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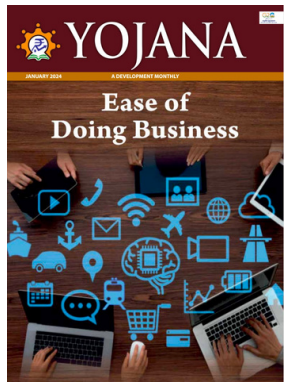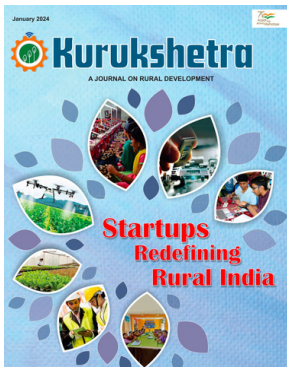
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Contents

1) Redefining Rural Landscapes
(GS3: Inclusive Growth and issues arising from it)

Context

- Startup ecosystem of India has witnessed remarkable growth in recent years, with a surge in innovative ventures addressing diverse challenges. **India is the 3rd largest startup ecosystem** in the world, with **more than 1 lakh registered startups**.
- Traditionally centered in urban hubs, the startup culture is now permeating the hinterlands, ushering in a new era of innovation and economic transformation.
- This phenomenon reflects a **broader trend of decentralisation and inclusivity**, where startups are leveraging technology to **bridge the rural-urban divide.**

Measures by Government to support Rural Entrepreneurs

1. Atal Community Innovation Centres:

- Atal Community Innovation Centres (under **Atal Innovation Mission**) – AIM's ACIC initiative was launched in 2020, with the **objective of creating community innovation centres for rural entrepreneurs.**
- The initiative **encourages grassroots innovation and directly supports community-based entrepreneurs** by establishing enabling infrastructure in Academic Institutions and NGOs.

2. Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme:

- The **Ministry of Rural Development** is implementing the Startup Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) as a sub-scheme under the **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)** with the objective of **helping the rural poor to set-up enterprises** at the village level in non-agricultural sectors.

3. Skill India Mission:

- Under this mission, the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** has been delivering skills through various schemes viz. the **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)** and the **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)**, among others, majorly to rural youths across the country.
- Third party evaluations of these schemes have shown that **70.5% of PMKVY 2.0 beneficiaries (2016-20) received placement** in their desired skill sector.

4. ASPIRE:

- The **Scheme For Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industries & Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE)** implemented by the **Ministry of MSME** aims to **provide training and incubation support to prospective entrepreneurs in the agro-rural sector** through **Livelihood Business Incubators (LBIs).**

Challenges for Rural Startups

1. Connectivity with suppliers in urban areas
2. Access to reliable and affordable financing
3. Lack of support system and ecosystem in rural India
4. Absence/lack of mentorship, networking opportunities, and incubation centres
5. Difficulty in finding early adopters in rural areas
6. Limited funding mechanism in rural areas

Conclusion

- Migration of startups from rural areas/Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities to innovation hubs is an inevitable phenomenon, and while it cannot be

entirely prevented, the **key lies in establishing an enabling innovation ecosystem in rural areas.**

- This ecosystem is crucial for sustaining early-stage challenges and overcoming the valleys of death that startups often face.
- Fostering an environment that supports and nurtures the growth of startups, particularly in rural areas, becomes imperative for realising the **USD 10 Trillion milestone by the year 2030.**

2) Government e-Marketplace: Leading the Digital Wave

(GS2: Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency and Accountability, E-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential)

Context

- In India, **public procurement** amounts to nearly **20-25% of GDP.** This means that a significant amount of taxpayers' money is directed towards making purchases of public goods and services that constitute the lifeblood of government programmes and services.
- Government e-Marketplace (GeM) was set up in **2016** as a **Special Purpose Vehicle** under **Section 8 of the Companies Act**, within the ambit of the **Department of Commerce.**
- GeM is a world-class, robust digital portal that **facilitates end-to-end procurement of goods and services** by various Central and State Government departments, organisations, and allied public sector undertakings (PSUs).
- It provides a **paperless, cashless, and contactless ecosystem** for government buyers to directly purchase products and services from pan-India sellers and service

providers through a unified online infrastructure.

- Since its inception, GeM has enabled **more than INR 60,000 crore of public savings.**

Need for a Digital Solution for Public Procurement

- Government procurement used to be **opaque, time-consuming, cumbersome, and prone to corruption and cartelisation.**
- Buyers were forced to purchase substandard goods at high, non-negotiable rates from unscrupulous suppliers. Potential sellers had to run from pillar to post, completely at the mercy of the facilitating agency, to get empaneled and then to get timely payments.
- The new system was envisioned to replace age-old manual processes that were riddled with inefficiencies and corruption.

Benefits of GeM

- Through digitalisation of processes, GeM has led to **higher process efficiencies, information sharing, improved transparency, reduced process cycle times, and a higher level of trust** among bidders. This, in turn, has resulted in **greater competition and higher savings.**
- Its inclusive approach has created an open and diverse public procurement marketplace that provides a **level playing field** to startups, MSMEs, women entrepreneurs, artisans, and craftsmen, allowing them to participate in government tenders without any barriers, thus **ensuring the Ease of Doing Business with the government.**

Growth Trajectory

- GeM is a category-driven e-marketplace that has a robust listing of more than 11,600 product categories and 300+ service categories.

- In the first year, GeM recorded a total Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) of ~INR 420 crore. In the following years, transactions conducted through GeM (in terms of order value) grew from around INR 38,000 crore in FY 20-21 to **INR 1 lakh crore in FY 21-22.**
- In **FY 22-23**, GeM registered an **88% growth**, surpassing a milestone of **INR 2 lakh crore** worth of Gross Merchandise Value (GMV).

Special Features of GeM

- **Trust-based Rating System:** GeM provides a rating system that continuously evaluates performance based on weighted and defined parameters. GeM has the **provision of rating both the buyers and the sellers**, enabling informed decision-making.
- **AL-ML-Based Decision Support:** GeM is in the process of implementing AI/ML-based advanced analytics on GeM, which will help GeM reduce anomalies and frauds. These AI-based models will provide real-time or near-real-time feedback on various transactions happening on GeM, and will help a buyer make informed decisions as well as prevent anomalous transactions.
- **GeM Sahay:** In a bid to address credit access challenges faced by MSMEs and startups, GeM has rolled out GeM Sahay, a **mobile application** that provides **frictionless financing for MSEs and startups**, allowing them to obtain a loan at the point of order acceptance on the GeM platform. The platform allows all lenders, duly regulated by the Reserve Bank of India, to participate and provide loans to GeM sellers.

Way Forward

- In a short span, GeM's buyer-seller ecosystem and its operations are twice as large as Amazon India and Flipkart combined.
- With improved functionalities, the platform is committed to adapting new-age technologies to transform public procurement with an aim to further enhance user experience, improve transparency, and induce greater inclusivity in public procurement process.

3) Global Nuclear Order under strain

(GS2: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests)

Context:

- Global Nuclear Order (GNO) is facing challenging issues from different players and different parts of the world.

Definition:

- The term "Global Nuclear Order" refers to a **set of treaties, agreements, and practices aimed at preventing nuclear proliferation, reducing the risk of nuclear war, and managing the consequences of nuclear weapons use.**
- Additionally, this order facilitates international utilisation of nuclear energy for civilian purposes like power production.
- The **Cuban Missile Crisis** compelled the USA and USSR to create a mechanism amongst nuclear powers which can help in defusing tensions from escalating to the nuclear level.

Components of GNO:

a. Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty:

- The U.S. and the U.S.S.R. initiated multilateral negotiations in 1965 on a treaty to curb the spread of

nuclear weapons and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) opened for signature.

- The NPT aims to:
  - o **Stop the spread of nuclear weapons:** Non-nuclear states promise not to acquire them, while nuclear states limit sharing nuclear technology.
  - o **Promote peaceful nuclear energy:** All states have equal access to nuclear technology for peaceful uses like medicine and power generation.
  - o **Pursue nuclear disarmament:** Nuclear states pledge to work towards reducing their arsenals and ultimately eliminating them.
- It came into existence in **1975.** Today, it is widely described as the cornerstone of the global nuclear order with **191 adherents.**

b. **Nuclear Suppliers Group:**

- The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a club of **48 countries** with nuclear technology that aims to:
  - o Control exports of materials, equipment, and technology that could be used to build nuclear weapons.
  - o While restricting sensitive items, it seeks to allow peaceful nuclear cooperation for purposes like energy.

c. **Anti Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty:**

- The treaty barred **the USA and the USSR (**now **Russia)** from deploying nationwide defences against strategic ballistic missiles.
- In the treaty preamble, the two sides asserted that effective limits on anti-missile systems would be a "substantial factor in curbing the race in strategic offensive arms."
- The U.S. withdrawal took effect in 2002, and the treaty is **no longer in force.**

d. **The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty:**

- The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty required the **United States and the Soviet Union** to **eliminate all of their nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometres.**
- The treaty marked the first time the superpowers had agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals, eliminate an entire category of nuclear weapons, and employ extensive on-site inspections for verification.
- On Aug. 2, 2019, the United States formally withdrew from the INF Treaty.

e. **New START treaty:**

- The New START Treaty entered into force on February 5, 2011.
- Under the treaty, the **United States and the Russian Federation** had seven years to meet the treaty's central limits on strategic offensive arms (by February 5, 2018) and are then obligated to maintain those limits for as long as the treaty remains in force.
- Strategic offensive arms includes Ballistic Missiles and other nuclear weapon delivery systems.
- This treaty is valid until 2026.

Success of GNO:

- The taboo against nuclear weapons has been held since 1945. It ensured that humanity has survived 75 years of the nuclear age without blowing itself up.
- Despite dire predictions of more than 20 countries possessing nuclear weapons by the 1970s, (there were five in 1968 – the U.S.,

U.S.S.R., U.K., France, and China), **only four countries have since gone nuclear, i.e., India, Israel, North Korea, and Pakistan.**

- Even after the Cold War ended, non-proliferation remained a shared objective and Moscow and Washington cooperated to ensure that Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan that hosted Soviet nuclear weapons and possessed some capabilities, were denuclearised.

India and GNO:

- **India had chosen not to sign the NPT** as it believes the treaty to be discriminatory: favored existing nuclear powers while restricting others.
- In 1974, India stunned the world by conducting an underground peaceful nuclear explosive, or PNE. In response to India's action, the Nuclear Suppliers Group came into force.
- From that point to getting a **waiver from the NSG** (2008) to start nuclear trade with the NPT countries, India has built an image of credible nuclear power.
- India's moratorium on nuclear testing and its no-first-use policy helped in building this image.

New Challenges to the GNO:

- The U.S. faces an **assertive China,** determined to regain influence, regionally and globally. In the absence of treaties like ABM and INF, Chinese nuclear arsenal is growing to challenge US hegemony.
- **Withdrawal of USA from ABM and INF** has stopped the mutual verification process to ensure compliance of the treaties.
- **Conflict in Ukraine** has made the relations between Russia and Western Countries sour and revived nuclear concerns.

- Nuclear proliferation by treaties like **AUKUS (Australia-UK-US)**, which provides nuclear capabilities to non-nuclear nations like Australia.
- During the Cold War, the U.S.'s nuclear umbrella tied its European allies closer. Today, domestic compulsions are turning the U.S. inwards, raising questions in the minds of its allies about its 'extended deterrence' guarantees.
- Aggression by China has created the desire of nations like Taiwan, South Korea to develop nuclear capabilities and rise of defence expenditure in Japan.

Way Forward:

- **Revitalise Arms Control Agreements:**
  - Prioritise extensions of crucial treaties like New START and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.
  - **Negotiate new agreements among capable nations:** Pursue limitations on emerging military technologies like hypersonic weapons and cyber capabilities.
  - **Strengthen verification and transparency:** Enhance monitoring regimes and information sharing to build trust and reduce suspicion.
- **Address Non-Proliferation Concerns:**
  - **Universalize the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT):** Address the concerns of non members to encourage remaining states like North Korea and Israel to join and comply with its terms.
  - **Strengthen safeguards and export controls:** Enhance

the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) frameworks to prevent nuclear materials and technology from falling into the wrong hands.
- o **Address regional tensions:** Foster dialogue and confidence-building measures in hot spots like South Asia, East Asia and Eastern Europe.
- **Advance Nuclear Disarmament:**
  - o **Move beyond incremental steps:** Shift focus from small reductions to concrete steps towards significant disarmament commitments.
  - o **Engage major nuclear powers:** Encourage US-Russia leadership and involve other key players like China and India in disarmament discussions.
  - o **Explore multilateral initiatives:** Seek collaborative efforts like "nuclear weapon-free zones" and negative security guarantees.
- **Build Trust and Cooperation:**
  - o **Maintain regular dialogue:** Facilitate regular communication and diplomatic channels between nuclear and non-nuclear states.
  - o **Promote transparency and openness:** Encourage states to share information about their nuclear programs and policies to reduce ambiguity.
  - o **Address humanitarian concerns:** Work to mitigate the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, including the risks of accidental detonation and

long-term environmental harms.
- **Adapt to New Challenges:**
  - o **Consider emerging technologies:** Address the proliferation risks and security implications of artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and other advanced technologies.
  - o **Promote non-state actor engagement:** Develop strategies to prevent non-state actors from acquiring and using nuclear materials.
  - o **Foster public awareness and engagement:** Educate the public about the dangers of nuclear weapons and build support for global nuclear security efforts.

Conclusion
- Global Nuclear Order is a complex phenomenon involving multiple nations and factors. Building it back requires sustained commitment and cooperation from all stakeholders.

4) Issues with the Office of Governor
(GS2: Functions and Responsibilities of the Union and the States, Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Devolution of Powers and Finances up to Local Levels and Challenges Therein)
Context:
- In recent years, Governors of different states are often in the news for conflicts with the State Council of Ministers (CoM). In light of these conflicts, understanding the legal consequences and identifying possible solutions to resolve these conflicts is crucial.
Recent Issues:

- **Governors refusing to give timely assent** for the bills sent by the State Legislatures.
- Governors send many bills passed in the State Legislature for **Presidential assent**, even in bills which do not usually require President's assent.
- Governors taking up **inspections** of State Government offices and **issuing orders** without the advice of the CoM in violation of constitutional legitimacy (**Article 163**).

Case Laws associated with issues in Governor's office:

- In *Rameshwar Prasad vs. Union of India (2006),* after finding that the Governor abused power in recommending Presidential rule in Bihar, the Supreme Court said that the **motivated and whimsical conduct of the Governor is amenable to judicial review.** The Court said that **"right persons"** should be chosen as Governors for maintaining "the sanctity of the post".
- In *NCT of Delhi vs. Union of India (2018)*, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court emphasised the need to **identify the "moral values of the Constitution" based on a notion of "constitutional culture".** It said that "constitutional morality places responsibilities and duties on individuals who occupy constitutional institutions and offices". Such **Constitutional morality should be adhered to by the Governor.**

Solutions to resolve issues:

- The **Sarkaria Commission Report** (1988) recommended that the "Governor should be a detached figure and not too intimately connected with the local politics of the State".

- The Justice **M.M. Punchhi Commission report** (2010) said that "to be able to discharge the constitutional obligations fairly and impartially, the Governor should not be burdened with positions and powers which are not envisaged by the Constitution."
- Amendment to **Article 155** of the Constitution regarding the appointment of Governor,
    - To consult the Chief Minister in the appointment of the Governor.
    - To create an independent body for selecting the Governor with a reasonably significant role for the Chief Justice of India.
    - To legally prohibit further rehabilitation of Governors in any official capacity.

Conclusion

- Role of Governor is to provide the necessary link between the Central and State governments. The Governor's office should be made to function within the Constitution through necessary amendments and safeguards.

5) India's Debt Burden-Costs and Concerns

(GS3: Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment)

Context:

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of India's debts.

Current Debt Situation:

- The **Union government's debt** was **₹155.6 trillion, or 57.1% of GDP**, at the end of March 2023 and the **debt of State governments was about 28% of GDP.**
- As stated by the Finance Ministry, **India's public debt-to-GDP ratio**

has barely increased from 81% in 2005-06 to **84% in 2021-22,** and is back to **81% in 2022-23.**

- This level of debt is **far higher than the levels specified by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBMA).**
- The 2018 amendment to the Union government's FRBMA specified **debt-GDP targets for the Centre, States and their combined accounts at 40%, 20% and 60%, respectively.**

Challenges due to high levels of Debt:

- The weight of debt can act as a **drag on development** due to,
  - **Limited access to financing** due to the low sovereign ratings which scares away investors.
  - **Rising borrowing costs** also due to sovereign ratings as interest rates has to be increased to attract risk taking investors.
  - **Currency devaluations** which makes import of essential goods costly and exports less competitive.
  - **Limited employment generation** as growth of the economy stagnates due to the above mentioned problems.
  - **Reduced social spending:** To manage debt, the government may be forced to cut spending on critical social programs like healthcare and education, hindering human development.

Way Forward:

- **Fiscal consolidation** measures to reduce the budget deficit and bring down debt levels over time. This may involve a combination of increased tax revenue, spending cuts, and reforms to improve fiscal efficiency.
- **Rationalisation of subsidies** can reduce burden on the public finances and at the same time ensures that the deserving people get Government support.
- **Debt restructuring** to use the cheaper sources of finances available at different situations.
- Addressing India's debt challenge requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach, in the long term, that balances fiscal responsibility with long-term economic growth and social development goals.

6) Indian Youth: Are they adequately skilled through Higher Education?

(GS2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources)

Context:

- According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey, the **unemployment rate among graduates is higher than in many other developing countries.** This situation calls for a discussion about the various reasons for this problem and few ways to address this problem.

Problems in Higher Education Sector:

- **Limited R&D Investment**: India's research and development (R&D) expenditure as a proportion of GDP is **only 0.7%.**
  - Higher education institutions are essentially knowledge institutions. This knowledge creation function is hindered due limited investments.
- **Limited participation of Private Sector:** In India, the public sector

accounts for some 70% of the total R&D expenditure and the private sector's contribution is relatively small. Private sector jobs in research are not growing.

- Concentration of public funding in research institutions like CSIR leading to limited funding for research in higher education institutes.

- **Lack of Job Creation:** The economy, particularly the manufacturing sector, is not creating enough jobs for educated graduates.

- **Inadequate regulation**: Massification of higher education led to a decline in quality, with many private universities becoming **"exam-giving institutions."**

  - State governments, the Central government and the University Grants Commission did not have the capacity to regulate them.

- **Skill Mismatch:** Higher education may not be aligning with the skills required by the job market.

- **Online Learning Losses:** Pandemic-induced online learning may have negatively impacted student learning and employability.

Solutions

- **Regulation and Funding:** Strengthen regulatory bodies to ensure quality standards in both public and private institutions. Increase public funding and promote private investment in higher education to improve infrastructure, faculty training, and resources.

- **Curriculum Reform:** Revamp curricula to be more relevant to industry needs and equip students with practical skills. Emphasise critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills.

- **Faculty Development:** Invest in ongoing faculty training and development programs to update skills, promote research, and improve teaching methodologies.

- **Industry-academia collaboration:** Create strong partnerships between universities and industries to co-design courses, conduct joint research, and provide internship opportunities.

- **Focus on STEM education:** Increase investment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education to meet the demands of the growing knowledge economy.

- **Entrepreneurship and Innovation:** Create programs and incubators to foster entrepreneurial spirit and support student startups in translating ideas into viable businesses.

- **Focus on Vocational Training:** Strengthen vocational training institutes and offer diverse skill-oriented programs to equip students for employment in non-traditional sectors.

- **Improve R&D ecosystem:** Increase public and private investment in research and development, encourage collaboration between universities and research institutions, and focus on translational research for practical applications.

- **Effective policy implementation:** Ensure clear and consistent implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) with adequate funding and resources.

- **Multi-stakeholder collaboration:** Involve government, educators, employers, students, and civil society in policy formulation and implementation.

- **Continuous monitoring and evaluation:** Regularly monitor

progress, evaluate policy effectiveness, and adapt approaches as needed.

Conclusion

- By implementing these solutions, India can create a higher education system that is accessible, relevant, and prepares graduates for success in the globalised world.

7) Trafficking of Women

(GS1: Role of Women and Women's Organization, Population and Associated Issues, Poverty and Developmental issues, Urbanization, their problems and their remedies)

Context:

- The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report for 2022 reveals that 40,725 women and 10,571 girls went missing from West Bengal that year, the highest numbers in the country.
- These alarming numbers raise the importance of understanding the various causes leading to women trafficking, solutions which can reduce trafficking and ways to rehabilitate the affected women.

Causes leading to trafficking of women:

Socioeconomic vulnerabilities:

- **Poverty**: Extreme poverty makes families and individuals susceptible to false promises of better opportunities, pushing them into the hands of traffickers.
- **Lack of education and awareness:** Limited access to education makes people vulnerable to misinformation and manipulation, hindering their ability to recognize and resist trafficking.
- **Unemployment and limited livelihood options:** Women with few economic opportunities are more likely to be lured by the prospect of work, even if it's deceitful.

- **Debt bondage:** Traffickers can exploit existing debt obligations, forcing families to sell their daughters or wives into bonded labor or even sex work.
- **Out migration of men** in search of work leaves women and children behind, creating unsupervised and susceptible targets.

Gender discrimination and inequality:

- **Patriarchal norms:** Gender inequality and female subordination create a society where women are seen as less valuable and vulnerable to exploitation.
- **Harmful traditional practices:** Practices like child marriage and sex-selective abortion create a skewed gender ratio, increasing demand for women and girls for trafficking.
- **Domestic violence and abuse:** Women fleeing violence at home may become targets for traffickers who promise escape but ultimately subject them to further abuse.

Other factors:

- **Armed conflict and migration:** Displacement and instability during conflict or natural disasters can leave women and girls particularly vulnerable to trafficking.
- **Weak law enforcement and corruption:** Lax implementation of anti-trafficking laws and corruption within law enforcement can embolden traffickers and hinder rescue efforts.
  - Immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act, 1956.
- **Demand for cheap labor and sex work:** The thriving demand for cheap labor and sex work, both domestically and internationally, fuels the trafficking industry.

Challenges in addressing the issue:

- **Police Inaction and Scepticism:** Lack of sensitivity among police

officers towards trafficking, often dismissing missing women cases as elopement.

- This leads to reluctance of filing FIRs under Sections 370 (forced labour and slavery) and 370A (exploitation of trafficked persons) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- **Trafficking Networks and Methods**: Highly organised and adaptable trafficking networks operate with impunity. They use all possible methods to continue their business.
- **Victim Reintegration and Support:** Stigma, fear of social ostracization and lack of comprehensive rehabilitation programs make it difficult for survivors to come forward and seek help.
- **Legal and Policy Gaps:** Weak implementation of existing anti-trafficking laws and loopholes in legislation.

Solutions to address the issue:

- **Strengthening law enforcement**: Training police, sensitising them to trafficking, and allocating adequate resources for investigation and rescue.
- **Empowering women:** Promoting education, livelihood opportunities, and awareness about their rights to reduce vulnerability.
- **Inclusion of Civil society** in the process of rescuing and rehabilitation of trafficked women. Work of **Katakhali Empowerment and Youth Association(KEYA)**, an NGO has been commendable in this direction.,
- **Disrupting trafficking networks:** Intelligence gathering, dismantling networks, and prosecuting traffickers effectively.

- **Supporting survivors:** Providing safe shelters, rehabilitation programs, and legal aid to help them reintegrate into society.
- **Strengthening legal and policy framework:** Enacting stringent anti-trafficking laws, streamlining enforcement, and allocating adequate resources for implementation.
- **International cooperation:** Collaborative efforts with neighbouring countries and global organisations to combat cross-border trafficking.

Conclusion

- A sustained and collaborative effort involving multiple stakeholders can help India effectively address the complex and enduring issue of women trafficking.

8) Structured Negotiations
(GS2: Separation of Powers between various organs Dispute Redressal Mechanisms and Institutions)
Context

- The increasing pendency, paperwork and red tape in Indian civil courts are already dissuading parties from using traditional dispute resolution methods.
- Such a situation provides room for **Structured Negotiations** through which defaulting parties can avoid the high costs and negative publicity associated with litigation, while complainants get a workable solution for their problem.

Definition:

- Structured negotiation is **a collaborative and solution-driven dispute resolution technique**. It typically involves inviting the defaulting service provider to the negotiation table and impressing upon them the benefits of complying with **social welfare legislations.**

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- While its utility pervades sectors, structured negotiation has been most effective in settling disability rights cases in the United States with organisations including Walmart, Bank of America, Houston's public transit agency, etc.

Benefits of structured negotiation:

- **Win-win situation:** It avoids the high costs and negative publicity of litigation for service providers, while helping people with disabilities achieve accessibility in the marketplace.
- **Efficiency:** It can be faster and less resource-intensive than traditional litigation methods.
- **Collaboration:** It encourages direct communication and collaboration between service providers and people with disabilities, leading to more effective solutions.

Challenges in India:

- **New concept in India:** The concept of structured negotiation is still relatively new in India and needs to be more widely understood.
- **Limited Priority of disability rights:** Businesses may not prioritise accessibility unless they see clear benefits or face legal consequences.
- **Qualified personnels** to take up alternate dispute resolution is **inadequate** in India.

Recommendations:

- **Pilot programs:** Implement pilot programs in specific sectors to demonstrate the effectiveness of structured negotiation in addressing accessibility issues.
- **Capacity building:** Train service providers and disability rights advocates on the principles and practices of structured negotiation.
- **Inclusion into current legislations and schemes:** Strengthen the legislations for

disability rights and ensure effective enforcement mechanisms. Eg: Sugamya Bharat campaign; the Rights of Persons with Disabilities act, 2016; Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rules, 2017.
- **Raise awareness:** Advocate for greater awareness about structured negotiation and its benefits for both businesses and people with disabilities.

Conclusion

- It's important to note that while structured negotiation can be a valuable tool, it should not be seen as a replacement for legal advocacy or enforcement of disability rights laws. Both approaches are necessary to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are protected.

9) Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and its implications on India

(GS3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment)

Context:

- The European Union (EU)'s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) policy intends to tax carbon-intensive products coming into the EU from 2026. There is a concern that this mechanism could have serious implications on the Indian Manufacturing sector.

Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism

- **Aim** is to **reduce EU greenhouse gas emissions by 55% (2030) compared to 1990 levels** and **prevent carbon leakage** (production shift to non-EU countries).
- **Mechanism:** Tax carbon-intensive imports (iron, steel, aluminium, etc.) based on embedded emissions.

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- **Phases:** Transitional (reporting, 2023-2025), Definitive (taxation, 2026+).
- **Carbon Leakage** is a strategy whereby carbon-intensive production by EU-based producers is moved to non-EU countries with lax environmental regulations.

Impacts on India:

- India will be one of the top 8 most affected countries as **27% of India's iron, steel, aluminium exports to EU (valued at $8.2 billion) is at risk.**
- Drop in exports can lead to other problems like,
  o Increase in unemployment.
  o Shrinking of Forex reserves.

Solutions Available to India:

- The first would be to **challenge the practice** as being violative of the common but differentiated responsibilities principle agreed upon under the **Paris Agreement.**
  o **India has already challenged** the CBAM before the **World Trade Organization** under the special and differential treatment provisions.
- Second, the EU could collect the **tax and return** the funds to such countries to invest in their green technologies.
- Third is to formulate its **own carbon taxation measures** that align with the principles of the Paris Agreement while simultaneously safeguarding its industries' interests.
  o In this direction, the Indian Parliament amended the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001,** to introduce the **Carbon Credit Trading System (CCTS).**
  o In India's mechanism, the obligatory CCTS model is also coupled with the

voluntary **market-based mechanism** called the **Green Credit Programme Rules**, notified by the Ministry of Environment in 2023.

Conclusion

- On the whole, CBAM poses significant challenges for Indian exports. Considering the fact that it comes to a definitive phase by 2026, it is imperative for India to swiftly negotiate the issue with the EU.

10) India-Maldives Relations
(GS2: India and its Neighborhood-Relations)
Context:

- India's relations with Maldives became strained after three junior ministers of the island nation's government made crude and disparaging remarks on social media about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Lakshadweep islands.
- Though Maldivian government distanced itself from the remarks, and President Mohamed Muizzu "suspended" the ministers, a social media campaign began in India to boycott Maldives. In such a situation, understanding the need for a maritime doctrine to manage India's strategic foothold in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Strategic significance of Maldives for India:

- **Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC):** Situated astride key shipping routes linking the Middle East with East Asia, the Maldives acts as a **chokepoint for trade**, making it **strategically valuable** for controlling maritime traffic and ensuring the security of India's vital energy imports.
- **Indian Ocean Security:** The Maldives' proximity to India's

southern coast allows it to play a crucial role in monitoring activities in the Indian Ocean, including potential threats from piracy, terrorism, and illegal activities. A stable and friendly Maldives enhances India's maritime security posture.

- **China's Presence:** China's growing economic and military presence in the Indian Ocean is a concern for India. Maintaining close ties with the Maldives helps India counter China's influence and prevent it from establishing a foothold in the region.
- **Regional Stability:** A politically stable Maldives, with India as a close partner, contributes to overall regional stability in the Indian Ocean. This stability is crucial for India's economic prosperity and security interests.

Challenges in the relationship:

- **Internal Political situation** in Maldives revolves between parties with pro-Indian and anti-Indian stances. In the 2023 elections, current President Mohamed Muizzu contested the elections with the "India Out" campaign.
- **Influence of China** through lavish economic aids for infrastructure development projects tourist inflows.
- **High handedness** of the Indian administration in portraying its cultural and economic dominance. Maldives and all other Indian neighbours are averse to such big brotherly attitudes.
- **Radical religious segments** in both the countries are increasing the tension through social media campaigns.

Need of the Hour:

- **Dialogue on an equal basis** between the nations can tone down empty rhetoric and help in

beneficial cooperation between the neighbours.
- **Work on Common interests** and problems like economic development, maritime security, tourism development, wat er management, etc.
- **Respect for sovereignty** in the relation between the nations.
- **Maritime Diplomacy** as a vital instrument of conventional diplomacy with the help of the Indian Navy and its assets.
- **Vision of SAGAR** (Security And Growth for All in the Region) should be amplified in a clear manner. This can provide a proper direction to India's relations with Maldives.

Conclusion

- Maintenance of friendly relations is beneficial to both India and Maldives. Addressing the short term challenges can bear fruits in the long term.

11) Defection and the role of Speaker

(GS2: Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these)

Context:

- The Speaker of Maharashtra State Legislature recognised the Shinde faction of Shiv Sena party as the real Shiv Sena party recently. These actions followed instructions of the Supreme Court but were not in consonance with those instructions.

Defection and Anti Defection Law:

- Defection involves a politician leaving one political party to join another, often with significant implications for power dynamics and governance.
- In **1985**, the Parliament through the **52nd amendment act** amended the Constitution **(Articles 101, 102, 190, 191)** to include defection

as a ground for disqualification of the legislators.

- The Anti Defection law (ADL) details the process of disqualification to be followed in case of a defection. It explains the **role of the Presiding officers** in taking up defection complaints.
- Any question regarding disqualification arising out of defection is to be decided by the Presiding officer of the House.
- Originally, the act provided that the decision of the presiding officer is final and cannot be questioned in any court. However, in the **Kihoto Hollohan case (1993),** the Supreme Court declared this provision as unconstitutional.
- The Supreme Court held that the presiding officer, while deciding a question under the Tenth Schedule, functioned as a **tribunal**. Hence, the Speaker's decision is **subject to judicial review.**

Problems with the role of Presiding Officers:

- **Potential for Bias:** The Speaker is often a member of the ruling party, raising concerns about impartiality when deciding defection cases involving the same party. This partisan affiliation can create the impression of a conflict of interest, where the Speaker might favour their own party over others.
- **Lack of Transparency:** The process of deciding defection cases is often opaque, with limited access to evidence and reasoning behind the Speaker's decision.
- **Delays and Uncertainties:** Anti Defection law has not given a specific timeframe for the Speaker to decide defection cases, leading to prolonged delays and uncertainty, which can hinder political stability and governance.

- **Discretionary use of disqualification powers** in the defection process. Disqualification was done in the case of 18 legislators in Tamil Nadu for their defection from AIADMK party but the Speaker did not disqualify legislators belonging to Uddav Thackeray faction of Shiv Sena party in Maharashtra.
- **Limited role of the Judiciary** in the use of ADL. In the case of Maharashtra, the Supreme Court could give only instructions to the Speaker but the Speaker had selectively used the instructions which favour his faction of the party.

Steps to control the role of Speaker:

- **Strengthening the Legislation** through the amendment of ADL to address the gaps.
  - **Time-Bound Decisions:** Setting a firm timeframe for the Speaker to decide defection cases, possibly with an extension mechanism under exceptional circumstances, can prevent delays and expedite the process.
  - **Appeals Process:** Streamlining the appeals process against the Speaker's decision through fast-track procedures in the courts can reduce delays and provide timely judicial redress.
  - **Clear Procedures:** Establishing clear and well-defined procedures for evidence presentation, witness examination, and arguments in defection cases can ensure efficiency and fairness.
  - **Judicial Review Enhancement:** Expanding

the scope of judicial review to allow courts to examine not only procedural flaws but also the substance of the Speaker's decision can act as a check on arbitrary use of power.

- o **Independent Tribunal:** Establishing an independent Anti-Defection Tribunal, composed of non-partisan legal experts, would remove the Speaker's direct involvement and address concerns about political influence.
- **Code of Conduct:** Implementing a strict and transparent code of conduct for the Speaker, emphasising non-partisanship and objective decision-making, could promote greater accountability and fairness.
- **Transparency Measures:** Enhancing transparency in the defection case process, such as publicly accessible records, clear criteria for decision-making, and published judgments, would build trust and prevent suspicion of bias.
- **Legislative Committee:** Exploring alternative models, such as a dedicated committee composed of representatives from various parties, for preliminary investigation and recommendations in defection cases, could reduce the Speaker's direct burden and foster broader consensus.

Conclusion

- Political defections to form Governments at state level have increased manifold in recent years. The time is ripe to update the Anti Defection Law.

12) Policing in India- Issues and Reforms

(GS3: Various Security Forces and Agencies and their Mandate)

Context:

- The three day conference in Jaipur of police officers (Director General of Police level) from across India, was a kind of stocktaking exercise as well as learning experience, as many subjects of contemporary relevance were discussed in detail.

Issues with Police Departments throughout the Country:

External Issues:

- **Low public trust:** Police often face accusations of corruption, brutality, insensitivity, and lack of accountability. This leads to fear and reluctance to approach the police for help.
- **Accessibility and responsiveness:** Police stations can be intimidating and bureaucratic, discouraging people from reporting crimes. Response times for non-emergency situations can be slow.
- **Bias and discrimination:** Issues like caste, religion, and gender can influence police behaviour, leading to discrimination and unequal treatment.

Internal issues:

- **Understaffing and overburdening:** High population-to-police ratio leads to overworked and stressed officers, affecting efficiency and quality of service.
  - o While the sanctioned police strength was **181 police per lakh** persons in 2016, the **actual strength was 137 police.** Note that the **United Nations** recommended standard is **222 police per lakh persons.**
- **Lack of training and resources:** Many officers lack proper training in investigation, community policing, and handling specific issues like cybercrime or domestic

violence. Inadequate equipment and infrastructure hamper performance.

- **Political interference:** Political pressure can influence investigations, postings, and promotions, compromising police autonomy and professionalism.
- **Low morale and motivation:** Poor working conditions, low salaries, and limited career prospects can lead to low morale and disengagement among officers.
  - o **Lower Ranks and Career Opportunities:** Dominance of IPS officers, deprives lower ranks of opportunities to showcase their talent. There is very little chance for an entry level constable to reach higher levels. Globally, people recruited at the lower level rise up to the top positions.

Other Issues:
- **Outdated laws and procedures:** Many laws are archaic and not suited to modern challenges, hindering effective investigation and prosecution.
- **Inefficient investigative methods:** Reliance on outdated forensic techniques and lack of scientific investigation often leads to weak cases and low conviction rates.
- **Weak community relations:** Lack of trust and communication between police and communities creates a divide and hinders crime prevention efforts.
- **Inadequate grievance redressal mechanisms:** Complaints against police misconduct are often ignored or not properly investigated, further eroding public trust.
- **Federal Issues and Discord:** Discord between the Central government and certain states regarding the control and role of the

Indian Police Service (IPS) and Enforcement Directorate (ED).
- **Social issues** like poverty, mental health, and drug abuse: These issues require a more holistic approach beyond traditional policing methods.
- **Growing concerns about human rights violations:** Instances of police brutality and custodial deaths raise serious concerns about accountability and respect for human rights.

Reforms in the Police departments:

Recommendations given by the **Malimath Committee(2003), Second Administrative Reforms Commission (SARC)** and the directions given in the **Prakash Singh vs. Union of India** case by the Supreme Court serves as a benchmark for reforms in Police departments.
- The new set of laws under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023 (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023 (BSA) can help in better use of police forces.
- Effective **Police Complaints Authorities** with independent investigation and oversight powers.
- The scope of the **political executive's power** over the police forces must be **limited under law**, so that use of Police forces for personal needs by the political masters gets reduced.
- **Transparent recruitment and promotion** processes based on merit, not political influence.
- Improved **grievance redressal mechanisms** for citizens regarding Police excesses and also a robust internal mechanism within the department.
- **Increased recruitment** to address the shortage of manpower in the police departments. States such as Uttar Pradesh had shortages upto 50 percent (2020).

- **Enhanced training** in community policing, human rights, and investigation techniques.
- **Improved working conditions** and **better pay** to attract and retain qualified personnel.
- **Regular psychological assessments** and support for officers dealing with stress.
- Building trust and cooperation with communities through **outreach programs** and joint problem-solving initiatives. Eg: **Janamaithiri Suraksha project** in Kerala.
- **Promoting diversity** within the police force to reflect the demographics of the population served.
- Reducing reliance on excessive force and **respecting individual rights.**
- **Strengthening** forensic science **capabilities** and evidence collection procedures.
- **Increasing transparency** in investigation processes and sharing information with the public.
- **Utilising technology** effectively for crime prevention and detection.

Conclusion

- Collective effort of the Central and State governments, Police leadership, civil society, and the public at large can bring the much needed reform in the Police departments throughout the country.

13) Online gaming in India
(GS1: Effects of Globalization on Indian society)
Context:

- Market failures occur in situations such as monopolies, externalities, and information asymmetries which not only diminish economic value but also erode societal well-being, which results in decline in the trust of users.

- The article discusses an impending market failure in the Indian online gaming industry.

Need for Government Regulation in the industry:

- **The rise of illegal offshore gambling and betting markets:** This poses significant financial and security risks, and leads to lost tax revenue.
- **Information asymmetries:** Users lack the knowledge to differentiate between legitimate and illegal platforms, leading to potential harm.
- **Lack of enforcement:** The absence of a specialised regulatory authority and effective enforcement mechanisms allows illegal operators to thrive.
- **Negative externalities:** Addiction, mental health issues, suicides, and financial fraud are some of the harmful consequences of unregulated online gaming
- **Protecting public interest and trust:** Regulation can create a safer and more transparent online gaming environment, thereby building user trust.
- **Boosting economic growth:** A well-regulated industry can attract legitimate businesses and investment, leading to job creation and GDP growth.
- **Preventing money laundering and national security threats:** Effective regulation can curb illegal activities and protect national interests.

Measures required:

- **A dedicated regulatory body:** This could be a central government agency or an independent commission with expertise in online gaming, technology, and law. This body would be responsible for developing and enforcing

regulations, issuing licences, and resolving disputes.

- o The **UK** has **a centralised regulator** whose effective functioning has led to a decline in both disordered gaming and medium-to-low risk gaming behaviour.

- **Classification of games based on type and risk:** Games could be categorized as games of skill, games of chance, or a combination of both. Different regulations and restrictions could apply to each category based on the potential for harm.

- **Strengthen data protection and privacy**: Regulations should be put in place to protect players' data and ensure responsible data collection and usage by gaming platforms. Suitable additions into **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023** should be done.

- **Implementation of age verification and parental controls:** Platforms should be required to implement robust age verification systems to restrict access to age-restricted games and gambling. Parental controls should also be readily available to allow parents to set limits on their children's gaming activity.

- **Combat illegal offshore gambling:** This could involve measures like blocking unauthorised platforms, working with financial institutions to restrict transactions, and cooperating with international law enforcement agencies.

- **Implement transparent tax regimes:** Clear and fair tax structures should be developed for the online gaming industry, ensuring adequate revenue for the government while avoiding stifling legitimate businesses.

- **Encourage self-regulation:** The industry should be encouraged to develop and implement self-regulatory codes of conduct, complementing government regulations and promoting responsible practices.

- **Promote public awareness and education:** Public awareness campaigns can be launched to educate users about the risks associated with online gaming, responsible gaming practices, and how to identify illegal platforms.

- **Continuously monitor and adapt regulations:** The regulatory framework should be regularly reviewed and updated to keep pace with the evolving online gaming landscape and address emerging risks.

Conclusion

- Government Intervention can help in avoiding a situation of market failure. The regulations succeed only when the benefits of intervention outweigh the costs involved in adhering to interventions. Government regulations should ensure this balance.

14) Air Pollution in National Capital Region

(GS3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment)

Context:

- Problem of air pollution in India has become a perennial one, rather than a seasonal one. The article discusses the reasons for inaction in controlling air pollution, few measures taken in this direction and possible solutions for this problem.

Reasons for inaction:

- **Trade-offs:** Addressing pollution requires difficult choices between development and environment, and

society and government are not ready to discuss these trade-offs effectively.
- **Political factors:** Politicians want to avoid unpopular decisions and lack courage to push for solutions with long-term benefits but potential short-term inconvenience.
- **Limited Cooperation** between Academia, Government and People.
- **Public apathy:** While willing for limited measures, the public is not ready for substantial sacrifices like increased public transport use or restrictions on private vehicles.

Experiments in NCR with meagre results:

- **Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) corridor:** The measure was successful in achieving its goals but dismantled due to resistance from car-using public and political capitulation.
- **Odd-even experiment:** Effectiveness of the measure has not been established fully but politically acceptable due to short-term impact and perception of action.
- **Smog towers:** Ineffectiveness masked by political narrative to project concern.

Solutions to control Air pollution:

- **Promote sustainable transportation:** This includes **metro lines, buses, and feeder networks,** making them affordable, accessible, and efficient. Encourage ridership through subsidies, dedicated lanes, and park-and-ride facilities.
  - **Incentivize electric vehicles:** Offer tax breaks, subsidies, and dedicated charging infrastructure to boost EV adoption. Restrict registration of new petrol/diesel vehicles in phases.

  - **Improve infrastructure for non-motorized transport:** Build dedicated cycling lanes, pedestrian walkways, and ensure safety for cyclists and pedestrians. Encourage cycling and walking for short trips.
  - **Implement traffic management systems:** Use congestion pricing, carpooling schemes, and smart traffic lights to reduce traffic volume and emissions.
- **Tackle construction dust:** Enforce mandatory covering of construction sites, regular water sprinkling, and use of dust suppressants. Impose heavy fines for non-compliance.
  - **Promote green and sustainable construction practices:** Encourage use of prefabricated materials, minimise on-site construction debris, and incorporate green areas within construction projects.
- **Address crop burning:** Implement schemes like cash compensation, stubble-to-manure programs, and bio-energy initiatives to discourage burning.
  - **Develop and promote efficient harvesting and stubble management** technologies: Invest in advanced machinery for stubble removal and encourage in-situ management techniques like mulching.
  - Raise awareness and **build community support:** Educate farmers about the harmful effects of burning and promote alternative solutions through campaigns

and farmer outreach programs.

- **Control industrial emissions:** Upgrade industrial machinery and enforce stricter emission standards for factories and power plants. Regularly monitor and penalise non-compliant industries.
- **Improve air quality monitoring and forecasting**: Install more air quality sensors across Delhi-NCR to provide real-time data on pollution levels.
  - Develop accurate **forecasting models:** Invest in research and development of advanced air quality prediction models to alert citizens and guide policy decisions.
  - **Public awareness campaigns:** Regularly communicate air quality data and forecasts to the public, providing health advisories and tips for minimising exposure.
- **Foster regional cooperation and knowledge sharing:** Work together to address transboundary air pollution and implement coordinated policy measures across the region.
  - **Share best practices and research:** Foster knowledge exchange and learn from successful air pollution control strategies implemented in other cities and countries.
  - **Engage in international partnerships:** Collaborate with international organisations and experts to access cutting-edge technology and funding for pollution control efforts.

Conclusion

- Solving air pollution requires societal consensus on difficult trade-offs and collective willingness to accept inconvenient but necessary changes. The public and political class must work together to create the momentum for significant action.

15) Cervical Cancer in India

(GS2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources)

Context:

- Cervical Cancer is the second most common Cancer in India with more than 1 lakh new cases and more than 75,000 deaths in 2022.
- High death numbers is a concern as Cervical Cancer is **easily preventable, curable and the only non-communicable disease which can be eliminated.**
- **Presence of Human Papillomavirus (HPV)** is the main cause of this type of Cancer.
- In January 2023, the Central Government announced that the **HPV vaccine drive** is to be started to eliminate Cervical cancer.

Causes for high incidence of the disease:

- **Lack of awareness, fear of cancer, and late diagnosis** lead to high mortality.
- **Low HPV vaccination uptake** as low as only 3% in a study conducted in 5 districts of Andhra pradesh state.
- **Leakages in patient care pathway:** Follow up treatment of patients to complete the course from screening to diagnosis and treatment is incomplete. In a study in Telangana, 70%-90% of the cases had incomplete treatment.

Elimination Strategy:

- The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** has given a simple, feasible,

scalable three pillared strategy with clear targets and accountability mechanisms.

- Pillar 1: Widespread HPV vaccination.
- Pillar 2: Screening
- Pillar 3: Diagnosis and Treatment of Cervical cancer and pre-cancer.

- The **National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetics, Cardiovascular devices and Stroke (NPCDCS)** of Government of India is screening for Cervical cancer from the Primary Health Centre (PHC) level.
  - Simple, easy and affordable screening tests are available through this programme.
  - HPV vaccination is to be provided for girls between 14 to 15 years of age through from this year.

Steps needed:

- Urgent need to **increase awareness** about cervical cancer causes and prevention.
- **Encourage HPV vaccination** uptake and address vaccine hesitancy.
- Promote age-appropriate **screening**, especially with HPV testing.
- Strengthen **capacity for pre-cancer treatment,** referral networks, and quality care.
- Build partnerships with **NGOs, innovators**, and public health professionals.
- Ensure continuous efforts in screening programs, **integrating latest technology** for early diagnosis.
- Strengthen **cancer registries** and referral linkages.
- Implement mechanisms to **reduce financial burden** for care.
- Connect all aspects of patient care: swift diagnosis, referral, quality

improvement, digital tools, and communication.
- Issue **follow-up reminders** and integrate palliative care early on.
- Collaborate on **research** and adopt successful **community outreach models.**

Conclusion

- Elimination of Cervical cancer can contribute to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 3.4 of reducing premature deaths by one third by 2030. With the new vaccination drive and the measures available, this goal can be achieved.

16) Minilateralism

(GS2: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests)

Context:

- Post World War II order is facing a confluence of forces like, resurgent nationalism, protectionism, minilateralism and resurgence of inter state wars. At this juncture, analysis of Minilateralism becomes important.

Definition:

- Minilateralism involves the **formation of small groups of countries that share common interests and are willing to coordinate their actions on specific issues.**
  - Eg: Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), AUKUS, I2U2, etc,.

Advantages:

- **Emergence as a Pragmatic Alternative:** Minilateralism as a response to the perceived ineffectiveness of traditional multilateralism, specifically its slowness and difficulty in addressing pressing issues due to diverse interests and conflicting agendas.

- **Focus on Shared Interests:** Minilateralism is characterised by the formation of small groups of countries with converging interests on specific issues, like security, trade, or climate change. This allows for more focused discussion and collaboration compared to broader multilateral platforms.
- **Flexibility and Agility:** The smaller size and shared goals enable minilateral arrangements to be more flexible and adaptable than large, diverse multilateral institutions. Decisions can be reached quicker and tailored to the specific interests of the involved countries.

Is it a replacement for Multilateralism?

- **Potential Drawbacks:** Competition between groups(minilaterals), fragmentation of the international system, and exclusion of countries outside the arrangements are drawbacks associated with minilateralism.
- **Uncertain Future:** The overall tone towards minilateralism is cautious, recognizing its potential while raising concerns about its **long-term implications for global cooperation** and the future of the international order.

Conclusion

- Minilateralism is not simply a replacement for multilateralism, but a complementary approach depending on the specific issue and context.

17) Science Administration in India

(GS3: Science and Technology-Developments and their Applications and Effects in Everyday Life)

Context:

- The government is overhauling India's science establishment, which includes setting up the new

National Research Foundation (NRF) and **restructuring the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).**
- In this scenario, an assessment of the current administrative ability to simultaneously optimise Indian science's efficiency and resilience is necessary.

Issues in Science Administration:

- **Low investment:** India's R&D expenditure is significantly lower than other major economies, limiting resources for impactful projects.
  - India's overall expenditure on research and development is around **0.7% of GDP,** compared to 3.5% for the United States and 2.4% for China.
- **Inefficient management:** The direction and organisation of science are inconsistent with the current global trends, highly bureaucratic, leading to missed opportunities and wasted resources.
- **Dominance of public sector:** Most of the research is concentrated in public research institutions which are affected by bureaucratic hurdles and lack of long-term fund support, hampering their effectiveness.
- **Oversized role of scientists:** Senior scientists hold too many administrative positions, often lacking the necessary skills and creating conflicts of interest. This "gatekeeper" system stifles competition and innovation.
- **Lack of training and professionalism:** Scientists are not trained in administration, leading to poor resource allocation and quality control issues like plagiarism and unethical publication practices.

- **Institutional capture and factionalism:** The absence of all-India transfers allows insiders to control and manipulate the system for personal gain, further damaging scientific outcomes.

Solutions Available:

- **Increase R&D funding:** Invest more in high-impact scientific projects to enhance India's global competitiveness.
- **Restructure science administration:** Separate scientists from administrative roles to improve efficiency and reduce conflicts of interest. Adopt best practices from countries like the USA, which selects scientists for administration quite early in their careers.
- **Professionalize science management:** Establish an all-India service for science administrators with dedicated training and career paths.
- **Promote accountability:** Hold scientists and administrators responsible for the performance of scientific institutions and projects.

Conclusion

- Addressing these core concerns can help India's science establishment to do justice to its economic and strategic aspirations.

18) A Green Blueprint for Science based Pollution Control Plan

(GS3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment)

Context:

- The National Clean Air Action Plan's (NCAP) report card shows a mixed result. The fact remains that much needs to be done to bring the air pollution down to permissible levels in most parts of the Country.
- In this scenario, the article brings out the challenges faced in controlling air pollution in India along with suitable solutions.

Challenges in Controlling Air Pollution in India:

- **Over concentration on urban landscapes:** Current efforts are mainly focused on urban air pollution data analysis.
- **Lack of systematic emissions inventory** and inadequate monitoring networks.
- **Absence of region-specific solutions:** India has diverse micro-environments and climatic conditions vary according to regions. This means we need to understand a diversity of natural and scientific processes.
- **High Baseline air pollution levels:** Baseline air pollution levels are higher than WHO guidelines, necessitating India-specific standards.

Suitable Solutions:

- Proposal to develop **an indigenous, science-based air quality resource framework.** The office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India is considering an ambitious initiative along this line.
- Create a **centralised emissions dataset** with standardised data collection and reporting. It should be based on globally established parameters with consideration to Indian situations.
- Establish a **consortium of experts** to advise on air quality science and management. The body should be an integrated mechanism that translates data into information, frames communication strategies and health advisories, issues alerts and plans mitigation strategies.
- **Region specific solutions** should be developed by the consortium. Air sheds and settlement patterns should also be considered along

with local climatic and topographic conditions.

- **Use of latest technology:** Utilise satellites, drones, and CubeSats for emission hot-spot identification and air quality monitoring. National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) has recently used **drone-based artificial intelligence to identify emission hot spots in Bengaluru** — the first time this technology has been used for this purpose — and attempted to narrow down the uncertainty in emission estimates.
- **Allocation of Funds for state-level** air quality management **initiatives**: The 15th Finance Commission provided enough funds to states for air quality management. State agencies need to work in tandem with academic and research establishments to develop forecasting systems and operationalise them

Conclusion

- Any improvement in air quality will give benefits on various fronts such as Climate change control efforts, Human respiratory health, etc.

19) India- Bangladesh Relations

(GS2: India and its Neighborhood-Relations)

Context:

- Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina returned to power in Bangladesh for a historic fourth straight term earlier this month after her party, the Awami League, secured two-thirds of the seats in the January 7 national elections.
- At this juncture, understanding the aspects of relations between India and Bangladesh becomes important.

Strong Foundations:

- India played a crucial role in **Bangladesh's liberation war (1971)**, laying the groundwork for a close relationship. India helped with men and material in the war against Pakistan and helped Bangladesh garner global recognition.
- Soon after, the relationship soured due to military regimes and anti-Indian sentiments. Sheikh Hasina's leadership since 1996 has strengthened ties, particularly through the **Ganga water treaty.**

Multisectoral Cooperation at present:

- Bilateral trade has boomed, making Bangladesh **India's largest South Asian trade partner and India, the second largest trade partner of Bangladesh.** Bilateral trade of around **$18 billion.**
- A Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement **(CEPA)** is under discussion to further boost trade.
- India is a major development partner, funding infrastructure projects like the Akhaura-Agartala rail link. India has extended **credit lines of around $7 billion** since 2010.
- Energy cooperation involves **electricity imports** from India and regional connectivity plans like the BIMSTEC Master Plan.
- India has keen interest in Bangladesh's **Matarbari port, Chattogram port and Mongla port** projects, crucial for an industrial corridor, which can help India to develop its North East region.

Recent Points of Tension:

- The **Teesta water sharing dispute** remains unresolved for a long time due India's internal political situation.
- The **Rohingya refugee crisis** presents a complex challenge with differing approaches by India and Bangladesh. Military junta rule in Myanmar further complicates the issue for both the countries.

- Cross-border **terrorism** and **religious tensions** pose security concerns.
- US criticism of Bangladesh's democratic record and visa restrictions add complexity, which may affect the financial transactions with the country in case of any US sanctions.
- **China's growing economic influence** in Bangladesh raises concerns for India. China has built 12 highways, 21 bridges and 27 power and energy projects in Bangladesh.

The Prime Ministership of Sheik Hasina gives hope for a continued positive relations with Bangladesh. Both the countries should come together to solve their issues on an equal footing.

20) Women Employment: Interplay of Caste, Education and Economic status

(GS1: Role of Women and Women's Organization, Population and Associated Issues, Poverty and Developmental issues, Urbanization, their problems and their remedies)

Context:

- Over the past two decades, there has been a significant decline in female Labour Force Participation (LFP), which necessitates us to examine the various factors which affect women employment across different spectrums of the society.

Factors affecting Women Employment:

- **Caste:** Studies on caste and LFP have conflicting results.
    - **Higher caste women** have **better access** to **education** and **formal sector jobs.**
    - **Higher caste** women have **lower LFP** due to the economic stability in their families. Even in women headed families, lower LFP is witnessed.

    - On the other hand, **Lower caste** women have **higher LFP due to economic necessity**. More often this employment is confined to the **informal sector.**
- **Education:**
    - **Lower-caste women** often face **economic disadvantages**, resulting in a higher share of them **being illiterate.** Limited educational opportunities confine them to **jobs** in the **informal sector.**
    - However, if a woman from this background manages to **pursue education** beyond school, affirmative action policies from the state enable entry into the **formal economy**, particularly in the **public sector.**
- **Patriarchy in the society:**
    - Societal expectations from women to primarily focus on **housework and care work** and manage the needs of a household, mostly prevent them from participating in the workforce.
    - Neglect of female education within the family due to the **emphasis on the education of male children** also handicaps the employment prospects of women, mainly in middle class groups.
    - On the other side, women also face **legal and economic constraints** in their pursuit of employment. For instance, there are laws in many companies that prevent women from working on the night shift.

Benefits of Women employment:

- **Societal good:** In any case, irrespective of whether it is the

informal or formal economy, women's participation in the labour force is beneficial for them and the larger society.

- **Voice within the family:** Studies show that a woman's ability to create revenue increases her **capacity to make decisions** for her and her family.
- **Better Reproductive health and Child health:** Education and employment are directly associated with **a delayed age of marriage** and the age of the **first childbirth** among women.
- **Child Education:** Studies have also shown that when the mother is earning, the chances of a child's schooling are higher.
- **Protection from Patriarchy:** Further, when women have control over resources, they are less susceptible to domestic violence and enjoy more mobility.

Conclusion

- Women Labour Force Participation not only liberates women from societal and economic constraints but also contributes to shaping a more educated and enlightened future.

21) Indo-Pacific Region: India's gateway to the World

(GS2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora)

Context:

- The Houthi attack on commercial ships in the Red Sea and the fragility of order and stability in the Indo-Pacific, is a reminder of the rough weather ahead in the Indo-Pacific in general and India's maritime space in particular.
- A larger question we must ponder is, does India have a maritime grand strategy that goes beyond occasional fire-fighting, naval

exercises with friendly nations and a snail-pace increase of the budget allocation for the Indian Navy? What indeed is India's long-term vision for the Indo-Pacific?

Opportunities provided by Indo-Pacific:

- **Strategic Opportunities:**
  - **Countering China's influence:** India can leverage its strategic partnerships with other regional powers like the US, Japan, and Australia to balance China's growing assertiveness in the region.
  - Escape from the **"unfriendly continental theatre"** dominated by China and Pakistan and shift the focus of India's defence assets to maritime theatres.
  - **Enhancing maritime security:** India can play a vital role in ensuring the security of critical sea lanes and deterring piracy and terrorism in the Indian Ocean Region. Eg: Formation of QUAD like organisations, which promote Naval cooperation.
  - **Promoting regional cooperation:** India can take a leadership role in promoting regional cooperation on issues such as maritime security, disaster management, and climate change.
- **Economic Opportunities:**
  - **Boosting trade and investment:** The Indo-Pacific region is home to some of the world's fastest-growing economies, offering immense potential for Indian businesses to expand their trade and investment activities.

- o **Developing infrastructure:** India can contribute to the development of regional infrastructure projects, such as ports, roads, and railways, which will improve connectivity and facilitate trade.
- o **Harnessing blue economy:** The Indo-Pacific region is rich in marine resources, and India can develop its blue economy by investing in sectors such as fisheries, aquaculture, and ocean energy.
- o **Becoming a technology hub:** India can leverage its IT expertise to become a hub for innovation and development in the Indo-Pacific region.
- o **Promoting digital connectivity:** India can invest in submarine cables and other infrastructure to improve digital connectivity in the region.

- **Soft power:**
  - o **Promoting Indian culture and values:** India can project its soft power through cultural exchanges, educational programs, and tourism initiatives.
  - o **Strengthening people-to-people ties:** India can build stronger relationships with other countries in the region through educational exchanges, cultural events, and tourism promotion. Eg: Projects in African countries, Sri Lanka, Maldives, etc.
  - o **Sharing its development experience:** India can share its development experience with other countries in the region, particularly in areas

such as poverty alleviation and healthcare.

Challenges:
- **Geopolitical Challenges:**
  - o **China's assertiveness:** China's growing military and economic presence in the region, including its territorial claims and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects, can be seen as a challenge to India's own strategic interests.
  - o **Balancing alliances:** India needs to carefully navigate its relationships with both the US and China, avoiding being seen as aligning too closely with either power.
  - o **Regional instability:** Ongoing conflicts and tensions in the region, such as in the Red Sea attacks, South China Sea and the Korean Peninsula, pose security risks and complicate regional cooperation.
- **Economic Challenges:**
  - o **Infrastructure deficit:** India's own infrastructure needs significant development to fully capitalise on the economic potential of the Indo-Pacific region.
  - o **Trade deficit:** India has a trade deficit with many countries in the region, which can hinder its economic growth.
  - o **Competition from other regional players:** India faces competition from other countries in the region, such as China and Japan, for trade, investment, and resources.
- **Other Challenges:**
  - o **Absence of a comprehensive strategy:**

India lacks a cohesive maritime grand strategy beyond occasional responses and naval exercises.

- o **Maritime threats:** Piracy, terrorism, and illegal fishing pose threats to maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region.
- o **Climate change:** The impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels and extreme weather events, pose security threats to coastal communities and infrastructure.

Recommendations for India:

- **Diversify partnerships:** While maintaining strong ties with the US and other Quad members, India can deepen its strategic partnerships with Southeast Asian nations, France, and African countries to create a more multipolar order and reduce dependence on any single power. This can be done by leveraging the global interest in the Indo-Pacific in recent times.
- **Promote regional cooperation:** Invest in ASEAN-led initiatives and maritime security collaborations to foster a rules-based order and address shared concerns.
- **Engage in proactive diplomacy:** Utilise forums like the SCO and BRICS to engage China constructively while firmly upholding its own interests.
- **Invest in infrastructure:** Upgrade ports, roads, and digital connectivity to facilitate trade and attract investment. Prioritise renewable energy and blue economy projects.
- **Boost trade competitiveness:** Promote manufacturing and exports by improving ease of doing business, investing in skill

development, and negotiating favourable trade deals.

- **Deepen regional economic integration:** Actively participate in regional trade agreements like RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) and IPEF (Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity) to expand market access and strengthen economic ties.
- **Modernise military:** Strengthen its naval capabilities, invest in cyber defense, and enhance intelligence gathering to deter maritime threats and cyberattacks.
- **Collaborate on regional security:** Participate in joint patrols, exercises, and intelligence sharing with regional partners to combat piracy, terrorism, and transnational crimes.
- **Promote maritime domain awareness:** Develop robust sensor networks and information-sharing mechanisms to ensure maritime security and freedom of navigation.

Conclusion

- By following a grand strategy inclusive of these aspects, India can navigate the complex challenges of the Indo-Pacific and emerge as a leading power, shaping the region's future towards peace, stability, and shared prosperity.

22) Semiconductor Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme
(GS3: Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology; Indigenization of Technology and Developing New Technology)

Context:

- The DLI scheme has approved only seven start-ups, markedly short of its target of supporting 100 over five years. This calls for an impact assessment of the scheme.

Three goals of India's semiconductor strategy:

1. The first is to **reduce dependence on semiconductor imports,** particularly from China, and especially in strategic and emerging sectors, ranging from defence applications to Artificial Intelligence development.
2. The second is to **build supply chain resilience** by integrating into the semiconductor **global value chain (GVC).**
3. The third is to capitalise on **India's comparative advantage**: India already plays host to the design houses of every major global semiconductor industry player and Indian chip design engineers are an indispensable part of the semiconductor GVC.

Issues with the DLI Scheme:

- **Limited foreign investment:** The scheme mandates that beneficiary start-ups maintain their domestic status for at least three years after receiving incentives, and for this they cannot raise more than 50% of their requisite capital via foreign direct investment(FDI).
- **Long term process:** Semiconductor R&D usually only pays off in the longer term, and the funding landscape for chip start-ups in India continues to be challenging despite promising IP and business potential.
- **Restricted Domestic Investment:** Long gestation periods, combined with the lack of success stories caused by the absence of a mature start-up funding ecosystem for hardware products in India, reduce the interest of domestic investors.
- **Modest incentives:** The relatively modest incentives under the DLI scheme (capped at ₹15 Crore for Product DLI and ₹30 Crore for Deployment Linked Incentive, per

application) would not make for a worthwhile trade-of for start-ups standing to lose out on access to crucial long-term funding(FDI).
- **Narrow focus:** The scheme prioritises "India-designed" chips, neglecting broader design capabilities.
- **Nodal agency conflict**: Centre for Development of Advanced Computing's (CDAC) role as the nodal agency appraising proposals by applicants under the DLI scheme and its role as a market player in the Indian chip design sector, shows a concern of conflict of interest.

Proposed Solutions:

- **Delink ownership from incentives:** Foreign funding is crucial for this sector's long term growth and so ownership as a limitation for getting support should be done away with.
- **Broaden scope:** The scheme needs to be revised to focus on the broader objective of facilitating design capabilities for a wide array of chips within the country, so long as the entity engaging in the design development process is registered in India
- **Increase financial support:** Enhance the scheme's budget to accommodate a broader focus. This can increase the incentives provided to the beneficiary start ups.
- **Change nodal agency:** Consider a model like Karnataka's Semiconductor Fabless Accelerator Lab (SFAL) to provide startups with mentorship, industry connections, and financial support.

Conclusion

- A revamped scheme with a broader scope, increased funding, and a suitable implementing agency can help India to reach the three goals of its semiconductor strategy.

23) India-France Relations: New Opportunities

(GS2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora)

Context:

- French President Emmanuel Macron visited India as the Chief Guest of the Republic day Ceremony. His visit caps a milestone year for India-France ties — the **25th anniversary of their strategic partnership.**

India-France Strategic Partnership

- The India-France Strategic Partnership, the **first that India signed with any western country,** has seen considerable progress in bilateral, regional and international contexts.
- It draws strength, trust and consistency from a shared sense of strategic autonomy and sovereignty, a quest for a multi-polar world, and a natural affinity for democratic values and rule of law.
- **Defence and security, civil nuclear matters, and space constitute principal pillars** of this partnership, which now also includes a strong Indo-Pacific component.
- **Defence and Security:** The procurement of **Rafale jets** as part of India's air power is a testament to the deep defence ties. The **India France joint defence exercises** have also grown in scope and complexity over the years.
- France's support was vital in India's accession to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) and Australia Group (AG). France continues to support India's bid for accession to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). They have resolved to work together for adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) in the UN.
- **Space:** There's a rich history of cooperation in the field of space for over 50 years between ISRO and the French Space Agency, Centre National D'Etudes Spatiales (CNES). France remains a major supplier of components and equipment for the Indian space programme.
- **Civil Nuclear Cooperation:** The countries have agreed to establish a partnership on Small Modular Reactors (SMR) and Advanced Modular Reactors (AMR).
- In Economic sphere, India has a positive balance of trade with France. India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) can be used in France. Cooperation in fields like tourism, education and supercomputer development is robust.

New Opportunities:

- The **rapidly changing international context,** with developments in Ukraine, the Middle East, and the potential return of Trump in the US, should lend urgency to India and France's cooperation.
- Both countries need to adapt to the **possibility of a less engaged US** and rethink concepts like **"multipolarity" and "strategic autonomy"** in this new context.
- **Peace in Ukraine and the Middle East** is a common priority for both nations. In view of a US withdrawal both countries need to expand their role in these conflict areas.
- Building up on the **Horizon 2047** partnership between the countries by including different aspects like defence cooperation, technological exchanges and free trade regime with the European Union.

Conclusion

- The real value of the visit lies in coming together to address the regional and global issues and adapting to a new international landscape.

Model Questions

1) Discuss the challenges faced by rural startups in India. Enumerate measures taken by the Government to promote rural entrepreneurship.

2) "The Government e-Marketplace has resulted in improved transparency, higher efficiency and created a level playing field in government procurement". Discuss.

3) "Global Nuclear Order is under strain in recent years". Explain with suitable examples.

4) In recent times, the Office of Governor is increasingly found to be in conflict with the State Council of Ministers. Elaborate with reference to different case laws.

5) International Monetary Fund has highlighted the rising public debt situation in India. In this context, elaborate on the problems faced by an economy with rising public debt.

6) Unemployment and underemployment are high among young graduates in India. Analyse this statement and suggest few practical solutions.

7) Poorer regions of India and the world witness a high number of women being trafficked. Elaborate.

8) Concept of Structured Negotiation can help in reducing pendency in Indian Courts. Comment critically.

9) EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism can have impacts on the Indian economy. How can India limit these impacts?

10) The Constitution has accorded the clemency powers to the President and the Governor to correct the wrongs by the Judiciary. This extraordinary power's use should be based on the "rule of law". Discuss.

11) Discuss the relevance of good relations with Maldives for India. Also explain the issues which affect the smooth relations between the neighbours.

12) Defection by legislators is common in news in recent times. In this context, assess the role of the Speaker in the defection process. Also give practical solutions to set straight the role of Speaker.

13) Police forces across India face a multitude of problems. Elaborate on these problems and give practical solutions to address these problems.

14) Enumerate the need for regulation of the Online gaming industry in India. Also suggest measures for a creating an able regulatory body.

15) Inadequate action has exacerbated the problem of air pollution in the National Capital Region (NCR). Comment.

16) Cervical Cancer is the second most common Cancer in India with more than 1 lakh new cases and more than 75,000 deaths in 2022. In this context, explain a strategy to reduce the incidence of this disease.

17) Elaborate on the concept of Minilateralism.

18) Administration of Scientific Research in India is stymied with various impediments. Critically analyse.

19) Air pollution has become an all India problem. Enumerate the challenges in reducing air pollution and ways to tackle these challenges.

20) India and Bangladesh share a long standing close relation interspersed by isolated episodes of tensions. Discuss.

21) India is facing a significant decline in women labour force participation due to interplay of different factors. Also suggest few solutions to address this issue.

22) Indo-Pacific holds the key to India's preeminence in global affairs. Elaborate.

23) Semiconductor Design Linked Incentive Scheme (DLI) has not worked in its optimum potential. Discuss the statement.

24) Indo-French relations have grown in a vibrant manner during the last 25 years. Explain. Also enumerate the new avenues which can help in broadening the relationship.