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SEVEN IMPORTANT ISSUES

I. NEW DRAFT COASTAL REGULATION ZONE NOTIFICATION

Why in News?

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has framed a new draft Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018. The Ministry had constituted a Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Shailesh Nayak to examine the various issues and concerns of Coastal States/UTs and various other stakeholders. The report submitted by committee has been examined in the Ministry and consultations have been held with various stakeholders in this regard.

Introduction

The draft has been prepared for India's 7,500 km coastline based on recommendations by a committee, all coastal states and various other stakeholders. It encompasses protection of ecologically sensitive areas, safeguarding aquatic system and marine life, plastic waste disposal and simultaneously allowing ecotourism and development of coastal zones. Based on suggestions and objections from the public, a committee under the ministry along with Dr Nayak will study the draft again and only then will a final notification be issued. The Centre has allowed India's coasts to be made more accessible to tourism and industrial infrastructure and given individual states considerable leeway to decide how they should plan such development.

Coastal zones are defined by the extent of territorial waters up to the high water mark. Generally the world's

coastal zones are long narrow features of mainland, islands and seas, generally forming the outer boundary of the coastal domain (from 200m above sea level to 200 m below sea level). Coastal zones include the entire continental shelf and occupy about 18% of the surface of the globe, supplying about 90% of global fish catch and accounts for some 25% of global primary productivity while at the same time being some of the most endangered regions on the planet.

India has a very robust remote sensing program that the Indian Remote Sensing Satellite (IRS) series of satellites were effectively used to monitor coastal habitats, landforms, shoreline, water quality, etc. and changes were identified during the last 40 years. The classification system for coastal habitats and the classification and geometric accuracies of products were standardized. Detailed information for mangroves communities and characteristics of coral reefs were generated. The high



and low tide lines were delineated seamlessly for the entire coastline using satellite data. All these data were organized in a GIS and the coastal database for the entire country was created. Impacts of various hazards on such as cyclones, tsunami and sea level changes on coastal habitats were documented. Based on topography, shoreline changes and tides, coastal multi-hazard vulnerability maps were characterized by employing the elevation data derived from satellite data and were prepared for the coastline of India. The information on ocean color and sea surface

temperature was used to generate potential fishery advisories, which are provided daily to fishermen. The coastal database was utilized effectively to identify coastal regulation zones, marine protected areas, vulnerable zones, etc. Various services for tsunami, fishery and coral reef bleaching were generated for societal benefits. It is planned to develop models for the coastal zone, so that impending dangers and likely changes in the coastal zone can be predicted and suitable actions can be undertaken. It is necessary to integrate socio-economic data with the knowledge database of coastal zone to understand the impact of anthropogenic activities and the changing climate on the coastal zone.

Coastal Regulation Zone

Under the Environment Protection Act, 1986 a notification was issued in February, 1991, for regulation of activities in the coastal area by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). As per the notification, the coastal land up to 500m from the High Tide Line (HTL) and a stage of 100m along banks of creeks, estuaries, backwater and rivers subject to tidal fluctuations, is called the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ). CRZ along the country has been placed in four categories. The above notification includes only the inter-tidal zone and land part of the coastal area and does not include the ocean part. The notification imposed restriction on the setting up and expansion of industries or processing plants etc.

- First CRZ notification came into force in 1991 but work to prepare Coastal Zone Management Plan was taken up only in 1997-98. It was sanctioned in January 2000.
- Second CRZ notification came into force in 2011 and states were directed to prepare their Coastal Zone Management Programme (CZMP) within a year.
- Third draft notification was issued by environment ministry in April 2018.

New Draft (CRZ) Notification, 2018

The MoEF&CC had received representations from various coastal states/UTs, besides other stakeholders, for a comprehensive review of the provisions of the CRZ Notification, 2011, particularly related to the management and conservation of marine and coastal eco-systems, development in coastal areas, eco-tourism, livelihood option and sustainable development of coastal communities etc. The Coastal Regulation Zone Notification was last reviewed and issued in 2011, with periodic amendments to some clauses.

The relaxations/amendment proposed in the CRZ Notification, 2018 shall, however, come into force only after the respective Coastal Zone Management Programme (CZMP) framed to the CRZ Notification, 2011 have been revised/updated by the States/UTs, as per the provisions of the CRZ, 2018 Notification and approved by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change.

Classification of the Coastal Regulation Zone

For the purpose of conserving and protecting the coastal areas and marine waters, the CRZ zone is

GOVT OPENS UP WATERFRONT TO DEBATE

DRAFT NOTIFICATION PROPOSES NEW DEFINITIONS

- > It will further reduce buffer zone near bays and creeks to 50 metres from the present 100 m
- > In Mumbai, Mahim

coastline and Marine Drive (Back Bay). Girgaum have been redefined as 'Bay Areas'

- > Mahim shoreline and entire Backbay area, extending from Nariman Point

and Cuffe Parade to Girgaum Chowpatty, have been classified as bay based on a report by the National Hydrographic Institute, Dehradun

- > In 2014, when the

distance was reduced to 100 metres, activists lambasted the move. However, Centre's decision was upheld by SC

- > Now, a further cut to 50 m will allow construction activity near bay areas



NEW CLASSIFICATION

CRZ-I areas are environmentally most critical:

CRZ-I A:

- > Mangroves
- > Corals and coral reefs
- > Sand Dunes
- > Biologically active mudflats;
- > National parks, marine

CRZ-II

- > Developed land areas up to or close to the shoreline in designated urban areas

CRZ-III

- > Areas that are relatively undisturbed (viz rural areas etc)

HOW RULES EVOLVED

- > First CRZ notification came into force in 1991 but work to prepare Coastal Zone Management Plan was taken up only in 1997-98. It was sanctioned in January 2000.
- > Second CRZ notification came into force in 2011 and states were directed to prepare their CZMP within a year.
- > Third draft notification was issued by environment ministry on Wednesday with a 60-day period for public to offer their comments and suggestions

subdivided into regions, with varying leeway for infrastructure development, depending on population and ecological sensitivity.

Environmentally most Critical CRZ-I:

a. Ecologically Sensitive CRZ-IA It constitute ecologically sensitive areas and the geo- morphological features which play a role in the maintaining the integrity of the coast viz.: (i) Mangroves (In case mangrove area is more than 1000 sq. mts, a buffer of 50meters along the mangroves provided and such area also constitute CRZ IA), (ii) Corals and coral reefs; (iii) Sand Dunes; (iv) Biologically active mudflats; (v) National parks, marine parks, sanctuaries, reserve forests, wildlife habitats and other protected areas under the provisions of Wild Life (Protection) Act, the Forest (Conservation) Act or Environment (Protection) Act; including Biosphere Reserves; (vi) Salt Marshes; (vii) Turtle nesting grounds; (viii) Horse shoe crabs habitats; (ix) Sea grass beds; (x) Nesting grounds of birds; (xi) Areas or structures of archaeological importance and heritage sites.

b. The intertidal Zone CRZ-IB: The area between Low Tide Line (LTL) and High Tide Line (HTL) constitute the CRZ-I B.

Land Areas up to or Close to the Shoreline CRZ-II

It constitute the developed land areas up to or close to the shoreline, within the existing municipal limits or in other existing legally designated urban areas, which are substantially built-up with a ratio of built up plots to that of total plots being more than 50% and have been provided with drainage and approach roads and other infrastructural facilities, such as water supply and sewerage mains etc.

Undisturbed Land Areas CRZ-III

Land areas that are relatively undisturbed (viz rural areas etc)

and those do not fall under CRZ-II, constitute CRZ III. CRZ-III further classified into following categories:

- **CRZ-III A:** Such densely populated CRZ-III areas, where the population density is more than 2161 per sq km as per 2011 census base designated as CRZ III A. In CRZ-III A, area up to 50 mts from the HTL on the landward side earmarked as the No Development Zone (NDZ), provided the CZMPs as per this Notification, framed with due consultative process, have been approved, failing which, a NDZ of 200 mts continue to apply.

Critically Vulnerable Coastal Areas (CVCA)

Critical Vulnerable Coastal Areas (CVCA) are ecologically sensitive areas identified as under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 such as:

- Sunderban region of West Bengal.
- Gulf of Khambat and Gulf of Kutch in Gujarat.
- Malvan, Achra-Ratnagiri in Maharashtra.
- Karwar and Coondapur in Karnataka.
- Vembanad in Kerala.
- Gulf of Mannar in Tamil Nadu.
- Bhitarkanika in Odisha.
- Coringa, East Godavari and Krishna in Andhra Pradesh.

- **CRZ-III B:** All other CRZ-III areas with population density of less than 2161 per sq km, as per 2011 census base. In CRZ-III B, the area up to 200 mts. from the HTL on the landward side earmarked as the No Development Zone (NDZ). Land area up to 50 mts. from the HTL or width of the creek whichever is less, along the tidal influenced water bodies, as the NDZ in CRZ III areas.

Water Area CRZ- IV

The CRZ - IV constitutes the water area and further classified as under:

- **CRZ- IV A:** The water area and the sea bed area between the Low Tide

Line up to twelve nautical miles on the seaward side constitute CRZ-IV A.

- **CRZ- IV B:** CRZ-IV B areas include the water area and the bed area between LTL at the bank of the tidal influenced water body to the LTL on the opposite side of the bank, extending from the mouth of the water body at the sea up to the influence of tide, i.e., salinity of five parts per thousand (ppt) during the driest season of the year.

Prohibited Activities within CRZ

The following activities shall be prohibited, in general, within the entire CRZ. Exceptions to these and other permissible/ regulated activities in specific CRZ categories viz. CRZ-I, II, III & IV, shall however be governed by the provisions.

- Setting up of new industries and expansion of existing industries, operations or processes.
- Manufacture or handling of oil, storage or disposal of hazardous substances as specified in the notification of Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change.
- Setting up of new fish processing units.
- Land reclamation, bunding or disturbing the natural course of seawater.
- Discharge of untreated waste and effluents from industries, cities or towns and other human settlements.
- Dumping of city or town wastes including construction debris, industrial solid wastes, fly ash for the purpose of land filling.
- Port and harbour projects in high eroding stretches of the coast.
- Mining of sand, rocks and other sub-strata materials.
- Dressing or altering active sand dunes.

- x. In order to safeguard the aquatic system and marine life, disposal of plastic into the coastal waters shall be prohibited. Adequate measures for management and disposal of plastic materials shall be undertaken in the CRZ.

National Coastal Zone Management Authority

The Authority constituted by the central government has its principal focus on the coastal environment. The main purpose for constitution of the Authority is protection and improving the quality of the coastal environment and preventing, abating and controlling environmental pollution in the coastal areas.

The Authority shall have its headquarters at New Delhi. The list of persons appointed at various designations under the Authority can be found in the Official Gazette of India. The minimum number of members required to initiate a valid meeting of the Authority shall be ten. The powers and functions of the Authority are as follows:

- To co-ordinate the actions of the State Coastal Zone Management Authorities (SCZMA) and the Union Territory Coastal Zone Management Authorities (UTZMA) under the EPA and the Rules made thereunder, or under any other law which is relatable to the objects of the said EPA.
- To make specific recommendations to the central government after examining the proposals for changes or modifications in the clarification of Coastal Zone Areas and in the Coastal Zone Management Plans received from the SCZMA and the UTZMA.
- File complaints under section 19 (Cognizance of Offence) of the EPA in cases of noncompliance of the directions issued by it.

- To inspect the facts concerning the cases before it.
- To provide technical assistance and guidance to various government authorities and other institutions or organizations as may be found necessary, in the matters relating to protection and improvement of coastal environment.
- To advise the central government on policy, planning, research and development, setting up of centres of excellence and funding, in matters relating to Coastal Regulation Zone Management.
- To deal with all environmental issues relating to coastal regulation zone which may be referred to it by the Central Government.
- Whenever required, to invite any other expert as a member during its meeting.
- The foregoing powers and functions of the Authorities shall be subject to the supervision and control of the central government.

Criticism CRZ Notification, 2018

Environmentalists have raised objections to the draft Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018.

The new rules will open areas like Vasai, Virar, Palghar and Mira Bhayandar to more development and new townships will come up here. If sanctioned, there will be no sacred areas under the CRZ.

New rules have mandated that for tidal influenced water bodies, CRZ will be between the High Tide Line to 50 metres (or width of the creek, which ever is less), instead of the earlier 100 metres.

- This makes the coast more vulnerable to development and free for recreation and to combat against rise of sea level.

- The new rules, mangroves in private land will not require a buffer zone. "If mangroves have to be conserved, then private and public mangroves, all must be equally conserved."

The rules also sub-classifies CRZ-III into CRZ- III A and III B. Areas with population density of less than 2,161 per sq km will now be under CRZ-III A. The non-development zone (NDZ) for III A will be 50 metres, instead of 200 metres. This dilution will help builders as more development will now be allowed. It was reduced from 500 metres in 1991 to 100 metres and now finally to 50 metres.

The draft empowers CZMAs at the state-level, which is responsible for the Coastal Zone Management Plans (CZMPs). The idea is to complete the process of drawing up plans in consultation with coastal dwellers. Land and sea are constantly merging. As a result, this cannot be done through satellite images. One has to visit the area. The issue is that the process of creating CZMPs is flawed.

Way Forward

India's coastal and marine ecosystems include a wide range of mangroves, coral reefs, sea grasses, salt marshes, mud flats, estuaries, lagoons and unique flora and fauna. Yet, despite their ecological richness and contribution to the national economy, these resources have not received adequate protection and are under stress. The World Bank financed Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project – part of the national coastal zone management program – seeks to balance development with the protection of vulnerable ecosystems.

General Studies Paper- III

Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment



2. NIGHTMARE OF DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND FOR INDIA

Why in News?

Recently, addressing a gathering of business leaders from both public and private sectors former President of India Pranab Mukherjee said India's demographic dividend ran the risk of turning into a "demographic disaster" if jobs were not created. The "minuscule" size of the knowledge economy and benefits of education still not reaching the remotest parts of the country were "worrisome situations" which need to be corrected.

India has made spectacular progress in last seven decades and particularly in last three decades, since the liberalisation of the economy. Our growth trajectory though robust has not been able to generate employment in the expected manner.

Introduction

The working age population is usually in the range of 15 to 64 years. The rising share of the working population, if it is increasingly absorbed in non-agricultural activities (which are known to be more productive than agriculture) should lead to higher income. Higher income would contribute to higher savings in turn leading to higher share of investment in GDP, hence growth. For these reasons the demographic dividend is seen as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in a nation's life. India is at the mid-point of its dividend, which will end by 2040.

One million Indians are currently entering the workforce every month. This is India's demographic dividend. The demographic dividend of a country is essentially a period of two to three decades when the birth rates go down and this leads to a situation wherein the workforce of the country is growing at a faster rate in comparison to its population.

By 2020, the median age in India will be just 28, compared to 37 in China and the US, 45 in Western Europe and 49 in Japan. Demographics can change the pace and pattern of economic growth. While China's spectacular growth has already benefited from a demographic dividend, India is yet to do so.

Year 2016 was a turning point in global demographic trends. It was the first time since 1950 that the combined working age (WA) population (15-59) of the advanced countries decline. Over the next three decades, the United Nations (UN) projects that China and Russia will each see their WA populations fall by over 20 percent. India, however, seems to be in a demographic sweet spot with its working-age population projected to grow by a third over the same period; always remembering that demography provides potential and is not destiny.

Demographic Dividend

It refers to the growth in an economy that is the resultant effect of a change in the age structure of a country's population. The change in age structure is typically brought on by a decline in fertility and mortality rates. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFP), it simply means, "the economic growth potential resulting from shifts in a population's age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population (15 to 64) is larger than the share of non-working-age population (14 and younger and 65 and older)."

To receive a demographic dividend, a country must go through a demographic transition where it switches from a largely rural agrarian economy with high fertility and mortality rates to an urban industrial society characterized by low fertility

and mortality rates. In the initial stages of this transition, fertility rates fall, leading to a labor force that is temporarily growing faster than the population dependent on it. All else being equal, per capita income grows more rapidly during this time too. This economic benefit is the first dividend received by a country that has gone through the demographic transition.

There are four main areas where a country can find demographic dividends:

- **Savings:** During the demographic period, personal savings grow and can be used to stimulate the economy.
- **Labor supply:** More workers are added to the labor force, including more women.
- **Human capital:** With fewer births, parents are able to allocate more resources per child, leading to better educational and health outcomes.
- **Economic growth:** GDP per capita is increased due to a decrease in the dependency ratio.

Distinctive Indian Demography

India's demographic cycle is about 10-30 years behind that of the other countries, indicating that the next few decades present an opportunity for India to catch up to their per capita income levels.

In addition, India's working age (WA) to non-working age (NWA) ratio is likely to peak at 1.7, a much lower level than Brazil and China, both of which sustained a ratio greater than 1.7 for at least 25 years. Finally, India will remain close to its peak for a much longer period than other countries.

Another distinctive feature in India is the large heterogeneity among the states in their demographic profile and evolution. There is a clear divide between peninsular India (West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh) and the hinterland states (Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar). The peninsular states exhibit a pattern with sharp rises and declines in the working age population. In contrast, the hinterland states will remain relatively young and dynamic, characterized by a rising working age population for some time.

Demographic Dividend and Economic Growth

Demographic dividend can increase economic growth through six channels. The first channel is through the swelling of the labour force, as more people reach working age. The second channel is the increased fiscal space created by the demographic dividend to divert resources from spending on children to investing in physical and human infrastructure. The third channel is the rise in women's workforce that naturally accompanies a decline in fertility and which can be a new source of growth. The fourth is the increase in savings rate, as the working age also happens to be the prime period for saving. The fifth channel is an additional boost to savings that occurs as the incentive to

save for longer periods of retirement increases with greater longevity. The sixth channel is a massive shift towards a middle-class society that is already in the making. Growth, education, home ownership, better economic security and a desire for more durable goods are the cause and consequence of young demographics.

Growth Consequences

It will have two important growth consequences. First, it seems that the peak of the demographic dividend is approaching fast for India. This peak will be reached in the early 2020s for India as a whole (this does not mean that the demographic dividend will turn negative; rather, the positive impact will slow down).

The second growth consequence relates to the distributional impacts across India. One way of assessing this is to compare the demographic dividend for the different states in terms of extra growth against their current level of per capita GDP.

Not a Clean Picture

India's labour force participation rate is around 60 per cent. ILO suggests that among 35 major economies of the world, India's labour force participation rate was ranked fifth from the bottom. China and Brazil, two of India's BRICS competitors, recorded the highest labour force participation rates. At less than 30 per cent, India had the lowest women's labour force participation

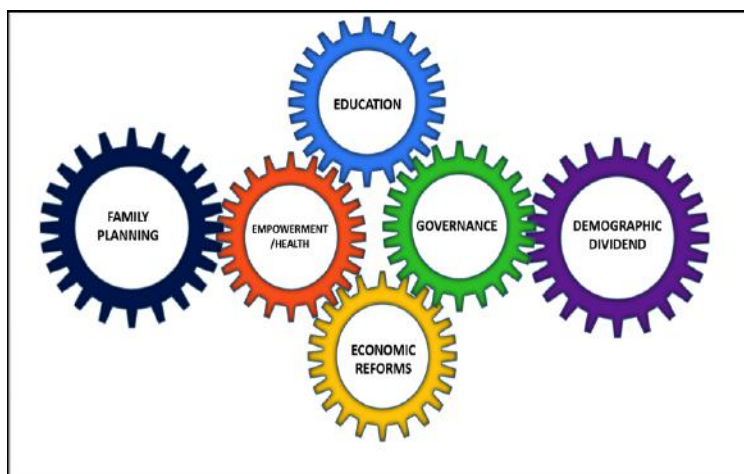
rate, less than half the corresponding rates for China and Brazil.

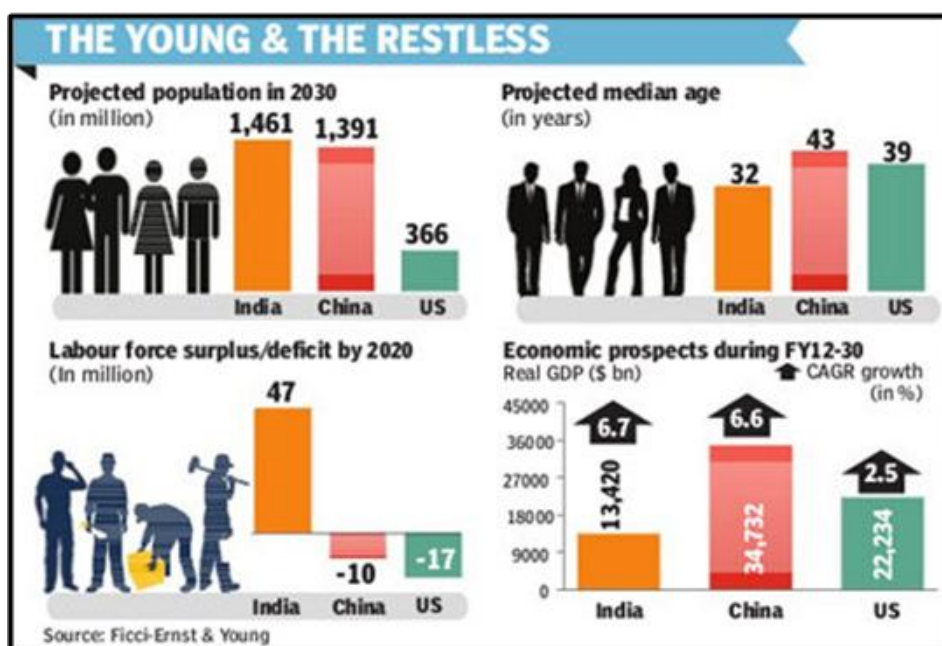
According to the survey, which takes into consideration all adults and not just the labour force participants,

found that unemployment and underemployment are particularly high among the 15 to 30-year-olds. Further, nearly half the full-time workers had blue collar jobs in the agricultural sector. In other words, not only has India not been able to utilise a very significant proportion of its labour force, especially women and younger citizens, it is yet to move a very large proportion of workers from the agricultural sector to higher value added occupations in the manufacturing and services sectors.

The Challenges

- The growth benefit of a demographic dividend is not automatic. A lot depends on whether the bulge in working population can be trained and enough jobs created to employ the 10 million more people who will join the labour force every year. There is mounting concern that future growth could turn out to be jobless due to de-industrialization, de-globalization and the fourth industrial revolution and technological progress. While digital technologies may enable the creation of new products and more productive jobs, they may also substitute existing jobs. India may not be able to take advantage of these opportunities, due to a low human capital base and lack of skills.
- Lack of jobs combined with a demographic dividend will increase the share of the population that is dependent on the working population. This will increase the economic insecurity of the elderly, as there will be fewer people generating wealth. Whether the demographic dividend promotes growth or transforms into a curse depends on how prepared the states that should benefit from a young population are. Bihar, Uttar





Pradesh and other lagging states will experience a much bigger bulge in working population than more developed states like Tamil Nadu. Unfortunately, the less-developed states are also the least prepared to take advantage of the demographic change they will undergo.

- Lack of quality educational infrastructure and research centres have deprived students at home to maximise their potential. As per the 2017 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) about 25% of the youth in the age group of 14 to 18 cannot read basic text fluently in their own language. More than half struggle with division (3 digits by 1 digit) problems. Only 43% are able to do such problems correctly.
- Technological change is making labour partially or wholly redundant in a number of sectors, across the world. Where labour is still necessary, increasing complexity of production requires labourers to have a minimum skill level that is much higher than the skill level required during the labour-intensive output boom in

China and South-East Asia in the past decades.

- Displacing China as the global manufacturing hub requires the creation of a comparable ecosystem that can successfully compete with the agglomeration economies enjoyed by the Chinese manufacturing industries.

Way Forward

Investing more and more efficiently in people will enable India to tap into its demographic dividend and prepare the country for the future. There is a powerful link between these investments and economic growth, stability and security. Investing in people through healthcare, quality education, jobs and skills helps build human capital, which is a key to supporting economic growth, ending extreme poverty and creating more inclusive societies. Human capital is now the fastest-growing component of India's wealth. It is already the largest component of global wealth. More developed and richer countries have vastly more human capital wealth than developing countries.

India's human capital base may not be adequate for the future or in a position to benefit from the

demographic dividend. India is home to the world's largest concentration of illiterate people in the world. It has made gains in human development, but challenges remain, including big barriers to secondary schooling, low-quality public services and gender discrimination. New technology could be exploited to accelerate the pace of building human capital, including massive open online courses and virtual classrooms.

Pursuing a more aggressive education agenda fits very well, not just with countries that will benefit from the demographic dividend, but also with what many governments in rich countries are trying to do, even in its absence. Demographic dividend is a time-limited opportunity and policymakers should have a greater incentive to redouble their efforts to promote human capital so that it can contribute to economic growth and job creation.

No country can achieve its potential and meet the challenges of the 21st century without the full participation of working population, both women and men. High-quality education is one of the strongest ways for countries to reduce poverty, achieve gender equality and create more jobs. Building human capital translates into higher rates of economic growth and job creation. Demographic dividend without investments in human capital will be a wasted development opportunity and it will further widen economic and social gaps, instead of narrowing them.

General Studies Paper- I

Topic: Role of women and women's organizations, Population and associated issues, Poverty and developmental issues, Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.



3. OPERATION GREENS TOWARDS AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE

Why in News?

Every now and then there are reports on farmer's suicides and protests from different parts of the country. These protests have been revolving around two main issues: loan waivers and increase the minimum support price of agriculture produce. Thus it has been very challenging for governments to accelerate agricultural growth rates. Tomatoes, Onions, Potatoes are consumed throughout the year in the entire country. During the last 70 years, farmers and consumers have incurred losses. For the first time, a new initiative titled "Operation Green (OG)" has been taken so that farmers can get right price and products are also available to the consumers at suitable prices. For this purpose, a provision of Rs. 500 crore has been made.

Introduction

The Operation Flood (OF) changed the face of milk production in India, making India the largest producer of milk in the world, with 164 million metric tonnes (MMT) produced in 2016-17. But important thing to note in OF was that it was driven largely by small holders and AMUL model ensured 75-80% of the price paid by milk consumers goes to farmers. The OG wants to replicate that success story of milk, in fruits and vegetables, starting with three basic vegetables—tomatoes, onions and potatoes.

The main objective of OG is to reduce price volatility in these commodities and thereby helping farmers augment incomes on a sustainable basis, as also provide these basic vegetables to consumers at affordable prices. India is the second largest producer of vegetables in the world, with about 180 MMT, next only to China, which produces more than 4 times the Indian production. It suggests that India has a long way to go in veggies. Although this is not as revolutionary as was the case of

green revolution in wheat, or white revolution in milk, yet, potatoes, onion and tomatoes, which form almost half of vegetable production in the country, have shown a very healthy growth. For example, during 2003-04 to 2017-18, potato production increased from 28 MMT to 49 MMT, while Onions went up from 6.3 MMT to 21 MMT and Tomatoes from 8.1 MMT to 22 MMT over the same period.

Operation Greens will promote Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs), agri-logistics, processing facilities and professional management. The idea behind Operation Greens is to double the income of farmers by the end of 2022. Operation is essentially a price fixation scheme that aims to ensure farmers are given the right price for their produce. The Minimum Support Price (MSP) regulation has a key role to play here. The announcement to set minimum support price of all kharif crops at 1.5 times the cost of production will increase the farmer's income and for consumers, tax incentives will be given under Operation Greens. The government aims to focus on basic ingredients and not on additional commodities in agriculture. Operation Greens will work to increase demand in the economy as well with its demand forecasting model. To help in the structural and infrastructure part of the scheme, as many as 470 agriculture market committee (APMCs) promoted markets will now be connected to the e-NAM platform while the government will help in development of 22,000 agricultural markets.

Initially, the government has targeted three main vegetables on TOP priorities under this mission i.e. In the opening years, the government wants to control over the precarious prices of these commodities and to ensure that the farmers are being paid sufficient against the hard work they have done. The booms and burst in prices has compelled many a times the

farmers to throw these vegetables on road. Reverse to this, speedy rise in the price (which is most of the time due to stocking and tricky games of traders) also put common man as well as the government in difficult situation.

In accordance with the government's vision, the Niti Aayog and economic think-tank has come out with a four-point action plan. This four point action plan includes the following measures:

- Better remuneration to farmers for their agriculture produce by reforming the existing marketing structure.
- Raising the productivity by using modern scientific, environmentally safe and sustainable agriculture technologies.
- Reforming the land policy to make farming and economically viable profession even for small marginal farmers.
- Provide capital support, subsidies and insurance schemes for economically supporting the farmers.

Although there is nothing radically new in what has been suggested in "Operation Greens" initiative, it only requires a strong political will and missionary zeal to achieve the target of doubling the farmer's income. The farmers are more hopeful this time because the government has shown the successful implementation of other operations like Swachh Bharat Mission recently.

Agriculture: Commodities Problem

The problem with these commodities is that when their production rises sharply, their prices collapse, as there is not enough modern storage capacity and the links to processing and organised retailing are very weak and small. As a result, farmers often end up receiving less than one-fourth of what consumers pay in major cities.

This must change. The OG needs to set a target that farmers must receive at least 60% of what consumers pay. Remember in case of milk, farmers get more than 75% of what consumers pay. Of course, these veggies are not milk and each one has its own characteristics.

Key Reforms in Agriculture Sector

First, link major consuming centres to major producing centres with minimal number of intermediaries.

- Right markets for their produce that can give them remunerative prices on sustainable basis.
- Mega-consuming centres and link their retail networks with producing centres of each commodity identified.
- Farmers can be organised in farmer producer organisation (FPOs).
- The announcement of income-tax concession to FPOs for five years.
- NABARD and SFAC together have about 3,000 FPOs, which could be the starting points for aggregation of commodities, assaying, sorting, grading and even packing with bar codes reflecting their traceability.
- APMC Act will have to be changed to allow direct buying from FPOs and giving incentives to FPOs, private companies and NGOs, to build back-end infrastructure, as was done for milk.

Second is the investment in logistics, starting with modern warehouses that can minimise wastages.

- Cost effective cold storages for onions, where wastages are reduced to less than 10% compared to 25-30% in traditional storages on farmers' fields.
- Large-scale investments in storage will require tweaking of Essential Commodities Act with respect to storage control order.

Third is linking with processing industry and organised retailing.

- On an average, about one fourth of the produce must be processed. India is way behind Southeast Asian

countries. Dehydrated onions, tomato puree, potato chips and so on should be cheap so that an average household can use them. Processing industry adds value and absorbs surpluses.

- If food processing ministry can coordinate with OG, it will be easier to make it a success for both. By developing these forward and backward linkages, the government can ease wide price fluctuations, raise farmers' share in consumers' rupee and yet consumers will pay lower prices.

Problems of Agriculture Sector

Even though Indian agriculture sector got hold of all these accolades since past few decades but still, the economic condition of the Indian farmers, who are the steadfast stakeholder of this largest economic sector, is miserable. There are many problems haunting the agriculture sector in India. Few of them are:

- 1. Illiteracy among farmers:** The farmers are not aware of the government schemes and initiatives. Even if they become aware of about the schemes, they are not able to understand the details and technicalities therein. For applying to different schemes also, they have to be dependent on middlemen who give them wrong information and cheat them for monetary benefits.
- 2. Scarcity of capital:** Even though the government is giving subsidy to farmers for developing modern agriculture infrastructure and for procurement of modern farm equipments, but farmers need to first pay the entire amount. The subsidy amount is credited to the farmer's bank account only later. Thus most farmers, who don't have initial capital, are unable to avail many of these schemes.
- 3. Small and fragmented land-holdings:** Sixty nine per cent of the Indian farmers are marginal

farmers and have a land holding of less than one hectare. This makes the agriculture economically unviable.

- 4. High cost of agr-inputs like seeds, agro chemicals and agriculture technology:** The high quality seeds, used in modern agriculture, are very costly and cannot be used to produce seeds for next year. Thus, use of these seeds becomes economically unviable for traditional farmers.
- 5. Lack of proper irrigation facilities:** Agriculture in our country largely depends on tropical monsoon, which most of the times is uncertain, unreliable and erratic. Lack of adequate monsoon in totally rain-fed areas leads to complete crop failures. On the contrary, over irrigation in well irrigated areas has led to problems of water logging and soil salinity and alkalinity.
- 6. Lack of mechanization and modern agriculture technologies:** Lack of mechanization leads to wastage of human labor and also reduces the agricultural productivity. Their proper and appropriate use can make agricultural operations efficient and quick thus, facilitating multiple cropping.
- 7. Lack of information about soil health and its management:** In absence of this knowledge, farmers are not able to decide the best crop for fields and the amount of agro chemical inputs required for their crops. A better knowledge of soil health and its management strategies can greatly reduce the cost of agricultural production.
- 8. Poor agriculture marketing services:** Agricultural marketing is still one of the biggest challenges that our country is facing. In the absence of proper marketing facilities, the farmers have to depend upon local traders and middlemen for sale of their agriculture produce. Most of the local traders and middlemen take

advantage of farmer's helplessness and buy their produce at throw away prices, thus denying the farmer the price for their labour.

- 9. Inadequate post-harvest storage transportation facilities:** One of the major reasons that compel farmers to sell their produce at throw away price to middle man is the lack of appropriate and storage facilities.

Way Ahead

A number of steps have been taken up from time to time by different governments but still a lot needs to be done.

Illiteracy of farmers: The main reasons of the failure of literacy programs are:

- (1) Programmes are voluntary and not mandatory.
- (2) People don't link literacy to their daily routine life
- (3) Due to poor economic condition people are pre-occupied with problems of food health, employment and self-reliance.
- (4) Lack of motivation and missionary zeal among individuals and functionaries involved in these programmes.

Strong political will how its high time to take strong measures to revive these programme and re-launch them incorporating constructive suggestions proposed by different expert committees.

The problem of fragmented land: It can be overcome by bringing in legislation for consolidation of holdings i.e. chakbandi. Chakbandi has been enacted and implemented in few states like Punjab, Haryana and parts of Uttar Pradesh but need to be fully implemented across India especially in population dense states like Bihar, Kerala, West Bengal etc. where the land holdings is less than one hectare.

Problem of capital scarcity: To improve the economic conditions of the farmers and capital availability for agriculture, the government of India

has taken several steps. Government has come up with several farmer centric credit schemes like

- (1) Kisan Credit Card:** Farmers can avail loan for crop sown by using the card. Farmer is also provided crop insurance and risk coverage.
- (2) Interest Assistance Schemes:** Under this scheme the farmers are provided with loan upto Rs-3 lakh with effective interest rate of 4% interest rates if loans are timely repaid.
- (3) Investing Loan Scheme:** This scheme provides loan to farmers for investment in irrigation, agriculture, mechanization, land development, plantations, horticulture and post harvest management agriculture produce.

Solving the problem of credit crunch and dissemination of knowledge and training: To disseminate the latest development in agriculture the Prasar Bharti (Government of India) started a new T.V channel named DD-Kisan, besides several programs on agriculture on national television channel (DD National). A 24x7 Kisan Call Centre facility is available to provide any type of assistance and information to farmers on telephones and mobiles, Kisan helpline is free of cost and its services are available in different languages. Besides this, all agricultural universities in India are organizing "Krishi Mela" and training Camps for spread awareness and train farmers in new technologies of agriculture.

To tackle the problem of transportation and sale of agriculture produce the government has the scheme of price policy for agricultural commodities or price support scheme (PSS). The objective of the PSS scheme is to provide remunerative/ guaranteed prices to the farmers for some their produce like oilseeds, pulses and cotton in case their price fall below the minimum support price (MSP). To provide best price of agriculture produce the government has set up several agriculture producer market

and is presently working on linking them digitally to forms electronic-National Agriculture Market (e-NAM).

Conclusion

The main reason of success of OF was that the government has ensured that the 70 percent of the money, paid by the consumers for the milk, reached directly to the farmers. The same needs to be repeated in OG also. This is only possible through linking the major consumption centers to the production centers (without the involvement of mediators), second, establishment of solid infrastructure, starting with modern warehouses/storage houses, to restrict the wastage of vegetables/produce and the third one is connecting the processing industries with organized retailing so that at least one fourth of the vegetables produced at peak time can be diverted to these industries.

The real success of OG can be acknowledged only when the farmers will get at least 60 to 70 percent of the price paid by end consumer as well as the end consumers also pay a lesser affordable price. Father of India's Green Revolution M.S. Swaminathan has quoted that "If agriculture fails, everything else will fail". OG is a welcome step by the government to stop the failure of agriculture and to build a better world for the Indian farmer.

General Studies Paper- III

Topic: Major crops - cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems - storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers.

Topic: Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System-objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.



4. CHILD PROTECTION & CHILD RIGHTS IN INDIA

Why in News?

In a major development against the eneredring incidents of child rapes in India, the Union Cabine has cleared the criminal law amendment ordinance and POCSO Act is a part of this amendment. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018, inserting Section 376AB in the Indian Penal Code, 1908 making possible the sentence of death for the crime of rape of a child less than 12 years is barely an exercise in legislative or executive wisdom.

Introduction

All children due to their age are considered to be at risk for exploitation, abuse, violence and neglect. But vulnerability cannot be defined simply by age. Though age is one component, Vulnerability is also measured by the child's capability for self-protection. The question that arises is, are children capable of protecting themselves. A child's vulnerability comes from various factors that hinder a child's ability to function and grow normally. Hence self-protection is more about the ability of the child to lead a healthy life within a child protection system; the ability to protect themselves or get help from people who can provide protection. The term vulnerable children refer to an age group that is considered at risk. But vulnerability of children is further compounded by the following factors:

- **Age within age:** Younger children, especially those below the age of six, are much more dependent on the protection system.
- **Physical disabilities**
- **Mental disabilities**
- **Provocative behaviours:** Due to ignorance or misunderstanding

of children's mental health or behavioural problems, some people can become irritated or frustrated and hence lash out against children or neglect them completely.

- **Powerlessness:** It Comes from the situations and people that surround the children. If a child is given the power by the state, family or community to participate and fulfil their own rights and responsibilities they are less vulnerable.
- **Defencelessness:** It comes from the lack of protection provided by the state or parents or community. If there is no child abuse law than how is a child suppose to defend himself/herself against abuse.
- **Passivity:** Due to situation or treatment of the child. For example a child who is enslaved or oppressed does not have the ability to seek help or protection.
- **Illness**
- **Invisible:** Children who the system doesn't even recognise are highly vulnerable.

The Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) like the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000 defines vulnerability in two categories: children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with law. Children in need of care and protection is defined as a child who :

- Doesn't have a home or shelter and no means to obtain such an abode.
- Resides with a person(s) who has threatened to harm them and is likely to carry out that threat, harmed other children and hence is likely to kill, abuse or neglect the child.
- Is mentally or physically handicapped, or has an illness,

terminal or incurable disease and has no one to provide and care for him/her.

- Has a parent or guardian deemed unfit or unable to take care of the child.
- Is an orphan, has no family to take care of him/her, or is a runaway or missing child whose parents cannot be located after a reasonable search period.
- Is being or is likely to be sexual, mentally, emotionally or physically abused, tortured or exploited.
- Is being trafficked or abusing drug substances.
- Is being abused for unthinkable gains or illegal activities.
- Is a victim of arm conflict, civil unrest or a natural disaster.

In India, too, children are often sexually abused by people known to them and regarded as authority figures. The government must ensure implementation of existing measures including enforcement of the POCSO Act.

Who is a Child?

Defining what age a person is or ceases to be a child is a constant debate in the India. The Census of India considers children to be any person below the age of 14, as do most government programmes. Biologically childhood is the stage between infancy and adulthood. According to the UNCRC a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. This definition of child allows for individual countries to determine according to the own discretion the age limits of a child in their own laws. But in India various laws related to children define children in different age limits.

- According to Article 21 (a) of the Indian Constitution all children between the ages of 6 to 14 should be provided with free and compulsory education.
- Article 45 states that the state should provide early childhood care and education to all children below the age of six.
- Lastly Article 51(k) states the parents/guardians of the children between the ages of six and fourteen should provide them with opportunities for education.
- The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 defines a child as a person who has not completed 14 years of age.
- The Motor Transport Workers Act, 1961 and The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions Of Employment) Act, 1966, both define a child as a person who has not completed fourteen years of age.
- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 states that a male has not reached majority until he is twenty-one years of age and a female has not reached majority until she is eighteen years of age.
- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 has changed the definition of child to any person who has not completed eighteen years of age.

Because of its umbrella clauses and the latest law to be enacted regarding child rights and protection, many are of the opinion that the definition of child found in the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000 should be considered the legal definition for a child in all matters.

Vulnerable Children

Vulnerability of children leads to and is further created by the socio-cultural, socio political and socio-religious situations they are in. A child

CHILD PROTECTION		
Prevention	Intervention	Rehabilitation
➤ Law and Policies ➤ Processes and Protocols ➤ Mechanisms and Systems Monitoring ➤ Sensitization and Awareness Building	➤ Laws and Policies ➤ Access and Assistance ➤ Immediate Relief (SOS attention) ➤ Restoration of rights/Status Quo ➤ Punish violators	➤ Laws and Policies ➤ Long term care until age 18 ➤ Skills and Training

who is forced or born into a situation or discriminated group is at risk for abuse, neglect and exploitation. The lack of a protection system either due to mis-implementation of national laws and programmes or the absence of protection policies and legislation also renders children vulnerable. There are various protection issues concerning children includes abuse and violence, child sexual abuse, street children, children living with aids, child in armed conflict, girl child, child marriage, children with disabilities, children affected by substance abuse, birth registration, missing children, children in conflict with law, child labour, child trafficking, children without, parental care, child health and nutrition, early childhood (children below six), children of schedule caste and schedule tribe families etc. needs to address.

What is Child Protection?

UNICEF considers child protection as the prevention of or responding to the incidence of abuse, exploitation, violence and neglect of children. This includes commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage. Protection also allows children to have access to their other rights of survival, development, growth and participation. UNICEF maintains that when child protection fails or is absent children have a higher risk of death, poor physical and mental health, HIV/AIDS infection, educational problems, displacement,

homelessness, vagrancy and poor parenting skills later in life.

According to the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) Child Protection is about keeping children safe from a risk or perceived risk to their lives or childhood. It is about recognizing that children are vulnerable and hence reducing their vulnerability by protecting them from harm and harmful situations. Child protection is about ensuring that children have a security net to depend on and if they happen to fall through the holes in the system, the system has the responsibility to provide the child with the necessary care and rehabilitation to bring them back into the safety net.

Child Rights

A right is as an agreement or contract established between the persons who hold a right (often referred to as the "rights-holders") and the persons or institutions which then have obligations and responsibilities in relation to the realization of that right (often referred to as the "duty-bearers"). Child rights are specialized human rights that apply to all human beings below the age of 18. Universally child rights are defined by the United Nations and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). According to the UNCRC Child Rights are minimum entitlements and freedoms that should be afforded to all persons below the age of 18 regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability and therefore apply to all people everywhere. The UN finds these rights interdependent and indivisible, meaning that a right can not be fulfilled at the expense of

another right.

India, in its bid to become an ethical labour market to international corporations in 1991, ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children in 1992. The Convention stems from Jebb's desire to end the suffering of children, giving them instead a healthy, happy and safe environment that nurtured them physically, mentally and emotionally. These facets find a strong resonance in the Convention. Child rights go beyond just human rights, which exist to ensure fair and proper treatment of people across the world and promote their well-being. Children, defined as any person under the age of 18, need more than just human rights due to a set of unique needs stemming from their vulnerabilities.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act

POCSO or The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act), 2012 was established to protect the children against offences like sexual abuse, sexual harassment and pornography. It was formed to provide a child-friendly system for trial underneath which the perpetrators could be punished. The Act defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age. It also makes provisions for avoiding the re-victimisation of the child at the hands of the judicial system.

- The Act defines different forms of sexual abuse which includes penetrative and non-penetrative assault. It also involves sexual harassment, pornography, etc.
- It makes it the legal duty of a person aware of the offence to report the sexual abuse.
- The evidence of the child should be recorded within a period of thirty days.
- The Act provides for punishment against false complaints or untrue information.
- It prescribes rigorous imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than ten years but which may extend to imprisonment for life and also fine as punishment for aggravated penetrative sexual assault.
- It also prescribes punishment to the people who traffic children for sexual purposes.

The purpose of the UNCRC is to outline the basic human rights that should be afforded to children. There are four broad classifications of these rights. These four categories cover all civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of every child. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children – that India ratified in 1992 – all children are born with fundamental rights.

- **Right to Survival:** A child's right to survival begins before a child is born. According to Government of India, a child life begins after twenty weeks of conception. Hence the right to survival is inclusive of the child rights to be born, right to minimum standards of food, shelter and clothing and the right to live with dignity.
- **Right to Protection:** A child has the right to be protected from neglect, exploitation and abuse at home and elsewhere.
- **Right to Participation:** A child has a right to participate in any decision making that involves him/her directly or indirectly. There are varying degrees of participation as per the age and maturity of the child.
- **Right to Development:** Children have the right to all forms of development: emotional, mental and physical. Emotional development is fulfilled by proper care and love of a support system, mental development through education and learning and physical development through recreation, play and nutrition.

Constitution of India

The first step to fulfill the rights of children can be found in the Constitution of India. The articles

are divided into two categories: Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy. Fundamental Rights are justifiable in a court of law and are negatives that prohibit the states from doing thing. The courts are bound to declare a law as invalid if it violates a fundamental right. Directive principles are positive suggestions for states and are not justifiable in a court of law.

National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was established in March 2007 as a statutory body under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005. It was set up to protect, promote and defend child rights in the country. The Commission consists of a chairperson and six members who are well versed in child welfare. National commission develops an electronic drop box, POCSO e-Box for registering complaints on Child Sexual Abuse.

Fundamental Rights

- Article 14- The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of laws with in the territory of India.
- Article 15- The State shall not discriminate against any citizen. Nothing in this Article shall prevent the State from making any special provisions for women and children.
- Article 21- No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.
- Article 21 A- The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 6-14 years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine.
- Article 23- Traffic in human beings and beggary and other forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of this provision

shall be an offence punishable in accordance with the law.

- Article 24- No child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment.
- The Constitution (86th Amendment) Act was notified on 13th December 2002, making free and compulsory education a fundamental right for all children in the age group of 6-14 years.

Directive Principles

- Article 39(e) and (f), Article 45, Article 47, Article 243G read with Schedule 11 - provide for institutionalization of child care by seeking to entrust programmes of Women and Child Development to Panchayat (Item 25 of Schedule 11), apart from education (item 17), family welfare (item 25), health and sanitation (item 23) and other items with a bearing on the welfare of children.

Juveniles Justice Board (JJB)

Juveniles accused of a crime or detained for a crime are brought before the JJB under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 (amended in 2006). Under this act and provisions of the Criminal Code Procedure children are not to be taken to a regular criminal court. The purpose of a separate court is that its purpose is socio-legal rehabilitation and reformation not punishment. The aim is to hold a child culpable for their criminal activity, not through punishment, but counselling the child to understand their actions and persuade them away from criminal activities in the future.

Child Related Policies

- The National Policy for Children, 2013

- National Policy for Children, 1974
- National Policy on Education, 1986
- National Policy on Child Labour, 1987
- National Nutrition Policy, 1993
- National Health Policy, 2002
- National Charter for Children, 2003
- National Plan of Action, 2005
- Child Rights in the Five Year Plans

International Organization

UNICEF views vulnerable children as those who are abused, exploited and neglected. Child protection is derived out of the duty to respond to the needs of vulnerable groups of children. UNICEF outlines the following groups as vulnerable: Children subjected to violence, Children in the midst of armed conflict, Children associated with armed groups, Children affected by HIV/AIDS, Children without birth registration, Children engaged in labour, Child engaged in marriage, Children in Conflict with the Law, Children without Parental Care, Children used for commercial sexual exploitation, Female children subjected to genital mutilation / cutting and Trafficked children.

Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight quantified objectives set out by the 189 world leaders at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000. The goals are set out in the Millennium Declaration and have been signed by 149 heads of state and government. The MDGs are too be achieved by 2015. The eight MDGs break down into 21 quantifiable targets that are measured by 60 indicators.

International Juvenile Justice bservatory

The International Juvenile Justice Observatory (IJJO) is an organisations that provides information, communication, debates, analysis and proposals concerning juvenile justice as well as children or young people who have social difficulties, behavioural problems or are in conflict with the law. The mission of the International Juvenile Justice Observatory is to contribute a international and inter-disciplinary vision of juvenile justice in order to create a future for minors and young people all over the world who are in situations of exclusion as a result of infringements of the law. The IJJO aims at promoting international development strategies to create necessary policies, legislations and intervention methods with regard to global juvenile justice that is universally applicable in the world. The IJJO promotes and works towards the provisions of major international conventions and laws regarding juvenile justice such as UNCRC and UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles.

Conclusion

Instead of stricter punitive measures for child sexual abuse, there is need to focus on prevention of crimes by enhancing budgetary allocation for the Centre's Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), which aims to provide a safety net for children and protect them from falling prey to crimes. All children deserve equality, despite their difference. They are entitled to all of these rights, no matter what race, colour, religion, language, ethnicity, gender or abilities define them.

General Studies Paper- II

Topic: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.



5. SYRIA'S SEVEN-YEAR CIVIL WAR

Why in News?

The United States, Britain and France have launched a new bid at the United Nations to investigate chemical weapons attacks in Syria in the wake of US-led missile strikes against Bashar al-Assad's regime.

Background

For a moment it looked as though Syria's seven-year war, which has killed more than 400,000 people and contributed to the largest refugee crisis in recent history, might be winding down. As 2017 drew to a close, the so-called caliphate of Islamic State (IS) had disintegrated. The forces of the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, and the rebels fighting to dethrone him had largely stopped killing each other. Russia, which had intervened to save Mr Assad, said its mission was "basically accomplished" and had promised to bring its troops home. But since then the calm has shattered. The regime has turned its guns on the rebels. Turkey has sent troops over its border to battle Kurdish forces. Americans have killed Russians. And long-standing tensions between Iran and Israel have flared.

Now into its eighth year, the Syria crisis remains unprecedented in scale, severity and complexity. Syria remains one of the largest protection crisis of our time: since the onset of the conflict in 2011, hundreds of thousands of people have been killed, widespread and systematic violations of human rights reported and humanitarian access a major challenge. In the first few months of 2018, the humanitarian situation for hundreds of thousands of civilians in Syria further deteriorated.

Overall, currently 13.1 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and protection inside Syria. Of these, an estimated 5.6 million people are facing acute needs. Humanitarian operations in Syria provide a critical life-line for millions

of people, with the UN and partners scaling-up rapidly to meet the needs of those impacted by recent conflict and military activity through leveraging all response modalities from inside Syria and cross border operations.

Meanwhile, the conflict in Syria continues to drive one of the largest displacement crisis in the world with over 6.6 million displaced in country and over 5.6 million Syrian refugees registered across the region as of April 2018. Refugee families have become increasingly vulnerable with each passing year of displacement, reaching over 80% of people in some host countries while 35% of refugee children are still out of school across the region. Host governments and communities have been extremely generous in hosting refugees since the crisis started; delivering a global good despite significant economic and social costs. The deteriorating situation inside many parts of Syria makes it clear that the conditions are not yet conducive for voluntary return to Syria in safety and dignity, even though some returns are occurring to Syria, in parallel with large-scale, on-going displacement.

How did the Syrian War Start?

Even before the conflict began, many Syrians were complaining about high unemployment, corruption and a lack of political freedom under President Bashar al-Assad, who succeeded his late father Hafez in 2000. In March 2011, pro-democracy demonstrations erupted in the southern city of Deraa, inspired by the "Arab Spring" in neighbouring countries. When the government used deadly force to crush the dissent, protests demanding the President's resignation erupted nationwide. The unrest spread and the crackdown intensified. Opposition supporters took up arms, first to defend themselves and later to rid their areas of security forces. Mr Assad vowed to crush what he called "foreign-backed terrorism". The violence rapidly

escalated and the country descended into civil war.

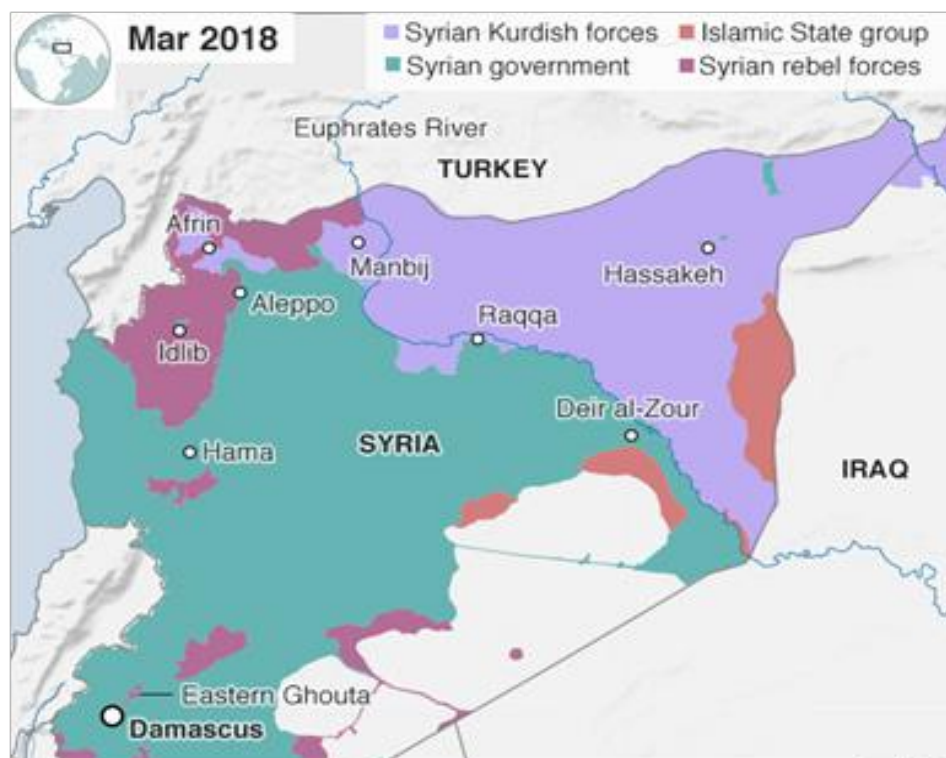
What is the war about?

It is now more than a battle between those for or against Mr Assad. Many groups and countries - each with their own agendas - are involved, making the situation far more complex and prolonging the fighting. They have been accused of fostering hatred between Syria's religious groups, pitching the Sunni Muslim majority against the President's Shia Alawite sect. Such divisions have led both sides to commit atrocities, torn communities apart and dimmed hopes of peace. They have also allowed the jihadist groups Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaeda to flourish. Syria's Kurds, who want the right of self-government but have not fought Mr Assad's forces, have added another dimension to the conflict.

The government has regained control of Syria's biggest cities but large parts of the country are still held by rebel groups and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) alliance. The largest opposition stronghold is the North-Western province of Idlib, home to more than 2.6 million people.

Why is Syria's War Heating up Again?

Part of the answer lies in the collapse of IS and the scramble for territory that ensued. In October Raqqa, the capital of the self-styled caliphate, fell to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish-led militia that America has used to fight IS. Mr Assad's regime, keen to concentrate on retaking the lands occupied by IS, duly agreed to a ceasefire with the rebels. By December it was in charge of lands to the West of the Euphrates river and the SDF controlled the lands to the East. But at that point regime forces once more took up the attack against the rebels. In January they sliced off parts of Idlib, the only province under rebel control.



In February they launched one of the war's deadliest bombardments on the rebel-held enclave of Eastern Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus.

The collapse of IS has also widened fissures among the foreign powers jostling for a say in Syria's future. In January America's secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, said American troops would remain in Kurdish-held parts of Syria until IS no longer posed a threat and a political solution to the war had been found.

This infuriated Turkey, a NATO ally, which considers some of America's Kurdish partners, the YPG, to be terrorists. Days after Mr Tillerson's announcement, the Turkish army assaulted Afrin, a YPG-controlled pocket of territory in north-western Syria. There are no American forces in Afrin, but Turkey's President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has threatened to march on Manbij, a town which does have them. This heightens the risk of direct clashes between two NATO powers and their proxies. America's vow to stay in Syria has also angered Russia, which backed Turkey's operation in Afrin. Seeking to test America's commitment to its campaign, the Kremlin may have ordered Russian mercenaries to attack

an American-supported base in the east—an attack that left scores of Russians dead.

On February 24th the UN Security Council agreed to a 30-day ceasefire, but it looks set to fail; Turkey, Iran and the Assad regime have all said they will continue fighting. With tensions rising among foreign powers, Syria's intractable war will become even more impervious to peace and its civilians will continue to bear the brunt.

Role of World Power

President Assad's government has been accused of launching a chemical weapons attack on the Syrian town of Douma on 7 April, 2018. Barrel bombs containing toxic substances were allegedly dropped from helicopters, killing "up to 75 people", with as many as 500 further casualties. Syria's renewed use of chemical weapons against its own people is shameless and barbaric. Dozens of people in the remaining rebel-held suburbs of Damascus were suffocated by chemical attack on the Douma district.

The U.S., France and Britain launched military strikes in Syria to punish President Bashar Assad for an apparent chemical attack against

civilians and to deter him from doing it again. Syrians crowded onto the streets in noisy demonstrations of defiance afterward and their ally Russia denounced the attack. Pentagon officials said the attacks targeted the heart of Assad's programs to develop and produce chemical weapons. More than 100 missile strikes have been launched against Syria by the US, UK and France.

The strike had a destructive influence on the entire system of international relations, an act of aggression against a sovereign state without a mandate from the UN Security Council and in violation of the UN charter and international law. China and Iran also condemned the attack. Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called the US-led attack a "crime". It is notable that in response to the false allegations of America, UK and Britain who had claimed that they had proof regarding the use of chemical weapons attack in Douma. Depending upon fabricated proof, Washington, London and Paris had failed in providing any evidence to media or public.

Taking cognizance of the Syrian crisis, the UN Secretary General António Guterres had already pointed out that he feared events could escalate rapidly into a regional and even global conflict, and urged all states "to act responsibly in these dangerous circumstances. The danger was even greater than during the cold war because the safeguards that existed then to manage such a crisis no longer seem to be present. He added that there was no military solution to the Syrian conflict.

U.S. Involvement: The United States has been reluctant to become too entangled in Syria, but it has acted for two main reasons. First, the Islamic State group began developing a foothold in the country in 2013. The next year, the United States formed an international coalition to launch airstrikes against the group. It eventually sent ground troops into the fight and about 2,000 U.S. forces are now deployed there. The United

States also has acted to punish the Assad government for using chemical weapons such as sarin and chlorine gas. In 2012, President Barack Obama called the use of chemical weapons a “red line” that would prompt military intervention. But when a sarin gas attack in the Damascus suburbs of Eastern Ghouta killed about 1,400 people a year later, President Obama backed away from a strike. Instead, the U.N. Security Council ordered Assad to destroy his chemical-weapons stockpile and sign the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits countries from producing, stockpiling or using chemical weapons.

Russia: The conflict has turned into a proxy war. The United States started arming and providing military air cover in 2014 for anti-Assad rebel groups who were also waging war against ISIS. Washington also began working with Syrian Kurds, one of the strongest partners in the fight against ISIS. After that support appeared to turn the tide against Assad, Russia — a longtime Syrian ally — entered the conflict in 2015 to shore up Assad's struggling regime. In addition, Russian President Vladimir Putin wanted to assert his country's power on the world stage.

Iran: Iran provided much-needed ground troops for the Assad regime, funneling money and fighters through the Lebanon-based Hezbollah militant group to further establish a strong presence in the region. Israel has been indirectly involved as it fears Iran could use Syrian territory to stage attacks on Israel or transfer weapons to Hezbollah. Iran is Israel's arch-enemy and has sworn to destroy the country.

Turkey's Interest: Turkey, Syria's northern neighbor, extended its ground operations into Syria, fearing the conflict could embolden Turkey's large population of Kurds to demand independence. In recent days, Turkish troops surrounded the Kurdish-held city of Afrin, forcing hundreds of civilians to flee.

India's Stand

Generally speaking, India and Syria have maintained good ties through

the war years. India has a favourable relationship with the regime, both from a historical and contemporary perspective. Syria has appreciated India's “balanced” take on the crisis and has asked BRICS to play a more constructive and active role in resolving the crisis. While it is not in India's current interest to be directly involved in any manner, it should actively look to become a part of the international negotiations to build consensus with the global community.

As a country with ambitions to become a global political and economic power, India cannot hide behind the veil of ambiguity, diplomatic fence-sitting and pontificate its view of and to the world from the obsolete pedestal of non-alignment. This trajectory only undermines India's own ambitions on the global stage, and as the world's largest democracy, whether it likes it or not, India has a responsibility to speak up on globally critical events.

Impact on Syrians

Since the start of the war, more than 465,000 Syrians have been killed, 1 million more have been injured and 12 million — more than half the country's population — have been forced to flee their homes. More than 5.5 million have moved abroad and registered as refugees.

Way Ahead

The massive aerial attack on Syria by the U.S. and its allies in the name of retaliation for Syria having unleashed chemical weapons on its civilians demonstrates the U.S.'s global policeman attitude. The U.S.-led attack that grossly interferes with the democratic functioning of a country was neither discussed in the U.N. nor sanctioned by the Security Council. The West's wars on Iraq, Libya and now Syria are nothing but fallout of its imperialist instincts. All those concerned with the task of addressing the menace of uncivilised aggressions must evolve a system that curtails such unilateral actions. It is also time

to recollect that all such attacks by a caucus of aggressors and carried out under the pretext of preserving democracy, have only plunged the targeted countries into severe crisis.

Just as power became the instrument of ambitious nationalism and state's leaders, it has now become the tool of ideologies, in fact, are futile source of international conflict. They can be used to obscure the real facts of a situation or the real motives of ambitious leaders. At this critical juncture, instead of acting upon confrontational strategy with Russia, Western countries, especially EU major states such as Great Britain, France, Germany and their leaders must show rational approach to prevent ‘clash of civilizations or any nuclear war. Instead of implementing the Zionist-led New World Order, they should join Russian war against the terrorist groups like ISIL and Al Qaeda, including their linked militant outfits.

At this critical moment, particularly dangers of the nuclear war or World War III between the American-led Western powers and Russia are hovering on the world like clouds. Hence, peace-loving Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Jews and Buddhists must check the extremist policies of President Donald Trump and those Western leaders who are completing the fanatic agenda of Israel and India, resulting into more recruitment in the militant outfits, especially in the ISIS group, while inspiring the extremist Muslims for more terrorism-related attacks. Instead of engaging themselves in controversial debate on the social media, these peace-loving persons must better make efforts for global peace.

General Studies Paper- II

Topic: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.



6. SOFT POWER MATRIX OF INDIA

Context

A mere wish to be praised as a global or regional power should not be allowed to guide our foreign policy. Soft power may not resolve differences but will make a difference. India holds “strong cards in the arena of soft power” to further its foreign policy goals. India being a major or even global power, with the capability, even responsibility, to play an ‘important role’ on the world stage as a balancing power between major powers and as a ‘security provider’ to others. We need to temper this rhetoric, be more realistic and less ambitious. The dividing line between national pride and national ego can be thin.

India's Soft Power Potential

India boasts an amazing variety and wealth of soft power resources. Its spiritualism, yoga, movies and television soaps, classical and popular dance and music, its principles of non-violence, democratic institutions, plural society and cuisine have all attracted people across the world. According to Harvard political scientist, who coined the term, soft power is the ability of a country to persuade others to do what it wants without resorting to force or coercion. Soft power, he said, lies in a country's attractiveness and comes from three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority). Though slower to yield results, soft power is a less expensive means than military force or economic inducements to get others to do what we want.

It is only over the past decade or so that India has begun to play its soft power cards more systematically.

Besides setting up a public diplomacy division within the Ministry of External Affairs in 2006 and expanding the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) worldwide, it has roped in the Ministry of Tourism, which is behind the “Incredible India” campaign and the Ministry for Overseas Indians “to showcase its social, political and cultural assets abroad. These government actors are working to leverage India's soft power “by using it to support larger foreign policy initiatives such as the Look East Policy (now Act East), the Connect Central Asia policy and developing strategic aid and trade partnerships in Africa,” he said, adding that in each of these initiatives, “official diplomacy has been buttressed by cultural exchange and efforts at increasing public knowledge and appreciation of India in foreign countries.”

Status and Responsibility

India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was convinced that India was bound to play an increasing and beneficent part in world affairs. He was banking on our moral high ground because he and the nation were proud of the non-violent manner in which we had achieved our independence.

Over the decades, no doubt influenced by our experience in the early years in Kashmir and China, the idealist strain has diminished and eventually disappeared altogether; national interest alone would guide our policy. This is not necessarily an undesirable thing. The only caveat is that we have to be realists and check the inexplicable urge to play a big role in international relations.

The government is working on developing a “soft power matrix”, a tool aimed at calibrating the effectiveness of India's soft power

outreach in dealings with neighbouring countries and leveraging it better as an operational instrument in India's broader diplomatic doctrine. The proposed matrix is being developed to calibrate outreach efforts such as the propagation of Gandhian values and philosophy. The move to try and quantify this aspect of India's diplomacy comes in the wake of criticism that the country has not been able to adequately leverage its ‘soft power’ in matters of foreign policy. Also, India's soft power so far is perceived as having functioned independently of government policies, without the backing of a focused policy or adequate backing with financial resources. The Standing Committee on External Affairs, in a report two years ago, had recommended that the Ministry of External Affairs formulate a “comprehensive and well-structured policy” delineating India's soft power resources and their articulation abroad.

Leaders everywhere look for a role for themselves. They believe, perhaps genuinely, that an increased prestige for themselves will translate into more votes domestically and ipso facto bring benefits to their countries. The driving factor is prestige, status. Often the leaders do not realise that playing a role carries with it responsibilities which we may not be able or keen to accept but which we might be dragged into. These responsibilities would be defined by others and would invariably involve us into tasks and areas which we may not wish to get involved in.

Regional Aspirations

If not global, the regional role unanimous that India is certainly a regional power. India is without doubt the pre-eminent power in South Asia. However, given our firm commitment not to use force and to

non-interference in internal affairs in other states, our neighbours do not feel threatened by us.

- India has huge effort in Sri Lanka to bring peace and stability to that country and we did so at the request of its lawful government. The venture ended in failure and eventually cost the life of a former Prime Minister.
- Small-scale interventions in the Maldives and the Seychelles in the 1980s were successful in stabilising legitimate governments. To that extent, India was able to play a positive role in the region.

In these examples, the motivating factor was not prestige, there were domestic factors at play. The resulting increase in our prestige was incidental. If intervention does not succeed, as in Sri Lanka, the ensuing loss of prestige more than offsets whatever prestige we might have gained in the other operations. Often, when a country gets involved in what might be assessed as a low cost foreign adventure, it remains bogged down even when the going gets tough precisely because it apprehends loss of face or prestige. It is easy to get in but difficult to get out.

Other Aspects of India's Soft Power

Theoretically speaking, the variety of India's soft power diplomacy has expanded the scope of soft power rhetoric, by allowing for shared cultural development instead of the export of cultural products. One aspect in which the Indian government has been decisive is in standing its ground against China's demands in 2017 regarding the Dalai Lama. This however, is perhaps the easiest of areas for decisive action to be taken for it is short-term in nature and requires little sustained effort on the part of the government. The most important move to be made with respect to the Dalai Lama would be to involve him

closely with the development of the Nalanda University, though there is no indication that this will happen. What will be crucial in the coming years is India's response to the Chinese appointment of the next Dalai Lama, given that a great deal of authority is derived from the presence of the current Dalai Lama.

The government must move beyond mere tokenism – visiting temples and Buddhist shrines on official tours can take one only so far. What India has in its favour at the moment is an abundance of resources by way of pilgrimage sites, the presence of the Dalai Lama and international goodwill, as well as the right intentions. In terms of initiatives on the international level, the government must also ensure that it does not direct its efforts solely at Tibetan Buddhism and make directed attempts at promoting connections with other Buddhist schools of thought. Effective revitalisation of the Nalanda University project and encouragement of Buddhist studies in well-established universities across the country must take place, to ensure that a diverse variety of thought that goes beyond just Tibetan Buddhism is brought in and that it is not only the duty on the Nalanda project to produce Buddhist scholarship. The study of ancient languages like Pali in which a number of Buddhist texts have been written would also be necessary for the holistic development of Buddhist academia. Entire schools of Buddhist thought, such as Nagarjuna Buddhism, remain largely unexplored in academic study, further expanding the scope for research to be encouraged and funded.

The promotion of Buddhist tourism reminiscent of the 'Incredible India' campaign is required to popularise India's association with the faith internationally. In addition to advertisement, proper management of tourist sites is a must. Having displayed adequate intent to bolster India's

position in the Buddhist world, the present government faces the crucial challenge of effective execution. This would go a long way in countering the rise of China, strengthening its relations with Asian countries, and helping it further down the path of its regional and global power ambitions.

China and India: Comparisons of Soft Power

Because India is situated at the very geographic center of the South Asia-Indian Ocean region, Indian civilizational influences have washed repeatedly over that vast region. Indian patriots are keenly aware of this history and it is easy to assume that Indian influence in the region is somehow natural or inevitable. That may indeed be the case, but the breadth and vigor of China's efforts to make itself and its policies attractive to the publics and governments of the region suggests that Indian soft power faces a new and very strong competitor.

India, like almost every country in the world, is pondering its response to the remarkable rise of China as a leading power. The question is more portentous for India because it has long dominated the geography of South Asia as well as the maritime flanks constituting the Indian Ocean. Repeated waves of Indian cultural influences did indeed wash over India's home region and the broader world. And China was kept far away by burdensome geography and technological backwardness. Now those barriers are vanishing. China is becoming a major power, perhaps the major power, in the region. A robust literature has emerged already on the swift development of Chinese naval power across the Indian Ocean, on Beijing's ambitious One Belt, One Road infrastructure-building efforts, on China's rise as the leading economic partner for most of the countries of the region and on China's push for

deeper partnership with countries from Myanmar to Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Iran and Djibouti. Despite, India's efforts to counter China's soft power rise in the region.

Way Ahead

Apart from protecting our people from adverse external factors and interventions, the principal criterion in the conduct of foreign policy for India ought to be lifting the poor from poverty. Whatever brings concrete benefits to our people should be encouraged. A mere wish to be praised as a global or even regional power should not be allowed to guide the policy. When other countries flatter us by describing us as a major power, it is invariably because they want to rope us into some schemes of their own. It is best not to get too entangled in the chess moves of other countries. The principal interest of most of them is to

sell very expensive military hardware to us.

- Our single minded focus should be on economic development.
- Without the necessary economic strength, we cannot strengthen our military. We do need a strong military but for that we need undisturbed double digit economic growth for a generation.

India does not provoke nor get provoked for two decades, concentrate on building the economy. Since we do have to think critically about allocating our scarce resources among alternative uses and since we are a democratic polity with a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society with a large number of poor, we have to think more than twice about defence spending. Even when at some stage we acquire credible hard power, we must not allow ourselves to be seduced by the flattering and

mostly insincere talk of others about India playing a global role.

Conclusion

India hasn't clearly articulated its grand strategy. At best, one hears that one of the primary objectives of Indian foreign policy is to shape the creation and sustenance of a multipolar world and a multipolar Asia. This conception—steeped in the principles of balance of power—is as good as the theory of realism would suggest. Soft power isn't exactly in consonance with this line of thinking. Soft power should not be sought just because it is the latest fad, it should be part of the "grand strategy matrix" of a nation state. The MEA needs to educate citizens on this front.

General Studies Paper- II

Topic: India and its neighborhood-relations.



7. STILL AWAITED: TRUE SPIRIT OF RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT

Why in News?

If the goal of the Right to Education (RTE) is to ensure that all children in India receive a proper education, then the current Act will ensure the exact opposite. The Centre must review the lack of implementation of the Right to Education Act across the country.

Introduction: Educational Right

Education is not a privilege. It is a human right. Human rights are inherent to all human beings, regardless of nationality, sex, ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. They cannot be given or taken away. Human rights are the foundation for freedom, justice and peace in the world. Education as a human right means:

- The right to education is legally guaranteed for all without any discrimination.

- States have the obligation to protect, respect and fulfil the right to education.
- There are ways to hold states accountable for violations or deprivations of the right to education.

International human rights law guarantees the right to education. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights, adopted in 1948, proclaims in Article 26: 'everyone has the right to education'. The right to education has also been reaffirmed in other treaties covering specific groups (women and girls, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees, indigenous peoples, etc.) and contexts (education during armed conflicts). It has also been incorporated into various regional treaties and enshrined as a right in the vast majority of national constitutions.

Both individuals and society benefit from the right to education.

It is fundamental for human, social, and economic development and a key element to achieving lasting peace and sustainable development. It is a powerful tool in developing the full potential of everyone and ensuring human dignity and in promoting individual and collective wellbeing. In brief:

- It is an empowerment right.
- It lifts marginalised groups out of poverty.
- It is an indispensable means of realising other rights.
- It contributes to the full development of the human personality.

Right to Education

The right to education encompasses both entitlements and freedoms, including the:

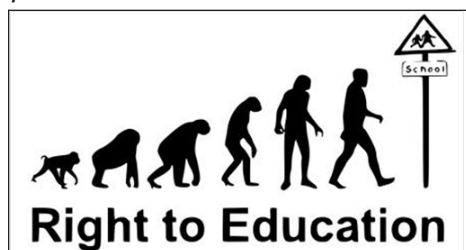
- Right to free and compulsory primary education.

- Right to available and accessible secondary education (including technical and vocational education and training), made progressively free.
- Right to equal access to higher education on the basis of capacity made progressively free.
- Right to fundamental education for those who have not received or completed primary education.
- Right to quality education both in public and private schools.
- Freedom of parents to choose schools for their children which are in conformity with their religious and moral convictions.
- Freedom of individuals and bodies to establish and direct education institutions in conformity with minimum standards established by the state.
- Academic freedom of teachers and students.

Article 21 A provides that the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine.

Article 45 of the Constitution of India has also been reframed and substituted and it provides that the State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.

In Article 51A of the Constitution, after clause (k) has been added that mandates that a parent or guardian has to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years.



The Right to Education Bill, 2005 was introduced to give effect to the Constitution (Eighty-Sixth) Amendment Act.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 finally came into force on 1st April 2010.

States' Obligations

When a state has obligations to respect, protect and fulfil this right. Some obligations are immediate. Others are progressive.

Obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil:

- **Respect:** Refrain from interfering with the enjoyment of the right (e.g., the state must respect the liberty of parents to choose schools for their children).
- **Protect:** Prevent others from interfering with the enjoyment of the right usually through regulation and legal guarantees (e.g., the state must ensure that third parties, including parents, do not prevent girls from going to school).
- **Fulfil:** Adopt appropriate measures towards the full realisation of the right to education (e.g., the state must take positive measures to ensure that education is culturally appropriate for minorities and indigenous peoples and of good quality for all).

Concerns: Access to Education in India

Almost a decade after its enactment of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, the progress as far as the implementation of the Act was unsatisfactory and the need for active engagement by civil society groups and community to step up pressure on the government to implement the Act in its true spirit. The education crisis has been on the forefront of policy-making agenda since the inception of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Scheme in 2000. The introduction of the Right to Education

(RTE) Act, 2009 was the outcome of long-drawn debates of policy makers, representatives of NGOs and various other stakeholders in the education sector. Ultimately the result was a revolutionary legislation that sought to reform the sector and eradicate the underlying issues of the education crisis in the country.

The five States (Goa, Manipur, Mizoram, Sikkim and Telangana) have not even issued notifications regarding admissions under the RTE. As readers will recall, Section 12(1)(c) of the Act mandates private unaided schools to reserve 25% of seats for children from economically weaker sections (EWS), in the age bracket of 6 to 14 years. This enabled economically marginalised communities to access high quality private schools, at the expense of the State. While Telangana may be excused due to its recent formation, it is unjustifiable that the other states have failed to undertake the most basic steps to implement Section 12(1)(c) of an Act passed eight years ago.

States have to notify per-child costs to pay the private schools, on behalf of the children admitted under this provision. However, out of 29 States and seven Union Territories, only 14 have notified their per-child costs. The provision does not apply to Jammu and Kashmir and there are no private schools in Lakshadweep; therefore, as per the data provided, a shocking 20 States/UTs have still not notified the per-child costs, a blatant violation of the letter and spirit of the RTE.

The data regarding the number of children admitted under Section 12(1)(c) of the Act, in States which provided the figures, are also distressing. The number of children studying under this provision increased by 6,12,053 from 2014-2015 to 2015-16, but by 5,02,880 from 2015-16 to 2016-17. The State of the Nation 2015 report by IIM Ahmedabad, based on official data obtained from the District Information

System for Education, puts the total number of seats under this provision as 1.6 crore over the next eight years. This means that 20 lakh seats should be available annually for EWS children in private schools under the Act; however, according to the data only 5-6 lakh seats are being filled on an annual basis.

Challenges of Implementation

- The Act aims to provide free and compulsory education to all children between 6 and 14 years. However, the government has not addressed the gap to achieve universal access to school. There are still a larger number of children who are out of school. Infrastructure, teaching norms and standards laid down under the RTE Act for schools are not respected.
- Another challenge we face on the ground is that the large number of untrained and unqualified teachers, which undermines quality of education.
- The RTE Act does expressly mention child-friendly and child-centred teaching, but the matter is not delved into further to ascertain how this shall be achieved. In a sense, it does not consider the most important stakeholders in a students' learning – the child him/herself.
- There has been an upsurge in private schools and for want of regulatory mechanisms, education has become a lucrative business. This runs counter to traditions of education in India where knowledge is free. Unrecognised private schools outlawed under the Act continue to function. Like in Singapore, the government should bring in a stringent regulatory system for private schools so that they are punished for their fraudulent practices.

- Several state governments are collaborating with private partners and devising schemes of public-private partnership in education, which fosters the trend towards privatisation.
- Civil society activists have informed the instances of schools refusing to admit children under the RTE provision, citing non-payment of dues by state governments.

Way Ahead

The Preamble to the Constitution states that the democratic Republic of India shall secure social, economic and political justice. Education is undoubtedly the most important element in the movement to secure this end. Although the Directive Principles of State Policy mandate the state to provide children the right to access education and the 86th constitutional amendment and the RTE dictate its implementation, it will only be fulfilled if sincere efforts are made by the states under the guidance and prodding of a committed Centre.

First, the government should ensure that it pumps in more resources, as the education budget for the past few years has been on the decline. Education as a foundation of development should receive highest priority. It should strengthen its schools and provide free education of good quality up to the secondary level, to which it has made an international commitment under the Sustainable Development Agenda.

The executive is responsible for the implementation of RTE and the legislature has the duty to hold the executive accountable. Neither judging by the evidence – has done its job properly. As the malaise regarding the non-implementation of the RTE is spread across the country, the Central government should immediately convene a meeting with all the State

education ministers and review the implementation of the law. The RTE aimed to provide a framework for private schools to supplement the efforts of the state to uplift disadvantaged sections of society through the means of education. We need to act immediately to address the gaps in the implementation of the law. The future of our children depends on it.

Conclusion

The Act has created every child's entitlement to education and raised aspirations. After it came into force, there has been an explosive demand for education. While a lot remains to be done, the number of government schools has increased, including in the rural areas.

The primary flaw of the RTE Act is in its failure to recognise the crux of the education crisis in the country as a problem of low quality education ascertained by low learning outcomes of students. The provisions must be revisited with the view that the education sector is only as strong as the potential human capital it seeks to develop. Without improving learning outcomes, the RTE Act, 2009 will remain a symbolic gesture of government reform misaligned with the issues of the education sector and ineffective in eradicating the education crisis that plagues the country.

General Studies Paper- II

Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/ Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.



SEVEN SUBJECTIVE QUESTIONS WITH MODEL ANSWERS

New Draft Coastal Regulation Zone Notification

Q1. The new draft if implemented will not only have an effect on how common areas used by fisherfolk are managed, but also bifurcate coastal zones along rural areas based on population density. Discuss it in the light of newly drafted Coastal Regulation Zone notification, 2018.

Hints:

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has framed a new draft Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018. The Ministry had constituted a Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Shailesh Nayak to examine the various issues and concerns of coastal states/UTs and various other stakeholders.
- The new draft aims to “conserve and protect the unique environment of coastal stretches and marine areas, besides livelihood security to the fisher communities and other local communities in the coastal areas and to promote sustainable development based on scientific principles taking into account the dangers of natural hazards, sea level rise due to global warming.
- Bifurcation of CRZ-III areas: Land that is relatively undisturbed such as in rural areas and do not fall in areas considered close to shoreline within existing municipal limits — have been divided into two categories:
 - ♦ CRZ-III A refers to rural areas with a population density of 2,161 people per square kilometre or more as per the 2011 Census. Such areas shall have a “No Development Zone” (NDZ) of 50m from the High Tide Line (HTL), the draft notes.
 - ♦ CRZ-III B refers to rural areas with a population density lesser than 2,161 people per square kilometre. Such areas shall continue to have an NDZ of 200m from the HTL.
- CRZ-I A constitute ecologically sensitive areas and the geo- morphological features which play a role in the maintaining the integrity of the coast viz.: (i) Mangroves (In case mangrove area is more than 1000 sq. mts, a

buffer of 50meters along the mangroves provided and such area also constitute CRZ I A), (ii) Corals and coral reefs; (iii) Sand Dunes; (iv) Biologically active Mudflats; (v) National parks, marine parks, sanctuaries, reserve forests, wildlife habitats and other protected areas under the provisions of Wild Life (Protection) Act, the Forest (Conservation) Act or Environment (Protection) Act; including Biosphere Reserves;(vi) Salt Marshes; (vii) Turtle nesting grounds; (viii) Horse shoe crabs habitats; (ix) Sea grass beds;(x) Nesting grounds of birds; (xi) Areas or structures of archaeological importance and heritage sites.

- Environmentalists claim that the draft has opened up fragile inter-tidal areas to real estate agents and framed with intent to favour large-scale industry at the cost of fishing communities. The 2018 notification takes away the protection that the hazard line could provide; instead, it merely states that the hazard line should be used as a tool for disaster management. This means that one can build in these areas after preparing an environment assessment report stating that certain precautions have been considered.
- India’s coastal and marine ecosystems include a wide range of mangroves, coral reefs, sea grasses, salt marshes, mud flats, estuaries, lagoons and unique flora and fauna. Yet, despite their ecological richness and contribution to the national economy, these resources have not received adequate protection and are under stress. Projects like Integrated Coastal Zone Management – part of the national coastal zone management program – seeks to balance development with the protection of vulnerable ecosystems.

Nightmare of Demographic Dividend for India

Q2. Examine how India’s demographic dividend will become demographic disaster if jobs are not created.

Hints:

- Recently, addressing a gathering of business leaders from both public and private sectors former President

of India Pranab Mukherjee said India's demographic dividend ran the risk of turning into a "demographic disaster" if jobs were not created. The "minuscule" size of the knowledge economy and benefits of education still not reaching the remotest parts of the country were "worrisome situations" which need to be corrected.

- India has made spectacular progress in last seven decades and particularly in last three decades, since the liberalisation of the economy. Our growth trajectory though robust has not been able to generate employment in the expected manner.
- By 2020, the median age in India will be just 28, compared to 37 in China and the US, 45 in Western Europe and 49 in Japan. Demographics can change the pace and pattern of economic growth. While China's spectacular growth has already benefited from a demographic dividend, India is yet to do so.
- India's demographic cycle is about 10-30 years behind that of the other countries, indicating that the next few decades present an opportunity for India to catch up to their per capita income levels. In addition, India's working age (WA) to non-working age (NWA) ratio is likely to peak at 1.7, a much lower level than Brazil and China, both of which sustained a ratio greater than 1.7 for at least 25 years. Finally, India will remain close to its peak for a much longer period than other countries.
- India's labour force participation rate is around 60 per cent. International Labour Organization (ILO) suggested that among 35 major economies of the world, India's labour force participation rate was ranked fifth from the bottom. China and Brazil, two of India's BRICS competitors, recorded the highest labour force participation rates. At less than 30 per cent, India had the lowest women's labour force participation rate, less than half the corresponding rates for China and Brazil.
- The growth benefit of a demographic dividend is not automatic. A lot depends on whether the bulge in working population can be trained and enough jobs created to employ the 10 million more people who will join the labour force every year. There is mounting concern that future growth could turn out to be jobless due to de-industrialization, de-globalization and the fourth industrial revolution and technological progress. While digital technologies may enable the creation of new products and more productive jobs, they may also substitute existing jobs. India may not be able to take advantage of these opportunities, due to a low human capital base and lack of skills.
- Lack of quality educational infrastructure and research centres have deprived students at home to maximise their potential.

- Technological change is making labour partially or wholly redundant in a number of sectors, across the world. Where labour is still necessary, increasing complexity of production requires labourers to have a minimum skill level that is much higher than the skill level required during the labour-intensive output boom in China and South-East Asia in the past decades.
- Investing more and more efficiently in people will enable India to tap into its demographic dividend and prepare the country for the future. There is a powerful link between these investments and economic growth, stability and security. Investing in people through healthcare, quality education, jobs and skills helps build human capital, which is a key to supporting economic growth, ending extreme poverty and creating more inclusive societies. Human capital is now the fastest-growing component of India's wealth. It is already the largest component of global wealth. More developed and richer countries have vastly more human capital wealth than developing countries.

Operation Greens Towards Agriculture and Farmers Welfare

- Q3. The Operation Greens wants to replicate that success story of milk, in fruits and vegetables, starting with three basic vegetables—tomatoes, onions and potatoes (TOP). Will Operation Greens change the face of the Indian agriculture sector? Discuss.**

Hints:

- Every now and then there are reports on farmer's suicides and protests from different parts of the country. These protests have been revolving around two main issues: loan waivers and increase the minimum support price for agriculture produce. Thus it has been very challenging for governments to accelerate agricultural growth rates. Tomatoes, Onions, Potatoes are consumed throughout the year in the entire country. During the last 70 years, farmers and consumers have incurred losses. For the first time, a new initiative titled "Operation Green (OG)" has been taken so that farmers can get right price and products are also available to the consumers at suitable prices.
- The Operation Flood (OF) changed the face of milk production in India, making India the largest producer of milk in the world, with 164 million metric tonnes (MMT) produced in 2016-17. But important thing to note in OF was that it was driven largely by small holders and

AMUL model ensured 75-80% of the price paid by milk consumers goes to farmers. The OG wants to replicate that success story of milk, in fruits and vegetables, starting with three basic vegetables—tomatoes, onions and potatoes (TOP).

- The main objective of OG is to reduce price volatility in these commodities and thereby helping farmers augment incomes on a sustainable basis, as also provide these basic vegetables to consumers at affordable prices.
- Operation Greens will promote Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs), agri-logistics, processing facilities and professional management. The idea behind Operation Greens is to double the income of farmers by the end of 2022. Operation is essentially a price fixation scheme that aims to ensure farmers are given the right price for their produce.
- Operation Greens will work to increase demand in the economy as well with its demand forecasting model. To help in the structural and infrastructure part of the scheme, as many as 470 agriculture market committee (APMCs) promoted markets will now be connected to the e-NAM platform while the government will help in development of 22,000 agricultural markets.
- In accordance with the government's vision, the Niti Aayog and economic think-tank has come out with a four - point action plan. This four point action plan includes the following measures:
 - ♦ Better remuneration to farmers for their agriculture produce by reforming the existing marketing structure.
 - ♦ Raising the productivity by using modern scientific, environmentally safe and sustainable agriculture technologies.
 - ♦ Reforming the land policy to make farming and economically viable profession even for small marginal farmers.
 - ♦ Provide capital support, subsidies and insurance schemes for economically supporting the farmers.
- The main reason of success of Operation Flood was that the government has ensured that the 70 percent of the money, paid by the consumers for the milk, reached directly to the farmers. The same needs to be repeated in Operation Greens also. This is only possible through linking the major consumption centers to the production centers (without the involvement of mediators), second, establishment of solid infrastructure, starting with modern warehouses/storage houses, to restrict the wastage of vegetables/produce and the third one

is connecting the processing industries with organized retailing so that at least one fourth of the vegetables produced at peak time can be diverted to these industries.

- The real success of Operation Greens can be acknowledged only when the farmers will get at least 60 to 70 percent of the price paid by end consumer as well as the end consumers also pay a lesser affordable price. Father of India's Green Revolution M.S. Swaminathan has quoted that "If agriculture fails, everything else will fail". OG is a welcome step by the government to stop the failure of agriculture and to build a better world for the Indian farmer.

Child Protection & Child Rights in India

Q4. Despite a plenty of laws, policies and programmes related to child protection, children in India suffer from the risk for exploitation, violence and abuse in many forms. Discuss.

Hints:

- In a major development against the increasing incidents of child rapes in India, the Union Cabinet has cleared the criminal law amendment ordinance and POCSO Act is a part of this amendment. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018, inserting Section 376AB in the Indian Penal Code, 1908 making possible the sentence of death for the crime of rape of a child less than 12 years is barely an exercise in legislative or executive wisdom.
- A child's vulnerability comes from various factors that hinder a child's ability to function and grow normally. Hence self-protection is more about the ability of the child to lead a healthy life within a child protection system; the ability to protect themselves or get help from people who can provide protection.
- Vulnerability of children leads to and is further created by the socio-cultural, socio political and socio-religious situations they are in. A child who is forced or born into a situation or discriminated group is at risk for abuse, neglect and exploitation. The lack of a protection system either due to mis-implementation of national laws and programmes or the absence of protection policies and legislation also renders children vulnerable.
- In India, too, children are often sexually abused by people known to them and regarded as authority figures. The government must ensure implementation of existing measures including enforcement of the POCSO Act.
- There are various protection issues concerning children includes abuse and violence, child sexual abuse, street

children, children living with aids, child in armed conflict, girl child, child marriage, children with disabilities, children affected by substance abuse, birth registration, missing children, children in conflict with law, child labour, child trafficking, children without, parental care, child health and nutrition, early childhood (children below six), children of schedule caste and schedule tribe families etc. needs to address.

- Instead of stricter punitive measures for child sexual abuse, there is need to focus on prevention of crimes by enhancing budgetary allocation for the Centre's Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), which aims to provide a safety net for children and protect them from falling prey to crimes. All children deserve equality, despite their difference. They are entitled to all of these rights, no matter what race, colour, religion, language, ethnicity, gender or abilities define them.

Syria's Seven-Year Civil War

Q5. In seven years of brutal civil war in Syria, hundreds of thousands of people has witnessed unprecedented devastation and displacement. Discuss the role of world powers to end the long war in Syria.

Hints:

- Overall, currently 13.1 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and protection inside Syria. Of these, an estimated 5.6 million people are facing acute needs. Humanitarian operations in Syria provide a critical life-line for millions of people, with the UN and partners scaling-up rapidly to meet the needs of those impacted by recent conflict and military activity through leveraging all response modalities from inside Syria and cross border operations.
- President Assad's government has been accused of launching a chemical weapons attack on the Syrian town of Douma on 7 April, 2018. Barrel bombs containing toxic substances were allegedly dropped from helicopters, killing "up to 75 people", with as many as 500 further casualties. Syria's renewed use of chemical weapons against its own people is shameless and barbaric.
- The U.S., France and Britain launched military strikes in Syria to punish President Bashar Assad for an apparent chemical attack against civilians and to deter him from doing it again. Syrians crowded onto the streets in noisy demonstrations of defiance afterward and their ally Russia denounced the attack.
- Taking cognizance of the Syrian crisis, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres had already pointed out

that he feared events could escalate rapidly into a regional and even global conflict and urged all states to act responsibly in these dangerous circumstances. The danger was even greater than during the cold war because the safeguards that existed then to manage such a crisis no longer seem to be present. He added that there was no military solution to the Syrian conflict.

- The United States has been reluctant to become too entangled in Syria, but it has acted for two main reasons. First, the Islamic State group began developing a foothold in the country. The United States also has acted to punish the Assad government for using chemical weapons such as sarin and chlorine gas.
- The conflict has turned into a proxy war. The United States started arming and providing military air cover for anti-Assad rebel groups who were also waging war against ISIS. Washington also began working with Syrian Kurds, one of the strongest partners in the fight against ISIS. After that support appeared to turn the tide against Assad, Russia — a longtime Syrian ally — entered the conflict to shore up Assad's struggling regime. In addition, Russian President Vladimir Putin wanted to assert his country's power on the world stage.
- The massive aerial attack on Syria by the U.S. and its allies in the name of retaliation for Syria having unleashed chemical weapons on its civilians demonstrates the U.S.'s global policeman attitude. The U.S.-led attack that grossly interferes with the democratic functioning of a country was neither discussed in the U.N. nor sanctioned by the Security Council.
- Recently the EU and UN began a conference to drum up fresh aid pledges for wartorn Syria and reinvigorate the faltering Geneva peace process as the conflict enters its eighth year.

Soft Power Matrix of India

Q6. What is soft power and why are countries looking to it in their conduct of diplomacy? A mere wish to be praised as a global or regional power should not be allowed to guide our foreign policy. Discuss.

Hints:

- According to Harvard political scientist, who coined the term, soft power is the ability of a country to persuade others to do what it wants without resorting to force or coercion. Soft power, lies in a country's attractiveness and comes from three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad) and its

foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority). Though slower to yield results, soft power is a less expensive means than military force or economic inducements to get others to do what we want.

- India boasts an amazing variety and wealth of soft power resources. Its spiritualism, yoga, movies and television soaps, classical and popular dance and music, its principles of non-violence, democratic institutions, plural society and cuisine have all attracted people across the world. It is only over the past decade or so that India has begun to play its soft power cards more systematically. Besides setting up a public diplomacy division within the Ministry of External Affairs in 2006 and expanding the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) worldwide, it has roped in the Ministry of Tourism, which is behind the “Incredible India” campaign, and the Ministry for Overseas Indians to showcase its social, political and cultural assets abroad.
- India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was convinced that India was bound to play an increasing and beneficent part in world affairs. The government is working on developing a “soft power matrix”, a tool aimed at calibrating the effectiveness of India’s soft power outreach in dealings with neighbouring countries and leveraging it better as an operational instrument in India’s broader diplomatic doctrine. The proposed matrix is being developed to calibrate outreach efforts such as the propagation of Gandhian values and philosophy.
- If not global, the regional role unanimous that India is certainly a regional power. India, like almost every country in the world, is pondering its response to the remarkable rise of China as a leading power. The question is more portentous for India because it has long dominated the geography of South Asia as well as the maritime flanks constituting the Indian Ocean. Repeated waves of Indian cultural influences did indeed wash over India’s home region and the broader world.
- Apart from protecting our people from adverse external factors and interventions, the principal criterion in the conduct of foreign policy for India ought to be lifting the poor from poverty. India being a major or even global power, with the capability, even responsibility, to play an ‘important role’ on the world stage as a balancing power between major powers and as a ‘security provider’ to others. Whatever brings concrete benefits to our people should be encouraged. A mere wish to be praised as a global or even regional power should not be allowed to guide the policy. When other countries flatter us by describing us as a major power, it is invariably because

they want to rope us into some schemes of their own. It is best not to get too entangled in the chess moves of other countries.

- Since we do have to think critically about allocating our scarce resources among alternative uses and since we are a democratic polity with a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society with a large number of poor, we have to think more than twice about defence spending. Even when at some stage we acquire credible hard power, we must not allow ourselves to be seduced by the flattering and mostly insincere talk of others about India playing a global role.

Still Awaited: True Spirit of Right to Education Act

- Q7. The education crisis has been on the forefront of policy-making agenda since the inception of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Scheme to Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009. However, learning outcomes in the country have fallen further, since the commencement of the RTE Act, 2009. Discuss.**

Hints:

- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE), is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted on 4 August 2009, which describes the modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 in India under Article 21a of the Indian Constitution. India became one of 135 countries to make education a fundamental right of every child when the Act came into force on 1 April 2010.
- The RTE Act, 2009 identified four overarching aims: improving access to inputs/infrastructure, maintaining a favourable pupil-teacher ratio (PTR), reducing inequities through reservation of ‘disadvantaged’ children in private schools and maintaining teacher quality. Ideally each of these tangible aims should be aligned to the broader, ultimate goal of attaining high learning outcomes in children by improving the quality of education delivered.
- The problem here is that the Act was formulated on the premise that increased investment in the education sector would improve the quality of education in the country. In attaining the former, we’ve lost sight of the ultimate goal. Thus, if we compare the “state of education” as per rankings awarded in ASER (Annual Status of Education Reports) published by the Pratham Foundation that assesses learning outcomes and those

given by the government's DISE (District Information System for Education) data that assesses the implementation of provisions of the Act, there will be significant disparity. The fact that one doesn't translate into the other implies that the premise on which the Act is built is flawed.

- While the Act has largely been implemented successfully in the country – the goal of universal enrolment rates is not far from being achieved, standards for infrastructure provision have been observed in several states across the country including the provision of infrastructure specific to fostering inclusion in private schooling for children of disadvantaged groups – this has not translated into improved learning outcomes.
- The primary flaw of the RTE Act is in its failure to recognise the crux of the education crisis in the country as a problem of low quality education ascertained by low learning outcomes of students. The provisions must be revisited with the view that the education sector is only as strong as the potential human capital it seeks to develop. Without improving learning outcomes, the RTE Act, 2009 will remain a symbolic gesture of government reform misaligned with the issues of the education sector and ineffective in eradicating the education crisis that plagues the country.
- The implementation of the right to education requires funding in order to build schools, pay teachers' salaries and training, provide teaching materials, etc. Under international law, states have the obligation to use the maximum of their available resources to realise the right to education. Even when a state's resources are very limited, it is obliged to prioritise certain immediate obligations, such as the introduction of free primary education and to guarantee education for all without discrimination. It is also obliged to provide progressively free secondary and higher education and to continuously improve the quality of education. This means that it must take immediate and progressive steps to fully realise the right to education and must not take retrogressive measures.
- To implement the right to education effectively, states should ensure that a sufficient proportion of the national budget is allocated to education financing and that the money is used effectively and equitably to guarantee education for all, as well as redress inequalities.
- As the malaise regarding the non-implementation of the RTE is spread across the country, the Central government should immediately convene a meeting with all the State education ministers and review the implementation of the law. The RTE aimed to provide a framework for private schools to supplement the efforts of the state to uplift disadvantaged sections of society through the means of education. We need to act immediately to address the gaps in the implementation of the law. The future of our children depends on it.



SEVEN IMPORTANT NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS

NATIONAL

1. Control of Viral Hepatitis

The Health Ministry has decided to roll out an initiative for prevention and control of viral hepatitis to address aspects such as surveillance, awareness generation, safe blood and injection safety to combat the disease. Under the initiative, the ministry has decided to establish a state coordination unit under the state National Health Mission for efficient rollout of the programme in 26 large and four small states.

Key Features

- Components such as surveillance, awareness generation, immunisation, safe blood, injection safety infection control, diagnosis of viral hepatitis, capacity building, research and monitoring would be addressed.
- It is also proposed to establish 15 model treatment centres based on the endemicity of the disease, which will function as referral centres for diagnosis and treatment of hepatitis C and assist in capacity building.
- There is also a plan to set up 50 state laboratories for assisting in diagnosis and training of the district hospitals for screening of hepatitis. The ministry intends to scale up to 100 treatment and 665 testing centres over a period of next three years.

About Viral Hepatitis

Hepatitis refers to an inflammation of the liver cells and damage to the liver. The liver's functions include detoxifying the blood, storing vitamins and producing hormones. Hepatitis can disrupt these processes and create severe health problems throughout the body.

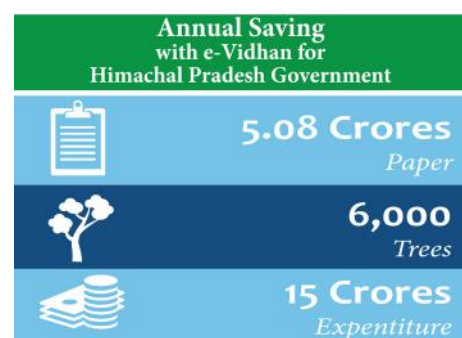
At least five viruses can cause hepatitis. The three most common are hepatitis viruses A, B and C. Infection with any of these three can be fatal. Other types of hepatitis can result from overconsumption of alcohol or an autoimmune condition. Hepatitis A, B, and C are forms of hepatitis transmitted by a virus.

2. e-Vidhan Project

The central government has launched Central Project Monitoring Unit for e-Vidhan project at Parliament House Annexe. e-Vidhan is a mission mode project to digitize and make the functioning of state legislatures in India paperless. It is a part of the broader Digital India Programme and is likely to contribute to the cleanliness of environment by reducing the use of

papers to a great extent. The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs is the Nodal Ministry for the project.

One of the key components of the strategy devised for implementation of the project is to create Project Monitoring Units both at central as well as state levels. Himachal Pradesh became the first state in the country to implement e-Vidhan as a pilot project.



3. Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP) System

India and Finland have reached an agreement under the Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP) system and that the issue surrounding the alleged tax payable by Nokia “has been resolved”, paving the way for the company to sell its plant shuttered for long in Chennai.

Nokia India was issued a demand notice for Rs. 2,500 crore in 2013, which was thereafter reduced to Rs. 1,600

crore. The Income Tax Department also raised a tax demand of Rs. 10,000 crore tax on Nokia Corporation for the same transaction, which has now been dropped under the MAP agreement.

About MAP

MAP is an alternative available to taxpayers to resolve disputes giving rise to double taxation, whether juridical or economic in nature. An

agreement for avoidance of double taxation between countries would give authorisation for assistance of Competent Authorities (CAs) in the respective jurisdiction under MAP. The main benefit of pursuing MAP is the elimination of double taxation (either juridical or economic). The MAP resolution, once accepted, eliminates protracted litigation.

4. Star Rating of Garbage Free Cities

The 1st regional workshop on star rating of garbage-free cities, organized by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in collaboration with the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC). Along with the annual Swachh Survekshan activity, the star rating of garbage free cities will create a healthy competition among the cities across the countries to achieve the goals of cleanliness and 100% solid waste management.

The star-rating initiative was developed by the Swachh Bharat

Mission (Urban). The 7-star rating is innovatively designed on a SMART (Single metric, Measurable, Achievable, Rigorous verification and Targeted towards outcomes) approach – making it the first-of-its kind rating tool for assessing cleanliness of cities and towns in India. The system, based on 12 parameters, builds on the spirit of healthy competition among cities and the aspirations of cities to progress towards higher standards of “Swachhata” and its sustainability.



The distinctive feature of Star Rating System will be that many cities can have higher stars as compared to only one city can be “Cleanest city” under Swachh Survekshan.

5. NCMEI Can Grant Minority Tag to Education Institutions

The Supreme Court has ruled all questions relating to conferring minority status on educational institutions are to be decided by the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) and quashed the order of the Calcutta High

Court, which had said the body had no original jurisdiction on the issue.

NCMEI Act empowered the Commission to decide all questions on the status of an institution as a minority educational institution. As per Section 11 of the Act, NCMEI could declare an establishment as a minority educational institution at all stages. Only the Commission has the power to decide on granting a ‘no objection’ certificate to an institution that wanted to convert into a minority institution.

About NCMEI

The National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions was set up in 2004. The Commission is mandated to look into specific complaints regarding deprivation or violation of rights of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. Protection of rights of minorities are enshrined in Article 30 of the Constitution which states that “all minorities, whether based on religion or language shall have the right to establish and



administer educational institutions of their choice”.

This Commission is a quasi-judicial body and has been endowed with the powers of a Civil Court. It is to be headed by a Chairman who has been a Judge of the High

Court and three members are to be nominated by central government. The Commission has 3 roles namely adjudicatory function, advisory function and recommendatory powers. The Commission can make recommendations to the

central government and the state governments regarding any matter which directly or indirectly deprives the minority community of their educational rights enshrined in Article 30.

6. Study in India Programme

With an aim to provide students across the world an opportunity to study in Indian educational institutions, the Union HRD Ministry has launched “Study in India” programme. It is an innovative initiative to attract students from our partner countries in South Asia, South-East Asia, Middle East and Africa to come and

experience the very best of academic learning from the top institutions in India. The Study in India Portal will become a single window to cover all aspects relating to studying in India for foreign students.

Currently, India is home to about 45,000 international students, which

accounts for just 1 per cent of the global student mobility. With ‘Study in India’, the government hopes the country will start attracting 1.5 lakh to 2 lakh international students by the year 2022.

The government will initially target 30 friendly countries, including Nepal, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Thailand, Malaysia, Egypt, Kuwait, Iran, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Rwanda, among others. The numbers of fee waiver schemes that have been announced include a complete fee waiver to the top 25% meritorious aspirants, 50% fee waiver to the next 25% and 25% to the rest of foreign students.



7. Draft of the National Clean Air Programme

The Environment Ministry has come out with a draft national action plan proposing multiple strategies to reduce air pollution. However, a green body claimed that the draft lacked its earlier set target of bringing down air pollution by 50 per cent in five years.

Key Objectives

- To augment and evolve an effective and a proficient ambient air quality monitoring network across the country to ensure comprehensive and reliable database.
- To have efficient data dissemination and a public outreach mechanism for timely measures for prevention and mitigation of air pollution.
 - To have a feasible management plan for prevention, control and abatement of air pollution.

Under the NCAP, the ministry plans to take a host of measures

to bring down air pollution. These include augmenting the air quality monitoring network, identification of alternative technology for real-time monitoring, setting up of 10 city super network, indoor air pollution monitoring and management and air pollution health impact studies. Other measures include air quality forecasting system, issuance of notification on dust management, a three-tier mechanism for review, assessment and inspection for implementation and a national emission inventory.



INTERNATIONAL

1. UN has Launched Road Safety Trust Fund

Citing tragic road accidents in India and Canada, UN termed traffic deaths an urgent global concern as the world body launched a trust fund aimed at spurring action to help save lives in road accidents.

The United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund aims to accelerate progress in improving global road safety by bridging the gaps in the mobilization of resources for effective action at all levels. It will mobilize resources from governments, intergovernmental or

non-governmental organizations, the private sector, philanthropic organizations and individuals.

It will support efforts along the five pillars of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety, which includes strengthened road safety management capacities, improved safety of road infrastructure and broader transport networks, enhanced safety of vehicles, improved behaviour of road users and improved post-crash care. Trust fund has the potential to

galvanise our global efforts to address the road safety situation, building on the progress made and experience gained over the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.

Road traffic deaths and injuries have become a serious and urgent global concern. Around 1.3 million drivers, passengers and pedestrians die each year and up to 50 million are injured on the world's roads. ■

2. US has Put India under Watch List

The United States Treasury Department has put India again on the currency manipulator watchlist as the country's foreign exchange net addition and the bilateral trade surplus with the US have breached two of the three criteria determining manipulation. The US Treasury Department uses three parameters to determine a currency manipulator: Bilateral trade surplus

with the US to be \$20 billion, current account surplus at 3% of country's GDP and net purchases of foreign currency to 2% of country's GDP over a year.

While adding India to the currency watchlist among other countries such as China, Mexico and Japan, what US Treasury Department said was that India's "net annual purchases of foreign exchange reached \$56 billion in 2017,

equivalent to 2.2 percent of GDP" — which breached the third criterion.

The mere fact that India is on the watch list now could restrict the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in the foreign exchange operations it needs to pursue to protect financial stability, especially when global capital flows threaten to overwhelm domestic monetary policy. ■

3. Cyber Security Tech Accord

A group of 34 major tech companies, including Cisco, Facebook, Microsoft, HP, RSA and Oracle, have signed the Cyber Security Tech Accord. This accord promises to establish partnerships

to share vulnerabilities provide consumers with better ways to protect them and refuse to assist governments in carrying out state sponsored cyber-attacks. Although the list of firms agreeing to the accord is lengthy,

several companies have declined to sign on at least for now, including Google, Apple and Amazon.

The 34 companies that signed the four-point accord pledged

that they will oppose cyber-attacks on innocent citizens and enterprises from anywhere. The companies commit to protecting against tampering with or exploitation of their products and services. They further commit not to help governments launch cyber-attacks against innocent citizens or enterprises. The firms also said they will empower their customers to improve their own security and will collaborate with other organizations to bolster cybersecurity generally. ■



4. NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite

Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) planet-hunting satellite was launched on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Cape Canaveral, Florida. It will monitor more than 200,000 stars for temporary drops in brightness caused by planetary transits.

- The mission will catalog thousands of planet candidates and vastly increase the current number of known exoplanets. Of these,

approximately 300 are expected to be Earth-sized and super-Earth-sized exoplanets, which are worlds no larger than twice the size of Earth.

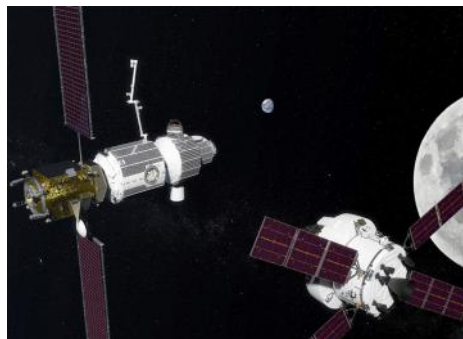
- TESS will find the most promising exoplanets orbiting our nearest and brightest stars, giving future researchers a rich set of new targets for more comprehensive follow-up studies.



- It will survey the entire sky over a period of two years. ■

5. Lunar 'Gateway' Space Station

NASA's goal of returning to the moon should see a major push in early 2019, when the agency awards its first contract for the lunar 'gateway' programme.



The Lunar Orbital Platform-Gateway is NASA's planned "staging" area intended for studies of the Moon and the deep-space environment. Eventually, it will function as a way station for astronauts travelling to and from Mars. The gateway would also further NASA's goal of another human landing on the Moon and will help determine whether water near the surface could be used to manufacture propellant for deep-space missions. The Moon's gravity could also help a spacecraft reduce the blistering speeds

used for six-month voyages back and forth to Mars, thus easing re-entry to Earth's atmosphere.

Lunar space station is a collaboration of global partners who developed and currently maintain the International Space Station, including the European Space Agency (ESA), NASA, Russia's Roscosmos, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and the Canadian Space Agency (CSA). ■

6. Commonwealth Countries Adopt Commonwealth Cyber Declaration

The Commonwealth countries unanimously adopted the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration. These countries have agreed to work closely together to strengthen their cybersecurity frameworks and response mechanisms between now and 2020. The declaration includes recognition of the potential for a

more active Commonwealth role in international discussions on global stability and cyberspace. It is also an important step for 31 Commonwealth small states. By promoting digital inclusion and a safer cyberspace, it sets out practical steps that will enable them to advance their economic and social development.



Despite setting out all these Commonwealth initiatives such as Telecommunications Organisation work areas, the declaration calls as Commonwealth Cybercrime (CTO). for the continuation of various Initiative (CCI) and Commonwealth

7. UNASUR Regional Bloc

Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru had decided to temporarily leave the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), given differences over choosing the secretary general of the group.

About UNASUR

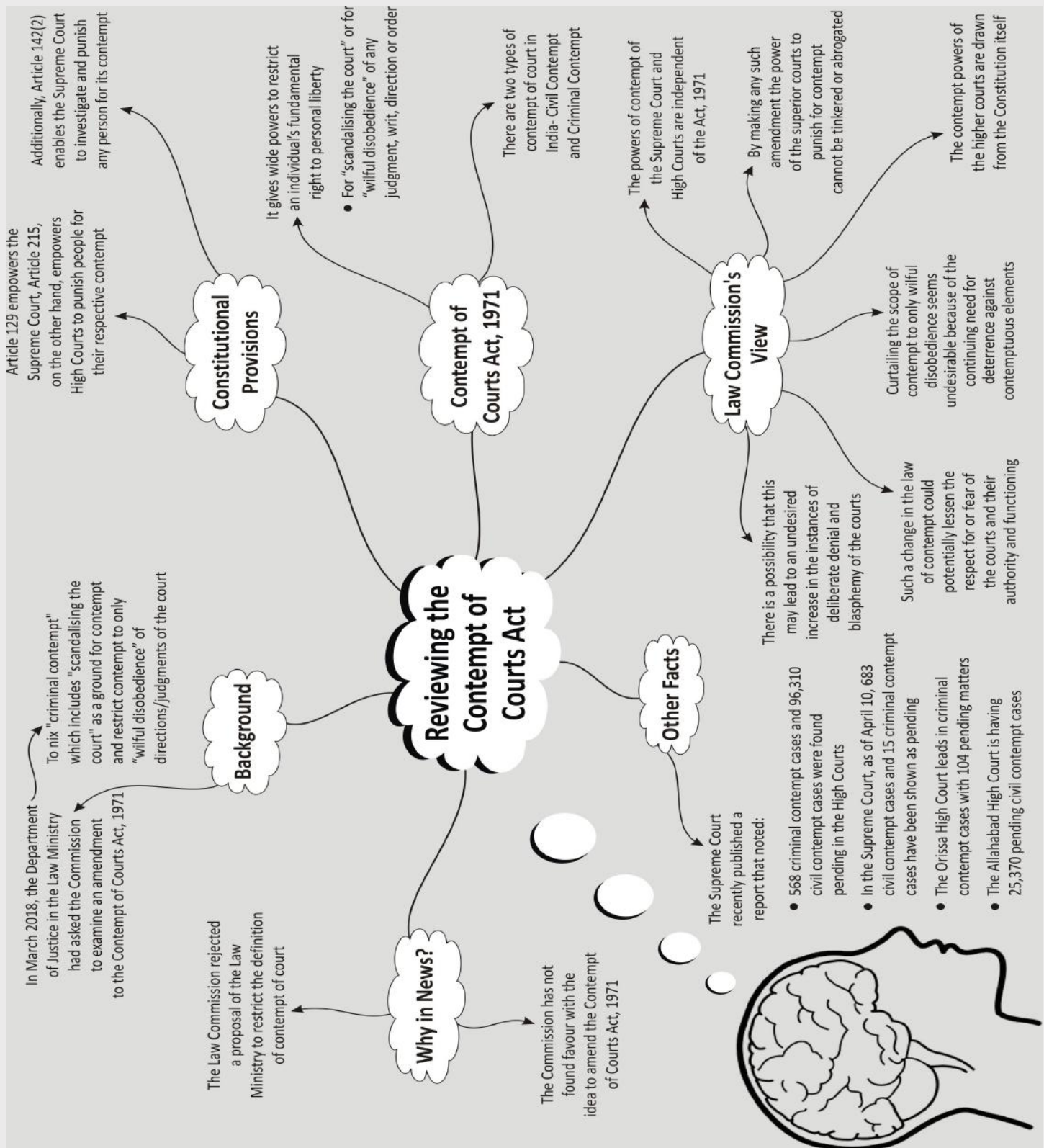
The Union of South American Nations is an intergovernmental body modeled

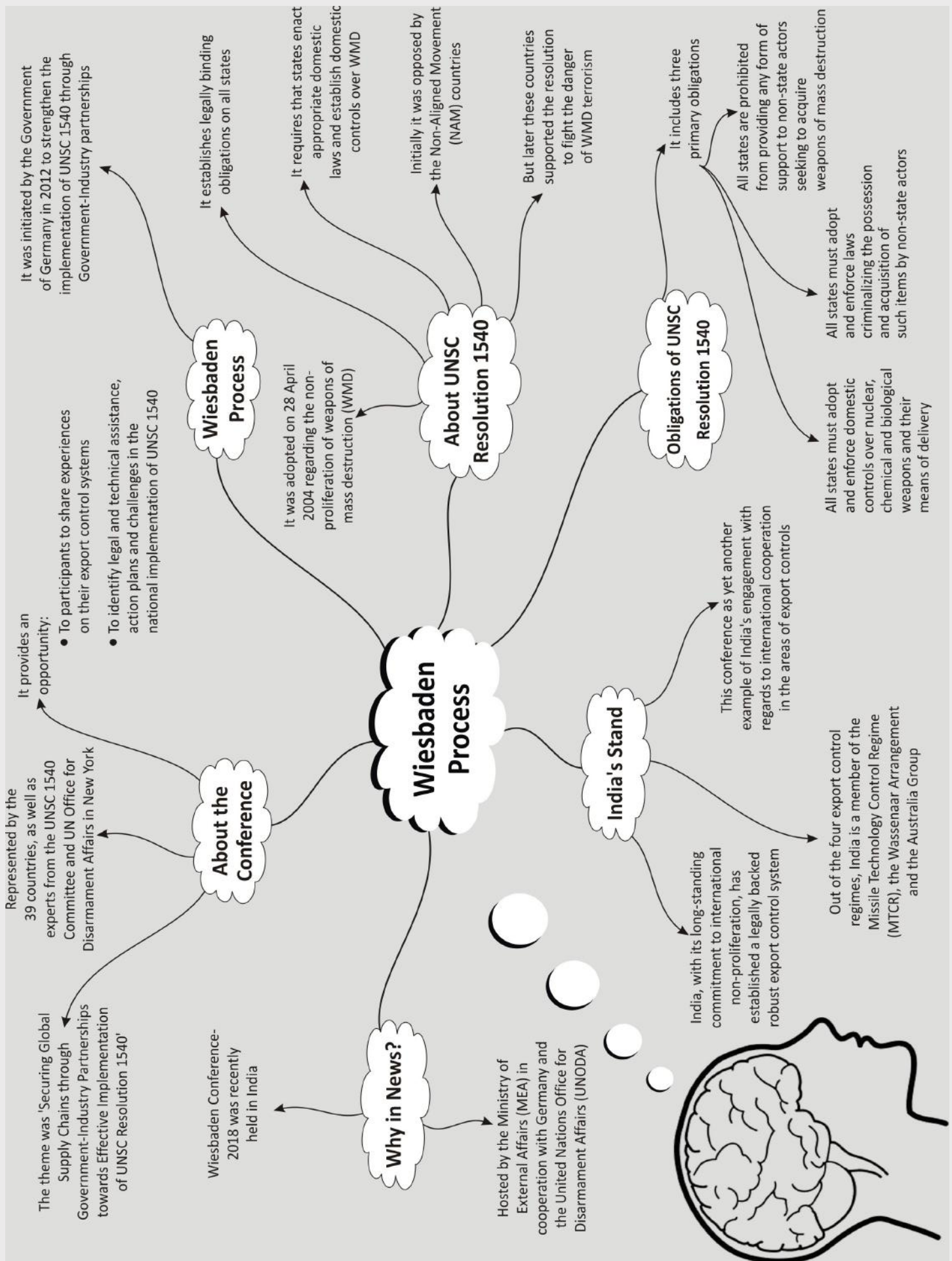
after the European Union, known as UNASUR. It acts as a forum for interaction between member-country leaders and also serves as a platform for interregional trade promotion. In May 2008, leaders from 12 South American countries inked the Constitutive Treaty to create UNASUR with the goal of enhancing regional economic and political integration. When Uruguay became the ninth member to ratify the charter in December 2010, the accord gained the necessary votes to give UNASUR legal status.

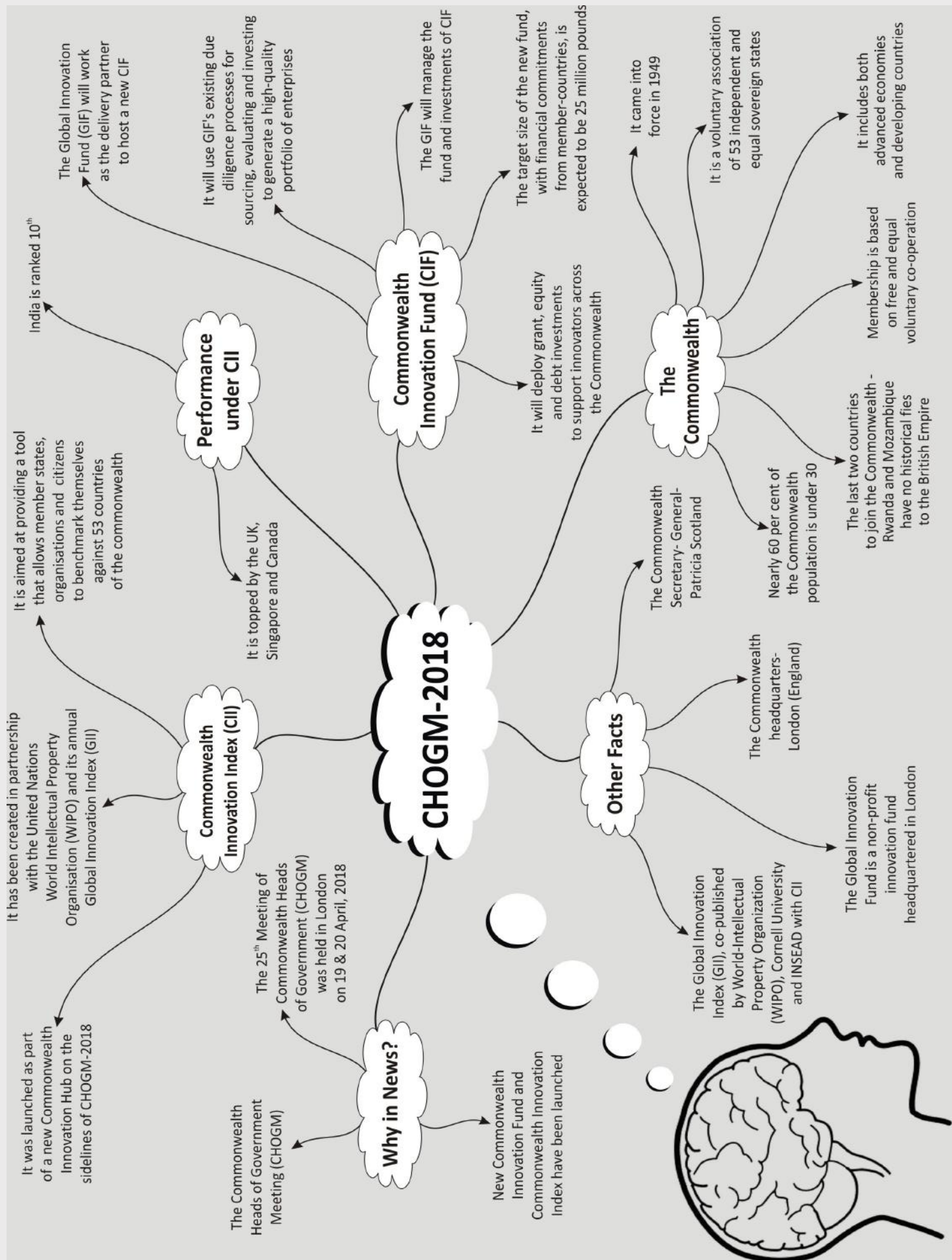
UNASUR was promoted by late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Bolivia, Ecuador, Guyana, Surinam, Uruguay and Venezuela remain in the bloc.

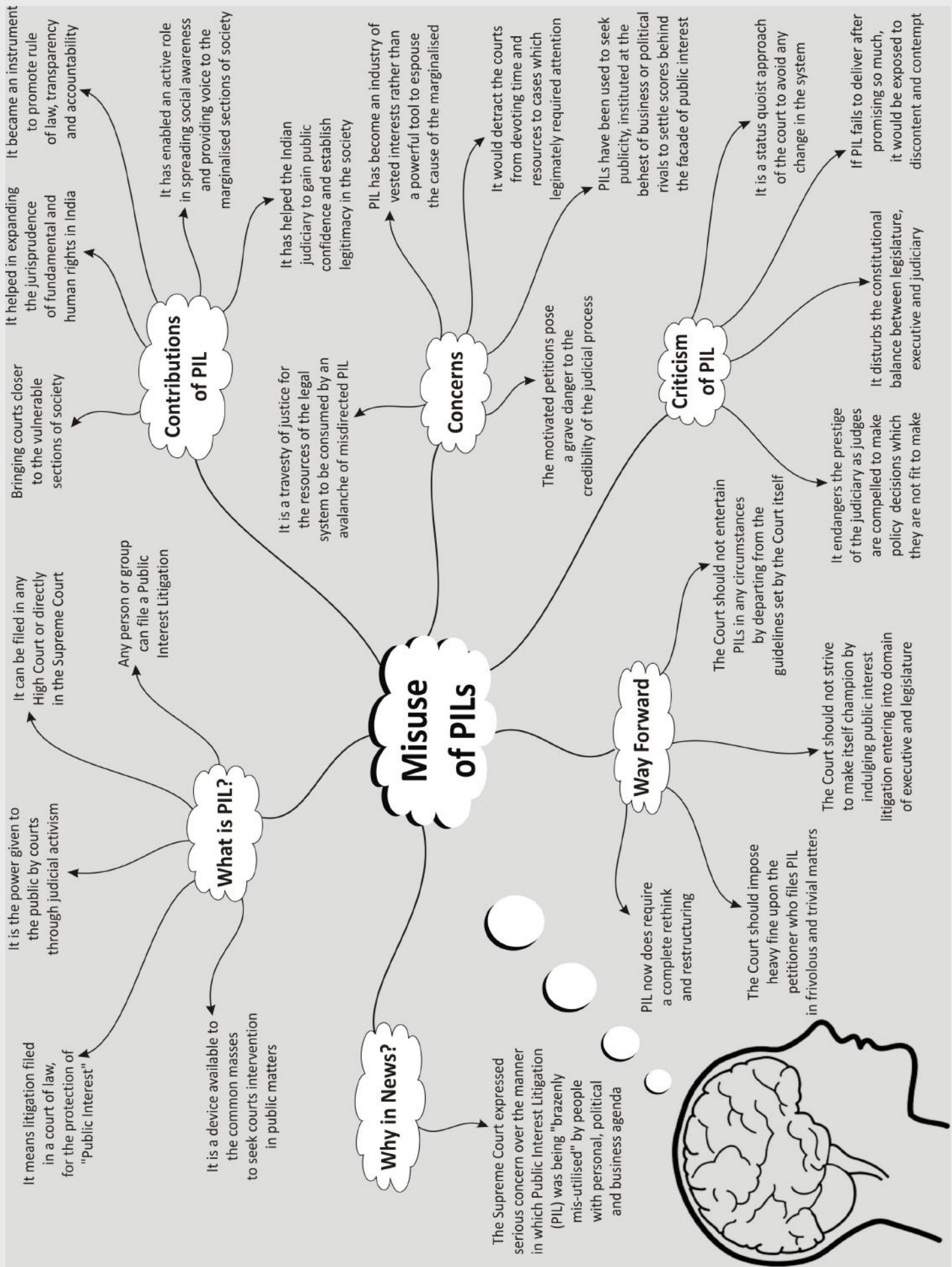


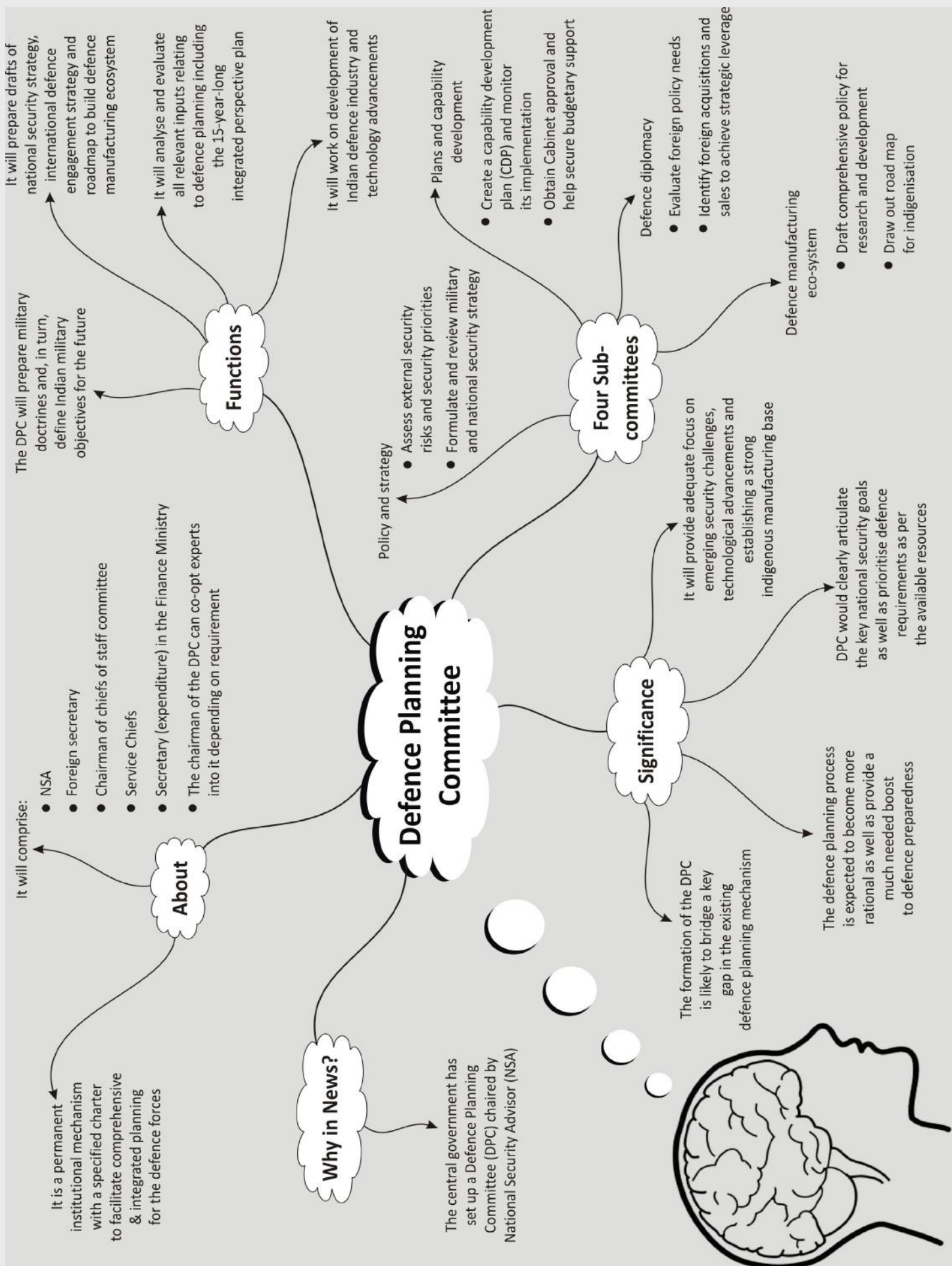
SEVEN BRAIN BOOSTERS

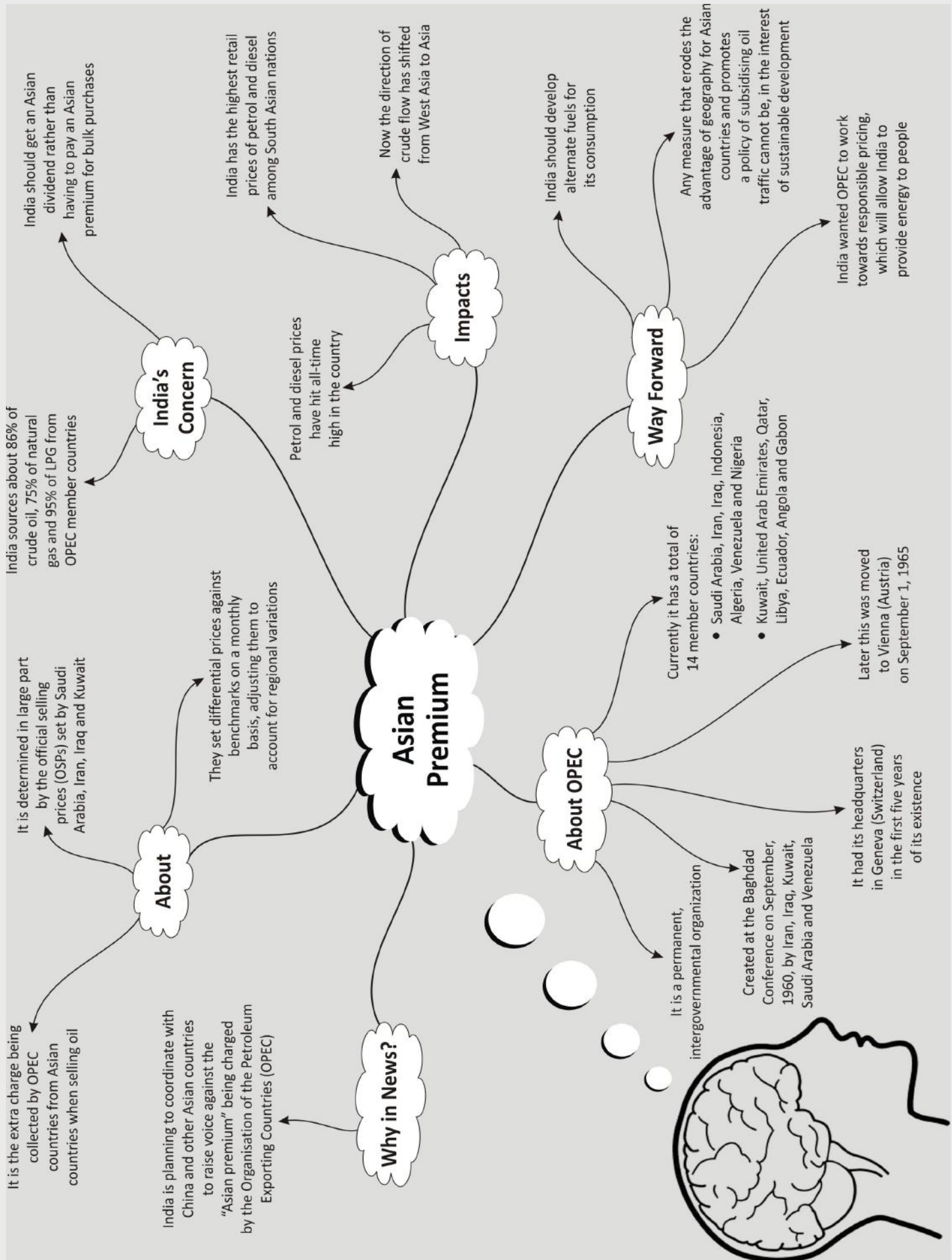


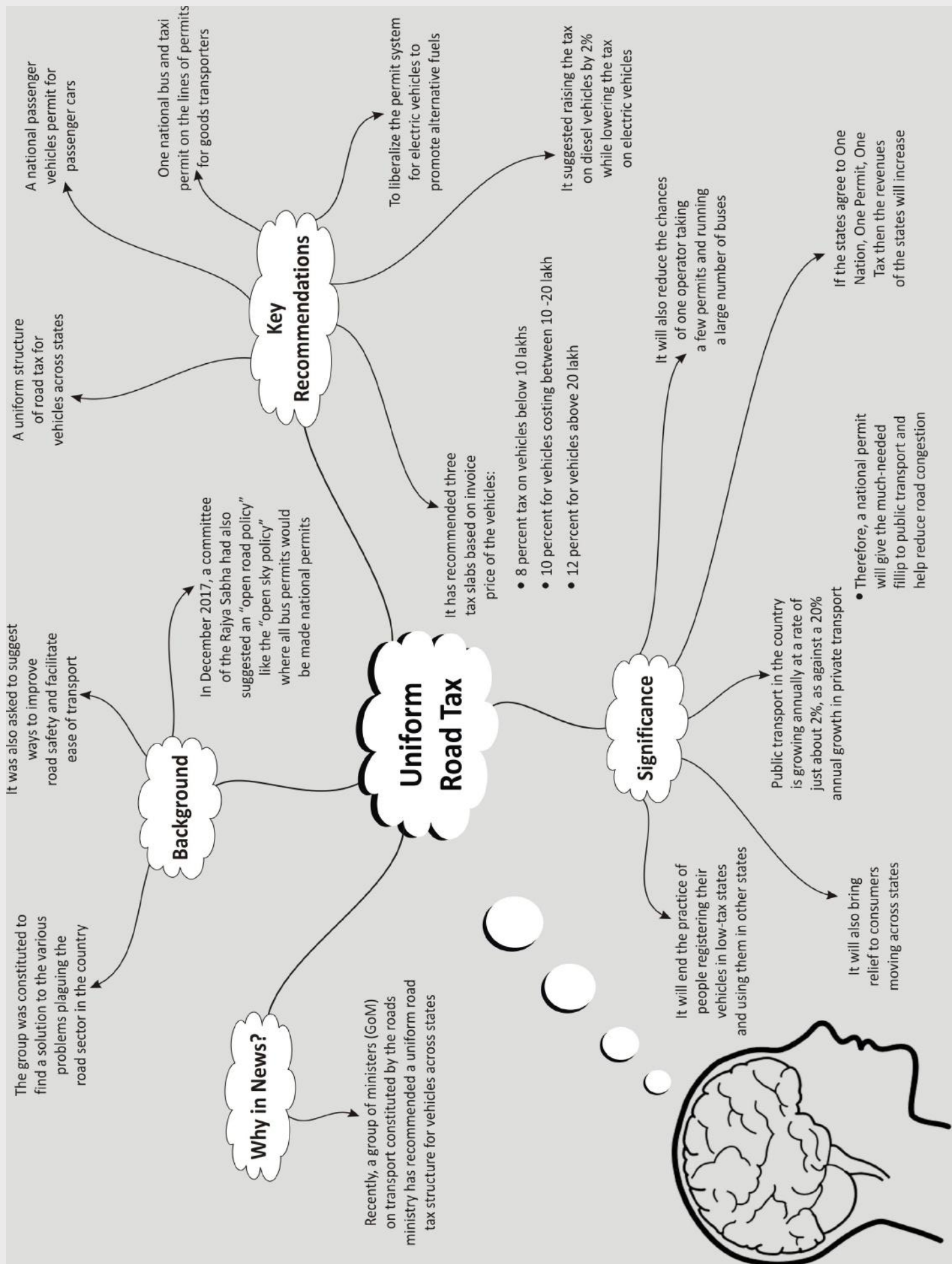












SEVEN MCQ's WITH EXPLANATORY ANSWERS

(Based on Brain Boosters)

Reviewing the Contempt of Courts Act

Q1. Consider the following statements in respect of contempt of court:

1. Contempt of court is not mentioned in the Indian constitution but in the Contempt of Courts Act of 1971.
2. Criminal contempt is when a person willfully disobeys any order of a court.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (d)

Both statements are not correct. Article 129 empowers the Supreme Court, Article 215, on the other hand, empowers High Courts to punish people for their respective contempt. Additionally, Article 142(2) enables the Supreme Court to investigate and punish any person for its contempt. The powers of contempt of the Supreme Court and High Courts are independent of the Act, 1971.

Civil contempt is when a person willfully disobeys any order of a court. Criminal contempt is interfering with the administration of justice or scandalizing the court or lowering its authority.

Wiesbaden Process

Q2. With reference to the Wiesbaden Process, consider the following statements:

1. Wiesbaden Conference-2018 was recently held in Germany.
2. It was initiated by the government of Germany in 2012 to strengthen the implementation of UNSC 1540.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

Explanation:

Statement 1 is not correct. Wiesbaden Conference 2018 was recently held in New Delhi (India). The Ministry

of External Affairs (MEA) in cooperation with Germany and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) hosted Conference. The title of the Conference was 'Securing Global Supply Chains through Government-Industry Partnerships towards Effective Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1540.

Statement 2 is correct. The Wiesbaden Process was initiated by the government of Germany in 2012 to strengthen the implementation of UNSC 1540 through Government-Industry partnerships.

CHOGM-2018

Q3. Consider the following statements in respect of Commonwealth of Nations (The Commonwealth):

1. Commonwealth Innovation Index has been created in partnership with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and its annual Global Innovation Index (GII).
2. The last two countries to join the Commonwealth were Rwanda and Mozambique.
3. The 25th Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM-2018) was held in Australia.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 2 and 3 only b) 1 and 2 only
c) 1 and 3 only d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b)

Explanation:

Statement 1 is correct. A new Commonwealth Innovation Index has been launched as part of a new Commonwealth Innovation Hub on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. It has been created in partnership with the United Nations World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and its annual Global Innovation Index (GII).

Statement 2 is also correct. It is a voluntary association of 53 independent and equal sovereign states. The last two countries to join The Commonwealth were Rwanda and Mozambique.

Statement 3 is not correct. The 25th Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM-2018) was held in London. 21st Commonwealth Games-2018 was held in Australia.

Misuse of PILs

Q4. With reference to the Public Interest Litigation (PIL), consider the following statements:

1. All courts in India are vested with jurisdiction of entertaining public interest litigation.
2. It is the power given to the public by courts through judicial activism.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

Explanation:

Statement 1 is not correct. The jurisdiction of entertaining public interest litigation is restricted only to the Supreme Court and the High Courts under Article 32 and 226 of the Constitution of India. The Lower Courts are not be vested this jurisdiction because it will open the flood gates to an unmanageable amount of litigants.

Statement 2 is correct. Public interest litigation is the power given to the public by courts through judicial activism. However, the person filing the petition must prove to the satisfaction of the court that the petition is being filed for a public interest and not just as a frivolous litigation by a busy body.

Defence Planning Committee

Q5. Consider the following statements in respect of newly constructed Defence Planning Committee (DPC):

1. It will work on strategy to boost defence exports and prioritised capability development plans for the armed forces.
2. Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) will be chairperson of this committee.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a)

Explanation:

Statement 1 is correct. The committee would prepare drafts of national security strategy and doctrines, international defence engagement strategy and roadmap to build defence manufacturing ecosystem. It will also work on strategy to boost defence exports and prioritised capability development plans for the armed forces.

Statement 2 is not correct. The DPC will be a permanent body chaired by the National Security Advisor and comprise the chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, three service chiefs and Secretary (expenditure) in the Finance Ministry.

Asian Premium

Q6. With reference to the Asian Premium, consider the following statements:

1. It is the extra charge being collected by OPEC countries from Asian countries when selling oil.
2. It is determined in large part by the official selling prices (OSPs).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c)

Both statements are correct. Asian Premium is the extra charge being collected by OPEC countries from Asian countries when selling oil and India has been voicing its dissent against this practice. The premium is determined in large part by the official selling prices (OSPs) set by Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and Kuwait. They set differential prices against benchmarks on a monthly basis, adjusting them to account for regional variations.

Uniform Road Tax

Q7. Consider the following statements in respect of proposed 'Uniform Road Tax':

1. It will end the practice of registering vehicles in low-tax states and using them in other states.
2. The group of ministers (GoM) on transport suggested raising the tax on diesel and petrol vehicles by 2%.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a)

Statement 1 is correct. A group of ministers (GoM) on transport constituted by the roads ministry has recommended a uniform road tax structure for vehicles across states and the move will end the practice of people registering their vehicles in low-tax states and using them in other states. The GoM has also recommended one national bus and taxi permit on the lines of permits for goods transporters.

Statement 2 is not correct. The GoM also proposed to liberalize the permit system for electric vehicles to promote alternative fuels. It suggested raising the tax on diesel vehicles by 2% while lowering the tax on electric vehicles.

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SEVEN IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIMS

1. Who was conferred with the 2017 Dadasaheb Phalke Award posthumously?

–Vinod Khanna

2. Which state has launched 'Pocket Cop' project?

–Gujarat

3. Who won the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service?

–The New York Times and The New Yorker

4. Which Gulf nation has approved a draft law on property ownership by foreigners?

–Qatar

5. Which state has launched a magazine to spread awareness about hemophilia?

–Gujarat

6. Which state government has launched a cashless health scheme (Atal Amrit Abhiyan)?

–Assam

7. Which state announced setting up of child protection committees?

–West Bengal

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SEVEN PERFECT QUOTES

(IMPORTANT FOR ESSAY AND ANSWER WRITING)

"A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus, but a molder of consensus."

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

"He who has never learned to obey cannot be a good commander."

—Aristotle

"The human voice can never reach the distance that is covered by the still,
small voice of conscience."

—Mahatma Gandhi

"The value of a man should be seen in what he gives and not in what he is able to receive."

—Albert Einstein

"The art of leadership is saying no, not saying yes. It is very easy to say yes."

—Tony Blair

"Earn your leadership every day."

—Michael Jordan

"No man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent."

—Abraham Lincoln

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SEVEN PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAIN EXAM

Answer each of the following questions in 200 words:

- Q1. India has done rather poorly when it comes to female representation in national politics. Discuss why we need more working women in politics.
- Q2. India's liberalisation regime focused on removing poverty, but strains caused by inequalities are sharpening. Critically analyse.
- Q3. To deal with corruption, it is not enough to just get fiscal policies right. It is in our collective long-term interest to nurture individual values. Elucidate.
- Q4. After Brexit, the UK is looking to the Commonwealth to replace EU as trade partner. Can a conglomeration of nations once ruled by Great Britain emerge as an alternative to the EU? Discuss.
- Q5. The convergence of 'Big Data' and 'Cloud' powered by artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) is going to transform businesses faster than ever. Discuss how AI and ML is effecting the Indian economy.
- Q6. Creation of a Defence Planning Committee is a credible step towards defence preparedness. Do you agree? Give reason.
- Q7. "Man is born free but is everywhere in chains". Critically comment.

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AN INTRODUCTION

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Quite a large number of students desirous of building a career for themselves are absolutely less equipped for the fairly tough competitive tests they have to appear in. Several others, who have a brilliant academic career, do not know that competitive exams are vastly different from academic examination and call for a systematic and scientifically planned guidance by a team of experts. Here one single move may invariably put one ahead of many others who lag behind. Dhyeya IAS is manned with qualified & experienced faculties besides especially designed study material that helps the students in achieving the desired goal.

Civil Services Exam requires knowledge base of specified subjects. These subjects though taught in schools and colleges are not necessarily oriented towards the exam approach. Coaching classes at Dhyeya IAS are different from classes conducted in schools and colleges with respect to their orientation. Classes are targeted towards the particular exam. Classroom guidance at Dhyeya IAS is about improving the individuals capacity to focus, learn and innovate as we are comfortably aware of the fact that you can't teach a person anything, you can only help him find it within himself.

DSDL Prepare yourself from distance

Distance Learning Programme, DSDL, primarily caters the need of those who are unable to come to metros for economic or family reason but have ardent desire to become a civil servant. Simultaneously, it also suits to the need of working professionals, who are unable to join regular classes due to increase in work load or places of their posting. The principal characteristic of our distance learning is that the student does not need to be present in a classroom in order to participate in the instruction. It aims to create and provide access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance. Realizing the difficulties faced by aspirants of distant areas, especially working candidates, in making use of the Institute's classroom guidance programme, distance learning system is being provided in General Studies. The distance learning material is comprehensive, concise and exam-oriented in nature. Its aim is to make available almost all the relevant material on a subject at one place. Materials on all topics of General Studies have been prepared in such a way that, not even a single point will be missing. In other words, you will get all points, which are otherwise to be taken from 6 -10 books available in the market/library. That means, DSDL study material is undoubtedly the most comprehensive and that will definitely give you added advantage in your Preliminary as well as Main Examination. These materials are not available in any book store or library. These materials have been prepared exclusively for the use of our students. We believe in our quality and commitment towards making these notes indispensable for any student preparing for Civil Services Examination. We adhere all pillars of Distance education.