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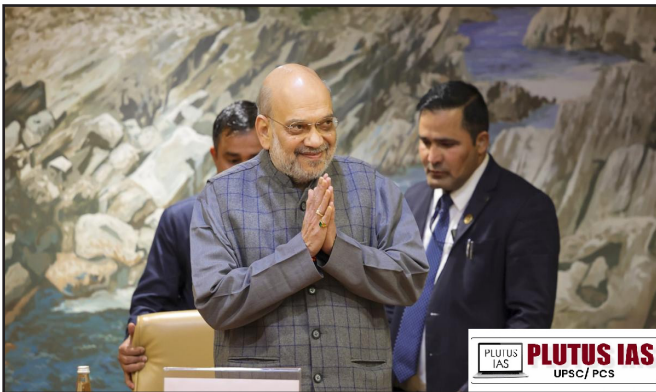
CONTENTS

1. National security: Social Media	1
2. Terrorism in India: Challenges to National Security.....	3
3. Conserving The National Heritage: Safeguarding India's Ancient Wonders	6
4. Swami Ramakrishna Paramhansa.....	9
5. Porous Borders : Threat to Internal Security	11
6. Earthquake Risk Reduction: Challenges and Strategies	14
7. New Election Commission Appointment: A Closer Look at the ECI and Recent Reforms	16
8. EV Batteries: Revolutions to achieve net zero emission by 2070	19
9. Quantum Computing: The Next Technol	21
10. National Educations Policy	24

NATIONAL SECURITY: SOCIAL MEDIA

WHY IN THE NEWS?

India's digital boom, while offering immense potential, is accompanied by a surge in cybercrime. Home Minister Amit Shah outlined the government's response, emphasizing a multi-faceted strategy. This includes blocking malicious online content, fostering inter-agency collaboration to combat cyber threats, and employing AI to detect financial fraud. Recognizing the borderless nature of cybercrime, the government stresses a holistic approach encompassing software security, service provider responsibility, and user awareness. The rising number of cybercrime cases underscores the urgent need for these measures to safeguard India's burgeoning digital economy and its citizens. The government's goal is a substantial reduction in cybercrime, reflecting its commitment to a secure digital future.



WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media refers to online platforms and tools that enable users to create, share, and interact with content, as well as connect with others. It allows people to communicate, exchange ideas, and build communities through text, images, videos, and other forms of media. Social media platforms typically offer features like messaging, commenting, liking, sharing, and following, which help users engage with one another.

- 1. Facebook:** A platform for sharing personal updates, photos, and videos and engaging with friends, family, and communities.
- 2. Instagram:** Focused on sharing images and videos, often with artistic or personal branding purposes.

- 3. Twitter (now X):** A microblogging platform for sharing brief thoughts, news updates, and trending topics.
- 4. TikTok:** A video-sharing app that allows users to create short, creative videos, often paired with music or special effects.
- 5. LinkedIn:** A professional network for connecting with colleagues, recruiters, and businesses, used for career networking and sharing industry-related content.

HOW HAS SOCIAL MEDIA BECOME A THREAT TO INTERNAL SECURITY?

- 1. Radicalization and Recruitment:** Extremist groups use social media to spread propaganda and recruit individuals, particularly vulnerable youth, leading to potential violence.
- 2. Misinformation:** False information spreads rapidly, causing confusion, distrust, and social unrest, often fueling protests or riots.
- 3. Cyberbullying and Harassment:** Online abuse harms individuals psychologically and disrupts social cohesion, contributing to societal instability.
- 4. Organizing Protests and Riots:** Social media enables the coordination of protests, which can escalate into violence, creating public safety risks.
- 5. Data Privacy Concerns:** Personal information shared on social media can be exploited for malicious purposes like identity theft or targeted misinformation.
- 6. Foreign Interference:** Social media is used by foreign actors to manipulate public opinion, interfere in elections, and create political divisions.

WHAT ARE THE GOVT ACTION TO TACKLE THE THREAT OF SOCIAL MEDIA?

- 1. Advisories:** MeitY has advised social media platforms to quickly remove misinformation and hoax bomb threats. Social media platforms are urged to report activities that threaten India's unity, integrity, sovereignty, security, or economic stability.

2. **Financial Assistance:** The central government provides financial assistance to law enforcement agencies in states and union territories to enhance their cybersecurity infrastructure and capabilities.
3. **Partnerships:** The government collaborates with academic institutions and R&D centres to build the cybersecurity workforce.
4. **Legal Action:** Social media platforms that fail to comply with the IT Rules and Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) may face legal action.
5. **Reporting:** Social media threats can be reported to the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3).
6. **Other Actions:** The government has strengthened mechanisms to address and combat cybercrime.

CHALLENGES IN CONTROLLING THREATS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA:

1. **Misinformation and Fake News:** False information spreads rapidly on social media, causing confusion, inciting violence, or triggering harmful actions.
2. **Hate Speech and Cyberbullying:** Identifying and moderating harmful content like hate speech and bullying is difficult, especially when it's subtle or disguised.
3. **Privacy Concerns:** Balancing user privacy with the need to monitor for malicious activity is complex due to the large amount of personal data collected on platforms.
4. **Anonymity:** Online anonymity allows harmful behaviours to thrive without accountability, making it hard to trace perpetrators.
5. **Platform Complexity:** The vast number of social media platforms and their constantly evolving features make it hard to monitor and enforce rules consistently.
6. **Global Reach:** Social media threats can quickly cross international borders, requiring cooperation between multiple legal systems and jurisdictions to address them.

7. **Algorithmic Manipulation:** Algorithms that prioritize engagement can unintentionally amplify harmful content, making it more likely to spread.
8. **Social Engineering Attacks:** Cybercriminals exploit social media to manipulate users through scams like phishing, aiming to steal sensitive information.
9. **Resource Limitations:** Effective policing of social media requires significant human resources to review flagged content and take appropriate action.

WHAT ARE WAYS TO REGULATE SOCIAL MEDIA?

1. **Content Moderation:** Use AI and human moderators to detect and remove harmful content like hate speech and misinformation. Platforms should have clear guidelines and enforce them consistently.
2. **Platform Accountability:** Hold platforms accountable for harmful content and impose penalties for non-compliance with regulations.
3. **Transparency:** Require platforms to publish transparency reports on content moderation and disclose political ads to prevent manipulation.
4. **Data Privacy:** Strengthen user data protection with stricter privacy laws and ensure platforms get explicit consent before collecting data.
5. **Combating Misinformation:** Partner with fact-checkers, label false content, and provide context to reduce misinformation spread.
6. **Protect Vulnerable Groups:** Implement stronger protections against cyberbullying harassment and create safe spaces for users, especially minors.
7. **Media Literacy:** Promote digital literacy campaigns to help users identify misinformation and navigate social media safely.
8. **Cross-Border Cooperation:** Establish international regulations and cooperation between countries to tackle global issues like hate speech and cybercrime.
9. **Algorithm Transparency:** Regulate algorithms to prevent the amplification of harmful content and ensure user well-being is prioritized.

CONCLUSION

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, providing significant benefits in communication, networking, and content sharing. However, its widespread use also presents critical threats to internal security, such as radicalization, misinformation, cyberbullying, and privacy concerns. To address these threats, governments are taking multi-faceted actions, including advisories, financial assistance to law enforcement, partnerships with academic institutions, and legal measures to enforce compliance with regulations.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Q. Which of the following statements are correct regarding the challenges posed by social media to internal security?

1. Misinformation on social media can lead to public confusion and unrest.
2. Cyberbullying and online harassment do not significantly affect social cohesion.
3. Anonymity on social media can protect harmful individuals from accountability.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer: C

MAINS QUESTIONS:

Q. Critically examine the government's approach to tackling the threats posed by social media to internal security, focusing on measures such as content moderation, legal action, and international cooperation.

(250 words, 15 marks)

TERRORISM IN INDIA: CHALLENGES TO NATIONAL SECURITY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has disapproved of US Vice President JD Vance's remarks at the Munich Security Conference, where Vance criticized

European nations' stances on issues like free speech and immigration. Vance warned that the real threat to Europe comes from within, alleging a retreat from fundamental values shared with the United States. His comments, made on February 14, have sparked a larger debate about a potential rift in US-Europe relations. Scholz responded strongly, rejecting Vance's criticism as inappropriate among allies, highlighting a growing divergence in values between the two regions. This controversy highlights tensions surrounding political shifts in Europe and the US and raises questions about the future of transatlantic cooperation.

WHAT IS TERRORISM?

Terrorism is the use of violence or the threat of violence to create fear, typically aimed at achieving political, ideological, or religious goals. It often targets innocent civilians or symbolic sites, such as government buildings, embassies, or places of public gathering, to generate widespread panic and pressure governments or societies into making political changes. The key characteristic that distinguishes terrorism from other forms of violence is its intentional focus on creating fear among a larger audience rather than achieving direct military victory. Terrorism can be carried out by non-state actors, such as extremist groups or individuals, or by state actors (state-sponsored terrorism). The motivations behind terrorism can vary widely, ranging from resistance against an oppressive regime to religious extremism to nationalist or separatist movements. Modern terrorism often involves tactics such as bombings, hijackings, kidnappings, and suicide attacks and has evolved to include cyberattacks and the use of weapons of mass destruction.

TERRORISM AND INDIA

- 1. 1993 Bombay Bombings:** 13 bomb blasts in Mumbai, killing 257 and injuring over 700. Linked to Dawood Ibrahim's D-Company and Pakistan-based groups.
- 2. Parliament Attack (2001):** Militants attacked India's Parliament, killing 9 and injuring 18. Perpetrated by Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Tayyaba.
- 3. Mumbai 26/11 (2008):** Coordinated attacks on hotels, restaurants, and a train station, killing 164 and injuring 300+ by Lashkar-e-Tayyaba.

4. **Indian Airlines Flight 814 Hijacking (1999):** The hijacking of a flight, resulting in one death and 154 hostages, was carried out by Harkat-ul-Mujahideen.
5. **Godhra Train Burning (2002):** The train fire killed 59, sparking Gujarat riots, with accusations of local Muslim involvement.
6. **Delhi Bombings (2008):** Bomb blasts across Delhi killed 30 and injured over 100, orchestrated by the Indian Mujahideen.
7. **Uri Attack (2016):** Attack on an army base in Jammu and Kashmir, killing 18 soldiers, claimed by Jaish-e-Mohammed.
8. **Pulwama Attack (2019):** A suicide bombing killed 40 CRPF soldiers in Jammu and Kashmir, attributed to Jaish-e-Mohammed.

TERRORISM AS A THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY:

1. **Loss of Life and Property:** Terrorist attacks cause casualties and infrastructure damage and instil fear, undermining national stability.
2. **Governance Instability:** Terrorism weakens governments by challenging authority and creating political turmoil, potentially fueling extremism.
3. **Economic Consequences:** Attacks disrupt markets, decrease tourism and investment, and lead to high-security costs, hindering economic growth.
4. **International Relations:** Terrorism's transnational nature strains diplomatic relations, requiring international collaboration on counter-terrorism measures.
5. **Radicalization and Recruitment:** Terrorist groups exploit grievances to recruit individuals, sometimes leading to homegrown terrorism.
6. **Cyber Terrorism:** Terrorist groups target critical infrastructure through cyber-attacks, creating widespread disruption.
7. **Human Rights Impact:** Counter-terrorism measures can infringe on civil liberties and human rights, potentially **creating a backlash**.
8. **Long-Term Effects:** Recovery from terrorist attacks takes years, with lingering social divisions and trauma.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA'S INITIATIVE TO COUNTER TERRORISM:

1. **Legislation:** The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) allows for banning terrorist organizations and prosecuting individuals involved in terrorism. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) investigates terrorism-related cases across states.
2. **Intelligence & Surveillance:** Coordination between agencies like the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and RAW enhances intelligence sharing. National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) aims for centralized counter-terrorism coordination.
3. **Security Forces & Military:** The Indian Armed Forces, National Security Guard (NSG), and anti-insurgency operations play key roles in neutralizing threats.
4. **Border Security:** The Border Security Force (BSF) and ITBP prevent cross-border terrorism, with operations like "All Out" targeting militants in Kashmir.
5. **Counter-Radicalization:** The government engages in community programs, monitors social media, and promotes rehabilitation to counter-radicalization.
6. **International Cooperation:** India collaborates with countries like the U.S., and Russia, and through bodies like INTERPOL and SAARC to combat global terrorism.
7. **Financial Measures:** It combats terrorist financing by monitoring financial transactions and working with organizations like FATF.
8. **Public Awareness & Vigilance:** Campaigns encourage public vigilance, while emergency response systems ensure rapid action during attacks.
9. **Technological Advancements:** India uses surveillance tools and strengthens cyber defence to counter modern terrorist threats.

WHY DOES TERRORISM STILL PERSIST?

1. **Political Grievances:** Ongoing conflicts and weak governance create environments where terrorist groups thrive, exploiting political disputes and power vacuums.

2. **Ideological Extremism:** Radical ideologies, often fueled by religion or political beliefs, are spread through propaganda and social media, leading to recruitment and violence.
3. **Socioeconomic Inequality:** Poverty, lack of education, and limited opportunities make individuals vulnerable to radicalization, with extremist groups offering a sense of purpose.
4. **External Support:** State-sponsored terrorism and illegal funding sources like drug trafficking sustain terrorist organizations.
5. **Technological Advancements:** The internet and access to weapons enable terrorists to spread propaganda, recruit, and carry out sophisticated attacks.
6. **Martyrdom Ideology:** Some terrorists are motivated by the promise of martyrdom and the belief they are fighting for a greater cause.
7. **Social Factors:** Alienation and lack of identity, particularly among marginalized youth, make them more susceptible to extremist ideologies.
8. **Ineffective Counter-Terrorism:** Failure to address root causes and lack of global cooperation allow terrorist networks to persist.

WAY TO CONTAIN TERRORISM

1. **Strengthen Security & Intelligence:** Improve intelligence sharing, surveillance, and counter-terrorism operations to prevent attacks.
2. **Counter Radicalization:** Promote education, community programs, and rehabilitation for at-risk individuals to prevent extremist ideologies.
3. **Address Socioeconomic Inequality:** Invest in poverty reduction, job creation, and education to reduce vulnerability to terrorism.
4. **Legislation:** Strengthen anti-terrorism laws and ensure swift prosecution to deter terrorist activities.
5. **Disrupt Financing:** Monitor and block financial channels funding terrorism and combat money laundering.
6. **International Cooperation:** Collaborate with global partners for intelligence sharing and joint operations to disrupt terrorist networks.
7. **Resolve Root Causes:** Address political grievances and conflicts and promote good governance to reduce terrorist motivations.

8. **Cybersecurity:** Monitor and prevent online radicalization and protect against cyber-attacks.
9. **Community Engagement:** Build trust with local communities and encourage cooperation to identify threats.

CONCLUSION

The news highlights a controversy between German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and U.S. Vice President JD Vance, who criticized European nations on issues like free speech and immigration at the Munich Security Conference. Vance warned about Europe's retreat from shared values with the U.S., sparking a debate over a potential rift in U.S.-Europe relations. Scholz rejected these comments, emphasizing the importance of unity between allies, pointing to a growing divergence in values between the two regions. This ongoing tension reflects larger shifts in political dynamics, both in Europe and the U.S., with implications for future cooperation between the two regions.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Q. Which of the following statements is correct about terrorism?

1. Terrorism is solely carried out by non-state actors.
2. Terrorism aims to create fear in a society to achieve political, ideological, or religious goals.
3. Modern terrorism may involve tactics like cyber-attacks and the use of weapons of mass destruction.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer: B

MAINS QUESTIONS:

Q. In light of global terrorism, explain the measures India has undertaken to counter terrorism and how these initiatives contribute to national security. (250 words, 15 marks)

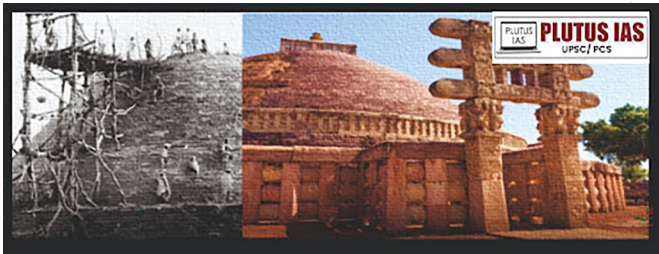
CONSERVING THE NATIONAL HERITAGE: SAFE-GUARDING INDIA'S ANCIENT WONDERS

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Due to climate change and extreme weather events, India's cultural and archaeological heritage is under severe threat. According to UNESCO reports, rising sea levels are endangering coastal heritage sites, while heat waves and heavy rainfall are accelerating the decay of historical monuments. With the 2025 Kumbh Mela approaching and increased government funding for conservation, protecting India's heritage has become a national priority, demanding urgent action.

THE RICH HISTORY OF INDIAN CULTURE IN ARCHITECTURE

- 1. Indus Valley Civilization (2500 BCE – 1900 BCE):** The cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro exhibit advanced urban planning, drainage systems, and grid-based street designs.



- 2. Buddhist Architecture:** The stupas at Sanchi and the rock-cut caves at Ajanta and Ellora exemplify early Indian craftsmanship and religious devotion.
- 3. Hindu Temple Architecture:** Temples such as the Brihadeshwara Temple in Tamil Nadu and

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Scheme	Date of Inauguration	Ministry	Features
Adopt a Heritage 2.0	2024	Ministry of Tourism & Ministry of Culture	Corporate involvement in the conservation of lesser-known monuments.
PRASAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive)	2014	Ministry of Tourism	Develops infrastructure and facilities at pilgrimage sites to enhance heritage tourism.

the Sun Temple at Konark showcase intricate carvings, massive gopurams, and sacred symbolism.

- 4. Mughal Architecture:** The Taj Mahal, Red Fort, and Fatehpur Sikri reflect Persian influences and artistic excellence.
- 5. Colonial and Modern Architecture:** The Victoria Memorial, Gateway of India, and Rashtrapati Bhavan blend Indian and European styles, symbolizing India's colonial and post-independence identity.

Examples of Architectural Wonders Across India

Taj Mahal (Uttar Pradesh): A symbol of love and architectural brilliance.

Hampi (Karnataka): The capital of the Vijayanagar Empire with stunning temple ruins.

Khajuraho Temples (Madhya Pradesh): Known for their intricate sculptures and depictions of human expressions.

GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO PROTECT INDIA'S RICH HERITAGE:

Legislative Framework :

- The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958, protects monuments from encroachments.
- The National Policy on Monuments, Antiquities, and Archaeological Sites guides conservation efforts.

Swachh Iconic Places (SIP) Initiative	2016	Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs	Targets cleanliness and preservation of heritage sites like Taj Mahal, Ajanta Caves, and Golden Temple.
Mausam Project	2014	Ministry of Culture	Focuses on maritime heritage conservation along India's coastal regions, such as historic trade routes in Lothal, Gujarat.
Vibrant Villages Programme	2023	Ministry of Home Affairs	Enhances conservation and promotion of cultural heritage in border villages to boost tourism and local economy.
National Cultural Audiovisual Archives (NCAA)	2014	Ministry of Culture	Digitally archives India's rich cultural and architectural heritage for future generations.
Adopt a Heritage Scheme	2017	Ministry of Tourism	Private companies adopt heritage sites for maintenance and promotion; 25 monuments adopted as per PIB 2024.
HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana)	2015	Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs	Focuses on urban heritage conservation with ₹500 crore allocated for development.
National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities (NMMA)	2007	Ministry of Culture	Over 3 lakh antiquities digitized for documentation.
UNESCO Collaboration	Ongoing	Ministry of Culture & UNESCO	India partners with UNESCO for site preservation and cultural awareness programs, with \$10 million allocated for 2024.



SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA'S ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE:

- Cultural Identity:** Architectural sites connect citizens with India's historical legacy. For example, the ruins of Nalanda University represent India's ancient knowledge traditions and Buddhist heritage. As per the PIB report (2024), Nalanda has been included in India's priority list for UNESCO heritage conservation projects.
- Tourism and Economy:** Heritage tourism contributes nearly 2.1% of India's GDP, generating employment for 87 lakh people. The PIB (2024) highlights that the Taj Mahal alone attracted 7 million visitors last year, significantly boosting the local economy in Agra.

- 3. Educational Value:** Structures serve as living classrooms for students and historians. The Rashtrapati Bhavan and Parliament House are examples of where modern governance meets historical architecture. The 2024 ASI report emphasizes the role of digital archives in making historical knowledge more accessible to students nationwide.
- 4. Spiritual and Artistic Value:** Temples, mosques, and churches represent India's religious harmony and artistic excellence. The Golden Temple in Amritsar is a significant religious and architectural marvel, attracting millions of devotees each year. The Culture Ministry (2024) has allocated ₹500 crore for the restoration of religious heritage sites across India.

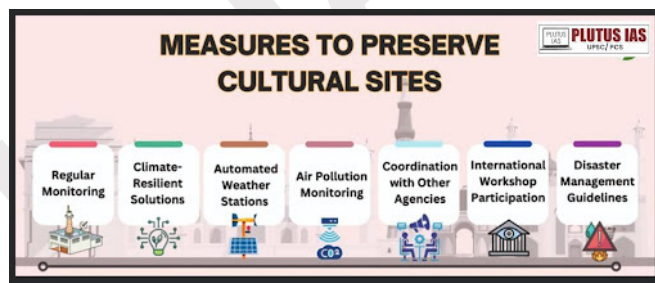
ISSUES CONCERNED WITH THE PRESERVATION OF INDIAN ARCHITECTURE

- 1. Urbanization and Encroachment:** Rapid expansion of cities threatens historical sites with illegal constructions.
- 2. Pollution and Climate Change:** Acid rain, pollution, and temperature fluctuations damage structures like the Taj Mahal.
- 3. Neglect and Lack of Funds:** Insufficient government funding leads to poor maintenance of lesser-known monuments.
- 4. Theft and Smuggling of Artifacts:** Illegal trade in antiquities leads to the loss of cultural treasures.
- 5. Unregulated Tourism:** High footfall at sites like Hampi and Ajanta caves leads to wear and tear of ancient carvings.

WAYS TO PRESERVE INDIA'S RICH ARCHITECTURE

- 1. Community Participation:** Local communities should be involved in preservation efforts through awareness programs. For example, the "Adopt a Heritage" initiative encourages local businesses and individuals to contribute to the upkeep of historical sites.
- 2. Sustainable Tourism Practices:** Limiting visitor numbers and using eco-friendly restoration techniques. The Taj Mahal now restricts daily visitors to 40,000 to prevent damage, as per the latest PIB report (2024).

- 3. Technology Integration:** Use of 3D mapping, AI, and laser scanning to digitally preserve structures. The ASI (2024) has mapped 500 monuments digitally to assist in long-term conservation.
- 4. Strengthening Laws:** Enhancing penalties for encroachment and illicit trade in antiquities. The UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Cultural Property (1970) supports India's efforts in protecting artefacts.
- 5. Corporate and NGO Partnerships:** Collaboration with private organizations for funding and expertise. The "Adopt a Heritage 2.0" program has led to 25 major monuments being supported by corporate sponsors.



CONCLUSION

Preserving India's architectural heritage is not just a duty but a necessity to maintain the country's cultural identity and economic strength. Government policies, community participation, and technological advancements can play a significant role in safeguarding these wonders. India's historical structures are a testament to its glorious past, and proactive efforts must be taken to ensure that they continue to inspire future generations.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

- Q. Which of the following initiatives is aimed at urban heritage conservation in India?**
- HRIDAY
 - PM Awas Yojana
 - Start-Up India
 - Digital India

Answer: A

MAINS QUESTIONS:

Q. Discuss the significance of architectural heritage in India and suggest measures to ensure its effective conservation in the face of modern challenges? (250 words, 15 marks)

SWAMI RAMAKRISHNA PARAMHANSA

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently paid tribute to Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa on his birth anniversary, acknowledging the profound influence the mystic and spiritual leader had on both his life and the nation. In a heartfelt message on social media, PM Modi expressed his reverence for the saint, emphasizing his deep spiritual connection with Maa Kali and the powerful impact of his teachings on figures like Swami Vivekananda. Sri Ramakrishna, born in 1836 into a humble background, remains a key figure in India's spiritual history, with his teachings on the unity of religions and devotion continuing to inspire millions globally.



SWAMI RAMAKRISHNA PARAMHANSA:

- 1. Birth and Family:** Swami Ramakrishna was born Gadadhar Chattopadhyay on February 18, 1836, in Kamarpukur, Bengal, to a poor Brahmin family with strong religious values.
- 2. Early Spiritual Experiences:** From a young age, he showed deep spirituality, having mystical visions, especially of Maa Kali, which guided his devotion.
- 3. Limited Education:** Despite little formal education, Ramakrishna focused on spiritual practices, meditation, and religious rituals rather than academics.

- 4. Marriage:** At 23, he married Saradamani Devi, whom he regarded as a divine companion, continuing his spiritual quest without interruption.
- 5. Spiritual Path:** Ramakrishna explored various spiritual paths, believing that all religions lead to the same divine truth, which became a central teaching in his life.

PARAMHANSA'S AND RAMAKRISHNA MISSION:

- 1. Swami Ramakrishna Paramhansa:** A mystic and spiritual leader, he emphasized the unity of all religions and the importance of direct spiritual experience, particularly devotion to Maa Kali.
- 2. Influence on Swami Vivekananda:** His teachings deeply inspired Swami Vivekananda, who later founded the Ramakrishna Mission.
- 3. Ramakrishna Mission:** Established in 1897 by Vivekananda, it focuses on spreading Ramakrishna's teachings of religious harmony, selfless service, and spiritual growth. The mission also engages in social welfare, education, and healthcare.
- 4. Global Impact:** The Ramakrishna Mission has centres worldwide, continuing its work of promoting spirituality, service, and religious unity.

PARAMHANSA'S SOCIAL REFORM:

- 1. Paramahansa's Social Reform:** Ramakrishna Paramahansa challenged caste barriers, promoted women's rights, and advocated for social service.
- 2. Paramahansa Mandali:** Organized gatherings where people of different castes could eat together, breaking down caste divisions.
- 3. Ramakrishna Movement:** Based on Ramakrishna's belief in the unity of all religions, it spread Vedanta and emphasized spiritual unity, charitable work, and service to humanity.
- 4. Ramakrishna Mission:** Founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1897, it focused on social service, including disaster relief, hospitals, and educational institutions.
- 5. Teachings of Ramakrishna:** Emphasized religious unity, the idea that serving humanity is serving God and that there are many paths to the Divine.

PARAMHANSA'S IDEAS AND PHILOSOPHY:

1. **Unity of Religions:** Ramakrishna believed all religions lead to the same truth. He often said, "As many faiths, so many paths," emphasizing that all forms of worship are valid expressions of the Divine.
2. **Divinity of Humanity:** He saw every person as a manifestation of God and believed that realizing the Divine in others is key to spiritual growth. This encouraged an attitude of respect, love, and equality toward all people.
3. **Selfless Service:** Service to humanity was considered the highest form of devotion. For Ramakrishna, helping others was synonymous with serving God, and this formed a core element of his spiritual practice.
4. **Personal Spiritual Experience:** Ramakrishna encouraged a personal, experiential approach to spirituality. He practised and recommended deep devotion (bhakti), meditation (dhyana), and other practices to experience God's presence directly.
5. **Multiple Paths to God:** He believed there are many legitimate paths to spiritual enlightenment, whether through love (bhakti), knowledge (jnana), or meditation (dhyana), advocating that everyone should find their personal path to the Divine.
6. **Transcendence of Ego:** Ramakrishna emphasized the importance of renouncing the ego. He believed that self-realization could only occur when a person transcends their individual self-centeredness and surrenders to the Divine will.
7. **Mystical Vision:** He had profound mystical experiences and encouraged others to seek direct communion with God through intense spiritual practice, making mysticism a central feature of his teachings.
8. **Embrace of Simplicity:** Ramakrishna led a life of simplicity and austerity, focusing on the essential spiritual truths. He believed true happiness comes not from material wealth but from inner peace and spiritual realization.

PARAMHANSA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE EARLY FREEDOM MOVEMENT:

1. **Spiritual Inspiration:** Ramakrishna's teachings helped foster a sense of national pride and spiritual awakening, encouraging Indians to reconnect with their cultural and religious roots, which was crucial in resisting British colonialism.
2. **Promoting Unity:** By emphasizing the unity of all religions, Ramakrishna helped reduce religious divisions and encouraged national unity, which became vital for the collective struggle for independence.
3. **Influence on Swami Vivekananda:** Ramakrishna's teachings profoundly shaped Swami Vivekananda, who combined spirituality with nationalism, motivating and inspiring many leaders and freedom fighters.
4. **Empowering Marginalized Groups:** Ramakrishna advocated for equality and social justice, challenging caste divisions and supporting the upliftment of women and the oppressed, aligning with the social reform movements that were part of the freedom struggle.
5. **Emphasis on Self-Reliance:** His philosophy of self-reliance and inner strength inspired many to work toward the betterment of India, laying the groundwork for a self-sufficient, free nation.

PARAMHANSA AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA:

1. **Guru-Disciple Bond:** Ramakrishna was the spiritual mentor of Vivekananda, profoundly shaping his philosophy and mission.
2. **Philosophical Influence:** Ramakrishna's belief in the unity of all religions influenced Vivekananda's vision of religious tolerance and spiritual inclusivity.
3. **Global Representation:** Vivekananda took Ramakrishna's teachings worldwide, especially at the 1893 Chicago Parliament of Religions, promoting Vedanta and India's spiritual heritage.
4. **Social Reform:** While Ramakrishna focused on spiritual awakening, Vivekananda combined it with social reform, advocating for women's rights, education, and the removal of caste discrimination.

5. **Legacy of Strength:** Ramakrishna taught Vivekananda that true strength comes from within. Vivekananda emphasized self-reliance and inner strength in both personal and national development.
6. **Nation-Building:** Vivekananda expanded Ramakrishna's idea of the divine in all people into a call for India's spiritual and national revival.

CONCLUSION

Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa's teachings on religious unity, devotion, and selfless service have left a lasting impact on India's spiritual and national identity. His influence on Swami Vivekananda helped combine spirituality with nationalism, inspiring the freedom movement. The Ramakrishna Mission, founded by Vivekananda, continues to promote service, education, and religious harmony worldwide. Ramakrishna's advocacy for social reform, including caste equality and women's rights, contributed to India's social awakening. His emphasis on self-reliance and the divine nature of all people laid the groundwork for a unified and independent India.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Q. With reference to Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, consider the following statements:

1. Sri Ramakrishna was born in Bengal in 1836.
2. He believed in the equality of all religions.
3. He advocated for women's education and widow remarriage.

How many of the above-given statements are correct?

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

Answer: C

MAINS QUESTIONS:

Q. Discuss the philosophical teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa and their influence on India's spiritual and social movements.

(250 words, 15 marks)

POROUS BORDERS : THREAT TO INTERNAL SECURITY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The 55th BSF-BGB Director General Level Border Coordination Conference is in the news as it is being held in New Delhi. The talks, led by DG BSF Daljit Singh Chawdhary and DG BGB Major General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui, focus on border security, crime prevention, and trade infrastructure. The MEA stressed the importance of honouring MoUs and agreements for better coordination.



BRIEF ABOUT INDIA & ITS BORDER

India shares its land borders with seven countries, spanning approximately 15,106 kilometres, and has a maritime boundary of 7,516 kilometres along the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Bay of Bengal. While some land borders are secured with fencing and checkpoints, others remain porous due to geographical and diplomatic complexities, leading to infiltration and smuggling. Maritime security faces challenges like piracy, illegal migration, and unregulated fishing. Initiatives like the Sagar Mala Programme and Coastal Surveillance Network (CSN) are strengthening India's border security, ensuring both land and sea frontiers are well-guarded.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR BORDER MANAGEMENT

1. **Border Infrastructure Development:** Projects like the construction of border roads and fencing aim to enhance mobility for security forces and deter unauthorized crossings. Example: The

Bharatmala Project aims to construct highways along border areas for improved military and logistical movement.

2. **Deployment of Specialized Forces:** The BSF, Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), and Sashasthra Seema Bal (SSB) are strategically positioned along various borders, each trained to handle specific regional challenges. Example: The Rashtriya Rifles is a counter-insurgency force deployed in Jammu and Kashmir to neutralise threats from cross-border terrorism.
3. **International Collaborations:** Regular dialogues and joint exercises with neighbouring countries, exemplified by the BSF-BGB conferences, aim to address cross-border issues like smuggling, human trafficking, and infiltration. Example: The India-Myanmar Border Agreement facilitates coordinated patrolling and intelligence-sharing to curb insurgent activities.
4. **Legal and Policy Measures:** Enactment of laws such as the Passport (Entry into India) Act and the Foreigners Act empowers authorities to regulate entry and manage the stay of foreigners.
5. **Community Engagement:** Initiatives like the Border Area Development Programme (BADP) focus on improving infrastructure and economic conditions in border regions, thereby fostering cooperation between local communities and security agencies. Example: The Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) promotes the development of villages along the Indo-China border to strengthen security through community participation.

POROUS BORDERS: A THREAT TO INTERNAL SECURITY

1. **Infiltration by Militants:** Unmonitored borders can be exploited by insurgents and terrorists to enter the country. Example: The Samadhan Doctrine, a counter-Maoist strategy, focuses on blocking infiltration routes from Nepal and Myanmar.
2. **Smuggling of Arms and Narcotics:** Illicit trade in weapons and drugs thrives in areas where border control is weak, funding criminal activities

and insurgencies. Example: The Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) targets drug trafficking along the India-Pakistan and India-Myanmar borders.

3. **Human Trafficking:** Porous borders facilitate the trafficking of persons for forced labour, prostitution, and other exploitative purposes, leading to severe human rights violations. Example: The Ujjwala Scheme provides support for victims of human trafficking by offering rehabilitation and reintegration services.
4. **Economic Threats:** Smuggling of goods undermines the local economy and results in significant revenue losses for the government. Example: The Operation Thunderstorm initiative cracked down on cross-border smuggling networks in Northeast India.
5. **Spread of Diseases:** Unregulated cross-border movement can lead to the spread of infectious diseases, posing public health challenges. Example: The Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) monitors and responds to disease outbreaks in border regions.
6. **Demographic Changes:** Illegal immigration can alter the demographic composition of border areas, leading to social and political tensions. Example: The National Register of Citizens (NRC) was implemented in Assam to identify and curb illegal immigration.

CHALLENGES IN BORDER MANAGEMENT

1. **Diverse and Difficult Terrains:** The varied geography, from the Himalayas to dense forests and riverine landscapes, hampers the establishment of physical barriers and consistent patrolling. Example: The Border Outposts Strengthening Programme focuses on securing vulnerable border stretches.
2. **Lengthy Borders:** The sheer expanse of India's borders makes comprehensive monitoring a daunting task. Example: CIBMS is being deployed along the Indo-Pak and Indo-Bangladesh borders for round-the-clock surveillance.
3. **Cross-Border Cultural Ties:** Ethnic and cultural affiliations often span borders, complicating enforcement actions.

Example: The Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship allows free movement but poses security risks.

4. **Resource Constraints:** Ensuring adequate manpower, advanced technology, and infrastructure across all border areas requires substantial investment. Example: Modernization of Police Forces (MPF) Scheme provides funding to improve law enforcement in border states.
5. **Political and Diplomatic Sensitivities:** Border disputes necessitate careful handling to prevent escalation.
6. **Local Opposition:** Infrastructure projects like fencing can face resistance from local populations due to concerns over livelihood and restricted movement.

RECOMMENDATION FOR BETTER BORDER MANAGEMENT

1. **Technological Integration:** Adopt advanced surveillance systems, including drones, motion sensors, and satellite imagery, to monitor remote and sensitive areas effectively. Example: Drone-Based Border Surveillance Project enhances real-time threat detection.
2. **Enhanced Training and Resources:** Provide specialized training for border security personnel and equip them with modern tools to detect and prevent illegal activities. Example: The Police Modernization Scheme ensures the latest equipment for border forces.
3. **Strengthened International Cooperation:** Engage in regular dialogues, intelligence sharing, and joint operations with neighbouring countries to address cross-border challenges collaboratively. Example: BIMSTEC Border Security Cooperation enhances regional counter-terrorism efforts.
4. **Community Participation:** Involve local communities in security efforts by addressing their socio-economic needs and encouraging them to report suspicious activities.
5. **Policy Reforms:** Regularly update and enforce laws to address emerging threats and ensure stringent penalties for violations related to border security.

CONCLUSION

Securing India's borders is a multifaceted challenge that requires a balanced approach, integrating technological advancements, robust policy frameworks, international cooperation, and community engagement. The 55th Director General-level Border Coordination Conference between the BSF and BGB exemplifies the ongoing efforts to address these challenges through dialogue and collaboration. By implementing comprehensive and adaptive strategies, India can enhance its border security and safeguard national integrity.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB):

1. The BSF operates under the Ministry of Defense, whereas the BGB is under the Ministry of Home Affairs of Bangladesh.
2. The primary focus of BSF-BGB coordination meetings is to enhance trade relations between India and Bangladesh.
3. The Indo-Bangladesh border is India's longest land border with any neighboring country.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: C

MAINS QUESTIONS:

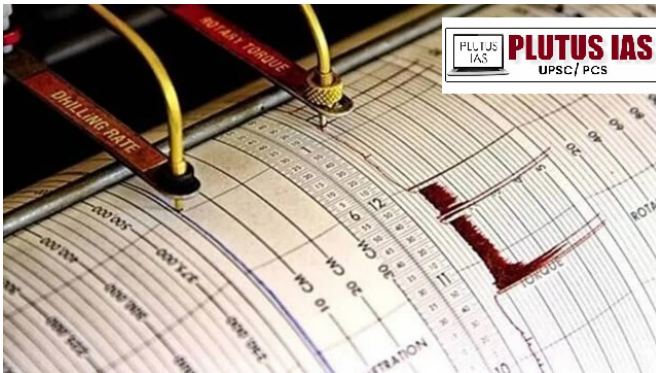
Q. India's porous borders pose a significant challenge to national security. Analyze the threats emanating from land and maritime borders, citing recent examples.?

(250 words, 15 marks)

EARTHQUAKE RISK REDUCTION: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Delhi was shaken by an earthquake of magnitude 4.0, originating near Dhaula Kuan, making it the strongest quake to strike the city in at least five years. Unlike most tremors that originate far from the capital, such as those from Afghanistan, this one had local origins, raising concerns about seismic activity closer to home. While no significant damage or injuries were reported, experts are asking why such tremors are occurring and what risks they pose to Delhi in the future. The rare event has sparked questions about the region's seismic vulnerability as experts analyze the potential for stronger quakes and the city's preparedness for future seismic events.



WHAT IS AN EARTHQUAKE?

An earthquake is the sudden shaking or movement of the Earth's surface caused by the release of energy from within the Earth's crust. This energy is typically stored when masses of rock are strained against one another, and when the rocks fracture or "slip," the stored energy is released in the form of seismic waves. These waves travel through the Earth, causing the ground to shake, sometimes violently. Earthquakes usually occur along fault lines, which are fractures in the Earth's crust where rocks on either side have moved relative to one another. The movement and release of energy at these fault lines can cause significant ground shaking, damage to structures, and sometimes even tsunamis if the quake occurs underwater.

TYPE OF EARTHQUAKE

1. Shallow Earthquakes:

Depth: Occurs at depths of less than 70 kilometres (km).

Commonality: The most frequent type of earthquake.

Energy Release: Release about 75% of the total energy produced by earthquakes.

Damage: These are typically the most destructive to buildings and infrastructure because of their proximity to the Earth's surface.

2. Intermediate Earthquakes:

Depth: Occurs at depths between 70–300 km.

Alternate Name: Also known as mid-focus earthquakes.

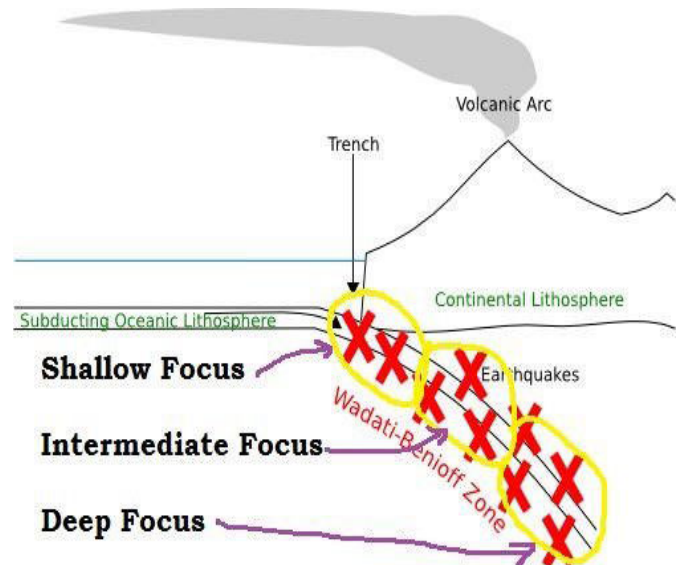
Impact: While not as destructive as shallow earthquakes, they can still cause significant shaking, depending on the location.

3. Deep Earthquakes:

Depth: Occurs at depths of 300–700 km. **Alternate Name:** Also called deep-focus earthquakes.

Destructive Nature: These are rarely destructive due to their depth, as the seismic waves lose energy by the time they reach the surface.

Location: Typically happens in subduction zones where one tectonic plate is being forced beneath another.



EARTHQUAKES ZONE: MAPPING

The National Center for Seismology (NCS) monitors seismic activities in India, focusing on earthquake detection, early warning systems, and maintaining national seismological networks. It also conducts seismic hazard studies and post-earthquake field studies.

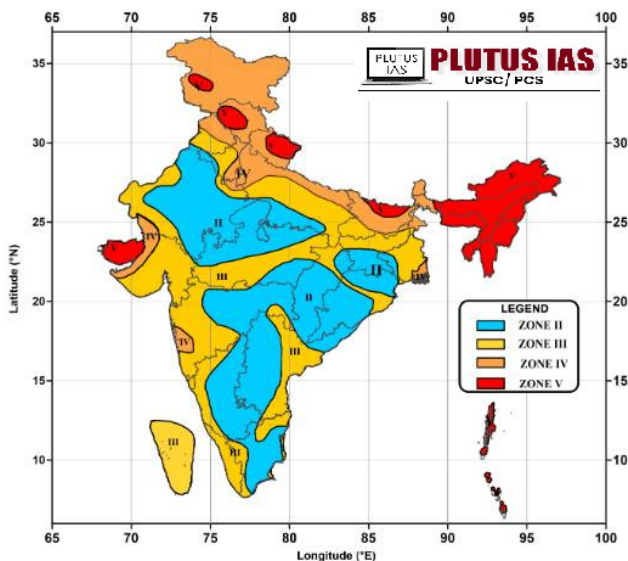
Zone 5: Highest risk (MSK IX+), with a zone factor of 0.36. Includes regions like Kashmir, the Himalayas, and the Andaman Islands.

Zone 4: High risk (MSK VIII), with a zone factor of 0.24. Includes Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, and parts of Uttar Pradesh.

Zone 3: Moderate risk (MSK VII), with a zone factor of 0.16. Covers cities like Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata.

Zone 2: Low risk (MSK VI), with a zone factor of 0.10. Includes cities like Bangalore and Hyderabad.

Zone 1: No current areas classified, representing very low seismic risk, potentially covering stable regions like the Deccan Plateau.



WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THE RECENT DELHI EARTHQUAKE?

The recent earthquake in Delhi, with a magnitude of 4.0, was not caused by the collision of tectonic plates, according to the National Center for Seismology (NCS). While Delhi lies in Seismic Zone IV, which is prone to earthquakes, the specific cause of this event wasn't linked to a plate collision but rather to the local geological conditions.

SEVERAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO THE SEISMIC ACTIVITY IN DELHI:

- 1. Tectonic Plate Movements:** The Indian plate is colliding with the Eurasian plate, causing the region to experience seismic activity. This collision occurs along the Himalayan region and influences the seismicity in surrounding areas, including Delhi.
- 2. Delhi-Hardwar Ridge:** The earthquake is thought to be associated with the Delhi-Hardwar Ridge, a major geological structure that extends beneath the alluvial plains of the Ganga Basin, coinciding with the Aravali Mountain belt. This ridge contributes to seismic activity around Delhi.
- 3. Local Faults and Geological Features:** The region around Delhi has faults and geological structures that can cause smaller earthquakes due to the release of built-up energy. These localized movements do not necessarily involve major tectonic shifts but can still generate tremors.

NDMA GUIDELINE ON EARTHQUAKES:

1. Preventive Measures

Seismic Risk Assessment: Assess and identify vulnerable areas in earthquake-prone regions.

Earthquake-Resistant Construction: Ensure new buildings follow seismic safety codes (IS 1893:2002) and retrofit older buildings.

Zoning and Land Use: Avoid construction in high-risk zones and enforce stricter building codes.

Public Awareness: Educate the public about earthquake risks and safety protocols.

Emergency Plans: Develop preparedness and evacuation plans for communities and institutions.

Infrastructure Retrofit: Strengthen existing infrastructure to meet earthquake-resistant standards.

2. During the Earthquake

Drop, Cover, and Hold On: Drop to the ground, take cover under furniture, and hold on until the shaking stops.

Stay Indoors: Remain inside, away from windows and heavy objects.

Move to Open Areas: If outside, move to open areas away from buildings and power lines.

Use Stairs, Not Elevators: Evacuate using stairs, not elevators.

Stay Calm: Remain calm and avoid panic to ensure safety.

3. Post-Earthquake Measures

First Aid: Provide first aid to the injured and call for medical help.

Inspect Damage: Check for structural damage before re-entering buildings.

Prepare for Aftershocks: Be ready for possible aftershocks.

Follow Official Instructions: Listen to authorities for updates and instructions.

Coordinate Relief: Organize rescue and relief operations, provide shelter, and restore services.

Mental Health Support: Offer psychological support to survivors.

CONCLUSION

The recent 4.0 magnitude earthquake in Delhi has raised concerns about the region's seismic vulnerability. Although no significant damage or injuries were reported, the quake, originating locally near Dhaula Kuan, highlights the potential risks in an area that lies within Seismic Zone IV. Delhi's geological setting, including factors like the Delhi-Hardwar Ridge and local fault lines, can contribute to seismic activity. The National Center for Seismology (NCS) has assured that this event was not caused by a plate collision but was likely due to local geological conditions.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Q. Which of the following statements are correct about Delhi's seismic activity?

1. Delhi is located in Seismic Zone IV, which indicates a high risk of earthquakes.
2. The recent earthquake in Delhi was caused by the collision of tectonic plates.
3. The Delhi-Hardwar Ridge contributes to seismic activity in the region.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer: C

MAINS QUESTIONS:

Q. Discuss the seismic risks faced by Delhi in light of the recent earthquake. What preventive measures should be taken to mitigate earthquake hazards in the region?

(250 words, 15 marks)

NEW ELECTION COMMISSION APPOINTMENT: A CLOSER LOOK AT THE ECI AND RECENT REFORMS

WHY IN THE NEWS:

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has gained attention due to recent developments around appointments, reforms, and the Election Commission (CEC and ECs) Act, 2023. The appointment of a new Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) has sparked debates over the independence and autonomy of the ECI, particularly ahead of the 2024-2025 general elections and state elections. Concerns have emerged regarding the Commission's ability to function impartially and without political interference while upholding its role in ensuring free, fair, and transparent elections across India.



CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS RELATED TO THE ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA:

The Election Commission of India (ECI), an autonomous constitutional body, is responsible for conducting national and state elections, as outlined in Article 324 of the Indian Constitution. This article vests the authority to oversee elections with the President of India, based on the advice and supervision of the ECI. The Commission conducts elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Assemblies, and key offices like the President and Vice President. Additionally, it ensures compliance with the Election Code of Conduct and resolves electoral disputes. Initially comprising a Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two other Election Commissioners, the ECI's structure has evolved, with the 2023 reform legislation providing a clearer framework for the appointment and functioning of the CEC and ECs.

WHAT IS THE ECI AND THE ECI (CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER AND ELECTION COMMISSIONERS) ACT 2023:

In 2023, the Indian Parliament passed the **Election Commission (Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners) Act**, a significant reform aimed at addressing long-standing concerns about the ECI's functioning. The Act provides a more structured and transparent framework for the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other Election Commissioners (ECs). Under the new law, the selection process for the CEC and ECs is overseen by a **six-member panel** comprising:

1. **Prime Minister**
2. **Leader of the Opposition**
3. **Union Home Minister**
4. **Chief Justice of India**
5. **Two eminent persons nominated by a committee**

This development addresses concerns over political influence in the appointment process. The Act aims to establish a more impartial and transparent selection mechanism by including diverse perspectives in the decision-making process. The Act also formalizes the tenure and removal process of CECs and ECs. The term of office for the CEC

and ECs is fixed at **six years** or until the **age of 65**, whichever comes first. Any removal of a sitting Election Commissioner can only occur through a **parliamentary impeachment process**, which offers a safeguard against arbitrary dismissals.

FEATURES OF THE CEC & EC ACT 2023

1. **Appointment Procedure:** One of the key aspects of the 2023 Act is the clarification of the appointment procedure for the CEC and Election Commissioners. Under the new law, the President is required to appoint the CEC and ECs based on a recommendation from a six-member selection panel, which will include the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, the Union Home Minister, and the Chief Justice of India. This attempt at bipartisanship aims to reduce political interference in the appointment process, making it more transparent and fair.
2. **Term and Removal of CEC & ECs:** The Act specifies that both the CEC and ECs shall hold office for a term of six years or until they turn 65, whichever comes earlier. This ensures that the Election Commission retains a sense of continuity in leadership and governance. Furthermore, the process of removing a CEC or an EC has been clearly defined under the Act, with the provision of a parliamentary impeachment procedure if they are to be removed from office. This legal safeguard prevents the arbitrary removal of Election Commissioners.
3. **Independence and Accountability:** A significant feature of the new law is the emphasis on the autonomy of the Election Commission. The Act aims to ensure that the Election Commission functions without fear or favor, thereby ensuring impartiality in the electoral process. The Act also establishes the legal safeguards necessary to prevent political interference in the functioning of the Commission.
4. **Autonomy:** The Act emphasizes administrative independence for the Election Commission, aiming to reduce political influence over the Commission's operations, particularly during election periods.

- 5. Revised Electoral Code of Conduct:** The Act also introduces clearer guidelines for the electoral code of conduct, further reinforcing its role in ensuring that elections are conducted fairly, without undue influence from external forces. This feature aims to reduce malpractices and encourage transparency during elections.

ISSUES WITH THE CEC & EC ACT 2023

- 1. Executive Overreach:** Although the Act's intention is to create a more transparent appointment process, the role of the Prime Minister and the Home Minister in the selection panel continues to cause concern. Critics argue that the central government's significant influence in the panel can lead to an imbalance, as it may compromise the true independence of the Election Commission, making it vulnerable to political pressures.
- 2. Lack of Representation for Opposition:** While the new law provides for the involvement of the Leader of the Opposition in the selection process, critics believe that the mechanism does not adequately empower the opposition to influence the appointment process. In the case where there is no recognized Leader of the Opposition (as may happen in a fragmented or majority government), this issue could undermine the fairness of the process.
- 3. Imbalance in Decision-Making:** The absence of a broader, more diverse representation in the appointment process could lead to an imbalance in decision-making, giving undue weight to the ruling party's influence over the Election Commission. This is particularly concerning in a country like India, where elections are often a matter of intense political competition.
- 4. Lack of Constitutional Backing for Some Provisions:** Some provisions of the Act could potentially conflict with the original intent of the Constitution. The Parliamentary system of impeachment, which is now a provision for the removal of the CEC or ECs, might not necessarily provide the degree of independence

and protection that the Election Commission requires from executive or legislative interference.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GREATER INDEPENDENCE OF THE ECI

- 1. Strengthening Opposition's Role:** Ensuring that the opposition has a more significant and structured role in the selection process would help prevent political bias from affecting appointments. This could include empowering a broader selection committee, with greater input from civil society and expert bodies.
- 2. Institutional Safeguards for Autonomy** Incorporating stronger safeguards that protect the Commission from arbitrary political interference is essential. This could include provisions that allow the Election Commission to function with more independence from government interventions, especially during election periods.
- 3. Expanding Public Scrutiny:** Increasing public oversight and scrutiny of the process of appointment and functioning of the Election Commission could be a crucial step toward reinforcing its credibility and reducing any chance of misuse.
- 4. Broader Stakeholder Consultation:** Engaging various political parties, civil society organizations, and legal experts in the drafting of reforms could ensure a more inclusive and representative framework, balancing the interests of all stakeholders.

CONCLUSION:

As India approaches the 2024-2025 general elections, the Election Commission (CEC and ECs) Act, 2023 aims to enhance the Commission's functioning and independence. However, concerns about political influence in appointments and the Commission's autonomy persist. The recent appointment of the new Chief Election Commissioner and other members highlights these issues. To ensure the Election Commission remains impartial and effective, continued reforms, transparency, and safeguards are essential for upholding India's democratic values.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Q. Which of the following is NOT a feature of the Election Commission (CEC and ECs) Act, 2023

- (a) Mandates a six-member panel for the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other Election Commissioners (ECs).
- (b) The tenure of the CEC and ECs is fixed at six years or until they reach the age of 65.
- (c) The Act includes provisions for impeachment of the CEC and ECs through a parliamentary vote.
- (d) The Act aims to reduce political influence over the Election Commission.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- A. A and B
- B. B and C
- C. C and D
- D. A and C

Answer: A

MAINS QUESTIONS:

Q. Discuss the constitutional provisions related to the Election Commission of India. In what ways do recent reforms under the Election Commission (CEC and ECs) Act, 2023 aim to strengthen its independence?

(250 words, 15 marks)

EV BATTERIES: REVOLUTIONS TO ACHIEVE NET ZERO EMISSION BY 2070

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI) signed a Programme Agreement with Reliance New Energy Battery Limited under the ₹18,100 crore PLI scheme for Advanced Chemistry Cells (ACC). This grants

Reliance a 10 GWh manufacturing capacity, bringing the total allocated capacity to 40 GWh out of the 50 GWh target. The PLI scheme, aimed at boosting India’s battery manufacturing for electric vehicles and renewable energy, strengthens domestic production, reduces imports, and supports India’s green energy goals.



WHAT ARE BATTERIES?

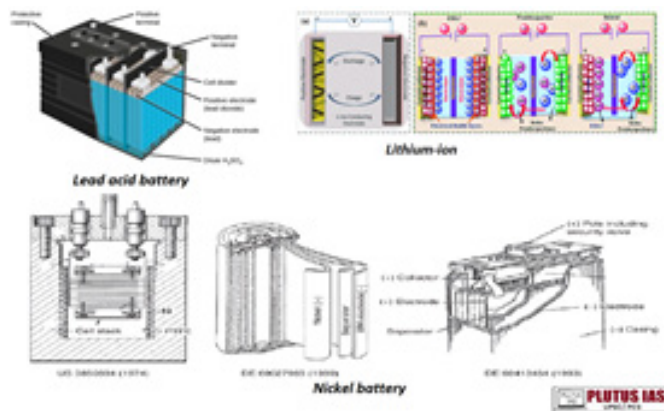
A battery is an electrochemical device that stores and releases electrical energy through chemical reactions. It typically consists of one or more electrochemical cells, where each cell has two electrodes (an anode and a cathode) separated by an electrolyte. When the battery is discharging, chemical reactions occur at the electrodes, releasing electrons and generating an electric current. The battery can be recharged (in the case of rechargeable batteries) by reversing these chemical reactions. Batteries are categorized into two main types:

- 1. Primary Batteries:** These can only be used once. After they are discharged, they cannot be recharged and are discarded. The reactions inside these batteries are irreversible, making them “use-and-throw” devices.
- 2. Secondary Batteries:** These are rechargeable and can be used for many cycles of charging and discharging. The chemical reactions in secondary batteries are reversible, allowing the battery to be recharged by applying an electric current to reverse the discharge reaction.

VARIOUS TYPES OF BATTERIES AND THEIR FEATURE:

Battery Type	Inventor/Origin	Key Characteristics	Common Applications
Lead-Acid Battery	Gaston Planté (1859)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – High energy-to-volume ratio, low energy-to-weight ratio – Strong surge currents – Inexpensive – Holds charge for up to 3 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Automotive (car batteries) – Emergency power backup

Battery Type	Inventor/Origin	Key Characteristics	Common Applications
Nickel-Cadmium (NiCad) Battery	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fast and even discharge Varying discharge rates Inexpensive Used in small electronics and toys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toys TV remotes Small electronic devices
Lithium-Ion (LIB) Battery	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High energy capacity No memory effect (except LFP cells) Low self-discharge Reversible lithium-ion flow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobile phones Laptops Electric vehicles



WHAT ARE THE INITIATIVES LAUNCHED BY THE GOVT OF INDIA?

1. Subsidies:

PM E-DRIVE Scheme: ₹10,900 crore for subsidizing charging stations for two- and three-wheelers.

FAME-II & Advanced Chemistry Cell PLI Schemes: Incentives for EVs, batteries, and storage systems manufacturers.

2. Charging Infrastructure:

Revised guidelines from the Ministry of Power to expand public charging infrastructure. Oil Marketing Companies to set up EV stations in cities and on highways.

3. Manufacturing Incentives:

PLI Scheme: Financial incentives for EV and battery manufacturers.

SPMEPCI (March 2024): Promotes manufacturing of electric passenger cars.

4. Other Initiatives:

Battery Swapping Policy: This policy encourages

battery swapping as a viable alternative to charging, helping reduce downtime for EVs and promoting more sustainable usage of batteries.

Green Hydrogen Mission: This initiative supports the development and manufacturing of fuel cells and green hydrogen technology, which are expected to decarbonize the transportation sector.

EV-Mission: Aimed at fostering research and development in EV adoption, this mission supports the innovation of new technologies and solutions to advance the EV ecosystem in India.

5. Tax Incentives: The Indian government has reduced the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on electric vehicles and chargers, making EVs more affordable and attractive to buyers.

Why india is focusing on Ev- Batteries

1. Environmental Impact: EVs are central to reducing carbon emissions, and batteries are the heart of these vehicles.

2. Energy Security: Developing domestic battery production reduces reliance on foreign imports, ensuring a stable supply and minimizing risks from supply chain disruptions.

3. Economic Growth: A robust EV battery manufacturing industry can generate jobs, stimulate growth, and support India’s green economy.

4. Government Initiatives: Policies like the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme are encouraging domestic EV battery manufacturing.

5. **Technological Advancement:** India aims to advance in battery technology to produce high-performance, cost-effective batteries.
6. **Market Potential:** With a large and growing population, India's EV market is expected to expand, making battery production a promising sector.

CHALLENGES TO BECOME SELF-RELIANT IN EV BATTERIES

1. **Raw Material Dependency:** India depends heavily on imports of essential materials like lithium, cobalt, and nickel needed for batteries.
2. **Supply Chain Complexity:** Developing a local supply chain, including recycling facilities, is crucial for sustainable battery production.
3. **High Initial Costs:** The high upfront costs of EVs remain a barrier to adoption for many consumers.
4. **Charging Infrastructure:** Widespread and accessible charging infrastructure is essential to ease range anxiety and drive EV usage.
5. **Technological Gaps:** Lack of advanced research and development in battery technology.
6. **Skilled Workforce Shortage:** Insufficient expertise in battery manufacturing and engineering.
7. **Regulatory Uncertainty:** Inconsistent policies around battery production and recycling hinder long-term investment.

CONCLUSION

India is focusing on EV batteries to reduce carbon emissions, enhance energy security, and promote economic growth. Government initiatives like the PLI scheme for battery manufacturing and subsidies for charging infrastructure are key to boosting domestic production and reducing import dependency. Challenges such as raw material dependency, supply chain issues, and high initial costs remain. Overcoming technological gaps, workforce shortages, and regulatory uncertainty is vital for achieving self-reliance in EV battery production. With strong market potential and supportive policies, India is well-positioned to become a leader in the EV sector.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Q. Which of the following statements are correct about India's Electric Vehicle (EV) initiatives?

1. The government has launched the PM E-DRIVE scheme to subsidize charging stations for two- and three-wheelers.
2. The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme aims to promote the manufacturing of electric passenger cars only.
3. India's government is actively working on a Battery Swapping Policy to reduce downtime for electric vehicles.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer: C

MAINS QUESTIONS:

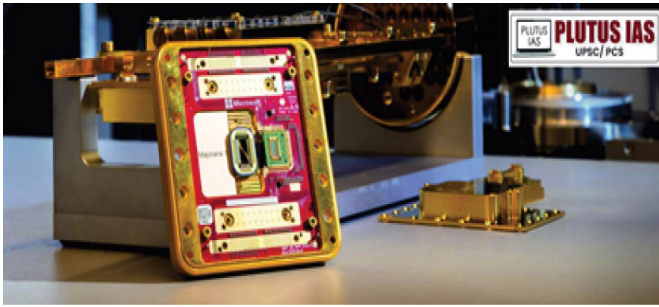
- Q. Discuss the various government initiatives aimed at promoting electric vehicle (EV) adoption and battery manufacturing in India. How do these initiatives support India's green energy goals? (250 words, 15 marks)

QUANTUM COMPUTING: THE NEXT TECHNOL

WHY IN THE NEWS:

Microsoft, on Wednesday, unveiled a new chip that it said showed quantum computing is "years, not decades" away, joining Google and IBM in predicting that a fundamental change in computing technology is much closer than recently believed.

Quantum computing holds the promise of carrying out calculations that would take today's systems millions of years and could unlock discoveries in medicine, chemistry, and many other fields where near-infinite seas of possible combinations of molecules confound classical computers.



WHAT IS QUANTUM COMPUTING

Quantum computing is a field of study that applies the principles of quantum mechanics to computing. Unlike classical computers that operate on bits, quantum computers use qubits (quantum bits), which can exist in multiple states simultaneously due to the principles of superposition and entanglement. This allows them to perform complex computations at speeds unimaginable for classical computers.

Superposition: A qubit can exist in both 0 and 1 states simultaneously, unlike classical bits.

Entanglement: When qubits become entangled, the state of one qubit is instantly linked to the state of another, regardless of distance.

Quantum interference: The probability of qubit states can be manipulated, enhancing computation efficiency.

FEATURES OF QUANTUM COMPUTING

- 1. Exponential Speedup:** Quantum computers can solve problems exponentially faster than classical computers. For instance, a quantum computer could factor large prime numbers in seconds, a task that would take classical computers thousands of years.
- 2. High efficiency in optimization problem:** Quantum computing is particularly powerful in solving optimization problems that involve multiple variables and constraints, such as supply chain management and financial modeling.
- 3. Enhanced Cryptographic Capabilities:** Quantum computers can break traditional encryption methods, necessitating the development of quantum-resistant cryptography.
- 4. Improved Simulation and Modeling:** Quantum mechanics-based simulations, such as molecular and chemical modeling, are significantly more accurate and efficient using quantum computers.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN QUANTUM COMPUTER & TRADITIONAL COMPUTER

Feature	Traditional computer	Quantum computer
Data Processing	Sequential processing	Parallel processing
Data Representation	Uses bits (0 or 1)	Uses qubits (0, 1, or both)
Computational Power	Limited by Moore’s Law	Exponential speedup due to superposition and entanglement
Security	Uses classical cryptography	Can break classical encryption but enables quantum-safe encryption
Application areas	Business, gaming, AI, general-purpose computing	Cryptography, AI, scientific modeling, optimization, quantum simulations
State Dependency	Independent processing	Qubit entanglement allows state-dependent computation, improving efficiency
Error Sensitivity	Less error-prone	Requires error correction due to quantum decoherence

EVERYONE IS FOCUSING ON QUANTUM COMPUTING

- 1. Cybersecurity & cryptography:** Quantum computing can break traditional encryption, making it crucial for governments and organizations to develop quantum-resistant encryption methods.
- 2. Advancement in AI & Machine learning:** Quantum computing can enhance machine learning algorithms, leading to improved AI applications in healthcare, finance, and automation.
- 3. Pharmaceutical & Drug Discovery:** Quantum simulations can significantly accelerate drug discovery and molecular analysis, reducing the time and cost of developing new medicines.
- 4. Climate Modeling & Scientific Research:** Quantum computers can provide accurate climate predictions and aid in solving complex scientific problems.
- 5. Financial Modeling & Optimization:** Quantum algorithms improve risk analysis, fraud detection, and investment strategies in financial institutions.
- 6. National Security & Defence:** Countries are investing in quantum research to strengthen cybersecurity, intelligence, and defense capabilities.

WHERE INDIA IS STANDING-INITIATIVES & POLICIES

- 1. National Quantum Mission (NQM):** Launched in 2023 with a budget of ₹6,000 crores, this mission aims to develop quantum technologies in computing, communications, and materials science.
- 2. Quantum Computing Labs & Research Centers:** Organizations like ISRO, DRDO, IITs, IISc, and private players such as TCS and IBM are working on quantum computing research.
- 3. Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaboration between government agencies, startups, and multinational tech firms to accelerate quantum advancements.

- 4. Quantum Communication Initiatives:** India has successfully tested quantum key distribution (QKD) to enhance cybersecurity.

ISSUES INDIA IS FACING IN ADVANCEMENT OF QUANTUM COMPUTING

- 1. Lack of Infrastructure Quantum:** High-cost quantum labs and equipment are needed to conduct cutting-edge research.
- 2. Talent Shortage:** India lacks skilled quantum computing professionals.
- 3. Limited Industry Investment:** Private sector funding in quantum computing is still in its nascent stage.
- 4. Technological Dependence:** India relies on foreign companies for quantum hardware.
- 5. Scalability Issues:** Building large-scale quantum computers requires significant breakthroughs in qubit stability and error correction.

WAYS TO MAKE INDIA AS GLOBAL POWER IN QUANTUM COMPUTING

- 1. Increase Government Investment:** Expand funding for quantum research, infrastructure, and training programs.
- 2. Educational Reforms:** Introduce quantum computing courses in universities and encourage research programs.
- 3. Strengthen Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborate with industry leaders and startups to accelerate innovation.
- 4. Develop Indigenous Quantum Hardware:** Reduce reliance on foreign technology by building India's own quantum processors.
- 5. Boost International Collaborations:** Partner with global leaders in quantum computing such as the US, EU, and China for knowledge exchange.
- 6. Promote Quantum Startups:** Provide funding and mentorship to Indian startups focusing on quantum technology.
- 7. Enhance Cybersecurity Research:** Invest in quantum cryptography to protect against future cyber threats.

CONCLUSION:

Quantum computing is set to redefine the future of technology, and India has a unique opportunity to establish itself as a key player in this domain. With strong government initiatives, increased funding, and a focus on education and infrastructure, India can overcome current challenges and emerge as a global quantum computing powerhouse. By fostering collaboration between academia, industry, and government, India can unlock the immense potential of quantum computing and drive innovation across multiple sectors.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Which of the following statements is true about quantum entanglement?

- It allows a single qubit to hold multiple values at once
- It ensures qubits maintain independent states
- It links qubits such that the state of one qubit instantly affects another, regardless of distance
- It only works at absolute zero temperature.

ANSWER: C

MAINS QUESTIONS:

Q. Discuss the key differences between Quantum Computing and Classical computing. How can quantum computing revolutionize industries such as healthcare, finance, and cybersecurity? (250 words, 15 marks)

NATIONAL EDUCATIONS POLICY**WHY IN THE NEWS?**

The news about Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's address at the 101st convocation of the University of Delhi is significant because it highlights India's strategic focus on education to drive national progress. His emphasis on the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 shows the government's intent to elevate India's educational framework to a global standard.

By addressing youth—the majority of India's population—Pradhan reiterated how crucial it is for students to contribute to the vision of a developed India by 2047. His acknowledgement of Delhi University's role in implementing NEP 2020 adds a layer of recognition to the university's efforts in shaping future leaders, making the story relevant both for educational reforms and for Delhi University's contribution to India's educational goals.

WHAT IS EDUCATION POLICY?

Education policy is a set of principles, guidelines, rules, and laws that govern the educational system within a country or region. It defines the goals, structure, methods, and practices for delivering education, aiming to shape and improve how education is provided to students. Education policy is designed to ensure that education is accessible, equitable, and of high quality, and it establishes frameworks for curriculum design, teaching standards, student assessment, and overall educational governance.

- Objectives:** These are the broad goals that the policy seeks to achieve, such as ensuring equitable access to education, improving quality, and fostering skills development.
- Curriculum and Instruction:** Policies often define what subjects or courses should be taught, how teachers should teach, and the standards of learning expected at different education levels.
- Governance and Administration:** This includes how education systems are organized, the roles of local, regional, and national authorities, and who is responsible for decision-making.
- Assessment and Accountability:** Education policies often set standards for assessing students' progress, as well as holding educational institutions accountable for meeting educational goals.
- Funding and Resources:** Policies may also outline how education is funded, how resources are allocated to schools, and how to address disparities in funding.

EVOLUTION OF EDUCATION POLICY

- 1. **National Policy on Education (1967):** Focused on expanding access to education and promoting national integration after independence. Emphasized quality, teacher training, and adult education. Aimed to address illiteracy and promote education as a tool for social and economic development.
- 2. **National Policy on Education (1986):** Introduced by Rajiv Gandhi, it emphasized universalizing elementary education, improving quality, and equity. Focused on science and

technology education, vocational skills, and a national education framework. Promoted multilingualism and integration of education with social development, especially for marginalized groups.

- 3. **National Education Policy (2020):** Introduced a 5+3+3+4 education structure and emphasized holistic and multidisciplinary education. Focused on foundational literacy and numeracy, early childhood education, and integration of vocational education. Pushed for mother tongue as the medium of instruction, digital learning, and improving teacher quality.

KEY FEATURES OF NEP 2020

Feature	Description
Universal Access & Early Education	Ensures access to education from pre-primary to Grade 12 and quality early childhood care for children aged 3-6.
Curricular Reforms	Implements a 5+3+3+4 structure and removes barriers between arts, sciences, vocational, and academic streams.
Language & Literacy	Promotes multilingualism, with mother tongue as the medium of instruction till Grade 5, and ensures foundational literacy and numeracy for all children.
Assessment Reforms	Allows two board exams a year (main and improvement) and establishes PARAKH for holistic assessment.
Equity & Inclusion	Focus on SEDGs , Gender Inclusion Funds, and Special Education Zones for disadvantaged regions and groups.
Teacher Development	Merit-based recruitment, continuous performance reviews, and a 4-year integrated B.Ed program.
Higher Education	Aims to raise the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) to 50%, promotes multidisciplinary education, and introduces common entrance exams.
Research & Excellence	Establishes MERUs (Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities) and a National Research Foundation .
Regulation	Establishes the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) to oversee higher education and set standards.
Technology Integration	Establishes NETF for technology in education and aims for 100% adult literacy .
Investment	Focuses on increasing public spending on education to 6% of GDP.

ROLE OF NEP-2020 TO ELEVATE INDIA TO THE GLOBAL LEVEL

- 1. **Holistic, Multidisciplinary Education:** NEP encourages a flexible, interdisciplinary approach, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and global competencies.

- 2. **Focus on Research & Innovation:** The policy promotes research through the National Research Foundation (NRF) and strengthens global research collaborations.
- 3. **Integration of Technology:** NETF and digital tools enhance education accessibility and align India with global EdTech advancements.

4. **Internationalization of Higher Education:** NEP supports Indian universities in setting up campuses abroad and attracting global universities to India.
5. **Promotion of Language and Culture:** Emphasizes multilingual education and preserves Indian languages while preparing students for global engagement.
6. **Increased Access & Inclusivity:** Aim for 100% GER in education by 2030, ensuring a diverse, skilled workforce.
7. **Vocational Education:** Integrates practical skills and internships, making students globally competitive.
8. **Attracting Global Talent:** The policy's focus on quality education and research draws international talent to India.
9. **Sustainability & Global Citizenship:** Aligns with SDG 4 for quality education and promotes global citizenship.
10. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Encourages collaborations to improve educational infrastructure and global competitiveness.

ISSUES WITH THE EDUCATION SECTOR

1. **Quality Disparities:** Uneven education quality, especially in rural areas, due to lack of infrastructure, qualified teachers, and outdated curriculum.
2. **Access & Inclusivity:** Limited access to education in rural areas, with socioeconomic disparities hindering marginalized groups' educational opportunities.
3. **Teacher Training:** Shortage of trained teachers and lack of professional development impacting the quality of education.
4. **Infrastructure Deficiencies:** Inadequate school facilities, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of learning resources limit effective teaching and learning.
5. **Affordability & Privatization:** High costs of private education make it inaccessible for many, while privatization can lead to exclusion and inequality.
6. **Technology Divide:** Digital gap between urban and rural areas, hindering effective online learning due to lack of devices and internet access.

7. **Examination System:** Over-reliance on rote learning and traditional exams, causing stress and neglecting skills like creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

WAYS FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Teacher Training:** Invest in continuous professional development to improve teaching quality and adapt to digital tools.
2. **Improved Infrastructure:** Upgrade school facilities and ensure reliable internet access, especially in rural areas.
3. **Inclusive Education:** Provide equal opportunities for marginalized groups with scholarships and targeted programs.
4. **Curriculum & Assessment Reform:** Focus on critical thinking and vocational skills, with alternative assessment methods beyond rote memorization.
5. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborate with private institutions to enhance resources and ensure affordability.
6. **Community Engagement:** Involve stakeholders (teachers, parents, students) in decision-making for relevant and inclusive reforms.
7. **Monitoring & Accountability:** Implement strong tracking systems to ensure reforms are on track and continuously improve based on feedback.

CONCLUSION

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a transformative step towards reshaping India's education system, focusing on inclusivity, quality, and global competitiveness. By emphasizing holistic education, research, vocational skills, and the integration of technology, NEP aims to elevate India's position globally. However, effective implementation will require addressing existing challenges such as quality disparities, teacher training, and infrastructure gaps. Through continuous reforms, strategic partnerships, and robust monitoring systems, India can move closer to achieving its educational goals and fostering a skilled, innovative, and globally competitive workforce.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Q. Which of the following statements is correct about the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020?

1. NEP 2020 aims to increase the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) to 50% by 2030.
2. NEP 2020 promotes the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction till grade 8.
3. NEP 2020 mandates the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) as a compulsory subject at the school level.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer: A

MAINS QUESTIONS:

Q. Analyze the role of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in transforming India's educational landscape. How does NEP 2020 aim to elevate India's education system to global standards, and what challenges need to be addressed for its successful implementation?

(250 words, 15 marks)