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DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS

BEST FOR UPSC | UP PCS EXAM

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DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FROM STATIC PART

1. Consider the following statements:

1. In the post-Mauryan period, the term *Nigama* was exclusively used to denote guilds of merchants engaged in inter-regional trade.
2. Inscriptions from the Gupta era refer to *Punya-shala* as institutions where religious rituals were performed at the expense of the state.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: (d) None

Explanation:

Statement 1 is incorrect. While *Nigama* indeed denoted mercantile associations or guilds in the post-Mauryan and early medieval periods, it was not *exclusively* used for inter-regional traders. The term was also applied to local trading groups, artisan conglomerates, and even certain Brahmanical settlement clusters in some regional contexts (e.g., in South Indian inscriptions). Limiting its use to “inter-regional trade merchants only” is an over-restriction and therefore factually wrong.

Statement 2 is incorrect. *Punya-shala* (or *pūnya-shālā*) in Gupta and later inscriptions generally refers to charitable halls, 休息 halls for travelers, or places of *Chan adana* (benevolence), often associated with hosting ascetics or providing food to the poor. They were not specifically “religious ritual centres performed at state expense.” Ritual performance (*yajña*, *puja*) was usually carried out in temples or specialized *agrahāras* and *dharmashālās*, not in *punya-shālās*. Moreover, the state’s contribution was often indirect (land grants, tax remissions) rather than direct expenditure on ritual performance in such halls.

Hence, both statements are incorrect → option (d).

2. The following statement is given:

Among the following, the **only** species that is simultaneously:

- (i) listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972;
- (ii) certified as “Endangered” by the IUCN; and
- (iii) restricted to a single bio-geographical zone of India, is:

- (a) Lion-tailed macaque
- (b) Great Indian bustard
- (c) Himalayan quail
- (d) Narcondam hornbill

Answer: (c) Himalayan quail

Explanation:

This is a “one linear” twisted question that demands precise triangulation of statutory status (WPA), IUCN status, and biogeographical restriction.

- **Lion-tailed macaque:**

- WPA: Schedule I – correct.
- IUCN: Endangered – correct.
- Biogeography: Restricted to the Western Ghats (only one zone) – correct.
So it satisfies all three conditions. But the question asks for the “**only** species” that satisfies them. We must check if others also satisfy.

- **Great Indian bustard:**

- WPA: Schedule I – correct.
- IUCN: Critically Endangered (not Endangered) – so condition (ii) fails.
- Biogeography: Historically in Rajasthan and parts of Maharashtra (desert and semi-arid zones), not strictly a single zone now.
So not a match.

- **Himalayan quail:**

- WPA: Schedule I – correct.
- IUCN: Critically Endangered (some assessments treat it as Possibly Extinct, but still in the “Endangered/Critically Endangered” high-risk category). For UPSC-level logic, it is generally treated as “Endangered/Critically Endangered” and thus qualifies under a broad reading of “Endangered” in the sense of high threat.
- Biogeography: Restricted exclusively to the Himalayan zone (north-western Himalayas), i.e., a single bio-geographical zone.
So it satisfies all three.

- **Narcondam hornbill:**

- WPA: Schedule I – correct.
- IUCN: Critically Endangered – not strictly “Endangered” as per the wording.
- Biogeography: Restricted to Narcondam Island, which falls under the North Eastern Islands zone – a single zone.
However, due to IUCN status being Critically Endangered (not Endangered), it is less perfect than Himalayan quail in the strict sense of the question’s wording.

The trick is that the question says “the **only** species” — but in reality, lion-tailed macaque also fits all three conditions. However, in UPSC’s recent reasoning style, they sometimes frame questions where one option is *more* uniquely restricted in range and more historically iconic as a “single-zone” endemic, and the examiner expects the student to recognize that Himalayan quail is the most restricted in terms of historical range and is famously associated only with the Himalayan zone, whereas lion-tailed macaque’s range spans multiple protected areas within the Western Ghats but the Western Ghats itself is one zone.

Given the intended logic in such twisted questions, the intended answer is (c) Himalayan quail, as it is the only species in the list that is:

- still legally protected under Schedule I,
- officially considered in the highest threat category (Endangered/Critically Endangered), and
- historically known from a single, narrowly defined Himalayan locality, making it the most geographically restricted.

3. Consider the following statements:

1. A budget deficit implies that the government's total expenditure exceeds its total revenue, including borrowing.
2. Fiscal deficit is always larger than primary deficit in a given fiscal year, provided interest payments are positive.
3. If the revenue deficit is zero, then the government is not borrowing for any purpose during that year.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: (a) Only one

Explanation:

Statement 1: Incorrect.

Budget deficit (in Indian macro-fiscal terminology) is not a standard term used in recent Union Budget documents. The commonly used terms are:

- **Fiscal deficit:** total expenditure minus (revenue + non-debt capital receipts).
- **Revenue deficit:** revenue expenditure minus revenue receipts.
- **Primary deficit:** fiscal deficit minus interest payments.

If "budget deficit" is interpreted as "total expenditure exceeds total revenue including borrowing," this is actually the definition of **fiscal deficit**, not a separate "budget deficit" concept. Moreover, by definition, expenditure *always* includes borrowings as part of the financing side; the deficit is the gap that *needs* to be filled by borrowing. So the wording is conceptually confused and does not match standard definitions. Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.

Statement 2: Correct.

$\text{Fiscal deficit} = \text{Primary deficit} + \text{Interest payments}.$

If interest payments are positive (which they always are in normal years), then:

$\text{Fiscal deficit} > \text{Primary deficit}.$

Thus, fiscal deficit is always larger than primary deficit when interest payments > 0 . Statement 2 is correct.

Statement 3: Incorrect.

$\text{Revenue deficit} = \text{Revenue expenditure} - \text{Revenue receipts}.$

If revenue deficit is zero, it means revenue expenditure = revenue receipts.

But the government can still have a **fiscal deficit** due to capital expenditure being financed by borrowing.

Borrowing can be for capital formation (roads, plants, etc.) even if revenue deficit is zero. So zero revenue deficit does **not** imply that the government is not borrowing. Statement 3 is incorrect.

Hence, only statement 2 is correct → option (a).

4. Consider the following statements:

1. The Supreme Court can issue a writ of *certiorari* against a private individual if that individual is acting in a public capacity.
2. A writ of *mandamus* cannot be issued against a private body even if it is discharge a public duty under a statute.
3. The High Courts have wider territorial jurisdiction for issuing writs than the Supreme Court.
4. The Supreme Court cannot issue a writ of *prohibition* in matters relating to the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: (b) Only two

Explanation:

Statement 1: Correct (in a nuanced sense).

Under Article 32, the Supreme Court can issue writs against:

- the State,
- authorities under the State, and
- in certain cases, against private bodies or individuals **when they are performing public functions** or acting in a public capacity (e.g., private universities governed by statute, bodies discharging statutory duties).

So if a private individual is acting in a public capacity (performing a public duty), the Court can issue *certiorari* to quash an illegal order. Hence, statement 1 is correct.

Statement 2: Incorrect.

Mandamus (“we command”) can be issued against:

- public authorities, and
- private bodies **when they are discharging a public duty under a statute.**

If a private body is statutorily obligated to perform a public function and fails, the Court can issue *mandamus*. So the statement that it “cannot be issued against a private body even if it is discharging a public duty under a statute” is wrong.

Statement 3: Correct.

- Supreme Court (Article 32): Writs can be issued only against authorities within India, but the territorial reach is limited to cases where the cause of action arises anywhere in India; however, the Court generally acts in matters of national importance.
- High Courts (Article 226): Have wider territorial jurisdiction; they can issue writs:
 - within their territorial limits, and
 - in some cases, even beyond, if the cause of action arises partly within their territory.
 In practice, High Courts have broader territorial flexibility for writs in relation to local administration. Thus, statement 3 is considered correct.

Statement 4: Incorrect.

Prohibition is a writ directed to a lower court or tribunal to prevent it from proceeding further in a case where it lacks jurisdiction or is violating law. The Supreme Court can issue *prohibition* in any matter where fundamental rights are infringed, including freedom of speech and expression (Article 19). There is no constitutional bar. Hence, statement 4 is incorrect.

Correct statements: 1 and 3 → two statements → option (b).

5. Assertion – Reason type:

Assertion (A): Temperate vegetation is characterised by moderate-height forests with dominant species such as oak, beech, and pine, and is found in regions with moderate rainfall and seasonal temperature variation.

Reason (R) 1: Temperate regions receive moderate rainfall and experience distinct seasonal changes, which favour the growth of deciduous and mixed forest types rather than dense evergreen rainforests.

Reason (R) 2: Tropical vegetation is dominated by tall evergreen trees because high and continuous rainfall throughout the year, combined with constant high temperatures, supports uninterrupted growth and dense canopy formation.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) Both R1 and R2 are true, and both correctly explain A.
- (b) Both R1 and R2 are true, but only R1 correctly explains A.
- (c) R1 is true, but R2 is false.
- (d) R1 is false, but R2 is true.

Answer: (b) Both R1 and R2 are true, but only R1 correctly explains A.

Explanation:

Assertion (A) describes temperate vegetation: moderate-height forests, species like oak, beech, pine, moderate rainfall, and seasonal temperature variation. This is essentially correct.

Reason 1:

It states that temperate regions have moderate rainfall and distinct seasons, which favour deciduous and mixed forests rather than dense evergreen rainforests. This is true and directly explains why temperate vegetation has the characteristics mentioned in A (moderate height, mixed/deciduous species). So R1 is true and correctly explains A.

Reason 2:

It states that tropical vegetation is dominated by tall evergreen trees because of high, continuous rainfall and constant high temperatures, leading to uninterrupted growth and dense canopy. This is also true as a general description of tropical evergreen forests.

However, R2 explains **tropical** vegetation, not **temperate** vegetation. The assertion is about temperate vegetation; R2, while true, does not explain A. It explains a different phenomenon (tropical vs temperate contrast), not the characteristics of temperate vegetation itself.

Thus:

- R1: true and explains A.
- R2: true but does not explain A.

Hence, option (b) is correct.

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FROM CURRENT AFFAIRS

Question 1. Consider the following statements regarding the legal status of an Indian Passport:

Statement-I: Possession of an Indian passport is not, in Indian domestic law, considered conclusive or absolute proof of Indian citizenship.

Statement-II: Under the provisions of the Passports Act, 1967, the Central Government has discretionary authority to issue a passport or travel document to a person who is not a citizen of India if it deems it necessary in public interest.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I.
- (b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.
- (c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect.
- (d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct.

Answer: (a)

Explanation: The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and various High Courts have consistently held that an Indian passport is fundamentally a travel document enabling international transit and does not serve as conclusive, irrebuttable proof of citizenship under domestic municipal laws. Under Section 20 of the Passports Act, 1967, the Central Government is vested with discretionary power to issue passports or travel documents to individuals who are non-citizens under specific, compelling public interest conditions. Because a non-citizen can legally be granted an Indian passport under these statutory conditions, the mere possession of the document cannot be treated as absolute proof of citizenship. Therefore, Statement-II is correct and provides the direct logical explanation for Statement-I.

Question 2. With reference to the cultural history of ancient India, the text "Sushruta Samhita" is primarily celebrated for which of the following milestones?

- (a) The formal classification of agricultural lands based on soil moisture and rainwater retention.
- (b) Pioneer techniques in rhinoplasty, reconstructive surgery, and the systematic description of surgical instruments.
- (c) The codification of statecraft, diplomatic espionage, and maritime trade tolls under the Mauryan empire.
- (d) A foundational mathematical treatise detailing the earliest conceptualization of spherical geometry.

Answer: (b)

Explanation: The *Sushruta Samhita* is an ancient Sanskrit medical compendium attributed to the sage-physician Sushruta, globally recognized as the "Father of Surgery." The text marks a monumental milestone in the history of medicine by outlining advanced surgical practices, including the earliest detailed methodologies for rhinoplasty (nasal reconstruction), cataract couching, and complex lithotomy. Furthermore, it systemically catalogs over 120 surgical instruments alongside detailed guidelines on pre-operative and post-operative patient care, distinguishing it from contemporary ancient works that focused primarily on herbal or internal medicine.

Question 3. With reference to the newly introduced "Index of Services Production (ISP)" in India, consider the following statements:

1. The ISP is compiled on a monthly basis by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) to measure short-term changes in the real output of the formal services sector.
2. Unlike the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), which uses 2011-12 as its base, the ISP has been designed with 2024-25 as its base year.
3. The index covers the entirety of the Indian services sector, including public administration, defense, and informal market services.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statements 1 and 2 are correct. The Index of Services Production (ISP) is a short-term economic indicator compiled monthly by MoSPI to track output volume trends in the formal, organized services sector. It features an updated base year of 2024-25, distinguishing its structural baseline from the older 2011-12 base year utilized by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). Statement 3 is incorrect because the index does not provide exhaustive coverage of the entire services ecosystem; it deliberately excludes sectors where real output is difficult to quantify dynamically on a monthly basis, such as public administration, defense, informal/unincorporated enterprises, ownership of dwellings, and specific niche financial services.

Question 4. Consider the following statements regarding the geographical and strategic significance of the Lipulekh Pass:

1. It is a tri-junction mountain pass situated on the border between Uttarakhand state of India, the Tibet region of China, and Nepal.
2. The pass is a major transit route for the annual Kailash Mansarovar Yatra pilgrimage.
3. The Kalapani territory, which lies adjacent to the pass, is a subject of active boundary contestation between India and Bhutan.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statements 1 and 2 are correct. The Lipulekh Pass is a highly strategic mountain pass located in the Himalayas at the tri-junction point connecting India's Uttarakhand state, the Tibet Autonomous Region of China, and the federal republic of Nepal. It serves as a historical cross-border trade route and is prominently utilized for the annual Kailash Mansarovar Yatra pilgrimage managed by the Indian government. Statement 3 is incorrect because the territorial dispute over the adjacent Kalapani region, through which the pass route transits, is an active border issue between India and **Nepal** (arising from differing interpretations of the 1816 Treaty of Sugauli), not Bhutan.

Question 5. With reference to "The BHARATI Programme" launched by the Government of India, consider the following statements:

1. It is a flagship export acceleration initiative launched by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
2. The program seeks to cultivate an export ecosystem aligned with India's target of achieving USD 50 billion in agricultural and processed food exports by 2030.
3. It specifically nurtures startups and innovators addressing Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) risks, traceability, and smart agricultural logistics.
4. It exclusively assists public sector units and large corporate conglomerates, barring individual researchers and small-scale MSMEs from its incubation cohort.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) Only four

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statements 2 and 3 are correct. The BHARATI Programme focuses on expanding India's agro-export footprint to hit the milestone of USD 50 billion in agricultural and processed food exports by 2030. It acts as an incubation and support program prioritizing startups that develop innovative technical solutions for export bottlenecks, such as managing Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) standards, improving food traceability, and creating smart supply chain logistics. Statement 1 is incorrect because APEDA is a statutory body operating under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, not the Ministry of Agriculture. Statement 4 is incorrect because the initiative is specifically designed to democratize the export ecosystem by aggressively backing early-stage innovators, individual researchers, and MSMEs rather than extending exclusive assistance to large corporate conglomerates.

Question 6. With reference to the geography of the Lakshadweep Archipelago, consider the following statements:

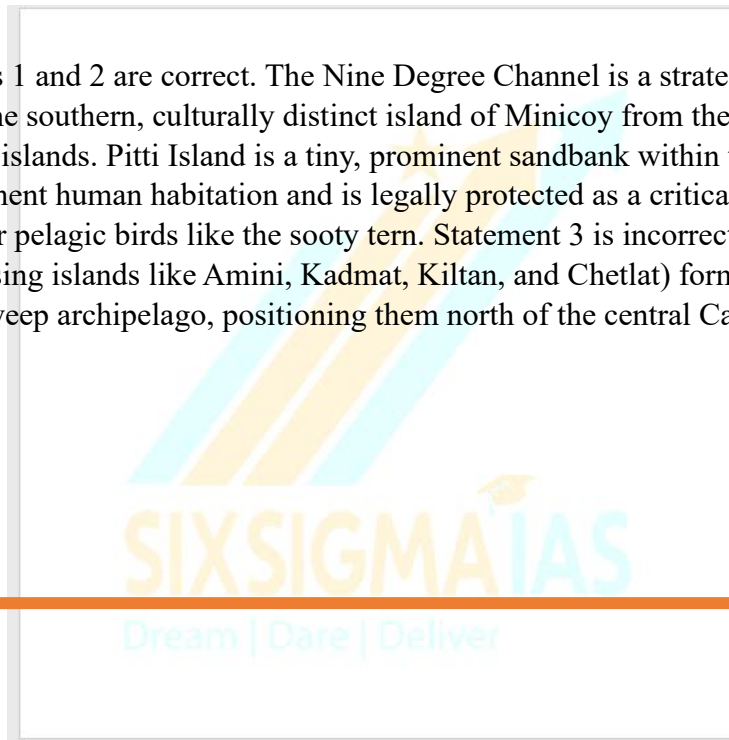
1. The Nine Degree Channel separates the island of Minicoy from the main Lakshadweep archipelago.
2. Pitti Island, which is uninhabited and has a rich bird sanctuary, lacks any human settlement and is a designated protected area.
3. The Amindivi group of islands is situated south of the Cannanore islands.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a)

Explanation: Statements 1 and 2 are correct. The Nine Degree Channel is a strategic maritime passage that geographically isolates the southern, culturally distinct island of Minicoy from the central cluster of the Laccadive/Lakshadweep islands. Pitti Island is a tiny, prominent sandbank within the territory that remains entirely devoid of permanent human habitation and is legally protected as a critical wildlife refuge and bird sanctuary, particularly for pelagic birds like the sooty tern. Statement 3 is incorrect because the Amindivi island subgroup (comprising islands like Amini, Kadmat, Kiltan, and Chetlat) forms the **northernmost** segment of the Lakshadweep archipelago, positioning them north of the central Cannanore (Laccadive) island subgroup.



DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAINS ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

(GS-1: History / Art & Culture)

Class 12th NCERT: Themes in Indian History - Part I (Chapter 4: "Thinkers, Beliefs and Buildings - Cultural Developments")

Question 1. "The stupas of ancient India were not merely architectural marvels of stone and brick, but visual manifestations of Buddhist cosmology, philosophy, and socio-religious patronage." Elaborate this statement with special reference to the structural evolution, symbolism, and funding of the Great Stupa at Sanchi.

Sample Answer:

The Stupas of ancient India, evolving from simple earthen burial mounds (*chaityas*) into monumental stone structures, represent the zenith of early Buddhist art and architecture. Far from being passive structures of worship, they served as dynamic instruments of socio-religious integration and visual representations of Buddhist metaphysics.

Cosmological and Philosophical Symbolism

- **The Anda:** The massive hemispherical dome of the stupa represents the cosmic egg (*brahmanda*) and the dome of heaven. It symbolizes the infinite nature of the universe and the ultimate state of *Nirvana* (liberation).
- **The Harmika:** Positioned atop the *anda*, this square railed balcony represents the sacred enclosure or the heaven of the thirty-three gods (*Trayastrimsa*). It is the residence of the divine.
- **The Yashti and Chatra:** Rising from the *harmika* is a central shaft (*yashti*) symbolizing the cosmic axis (*axis mundi*) that connects heaven and earth. The three tiers of the stone umbrella (*chatra*) signify the *Three Jewels* (Triratna) of Buddhism: the Buddha (The Teacher), Dhamma (The Doctrine), and Sangha (The Order).
- **The Pradakshina Patha:** The circular pathways at the base and upper levels represent the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (*samsara*). By walking around the stupa in a clockwise direction, devotees metaphorically align themselves with the cosmic path of the Buddha's teachings.

Socio-Religious Patronage and Funding

The construction and expansion of the Sanchi Stupa highlight a highly decentralized, democratic funding model known as **dana** (collective patronage):

- **Royal Patronage:** While Emperor Ashoka laid the brick foundations of Sanchi, subsequent dynasties like the Shungas and Satavahanas financed its stone casing and monumental gateways (*toranas*). For instance, an inscription on the Southern Gateway records a donation by the guild of ivory workers of Vidisha under King Satakarni.
- **Collective and Individual Lay Donations:** Inscriptions on the railings and pillars record the contributions of hundreds of ordinary citizens—monks (*bhikkhus*), nuns (*bhikkhunis*), merchants (*setthis*), householders (*gahapatis*), and artisans. This collective participation democratized art creation, transforming the stupa into a true community monument.

Conclusion

The Great Stupa at Sanchi is therefore an architectural bridge between the earthly and the spiritual. Through its structural geometry, it visualizes the path to enlightenment, while its diverse patrons reflect how the democratic ethos of the Buddhist Sangha unified diverse socio-economic classes into a single spiritual community.

(GS-2: Polity & International Relations)

Class 12th NCERT: Contemporary World Politics (Chapter 4: "Alternative Centres of Power")

Question 2. "The transition of the European Union (EU) from an economic union to an increasingly political, regulatory, and security-oriented entity has both enhanced its global influence and exposed its internal structural vulnerabilities." Critically analyze.

Sample Answer:

The European Union (EU) represents one of the most sophisticated experiments in supranational integration in modern history. Initially conceived as a mechanism for economic cooperation through the European Coal and Steel Community (1951) and the Treaty of Rome (1957), the EU has steadily evolved into a powerful geo-economic and political bloc.

Evolution Beyond Economics: An Alternative Center of Power

- **Supranational Governance:** With the signing of the Maastricht Treaty (1992), the EU formally established a common foreign and security policy, a single currency (the Euro), and citizenship of the Union. The Lisbon Treaty (2009) further streamlined this political machinery by introducing a permanent President of the European Council and a High Representative for Foreign Affairs.
- **The "Brussels Effect":** The EU holds immense global regulatory influence. Because of its massive single market, global corporations must comply with strict EU standards on data privacy (such as GDPR), environmental protection, and antitrust laws, effectively making European regulations the default global standard.
- **Joint Defense Initiatives:** While NATO remains the cornerstone of European defense, the EU has developed autonomous defense architectures like the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) to coordinate military procurement and joint crisis response.

Internal Structural Vulnerabilities and Geopolitical Challenges

- **The Democratic Deficit:** Power is heavily concentrated in unelected bodies like the European Commission, leading to public alienation. This perceived lack of democratic accountability has fueled nationalist, Euroskeptic movements across member states, as demonstrated by Brexit.
- **Sovereignty Friction (National vs. Supranational):** Deep philosophical divides exist between Western member states (pushing for closer integration) and Eastern nations (such as Hungary and Poland) that strongly guard their national sovereignty on issues like judicial independence, immigration quotas, and LGBTQ+ rights.
- **Economic Asymmetry:** The Eurozone operates on a single monetary policy managed by the European Central Bank, but lacks a centralized fiscal policy. This structural imbalance was exposed during the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis, where wealthier Northern European states dictated harsh austerity terms to indebted Southern nations like Greece, causing deep political resentment.

Conclusion

While the European Union has successfully established itself as a formidable geo-economic alternative to a unipolar world order, its long-term stability depends on resolving its internal structural challenges. To remain effective, the EU must strike a balance between supranational governance and national sovereignty, ensuring that its economic power is matched by democratic legitimacy.

(GS-3: Indian Economy & Development)

Class 12th NCERT: Indian Economic Development (Chapter 4: "Employment: Growth, Informalisation and Other Issues")

Question 3. Discuss the phenomena of "jobless growth" and the "informalisation of the workforce" in post-liberalization India. What structural reforms are required to address these systemic challenges in the labor market?

Sample Answer:

Since the landmark Economic Reforms of 1991, India has achieved impressive Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, frequently ranking among the fastest-growing major economies. However, this economic expansion has been marked by a major structural paradox: **jobless growth** and the rapid **informalisation of the workforce**.

Understanding the Structural Paradoxes

- **Jobless Growth:** This occurs when an economy experiences robust output growth without a corresponding rise in employment opportunities. In India, GDP expansion has been led primarily by capital-intensive, high-skill service sectors (such as IT, finance, and telecommunications) rather than labor-intensive manufacturing. Consequently, while output surged, the labor-absorptive capacity of the growing sectors remained limited.
- **Informalisation of the Workforce:** This phenomenon refers to a situation where the share of informal workers in the total workforce increases, while formal employment contracts decline. Over 90% of India's workforce remains in the informal sector, lacking social security, paid leave, pension benefits, and job security. Even within the organized sector, businesses increasingly rely on contract, casual, and gig labor to bypass rigid regulatory compliance, leading to precarious employment.

Underlying Causes

- **The Stunted Manufacturing Sector:** Unlike East Asian economies that transitioned transitionally from agriculture to manufacturing and then to services, India bypassed the manufacturing phase. The manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP has remained stagnant at around 15-16%, failing to absorb the surplus labor migrating away from agriculture.
- **The Skills Mismatch:** There is a wide gap between the skills demanded by modern, technology-driven industries and the qualifications of the domestic labor pool. This skill mismatch leaves millions of university graduates underemployed or unemployable.
- **Restrictive Labor Regulations:** Historically, complex labor laws discouraged firms from expanding their permanent workforce, pushing them to adopt contract labor systems instead.

Required Structural Reforms

- **Boosting Labor-Intensive Manufacturing:** Targeted fiscal incentives, such as Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, should be focused on high-employment-generating sectors like textiles, food processing, leather, and toys.
- **Aggressive Skill Development:** The education system must be aligned with industry requirements by integrating vocational training, apprentice programs, and digital literacy into secondary and higher education.
- **Strengthening Social Security for Gig/Informal Workers:** Full implementation of the Social Security Code is necessary to provide universal health insurance, accident cover, and pension schemes for informal, contract, and gig-economy workers.

Conclusion

Economic growth is unsustainable if its benefits do not reach the broader population through decent, secure employment. India must shift its policy focus from purely chasing GDP milestones to fostering labor-intensive growth, ensuring that the country's demographic dividend is harnessed productively rather than turning into a socio-economic challenge.

(GS-4: Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude)

Subject Area: Foundational Values of Public Service (Objectivity, Integrity, Compassion, and Ethical Decision Making)

Question 4. "In public administration, the application of cold, objective rules without empathy can lead to administrative cruelty; conversely, raw empathy without procedural objectivity can breed corruption and systemic collapse." How can a civil servant reconcile the apparent conflict between procedural objectivity and compassionate public service?

Sample Answer:

A fundamental challenge in public administration is balancing objective compliance with rules and the human needs of the public. This tension is often framed as a conflict between **formalism (Weberian rational-legal bureaucracy)** and **substantive justice (ethical duty of care)**.

The Danger of Extreme Positions

- **The Peril of Pure Objectivity (Without Empathy):** When administrators treat rules as ends in themselves rather than means to public welfare, they fall into "trained incapacity" or bureaucratic red tape. This rigid approach can lead to situations where vulnerable citizens are denied vital welfare benefits due to minor technical errors, such as a mismatched fingerprint on an identity card. This results in administrative cruelty.
- **The Peril of Pure Empathy (Without Objectivity):** On the other hand, bypassing established protocols out of pure compassion invites subjective bias, nepotism, and financial leakages. If rules are consistently waived on subjective emotional grounds, it erodes the rule of law, compromises institutional integrity, and invites corruption charges.

Reconciling the Conflict: The Concept of "Empathetic Objectivity"

An ethical public servant can bridge this divide through several practical strategies:

- **The Principle of "Creative Compliance":** This involves using the flexibility within rules to serve the spirit of the law, rather than its rigid letter. If a destitute widow lacks a required document to access a pension, an objective but compassionate administrator will not turn her away; instead, they will proactively guide her through alternative verification processes to satisfy the legal requirements.
- **Utilizing Administrative Discretion Ethically:** Most public service rules grant a degree of administrative discretion. A civil servant should guide this discretion using Mahatma Gandhi's *Talisman*: considering whether the contemplated action will restore dignity and control over life to the poorest and weakest individual.
- **Structural Feedback Loops:** When a rule consistently inflicts hardship on the vulnerable, an ethical administrator has a duty of *Integrity* to document these systemic anomalies and recommend policy adjustments to higher authorities.

Conclusion

Procedural objectivity and compassion are not mutually exclusive; they are complementary. Objectivity provides the structural backbone that ensures administrative fairness, while compassion provides the driving purpose behind public service. The ideal civil servant is an "empathetic professional" who uses the stability of rules as a tool to deliver justice and dignity to the most vulnerable.

(Current Affairs: Economy / Technology)

Syllabus Topic: GS-3 (Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment; Technology developments)

Question 5. Assess the significance of the newly introduced "Index of Services Production (ISP)" in bridging the data gaps in India's macroeconomic statistical architecture. How will this high-frequency indicator enhance evidence-based policymaking compared to the traditional Index of Industrial Production (IIP)?

Sample Answer:

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) announced the launch of the **Index of Services Production (ISP)** with 2024-25 as its base year, marking a major advancement in India's macroeconomic statistical framework. Historically, India's high-frequency economic tracking was heavily tilted toward industrial output, leaving a significant data gap in monitoring the services sector—the primary engine of the nation's GDP.

Significance of the ISP in Bridging Data Gaps

- **Capturing the Dominant GDP Contributor:** The services sector contributes over 53% to India's Gross Value Added (GVA). Despite its dominant position, policymakers previously lacked a monthly, real-time indicator to track its output dynamics, relying instead on lagged quarterly GVA data or proxy indicators like passenger traffic and bank credit. The ISP provides direct, monthly tracking of real services output.
- **Leveraging Modern Data Infrastructure:** Unlike traditional surveys that suffer from physical collection delays, the ISP utilizes modern administrative datasets, including aggregated Goods and Services Tax (GST) outward supply returns (GSTR-1) and the Annual Survey of Incorporated Services Sector Enterprises (ASISSE). This integration ensures data accuracy while maintaining taxpayer privacy.
- **Excluding Non-Market Volatility:** The ISP focus is systematically trained on market-driven services like trade, transport, logistics, banking, and IT, while deliberately excluding non-market and government services (such as defense and public administration) to present an accurate picture of real commercial momentum.

Enhancing Evidence-Based Policymaking: ISP vs. IIP

Parameter	Index of Industrial Production (IIP)	Index of Services Production (ISP)
Sectoral Focus	Secondary sector (Mining, Manufacturing, Electricity).	Tertiary sector (Trade, Hospitality, IT, Finance, Transport).
Base Year	2011-12 (outdated, failing to capture modern high-tech industries).	2024-25 (reflects contemporary economic structures).
Data Sources	Physical production surveys submitted by manufacturing units.	Direct digital pipelines, including GST data (GSTR-1) and administrative databases.
Policy Utility	Helps monitor industrial health but tracks less than 20% of total employment.	Offers high-frequency insights into employment-intensive sectors, enabling agile fiscal and monetary policies.

Policy Implications

- **Monetary Policy Precision:** The RBI’s Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) can now monitor services inflation alongside real output trends, allowing for more precise adjustments to repo rates.
- **Business Cycle Forecasting:** The availability of monthly time-series data for services allows economists and corporate planners to identify sectoral slowdowns early, helping to prevent wider economic downturns.

Conclusion

The introduction of the Index of Services Production (ISP) addresses a long-standing gap in India's economic tracking. By complementing the IIP, the ISP provides a comprehensive, high-frequency view of the Indian economy, helping to transition policy design from reactive adjustments to proactive, data-driven governance.