




MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS CAPSULE (UPSC)

SEPTEMBER 2023



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PREFACE

Hello PRAYAAS' Students Community,

Fear of current affairs among UPSC students is justified due to the vastness of the current affairs, the dynamic nature of current events, the unpredictability of the exam, the need for a deep understanding, and the pressure to stay updated.

From above, we recognize that the UPSC examination demands a thorough understanding of current affairs and their implications on a broader scale. **Therefore, "PRAYAAS PRABHAV" is not merely a compilation of news headlines but a gateway to a deeper comprehension of the interconnected world we live in.**

Each article in this magazine is designed to foster critical thinking and analytical skills, essential for excelling in the UPSC examinations and becoming an astute civil servant.

As you delve into the pages of this magazine, we encourage you to engage actively with the content, ponder over the implications, and form your independent viewpoints.

At the end of Magazine, you will get **QR Code of weekly lectures by our faculty (Dhananjay Sir)**. These lectures are available **Free of Cost** to all Sincere Aspirants. In that lectures you will thoroughly understand each topic of these Monthly Compilation. Make Most use of it to understand topic better.

Till, December, we are Specifically focusing on Mains perspective. Mains focus will be on how to develop that thinking abilities and how to decipher topics for mains.

Start from January till prelims, we will shift our focus specifically on Prelims Perspective here our special focus on linking Current with Static.

The UPSC examinations not only assess your factual knowledge but also value your ability to analyse, synthesize, and present coherent arguments. **Let "PRAYAAS PRABHAV" be your ally in honing these essential skills.**

We are hopeful that this efforts from PRAYAAS will bring more clarity in Your UPSC Journey. As in the name of our institute "PRAYAAS Institute of Excellence", it will bring excellence in your current affairs and over all journey of UPSC.

Your Thankful,

Team PRAYAAS

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GS 1

Women Participation in STEM

Context-

- Recently, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) announced the list of awardees for the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize for 2022. Notably, there were no female scientists chosen for the SSB Awards 2022.

Syllabus of Mains – GS 1 - Role of women

GS 2 – Education, Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors

STEM

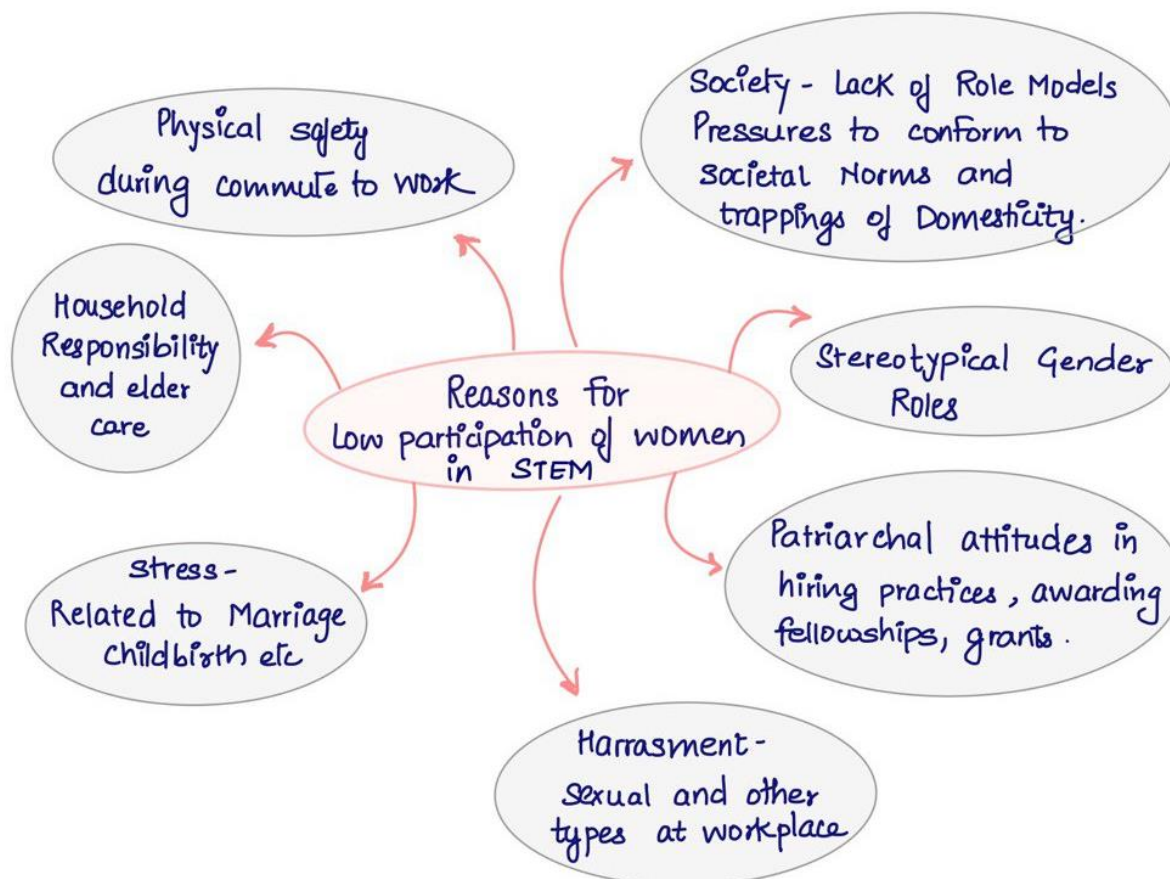
- The STEM acronym was introduced in 2001 by scientific administrators at the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF).
- The organization previously used the acronym SMET when referring to the career fields in those disciplines or a curriculum that integrated knowledge and skills from those fields.
- It is a curriculum based on the idea of educating students in 4 specific disciplines — science, technology, engineering and mathematics — in an interdisciplinary and applied approach.
- India is one of the countries that produce the highest number of scientists and engineers, the growth of STEM has picked up significantly over the last few years.
- Under Article 51A of the Constitution of India, it is a duty of every citizen of India to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.

Participation of Women in STEM:

- About **43% of STEM graduates in India are women**, which is the highest in the world, but their share in STEM jobs in India is a mere 14%.
- In Indian STEM, the primary concern has never been with the number of women graduates, but with the proportion of those who ultimately land STEM jobs.
- India stands at **127th position in the latest Global Gender Gap Index.** There is less participation of girls especially in science, technology, engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Fields.

- For instance, IIT in 2016 got only 8% female students. This shows a clear gap when it comes to participation in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics)-related fields.

Reasons for the Low Participation:



Initiatives to Promote Women Participation:

Vigyan Jyoti Scheme:

- It is launched by the Department of Science & Technology (DST).
- It is intended to create a level-playing field for the meritorious girls in high school to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) in their higher education.
- It also offers exposure for girl students from the rural background to help to plan their journey from school to a job of their choice in the field of science.

GATI Scheme:

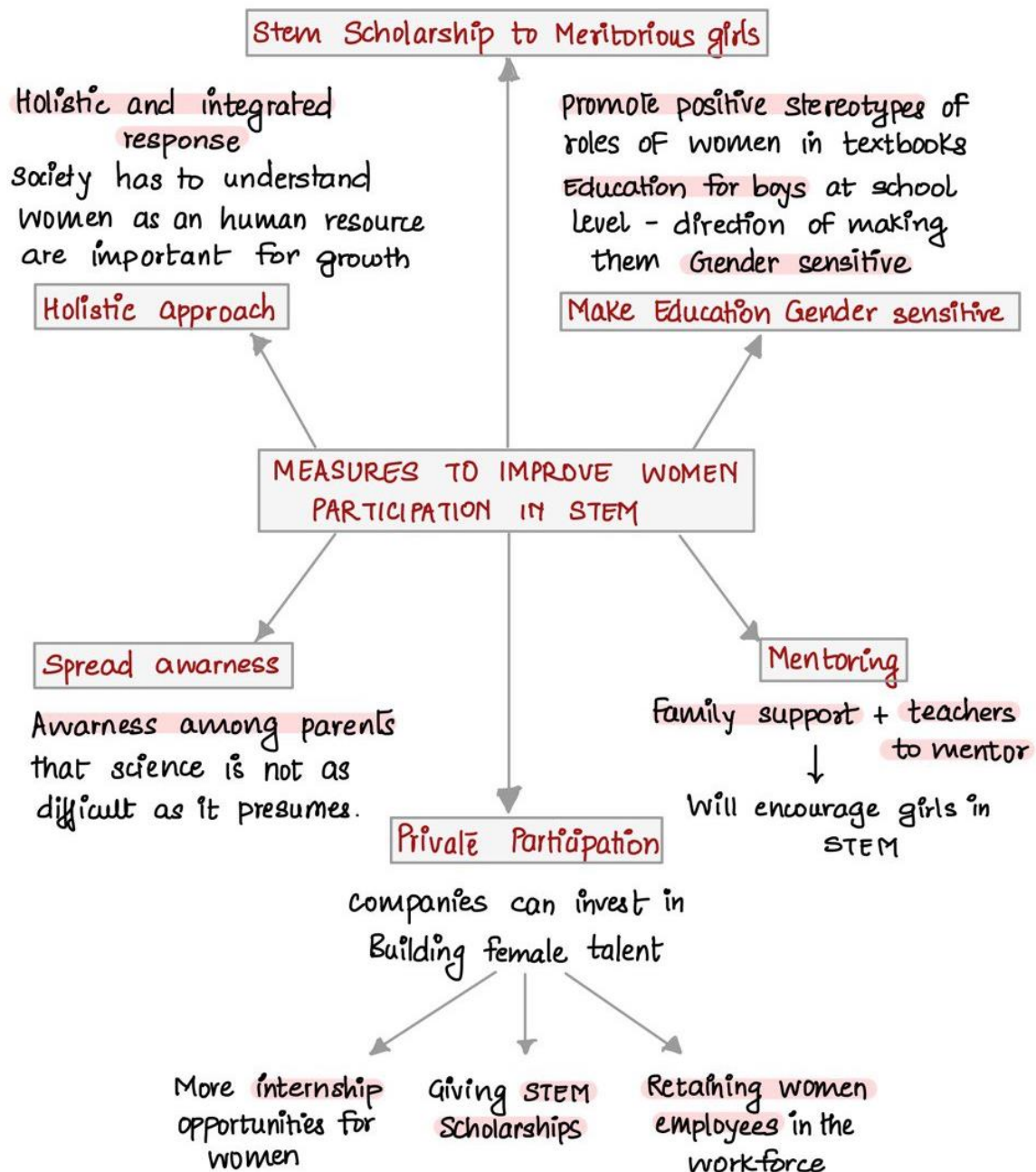
- The Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI) will develop a comprehensive Charter and a framework for assessing Gender Equality in STEM.

Knowledge Involvement Research Advancement through Nurturing (KIRAN):

- Launched in 2014-15, the scheme provides opportunities for women scientists in moving up the academic and administrative ladder.
- One of the programmes under the KIRAN scheme — **‘Women Scientist Scheme’** — provides career opportunities to unemployed women scientists and technologists, especially those who had a break in their career.

Measures to improve women participation in these fields:

Will boost girls to pursue science at graduate & post graduate levels.



Conclusion: -

- Empowering women in science and technology and their full and equal participation is **one of the core objectives mentioned in the Science and Technology Policy of the Govt. of India, 2003.**
- Accordingly, there are several schemes, mostly in the form of scholarships, introduced by the government. However, evidence suggests that not much progress has been made. There is a need to invest on supporting infrastructure, incentivising institutions to promote gender equity, transparency in decision making etc. to bridge the persisting gender imbalance in STEM major.
- **Gender equality is not just an ethical imperative, but also a business priority.** Organisations with greater diversity among their executive teams tend to have higher profits and greater innovation capability.

Question for Practice: -

- Critically Examining the assertion that the scarcity of women is a justification for the enduring underrepresentation of female scientists in academic and research institutions. (250W)

GS 2

One Nation, One Election (Simultaneous Election)

Context: -

- The government has initiated steps towards achieving simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in India. Former President Ram Nath Kovind will lead the committee responsible for this effort.
- A special parliamentary session has been called from September 18-22 to discuss this matter. Implementing "one nation, one election"

Central Idea behind One Nation, One Election

- The central idea behind One nation, one election is to synchronize the timing of Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections across all States to reduce the frequency of polls throughout the country.

Historical Background

- The concept of simultaneous elections in India dates back to at least 1983 when it was first proposed by the Election Commission.
- However, India initially conducted simultaneous elections to both the Lok Sabha (House of People) and State Legislative Assemblies in 1951-52, and this practice continued in the subsequent General Elections of 1957, 1962, and 1967.
- The cycle was first broken in 1959 after the Centre invoked Article 356 to dismiss the then-Kerala government.
- Subsequently, due to defections and counter-defections between parties, several Legislative Assemblies dissolved post-1960, which eventually led to separate polls for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.
- In 1970, the Lok Sabha itself was dissolved ahead of schedule, leading to fresh elections in 1971. Consequently, the First, Second and Third Lok Sabha were the only ones to enjoy full five-year terms.
- The frequent premature dissolutions and extensions of the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies' terms led to separate elections for these bodies, disrupting the cycle of simultaneous elections that had been established earlier.
- Idea of conducting simultaneous elections was advocated in 1999 by the Law Commission headed by BP Jeevan Reddy.

Advantage of simultaneous election

Reduction of Financial burden on state exchequer: -

- Continuous election cycles are a financial burden on the state exchequer.
- 'One Nation One election' will reduce the overall expenditure on political process by ECI.
- In the initial Lok Sabha elections in 1951-52, 53 parties participated with poll expenses of 11 crore rupees. In contrast, the 2019 elections saw 610 political parties, around 9,000 candidates, and an estimated poll expenditure of 60,000 crore rupees (As declared by ADR).

Better utilisation of financial resources by political parties: -

- Simultaneous elections will reduce the campaign expenditure of political parties and the candidates.
- This will help smaller regional parties in better management of financial resources.

Reduced duration of 'model code of conduct': -

- Frequent imposition of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) during polls stalls all development work for months at a time.
- It will reduce 'policy paralysis' that results from the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct during election time.

Focus on governance instead of being in 'election mode': -

- "One nation one election" will ensure continuity of policies and programmes of the central and state governments. It will reduce disruption of normal public life as political rallies will be kept to a minimum. It will improve the delivery of essential services to public.

Increase of administrative efficiency: -

- During elections the entire state machinery focuses on conducting a free and fair electoral process which impacts the everyday administration because officials are engaged in polling duties. 'One nation one election' will increase efficiency of administrative system.

Improvement of Internal security: -

- Frequent Deployment of security forces during elections is use a considerable size of armed police forces which can otherwise be better deployed for better management of internal security problems like naxalism.

Reduced use of 'black money': -

- Elections involve considerable expenditure by prospective candidates most of which is black money. 'One nation one election' will reduce the circulation of black money in economy.

Reduction of populist measures: -

- Frequent elections force the political class to think in terms of immediate electoral gains rather than focus on long-term programs and policies which impacts the focus of governance and policymaking. Simultaneous elections would reduce the populist measures.

Increase of voter turnout: -

- According to the Law Commission, simultaneous elections will increase voter turnout because it will be easier for people to cast many votes all at once.

Improvement in social harmony: -

- Frequent elections perpetuate caste, religion, and communal issues across the country as elections are polarising events that have accentuated casteism, communalism, and corruption.
- Simultaneous elections would reduce the fault lines between communities created due to multiple elections.

Arguments against 'one nation one election': -**Reduced Accountability: -**

- Regular elections ensure that the government is under an obligation to listen to the will of the people regularly. Regular state elections serve as feedback mechanism for the political parties. Critics argue that if the government is assured of a fixed term it might lead to autocratic tendencies.

Undermining of Federal Power: -

- In recent years, issues affecting the states have gained political value, which is demonstrated with more regional parties forming state governments like DMK in Tamil Nadu, TDP in Andhra Pradesh & Biju Janata Dal in Odisha. Due to simultaneous elections union elections might overshadow the state election.

Disadvantage for regional parties: -

- Critics argue that simultaneous election would hamper the prospects of regional parties as national issues would dominate the political narrative instead of local issues. Regional parties would not be able to compete against national parties in both money and election strategies.

Against Spirit of Democracy: -

- Critics argue that forcing simultaneous elections is against democracy because trying to force an artificial cycle of elections and restricting the choice for voters is not correct.

Influences choices and electoral behaviour-

- Voters may vote for the same party both at the national and state level which might put regional parties at a disadvantage.
- According to research report by IDFC Institute if elections are held at six-month intervals, there's a 77 percent likelihood of voters favouring the same political party or alliance for both state assemblies and the Lok Sabha.
- This figure drops to 61 percent if elections are held six months apart.

Threat to internal security: -

- Deployment of heavy security forces for simultaneous elections is a logistical challenge and might endanger the internal security in the country.

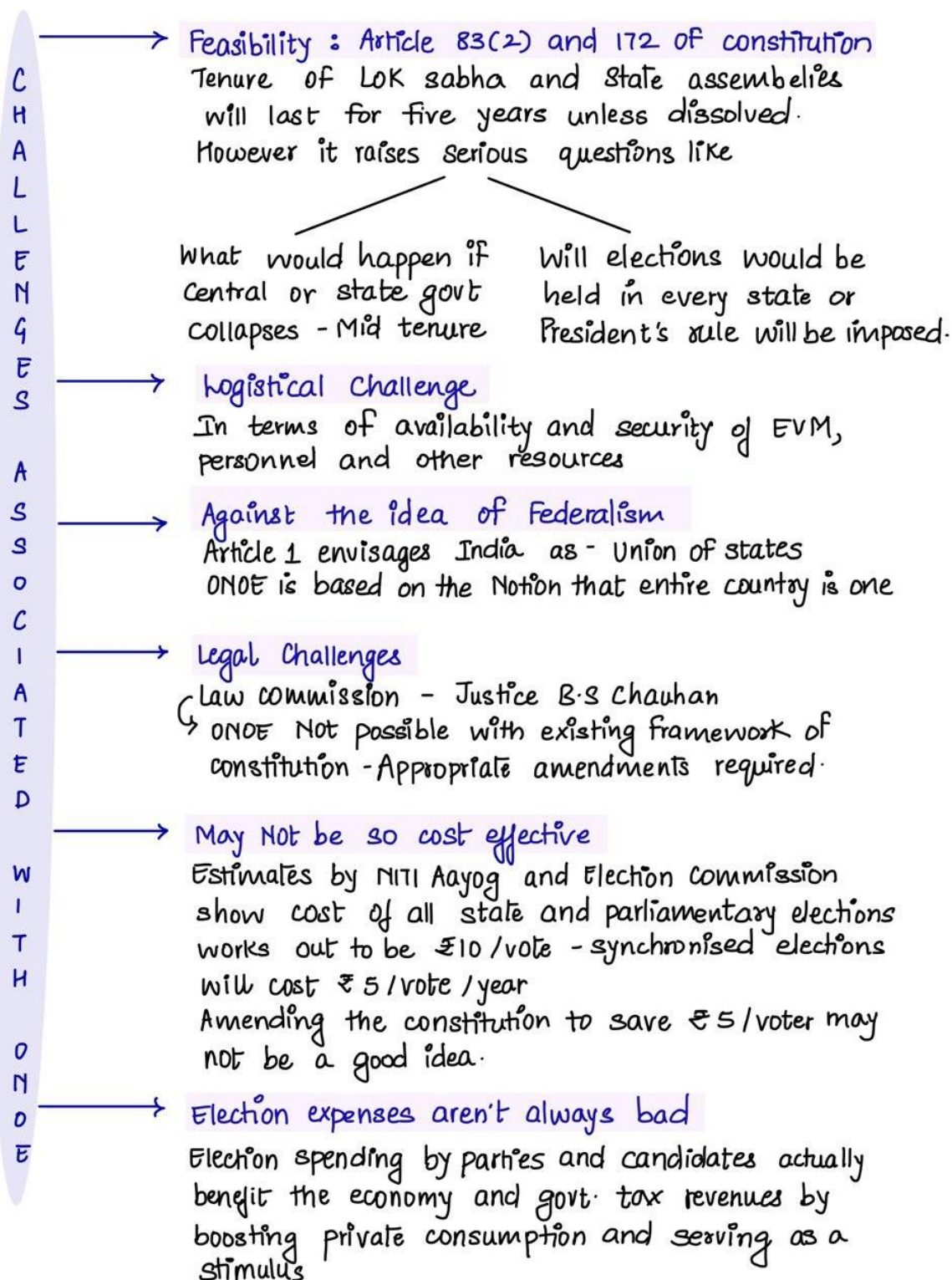
Tampering with the democratic will

- The present system has been consciously chosen by our forefathers to uphold the will of democracy by providing for regular elections so that people can express their will through the right to vote. Modifying the election system would mean tampering with the power of people to express their democratic will.

Exclusion of local elections: -

- Simultaneous election excludes local body polls for panchayat and municipalities. Conduction of separate election for these bodies will be another additional exercise which might nullify the gains made by simultaneous election for both lok sabha and state assemblies.

Challenges associated with ONOE: -



Logistical challenges: for implementing "One Nation One Election" are as follows:

Increased EVM and VVPAT Requirements:

- Currently, a single voting machine is used at each polling station. To conduct simultaneous elections, the Election Commission of India (ECI) would need to double the supply of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) because each polling station would require two sets – one for the Legislative Assembly election and another for the Lok Sabha election.

Additional Polling Staff:

- Conducting simultaneous elections would necessitate a larger pool of polling staff to manage both sets of elections simultaneously. This poses a recruitment and training challenge for the ECI.

Logistics of Material Transport:

- Coordinating the transportation of election materials to polling stations, including EVMs, VVPATs, and other equipment, becomes more complex with simultaneous elections. Ensuring timely delivery and distribution to the right polling stations is critical.

Enhanced Security Needs:

- Simultaneous elections would require heightened security measures, including an increase in Central Police Forces to maintain law and order at polling stations. Adequate security arrangements must be made to manage the dual electoral process effectively.

Storage Challenges:

- The ECI already faces difficulties in storing EVMs after elections. With the need for a larger inventory of machines due to simultaneous elections, finding secure and suitable storage facilities becomes more pressing.

Recommendations of Various committee: -

- The Law Commission of India recommended simultaneous elections to Lok Sabha and State Legislative.
- The 79th report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice recommended a two-phase election schedule – one concurrent with Lok Sabha elections, the second in the mid-term of the Lok Sabha.
- The Election Commission has also extended its in-principle support for the simultaneous elections.

Feasibility of Simultaneous Election Report 2015

Holding of simultaneous elections would reduce burden on

- **Fund**-The massive expenditure that is currently incurred for the conduct of separate elections.
- **Policy paralysis**-It results from the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct during election time.
- Impact on delivery of essential services and Burden on crucial manpower that is deployed during election time.

What are possible solutions?

Presidential Form of Government:

- One radical solution is transitioning to a Presidential form of government, where the President is not accountable to the House. In such a system, fixed election dates, similar to the United States, could be established for presidential and legislative elections, minimizing synchronization challenges.
- Switching to the Presidential form of government would mean altering the basic structure of the constitution.

Fixed Election Dates:

- Emulate the American model of fixed election dates for the President, Vice President, House of Representatives, and Senate. These fixed dates could be legally mandated, ensuring that elections occur at scheduled intervals, regardless of the parliamentary form of government.

Alternative Leadership Selection:

- In the parliamentary system, if the government falls before completing its term, one solution is to invite the second or third leading person in the house or the leader of a political party to form the government. Alternatively, the House could be given the opportunity to elect its leader in such circumstances.

Coupling the 'no-confidence motion' along with the 'vote of confidence' in an alternative government: -

- This vote of confidence will also mention a leader to head it. After passing both of them (no-confidence motion and vote of confidence), the alternate government will head the government for the remaining term. This will help to maintain the fixed term and can ensure proper simultaneous election cycle.

Constitutional Amendment for Term Alignment:

- Amend the Constitution to align the terms of state legislative assemblies with that of the Lok Sabha elections. This would ensure that elections for both entities occur simultaneously. Additionally, synchronizing only the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha elections could be considered.

Logistical Costs vs. Savings:

- While implementing "One Nation One Election" may entail some logistical costs, it is essential to consider the potential savings, such as reduced election expenditure. The net result could be cost-effective and efficient elections.

Conclusion: -

- The Government should not implement ONOE in a hurry, it should conduct additional study, evaluate the data, and solicit feedback from voters, opposition party leaders, and local parties on how to implement the concept. Hence, let India decide whether it needs "One Nation, One Election" to be implemented or not.
- The concept of 'One India One Election' holds promise as a positive change, provided it is executed with meticulous attention to policies and regulations. Addressing the growing demand for skilled administrative staff and heightened security is crucial. Forming a dedicated group consisting of constitutional experts, think tanks, government officials, and political party representatives is essential to working out the intricate details of implementation.
- In a country where elections are celebrated as festivals, the transition to holding them once every five years nationwide would indeed be akin to a grand "Maha-Festival," consolidating the democratic process and reducing the administrative burden associated with frequent elections.

SELF HELP GROUPS (SHG)

Why in the news?

- Recently, the Government announced that skill development training will cover two crore women under the 'Lakhpati Didi' scheme, which aims to encourage them to start micro-enterprises.

Lakhpati Didi Scheme

- **Objective:** Enable rural SHG women to earn at least Rs.1 lakh per annum.
- In 2021, the **Ministry of Rural Development launched** the Lakhpati SHG women initiative.
- It is based on a women-led development approach.
- **Activities Covered:** Women would be trained in skills like plumbing, LED bulb making, and operating and repairing drones, among others.

What is SHG?

- National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) defines Self-Help Groups as 'a homogenous group of rural poor voluntarily formed to save whatever amount they can conveniently save out of their earnings and mutually agree to contribute and emergent credit needs'.
- A Self-Help Group is defined as a "self-governed, peer-controlled information group of people with similar socio-economic background and having a desire to collectively perform common purpose".
- SHG is a village-based financial intermediary committee usually composed of 10-20 local women.
- It is **voluntary in nature**.
- India has **around 1.2 crore** SHGs, **88% of them all women based**.
- SHG success stories include Kudumbashree in Kerala, Jeevika in Bihar, Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal in Maharashtra, and Looms of Ladakh.
- SHGs originated in the year 1975 at Bangladesh by Mohammed Yunus of Chittagong University. It is a programme related to the eradication of poverty in general, rural development through women empowerment in particular.
- Its initiation-credit in India in 1986-87 goes to National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). But the real effort was taken after 1991-92 from the linkages of SHGs with banks.

Benefits of SHGs

Social integrity:

- SHGs encourages collective efforts for combating practices like dowry, alcoholism etc.

Gender Equity:

- SHGs empowers women and inculcates leadership skill among them.
- Empowered women participate more actively in gram sabha and elections.
- There is evidence in this country as well as elsewhere that formation of Self-Help Groups has a multiplier effect in improving women's status in society as well as in the family leading to improvement in their socio-economic condition and also enhances their self-esteem.

Pressure Groups:

- Their participation in governance process enables them to highlight issues such as dowry, alcoholism, the menace of open defecation, primary health care etc and impact policy decision.

Voice to marginalized section:

- Most of the beneficiaries of government schemes have been from weaker and marginalized communities and hence their participation through SHGs ensures social justice.

Financial Inclusion:

- Priority Sector Lending norms and assurance of returns incentivize banks to lend to SHGs. The SHG-Bank linkage programme pioneered by NABARD has made access to credit easier and reduced the dependence on traditional money lenders and other non-institutional sources.
- Improving efficiency of government schemes and reducing corruption through social audits.

Alternate source of employment:

- It eases dependency on agriculture by providing support in setting up micro-enterprises e.g. personalised business ventures like tailoring, grocery, and tool repair shops.

Changes In Consumption Pattern:

- It has enabled the participating households to spend more on education, food and health than non-client households.

Impact on Housing & Health:

- The financial inclusion attained through SHGs has led to reduced child mortality, improved maternal health and the ability of the poor to combat disease through better nutrition, housing and health – especially among women and children.

Banking literacy: -

- It encourages and motivates its members to save and act as a conduit for formal banking services to reach them.

Role of SHG's in Empowering Women: -**Economic Sphere:**

- **Promoted entrepreneurship Culture:** Among rural women by enhancing their skills and allowing them to engage in various entrepreneurial activities.
- **Providing Finance:** SHG provides micro-loans to sustain businesses while also creating an environment for them to develop greater agency and decision-making skills.
- **Participation in Labour Force:** Rise in Rural Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) from 19.7% in 2018- 19 to 27.7% in 2020-21 (Economic Survey 2023-23).
- They are also bridging the gap between rural and urban India.

Social Sphere:

- Contributed to strong social networks and stronger local institutions, thus contributing to social capital.
- Enhanced position of women, for instance, their participation in family decision-making has increased, etc.
- Meet national targets, such as those under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 (gender equality), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) etc.
- During Disaster and Other Exigencies: During the COVID-19 pandemic, SHGs led from the front in producing masks, sanitisers, and protective gear.

Political Sphere:

- Many SHGs have started to advocate for their rights and, through pressure groups, have forayed into activism while sustaining livelihoods.

Issues With Self-Help Groups:

Access of market:

- Also, the goods produced by SHGs do not have access to larger marketplace.

Lacks up-gradation of skills:

- Most SHGs are not making use of new technological innovations and skills.
- This is because there is limited awareness with regards to new technologies and they do not have the necessary skills to make use of the same.
Furthermore, there is a lack of effective mechanisms.

Politicization:

- Political affiliation and interference have become a **serious problem** with SHGs.

Agricultural Activities:

- Most of the SHGs work at local level and engaged in agricultural activities. SHGs in rural areas should be introduced to non-agricultural businesses too and should be provided with state-of-the art machinery.

Lack of Technology:

- Most of the SHGs work with rudimentary or no technology.

Weak Financial Management:

- It is also found that in certain units the return from the business is not properly invested further in the units, and the funds diverted for other personal and domestic purposes like marriage, construction of house etc.

Inadequate Training Facilities:

- The training facilities given to the members of SHGs in the specific areas of product selection, quality of products, production techniques, managerial ability, packing, other technical knowledge are not adequate to compete with that of strong units.

Problems Related with Raw Materials:

- Normally each SHG procures raw materials individually from the suppliers. They purchase raw materials in smaller quantities and hence they may not be able to enjoy the benefits of large-scale purchases like discount, credit facilities etc.
- Moreover, there is no systematic arrangement to collect raw materials in bulk quantities and preserve them There is no linkage with major suppliers of raw

materials. Most of the SHGs are Ignorant about the major raw material suppliers and their terms and conditions. All these causes a high cost of raw materials.

SHGs are run by non-professionals:

- There is no professionalism within the SHGs. This does not promote the expansion and improvement of the SHGs. This does not allow for the increase of wages of the members and improvement in their living conditions. This also leads to error in accounting and mismanagement.

Lack of Stability and Unity Especially among women SHGs:

- In the case of SHGs dominated by women, it is found that there is no stability of the units as many married women are not in a position to associate with the group due to the shift of their place of residence. Moreover, there is no unity among women members owing to personal reasons.

Exploitation by Strong Members:

- It is also observed that in the case of many SHGs, strong members try to earn a lion's share of the profit of the group, by exploiting the ignorance and illiterate members.

Too much dependence on government and NGOs:

- Many SHGs are dependent on the promoter agencies for their survival. In case these agencies withdraw their support, the SHGs are vulnerable to downfall.






Inadequate Financial Assistance:

- It is found that in most of the SHGs, the financial assistance provided to them by the agencies concerned is not adequate to meet their actual requirements. The financial authorities are not giving adequate subsidies to meet even the labour cost requirements.

Credit Mobilization:

- A study has shown that about 48% of the members had to borrow from local money lenders, relatives and neighbours because they were getting inadequate loan from groups.
- Contrary to the vision for SHG development, members of a group do not come necessarily from the poorest families.

Government Initiative: -

Initiative	Year/Agency	Key Features
 Self-Help Group Bank Linkage Programme (SHG-BLP)	1992/ National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)	Linked SHG with banks.
 Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana– National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY – NRLM)	2011 as NRLM/ Ministry of Rural Development	Organizing rural poor women into SHGs and continuously nurturing and supporting them. Renamed as DAY-NRLM in 2015.
 Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)	2016/Sub-schemes under DAY-NRLM	help SHGs to set-up enterprises at the village level in non-farm sectors.
 Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP)	2011/Sub-schemes under DAY-NRLM	Empowering women in agriculture by making systematic investments to enhance their participation and productivity, also create and sustain their agriculture-based livelihoods.
 Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)	2014/ Sub-schemes under DAY-NRLM	Skilling the poorest of the poor youth between the ages of 15 and 35 years.

Measures to Make SHGs Effective: -

Role of a facilitator: -

- The Government should play the role of a facilitator and promoter, create a supportive environment for the growth and development of the SHG movement.

Expanding SHG Movement to Credit Deficient Areas of the Country: -

- Such as Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, States of the North-East.

Rapid expansion: -

- Rapid expansion of financial infrastructure (including that of NABARD) and by adopting extensive IT enabled communication and capacity building measures in these States.

Extension of Self-Help Groups to Urban/Peri-Urban Areas:

- Efforts should be made to increase income generation abilities of the urban poor as there has been a rapid rise in urbanisation and many people remain financially excluded.

Positive Attitude:

- Government functionaries should treat the poor and marginalized as viable and responsible customers and as possible entrepreneurs.

Monitoring: -

- Need to establish a separate SHG monitoring cell in every state. The cell should have direct links with district and block level monitoring system. The cell should collect both quantitative and qualitative information.

Need Based Approach: -

- Commercial Banks and NABARD in collaboration with the State Government need to continuously innovate and design new financial products for these groups.

Conclusion: -

- In this era of liberalization, privatization and globalization, women are more conscious for their liberty, rights and freedom, security, social status etc, SHGs play a very important role in the economic and social advancement of women from rural strata of society.
- Further, government programmes can be implemented through various SHGs. This will not only improve the transparency and efficiency but also bring our society closer to 'self-governance' as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi.
- Self-help group (SHG) movement is one of the most powerful incubators of female resilience and entrepreneurship in rural areas. It is a powerful channel for altering the social construct of gender in villages.

18th G20 Summit

In News: -

- The 18th G20 Summit was held in New Delhi, India on September 9th and 10th, 2023. The summit was the first time India hosted the G20 Leaders' Summit.
- The **theme of the summit was** "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", which means "The world is one family".
- The **overarching theme, "One Earth, One Family, One Future,"** encapsulates India's vision of fostering unity and equality, transcending the traditional distinctions between developed and developing nations.
- G20 Leaders' New Delhi Declaration achieved unanimous consensus, addressing diverse global issues, from Russia-Ukraine tensions to sustainable development, food security, and launching the Global Biofuel Alliance.

Syllabus of Mains – GS 2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Basics: -

- The Group owes its origin to the Financial Crisis in 1997-98 of the Asian Tigers (Countries of East and Southeast Asia), which caused its establishment in 1999.
- It worked first as a forum for the Central Bank Governors and Finance Ministers of the major industrialised and developing economies to discuss global economic and financial stability.
- **Elevation to Leader's Level:** After the 2008 global financial crisis, it was upgraded to the level of Heads of State or Government when it became clear that crisis coordination would be possible only at the highest political level.
- In 2009, it was declared as the "premier forum for international economic cooperation".
- The G20 Leaders have met on a regular basis since then, and the G20 has emerged as the leading platform for global economic cooperation.

G20 Countries List (Now G21)

- G20 comprises 19 countries, namely Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkiye, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union.
- These members account for **around 85% of the world GDP, 75% of the total international trade, and two-thirds of the global population.**

- In addition to these member countries, the G20 each year invites guest countries and international organisations such as the United Nations, World Bank, IMF, OECD, ASEAN, etc., to participate in its meetings.



Major Outcomes of G20 Summit 2023: -

Admittance of the African Union (G20 now G21):

- The G20 leaders agreed to admit the African Union as a permanent member of the G20, which is a major step towards increasing the representation of developing countries in the forum.

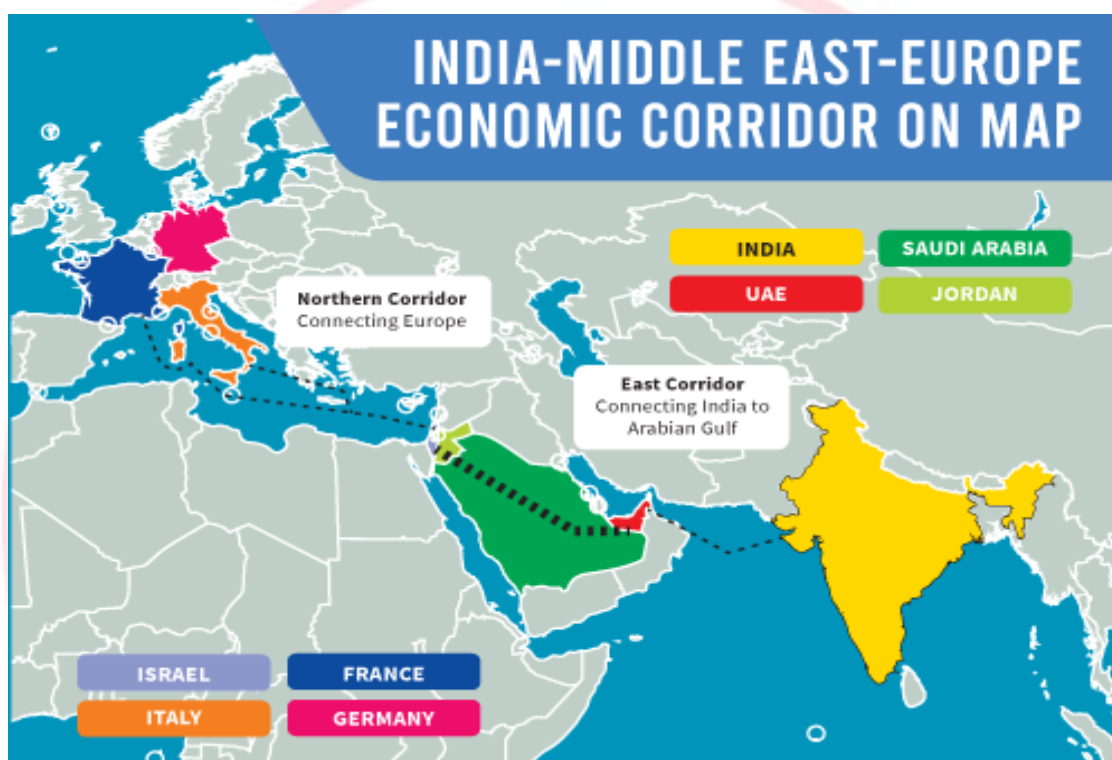
Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA):

- GBA is an India-led initiative that aims to develop an alliance of governments, international organizations, and industry to promote the adoption of biofuels.
- The alliance was launched with nine initiating members: India, the US, Brazil, Argentina, Bangladesh, Italy, Mauritius, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates.
- 19 countries and 12 international organizations have already agreed to join.

India – Middle East – Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC):

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Governments of India, the US, Saudi Arabia, the European Union, the UAE, France, Germany and Italy to establish the IMEC.
- IMEC is part of a **broader initiative called the Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII).**
- The PGII was initially introduced during the G7 summit in the UK in June 2021.

- PGII aims to finance infrastructure projects in developing countries through a combination of public and private investments.
- IMEC is a significant infrastructure project connecting India, the Middle East, and Europe.
- The project aims to establish a network of transport corridors, including railways and sea lanes.
- IMEC is seen as a response to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), providing an alternative infrastructure network.



G20 Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion Document:

- The G20 Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion document prepared by the World Bank has lauded the transformative impact of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) over the past decade under the Central Government.

India's Cultural Showcase:

- Bharat Mandapam (inspired from Anubhav Mandapam).
- Bronze statue of Lord Nataraja (Chola style).
- Konark Chakra of Odisha's Sun Temple and Image of Nalanda University (used as iconic backdrops).
- Thanjavur Paintings and Dhokra art.
- Brass statue of Lord Buddha sitting under Bodhi tree.

- Diverse musical heritage (Hindustani, Folk, Carnatic, Devotional).

Structure and functioning of G20

- The G20 operates based on annual meetings of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, with a leaders' summit held once a year.
- The G20 consists of **two parallel tracks called the Finance Track and the Sherpa Track.**
- These two tracks play an active role in shaping ideas and priorities for the host presidency while also guiding the intergovernmental negotiations carried out throughout the presidency.
- They prepare and follow up on the issues and commitments adopted at the Summits.

Sherpa Track: -

- Sherpas of member countries are the personal emissaries of the Leaders.
- They concentrate on socio-economic issues such as agriculture, anti-corruption, climate, digital economy, education, employment, energy, environment, health, tourism, trade and investment.
- They oversee all the negotiations over the year, discuss the agenda for the Summit and coordinate the substantive work of G20.

Finance Track: -

- It is headed by the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, who generally meet four times a year, with two meetings being held on the sidelines of World Bank /International Monetary Fund meetings.

Troika:

- The G20 **does not have a charter or a secretariat.**
- The Presidency is supported by the Troika, which includes the previous, current, and incoming presidencies. The G20 Presidency hosts the Summit and directs the agenda for a calendar year.

A non-binding forum:

- Its decisions are **not legally binding**, and member countries are not required to implement them.

Working with international organisations:

- The G20 members also work closely with international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Why G20 Is Important for India: -

Global Cooperation:

- In a rapidly changing global landscape, cooperation among major economies is essential. The G20 serves as a platform for coordinating responses to global crises and challenges.

Leadership Role:

- As the host of the G20 Presidency, India has the opportunity to assume a leadership role representing the interests of not only itself but also the Global South. This can help shape the global agenda in a more inclusive manner.

Global Influence:

- As one of the world's largest economies, India's participation in the G20 allows it to have a say in shaping global economic policies and governance. It provides India with a platform to advocate for its interests and priorities on the world stage.

Economic Growth:

- The G20 discussions often focus on economic stability, growth, and development. India can use its position in the G20 to promote policies that support its economic growth and development agenda.

Global Challenges:

- The G20 addresses a wide range of global challenges, including climate change, sustainable development, and health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. India's involvement in these discussions is crucial as it faces many of these challenges on a large scale.

Bilateral Relations:

- The G20 provides an opportunity for India to engage in bilateral discussions and negotiations with other major economies. It can use these meetings to strengthen its diplomatic and economic ties.

Reforms:

- India can advocate for reforms in international financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank, which can benefit both India and other developing nations.

Trade and Investment:

- The G20 discussions on trade and investment can have a significant impact on India's trade policies and economic partnerships with other countries.

Significance of G20 Summit 2023: -**Global Economic Recovery:**

- The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect economies worldwide. The G20 can play a crucial role in coordinating efforts to support economic recovery, stabilize financial markets, and address challenges related to trade, investment, and supply chains.

Climate Change and Sustainability:

- Climate change remains one of the most pressing global challenges. The G20 can use its platform to discuss climate action, set targets for emissions reduction, and promote sustainable development practices.
- With the theme of "One Earth, One Family, One Future," the 2023 summit may emphasize environmental responsibility.

Health Security:

- The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic underscores the need for global health security and pandemic preparedness. The G20 can discuss strategies for preventing and responding to future health crises, including vaccine distribution, healthcare infrastructure, and international cooperation on health research.

Trade and Geopolitical Tensions:

- The G20 can address trade tensions and promote a rules-based international trading system. Discussions on resolving trade disputes and promoting fair trade practices are crucial for global economic stability.

Digital Economy and Technology:

- The digital economy and technological advancements are transforming industries and societies.
- The G20 can explore policies related to digital governance, data privacy, cybersecurity, and digital inclusion.

Social and Economic Inclusion:

- The G20 may focus on inclusive economic growth, addressing inequality, and promoting opportunities for all. This can include discussions on education, employment, social protection, and financial inclusion.

Geopolitical Cooperation:

- The G20 provides a platform for major powers to engage in diplomatic dialogue and collaboration. The summit can be an opportunity for leaders to discuss geopolitical tensions, conflict resolution, and regional stability.

Humanitarian and Development Initiatives:

- The G20 can support global efforts to alleviate poverty, promote sustainable development, and address humanitarian crises. Initiatives related to food security, clean water, and education may be on the agenda.

Global Governance and Reforms:

- Discussions on international governance structures, including the United Nations and international financial institutions, can be part of the G20's focus. Member countries may explore ways to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of these organizations.

Bridging North-South Divides:

- The G20 provides a **platform for dialogue between developed and developing countries**. It can be an opportunity for the Global South to voice its concerns and for the Global North to address issues related to development assistance and debt relief.

Issues and Limitations of G20: -**Difficulty in Reaching Consensus:**

- The G20 consists of countries with diverse economic and political systems, making it challenging to achieve consensus on crucial issues.
- For instance, during the 2008 global financial crisis, the G20 faced significant struggles in developing a coordinated response due to varying national interests and priorities.
- Similarly, issues like climate change and geopolitical tensions, such as the Russia-Ukraine crisis, have sparked internal friction within the group, impacting its ability to reach a unified stance.
- This has been observable during the Bali G20 summit and the current India's G20 presidency.

Absence of a Permanent Secretariat:

- The G20 lacks a permanent secretariat or administrative body to oversee and facilitate its activities. This absence can lead to inefficiencies in monitoring and coordination as discussions expand, which may hinder the timely implementation of decisions and initiatives.

Non-Binding Decisions:

- One of the **fundamental limitations of the G20 is that the decisions made during its meetings are non-binding.**
- While member countries voluntarily commit to various agreements and initiatives, there is no mechanism in place to enforce compliance.
- For example, even though the G20 countries agreed to guidelines for preventing the financing of terrorism, there is no means to ensure that these guidelines are consistently adhered to.

Limited Membership:

- The G20's membership includes only 19 countries and the European Union. This limited representation means that other significant economies are not part of the group.
- Expanding the membership could help ensure that the G20 is more representative of the global economy, which would enhance its legitimacy and capacity to address a broader range of global issues.

Conclusion: -

- India has an important opportunity during its G20 Presidency to establish a legacy of success across critical challenges the world is facing and it has friends that it can rely on for support.
- India has set “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” or “One Earth - One Family - One Future” as the theme for its G20 Presidency, rightly aiming to instil a sense of unanimity essential for addressing these global challenges collectively and effectively and build unanimity to address global challenges collectively and effectively.
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi further envisions** India's G20 agenda to be **“inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented, and decisive.”** India's successes and experiences are critical to tailoring global solutions.

Bharat vs India: Debate

Context: -

- Recently, the current government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has used the term "President of Bharat" instead of "President of India" on an invitation card for the recent G-20 Summit.
- This shift in terminology has raised eyebrows and suggests a political dimension to the use of these names.

Perspectives on the Names "India" and "Bharat"

Constitutionality:

- Article 1 of the Indian Constitution already uses both "India" and "Bharat" interchangeably, stating, "India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States."
- The preamble of the Indian Constitution begins with "We the People of India," but the Hindi version uses "Bharat" instead of India, indicating interchangeability.
- Additionally, some government institutions, such as the Indian Railways, already have Hindi variants that include "Bharatiya railway."

Origin of the Name India:

- The name India is derived from the word Indus, which is the name of a river that flows through the northwestern part of the subcontinent.
- The **ancient Greeks** called the people living beyond the Indus as Indoi, which means "the people of Indus".
- Later, the Persians and the Arabs also used the term Hind or Hindustan to refer to the land of Indus.
- The Europeans adopted the name India from these sources, and it became the official name of the country after the British colonial rule.

Origin of the Name Bharat:

- The term "Bharat" has deep historical and cultural roots. It can be traced back to Puranic literature and the epic Mahabharata.
- **Vishnu Purana describes "Bharata"** as the land between the southern sea and the northern snowy Himalayan Mountain.
- It signifies a religious and socio-cultural entity more than a mere political or geographical one.
- Bharata is also the name of a legendary ancient king, considered the ancestor of the Rig Vedic tribes of Bharatas, symbolizing the progenitor of all subcontinent's people.

Constitutional Assembly Deliberation Regarding India and Bharat:

- The debate surrounding the country's name is not new. When the Constituent Assembly was framing the Constitution in 1949, there was a division of opinions regarding the name.
- Some members felt that "India" was a reminder of colonial oppression and sought to prioritize "Bharat" in official documents.
- **Seth Govind Das from Jabalpur** advocated for placing "Bharat" above "India," emphasizing that the latter was merely a translation of the former in English.
- **Hari Vishnu Kamath cited** the example of the Irish Constitution, which changed the name of the country upon achieving independence, as a precedent for using "Bharat."
- Har Govind Pant argued that the people wanted "Bharatvarsha" and rejected the term "India" imposed by foreign rulers.

Earlier stance of Government:

- In 2015, **Centre opposed a name change,** stating that the issue had been extensively deliberated upon during the Constitution's drafting.
- The Supreme Court has twice rejected pleas to rename 'India' to 'Bharat', once in 2016 and then in 2020, reaffirming that "Bharat" and "India" both find mention in the Constitution.

How are “Bharat” and “India” Balanced?

Adoption of the Constitution:

- The Indian Constitution was originally adopted by the Constituent Assembly in English. This underscores the historical and legal importance of the English version as the foundational text of the Constitution.
- In addition to the English version, a Hindi translation of the Constitution was published in 1950. This translation was signed by the members of the Constituent Assembly, and it was done in accordance with a resolution passed by the Constituent Assembly.
- Article 1(1): Article 1(1) of the Constitution defines the name and character of the country. In the English version, it states "India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States," emphasizing "India" as the primary name.
- **In the Hindi version,** it reads "Bharat artharth India, rajyon ka sangh hoga," with "Bharat" given prominence.

Constitutional Amendments:

- The 58th Amendment to the Constitution in 1987 likely addressed issues related to the use of Hindi and English in official documents, legal proceedings, and government communications.

- The 58th Amendment gave the President the power to publish the official text of the Constitution in Hindi, which could also be used in legal proceedings.
- Examples of Names: Examples such as the "Gazette of India" in English and "Bharat ka Rajpatra" in Hindi are given to illustrate how this naming convention is applied to various official publications.
- The choice of names reflects the dual-language nature of India's official documents and publications.

Some of the Other Countries that Changed their Name:

- Siam to Thailand (1939):
- Zaire to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1997):
- East Pakistan to Bangladesh (1971):
- In 2022, Turkey changed its name to Türkiye, as the name signifies the best representation and expression of the Turkish people's culture, civilization and values.

Current Scenario: -

Use of "India" Internationally:

- India has consistently used the name "India" in all international and multilateral fora. This signifies that the country's international identity and recognition are associated with the name "India".
- This highlights the practicality and standardisation of using the English name "India" in global diplomacy and communication.

Dual-Language Approach:

- It is noted that India follows a dual-language approach in official documents and diplomatic contexts. Under the National emblem in letters of credence given by the President of India to Ambassadors-designate, the words "Rashtrapati" and "Bharat Gantantra" are written in Hindi, while the English equivalents, "President" and "Republic of India," are used underneath.
- This approach reflects India's commitment to multilingualism and its diverse linguistic heritage.

Modern Usage:

- The use of both "Jai Hind" and "Jai Bharat" is noted in contemporary India, reflecting the coexistence of different cultural and linguistic traditions.
- For instance, in most of the major speeches, such as the Independence Day speech both expressions are used, signifying a recognition of the diverse historical and cultural threads that make up the fabric of the nation.

Legal Requirements of Changing Name of the Country: -

- However, the adoption of 'India' as the official name was a deliberate choice made by the framers of the Constitution to reflect the country's geographical and administrative identity.
- Interchanging of India to Bharat on official invitations is legally permissible but removing any term such as 'India' from the Constitution would require a Constitutional amendment.
- The name 'India' is mentioned in the Preamble to the Constitution, which is considered a part of the Constitution itself.

The process of amending the Constitution is outlined in Article 368: -

- It involves passing a bill in both houses of Parliament with a special majority (two-thirds majority of the members present and voting) and ratification by at least half of the state legislatures.
- Changing the name of India to Bharat will impact upon the constitutional mandate of using English language in legal proceedings and enactments.
- Article 348(1) (a) of the Constitution of India provides that all proceedings in the SC and in every HC shall be in English language until Parliament by law otherwise provides.
- Also, sub-clause (b) of the Article states that the authoritative texts of all bills, acts, orders, rules, regulations and bye laws issued under the Constitution or under any law made by Parliament or the Legislature of a State, shall be in the English language.
- The said amendment will result into amending the existing enactments whose extent of applicability is mentioned to be within or beyond the territory of India.

Conclusion

- As India is the World's Largest Democracy, changing of nomenclature could face legal challenges, with arguments related to the Constitution's identity, secularism, and the need for wider public concurrence.
- India's name is recognized globally, and such a change would require diplomatic efforts to ensure that other nations recognize and accept the new name.
- Any decision regarding changing of name would need to take into account the diverse and pluralistic nature of India's society and its historical and constitutional context.

Social Audit

Context: -

- The social audit units of the MGNREGA have seen less than 14% recovery of flagged amounts of misappropriation this financial year, with previous years showing similar results.
- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) faces recurring criticism due to alleged high corruption rates.
- The **Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)** is monitoring the entire implementation of this scheme in association with state governments.
- While the scheme incorporates an inbuilt mechanism of "social audit units" to detect malpractice, their effectiveness is hindered by inadequate measures for recovering embezzled funds.
- **MGNREGA Act's Section 17 mandates gram sabhas** to monitor work execution, with independent social audit units in each state.

Syllabus of Mains- GS 2- Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector

Introduction: -

- A social audit serves **as a method for verifying if the expenditures reported by the government in official documents align with the actual spending** on the ground.
- It bridges the divide between the envisioned objectives and the tangible outcomes, as well as between operational efficiency and overall effectiveness.



Key Principles of a Social Audit: -

Transparency:

- Social audits demand transparency in operations and decision-making, ensuring all relevant data is openly accessible for ethical performance.

Engagement:

- Active participation of stakeholders, including employees, customers, communities, and NGOs, is integral.

Standards:

- Social audits assess adherence to laws, regulations, ethical standards, and industry best practices. This encompasses labour rights, environmental regulations, etc.

Continuous:

- Social audits are ongoing processes focusing on continuous enhancement. Findings are used to identify areas for improvement and guide action plans to address shortcomings.

Credibility:

- Independent third parties often conduct social audits to ensure credibility.

Impact Assessment:

- Beyond policies and processes, social audits evaluate the actual societal impact of an organisation's activities, including social, environmental, and economic dimensions.

Types of Social Audits

Compliance Audits:

- These audits ensure an organisation complies with relevant laws, regulations, and industry standards.

Performance Audits:

- These audits assess an organisation's effectiveness in achieving its social responsibility goals and objectives.

Environmental Audits:

- These audits concentrate on an organisation's environmental practices, such as waste management, energy consumption, and sustainability initiatives.

Social Impact Assessments:

- While not traditional audits, social impact assessments are a structured process used to evaluate the social consequences of a project, program, or policy.

Limitations of social audit: -**Limited Awareness:**

- Many citizens, especially in marginalised communities, lack awareness of social auditing, hindering their active participation.

Accessibility Challenges:

- Accessibility issues persist, with some sections of society, including remote or resource-constrained areas, facing difficulty participating in social audits, limiting inclusivity.

Political Interference:

- Political interests often compromise the independence and impartiality of social audits, as local politicians may exert pressure on auditors.

Resource Constraints:

- Effective social audits require technical expertise and adequate funding, which grassroots organisations and communities may lack.

Limited Follow-up:

- Challenges exist in obtaining complete data, and there is often limited follow up and enforcement of audit recommendations, affecting overall accountability.

Challenges Associated with Social Audit: -**Rules not followed:**

- In several states, Gram Panchayats are not required to provide Social Audit Units with records pertaining to work completion and expenditures, and Gram Sabhas are not provided with social audit reports in their native tongues.

Lack of Independency:

- Many governments do not adhere to the transparent selection procedure for the director of the Social Audit Units as specified in the requirements. Several Social Audit Units do not have enough personnel to cover all of the panchayats even once a year.

Not Institutionalised:

- Auditors are subject to implementing agencies that face resistance and intimidation and struggle to even get access to original data for verification because the government has not regulated the institutionalisation of Social Audit.

Lack of Stringent Penalty:

- Because there are no fines or legal repercussions for breaking rules and guidelines, Social Audit is a pointless endeavour.

Inadequate Knowledge:

- Due to unawareness, members of the Gram Sabha are unaware of their legal entitlement to social audits.

Lack of an Intelligent Information System:

- Government agencies rely on an ambiguous and imprecise system of referencing government accounts and government reporting methods to track the progress of a plan, making it challenging for auditors to take stock, accelerate, decelerate, or implement corrective actions.

No Incentive to Participate:

- The lack of participation in village activities is a result of people's worries about their livelihood.

Steps To Be Taken to Make Social Audit Effective: -

- **Legal Clarity:** Improve the social audit legal framework to maximise effectiveness.
- **Capacity Building and Technology Integration:** Invest in training and capacity-building programs for auditors, government officials, and community representatives to enhance their audit skills.
- Community Engagement and Awareness
- Timeliness and Accountability
- Independent Oversight and Feedback Mechanisms

- **Utilizing Management Information System:** The planning, implementation, and feedback phases of a program's life cycle are streamlined by using MIS to track specifics of schemes at all levels.

Notable examples of social audits in India

MGNREGA: -

- MGNREGA has witnessed extensive use of social audits.
- Citizens, particularly in states like Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, actively participate in auditing the program's implementation to ensure wages are paid correctly, work is carried out as per guidelines, and funds are not misappropriated.

Mid-Day Meal Scheme and RTE (Right to Education) Act: -

- Social audits are conducted to assess the quality and delivery of meals and education in government schools. These audits focus on facilities, teacher attendance, the availability of textbooks, etc.

Forest Rights Act: -

- In states with a significant tribal population, like Chhattisgarh, social audits have been conducted to ensure that the Forest Rights Act is implemented properly.

Public Distribution System (PDS): -

- States like Tamil Nadu have used social audits to improve the PDS. Audits help identify ineligible beneficiaries, reduce leakages, and ensure that food grains reach the intended beneficiaries.

Swachh Bharat Mission (Clean India Campaign): -

- Social audits have been used to evaluate the progress of sanitation programs. These audits help monitor the behaviour change of communities towards open defecation.

Case Study: - Meghalaya's Exemplary Model

- Meghalaya introduced social audits into law in 2017 by enacting the Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, making it the first Indian state to do so.
- This legislation mandated social audits across 21 schemes and 11 government departments.
- Meghalaya's approach was unique as it integrated traditional tribal institutions into the social audit process. This is a distinctive feature.

- Here, Social audits became an ongoing process where citizens actively participated in program planning, execution, and monitoring, and social audits emerged as a tool for promoting "good governance".

Conclusion

- The social audit process is intended as a means for social engagement, transparency, and communication of information, leading to greater accountability of decision-makers, representatives, managers and officials. Thus, the application of social audit holds tremendous potential in bridging gaps between policy objectives and outcomes.
- The need for a social audit is essential. Due to its wider breadth and similarity to financial and operational audits, this is a useful tool for giving society and stakeholders assurance.
- Global experience with Social Audits is encouraging despite its shortcomings. The Andhra Pradesh Government's endeavour is a milestone in this field. Such inspections and comments are very helpful in identifying the gap between what people need and what they get through social programmes.

India-Canada and Khalistan Movement

Context: -

- Canadian PM Justin Trudeau alleged a potential link between the GoI and the killing of pro-Khalistan leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar.
- Canada expelled a diplomat from the Indian High Commission in Ottawa.
- In response, India also expelled a Canadian diplomat.

India-Canada Bilateral Relations: -

- India-Canada bilateral relations elevated to a **strategic partnership** in 2015.

Various aspect of relations: -

People-to-People Relations: -

- Canada hosts one of the largest Indian Diasporas in the world.
- **Seven lakh NRIs & 1.6 million people of Indian origin** live in Canada (total population 38.8 million).
- The present House of Commons (total strength of 338) has **19 MPs** of Indian origin.

Economic Relations

- India's total trade with Canada (goods and services) in 2021-22 was **US\$11.68 billion**.
- Canadian Pension Funds have substantial investments in India.

- India became the 10th largest trading partner of Canada in 2022.

Education:

- Indian students studying in Canada now comprise approximately 40% of the entire population of international students in Canada.

Space:

- ISRO and Canadian Space Agency (CSA) have signed MOUs in the field of exploration and utilization of outer space.

Agriculture:

- The bilateral MoU on agriculture cooperation was signed in 2009.
- A Joint Working Group has been set up under the MoU.
- A Joint Working Group for Pulses has been set up separately.
- Canada **is one of India's largest sources of pulses** (in 2021, almost 30% of our total pulses imports were from Canada).

India-Canada strained ties reason and impact: -

India criticised the Canadian government for:

- Proximity to individuals sympathetic to Khalistan activities.
- Incitement of violence against Indian diplomats
- Damage to diplomatic premises
- Threats to the Indian community and places of worship
- Extremist elements in Canada and their nexus with:
 - Organised crime
 - Drug syndicates
 - Human trafficking
- The defence of Khalistanis under the **aspect of "free speech" is selective and hypocritical.**

In response to India's concerns, Justin Trudeau stated that Canada would defend:

- Freedom of expression
- Peaceful protest and Conscience

Domestic Politics Impacting Relations:

- Trudeau's domestic political considerations have negatively impacted Canada's relations with India.
- Trudeau's Liberal Party relies on the support of Jagmeet Singh's New Democratic Party.
- Singh's party includes members with ties to Khalistan extremism.

Visa and Immigration Policies:

- In recent years, there have been reports of Indian students facing difficulties obtaining visas to study in Canada, which has caused dissatisfaction and raised concerns in India.

Differing Stances on International Issues:

- Recently, during the G20 meeting in New Delhi, Canada and India did not have bilateral talks, but instead met on the sidelines.
- Differing opinions on issues such as the political situation in Kashmir have strained diplomatic ties.
- India and Canada **paused their Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) negotiations.**
- Canada cancelled a trade mission to India scheduled to arrive in Mumbai in October.

India-Canada Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):

- It is a proposed bilateral trade agreement between India and Canada in 2008.
- The negotiations for the India-Canada CEPA were formally launched in 2010.
- The primary objective of the CEPA is to promote trade and economic relations.

Benefits

- Provide Indian businesses better access to the Canadian market and vice versa.
- Reducing or eliminating tariffs on goods and services can increase trade flows.

Current Status

- The CEPA has been under negotiation for several years but has not been finalised yet.
- In March 2022, both sides agreed to re-launch the CEPA negotiations.

Way Forward: -**Addressing Khalistan Issue:**

- Encourage open and inclusive dialogue between all stakeholders including members of the Sikh community, Indian government representatives and Canadian officials.
- Both countries should take legal measures to address any political extremism.

Economic Diversification:

- Expanding trade beyond traditional sectors to include emerging technologies, renewable energy, and healthcare can open new avenues for cooperation and economic growth.

Cultural Exchange:

- Promoting cultural exchange programs, art exhibitions, and film festivals can foster a deeper understanding of each other's cultures and traditions.

Environmental Cooperation:

- Given the shared commitment to combat climate change, India and Canada can work together on green technologies, sustainable development, and renewable energy initiatives.

Diplomatic Engagement:

- Regular high-level diplomatic dialogues and exchanges can help align their positions on global issues and promote mutual understanding.

Security Cooperation:

- Robust cooperation on counter terrorism issues particularly through the framework of the JWG on Counter Terrorism

Conclusion: -

- Both India and Canada must endeavour to transcend politically contentious issues and focus on areas of mutual cooperation and collaboration. The future holds great promise for this dynamic partnership, and both nations must seize the opportunities it presents.
- **Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute** at the Wilson Centre think-tank, says the combination of increasing Sikh activism in Canada, growing Indian pressure on Ottawa, and Ottawa's unwillingness to address Indian concerns has **"plunged bilateral relations into a deep crisis today."**

Khalistan Movement

- The Khalistan movement is a fight for a separate, sovereign Sikh state in present-day Punjab (both India and Pakistan).
- The movement was crushed in India **following Operation Blue Star (1984)**.

- It continues to evoke sympathy and support among sections of the Sikh population, especially in the Sikh diaspora in countries such as Canada, the UK, and Australia.

Mediation Act, 2023

Context: -

- During the recent monsoon session of Parliament, both Houses passed the Mediation Bill, 2023, now known as the Mediation Act, 2023, and upon receiving the assent of the President of India, is referred to as the Mediation Act, 2023.
- This Act seeks to promote mediation, particularly institutional mediation, and provide a mechanism for enforcing mediated settlement agreements.
- The Mediation Bill 2023 allows persons to try to settle civil or commercial disputes through mediation before approaching any court or tribunal.
- It seeks to promote and facilitate mediation, especially institutional mediation.

What is Mediation?

- Mediation is a **voluntary, binding process in which an impartial and neutral mediator facilitates disputing parties** in reaching a settlement.
- A mediator does not impose a solution but creates a conducive environment in which disputing parties can resolve all their disputes.
- Mediation is a tried and tested alternative method of dispute resolution. It has proved to be a great success in the cities of Delhi, Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Nagpur, Chandigarh and Aurangabad.
- Mediation is a structured process where a neutral person uses specialized communication and negotiation techniques. Litigants participating in the mediation process have unequivocally endorsed it.

Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR)

- ADR means settling disputes without going to regular court.

In India, modes of ADR include:

- Arbitration
- Negotiation
- Mediation
- Lok Adalats

Key Features of the Act: -

- It makes pre-litigation mediation voluntary.
- It also provides for online and community mediation.
- **Ambit:** It includes family disputes, community conflicts, civil disputes, and commercial disputes

Community Mediation:

- Community mediation may be attempted to resolve disputes likely to affect the peace and harmony amongst residents of a locality.
- It will be conducted by a panel of three mediators.

Applicability:

- It applies to mediations involving:
 - Domestic parties
 - International mediations
 - Those specified in the mediation agreement.

Mediation process:

- The mediation **must be completed within 120 days, which could be extended by 60 days.**
- A party may withdraw from mediation after two mediation sessions.
- Parties can seek interim relief by approaching the appropriate court/tribunal, in **“exceptional circumstances.”**
- The mediation settlement agreements **may be challenged within 90 days** from the date of receipt of the copy.

Disputes not fit for mediation:

It includes:

- Claims against minors or persons of unsound mind.
- Disputes affecting the rights of a third party which is not part of the mediation proceeding,
- Disputes involving allegations of fraud, and forgery.
- Tax disputes, and disputes under the Competition Act.
- Criminal prosecution

Mediation Council of India (MCI):

It provides for the setting up of the Mediation Council of India.

- Its functions include:
- Registering mediators

- Recognizing mediation service providers
- Recognizing mediation institutes.

NOTE- India has **signed the UN Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation (Singapore Convention)**

Benefits

- It is a cost-effective process to solve the dispute.
- It will reduce the burden on the courts.
- It is voluntary and not confrontational.
- It offers flexibility and **privacy**.

Key Issues and Concerns with the Act: -

Mandating Pre-litigation Mediation:

- According to the Act, pre-litigation mediation is mandatory for both parties before filing any suit or proceeding in a court, whether or not there is a mediation agreement between them.
- However, as per Article 21 of the Constitution, access to justice is a fundamental right which cannot be fettered or restricted.

Requiring Central Government Approval before issuing Regulations:

- Under the Act, the Council will discharge its major functions by issuing regulations. It must take approval from the central government before issuing such regulations.
- Thus, Council's effectiveness could be limited if it requires central government approval for its core functions. Similar organizations don't require prior approval before issuing regulations. e.g. National Medical Commission and the Bar Council of India.

Challenges in Enforcing International Settlements:

- The Act considers international mediation to be domestic when it is conducted in India with the settlement being recognised as a judgment or decree of a court.
- The Singapore Convention does not apply to settlements that already have the status of judgments or decrees. As a result, conducting cross-border mediation in India will exclude the tremendous benefits of worldwide enforceability.

Multiple registration needed for Mediators:

- Mediators must be registered/ empanelled at all four places:
 - 1) Mediation Council of India,

- 2) Empanelled by a court annexed mediation centre.
 - 3) A recognised mediation service provider, and
 - 4) A Legal Services Authority.
- It is unclear why satisfying any one of these conditions is not sufficient for such mediators.

Undefined Terminology:

- Clause 8 of the Act entitles a party to move the Court, before the commencement or during mediation, **for interim relief, only in “exceptional circumstances”**.
- The term “exceptional circumstances” is undefined in the Act.

Issues with Community Mediation :

- As for community mediation, the Act makes it mandatory to have a panel of three mediators.
- Community Mediation is a powerful tool that offers an opportunity for people to resolve disputes through managed communication.
- This requirement seems unnecessary and impinges on the flexibility that mediation brings.

Conclusion:

- The future of mediation in **India lies in its ability to impact social change in a manner that law does not.** The Act should be implemented more in spirit than in form as a famous jurist rightly held that, “it is the spirit and not the form which keeps justice alive.”

GS 3

Environmental Challenges in Himalayas

Context: -

- ECOLOGICAL disasters in the hill states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have laid bare the fragility of the Himalayan region. Landslides in Shimla and land subsidence in Joshi math have turned the spotlight on the carrying capacity of the mountain range spanning 13 states and union territories.
- Action plan of the National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (NMSHE), which was launched under the National Action Plan on Climate Change was also in news recently.

Introduction: -

- Nestled in the heart of Asia, the Himalayan Mountain range, **often known as the "Roof of the World,"** has entranced human imagination for centuries with its awe-inspiring beauty and charm.
- Yet, beneath its tranquil exterior lies a narrative of escalating environmental crises. Recently, the Himalayas have witnessed a series of unprecedented and alarming challenges that imperil their very existence.
- From the repercussions of climate change resulting in glacial thaw and disrupted weather patterns, to uncontrolled urban expansion and unsustainable development practices, the Himalayas confront a wave of devastation that calls for immediate attention.
- Comprehending the fragile equilibrium that sustains the Himalayas is now a matter of concern not only for the region, but a global imperative. The plight of the Himalayas demands swift action and collaborative endeavours on an international scale.

Himalayas Significant: -

Climate Regulation:

- The Himalayas hold a vital role in controlling the climate of the neighbouring regions and even further afield. They exert influence on the monsoon patterns that deliver essential rainfall to nations such as India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.
- Additionally, the Himalayan glaciers serve as sensitive indicators of global climate change.

Water Source:

- The Himalayan glaciers and snowfields serve as the source for major rivers like the Ganges, Indus, Brahmaputra, and Yangtze, which sustain the lives and livelihoods of millions of people across South Asia.
- The water from these rivers supports agriculture, hydropower generation, and urban centres downstream.

Cultural and Spiritual Significance:

- The Himalayas are regarded as a sacred and spiritual centre by numerous cultures and religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.
- They are home to several revered pilgrimage sites, monasteries, and temples and are often associated with meditation, enlightenment, self-discovery etc.

Biodiversity Hotspot:

- The Himalayan region is recognized as one of the world's biodiversity hotspots and contributes to global ecological balance.
- Its diverse ecosystems, ranging from lush forests to alpine meadows, harbour a rich variety of plant and animal species, some of which are unique to the region.

Geological Importance:

- The Himalayas are the result of the ongoing collision between the Indian Plate and the Eurasian Plate. This geological process has shaped the landscape and continues to influence seismic activity in the region.
- Studying the Himalayas provides insights into the Earth's tectonic forces and helps scientists understand the dynamics of mountain building.

How Rampant Urbanisation Affecting Himalayas: -

Flawed Development:

- Blocked roads after a landslide at Chamoli, sinking of Joshimath in Uttarakhand, road caving in Chamba in Himachal epitomise a flawed developmental paradigm institutionalised in the Himalayan region.
- Studies by the National Remote Sensing Centre (of ISRO) have revealed that Rudraprayag and Tehri districts are the most landslide-affected districts in the country.
- The Chardham Mahamarg Vikas Pariyojna, a massive infrastructure project, claimed lakhs of trees, acres of forest land and the fertile topsoil of the fragile Himalayas.
- In 2022 alone, 10 crore tourists, including pilgrims, visited Uttarakhand, and experts continue to caution that unregulated tourism that exceeds the region's carrying capacity can have disastrous impacts.

Rising Temperatures:

- The Himalayas are warming faster than other mountain ranges, and the increased use of reinforced concrete in building construction, replacing the traditional wood and stone masonry there, is likely to create a heat-island effect and thus add to regional warming.

Cultural Erosion:

- Traditional Himalayan communities have distinct cultural practices and ways of life closely tied to their natural surroundings. Unsustainable urbanisation has been leading to the erosion of traditional knowledge, customs, and cultural identity.

Government Initiatives Related to Protecting the Himalayan Region: -**National Mission on Sustaining Himalayan Ecosystem:**

- It was launched in 2010 and covers 11 states (Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, all northeast states and West Bengal) and 2 UTs (J&K and Ladakh).
- It is one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).

SECURE Himalaya Project:

- It is a part of “Global Partnership on Wildlife Conservation and Crime Prevention for Sustainable Development” (Global Wildlife Program) funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).
- It promotes sustainable management of alpine pastures and forests in the high range Himalayan ecosystems.

Mishra Committee Report 1976:

- Named after MC Mishra (then Garhwal commissioner in erstwhile UP), the committee gave its findings about land subsidence in Joshimath.
- The committee recommended placing restrictions on heavy construction work, blasting or digging to remove boulders for road repairs and other construction, and felling of trees in the region.

Ecological Challenges in the Himalayas: -

Ecological Challenges Himalayas have been facing

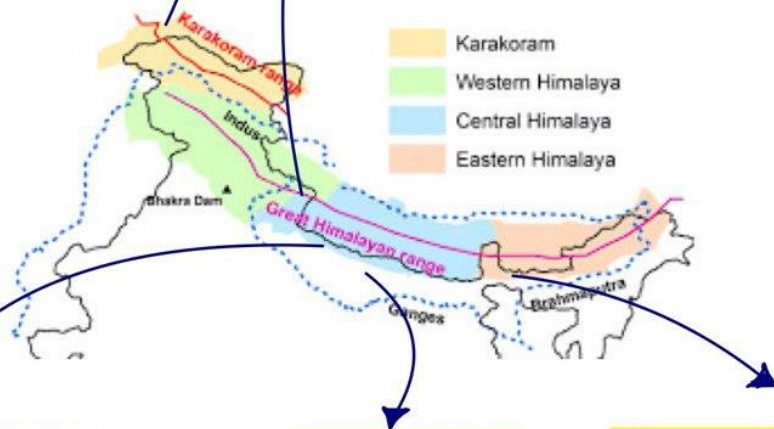
Climate change and Glacial Melting

- Highly vulnerable,
- ↑ temp → rapid melting of glaciers
- Risk to communities who depend on glacial meltwater

Accumulation of Black carbon causes glacier Melt

Absorbs more light
emits infra red radiation
fastens melting

Eg. Gangotri glacier → High Black carbon deposits
fastest receding glacier



Natural Disasters

Prone to landslides, Avalanches, earthquakes

↓
Himalayas - young fold mountains still rising - prone to tectonic activities

↓
Climate change exacerbate the frequency and severity of these events

Soil Erosion

↳ Deforestation
↳ construction activities
↳ Improper land use practices
↓
Distabilises Himalayan slopes

Growth of invasive species

Temp ↑ - New habitats become available for invasive species
↳ Outcompete Native species disrupting balance of ecosystem.

Way Forward: -

- Having early warning and better weather forecast systems in order to forecast the disaster and alert the local population and tourists.
- Reviewing the area's latest status and drawing up a sustainable plan that respects the specific requirements of the fragile region and climate impacts.
- Initiating a dialogue on adverse impacts of commercial tourism and promoting ecotourism.
- Issuing Detailed Project Reports (DPR), EIAs and Social Impact Assessment (SIA) before implementing any project.
- Upgrading existing dams to improve their structural stability and prioritising regular monitoring after flooding events.
- To control the problem of unregulated tourism, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) recommended a series of regulations that would create a buffer zone and restrict tourism in Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)-prone areas and nearby regions in order to reduce the scale of pollution in those areas.
- Himalayan countries need to build an international network that will monitor risks such as those from glacial lakes and give early warning of hazards — similar to the tsunami warning systems installed around the Indian Ocean over the past decade.
- The countries should share and disseminate knowledge about the mountains and preservation of the ecology there.
- If the **people of the Himalayas were more aware of the geological vulnerability and ecological fragility of their mountain home**, they would surely force more compliance of laws and regulations to protect it so spreading educational awareness is needed.
- India and other affected countries should include in their school curricula basic knowledge of the geology and ecology of the Himalayas. If students are taught about their environment, they will feel more connected to the land and be more aware of its pulse.
- The municipalities in the Himalayan states need to play a more proactive role while granting approval to buildings; building bye laws need to be updated to overcome the emerging challenges of climate change so role of local government is very important.

Question for Practice: -

- Rampant and flawed urbanisation without considering importance of Himalaya has created new problems there in the light of this, Discuss the major challenges that the Himalayan region has been facing in recent times with. (150W)

Ageing Workforce

Context:

- India's population is predominantly youthful, with a significant number of people under 30 years old.
- The Prime Minister emphasized the potential, capabilities, and resolutions of India's youth, noting the favourable environment for growth and development.
- Despite a youthful population, an analysis of workforce data from CMIE's (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy)'s Economic Outlook, indicates that India's workforce is ageing rapidly which is a concerning trend.

Key Highlights: -

- According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), India's workforce, which comprises all the employed people in the country, has seen a decline in the share of young people and an increase in the share of older people in the past year.
- The **CMIE defines youth as those belonging to ages above 15 years and below 25 years**, but for this analysis, the workforce is divided into three groups:
 - a) Those aged 15 years or more but less than 30 years.
 - b) Those aged 30 years or more but less than 45 years.
 - c) Those aged 45 years and older.
- The CMIE data shows that the share of the first group (a), which can be considered as the youth, has **fallen from 25.5% in 2019-20 to 21.9% by December 2020.**
- The share of the second group (b), which can be considered as the prime working age, has also fallen from 37.6% to 36.1%.
- The share of the third group (c), which can be considered as the older workers, has risen from 36.9% to 42%.
- The data shows that India's workforce is ageing or becoming older on average.
- This is **contrary to the popular perception** that India is a young country with a large pool of potential workers.

Ageing of India's workforce is not uniform: -

Urban workers:

- The share of urban workers aged 45 years and older has increased from 34.4% to 41.7%, while the share of **urban workers aged below 30 years has decreased from 28.4% to 23.2%.**

Women workers:

- The share of women workers aged 45 years and older has increased from 32.8% to 40%, while the share of women workers aged below 30 years has decreased from 27.2% to 22.5%.

Educated workers:

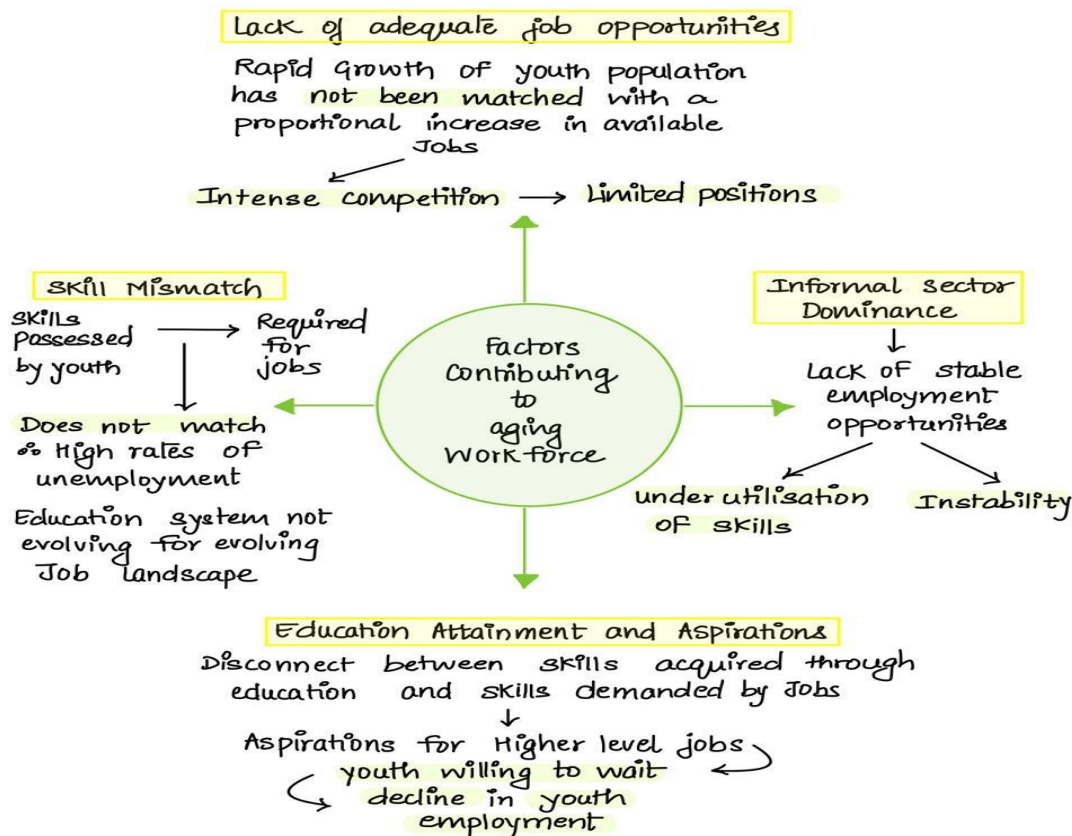
- The share of workers with graduate and post-graduate degrees aged 45 years and older has increased from 29.4% to 37%, while the share of workers with graduate and post-graduate degrees aged below 30 years has decreased from 31.3% to 24.8%.

Salaried workers:

- The share of salaried workers aged 45 years and older has increased from 31.8% to 38.7%, while the share of salaried workers aged below 30 years has decreased from 29.7% to 23%.

These features indicate that the **ageing of India's workforce is largely driven by higher job losses among those below the age of 40 years**, especially in urban areas, among women, among educated and skilled workers, and formal sector employees.

Factors Contributing to an Ageing Workforce: -



Implications for the Country's Economic and Social Development: -

Lower growth potential:

- A younger workforce is generally more productive, innovative and adaptable than an older workforce.
- A younger workforce also implies a higher labour force participation rate and a lower dependency ratio, which boosts economic growth.
- An ageing workforce, on the other hand, may reduce India's growth potential and competitiveness in the global market.

Higher social security burden:

- An older workforce may require more expenditure on health care, pensions and other social security benefits, which may strain India's fiscal resources and crowd out public investment in other sectors.
- An ageing workforce may also increase the pressure on the existing social security schemes, such as the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), Employees' State Insurance (ESI) and National Pension System (NPS), which are already facing challenges of coverage, adequacy and sustainability.

Lower human capital development:

- An ageing workforce may imply a lower investment in education, skill development and training for the younger generation, which may hamper India's human capital development and future productivity.
- An ageing workforce may also reduce the opportunities for inter-generational learning and knowledge transfer within organisations and sectors.

Healthcare and Well-being:

- Older workers often require more healthcare services, both preventive and curative.
- Employers may need to provide health insurance plans that cater to the specific needs of older employees, and workplace policies might need to accommodate flexible hours or ergonomic adjustments to support the well-being of ageing workers.
- Additionally, investing in workplace wellness programs can help maintain the health and productivity of older employees.

Steps Taken to address the challenges posed by an ageing workforce:

Skill Development Initiatives:

- Programs like "Skill India" are crucial in equipping the workforce with the skills needed to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving job market.
- By offering training and upskilling opportunities, the government helps workers transition to new roles and industries, reducing the risk of job displacement due to technological advancements.

Policies for Older Workers:

- Encouraging companies to retain and utilize the expertise of older workers is essential for knowledge retention and transfer.
- Such policies might include flexible work arrangements, mentoring programs, and opportunities for phased retirement.

Retirement Age Considerations:

- Extending the retirement age recognizes the valuable contributions that experienced workers can make.
- By keeping older employees in the workforce for a longer period, the economy can benefit from their skills and knowledge.

Promoting Skill Development:

- The Skill India Mission, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) are all initiatives aimed at improving the employability and skill level of India's youth.
- These programs help bridge the skills gap, increase job opportunities, and create a more adaptable workforce capable of meeting evolving industry demands.

Expanding Social Security Coverage:

- Extending social security benefits to informal sector workers is a critical step in providing financial stability to a vulnerable segment of the workforce.
- Schemes like Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM), PM Laghu Vyapari Mandhan Pension Yojana (PMLVPMY), and Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan Dhan Yojana (PM-KMY) offer social security coverage, pension, and insurance benefits to workers who might not have had access to such protection previously.

Encouraging Active Aging:

- Policies that promote active ageing allow older workers to remain engaged and productive for longer.
- Raising the retirement age, allowing partial withdrawal from retirement funds, and providing tax incentives for senior citizens encourage older individuals to continue working, contributing, and maintaining their financial independence.

Conclusion: -

- While India's youthful population offers immense potential, the challenge of an ageing workforce necessitates proactive strategies to ensure a balanced and productive workforce across all age groups.
- A holistic approach that addresses skill development, flexible work arrangements, and supportive policies is vital for addressing the implications of an ageing workforce and harnessing the demographic dividend effectively.

Food Processing Sector

In News: -

- During the 17th edition of ANUTECH - International FoodTec India in Mumbai, notable figures from both industry and government presented an optimistic outlook for the food processing sector in India.
- This sector is experiencing significant growth and is poised to emerge as a pivotal force in the nation's economy.

Syllabus of Mains – GS 3- Food processing and related industries in India- scope and significance, upstream and downstream requirements.

GS 2- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

What is meant by Food processing?

- It is responsible for converting raw ingredients or agricultural products into edible food items suitable for human consumption.
- It plays a vital role in processing and preserving perishable materials, resulting in packaged food products with an extended shelf life, making them convenient for distribution and consumption.
- This sector encompasses a wide range of activities, technologies, and processes aimed at making food products safer, more convenient, and longer lasting, while also enhancing their flavour and nutritional value.

- However, food processing **can reduce the nutritional value** of the food and may include additives that are harmful to health.

Data and Key Facts: -

- **Sunrise Industry:** The Food Processing Industry is a sunrise industry (burgeoning in its infancy stage that shows promise of a rapid boom) providing vital linkages between the two pillars of our economy – manufacturing and agriculture.
- It is expected to generate a whopping 9 million jobs by 2024.
- **Sector Growth:** Its output is expected to reach US\$ 535 billion by 2025-26. The Indian food industry is expanding at a CAGR of 14% and the food processing sector accounts for 32% of the total food industry.
- **FDI:** India's food sector attracted US\$ 4.18 billion in foreign direct investments between April 2014 and March 2020.
- **Consumer Base:** By 2030, Indian annual household consumption is expected to triple, making India the fifth-largest consumer in the world.



Importance of Food Processing Sector: -

- **Employment Generation:** because it acts as a bridge between Agriculture and Manufacturing.
- **Reduce malnutrition:** Processed foods when fortified with vitamins and minerals can reduce the nutritional gap in the population.
- Reduce food wastage.
- Curbs Food Inflation
- Creating an incentive for the farmer to diversify crops and increase their income.
- Preserve the nutritive quality of food and prolongs the shelf life.
- Enhances the quality and taste of food.
- Enhances consumer choices.

Key Drivers of Food processing Industry:

Export opportunities:

- There is a rise in the demand for Indian processed food in the international market. In addition to changing consumer tastes in foreign markets, huge demand from people of Indian origin live abroad.
- According to government's estimates, Indian exports of processed food and related items rose at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11.74 percent during 2011-16, reaching US\$16.2 billion.

Availability of cheap workforce:

- India has a relatively cheaper workforce that can be effectively utilized to set-up a low production base for the domestic and export market.
- Production costs in India are lower by about 40 percent in comparison to most developed and developing countries.

Surplus raw material:

- High level of agricultural production – large livestock base, wide variety of crops, inland water bodies and a long coastline, that help increase marine production.

Strong domestic demand:

- Changing lifestyle and food habits due to increased disposable income.

Other drivers: -

- Demand for processed food rising with growing disposable income, urbanising young population, growing middle-class, and nuclear families.
- Changing lifestyle and increase in awareness and concern for wellness and health.
- Urbanisation is shifting the consumption towards packaged and ready-to-eat foods.
- MSME's are playing a vital role in India's food processing chain through various advancements in skills and technology.
- The online food ordering business in India is witnessing an exponential growth.
- There is a shift in focus from loose to branded packaging.
- The government's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative places priority on this sector and offers support through various policies.

Opportunities in Food processing Industry: -

Feeding the population:

- India faces the challenge of feeding a growing population, and a significant amount of agricultural produce is lost due to spoilage and inadequate storage facilities.
- By investing in advanced processing and preservation techniques, the industry can help minimize post-harvest losses and ensure a steady supply of food throughout the year.

Employment Opportunities:

- Food processing industry also holds a great potential to generate employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas.
- A parliamentary report from 2022 highlighted that the food processing industry is a major segment in terms of employment, accounting for 12.38% of the jobs generated in the Registered Factory sector in 2017-18.

Entrepreneurship:

- With proper training and skill development programs, individuals can be empowered to become entrepreneurs, contributing to local economic development.
- This not only creates jobs but also addresses the issue of rural-urban migration.

Reducing food wastage:

- The food processing industry can play a vital role in reducing food wastage and improving food security.

Growth Acceleration:

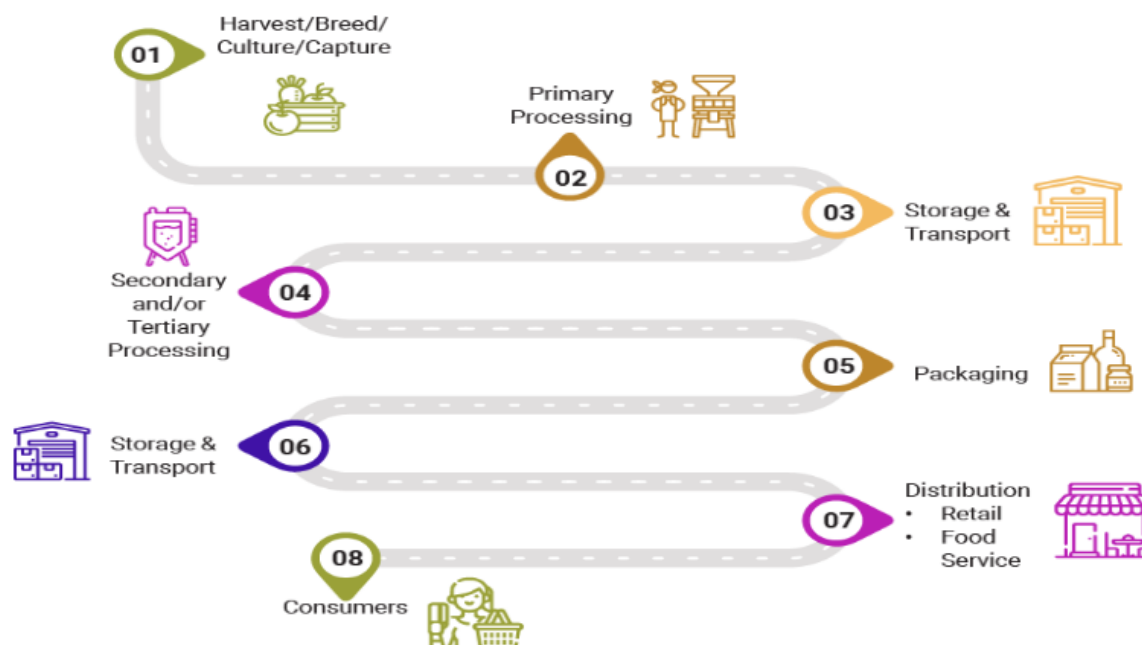
- The food processing industry can provide an immense acceleration to India's economy. There is still significant untapped potential to be realized.

Upstream requirements of Food processing industry:

- Accessibility to raw materials
- Modern extraction techniques.
- Good linkages with farmers.
- Raw materials
- Good quality testing facilities.
- Transport facilities
- Work force.

Downstream Requirements in Food processing industry:

- Processing of the materials collected during the upstream stage into a finished product.
- Actual sale of product to customers like businesses, governments, or individuals.



Challenges of food processing industry in India:

Bottlenecks on supply and demand sides:

- Small and dispersed marketable surplus due to fragmented holdings, low farm productivity due to lack of mechanisation, high seasonality, perishability, and lack of proper intermediation (supply chain) all contribute to a lack of raw material availability. As a result, food processing and exports are hampered.

Bottlenecks in the infrastructure:

- More than 30% of farm-gate produce is lost due to insufficient cold chain infrastructure. Supply is erratic due to a lack of all-weather roads and connectivity.

Unorganised Sector:

- The food processing industry has a high concentration of unorganised segments, which account for nearly 75% of all product categories. As a result, the existing production system is inefficient.

Regulatory Gaps:

- There are numerous laws that govern food safety and packaging, each under the jurisdiction of a different ministry or department.
- Contradictions in food safety specifications and guidelines result from the proliferation of legislation and administrative delays.
- The widespread use of fertilisers, pesticides, and other chemicals has raised concerns about food quality, which should be investigated.
- Furthermore, protection from unfair and dangerous practises such as adulteration is required.

Health Concern:

- Processed foods may not be nutritionally balanced and may pose a health risk, particularly for children, unless fortified. This could lead to a negative perception of processed foods, potentially affecting the sector's economic gains.

Limited ability to control quality and safety:

- The sheer number of players involved in the food value-chain, particularly in the large unorganised segment, makes implementation of quality and safety standards difficult.
- As a result, practises such as milk adulteration and the use of carbide for fruit ripening have become more common.

Low consumer awareness:

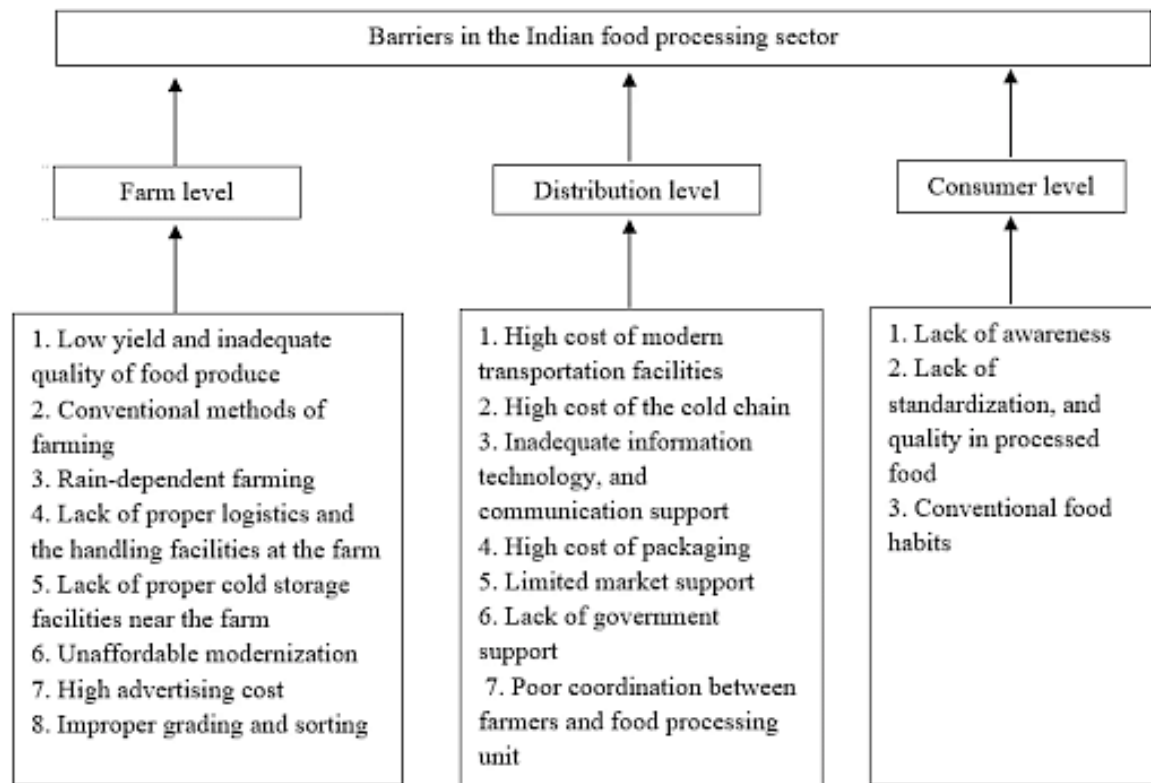
- Consumer awareness is a critical component of the country's improved nutritional situation. Consumers are currently unaware of several nutritional, food safety, and quality issues.

Lack of skilled manpower:

- The food processing industry (FPI) has a large unorganized segment, and to explain to them the inefficiencies in the existing production system and invest in technology upgrades becomes a challenge.
- Many food processing businesses operate in the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) sector, which often lacks the resources needed to upgrade their facilities and machinery to the latest technology.

Low brand value and strength:

- Indian brands have little to no strength in the foreign markets with only Indian-origin people being able to recognise the Indian food brands and products.



Government's Policy in food processing industry:

- 100% FDI is permitted under the automatic route in food processing industries.
- 100% FDI is allowed in multi-brand retail through government approval route for trading, including through e-commerce in respect of food products sourced from Indian farmers or manufactured or produced in India.
- RBI has classified loan to food & agro-based processing units and Cold Chain under agriculture activities **for Priority Sector Lending**.
- Many food processing sectors like pickles etc. that were earlier reserved for small scale industries under the reserved list till 2015 have now been de-reserved.

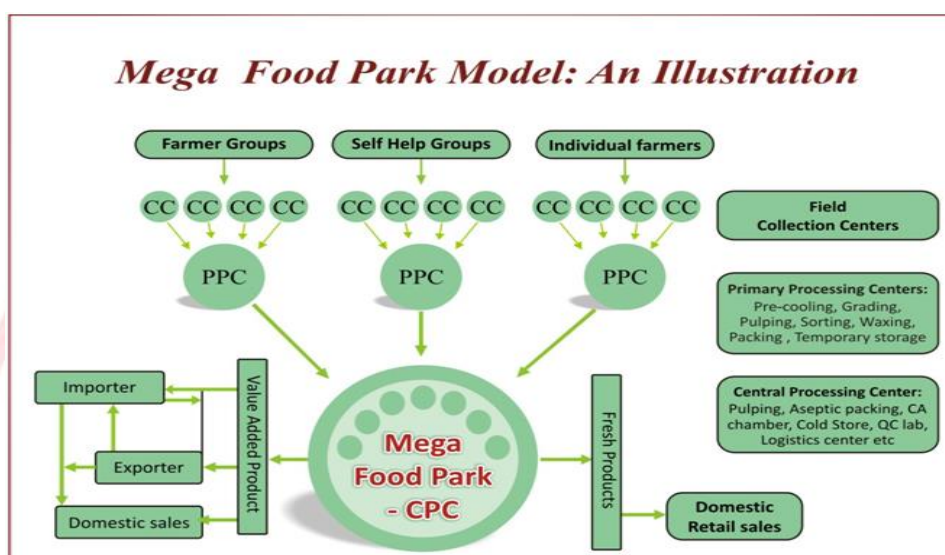
Government Schemes:

Scheme for Mega Food Parks:

- The Mega Food Parks Scheme covering a minimum area of 50 acres, operates using a cluster-based approach, following a hub and spokes model that aims to establish a vital link between agricultural production and the market.
- From farm to processing and then to consumer markets" through a network of collection centres (CCs) and primary processing centres (PPCs) to ensure

optimization of value addition, minimization of wastage, increasing farmer's income and creating employment opportunities particularly in rural sector.

- The scheme is based on a “Cluster” approach with state-of-the art processing facilities with support infrastructure and a well-established supply chain.
- It aims to develop 42 Mega Food Park.
- A turnover of 400-500 crores and employment generation of at least 30000 from each mega food park is expected.



PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme:

- The Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) has launched the PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Scheme.
- The scheme intends to provide financial, technical, and business support to upgrade existing micro food processing enterprises.
- It is a part of India's self-reliant scheme called Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan; and 'Vocal for Local' Campaign.
- The idea behind the scheme is to bring unorganized micro food enterprises into an organized framework.
- The government has earmarked Rs. 10000 crores to benefit 2 lakh micro food processing enterprises. The scheme aims to support Micro Food Entrepreneurs, FPOs, SHGs and Co-operatives etc.
- One-District One-Product Approach (ODOP) plan to be implemented to encompass input procurement, common services availability, and product marketing.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana:

Under PMKSY the following schemes are to be implemented:

- Mega Food Parks.

- Integrated Cold Chain, Value Addition and Preservation Infrastructure.
- Creation/Expansion of Food Processing and Preservation Capacities.
- Infrastructure for Agro-Processing Clusters.
- Scheme for Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages.
- Food Safety & Quality Assurance Infrastructure.
- Human Resources and Institutions.

Way Forward

Private sector participation:

- Private players should be involved, and they should work with the SHFs to perfectly assess the situation.
- Private players can help by investing in logistics and storage facilities, financing the activities needed to create and boost the brand value and strength of Indian food products in the export markets.

Technology upgradation:

- Encourage technology up gradation of existing facilities and investment in development of ancillary industries like research and development, packaging, food processing equipment manufacturing, food safety certifying agencies by extending fiscal incentives to investors.

Institutional credit:

- Enable better access to credit to facilitate the high-cost technology adoption and scale enhancement.

Smart Food Processing Hubs:

- Establishing smart food processing hubs equipped with advanced technologies like Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), and blockchain. These hubs can monitor the entire food supply chain, from farm to table, ensuring quality, traceability, and efficiency.

Nutraceutical Innovation:

- Developing a range of functional and nutraceutical foods tailored to specific health needs. These could include foods fortified with essential nutrients, probiotics, and bioactive compounds to address prevalent health concerns in the Indian population.

Zero-Waste Processing:

- Implementing zero-waste processing techniques where every part of the raw material is utilized. For instance, converting food waste into biofuels or using food byproducts to create new products like bioplastics or animal feed.

Community-Based Processing Centres:

- Establishing community-based food processing centres in rural areas. These centres can serve as hubs for local farmers to process their produce, reducing post-harvest losses and creating rural employment opportunities.

Streamlining the regulatory structure:

- **Single window clearance:** Remove impediments of multiple departments and laws in seeking approvals by bringing them under a single window thereby providing clarity in roles and channels of operational and service delivery.
- Ensure uniform implementation of the APMC act to encourage private sector investment in infrastructure development.

Conclusion:

- The widespread adoption of ongoing reforms and industry-friendly policies from the central and state governments to enhance the country's unorganised food processing sector is **expected to give thrust to this sector** in the upcoming years, driving the sector forward.
- The food processing industry in India plays a crucial role in connecting Indian farmers to consumers in both domestic and international markets.
- In India, the food processing industry has *expanded significantly over the last few decades. The rise in working-class income has resulted in more disposable income to spend on processed foods.* Another important factor is the change in food habits of the working class, **who prefer readily available convenient foods so surely it is sunrise industry for Indian Economy.**

Question for practice:

- Despite the steady growth observed in the Indian food processing industry, there remains a notable reservoir of untapped potential. This potential is yet to be fully harnessed and leveraged for further development and expansion. (15M- 250W)

Social Security and India: -

Introduction: -

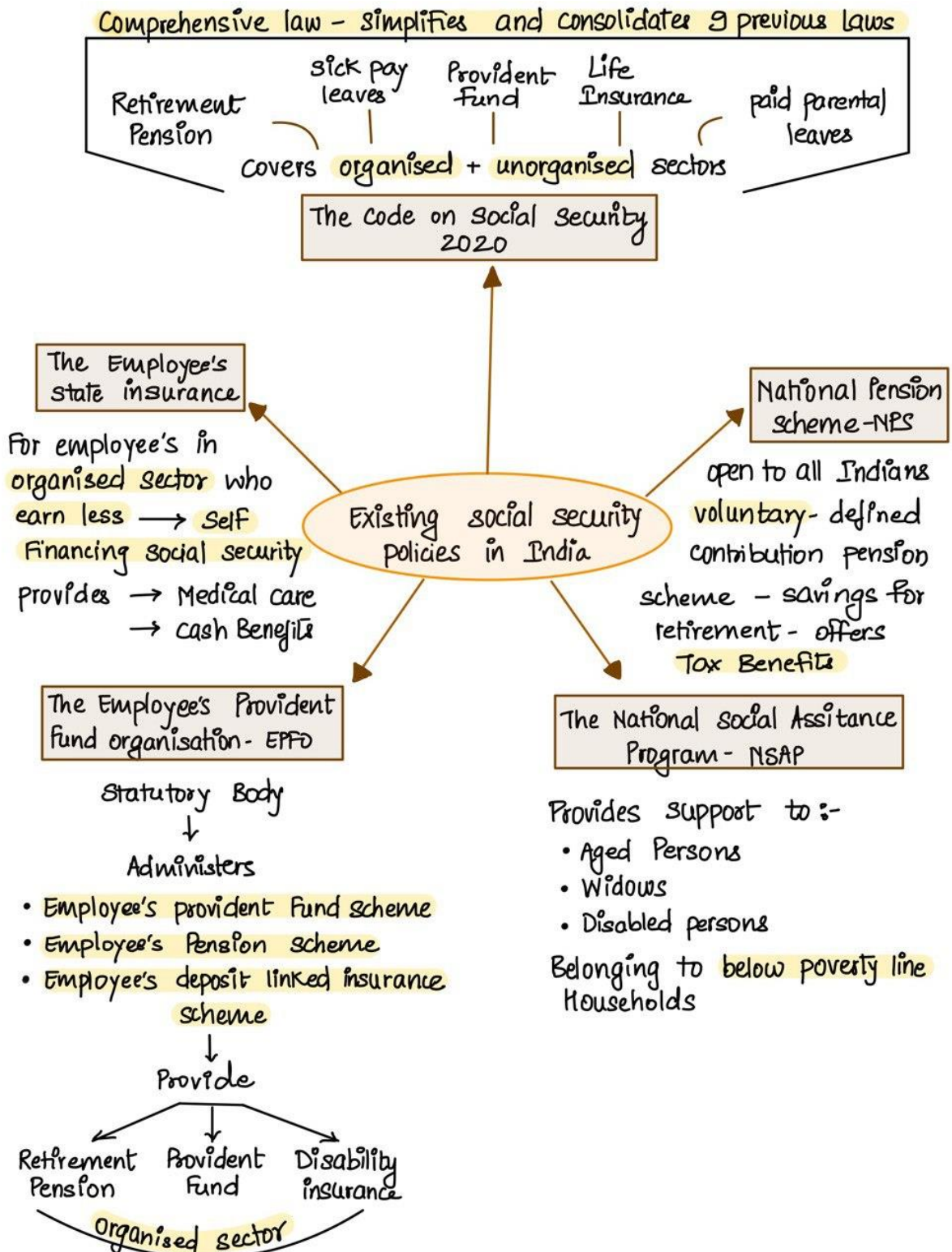
- Social security refers to a government program designed to provide financial support and assistance to individuals or families facing economic challenges or specific life circumstances.
- The specifics of social security programs vary widely from country to country, and they are often funded through taxes paid by individuals, employers, or both. These programs aim to promote social stability, protect vulnerable populations, and contribute to overall societal well-being.
- **According to ILO**, Social security is the protection that a society provides to individuals and households to ensure access to health care and to guarantee income security, particularly in cases of old age, unemployment, sickness, invalidity, work injury, maternity, or loss of a breadwinner.
- Social security policies cover various types of social insurances, such as pension, health insurance, disability benefit, maternity benefit, and gratuity.

Syllabus of Mains – GS 2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

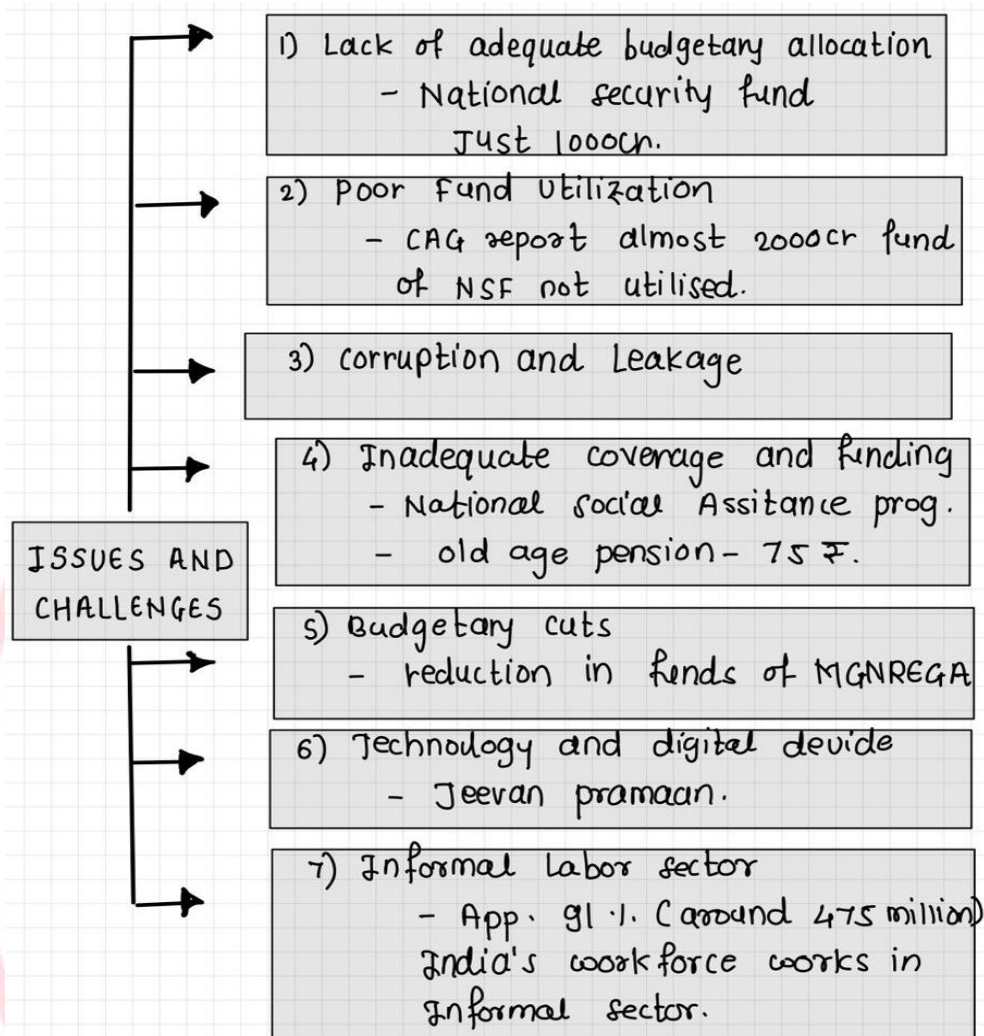
Data: -

- Around 53% of all the salaried workforce does not have any social security benefits in India, according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey Annual Report 2021-22.
- In effect, this means that such employees have no access to a provident fund, pension, and health care and disability insurance.
- Only 1.9% of the poorest 20% of India's workforce have access to benefits.
- Meanwhile, gig workers, or approximately 1.3% of India's active labour force, rarely have access to any social security benefit.
- India's social security system is also ranked poorly; Mercer CFS ranked India at 40 out of 43 countries in 2021.

Existing Social Security Policies in India: -



Issues and Challenges related to Social Security Policies and their Implementation: -



Steps that can be taken up by India: -

Universal Social Security:

- The time has come for India to consolidate its existing social security schemes/ad hoc measures and provide universal social security to its entire labour workforce.

Expanding EPFO Contribution:

- For formal workers, expanding contributions to the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) system can provide increased social security. This involves both employers and employees contributing to the fund.

Government Support for Vulnerable Workers:

- Providing government subsidies or social assistance to those unable to contribute due to unemployment, underemployment, or low earnings ensures that everyone has access to basic social security support.

Digitization and e-Shram Platform:

- Investing in digital platforms and data systems streamlines the registration, verification, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation of social security services, improving efficiency and transparency.

Mandatory Social Security for Employers:

- Implementing mandatory social security entitlements for employees, enforced by their employers, would foster formalization and accountability in employee-employer relationships.

Pan-India Labour Force Card:

- Introducing a nationwide labour force card could simplify the registration process and expand social security coverage beyond the construction and gig worker sectors.

Administrative Simplification:

- There is a need to simplify the administrative framework of social security programs.
- For example, the existing social security framework for unorganized workers has become complex, with overlapping areas of authority between the State and Centre, and confusing definitions being used such as between a platform worker, an unorganized worker and someone who is self-employed.

Strengthening Existing Schemes:

- The govt may also strengthen existing schemes, for example the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), the Employees' State Insurance Scheme (ESI), and the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), with budgetary support and expansion of coverage.

Administrative Simplification:

- There is a need to simplify the administrative framework of social security programs.

Raising Awareness:

- There's a need for a more significant push to raise awareness about social security to ensure that more workers are aware of the available benefits.
- Organizations such as the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) which run Shakti Kendra (worker facilitation centres), may be funded to run campaigns (especially for women) to provide greater information on social security rights, along with services and schemes that the government offers.

What can India learn from other countries: -

Brazil:

- Brazil has a comprehensive and generous social security system that covers more than 90% of the population and provides income replacement for workers and their families in various situations.
- India can learn from Brazil's experience in expanding the coverage and scope of its social security system, as well as implementing reforms to ensure its fiscal sustainability and efficiency.

Germany:

- Germany has a well-developed social security system that is based on the principle of social insurance, where workers and employers contribute to various schemes that provide pensions, health care, unemployment benefits, long-term care, and family allowances.
- India can learn from Germany's model of social insurance, which is widely accepted and trusted by the public and provides adequate protection and incentives for workers.

Singapore:

- Singapore has a unique social security system that is based on the principle of individual savings, where workers are required to save a portion of their income in a central provident fund that can be used for retirement, housing, health care, and education.
- India can learn from Singapore's approach of promoting personal responsibility and asset accumulation, as well as providing flexibility and choice for workers to manage their savings.

Conclusion: -

- There is a need for more robust policy implementation, proper allocation of funds, transparent utilization of resources, and efficient oversight mechanisms.
- Without addressing these issues, the intended beneficiaries of social security programs may continue to face challenges and inadequate support.

- The **Code on Social Security proposed by the government in 2020 is a positive step towards providing a statutory framework** for social security for various categories of workers, including those in the gig economy and informal sectors.

Question for practice: -

1. The social security policies in India requires a comprehensive revamp. In this context, analyse the obstacles encountered by social security schemes and propose steps to tackle them. (150W)

PM PRANAM Scheme- Fertilizer Subsidy

Introduction: -

- The Union Budget for 2023-24 introduced the PM-PRANAM initiative aimed at encouraging the judicious utilization of both chemical and alternative fertilizers. It also seeks to raise awareness about regenerative agriculture (RA).
- Regenerative agriculture is a results-driven approach to food production that prioritizes the rejuvenation and maintenance of soil health, preservation of climate stability, safeguarding of water resources and biodiversity, and the improvement of farms' productivity and economic viability.

Syllabus of Mains – GS 3 -Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies

What is the PM PRANAM Scheme?

- It stands for **PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment, and Amelioration of Mother Earth**.
- It **aims to** reduce the use of chemical fertilizers and promote the balanced use of alternative fertilizers.
- It will save the subsidy burden on chemical fertilizers, which is projected to increase to Rs 2.25 lakh crore in 2022-2023.
- It will make Indian agriculture more resilient to the changing climate.
- It will incentivise those states that use fewer chemical fertilizers than their average consumption in the last three years.
- The states will receive 50% of the subsidy savings as a grant, which they can use for asset creation, technological adoption, and awareness generation related to alternative fertilizers.
- It will involve the participation of farmers, panchayats, farmer producer organizations and self-help groups that are involved in the reduction of fertilizer use.

- It is in line with the government's focus on promoting green agriculture and sustainable agricultural practices with environmental concern.
- It will support the existing initiatives such as National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), National Initiative on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA), and PM Krishi Sinchaayi Yojna (PMKSY).

Issues with Fertilizer Usage in India: -

Imbalance in Fertilizer Use:

- India has a recommended ratio of 4:2:1 for nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K) fertilizers, but the actual ratio is much higher for N and lower for P and K. This leads to nutrient deficiencies, soil degradation, and lower crop yields.
- According to a report by NITI Aayog, the average NPK ratio in India was 8:3:1 in 2015-16, which is far from the recommended ratio of 4:2:1.

Excessive Use of Nitrogenous Fertilizers:

- India is the third-largest producer and the second-largest consumer of urea, a nitrogenous fertilizer.
- However, excessive use of urea has negative impacts on soil health, water quality, and greenhouse gas emissions. Urea also subsidizes the production of other fertilizers, which creates distortions in the fertilizer market.

Lack of Domestic Production and Dependence on Imports:

- India has limited domestic resources of P and K fertilizers and relies heavily on imports from other countries.
- This makes India vulnerable to fluctuations in global prices and availability of these fertilizers. Moreover, India has not invested significantly in expanding its domestic fertilizer production capacity since the 1990s.
- According to the annual report of the Department of Fertilizers, India has a domestic production capacity of 24.66 million metric tons of P&K fertilizers, which meets only 50% of the domestic demand.
- The rest is met through imports from countries like China, Russia, Morocco, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

Inefficient Distribution and Subsidy System:

- India has a complex and costly system of subsidizing fertilizers to farmers, which involves multiple agencies, intermediaries, and leakages.
- The subsidy system also does not adequately incentivize farmers to use fertilizers efficiently or adopt organic or bio-fertilizers.

- The fertilizer subsidy has become a sticky item in the expenditure list of the Union Budget. The government has earmarked Rs 1.75 trillion for fertilizer subsidy in the 2023-24 Budget, above a trillion rupees for a fourth year in a row.
- The dependence on LNG for fertilizer production exposes India to high and volatile global gas prices, and a soaring fertilizer subsidy bill.
- The use of LNG in the fertilizer sector was as high as 63% of the total gas consumption in FY 2020-21.

Effects of Improper Utilization of Fertilizers: -

Environmental Pollution:

- Excess use of fertilizers causes environmental pollution as their residual and unused amounts will become pollutants for air, water, and soil.
- **Eutrophication:** Excess use of fertilizers can lead to eutrophication in the water bodies, which is the excessive growth of algae and other aquatic plants that deplete the oxygen level and harm aquatic life.

Soil degradation:

- Continuous use of nitrogenous fertilizer alone can reduce the soil fertility and cause deficiencies of other major and micronutrients. It can also affect the soil microflora and fauna that are essential for maintaining the soil quality.

Reduced Crop Quality:

- Improper fertilizer application can result in the excessive growth of certain plant parts (e.g., leaves and stems) at the expense of reproductive structures (e.g., fruits and grains), leading to reduced crop quality and yield.

Groundwater Contamination:

- Nitrate leaching from overused fertilizers can contaminate groundwater, posing health risks to people who rely on these sources for drinking water.
- Elevated nitrate levels in drinking water can lead to methemoglobinemia or "blue baby syndrome."

Health Concerns:

- Pesticides and herbicides often used in conjunction with fertilizers can pose health risks to farmers and consumers when used improperly or excessively.

Economic Burden:

- Excessive fertilizer use can be economically unsustainable for farmers, as it can increase input costs without corresponding increases in crop yields. This can lead to indebtedness among small and marginal farmers.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions:

- The production and application of synthetic fertilizers contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, particularly nitrous oxide (N₂O), which is a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change.

Imbalance in Crop Nutrient Uptake:

- Inappropriate fertilizer application can result in an imbalance of nutrients in the soil, which can affect the nutrient uptake by crops and may require corrective actions in subsequent growing seasons.

How can the PM PRANAM Scheme help be reforming the Fertilizer Regime?

Reduction in Subsidy Bills:

- PM Pranam can contribute to reducing the government's subsidy bills by promoting alternative or bio-fertilisers.
- The government aims to set up 10,000 Bio-Input Resource Centres, creating a national-level micro-fertiliser and pesticide manufacturing network.
- By supporting the production and adoption of these bio-fertilisers, PM Pranam can gradually reduce the financial burden on the government in terms of chemical fertilizer subsidies.

Fiscal Deficit Control:

- Lowering subsidy bills through the promotion of PM Pranam can help in controlling India's fiscal deficit. Fiscal deficits can be a significant economic challenge, and reducing subsidies is one way to address this issue.

Gradual Phase-Out of Chemical Fertiliser Subsidies:

- PM Pranam can serve as a catalyst for the gradual phase-out of subsidies on chemical fertilizers.
- By providing support and incentives for the adoption of alternative fertilizers, the government can reduce its financial commitment to chemical fertilizer subsidies.

Support for Farmer Fertiliser Cooperatives:

- PM Pranam can help farmer fertilizer cooperatives scale up their production of biofertilizers. This support can lead to increased economies of scale and a more extensive distribution network for alternative fertilizers.

Incentivizing Sales and Distribution Networks:

- It's important to work out pricing and margin strategies for biofertilizers to incentivize sales and distribution networks.
- PM Pranam can facilitate this by providing incentives to cooperatives and businesses involved in biofertilizer production and distribution.

Demonstration and Certification:

- PM Pranam can support initiatives to demonstrate the effectiveness of alternative fertilizers on farmer fields.
- Certification of these bio-fertilisers can also ensure quality and help farmers or their organizations realize better prices for their produce.

Other Governments Initiatives: -

One Nation One Fertilizer (ONOF):

- This scheme, also known as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Urvarak Pariyojana (PMBJP), was launched in 2022 by the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.
- Under this scheme, all fertilizer manufacturers under the fertilizer subsidy scheme are required to use a single brand and logo for fertilizers. The brand name is Bharat and it covers all types of fertilizers, including urea, DAP, NPK, and MOP.
- The aim of this scheme is to standardize fertilizer brands across the country, clear up the confusion of farmers regarding the availability and quality of fertilizers, reduce the cost and increase the availability of fertilizers, and save freight subsidy by minimizing cross-country movement of fertilizers.

Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):

- This system was introduced in 2016 by the Department of Fertilizers to provide subsidy amount to farmers to purchase fertilizers.
- Under this system, the subsidy is transferred to the fertilizer companies after the sale is made to the farmers through point of sale (PoS) devices installed at retail outlets.
- The aim of this system is to ensure timely supply of fertilizers, prevent diversion and leakages of subsidy, promote balanced use of fertilizers, and create a transparent and accountable system for subsidy payments.

Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS):

- This scheme was launched in 2010 by the Department of Fertilizers to provide subsidy on nutrients rather than on products.
- Under this scheme, the subsidy rates for nutrients such as nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K), and sulphur (S) are fixed by the government in advance for each financial year.
- The manufacturers and importers are free to decide the retail price of their products based on the market conditions.
- The aim of this scheme is to encourage the production and consumption of complex fertilizers, promote balanced use of NPKS nutrients, reduce the subsidy burden on the government, and induce competition among fertilizer companies.

Neem Coated Urea (NCU):

- This scheme was launched by the government in 2015 to promote the use of organic urea to preserve soil health and yield better crops.
- Under this scheme, farmers are only making use of neem coated organic urea to cut down savings by around 10%. The urea that is coated with neem tree seed oil is called neem coated urea.
- The government mandated all the indigenous and imported urea to be neem coated to make the urea slow release and difficult to use for non-agricultural purposes.
- The scheme aims to regulate the use of urea, enhance the availability of nitrogen to the crop, reduce the cost of fertilizer application, prevent wastage and diversion of subsidy, and decrease soil and water pollution caused by urea.

Conclusion: -

- Fertilizer subsidy is third highest in India and with PM PRANAM Scheme it will get reduce and we can use this in another capacity building sector and at the same time it will help us to solve the problem of environmental degradation in long term.

Question for practice: -

- The fertilizer subsidy system in India requires restructuring. Explain how the newly introduced PM-PRANAM (PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment, and Amelioration of Mother Earth) Scheme can contribute to this reform.(250W)

GS 4

Media ethics and self-regulation

Context-

- The Supreme Court has recently underscored the significance of bolstering self-regulatory measures implemented by television networks to guarantee ethical behaviour and accountable journalism.
- The court was hearing an appeal presented by the News Broadcasters and Digital Association (NBDA) challenging remarks made by the Bombay High Court against the effectiveness of self-regulation.
- The Bombay High Court had criticized media trials and observed that existing self-regulatory mechanisms lacked the character of statutory mechanisms.

Syllabus of Mains – GS 4 - laws, rules, regulations and conscience as sources of ethical guidance, Government policies

Introduction: -

What are Media Ethics?

- Media ethics is concerned with the **question of what is right or wrong, good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, about the means and ways** that the media collects and presents information and news.
- Media ethics refer to the principles and standards that guide the behaviour and conduct of journalists, media organizations, and other professionals in the field of journalism and communication.
- These ethics serve as a set of guidelines that help ensure responsible and fair reporting, as well as maintain the integrity, credibility, and trustworthiness of the media industry.

Principles of media ethics: -

Harm Limitation Principle:

- It states that in the process of reporting an issue to the public, journalists and reporters must do so with great sensitivity and in such a way that it does not harm certain groups of people.

Principle of utilitarianism:

- The theory contends that people should prioritise the greater good. Utilitarianism can be used to justify sacrificing the privacy of a few individuals if it would facilitate greater access to information for the public.

Deontology:

- Focuses on a person's duty to determine appropriate action.
- This is a very pertinent concept for the media as it is the media's duty to serve the public by providing information which is impartial, and which promotes knowledge and reason.

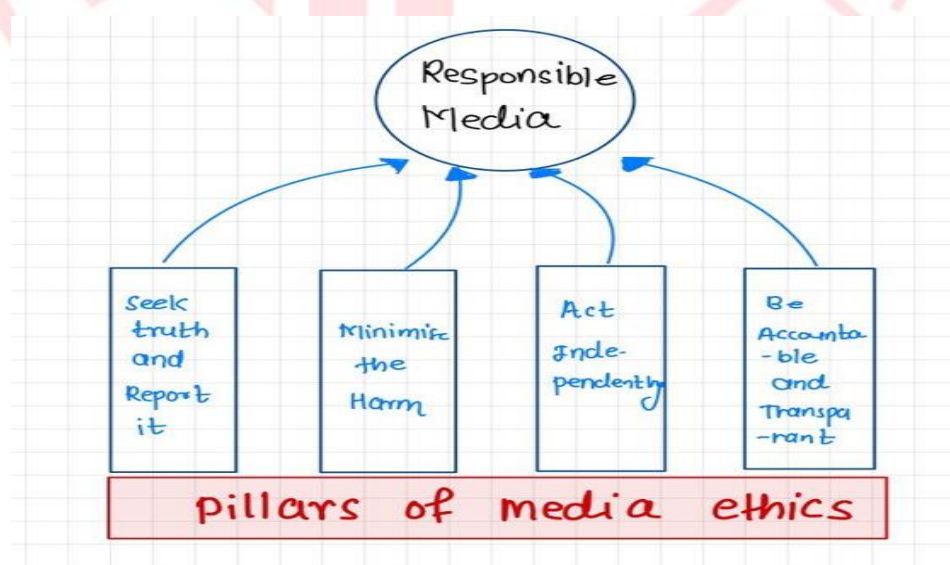
Avoiding Conflicts of Interest:

- Journalists should disclose any potential conflicts of interest that may affect the objectivity of their reporting.

Responsible Coverage of Sensitive Issues:

- Reporting on topics like crime, tragedy, or conflict requires special care to avoid sensationalism or gratuitous intrusion into the lives of affected individuals.
- Aristotle's golden mean focuses on the middle ground between two extremes.
- In media ethics, this theory could be used for redacting names from a sensitive article or blurring the faces of those who are a victim of crime.
- Journalist can use this theory to determine whether to publish/telecast something. This theory allows them to **strike a balance between too ethical and too neutral**.

Pillars of Media Ethics:



Key stakeholders in Media Ethics and their Responsibility: -

Media actors:

- Media ethics must ensure that journalists observe principles of integrity, professionalism, privacy, and impartiality.

Government:

- Media ethics promotes and defends values such as a universal respect for life and the rule of law and legality.

General Public:

- Serve the public by providing information which is impartial and which promotes knowledge and reason.

Police:

- Media must facilitate assistance to the police, and it must applaud when criminals are brought to justice as a result.
- The press must also hold the police to account, acting as the eyes and ears of the public.

What are the SC's Observations?

Balancing Regulation and Freedom of Speech:

- The SC acknowledged the significance of avoiding pre-censorship or post-censorship by the government while maintaining ethical standards in media content.
- The court commended the idea of self-regulation by media outlets but emphasized that such mechanisms should be more effective in curbing unethical conduct.

Notice Issued to Strengthen Regulatory Framework:

- The SC issued a notice to NBDA and other relevant parties to explore the enhancement of the regulatory framework.
- The court emphasized the necessity of examining whether the current steps taken to establish self-regulatory mechanisms need to be strengthened both in terms of jurisdiction and the final consequences of violations.

Concerns Over Media Behaviour:

- The SC highlighted the **frenzy in media coverage** following the death of an actor, where speculation about guilt or innocence could impact ongoing investigations.

- Court emphasized that the media's role should be to uphold the presumption of innocence until proven guilty rather than pre-emptively shaping public opinion.

Proposals to Enhance Fines and Guidelines:

- The court questioned the adequacy of the current Rs 1 lakh fine imposed for violations, suggesting that finest should be proportionate to the profits generated by the entire show.
- The Chief Justice raised the idea of "disgorgement," like the practice in securities regulation, where violators return ill-gotten gains.

IMP NOTE: -

- The NBDA (Formerly known as News Broadcasters Association (NBA)) represents the private television news, current affairs and digital broadcasters. It is the collective voice of the news, current affairs and digital broadcasters in India.
- The NBDA has presently 27 leading news and current affairs broadcasters (comprising 125 news and current affairs channels) as its members. The NBDA presents a unified and credible voice before the Government, on matters that affect the growing industry.

How is Media Regulated in India?

Conventional Media:

- Conventional media includes newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, etc.
- To regulate the conduct of traditional media, the government has established various statutory bodies under different statutes.
- Print media is regulated mostly through two major Acts, namely, the Press and **Registration of Books Act of 1867**, which provides for the registration, regulation, and preservation of every copy of books and newspapers printed in India, and the ***Press Council Act, 1978.***
- Cinema is regulated through the ***Cinematographic Act of 1952.*** The Act also establishes a regulating body named Central Board of Film Certification.
- The **telecommunication sector is regulated through the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997.** Under this Act, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, regulates, adjudicates disputes, disposes of appeals, and protects the interests of service providers and consumers.

Digital Media:

- Digital media broadly includes websites, blogs, video platforms like YouTube, and social media sites.

- As these platforms act as a medium of communication between two or more people, they are known as “intermediaries” under the governing law.
- These are regulated under the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and the rules framed therein under section 69, which are called Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code), Rules 2021 (IT Rules, 2021).

Instances of Breaches of Media Ethics

- **Media trials:** Undermining the concept of free and fair trial.
- **Media’s love for borewells:** An example of the **media’s role in ‘making news’ rather than ‘reporting news’** as was a case of the five-year-old boy who accidentally fell into an open borewell.
- **The Aarushi–Hemraj murder case:** The way the media covered it sparked a debate on crime stories being sensationalised to attract viewers and readers.
- **Kathua Rape Case:** Several media houses revealed the identity and pictures of the victim and did not handle the case with the required sensitivity.
- **Violation of privacy:** From Bollywood stars to cricketers and politicians are victims—Ex. paparazzi.

Rationale behind Self-Regulation of Media: -

Ensures independence of media:

- Self-regulation ensures that the media can operate independently.
- This is in the interest of the media as well as its different stakeholders and the audience.

Provides greater incentives for compliance:

- If rules are developed by the media, industry participants are more likely to perceive them as reasonable.

Bring efficiency:

- Media participants are likely to have superior knowledge of the subject compared to a government agency.
- This is important where technical knowledge is needed to develop appropriate rules and determine whether they have been violated.

Preservation of Freedom of Speech and Expression:

- Self-regulation allows media organizations to regulate themselves without external interference.

- This helps safeguard the fundamental democratic principle of freedom of speech, ensuring that the government or other external entities do not unduly restrict or control the content and operations of media outlets.

Public Confidence and Credibility:

- Effective self-regulation enhances the credibility and reputation of media organizations. When the public perceives that the media is committed to responsible reporting and accurate information dissemination, they are more likely to trust and rely on it as a source of news and information.

Need for effective Media Ethics: -**Media and market pressure:**

- Business imperatives of increasing revenue have taken (and continue to take) their toll on journalistic excellence.

Inadequate penalty:

- Currently, ₹ 1 Lakh fine is ineffective as this fine is not in proportion to profits earned by the offending channel from the corresponding show.

Absence of journalistic ethics:

- which is reflected in inaccurate news being broadcasted.

Conflicts of Interests:

- Impartiality is one of the pillars of media ethics. But a dilemma occurs when one is assigned to cover a story about someone s/he has an existing personal relationship with.

Confidentiality and Integrity:

- Serious ethical concerns have been expressed where reporters covered special stories based on information concerning an individual's personal conduct in private life.

Bias and subjectivity:

- News reports are often reported in a particular style, and bias in a manner that has led to the suspicion of the news media's intentions and objects.

Emerging dilemmas:

- Cross-media ownership by big corporate companies has assumed alarming proportions.

- Leaving the regulation to the media itself generates the likelihood that it may subjugate regulatory aims to its own business goals.

What should be done? (Way- Forward)

- The need of the hour for *reporters is to be aware of the sensitivities of their audiences.*
- Self-regulation system of media needs strengthening.
- **Hutchins Commission report** advocated for *freedom of the press, and self-regulation was considered as the key feature, and government intervention as the last resort.*
- Penalties should be in proportion to the profits earned by an errant channel, as recently advocated by the Supreme Court.
- Self-regulation in the broadcast media could be the best way forward in achieving a balance between the media's duty to empower the participatory role of the people in governance and the reasonable restrictions that prevent the abuse of its immense strength.
- There should be a universal code of ethics which specifies the guidelines for journalists Like:
 - Take responsibility for the accuracy of their work.
 - Never deliberately distort facts or context, including visual information.
 - Recognise a special obligation to serve as watchdogs over public affairs and government.
- Objectivity is an essential technique for removing bias in seeking truth.
- There is a necessity for media training that can be commenced by media establishments as part of journalism courses.

Conclusion: -

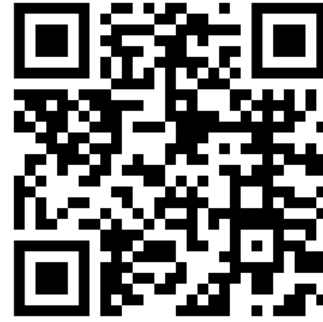
- If we *don't have a vigorous questioning, aggressive journalistic community, democracy itself is in great jeopardy*: Milton Glaser.
- The media does play a vital role in our democracy, and if we cannot depend on journalistic ethics, the nation's in trouble as *it is fourth pillar of democracy and Without 4th pillar the building of democracy can stand tall.*

QR Code of Lectures

Sept First Week



Sept Second Week



Sept 3rd Week



Sept 4th Week



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