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Awakening Toppers

UPSC MAINS

Solved PYQs

2024

General Studies Paper II



Polity & Governance

1) Examine the need for electoral reforms as suggested by various committees with particular reference to “one nation – one election” principle. (10 marks, 150 words)

Introduction:

- Option 1 – Electoral Reforms are essential for ensuring trust in democracy and making the democratic processes more effective.
- Option 2 – The recent introduction of 129th Constitutional Amendment Bill and its subsequent referral to joint parliamentary committee shows the government’s intent towards executing a long discussed electoral reform of simultaneous elections.

Body:

- Need for Electoral Reforms: (Flow chart)
 - Electoral Funding transparency
 - Criminalisation of Politics
 - MCC violations
 - Enforcement of RPA
 - Election commission related reforms
 - Voter identification

Committee	Focus Area
Tarkunde Committee 1975	Voter Age, voter identification
Dinesh Goswami Report 1990	Security deposit, MCC changes
Law commission 170 th report	
Indrajit Gupta Committee 1998	Partial state funding of elections
National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution	Curbing defection, addressing black money and state funding of campaigns
Vohra Committee	Nexus between criminal police politicians
Ram Nath Kovind Panel	One Nation One Elections

Need	Challenges
Perpetual Election Cycle	Federal structure-National issues conflated with regional
Expenditure Saving (Lok Sabha Committee) (4500 crore for one cycle)	Humungous exercise
Governance at backseat due to MCC	Local Bodies
Increased political Stability	Constitutional Amendments
Free up Security personnel	Increase in episodic accountability
May give more space for civil society to operate	Adding 26.55 lakh ballot units, 17.78 lakh control units, and 17.79 lakh VVPATs to the current inventory.
Reduced freebies	4,719 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) in 2024 general elections,

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2) Explain and distinguish between Lok Adalats And Arbitration Tribunals. Whether they entertain civil as well as criminal cases?

- **Intro:** With 5.5 crore cases pending at various levels of judiciary, mechanisms like Lok Adalats and Arbitration tribunals provide a beacon of hope in terms of Alternate Dispute Redressal Mechanism
- **Body :**
 - Lok Adalat's :
 - Part of Ancient Indian culture of ADR
 - Legal Service Authorities Act 1987
 - Focus on mediation and consultation
 - Constituted by NALSA, SLA, SLSA, etc
 - Hear both civil and criminal(compoundable) cases
 - Decision binding if parties agree
 - Permanent and Temporary
 - More Informal mechanism and conciliatory mechanism.
 - No court fee or cost of proceedings
 - Arbitration Tribunals :
 - Formalised under Arbitration and Conciliation Act 1996
 - Civil disputes ONLY
 - Decisions are binding, but challengeable in court of law
 - Final decisions or awards are based on adjudicator's assessment.
 - Proceedings are adversarial in nature
 - Parties have to bear cost
 - Concerns Regarding Both (Flow Chart) :
 - Lack of Awareness
 - Lack of Acceptance
 - Delay and Backlog
 - Quality of Mediators and Arbitrators
 - Cultural and linguistic preferences
 - Resistance to Settlement

Conclusion :

- While both institutions have had their fair share of challenges, to unclog the judicial cholesterol in our system, we can follow the lead of ex- CJI's statement , " Mediate, Don't litigate".

3) The growth of cabinet system has practically resulted in the marginalization of the parliamentary supremacy:" Elucidate.

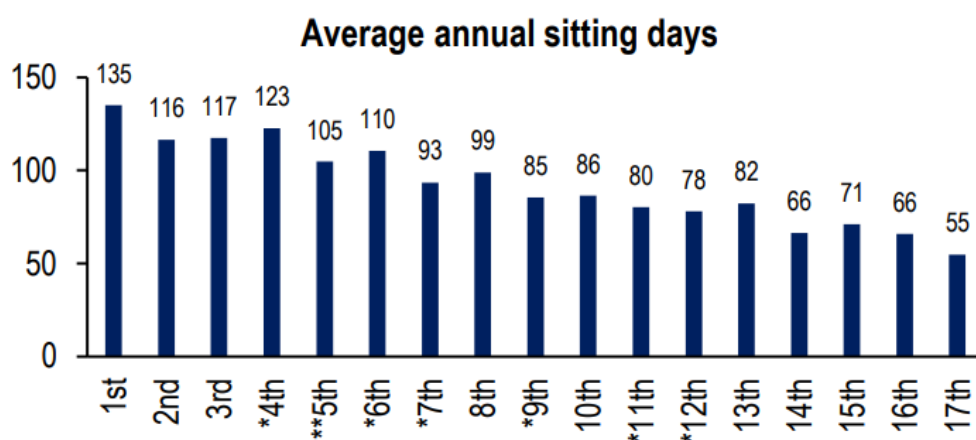
Intro:

- **Option 1**
 - While our parliamentary system does not subscribe to the concept of parliamentary supremacy, its functioning as an accountability manager to the executive has seen certain challenges via the cabinet system.
- **Option 2**
 - While the word cabinet has not been clearly defined in the constitution, Article 352 mentions it. In practice though, cabinet system's growth has led to certain challenges to the role of parliament as an accountability manager of the executive.

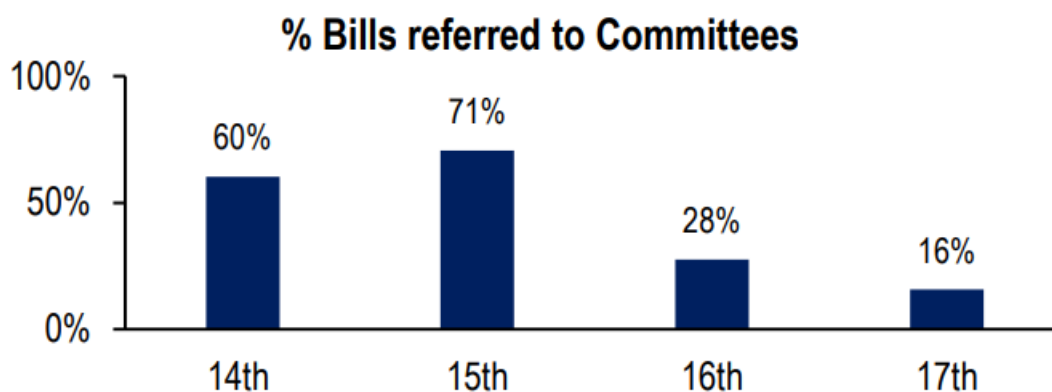
Body:

Examples of marginalisation of parliament :

- Ordinances
- Parliament calendar
- Parliament proceedings-Business advisory committee and Cabinet committee on parliamentary affairs
- Lack of reference of parliamentary committees -Only 16% bills referred



Note: * indicates a term less than five years; ** indicates a six year term.





- Private Member bills not getting passed
 - NO PVT MEMBER BILL PASSED SINCE 1970.
- Anti Defection Law :
- Use of Delegated legislation
- Pre-legislative consultations

Why parliament is still important :

- No Confidence Motion and ensuing debate
- Committees especially financial committees For example The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) headed by senior Congress leader and Lok Sabha member K.C. Venugopal will hold a performance review of “regulatory bodies established by Act of Parliament”, such as the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- Budgetary control as per constitution
- Question hours / motion of thanks

Conclusion :

- When the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person, or in the same body of magistrates, there can be no liberty

PYQ Relevance

1. The size of the cabinet should be as big as governmental work justifies and as big as the Prime Minister can manage as a team. How far is the efficacy of a government then inversely related to the size of the cabinet? Discuss (2014)
2. To what extent, in your view, the Parliament is able to ensure accountability of the executive in India? (2021)
3. Compare and contrast the British and Indian approaches to Parliamentary sovereignty. (2021)
4. Do Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees keep the administration on its toes and inspire reverence for parliamentary control? Evaluate the working of such committees with suitable examples. 2021
5. Individual parliamentarian's role as the national lawmaker is on a decline, which in turn, has adversely impacted the quality of debates and their outcome. Discuss(2019)
6. The role of individual MPs (Members of Parliament) has diminished over the years and as a result healthy constructive debates on policy issues are not usually witnessed. How far can this be attributed to the anti defection law, which was legislated but with a different intention?(2013)

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4) The duty of the Comptroller and Auditor General is not merely to ensure the legality of expenditure but also its propriety." Comment.

Intro :

- Article 148 and Comptroller and Auditor General's Duties powers and conditions of service Act 1971
- Arvind Gupta judgement 2012 – Legality and Propriety

Body :

Legality of Expenditure :

- Find out misallocations
- Weed out corruption – Commonwealth games scam
- Calculate net proceeds of tax
- Assist Public Accounts Committee
- Promote Fiscal Prudence
- Form in which accounts are maintained

Propriety of Expenditure- Performance audit

Focus on three E's- Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness

Audit of

- Ayushman Bharat -
- PM Ujjwala yojana
- Bharatmala pariyojana
- Schemes for flood control and weather forecasting
- Railways
- Criminal justice System

Challenges of propriety of expenditure

- Notional loss- 2G scam – 1.76 lakh crore
- Practical difficulties
- Data collection techniques and methodologies
- Lack of importance to PAC recommendations

CAG is probably the most important officer- Dr BR Ambedkar

5) Analyse the role of local bodies in providing good governance at local level and bring out the pros and cons merging the rural local bodies with the urban local bodies.

Introduction :

- 4000 municipalities and 2.55 lakh panchayats with 3 million elected functionaries.
- Article 40, 73rd and 74th CAA.

Body :

- Role of local Bodies in providing good governance :

Principle of Subsidiarity

- In Kerala, the decentralized planning campaign allowed local bodies to take charge of their area's health, education, and infrastructure. These local bodies could make decisions without waiting for state or central government intervention.

Equitable :

- Under the Swachh Bharat Mission, many local bodies took steps to ensure that disadvantaged communities had access to proper sanitation facilities.
- Data: As of 2022, local bodies contributed to the construction of over 11 crore toilets across India, ensuring sanitation equity.

Transparency :

- ULBs can livestream the proceedings of the General Body and other committees of the ULBs, such as the Standing Committee, Improvements Committee, and others.

Accountability :

- Social audits of MGNREGA projects in states like Rajasthan and Odisha have ensured that funds are used correctly, with community involvement in reviewing expenditures.

Responsive :

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, many local bodies, especially in Kerala and Maharashtra, played a crucial role in organizing relief work, healthcare services, and ensuring the supply of essential goods. Pune's municipal corporation set up over 160 decentralized COVID-19 testing and treatment centers to ensure quick and effective medical assistance.

Consensus Oriented –

- Village councils in Nagaland ensure 100% attendance in decision-making meetings, leading to highly representative and inclusive governance.

Rule of Law :

- Municipal bodies in Tamil Nadu have implemented strict building regulations to prevent illegal construction, ensuring adherence to urban planning laws. Chennai's municipal corporation conducted over 3,000 inspections in 2022 to ensure that urban development followed the rule of law.

Efficient and Effective :

- Surat, the municipal corporation implemented efficient waste management systems, resulting in improved sanitation and waste disposal. Surat's local body collects over 1,600 metric tonnes of waste daily and manages it using advanced waste-to-energy technology.

Participatory:

- According to a Ministry of Panchayati Raj report (2022), states like Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, and Karnataka reported over 80% active participation in Gram Sabhas, with citizen attendance reaching as high as 60-70% in some areas during key planning periods.

Body : Merging of ULB and RLB

HOME / NEWS / INDIA / TAMIL NADU

T.N. begins 'exploratory process' for potential merger of village panchayats with urban local bodies

A government official said the State was considering the feasibility of such mergers, ahead of the elections that may need to be held for rural local bodies in 28 districts by the end of this year

Updated - January 12, 2024 03:54 pm IST - CHENNAI

T. RAMAKRISHNAN



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Pros	Cons
Efficiency of administration	Delimitation exercise
Simpler Elections	Different issues of urban and rural areas
Synergetic growth	Personnel
Spillover development	PESA act areas /tribal areas affected
Economic Prudence	Constitutional morality

6) Public charitable trusts have the potential to make India's development more inclusive as they relate to certain vital public issues. Comment.

Introduction :

- Indian Trusts Act 1882 and Societies Registration Act 1860
- India is a welfare state as per DPSP

Conclusion

- Good Governance is not just the responsibility of the state but it needs valuable partnership from non government sector which Public Charitable Trusts can provide.

Body :

Domains in which Public Charitable Trusts operate :

- Food Distribution –Akshay patra
- Education and Skill Development –Tata Trusts,
- **Women Empowerment** –SMILE+INDIAN WOMEN and Child Development Trust
- Poverty alleviation – ASRA –PUNJAB
- **Marginalised Sections** –PWD, Leprosy patients, Elderly population, widows
- Shelter and clothing – Shelter Progetto - Gurugram
- Rural Development

Challenges

- **Lack of Accountability and Transparency:** Certain charitable trusts struggle with issues of transparency in how funds are allocated and used, which can impede their ability to contribute effectively to inclusive development. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Smriti Manch faced scrutiny after the Delhi High Court flagged irregularities in fund usage, with donations being misappropriated for non-charitable purposes.
- **Limited Reach in Rural and Remote Areas:** Although charitable trusts are predominantly centered in urban areas, many rural and remote communities are left under-supported, restricting their influence on inclusive development. only 12% of public charitable trusts have mechanisms to track long-term social outcomes effectively.
- **Dependence on Philanthropic Donations:** Charitable trusts frequently depend on donations and external financial support, which can vary, affecting the consistency and sustainability of their initiatives
- **Regulatory framework:** Ensuring proper governance and transparency in the operations of these trusts is crucial for maintaining public trust.
- **Coordination with government:** Effective collaboration between trusts and government bodies is essential to avoid duplication of efforts and maximize impact

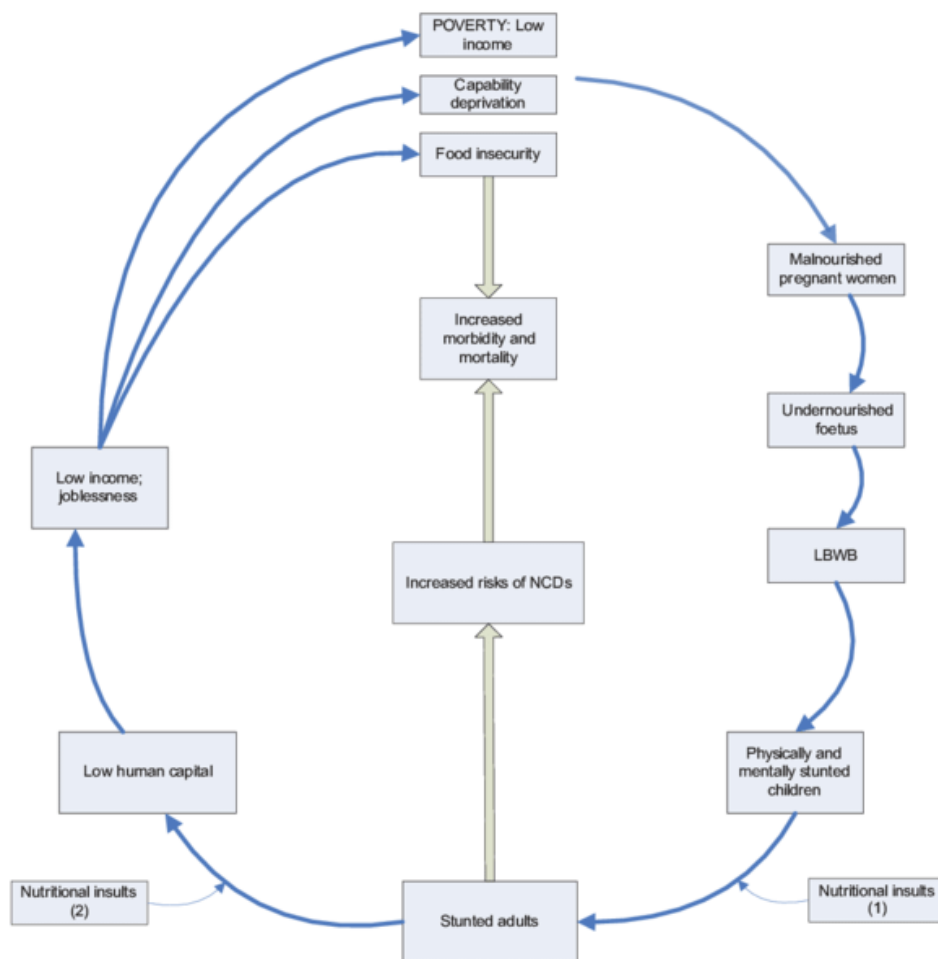
7) Poverty and malnutrition create a vicious cycle, adversely affecting human capital formation. What steps can be taken to break the cycle?

Introduction :

- While on the one hand, as per MPI, India has managed to lift 415 million people out of poverty in the last 15 years, About half of the children from each real poor and excluded poor, two-fifths among privileged non-poor and less than one-third among non-poor households were stunted in India.

Body :

- Vicious cycle of Poverty and Malnutrition



Steps to break cycle

WSFS

- Wage Employment
- Self Employment
- Food Surety
- Social Security

All backed by
technology

Wage Employment

- Income-support measures can help lift families out of poverty, enabling them to afford better nutrition and healthcare.
- E.g., MGNREGA, Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY), Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY)....

Self Employment

- Germany: Apprenticeship Programs – Germany's dual education system combines vocational training with practical experience, providing youth and aspiring entrepreneurs with the skills they need to start their own businesses.
- New centrally sponsored scheme under the Prime Minister's package, in collaboration with state governments and industry. This scheme aims to skill 20 lakh youth over five years and upgrade 1,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)
- SHG Led development .

Food Surety :

- Addressing Malnutrition by providing greater food security to low-income families.
- E.g., Poshan Abhiyaan, PDS, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)

Social Security Initiatives

- NSAP cap increase, Ayushman bharat coverage increase

8) The Doctrine of Democratic Governance makes it necessary that the public perception of the integrity and commitment of civil servants becomes absolutely positive. Discuss.(10 marks, 150 words)

Introduction :

- Democratic Governance is a system of government where institutions function according to democratic processes and norms, both internally and in their interaction with other institutions. Certain recent occurrences have cast shadow over the public perception of civil servants.

Body :

Pillars of Democratic governance

- Participatory :Pame Armstrong's passion and dedication towards the betterment of the society was so strong that he built a 100 km long road in a remote hill of Manipur
- Responsiveness :
- Efficiency and Effectiveness :
- Transparency - U. Sagayam first IAS officer to make his assets public
- Ethical conduct : TN Seshan
- Innovation and openness to change : IAS officer Himanshu Nagpal, the chief development officer in Varanasi, initiated a comprehensive groundwater rejuvenation project, notably increasing the water table, improving water availability and reducing waterborne diseases.
- Competence and Capacity : Ajit Doval

Why public Perception of integrity and commitment needs to be positive :

- Public Trust in state machinery
- Ease of living
- Reduces corruption
- Makes economic sense
- Role models in society
- Benefits to marginalised communities
- Law and order maintained

Challenges to this public perception

- Corruption
- Bureaucratic attitude-elitism
- Distant bureaucracy
- Social Media theatrics
- Delays and Red tapism

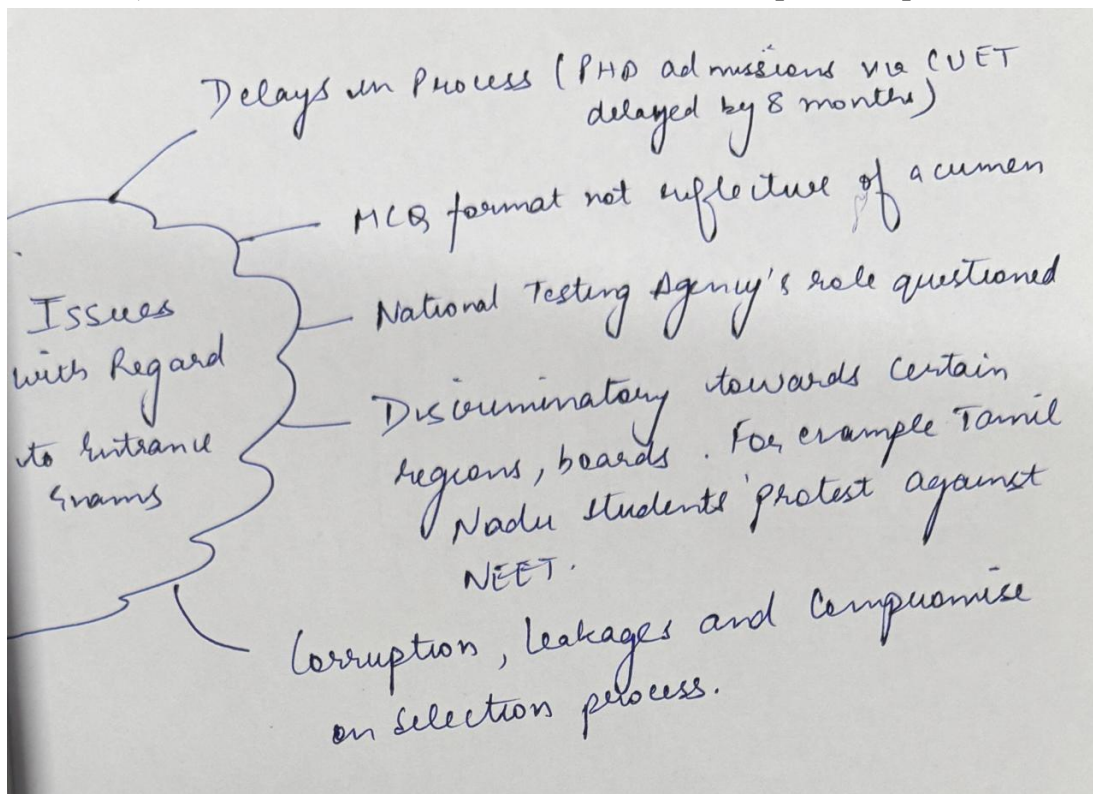
Conclusion with way forward :

- Learn and incorporate best practices (Singapore and Malaysia) , implement committee recommendations like Niti Aayog, Baswan committee, Hota Committee etc.

9) What are the aims and objects of recently passed and enforced, The Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024? Whether University/State Education Board examinations, too, are covered under the Act?

Introduction :

- Exam paper leaks cause immense damage to the psychological state of India's younger generation in pursuit of a better, more progressive future. With our demographic dividend hugely dependent on finding the brightest minds for the best positions, the recent Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means seems to be a step in that pursuit.



Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means Act)

Enforced from 21st June 2024.

- Defines Public Examination :** any examination conducted by a “public examination authority” listed in the Schedule of the Bill - the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), the Staff Selection Commission (SSC), the Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs), the Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS), the National Testing Agency (NTA).
- 15 types of unfair means**
 - Theft of examination materials or their leakage to the candidates,
 - cheating or assisting the candidates in any way,
 - corrupting computer setup or resources,
 - foul play in the process of shortlisting or ranking of the candidates,



- conducting fraudulent exams and issuing fake admit cards or offer letters for financial gain,
- tampering with answer sheets or examination records
- **Punishment**
 - Punishment for “any person or persons resorting to unfair means and offenses” can be three to five years in prison, and a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh.
 - **Punishment for the Service Providers:**
 - A service provider, engaged by the public examination authority for the conduct of examinations, shall also be liable to be punished with the imposition of a fine up to Rs 1 crore and proportionate cost of examination shall also be recovered from it, if the service provider is involved in illegal practices.
 - Offences are cognizable non bailable and non compoundable.
- **Power to Refer Investigation to a Central Agency**
 - The Act empowers the Central Government to refer any case under the Act to a Central Investigating Agency whenever necessary in order to ensure expeditious and cautious disposal of matters concerned.

Issues :

- No mention of rescheduling of cancelled exam and any fixed duration for the same.
- Invigilators and administrative officers often lack proper training, leading to inefficiencies and opportunities for unfair practices.
- DSP level officer to investigate but need is of experts committee.
- No discussion on use of AI/other technology

10) Right to privacy is intrinsic to life and personal liberty and is inherently protected under Article 21 of the constitution. Explain. In this reference discuss the law relating to D.N.A. testing of child in the womb to establish its paternity.

Intro :

Body :

- Used preamble to arrive at the conclusion
- Privacy is not absolute but qualified
- Triple test of proportionality – Law, legitimate aim of public interest, proportionality

Body : Paternity Test

- Indian Evidence Act or Bharatiya Sakshya Sanhita
- Bhabani Prasad versus State of Orissa 2010 – DNA tests should not infringe upon personal rights without consent
- Ashok Kumar judgement 2021 – Proportionality of legitimate aims must be pursued

Way forward :

- Establish privacy safeguards in evidence acts
- Comply with supreme court judgements
- Reconsider DNA technology Use and Application bill for future reference

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11) What changes has the Union Government recently introduced in the domain of Centre-State relations? Suggest measures to be adopted to build the trust between the Centre and the States and for strengthening federalism.

Introduction :

- Indian Federalism is Sui Generis where delicate balance is maintained between centre and states. Recent moves by union government have both aided and sometimes challenges this notion.

Body : Simple Trifurcation-

Financial/ Fiscal measures Administrative

- GST and its Compensation Cess :
 - All India Services Rules
 - Niti Aayog
 - No Special Category Status
 - Schemes – PM Shri, ONORC, Ayushman Bharat ,Bharat Urea
 - Net Borrowing Limit

Legislative, :

- All India Services Rules
- Niti Aayog
- Schemes – PM Shri, ONORC, Ayushman Bharat ,Bharat Urea
- NIA Amendment Act
- Farm laws(later repealed)
- Disaster management by Epidemic diseases act and Disaster Management Amendment Bill August 2024

Domain	Change	Impact
Administrative	All India Services Rules : Proposed amendment in Central deputation rules	States raised concerns over centralisation
	Niti Aayog- increasing role and handholding of states for SDG goals	
	Schemes – PM Shri, ONORC, Ayushman Bharat ,Bharat Urea	Resisted initially by states with similar schemes but later adopted post assurances
Legislative	NIA Amendment Act 2019 , BSF Rules in Punjab and West Bengal	States raised concerns over encroachment of police powers under state list

	Cabinet approval to One Nation One Election	States/regional parties concerns over impact on federalism
	Farm laws, Electricity amendment act	States allege encroachment in State list
Financial/Fiscal	GST and its Compensation Cess	GST increased overall formalisation and tax collection but delays in compensation fund disbursal during covid raised concerns
	No Special Category Status	States like Bihar, Andhra Pradesh raised demands
Financial /Fiscal	15TH Finance commission recommendations	Southern states raised concern over demographic performance and reduced share as result of declining population
	Net Borrowing Limit Imposed	States like Kerala objected and filed petition in Supreme court under Article 131

Body

Measures to build Trust

- Effective Use of Governing Council of Niti Aayog
- Inter State Council operationalisation
- Pre legislative consultation
- Pro active role in inter state dispute – Assam Arunachal Border dispute
- Terms/criteria of Finance Commission
- Governor appointment – Sarkaria Commission , Puncchi Commission

Conclusion

- Federalism must no longer be the fault line of Centre-State relations but the definition of a new partnership of Team India. For Viksit Bharat 2047.

12) Explain the reasons for the growth of public interest litigation in India. As a result of it, has the Indian Supreme Court emerged as the world's most powerful judiciary ?

Introduction :

- Public interest Litigation (PIL) refers to litigation filed in a court of law, for the protection of "Public Interest", such as Pollution, Terrorism, Road safety, Constructional hazards etc. Any matter where the interest of public at large is affected can be redressed by filing a Public Interest Litigation in a court of law.

Body :

Journey of PIL in India (Timeline)

Mumbai Kamgar
Sabha versus
Abdul Thai 1976

Hussainara
Khatoon vs State
of Bihar 1979

S.P Gupta Versus
union of India
1982

MC Mehta vs
union of India
1986

Vishakha vs
State of
Rajasthan 1997

Reasons :

In 1982, Justice P.N. Bhagwati, correctly stated the purpose of PIL as it originated. He emphasised that PIL " a strategic arm of **the legal aid movement** which is intended to bring **justice within the reach of the poor masses**, who constitute the low visibility area of humanity, is a totally different kind of litigation from the ordinary traditional litigation."

- Judicial Interpretation of writs and SLP
- Influence of international judiciaries-USA
- LPG
- Increased awareness and judicial Literacy
- Trust in judiciary
- Role of civil society – ADR, PUCL, COMMON CAUSE

Is Indian judiciary most powerful in the world ?

One of the most powerful but maybe not the MOST.

Give counter arguments

13) Discuss India as a secular state and compare with the secular principles of the US constitution.

Introduction :

- Secularism is a contextual term which translates to different meanings, outcomes and definitions contingent on culture, polity, region and nations. An illustration of this is the approach of both India and the US to secularism.

Body :

- India – Constitutional provisions
- Fundamental Rights – 15, 16, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 44
- Laws – Personal Laws
- Minority rights
- State Led Religious Reform
- PREAMBLE

Comparison of India and USA

INDIA	USA
State has no religion	Complete Separation of Church and State
Equal Treatment to all religions	State is blind to religious identity
State can interfere in religious practices- Doctrine of Essential Religious Practices	No interference by state in religious practices
Religion as a community / societal phenomena	Religion as a private and personal choice

Challenges to secularism in both

- India : Communal violence, Hate Speech, Religious chauvinism, Uniform Civil code
- USA : Straightjacketing religious beliefs, Negative perception to religiosity, less space for religious reform

14) The Citizens' charter has been a landmark initiative in ensuring citizen-centric administration. But it is yet to reach its full potential. Identify the factors hindering the realisation of its promise and suggest measures to overcome them.

Intro :

- Citizens' Charters initiative is a response to the quest for solving the problems which a citizen encounters, day in and day out, while dealing with the organisations providing public services.
- The concept was first articulated and implemented in the United Kingdom by the Conservative Government of John Major in 1991 as a national Programme.
- In a Conference of Chief Ministers of various States and Union Territories held on 24 May, 1997 in New Delhi, presided over by the Prime Minister of India, an 'Action Plan for Effective and Responsive Government' at the Centre and State levels was adopted.

Factors Hindering the Full Realization of Citizens' Charters

- **Uniform Approach:** There is often a tendency to implement a standardized Citizens' Charter (CC) across all offices under a parent organization, disregarding unique local challenges. Additionally, many Ministries and Departments have yet to adopt the CC framework, limiting its reach and impact.
- **Isolated Formulation:** Most Citizens' Charters lack input from the frontline staff responsible for implementation, as they are rarely developed through a consultative or participatory process.
- **Absence of Legal Mandate:** Citizens' Charters are not legally enforceable, leading to reduced accountability and limiting their effectiveness in holding service providers to their commitments.
- **Stagnant Framework:** Charters are infrequently updated, leading to outdated practices that don't adapt to evolving public needs or operational realities.
- **Design Flaws and Limited Content:** Many CCs lack clarity, with insufficient information on essential service parameters, making it difficult for end-users to hold agencies accountable.
- **Limited Public Awareness:** Only a small proportion of citizens are aware of CCs and the service commitments outlined in them, as there has been minimal effort to educate or communicate these standards to the public.
- **Undefined Standards of Service:** Many CCs fail to set measurable standards, making it challenging to evaluate whether the services provided meet expectations.
- **Poor Compliance:** Organizations often show limited adherence to their CCs, and in the absence of citizen-friendly redress mechanisms, citizens have little recourse if commitments are not met.

- **Tailored Charters:** Citizens' Charters should be customized to reflect the specific functions and priorities of different organizations and, where possible, made available in local languages to ensure accessibility.
- **Inclusive Consultation:** Developing charters should involve consultations with diverse stakeholders, including citizens, NGOs, and civil society groups, to better represent public needs and expectations.
- **Defined Commitments and Remedies:** Service standards should be clearly outlined, with provisions for compensatory measures when these standards are not met, thus improving accountability.
- **Independent Evaluation:** Periodic assessment by independent bodies can help ensure CCs remain relevant and continue to meet the changing needs of citizens.
- **Adoption of the Sevottam Model:** The Sevottam model, recommended by the 2nd ARC, provides a systematic approach by:
 - Defining services and identifying clients
 - Setting standards for each service
 - Building organizational capabilities to meet these standards
 - Delivering services in alignment with defined standards
 - Continuously monitoring and evaluating performance
 - Implementing ongoing improvements based on feedback

15) In a crucial domain like the public healthcare system the Indian State should play a vital role to contain the adverse impact of marketisation of the system. Suggest some measures through which the State can enhance the reach of public healthcare at the grassroots level.

Introduction :

- Health – Public good of the highest order which can make or break our demographic dividend and ensure inclusive growth.
- DPSP Article 47 – Directs the state to improve public health.

Conclusion :

- To make the healthcare system healthy, caring and systematic- all relevant stakeholders need to play important role but state needs to take the lead.

Adverse impacts of marketisation of public healthcare systems :

- Affordability
- Accessibility
- Awareness
- Absence of manpower
- Accountability

Affordability:

- Marketisation raises treatment costs, pushing 63 million Indians into poverty annually due to out-of-pocket health expenses

Accessibility:

- Private hospitals are concentrated in urban areas, leaving 66% of rural Indians dependent on underfunded and distant public health centers.

Awareness:

- Market-driven care often neglects preventive education, leading to low awareness – only 12% of rural women aged 15-49 had full knowledge of HIV/ AIDS prevention.

Absence of manpower:

- Market preference for urban, profitable locations leads to rural shortfalls – India faces an 80% shortage of specialists in Community Health Centres.

Accountability:

- In the absence of strict regulation, private hospitals face limited oversight – e.g., multiple reports of overcharging COVID-19 patients during the pandemic hence accountability is compromised.

Measures to enhance reach of public healthcare at grassroots :

- Double expenditure target (NHP)
- Increased use of technology at PHC level
- Expand health insurance as prime necessity (recently extended to elderly)

- Expand Jan Aushadhi Kendras and conduct quality audits
- Promote Telemedicine with help of CSC VLE and Space based internet for remote areas
- Medical education in vernacular languages
- Revisit pharmacopeia for non communicable disease

Way Forward

- **Increase in Public Spending:**
 - India's healthcare spending is 3.6% of GDP, including out-of-pocket and public expenditure.
 - India spends the least among BRICS countries: Brazil spends the most (9.2%), followed by South Africa (8.1%), Russia (5.3%), China (5%).
- **Infrastructure Development:**
 - Invest in building and upgrading healthcare infrastructure, including hospitals, clinics, and research facilities.
- **Healthcare Education and Training:**
 - Strengthen medical education and training programs to produce skilled healthcare professionals.
- **Research and Innovation:**
 - Foster a culture of research and innovation in healthcare. Provide incentives for pharmaceutical and biotech companies to conduct research and develop new treatments.
- **Telemedicine and Digital Health:**
 - Promote the use of telemedicine and digital health solutions to increase access to healthcare services, especially in rural areas.
- **Regulatory Reforms:**
 - Streamline and simplify regulatory processes to facilitate faster approval of drugs, medical devices, and healthcare technologies.
 - Ensure a transparent and efficient regulatory framework.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):**
 - Encourage collaborations between the government, private sector, and non-profit organizations to leverage resources and expertise.
- **Health Insurance and Financing:**
 - Implement and expand health insurance schemes to provide financial protection to citizens.
 - Develop innovative financing models to fund healthcare projects and initiatives.
- **Focus on Preventive Healthcare :** Focus on preventive healthcare measures to reduce the burden of diseases.
- **Quality Standards and Accreditation:**
 - Establish and enforce stringent quality standards for healthcare services.
 - Encourage healthcare facilities to obtain international accreditation to enhance their credibility.

- **Human Resource for Health** : This not only includes increased quantity and quality of doctors, healthcare professionals and paramedics but also their working conditions, safety, protection etc.
- **Medical Tourism Promotion:**
 - Develop and promote medical tourism by offering high-quality healthcare services at competitive prices. Improve visa and travel infrastructure to attract patients from other countries.

Sister Questions -PYQ

1. Public health system has limitation in providing universal health coverage. Do you think that private sector can help in bridging the gap? What other viable alternatives do you suggest? (2015)
2. Besides being a moral imperative of Welfare State, primary health structure is a necessary pre-condition for sustainable development." Analyze. (2021)

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Sister Questions -PYQ

- E-governance is not only about utilization of the power of new technology but also much about the critical importance of the 'use value' of information. Explain(2018)
- "The emergence of Fourth Industrial Revolution (Digital Revolution) has initiated e-Governance as an integral part of the government". Discuss (2020)

16) e-governance is not just about the routine application of digital technology in service delivery process. It is as much about multifarious interactions for ensuring transparency and accountability. In this context evaluate the role of the 'Interactive Service Model' of e-governance.

Introduction :

- According to the honourable PM, 'E-governance stands for easy, effective, economical and environment-friendly governance'

Body :

Dimensions of E-governance

- Effective Service Delivery
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Participatory governance
- Environment Friendly
- Economical
- Grievance Redressal
- G2G interactions
- G2B interactions
- G2E interactions
- Integrate emerging tech-Drones(SWAMITVA), chatbots, AI(Bhashini)

Multifarious Interactions in E-Governance

E-governance facilitates **multi-dimensional engagement** across various actors:

- **G2C (Government to Citizen):-**
 - *UMANG App* integrates services like PAN card application, PF balance check,
 - - *Aarogya Setu App* allowed citizens to self-assess and report COVID symptoms, linking with public health databases.
- **G2B (Government to Business):-**
 - *GSTN portal* allows e-filing of returns, input credit claims, and compliance monitoring.
 - *GeM (Government e-Marketplace)* enables transparent procurement from registered businesses

- **G2G (Government to Government):-**
 - *e-Office system* promotes paperless file movement between ministries and departments.
 - *National e-Governance Service Delivery Gateway (NSDG)* enables back-end integration for inter-departmental service coordination.

Transparency and Accountability

- Digital governance creates visibility of processes and a trail of responsibility:
- Transparency:-
 - RTI Online Portal allows citizens to file RTI requests directly to over 2,000 public authorities.
 - BhuNaksha portal provides digitized land records with ownership details in states like Odisha and Chhattisgarh, reducing manipulation.

Accountability:-

- CPGRAMS (Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System) lets citizens track complaints; officials have defined resolution timelines.
 - Aspirational Districts Dashboard shows real-time performance indicators across education, health, and agriculture, available publicly.

Evaluation of the Interactive Service Model

The model has demonstrated major **benefits**, along with **challenges**:

- **Successes:**
 - *DigiLocker* offers secure access to documents like driving licenses and academic certificates; over **180 crore** documents issued as of 2024.
 - *e-Shram Portal* has registered over **28 crore unorganized workers**, enabling targeted welfare delivery.
 - *Swachh Bharat App* allowed users to upload photos of constructed toilets, aiding monitoring and validation.

Challenges:

- **Digital Divide:** Only 31% of rural households had internet access in 2020 (NSSO Survey), limiting participation.
- **Cybersecurity:** The *CoWIN data breach* incident in 2023 raised serious concerns about citizen data safety.
- **Language barriers:** Many platforms lack regional language support, reducing accessibility.

Conclusion :

- In the words of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, E-governance adoption must be accompanied by a quantitative measure of impact of e-governance on the life of common citizens.

International Relations

17) 'The West is fostering India as an alternative to reduce dependence on China's supply chain and as a strategic ally to counter China's political and economic dominance.' Explain this statement with examples.

(10 Marks, 150 Words)

Demand of The Question

- The statement reflects a strategic shift by Western nations, particularly the United States and its allies, **to reduce reliance on China's supply chain** and counter its growing geopolitical and economic influence by positioning India as an **alternative manufacturing hub** and strategic partner.
- This approach is driven by concerns over **supply chain vulnerabilities**, trade tensions, and China's expanding global influence

Introduction- Cause & Opportunity

- Western countries are diversifying their supply chains away from China due to risks such as trade disputes, supply chain disruptions (e.g., during COVID-19), and **concerns over intellectual property theft or over-reliance on a single country**.
- India, with its large workforce, growing economy, and **democratic governance**, is being positioned as a **viable alternative manufacturing and supply chain hub**.

Economic Dimension

1. Apple's iPhone Exports from India to US Jumped 76% in April 2025

- Apple's iPhone exports from India to the US surged by 76% in April 2025 compared to the previous year, totaling approximately 3 million units, as the company seeks to avoid US tariffs on Chinese imports.
- Meanwhile, shipments from China, where the majority of iPhones have typically been manufactured, plunged about 76% from last year to just 900,000.
- Apple is significantly expanding its manufacturing operations in India, defying U.S. President Donald Trump's **directive to reshore production**.
- Its primary contractor, Foxconn, is investing \$1.5 billion in a display module plant near Chennai, while also **establishing a \$450 million semiconductor assembly unit in Uttar Pradesh** in partnership with HCL Technologies.

2. India's Rise in Supply Chain

- Many supply chain leaders are diversifying their supply chains **across global regions to reduce risk and increase flexibility** in costs and lead times.
- For supply chain leaders, this means exploring **emerging global supply chain regions** for diversification. India is one of those promising new regions.
- According to International Monetary Fund estimates, **India will be the world's third-largest economy by 2027**, with a GDP of \$5 trillion – bypassing Germany and Japan

- India is emerging as a reliable alternate destination for manufacturers and supply chain diversification **due to its large labor** and consumer base, low operating costs, and linkages to important international markets.
- **India is also appealing because of its strong economy**, relative ease of doing business, and an increasing number of sectors open to foreign investment.
- Companies like Apple have expanded manufacturing in India.
- By 2023, Apple shifted about 7% of its iPhone production to India, with companies like Foxconn and Pegatron setting up facilities in states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
- This reduces dependence on Chinese factories.

China's Plus One Strategy

- Many Western firms are adopting a **"China Plus One" strategy**, diversifying their manufacturing bases to include countries like India.
- For instance, **Samsung** has invested heavily in India, **making it a hub for smartphone** and electronics production, with its plant in Noida being one of the largest globally.
- In 2023, India's **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI)** scheme attracted investments from companies like **Intel** and **Micron Technology** for semiconductor and electronics manufacturing, positioning India as an alternative to China's dominance in tech supply chains.

Pharmaceutical and Critical Materials

- India is a major producer of generic drugs and active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs).
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, Western nations realized their **over-reliance on China for APIs and medical supplies**.
- The U.S. and EU have since supported India's pharmaceutical industry to diversify supply chains.
- For example, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) has **funded projects to boost India's API production**.
- India and the EU are part of the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP), focusing on cooperating in **mineral extraction, processing, and innovation technologies** to reduce reliance on Chinese imports for critical minerals like **lithium, rare-earth minerals, and nickel**.

Trade & Technology Council

- Established in 2022, the **EU-India TTC focuses on strategic technologies**, green energy, and supply chain resilience, with priorities including 6G, AI, cybersecurity, and **telecommunications to counter China's influence**.
- This initiative underscores the economic dimension of fostering India as an alternative.

Strategic Dimension

QUAD

- The Quad, comprising the U.S., Japan, Australia, and India, is a key strategic partnership aimed at ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- Joint military exercises like Malabar, involving Quad nations, showcase India's growing naval capabilities, particularly in response to China's expansion in the Indian Ocean.

ICET

- The U.S. has deepened defense ties with India through agreements like the U.S.-India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET), launched in 2022.
- This focuses on collaboration in AI, quantum computing, and semiconductors, reducing reliance on Chinese tech and enhancing India's strategic capabilities.
- In 2023, the U.S. approved the transfer of advanced technologies, like GE's jet engine manufacturing, to India for co-production, strengthening India's military capacity to counter China along their shared border.

Connectivity Initiatives

- The EU-India partnership on connectivity, including the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), aims to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- IMEC seeks to enhance trade and infrastructure links between India, the Middle East, and Europe, providing an alternative to China's expansive connectivity projects.

Conclusion

- In conclusion, the West's pivot towards India is a strategic recalibration **aimed at mitigating overdependence** on China in both economic and geopolitical arenas.
- India's expanding manufacturing capabilities, demographic advantages, digital infrastructure, and democratic governance make it a credible alternative in global supply chains.
- Simultaneously, growing strategic cooperation through initiatives like the Quad, IPEF, and bilateral defense agreements underscores **India's rising role as a key partner in countering China's assertiveness**.

18) Critically analyse India's evolving diplomatic, economic and strategic relations with the Central Asian Republics (CARs) highlighting their increasing significance in regional and global geopolitics.

(10 Marks, 150 Words)

Introduction

- India's relationship with the Central Asian Republics (CARs) – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan – has grown significantly in recent years, driven by shared interests in energy, security, and regional stability.
- As the CARs sit at the crossroads of Eurasia, their geopolitical importance has surged, and India is keen to deepen ties to counterbalance regional powers like China and enhance its own strategic reach.

Body of Answer- DES Dimensions

- Diplomatic
- Economic
- Strategic

Diplomatic Dimension

- India has ramped up its diplomatic outreach to the CARs, moving beyond historical Silk Road connections to a more proactive stance under its **"Connect Central Asia" policy launched in 2012**.
- High-level visits have set the tone – Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2015 tour of all five CARs was a landmark, **followed by the first India-Central Asia Summit in 2022, where leaders committed to regular dialogues**.
- The India-Central Asia Dialogue, with its latest meeting in 2024, has become a key platform for discussing trade, security, and connectivity.
- Cultural diplomacy also plays a role, with initiatives like the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) promoting exchanges through yoga, language programs, and academic ties, such as the Centre for Indian Studies in Kyrgyzstan's Osh State University.
- The CARs value India's non-hegemonic approach, as seen in their support for India's bid for a permanent UN Security Council seat.
- However, India's diplomatic momentum has been inconsistent, with follow-through on agreements often lagging due to bureaucratic hurdles and limited on-ground presence compared to China or Russia.

Economic Dimension

- Economically, India's engagement with the CARs is growing but remains modest.
- Bilateral trade was around \$3 billion in 2023, dwarfed by China's \$89.4 billion trade with the region.
- Key sectors include energy, pharmaceuticals, and IT.

- Kazakhstan, for instance, supplies **uranium for India's nuclear energy needs**, while Indian companies are investing in Uzbek textile and pharmaceutical industries.
- India's \$1 billion line of credit for CAR development projects, announced in 2022, signals intent to boost economic ties, with projects like IT parks in Uzbekistan showing early promise.

Economic Dimension- Connectivity

- India's investment in Iran's Chabahar Port and its push for the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) aim to bypass Pakistan and link India to Central Asia via Iran.
- The TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline, **though stalled by Afghanistan's instability**, remains a long-term goal for energy security.

Strategic Dimension

Strategic Dimension- Afghanistan

- Strategically, India sees the CARs as **vital for regional security**, especially post the Taliban's 2021 takeover of Afghanistan.
- The region's proximity to Afghanistan makes it a buffer **against terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking – threats that directly impact India**, particularly in Kashmir.
- India's military base in Tajikistan's Farkhor, one of its few overseas bases, underscores its commitment to regional security.
- Joint exercises like Dustlik with Uzbekistan and KAZIND with Kazakhstan focus on counterterrorism, enhancing India's defense ties.

Strategic Dimension- SCO

- India's role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), where it became a full member in 2017, allows it to collaborate with CARs on regional stability and counterterrorism.
- The SCO's focus on transnational threats aligns with India's interests, though navigating the China-Russia dynamic within the group is tricky.
- India also seeks to counter China's growing influence in the CARs, where **Beijing's BRI projects** and energy deals dominate.
- For instance, India's push for Chabahar and INSTC offers an **alternative to China's BRI**, appealing to CARs wary of Chinese debt traps.

Deeper Ties with CAR

- Securing energy resources
- Countering China and Pakistan,
- Expanding influence in Eurasia.

Challenges

- China's economic clout and Russia's historical security ties, through frameworks like the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), **overshadow India's efforts**.
- Afghanistan's instability further complicates India's plans, as seen in delays to the TAPI pipeline.

- **Political volatility in the CARs** and India's own connectivity challenges, due to hostile neighbors like Pakistan, add to the hurdles.

Way Forward

- Economically, trade volumes need a boost, requiring streamlined logistics and more competitive offerings compared to China's BRI.
- Diplomatically, **India must sustain high-level engagements** and deliver on commitments to build trust.
- Strategically, navigating great power rivalries – especially between Russia, China, and the U.S. – **while maintaining strategic autonomy is critical.**
- India's limited historical presence in the region, compared to Russia or China, also demands **more aggressive soft power outreach**, like easing visa rules for CAR citizens to foster people-to-people ties.

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19) "Terrorism has become a significant threat to global peace and security." Evaluate the effectiveness of the United Nations Security Council's Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC) and its associated bodies in addressing and mitigating this threat at the international level.

(15 Marks, 250 Words)

Introduction- Discuss about the Organization

- The United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) was established by UNSC Resolution 1373 in September 2001, following the 9/11 attacks, to strengthen global efforts against terrorism.
- Comprising all 15 UNSC members, the **CTC monitors and supports member states in implementing counter-terrorism measures**, such as criminalizing terrorist acts, freezing terrorist assets, and enhancing border security.
- It works through its **Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)**, which conducts country assessments, facilitates technical assistance, and promotes international cooperation.
- The CTC plays a critical role in coordinating global responses to terrorism, emphasizing prevention, capacity-building, and adherence to international law, while addressing evolving threats like online radicalization and terrorist financing.

Introduction- Definition of Terrorism

- As per UNSC Resolution 1566, Terrorism has Three Key Elements
- **Criminal acts:** Terrorism involves illegal actions, such as violence against civilians or hostage-taking.
- **Intent:** The purpose is to cause death, injury, or widespread fear.
- **Political or coercive motive:** The aim is to intimidate populations or pressure governments/international organizations.

Terrorism as a threat To Global Peace & Security

Terrorism as Threat to Global Peace

- Terrorism thrives in regions with ongoing conflicts or weak state structures, where groups exploit instability to establish strongholds, recruit fighters, and launch attacks.
- Over 90% of terrorist attacks and 98% of terrorism deaths in 2023 occurred in conflict zones, **with the Sahel region in sub-Saharan Africa** accounting for over half of global terrorism deaths.
- Terrorist groups have increasingly harnessed advanced technologies, **including encrypted communication, social media**, and artificial intelligence, to radicalize, recruit, and coordinate attacks.
- This has **made terrorism more decentralized**, unpredictable, and global in reach.



- Terrorism is fueled by geopolitical tensions and regional conflicts, which **create ripple effects that destabilize neighboring countries** and heighten global insecurity.
- Major events, such as the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel, have had far-reaching consequences.
- Terrorism's disproportionate psychological impact—designed to instill fear and disrupt social cohesion—amplifies its threat to global stability.
- Even though armed conflict and homicide cause more deaths, terrorism's ability to traumatize societies makes it uniquely destabilizing.

Body of Answer- Evaluation of Efforts by UNCTC & Associated Bodies

1. Global Framework For Counter Terrorism

- The CTC has established a robust normative framework through Resolution 1373, which **mandates states to criminalize terrorism, freeze terrorist assets, prevent safe havens, and enhance border security.**
- This legally binding resolution has driven 193 member states to align domestic laws with international standards, creating a unified approach to counter-terrorism.
- The CTC's facilitation of anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-financing of terrorism (CFT) **measures** led to 120 countries strengthening financial oversight by 2023, disrupting funding networks for groups like ISIS, **which saw a 30% reduction in illicit financial flows in the Middle East**

2. Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance

- The CTED, established in 2004 under Resolution 1535, conducts country visits and gap analyses to assess compliance with Resolution 1373 and recommend tailored solutions.
- It has facilitated technical assistance in areas like **border management, law enforcement training, and judicial capacity.**

3. International Cooperation

- The CTC promotes collaboration through partnerships with organizations like Interpol, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and regional bodies such as the African Union.
- It has **fostered intelligence-sharing networks**, crucial for tracking transnational threats.
- The CTC's coordination with Interpol led to the arrest of 12 IS-K operatives planning attacks in Central Asia, **following enhanced information-sharing protocols post the 2024 Syria regime change, which destabilized regional security.**

4. Adapting to Emerging Threats

- CTED's 2023 Global Research Network report on online radicalization prompted 50 member states to adopt stricter regulations on encrypted platforms by 2024, reducing ISIS propaganda reach by 25% on platforms like Telegram, as noted in UN reports.

5. Human Rights & Rule of Law

- The CTC integrates human rights into its framework, **ensuring counter-terrorism measures comply with international law**, a critical aspect to avoid alienating communities and fuelling radicalization.
- CTED's collaboration with Nigeria ensured counter-terrorism operations against Boko Haram incorporated community engagement, **reducing civilian casualties by 10% in 2024 compared to 2022, fostering local trust.**

Limitations & Challenges

1. Lack of Universal Definition on Terrorism

- The absence of a globally agreed-upon definition of terrorism, due to **disagreements over state-sponsored acts and liberation movements**, limits the CTC's ability to uniformly enforce measures. This creates loopholes exploited by some states to shield certain groups.
- China's veto of a UNSC proposal by India and the U.S. to designate Lashkar-e-Taiba's Sajid Mir as a global terrorist highlighted how geopolitical rivalries hinder CTC sanctions, allowing perpetrators of the 2008 Mumbai attacks to evade justice.

2. Resource Crunch

- Many developing nations, particularly in Africa, lack the resources to fully implement Resolution 1373's mandates.
- **A 2023 CTED report noted that 80 countries struggled with inadequate funding for counter-terrorism infrastructure, undermining global efforts.**
- In the Sahel, despite CTC assistance, Burkina Faso's terrorism deaths rose by 68% in 2023 **due to insufficient law enforcement** capacity and reliance on ineffective mercenary groups like Wagner, which exacerbated local grievances.

3. Geopolitical Division within UNSC

- Permanent UNSC members' conflicting interests – particularly between the U.S., Russia, and China – often stall decisive action.
- Veto powers limit sanctions or interventions against state-backed terrorism or groups aligned with certain members' interests.
- Example- Russia's resistance to CTC-led investigations into Syria's HTS, post-Assad collapse in 2024, delayed coordinated responses to jihadist splinter groups, risking regional destabilization.

4. Overreliance on State Compliance

- The CTC relies on states to self-report and implement measures, which can lead to uneven enforcement. Some countries prioritize domestic politics over global commitments, undermining effectiveness.
- Example (2023): Pakistan's inconsistent compliance with FATF and CTC recommendations allowed safe havens for groups like Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), contributing to a 20% rise in TTP attacks in 2023, as noted in UNSC reports.

Conclusion

- The CTC's effectiveness is evident in its role as a **global coordinator, reducing terrorism deaths in regions like Iraq** (down 99% since 2007) and fostering frameworks that disrupted groups like ISIS, which saw a 20% decline in global attacks from 2022 to 2024.
- Its partnerships with regional organizations **have strengthened responses in high-risk areas like the Sahel and Central Asia.**
- However, its impact is curtailed by geopolitical divisions, resource constraints, and the lack of a terrorism definition, which complicates sanctions and prosecutions.

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20) Discuss the geopolitical and geostrategic importance of Maldives for India with a focus on global trade and energy flows. Further also discuss how this relationship affects India's maritime security and regional stability amidst international competition? (15 Marks, 250 Words)

Introduction- Strategic Location

- The Maldives is a **geostrategic linchpin for India**, critical for securing global trade routes, energy flows, and regional influence in the Indian Ocean.
- Its proximity to key shipping lanes and choke points enhances **India's ability to monitor and protect the \$10 trillion trade and 70% of its energy** imports passing through the region.
- The Maldives' 26 atolls, stretching across 90,000 square kilometers of the Indian Ocean, lie along major shipping **routes connecting Asia, the Middle East, and Europe**.
- This location makes it a linchpin for India's maritime strategy and regional dominance in South Asia.
- Located just 70 nautical miles from India's Lakshadweep Islands and 300 nautical miles from the Indian mainland, **the Maldives is within India's immediate maritime neighborhood**.
- This proximity enhances India's ability to project power and monitor activities in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR), a critical theater for global trade**.

Body of Answer- Geopolitical Aspect

- The Maldives has become a battleground for India-China competition, **with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) seeking** to expand its footprint through infrastructure investments.
- India's **"Neighbourhood First"** policy and **Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative** emphasize deepening ties with the Maldives to counter **China's "String of Pearls" strategy**, which aims to encircle India with strategic ports.
- **Choke Point Control**: The Maldives is near key choke points like the Eight Degree Channel and the One-and-a-Half Degree Channel, which are vital for ships transiting between the Persian Gulf, East Asia, and Europe
- **Piracy and Security Threats**: The Maldives' location makes it a potential hub for countering piracy, smuggling, and illegal fishing, which threaten global trade routes.
- **Strategic Outpost**: India's defense agreements, including the 2024 renewal of military cooperation, allow access to Maldivian ports and airfields, enabling India to monitor and respond to threats.
- The establishment of a coastal radar network, funded by India, enhances real-time tracking of vessels, critical for securing trade routes.
- **China's Energy Ambitions**: China's investments in Maldivian infrastructure, such as the \$200 million Sinamale Bridge, raise concerns about potential dual-use facilities that could support Chinese naval operations.
- India counters this through projects like the **\$500 million Greater Male Connectivity Project**, funded in 2023, to maintain economic leverage and secure energy routes.

- **Renewable Energy Potential:** The Maldives' vast EEZ offers potential for offshore wind and solar projects, aligning with India's renewable energy goals.
- **Collaborative initiatives,** like India's support for solar plants in Addu Atoll in 2024, **strengthen energy ties** while reducing reliance on imported fossil fuels.

Conclusion- Challenges & Geopolitical Tensions

- **China's Economic Inroads:** China's debt-driven investments have swayed Maldivian governments, as seen during the 2013-2018 period under President Yameen, when Chinese loans funded major projects.
- The 2023 election of President Muizzu, initially critical of India's military presence, raised concerns, though his 2024 visit to New Delhi signaled a pragmatic return to India-centric policies
- **Domestic Instability:** The Maldives' political volatility, marked by frequent government changes, complicates India's efforts to secure consistent partnerships. Anti-India sentiments, fueled by campaigns like "India Out" in 2023, challenge bilateral ties.
- **Climate Vulnerability:** Rising sea levels threaten the Maldives' low-lying islands, potentially disrupting its strategic utility. India's \$100 million aid for climate resilience in 2024 underscores the need to protect this geostrategic asset.

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