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100 Mains Exclusive Topics with Questions & Answers

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BIG ISSUE

India-Nepal Relations: Repairing Bilateral Ties

The recent visit of Nepal's PM to India cleared the stage for resolving a border dispute through discussion and increasing hydropower production in Nepal, primarily through Indian investment. Nepal was able to profit from India's economic progress by focusing on cross-border connectivity through infrastructure development and financial connectivity through the RuPay payment card system. The visit is strategically significant for India since it wants to discourage Chinese investment in Nepal and promote sub-regional cooperation through power trade among BBIN member countries. Certain differences between Nepal and China, primarily as a result of the border closure and India's positive attitude toward boosting the Nepalese economy, have resulted in a high level of trust between the two countries, which could lead to increased economic cooperation for the benefit of the two countries' people in the future.

■ Satish Kumar Karna

On Buddha Poornima in May 2022, India's Prime Minister visited Lumbini to express that the common culture between India and Nepal is far more valuable than the money that China has been pouring into the Buddha's birthplace.

Because of centuries of physical, historical, cultural, and economic relations, Nepal is an important neighbour of India and holds a special place in its foreign policy. For a long time, the two countries had a solid relationship that has been influenced by current circumstances. The relationships between India and Nepal are close, comprehensive, and multidimensional, and are more prominent in political, social, cultural, religious, and economic contacts with each other.

The two countries established diplomatic relations on June 17, 1947, to provide a formal tone to such historic links. Our bilateral relations have become stronger because of our unshakable dedication to the values of peaceful coexistence, sovereign equality, and mutual respect of each other's ambitions and sensibilities.

Recent Developments

Visit of Nepal's PM to India

In April, 2022, Nepal's Prime Minister paid a long-awaited visit to India.

- Both Prime Ministers decided to resolve the disputed boundary issue through a bilateral system based on negotiation, in the spirit of the two nations' strong and cordial relations.
- Both Nepal and India claim the Kalapani, Lipulekh, and Limpuaduhura areas in Nepal's northwest as their own.
- In addition, the two leaders agreed that the countries' open border system should not be used by unwelcome groups.
- Nepal and India also discussed the development of Indian projects being implemented in Nepal.
  - They agreed to quicken the pace of the Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project's implementation.
  - If the Mahakali Treaty's Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project had been executed, it could have generated 6,000 MW of hydropower and been a game-changer for Nepal.
- Prime Minister Deuba offered India of his government's full cooperation in addressing any outstanding concerns in the implementation of India-assisted projects such as the National Police Academy at Kavrepalanchok, the Integrated Check Posts at Nepalgunj and Bhairahawa, and the Ramayana circuit projects.
- The opening of the 35-kilometer cross-border train link between Jayanagar (Bihar) and Kurtha (Nepal) was one of the highlights. It will be extended to Bijalpura and Bardibas in two more phases.
  - The 787-crore initiative had been ready for over a year, but its implementation was hampered by Nepal's administrative procedures for establishing a firm that could recruit employees.
  - Initially, the Konkan Railway Corporation would give the required technical assistance.
- The 90-kilometer 132-kV double-circuit transmission line connecting Tila (Solukhumbu) to Mirchaiya (Siraha) near the Indian border was the second project to be launched. There are a dozen hydroelectric projects planned in the Solu corridor for which the Nepal Electricity Authority has completed PPAs totaling 325 MW, all of which were built with an Exim Bank concessional loan of 200 crore.
- In addition, agreements for technical cooperation in the railway sector, Nepal's admission to the International Solar Alliance, and a petroleum supply arrangement between Indian Oil Corporation and Nepal Oil Corporation were signed.

Issue Analysis

Climate Finance: An Insight

Climate finance is needed both to mitigate the emissions causing climate change and to help communities and economies adapt to the changes that are now inevitable. If greenhouse gas emissions are not reduced immediately and at scale, it won't be possible to limit warming to 1.5° C, or even 2° C, putting the world on a catastrophic path. Climate finance helps countries meet their NDCs and implement their NAPs. Making adequate finance available is therefore crucial to making progress towards meeting the Paris goals.

The main objective of the **COP27 climate conference in Egypt** later this year will be to move from pledges to implementation.

Global climate financing is significantly lower than needed and is also unevenly distributed. Innovative and collaborative financing models are required to finance urgent climate action, particularly in developing and emerging markets where it is needed most.

In this vein, last November's **COP26 in Glasgow** presented itself as an opportune moment to bring together the world for a serious discussion around the climate agenda.

From Glasgow to Sharm El-Sheikha: A Guidebook for Just Climate Finance

With wide participation of diverse stakeholders, including the private sector, COP26 managed to make a number of positive announcements as participating countries reaffirmed their commitment to the Paris Agreement goal of keeping the increase in global temperature to levels below 2°C, and moreover, to keep the goal of the 1.5°C alive.

Participants also recognized that this is a critical decade for action on the climate agenda, calling for a phase-down of coal.

Glasgow also urged developed countries to deliver on the $100 billion pledge and to double financing for adaptation.

It is within this context that the 'Sharm El-Sheikh Guidebook for Just Financing' aims to outline the key role of each stakeholder in translating financial commitments into implementable projects and address the critical challenges of leveraging and catalyzing needed finances and investments to support the climate agenda.

As depicted by the Climate Policy Initiative, the tracked global climate finance averaged $632 billion in 2019/2020, which is significantly lower than the needed annual financing estimated at $4.13 trillion.

Pledged global commitments, particularly from the private sector, may not make their way to the countries that need them the most. Innovative solutions, such as de-risking instruments and blended finance, are therefore more important than ever.

A deeper analysis of these instruments is crucial to attracting investment for green, sustainable, inclusive, and resilient development – particularly within developing countries and emerging economies.

Moreover, concessional financing resources from multilateral development banks (MDBs), in addition to pledges by philanthropic groups, may help the origination of these finances to help achieve the climate ambitions over the longer term.

A Multi-Stakeholder Approach to Climate Finance

The proposed initiative instigates a consultative multi-stakeholder process that includes governments, multilateral and bilateral partners, the private sector, civil society, philanthropic organizations, research centres, and think-tanks to coordinate collective action to foster a green and resilient transition.

It aims to outline a roadmap whereby developing countries and emerging economies can translate international pledges into investable projects.

As an outcome of these consultations, stakeholders will draft a guidebook that incorporates a practical guide for innovative climate financing, leveraging their comparative advantage and strengthening effective inter-coordination mechanisms.

The guidebook will focus on identifying priority sectors that have a direct impact on accelerating climate adaptation and mitigation, with a special emphasis on energy, water, and agriculture sectors; develop clear guidelines to enhance the bankability of adaptation and mitigation projects; clarify strategies to mobilize resources towards climate adaptation projects in developing and emerging countries; and create conducive markets for green projects, aligned with national and international policy frameworks.

According to the World Economic Forum, developing countries need to invest an additional $800 billion per year on climate mitigation projects by 2025, dwarfing the $100 billion pledge.

In view of the growing climate finance needs to respond to the climate agenda and the sustainable development goals, the international community needs to drive more focus on mobilizing additional capital, allowing institutional investors to become key players.

Issue Analysis

Global Supply Chain Resilience: Need for Synchronization

There is a visible churning in geopolitics and geoeconomics; the trade war between the United States and China, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and the breakdown of the multilateral system are all driving global supply chains to be evaluated and reconfigured. The epidemic accelerated the migration of global supply chains that began with the trade dispute between the United States and China, exposing major vulnerabilities in vital commodity production networks.

There is now widespread agreement that countries must design their foreign trade policies to address vulnerabilities, manage disruptions, and limit concentration. India has a unique opportunity to take advantage of these trends in order to draw global value chains, particularly through alliances with strategically and geopolitically aligned states like the Quad members.

In the context of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, economic sanctions against Russia implemented in response to the government's decision to invade Ukraine are already having an impact on global supply chains.

Commodity and industrial input trade between Russia and Ukraine has been hampered, with prices skyrocketing on everything from wheat and oil to nickel and palladium. Transportation costs are also increasing. This, along with various other global developments, has highlighted the issue of supply chain resilience.

The capacity of an enterprise or group of business entities to survive, adapt, and flourish in the face of tumultuous change- resistance and recovery is characterized as supply chain resilience. That implies being able to withstand, if not completely prevent, the effects of a supply chain disruption, as well as quickly recover from one. Multiple sections of the supply chain are vulnerable to operational risk and disruption. As we saw with COVID-19, worldwide disasters can have a far-reaching, global impact on supply chain logistics, suppliers, and workforces. Unexpected competition, unanticipated market movements, or even rapid changes in client shopping behaviors can all cause supply chain disruptions.

Supply Chain Disruptions: Socio-Economic Impact

- Two Ukrainian enterprises, Ingas and Cryoin, produce 45 percent to 54 percent of the world's semiconductor-grade neon, which is important for the lasers used to create chips.
- "The halt puts a pall over global chip output, which was already in short supply after the coronavirus outbreak sparked a surge in demand for cellphones, laptops, and later automobiles, prompting some companies to reduce production."
- According to recent data, almost 300,000 U.S. and European companies have suppliers in Russia and/or Ukraine.
- People and industries are both affected by supply chains in different ways. Food supply lines are clogged as a result of Russia and Ukraine's inability to distribute fertiliser, wheat, and sunflower oil, while aluminium, steel, and platinum companies suffer similar difficulties.
- "The biggest overall effect is the rise in oil prices, which is more adding to inflationary pressures than affecting actual products delivery."
- With Russia supplying nearly 40% of Europe's natural gas and 65% of Germany's—as well as being the world's third-largest oil exporter—any abrupt changes will have a bullwhip effect throughout the energy sector.
- The price of petroleum reached $130 per barrel for the first time in 13 years after the Biden administration announced it would stop importing Russian oil, and consumers in some parts of the United States have seen average gasoline prices soar past $5 per gallon.
- Russia and Ukraine also account for about a third of all worldwide wheat exports, implying that the ongoing conflict might disrupt the still-recovering global food supply system, putting millions of people's lives in jeopardy.
- Delays, shortages, and rising prices may have negative consequences, including:
  - Brand and image repute of the company are being harmed.
  - Liquidity and financial flows that are delayed
  - Customer confidence and market share are eroding.
  - Revenue loss - According to the GEP 2021 Cost of Supply Chain Disruption Survey, 64% of respondents reported revenue losses ranging from 6% to 20%.

Rapidly Changing Consumer Behaviour

Other recent reasons that have had a significant impact on traditional supply chain processes include the quick rate of change in consumer behavior – as well as a very volatile trade and political climate.

Issue Analysis

Strengthening India's Informal Sector: Implications for Economic Development

Reforming the informal sector is the need of the hour. With increasing levels of unemployment in the sector, it is essential to re-employ workers. The government needs to take action to formalise the sector and to provide ample employment opportunities with proper job security and other social security benefits.

■ Sharmila Senthil Kumar

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), about 2 billion workers, or 60 per cent of the world's employed population aged 15 and older, spend at least part of their time in the informal sector. The size of the informal sector slowly decreases as economies develop, but with wide variations across regions and countries. Today, the informal sector still accounts for about a third of low- and middle-income countries' economic activity and 15 per cent in advanced economies.

Despite high levels of economic growth during the past two decades, the informal economy in India still accounts for more than 80 per cent of non-agricultural employment. Informality is found in both the traditional informal economy and – increasingly – through the growth of informality in the formal sector. Limited employment creation in the formal economy means that for many people the only alternative is to seek employment in the informal economy.

Informal Sector

- The informal sector consists of enterprises which are labour-intensive. Low-skilled labourers who are desperate enough to work for miserly wages in order to meet their subsistence requirements largely constitute the labour force of unorganised economic activities. Since unorganised firms operate outside of the jurisdiction of corporate law, workers in this sector have neither job-security nor social protection.

Informal Activities include

- Farming, market gardening, self-employed artisans, shoemakers, tailors, etc.
- Working in construction, housing, road building, etc.
- Small-scale distribution, e.g. petty traders, street hawkers, etc.
- Other services, e.g. barbers, shoe-shiners, etc.
- Beggars.
- Illegal activities like drug pushing.

Informal Work & Inequality

- **Wage Gap:** The prevalence of informal work is also associated with high inequality: workers with similar skills tend to earn less in the informal sector than their formal sector peers, and the wage gap between formal and informal workers is higher at lower skill levels.
- **Gender Inequality:** Informal work is similarly linked with gender inequality. In two out of three low- and lower-middle-income countries, women are more likely than men not only to be in informal employment, but also to be in the most precarious and low-paying categories of informal employment.

Informality & Inclusive Economic Development

- Addressing informality is essential and urgent to support inclusive economic development and reduce poverty worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic has only reinforced this sense of urgency: its crushing impact on informal activities worldwide has highlighted the need for governments to provide a lifeline for large segments of the population not covered (or not well covered) by existing social protection programs.

Policy Intervention to address Informality

- Designing effective policies to address informality is, however, complicated by its multiple causes and forms, both across and within countries. Informality is a response to a set of country-specific characteristics and institutions, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Four types of policies have proved effective:
  - (i) **Access to Education:** Improving access to and quality of education is probably the single most powerful way to lower informality.
  - (ii) **Reform in Tax System:** Tax system design should avoid inadvertently increasing incentives for individuals and firms to remain in the informal sector.
  - (iii) **Financial Inclusion:** Policies to enhance financial inclusion by promoting expanded access to formal (or bank-based) financial services can help lower informality.
  - (iv) **Labor Market Regulations:** A range of structural policies can help increase incentives and lower the cost of formalization. Labor market regulations can be simplified to ensure greater flexibility and facilitate informal workers' entry into formal employment.

Informality critically affects how fast economies can grow, develop, and provide decent economic opportunities for their populations. Sustainable development requires a reduction in informality over time, but this process will inevitably be gradual because the informal sector is currently the only

Review

FinTech in India: Potential and Issues

Recently, the Prime Minister of India asked to "convert India's fast fintech adoption, reflected in high volumes of UPI and other digital transactions, into a FinTech revolution that would help to achieve financial empowerment of every single citizen of this country". However, at the same time he asked for robust fintech security innovation to secure the interest of people engaged in digital transactions.

■ Chandrakant Singh

Over the last two years, India has seen massive adoption of digital payment systems. This growth and expansion of the FinTech ecosystem in India have been aided by a number of factors, including the growing availability of smartphones, increased internet access, and high-speed connectivity. Currently, India has the highest FinTech adoption rate globally of 87% which is significantly higher than the global average rate of 64%. In fact, according to a report by Boston Consulting Group and FICCI, India is well-positioned to achieve a FinTech sector valuation of USD 150-160 billion by 2025, implying a USD 100 billion in incremental value creation potential.

What is FinTech?

- FinTech, or financial technology, is the term used to describe any technology that delivers financial services through software, such as online banking, mobile payment apps or even crypto currency. FinTech is a broad category that encompasses many different technologies, but the primary objectives are to change the way consumers and businesses access their finances and compete with traditional financial services.

FinTech in India

The growth of FinTech, or the designing and provisioning of financial services by using new technological innovations, is one of the most significant developments in the financial sector in the past decade in India.

FinTech has the potential to play a big role in increasing access to finance to last mile, and in promoting the growth of MSMEs in the country. However, the broader FinTech landscape all over the world comprises of a variety of day-to-day financial services enhanced by technology. Mobile payments, cryptocurrency, investment advisory, insurance aggregators, peer-to-peer lending and some more services which traditionally required human capital, now form the FinTech landscape.

FinTech activity in India may be measured by Venture Capital/ Public Equity (VC/PE) deals. In 2016 and 2017 there were around 103 private equity or venture capital investments in the FinTech sector in India amounting to USD 2.39 billion. The biggest investment in 2017 was USD 1.4 billion in Paytm by the Japanese conglomerate SoftBank. Others who received funding include insurance-marketplace PolicyBazaar (USD 77 million), SME lending platform Capital Float (USD 45 million) and payments firms Mswipe Technologies (USD 31 million) and Razorpay (USD 20 million).

Growth of FinTech

According to a report by the World Economic Forum, FinTech enterprises have set the foundation for disrupting incumbent financial institutions both now and in the future.

India has made progress in the growth of fintech products and service in following areas:

- **Payments:** FinTech has significantly permeated the payments landscape. Companies like PayTM, MobiKwik, Citrus and PayU are taking advantage of the rapid increase in the use of smartphones, internet connectivity and online shopping to integrate payment processing into web applications. Besides, UPI in easing payments transactions.
- **Lending and Investment**: FinTech solutions have the potential to transform the lending landscape by following way:
  - **Crowdfunding,** which entails raising external finance from a large group of investors. The investors can interact with the investees and view their ideas on a crowdfunding platform. The financing can be received in the form of reward or donations, debt or equity.

UPI

- UPI was launched on August 25, 2016 to give a boost to mobile banking.
- It has been developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- UPI allows users to send and receive money using a single identifier which will act as a virtual address. The address could be an Aadhaar number, a mobile number or a virtual payment address linked to a bank account. This eliminates the need to exchange sensitive information such as bank account numbers during a financial transaction.
- Since its launch two years ago, the value of transactions on UPI has been growing rapidly, reaching INR 54212 crore in August 2018. This has eased the payment transaction in India which were earlier manual in nature.

inFocus

- Draft National Data Governance Framework Policy
- Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity
- Direct Seeding of Rice
- Lancet Report on Pollution and Health
- The Global Report on Food Crises 2022

Draft National Data Governance Framework Policy

On 27th May, 2022, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) released the revised draft National Data Governance Framework Policy. The development comes after a strong criticism of the previous 'Draft India Data Accessibility and Use Policy, 2022', which was opened for public consultation in February, 2022.

Need

- In the post-COVID-19 era, this digitization of government is accelerating faster. With this accelerated digitization, the volume and velocity of data generated is also increasing exponentially.
- This data can be used in turn to improve citizens' experience and engagement with the government and governance as a Digital Nagrik.
- However, the Digital Government data is currently managed, stored and accessed in differing and inconsistent ways across different government entities, thus attenuating the efficacy of data-driven governance, and preventing an innovative ecosystem of data science, analytics and AI from emerging to its full potential.
- The power of this data must be harnessed for more effective Digital Government, public good and innovation, thus requiring a National Data Governance Framework Policy (NDGFP).

Objectives & Purpose of Policy

- To transform and modernize Governments data collection and management processes and systems through standardised guidelines, rules and standards for the collection, processing, storage, access, and use of Government data – with the objective of improving governance through a whole-of government approach towards data-led governance.
- To enable and catalyze vibrant AI and Data led research and Start-up ecosystem, by creating a large repository of India datasets. This will be achieved by establishing guidelines, rules and standards to build and access to anonymised non personal data to ensure the growth of Indian datasets. This will be the catalyst for Artificial Intelligence and analytics ecosystem, which in turn would be kinetic enablers of India's digital economy

Salient Features

- **Applicability:** The Policy will apply to all Government departments and entities, non-personal datasets and data and platforms. State Governments will also be encouraged to adopt the provisions of the policy and rules, standards and protocols as applicable.
- **Indian Datasets Programme:** It envisages for the creation of an India Datasets programme, which will consist of non-personal and anonymised datasets from Central government entities that have collected data from Indian citizens or those in India. Private companies will be "encouraged" to share such data.
- **India Data Management Office (IDMO)**: An India Data Management Office (IDMO) shall be set up under the Digital India Corporation under Meity. They will be responsible for framing, managing, and periodically reviewing and revising policies.
- The IDMO shall coordinate closely with the line Ministries, State Governments and other schematic programs to standardize data management by building up capacity and capabilities in each ministry.
- The IDMO shall formulate all data/datasets/metadata rules, standards, and guidelines in consultation with Ministries, State Governments, and industry.
- The IDMO shall conduct at least 2 semi-annual consultations and report carding for this purpose with representation from State Governments and industry.
- **Data Anonymisation**: For data anonymisation, the IDMO will set and publish data anonymisation standards and rules to ensure informational privacy is maintained,
- **Data Management Units (DMU)**: The ministries and the departments will have data management units (DMU), headed by a designated official. This official will work closely with IDMO for ensuring implementation of policy.

ESSAY COMPETITION

Changing Contours of India's Foreign Policy: Imperatives & Implications

Winner: Deepika Singla
Bahadurgarh, Haryana

In the globalizing world it is necessary to form vital links with the neighboring countries. Realizing this every country formulates a foreign policy to reap maximum benefits for itself. Demography, availability of resources, ability to meet rising demand, scientific advancement & technological development and economic strength of a country determines the fundamentals of foreign policy of any country and so does of India's, thereby maintaining dynamism in the foreign policy.

India is the fifth largest economy in the world and third actually by PPP terms. Thus, its foreign policy has turned over a new leaf from independence to current times. As per Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, the foreign policy of India has undergone six evolutionary phases. These phases are:

- **1946-62:** Era of Optimistic Non-Alignment
- **1962-70:** Realism and discovery
- **1971-1991:** Regional assertion
- **1991- 1999:** Quest for strategic autonomy
- **2000- 2013:** Balancing power
- **2014 to current:** Phase of energetic diplomacy

Guiding Principles of India's Foreign Policy

India stands on the foundational ethos of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' and 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas'. The 'Panchsheel' principles and 'Panchamrit' form the guiding light of India's foreign policy. Though the policy has evolved but the basic principles and civilizational ethos of India have still not lost ground to tackle the newly emerging challenges.

- **Panchsheel:** The Panchsheel principles include mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity & sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and cooperation for mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence.
- **Panchamrit:** It includes Samman (dignity of honor); samvad (greater engagement and dialogue); samriddhi (shared prosperity); suraksha (regional and global security) and sanskriti evam sabhyata (cultural and civilizational linkages).

Contours of Foreign Policy and its Imperatives

Every nation yearns to become politically, economically, militarily as well as culturally strong and so does India. The drive to fulfill economic, social, political and ecological needs and achieve security on each front is responsible in shaping foreign policy of India. The approach of contemporary India is not restricted to economic considerations but gives emphasis to structural factors as well. India aspires to attain major power status sharing regional and global responsibilities in diverse domains such as energy, environment, global trade, human rights, good governance, and international security. All these elements are reflected in India's diplomatic engagements with the world.

Political Security

On the political front, the foreign policy of India has tried to assure political security, cyber security, balance of power, and external security and 'Neighborhood First' principle.

- **Military & Strategic Agreements:** For long term military and strategic cooperation India signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) and the General Security of Military Information Agreement with the United States.
- **Retaliatory Approach (Military/Economic):** India organized a surgical strike against Pakistan and imposed retaliatory tariffs on US products in response to US decision of terminating India's status as a beneficiary developing nation under Generalized System of Preference trade program.
- **International Cooperation on Burning Issues:** India's hosting of the Fifth Global Conference on Cyberspace in November 2017 and India-European Union (EU) commitment toward working for "open, free, secure, stable, peaceful, and accessible cyberspace, enabling economic growth and innovation symbolizes India's recognition of the stakes in effective international cooperation in cyberspace.
- **Initiatives towards Balance of Power:** To ensure balance of power, India has adopted Act East Policy, Think West Policy, SAGAR (Security and Growth of All in the Region) and joined BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), etc.
- **Approach towards Regional Influence:** To increase regional influence, India has adopted pragmatic approach towards its neighbors helping them to strengthen their economy, for example, India-Maldives Addu Tourism Zone; extending economic assistance to Sri Lanka, etc.
- **Non-Proliferation Credentials:** Giving a boost to its non-proliferation credentials, India has become member of Missile Technology Control Regime, the Australia Group and Wassenaar Arrangement.

Polity and Governance

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Judiciary

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- Transit Anticipatory Bail

Plans/Policies

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Polity and Governance

Delimitation Commission Notifies New J&K Assembly Constituencies

Recently, the Delimitation Commission for Jammu and Kashmir submitted its final report for the delimitation of Assembly and parliamentary constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Delimitation Commission was constituted by the Centre on March 6, 2020 in exercise of powers conferred by Section 3 of the Delimitation Act, 2002 (33 of 2002), for the purpose of delimitation of Assembly and Parliamentary Constituencies in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

Recommendations

Redrawal of Constituencies

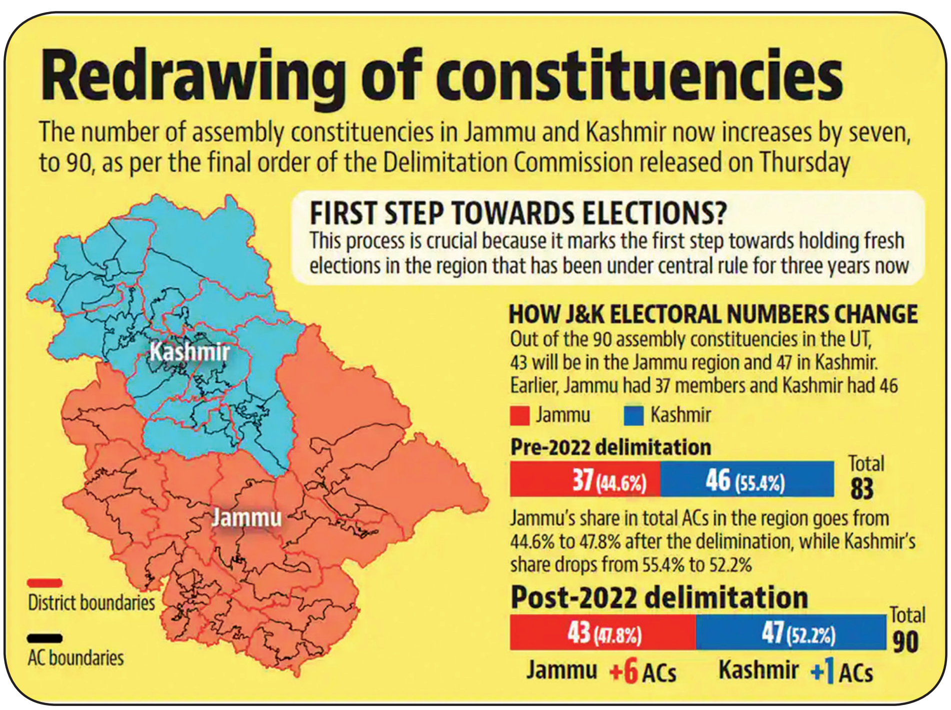
- Delimitation Commission has recommended seven additional constituencies:
  - 6 for Jammu
  - 1 for Kashmir
- Jammu Division will now have 43 seats compared to 37 earlier.
- Kashmir Valley will have 47 seats compared to 46 earlier.

Lok Sabha Seats

- Reorganisation of the Parliamentary constituencies so that 5 Lok Sabha seats constitute 18 Assembly constituencies each, taking the total number of assembly constituencies to 90.
- Reserving 9 Assembly seats for Scheduled Tribes, 6 in Jammu while 3 in Kashmir.
- The Anantnag region in Kashmir has been combined with Rajouri and Poonch in Jammu to carve out Anantnag-Rajouri as one Parliamentary constituency.

Kashmiri Hindus

- It recommended provision of at least two members from the community of Kashmiri Migrants (Kashmiri Hindus) in the Legislative Assembly.



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Social Issues

Surrogacy

On 27th May, 2022, a petition was filed before Delhi High Court, challenging the exclusion of a single man and a woman having a child from surrogacy and demanded the decriminalization of commercial surrogacy.

- The petitioners have challenged their exclusion from availing surrogacy under the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021 and Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021.
- The petitioners include a single man and a woman who is also a mother and desires a second child.

Basis of the Petition

- The personal decision of a single person about the birth of a baby through surrogacy, i.e., the right of reproductive autonomy is a facet of the right to privacy guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Issues Raised

- The personal decision of a single person about the birth of a baby through surrogacy, i.e., the right of reproductive autonomy is a facet of the right to privacy guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- Currently, the existing laws do not allow single men to have child through surrogacy.
- Married women can only avail surrogacy services if they are unable to produce a child due to medical conditions.
- The laws also require a surrogate to be genetically related to the couple who intend to have a child through this method.
- Further, commercial surrogacy is the only option available to them but the "ban on commercial surrogacy robs them of the option".
- Thus, the right of privacy of every citizen or person to be free from unwarranted governmental intrusion into matters fundamentally affecting a decision to bear or beget a child through surrogacy cannot be taken away.

Surrogacy

- Surrogacy is an arrangement in which a woman (the surrogate) agrees to carry and give birth to a child on behalf of another person or couple (the intended parent/s).
- A surrogate, sometimes also called a gestational carrier, is a woman who conceives, carries and gives birth to a child for another person or couple (intended parent/s).

Altruistic Surrogacy

- It involves no monetary compensation to the surrogate mother other than the medical expenses and insurance coverage during the pregnancy.

Commercial Surrogacy

- It includes surrogacy or its related procedures undertaken for a monetary benefit or reward (in cash or kind) exceeding the basic medical expenses and insurance coverage.

Issues with Surrogacy in India

Social and Psychological Context of Surrogacy

- Commercialization of surrogacy creates several social conflicts.
- Since most surrogate mothers are not from well-off sections and the motive primarily is monetary so they are easily exploited by the agents working for commissioning parents.
- Secrecy and anonymity creates a negative environment that affects human relations within and outside families.
- Surrogacy carry social stigma in the society as it is equated with prostitution and by virtue of that it is argued that it should be disallowed on moral grounds.

Health Risks

- In India, surrogates are implanted with up to five embryos in order to increase the chances of pregnancy.

Heritage Art & Culture

Art & Culture

- Cultural Significance of India's Gifts to Quad Partners
- Kanheri Caves
- Vadnagar's Link with Buddhism
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- New Archaeological Findings at Rakhigarhi
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Personalities

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News Snippets

Art & Culture

Cultural Significance of India's Gifts to Quad Partners

At the recent Quad Summit held at Tokyo, Indian Prime Minister carried with him gifts for leaders of the US, Australia and Japan showcasing India's rich cultural heritage and art forms.

Rogan Painting

- Rogan painting is an art of cloth printing practised in the Kutch District of Gujarat.
- In this craft, paint made from boiled oil and vegetable dyes is laid down on fabric using either a metal block (printing) or a stylus (painting).
- The word 'Rogan' comes from Persian, meaning varnish or oil.
- A special paste made of castor is used in this craft.
- Castor seeds are hand-pounded to extract the oil and turned into a paste by boiling, Colored powder diluted in water is then mixed with this.
- The kalam, an iron rod, flat at both ends, is used to paint half the design with the support of the fingers of the left hand.

Sanjhi Art Panel

- Sanjhi Painting is a tradition of art that originated out of the cult of Krishna and flourished in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh.

- It is in Vraja, or Vrindavan, the homeland of Lord Sri Krishna, that this art of Sanjhi painting reached its pinnacle.
- It involves creating stencils based on incidents from the life of the deity and then hand-cutting these on thin sheets of paper using scissors.
- Sanjhi was popularised in the 15th and 16th centuries by the Vaishnava temples and was practised by Brahmin priests.

Gond Art

- The historical evolution of 'Gond', also known as Pardhan painting or 'Jangarh kalam,' comes from a community of around four million people spread all over central India, Gonds have a recorded history of 1400 years.
- Gond paintings are one of the most admired tribal art forms.
- The word 'Gond' comes from the expression 'Kond' which means 'green mountain'.
- These paintings, created by dots and lines, have been a part of pictorial art on walls and floors of Gonds.
- It is done with the construction and re-construction of each and every house, with locally available natural colours and materials like charcoal, coloured soil, plant sap, leaves, cow dung, limestone powder, etc.
- Gond art is considered very similar to Aboriginal art of Australia.