks and lone-wolf operations, complicating responses.
7. **Funding and Resource Shortages:** Terrorist groups often have significant funding, while counter-terrorism efforts face resource constraints.
8. **Public Support:** Heavy-handed tactics can erode public trust, making counter-terrorism less effective and potentially fueling radicalization.

WAY FORWARD:

1. **Criminalizing Terrorist Offenses:** Strengthen laws to criminalize all terrorist activities and ensure effective prosecution.
2. **Strengthening International Cooperation:** Enhance global intelligence-sharing and create unified legal standards for tackling terrorism.
3. **Countering the Use of New Technologies:** Regulate online platforms and improve cybersecurity to prevent terrorist exploitation of technology.

4. **Addressing the Threat of Foreign Terrorist Fighters:** Strengthen border control measures and develop reintegration programs for returning foreign fighters.
5. **Promoting a Whole-of-Society Approach:** Engage communities, promote counter-narratives, and educate the public to prevent radicalization.
6. **Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Radicalisation (CTCR) Division:** Coordinate efforts across agencies to prevent radicalization and ensure integrated counter-terrorism strategies.

CONCLUSION

Terrorism remains a significant threat to India, with both international and domestic dimensions. While the impacts are devastating, India continues strengthening its counter-terrorism framework through military, legislative, and diplomatic measures to ensure national security and regional stability. The country's focus on enhancing intelligence-sharing, improving border security, and countering radicalization has contributed to weakening terrorist networks. The evolving tactics of terrorists and cross-border challenges require constant adaptation of strategies. India must maintain a comprehensive approach involving both security and socio-economic initiatives to combat terrorism in the long term.

PRELIMS QUESTION:

Q.Consider the following statements:

1. Terrorism is primarily driven by the deliberate use of violence to achieve political, ideological, or religious objectives.
2. The Jammu & Kashmir region faces terrorism due to its geopolitical conflict, cross-border infiltration, and internal social grievances.
3. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is responsible for addressing terrorism issues related only to international groups, not domestic ones.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: B

MAINS QUESTION:

Q. Discuss the various challenges faced by India in its counter-terrorism efforts, particularly in Jammu & Kashmir, and suggest a way forward to enhance national security.

(250 words, 15 marks)