

Q1. Right to privacy relating to self-identity is very dear to every human being and is well protected under Article 21 of the Constitution. In this context, examine the effect of the 2026 amendment to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.

Introduction

The right to privacy includes the freedom to determine and express one's identity without unjustified state interference. In ***NALSA v. Union of India* (2014)**, the Supreme Court recognised self-determined gender identity as part of dignity, autonomy and liberty under **Articles 14, 19 and 21**. Similarly, ***K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* (2017)** protected decisional privacy and control over personal information.

The **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026** significantly alters the rights-based framework of the 2019 Act.

Effect of the 2026 Amendment to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

- **Removal of Self-identification:** The Amendment deletes Section 4(2), which guaranteed the right to a **self-perceived gender identity**, thereby shifting control over identity from the individual to the State.
- **Medicalisation of Identity:** A District Magistrate issues an identity certificate after considering the recommendation of a designated **medical board**. This conflicts with ***NALSA***, which rejected biological tests as the sole basis of gender identity.
- **Narrower Definition:** Explicit references to **trans-men, trans-women and genderqueer persons** have been removed, potentially excluding non-binary and non-medically transitioning persons.
- **Privacy Concerns:** Medical institutions must disclose information concerning gender-affirming surgery to the District Magistrate. Such disclosure may violate **informational privacy, bodily autonomy and medical confidentiality**.

- **Administrative Hardship:** Medical and bureaucratic scrutiny may cause delays, humiliation and arbitrary exclusion, especially in the absence of a clear appeal mechanism.
- **Loss of Entitlements:** A person obtaining a revised certificate after surgery may cease to receive protections under the Act, creating uncertainty regarding welfare benefits.

Positive Objectives of the Amendment

The Amendment seeks to establish a **verifiable beneficiary framework**, prevent misuse of welfare measures and impose stringent punishments for **kidnapping, mutilation, forced begging and coercion** into assuming a transgender identity. However, these objectives can be achieved through less restrictive safeguards.

Conclusion

The Amendment marks a shift from **self-determined to state-certified identity**, raising serious concerns under **Articles 14, 19 and 21**. A balanced framework should recognise self-declared gender through a simple affidavit, protect medical confidentiality, provide an independent appeal mechanism and penalise individual fraud without subjecting the entire transgender community to intrusive scrutiny.

2. "Women as a class neither belong to a minority group nor are they regarded as forming a backward class." In the light of this statement, discuss the evolution of women's reservation from local bodies to Parliament. (150 Words, 10 Marks)

Introduction

The premise that women do not constitute a homogeneous minority or traditional backward class made **gender-based political reservation distinct from Articles 15(4) and 16(4)**. Instead, **Article 15(3)** empowers the State to make special provisions for women and children. This framework evolved from **grassroots representation to legislative reservation**, culminating in the **106th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2023**.

Body

- **Grassroots Foundation:** The **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, 1992** mandated **not less than one-third reservation** for women in Panchayats and Municipalities, including within SC/ST-reserved seats and offices of chairpersons. **Several States have subsequently increased PRI reservation to 50%**, deepening women's participation in grassroots governance.
- **From Representation to Empowerment:** Local-body (**Articles 243D and 243T**) reservation expanded women's participation in **decision-making, public service delivery and community development**, challenged patriarchal norms and created a **pipeline of political leadership**.
- **Legislative Stagnation:** Extending reservation to Parliament and State Legislatures remained contentious for decades. The **Committee on the Status of Women in India's *Towards Equality* Report (1974)** highlighted women's declining political representation, while successive **Women's Reservation Bills** faced disagreements over implementation and sub-quotas.
- **Apex Culmination:** The **106th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2023 (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam)** inserted **Articles 330A, 332A and 334A**, providing **one-third reservation** for women in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies and Delhi Legislative Assembly, including **one-third of SC/ST-reserved seats** for women.

Delimitation and Implementation: Implementation depends on **delimitation following the first Census after the Amendment**. In **April 2026**, the **131st Constitutional Amendment Bill** sought to facilitate earlier implementation by modifying this requirement. However, the Bill was **voted down by the Lok Sabha on 17 April 2026**, leaving the existing constitutional framework unchanged.

Conclusion

India has progressed from **constitutional enablement and grassroots reservation to legislative representation**. The trajectory seeks **descriptive and substantive political**

empowerment, requiring complementary political capacity, institutional support and genuine decision-making autonomy.

3. Examine whether the constitutional office of the Lok Sabha Speaker has become vulnerable to partisan politics under the anti-defection regime. What institutional changes are required to ensure the neutrality of the Lok Sabha Speaker in managing a polarised House? (150 Words)

Introduction: The office of the **Lok Sabha Speaker**, elected under **Article 93** is intended to be the custodian of parliamentary dignity. However, the **Tenth Schedule (Anti-Defection Law)** inserted by the **52nd Amendment Act, 1985**, has exposed the office to partisan vulnerability by making the presiding officer the sole **quasi-judicial authority** for deciding disqualification petitions.

Body:

Vulnerabilities to Partisan Politics Under Anti-Defection Regime

- **Conflict of Interest:** Unlike the **British Westminster convention**, Indian Speakers **do not resign from their political parties**, creating an inherent clash between party loyalty and neutral adjudication.
- **Selective Delays:** Lacking a constitutional deadline, Speakers often **indefinitely delay disqualification petitions** against ruling party defectors while expediting cases against opposition members.
- **Weaponization During Crises:** Strategic notices for the Speaker's removal are deployed **to restrict or bypass disqualification proceedings** during political instability, as highlighted in ***Nabam Rebia (2016)***.
- **Limits of Judicial Review:** Although ***Kihoto Hollohan (1992)*** made decisions subject to judicial review, **courts avoid pre-decisional interference (*quia timet*)**, allowing partisan delays to persist.

Institutional Reforms for Ensuring Neutrality

- **Independent Adjudicatory Tribunal:** Transfer **Tenth Schedule** powers to an independent permanent tribunal or the Election Commission of India (*Keisham Meghachandra Singh case, 2020*).
- **Adopting British Conventions:** Mandate that newly elected Speakers **formally resign** from their political party to secure structural independence.
- **Statutory Timeframes:** Amend the **Tenth Schedule** to prescribe a **strict timeframe (e.g., 3 months)** for disposing of disqualification petitions.
- **Strengthen Opposition Space:** Ensure **fair allocation of debate time**, questions and committee representation, while filling the Deputy Speaker position promptly.

Conclusion: The Speaker's constitutional authority remains indispensable, but **neutrality determines its democratic legitimacy**. **Transferring adjudicatory powers** under anti-defection law to an independent mechanism will **restore public trust in the legislature**.

4. Is the right to vote a fundamental right? Discuss the position of the Election Commission of India while undertaking the revision of electoral rolls. Can it also examine the question of citizenship of voters? (150 Words)

Introduction

The **right to vote is a constitutional right, but not a fundamental right under Part III**. It flows from **Article 326**, which establishes elections based on adult suffrage, and is regulated by the **Representation of the People Acts, 1950 and 1951**. However, the Supreme Court has held that the **freedom to choose a candidate, or reject all candidates, is part of freedom of expression under Article 19(1)(a)**.

In *People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) v. Union of India (2003)*, the Supreme Court distinguished the **right to vote** from the **freedom of voting**.

Body

Position of the Election Commission of India

- Under **Article 324**, ECI exercises superintendence, direction and control over the preparation of electoral rolls.
- **Section 21 of RPA, 1950** authorises periodic revision and permits the ECI to order a **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** at any time, for recorded reasons.
 - **Its objective is twofold:** include every eligible citizen and exclude duplicate, deceased, shifted or otherwise ineligible persons.
- In ***Association for Democratic Reforms v. ECI (2026)***, the SC upheld the ECI's authority to undertake systemic verification of electoral rolls.
- However, the **revision process must uphold fairness and proportionality**. Existing entries are presumed valid, though this presumption is rebuttable. No name should be deleted without specifying the grounds for doubt, issuing notice, providing an opportunity of hearing, passing a reasoned order and permitting an appeal under **Section 24 of RPA, 1950**.

Examination of Citizenship

- Citizenship is a prerequisite for enrolment under **Article 326 and Section 16 of the 1950 Act**. Therefore, the ECI may conduct a **limited, prima facie inquiry** into citizenship for determining electoral eligibility.
- However, it cannot conclusively declare a person a non-citizen. Such determination belongs to the **competent authority under the Citizenship Act, 1955**.
- Doubtful cases must be referred to that authority; the ECI's decision remains confined to electoral consequences and is subject to judicial review.

Conclusion

Electoral-roll revision must **reconcile the twin democratic objectives of electoral purity and universal inclusion**, because **wrongful exclusion** can be as damaging to democracy as wrongful inclusion.

5. Do constitutional bodies like the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) possess adequate enforcement powers to secure substantive social equality? Suggest measures to enhance their institutional effectiveness. [10 Marks, 250 Words]

Introduction

Substantive equality requires not merely equal laws but the removal of historical and structural disadvantages. The **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)** and **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)** are constitutional watchdogs created under **Articles 338 and 338A**, respectively, to advance this objective.

Existing Powers and Contribution

- **Investigative Role:** They investigate constitutional and legal safeguards and inquire into specific complaints concerning deprivation of rights.
- **Civil-Court Powers:** During inquiries, they may summon persons, receive evidence, requisition public records and examine witnesses.
- **Policy Oversight:** They advise governments on socio-economic development and must be consulted on major policies affecting Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- **Accountability:** Their reports are submitted to the President or Governor and placed before the legislature with an action-taken memorandum.

These powers enable grievance redressal, expose administrative neglect and give marginalised communities an institutional voice.

Limits to Institutional Effectiveness

- **Non-Binding Recommendations:** Governments may reject recommendations after merely providing reasons.

- **No Adjudicatory Authority:** In *All India Indian Overseas Bank SC/ST Employees' Welfare Association v. Union of India* (1996), the Supreme Court held that civil-court powers are limited to investigation; the Commission cannot issue injunctions.
- **Weak Follow-up:** No effective mechanism ensures time-bound implementation of findings.
- **Capacity Constraints:** Staff shortages, limited regional presence and dependence on government resources weaken independent monitoring.
- **Reactive Functioning:** Individual complaints often overshadow systemic issues such as atrocities, displacement, reservation backlogs and diversion of welfare funds.

Measures to Enhance Effectiveness

- Require time-bound action-taken reports and legislative scrutiny of non-compliance.
- Provide limited statutory power to enforce attendance, document production and interim protection against victimisation.
- Ensure transparent appointments, fixed funding, specialised investigators and stronger regional offices.
- Create public dashboards to track complaints and implementation.
- Institutionalise coordination with courts, police, state commissions and civil society.
- Conduct regular social audits of reservation, welfare expenditure and tribal displacement.

Conclusion

The commissions possess significant oversight powers but inadequate enforcement capacity. Their effectiveness requires stronger follow-up and institutional autonomy without converting them into parallel courts.

6. Does India's tribal development policy reflect the aspirations for a socially grounded and equity – based governance? Justify your answer. – 150 words

Body:

Introduction:

The Constitutional safeguards under **Articles 244, 275(1), Fifth and Sixth Schedules**, along with laws such as the **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996** and **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006**, seek to combine development with tribal autonomy, cultural identity and social justice.

Socially Grounded and Equity-Based Features of India's Tribal Development Policy

- **Community Rights:** The **FRA 2006** recognises individual and community rights over forests, correcting historical injustice against forest-dwelling communities to determine forest rights and supports livelihood security through access to **Minor Forest Produce (MFP)**
- **Participatory Governance:** The **PESA** empowers **Gram Sabhas** over local resources and development across Fifth Schedule Areas in **10 States**.
- **Targeted Equity:** **Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN)** specifically targets **75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** for basic services and livelihood development.
- **Development Convergence:** **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan** targets **63,843 tribal-majority villages**, benefiting over **5 crore tribal people** through convergent interventions.

However, Gaps Persist

- **Implementation Deficit: Weak implementation of PESA and FRA** often limits meaningful tribal participation.
 - As of **February 2026**, only **25.38 lakh of 54 lakh claims (47%)** filed under the FRA had been approved
- **Development-Induced Displacement:** Mining, dams and infrastructure projects can generate conflicts between **development and community rights**.
 - **Example:** The **Ken–Betwa Link Project (Phase I)** involves displacement of **1,913 Project-Affected Families**, including **648 Scheduled Tribe families** as per government report.
- **Persistent Human Development Gaps:** Remote tribal regions continue to face deficiencies in **health, education and connectivity**.
 - **NFHS-5** data cited by the government in **2026** shows **40.9% of ST children under five are stunted**, compared with **35.5% nationally**.

Way Forward

- **Strengthen Tribal Self-Governance:** Implement **PESA and FRA** effectively and empower **Gram Sabhas** over land and natural resources, as recommended by the **Bhuria Committee (1995)**.
- **Ensure Participatory Development:** Ensure **informed tribal participation**, minimise displacement and **strengthen rehabilitation** in development projects.
- **Bridge Human Development Gaps:** Improve **health, education, nutrition and connectivity** through targeted interventions.
- **Protect Land and Livelihoods:** Strengthen safeguards against **tribal land alienation** and promote **forest-based livelihoods and Minor Forest Produce (MFP)**, in line with the **Xaxa Committee (2014) recommendations**.

Conclusion

Thus, India's policy framework increasingly reflects **equity, participation and cultural sensitivity**, but the gap between **legal recognition and grassroots implementation** remains significant.

Tribal development must move further from development for tribals towards **development with and by tribal communities**.

7. “Malnutrition in India is not merely a public health concern; it is also a challenge of social equity, human development and effective welfare governance.” Discuss. (150 words, 10 Marks)

Introduction

Malnutrition represents a “**triple burden**” of **undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and rising overnutrition**. NFHS-6 (2023–24) records under-five **stunting at 29.3% and severe wasting at 5.2%**, showing progress but persistent nutritional deprivation. Thus, malnutrition remains both a **public-health and social-justice challenge**, engaging the State’s mandate under **Article 47**.

Body

Malnutrition as a Public-Health Concern

- **Child Morbidity:** Wasting and undernutrition weaken immunity, increasing vulnerability to infections and disease.
- **Maternal–Child Cycle:** Undernourished and anaemic mothers increase risks of poor maternal and child outcomes, perpetuating **intergenerational malnutrition**.
- **Hidden Hunger:** Deficiencies of iron and other micronutrients impair physical and cognitive development.
- **Double Burden:** India increasingly faces undernutrition alongside **overweight/obesity**;
 - India faces persistent undernutrition alongside rising overnutrition; NFHS-6 reports 30.7% of women and 27.3% of men (15–49 years) as overweight/obese, highlighting the growing double burden of malnutrition.

Malnutrition Beyond a Public-Health Concern

Social Equity

- Malnutrition disproportionately affects the **poor, women, children and socially disadvantaged groups**, converting socio-economic inequality into nutritional inequality.
- **Rural–Urban Divide:** Under-five stunting is 30.9% in rural India compared with 23.9% in urban India (NFHS-6), highlighting the continuing spatial and socio-economic inequity in nutritional outcomes.
- Gendered deprivation and poor maternal nutrition reproduce disadvantage across generations.
- Thus, **NFSA, 2013, PM-POSHAN** and **Saksham Anganwadi & POSHAN 2.0** operationalise nutrition as an entitlement rather than charity.

Human Development

- **Cognitive Loss:** Chronic childhood undernutrition impairs learning capacity and school readiness.
- **Educational Outcomes:** Hunger reduces attendance and classroom concentration—the rationale underlying **PM-POSHAN**.
- **Productivity:** Poor nutrition reduces physical capacity and future employability, weakening India's **demographic dividend**.
- It creates a vicious cycle: **malnutrition** → **poor learning** → **low productivity/income** → **poverty** → **malnutrition**.

Effective Welfare Governance

- Malnutrition is **multi-dimensional**—food, sanitation, healthcare, safe water, maternal education and care practices—requiring **inter-ministerial convergence**, not siloed schemes.
- **Last-Mile Gaps:** NFHS-5 shows only **3% of children aged 6–23 months receive an adequate diet**, revealing a gap between food availability and nutritional outcomes.
 - **POSHAN 2.0** therefore rests on **convergence, governance and capacity-building**, integrating maternal nutrition, infant feeding and treatment of MAM/SAM.

- **Technology-Enabled Accountability: POSHAN Tracker** enables near-real-time identification of stunting/wasting and tracking of last-mile nutrition services.

Conclusion

India must move beyond **calorie security towards nutrition security and human capability** through stronger Anganwadis, dietary diversity, women's empowerment and WASH-health convergence. Guided by **Amartya Sen's capability approach**, tackling malnutrition is essential for **SDG-2 (Zero Hunger)** and an **equal, dignified social order**.

8. Analyze the advantages and limitations of the generalist structure of the Indian Civil Services in contemporary governance. (Answer in 150 words) 10

Introduction

India's higher civil services follow a **generalist career model** i.e., officers selected through a common examination receive broad administrative training and rotate across diverse departments. This produces versatile administrators, but complex governance increasingly demands specialized expertise.

Body

Advantages of the Generalist Structure

- **Administrative Adaptability:** Broad training enables officers to manage varied responsibilities. E.g., during **Covid-19**, District Magistrates coordinated healthcare, policing, migrant relief and food distribution.
- **Cross-sectoral Coordination:** Generalists integrate legal, financial, social and technical considerations. E.g., under the **Aspirational Districts Programme**, district officials coordinate interventions across health, education, agriculture and infrastructure.
- **Whole-of-Government Perspective:** Experience across departments helps officers recognize policy interconnections

e.g., balancing industrial development with land acquisition, rehabilitation and environmental protection.

- **Policy–Implementation Link:** Movement between district administration and government secretariats connects grassroots experience with policymaking. E.g., experience gained in implementing **MGNREGA or disaster-relief programmes** can improve subsequent policy design.
- **Crisis Leadership:** Generalists are suited to uncertain situations requiring rapid coordination rather than narrow technical expertise, as seen during cyclones, floods and elections.

Limitations of the Generalist Structure

- **Domain Deficit:** Cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, epidemiology and climate finance require sustained expertise that broad administrative experience cannot substitute.
- **Rotational Postings:** Movement across unrelated departments prevents deep specialization and weakens policy ownership. The **2nd Administrative Reforms Commission** consequently recommended greater domain specialization.
- **Specialist Marginalization:** Technical professionals may have limited influence in senior policymaking when leadership positions are predominantly occupied by generalists.
- **Dependence on Consultants:** Inadequate internal expertise may increase reliance on external consultants who lack long-term institutional responsibility.
- **Shallow Regulatory Capacity:** Generalists may struggle to effectively regulate technically sophisticated sectors such as telecommunications, digital platforms and financial markets.

Way Forward

- **Domain-Based Career Progression:** Assign officers to specialized sectors based on qualifications, aptitude and experience, with longer tenures to develop expertise and policy ownership.
- **Generalist–Specialist Partnership:** Ensure greater participation of technical professionals in senior policymaking and use transparent lateral entry to address critical expertise gaps.

- **Continuous Capacity Building:** Strengthen **Mission Karmayogi** through technology-enabled learning on the **iGOT-Karmayogi platform**, competency assessment and regular upskilling, supported by institutional oversight from the **Capacity Building Commission (CBC).**

Conclusion

Generalists remain essential for coordination, field administration and crisis management, but cannot replace specialists. **Mission Karmayogi**, domain-based postings, assured tenure, continuous training and transparent lateral entry can build an effective **generalist–specialist partnership.**

9. "IPMDA (Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness) bridges the gap between India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision and the Quad's collective Indo-Pacific strategy." Make a critical assessment of the statement focusing on IPMDA.

Introduction

The **Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)** is a **Quad initiative launched in 2022** to enhance real-time maritime information sharing among Indo-Pacific countries. It operationally connects India's inclusive **SAGAR** vision with the **Quad's objective of a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific.**

Body

How IPMDA Bridges SAGAR and Quad's Indo-Pacific Strategy

- **Enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA):** IPMDA improves maritime security through **near real-time satellite-based information sharing**, helping countries track **Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, piracy, smuggling and suspicious vessel movements.**

- **Example:** IUU fishing causes an estimated **\$23 billion annual global economic loss (FAO)**; IPMDA integrates **commercial satellite data and AIS networks** to improve visibility in poorly monitored areas.
- **Supporting India's SAGAR Vision:** IPMDA complements India's **SAGAR** by promoting maritime cooperation, capacity building and information sharing among **Indian Ocean Region (IOR) countries**.
 - **Example:** India's **Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), Gurugram (2018)** shares maritime information with partner countries. IPMDA strengthens the ability of smaller coastal states to protect their **Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)** and manage marine resources.
- **Strengthening Quad Cooperation:** IPMDA, launched as a key outcome of the **Quad Leaders' Summit (Tokyo, 2022)**, supports a **free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific**.
 - **Example:** It focuses on **Southeast Asia, Pacific Islands and Indian Ocean Region** by improving regional maritime information sharing. It promotes collective security and supports adherence to maritime norms under **UNCLOS**.
- **Improving Humanitarian and Disaster Response (HADR):** IPMDA enhances responses to **cyclones, tsunamis, oil spills and search-and-rescue operations** through better maritime information.
 - **Example:** Disaster-prone countries like **India, Indonesia and Pacific Island states** can use shared maritime data for faster rescue and relief operations. It strengthens India's role as a **Net Security Provider in the Indian Ocean Region**.

Limitations of IMPDA

- **Limited Coverage and Dependence on Technology:** Effective implementation depends on satellite availability, technological capacity and data-sharing mechanisms, which may be challenging for smaller developing countries.

- **Strategic Perception Issues:** Some countries (**China**) may perceive IPMDA as a tool for strategic competition, particularly due to growing geopolitical rivalry in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Need for Greater Inclusivity:** For IPMDA to fully align with SAGAR's inclusive approach, wider participation of Indian Ocean littoral states and capacity-building support are essential.

Conclusion

IPMDA is a practical bridge **between India's cooperative maritime vision and the Quad's strategic reach**. Its credibility, however, will depend on local capacity-building, secure data governance and cooperation through ASEAN, the Indian Ocean Rim Association and other regional institutions.

10. "BRICS acts as a powerful counterweight in global governance, actively amplifying the voice and influence of the Global South." Explain the role of BRICS in projecting itself as an alternative to other global groupings. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

BRICS emerged from the shared concern that institutions created after the Second World War inadequately represent the rising economic and political weight of developing countries. Its expansion across **Asia, Africa, West Asia and Latin America** has strengthened its claim to represent the **Global South** and serve as a counterweight to Western-dominated groupings such as the G7.

Body

How BRICS Projects Itself as an Alternative

- **Reforming Global Governance:** BRICS demands greater representation for developing countries in the United Nations Security Council, International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Its recent strategic proposals, reinforced during successive summits through **India's 2026 Chairship**

priorities focusing on resilience, innovation, cooperation, and sustainability, sought reform of IMF quotas and leadership selection.

- **Alternative Development Finance: The New Development Bank (NDB)** finances infrastructure and sustainable-development projects without reproducing the traditional dominance of advanced economies. Its equal founding shareholding contrasts with the quota-based control of the World Bank.
- **Financial Resilience: The USD 100-billion Contingent Reserve Arrangement** offers liquidity support during balance-of-payments pressures, supplementing the IMF-centred financial safety net.
- **Local-currency Cooperation:** Financing and trade in national currencies can reduce transaction costs and exposure to dollar fluctuations. However, BRICS has not formally adopted a common currency.
- **South–South Cooperation:** BRICS promotes cooperation in agriculture, health, education, climate action, technology, energy and disaster management based on developing-country priorities.
- **Agenda-setting Power:** It highlights concerns such as **climate finance, food and energy security, vaccine equity**, technology access and opposition to unilateral economic coercion.
- **Flexible Multipolarity:** Unlike treaty-based alliances, BRICS allows countries with different political systems and strategic alignments to **cooperate without surrendering policy autonomy**.

Limitations

Internal differences—particularly India–China tensions, unequal economic weight, divergent positions on global conflicts and limited institutionalisation—constrain collective action. BRICS also lacks a **common market**, security structure and unified foreign policy.

Conclusion

Thus, BRICS is not yet a substitute for the G7 or Bretton Woods institutions. It is better understood as a **reformist and complementary platform** that expands the policy choices of developing countries and pushes global governance towards greater representation, equity and multipolarity.

11. Discuss the position of the Governor in the federal polity of India. What is the nature of the Governor's power while giving assent to a Bill passed by the State Legislature? Is the Governor bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers in all functions? (250 words)

Introduction

The Governor occupies a unique position as the **constitutional head of the State** under Article 153, while also functioning as an important link between the Union and the State. Although appointed by the President, the Governor is **neither an employee of the Union nor an agent subordinate to it**, as held in *Hargovind Pant v. Raghukul Tilak* (1979).

Body

Governor's Power over State Bills

- Under **Article 200**, after a Bill is passed by the State Legislature, the Governor may:
 - assent to the Bill;
 - withhold assent and, if it is not a Money Bill, return it with a message for reconsideration; or
 - reserve it for the President's consideration.
- Reservation is mandatory if the Bill endangers the constitutional position of the High Court. Where a non-Money Bill is reconsidered and passed again, Article 200 states that the Governor **shall not withhold assent**.
- In the **2025 Presidential Reference on assent to Bills**, the Supreme Court clarified that the Governor enjoys constitutional

discretion under Article 200 and is **not bound by the Council of Ministers' advice** while choosing among the constitutionally available options. However, this power cannot become an indefinite **pocket veto**. Although courts cannot prescribe rigid timelines or grant "**deemed assent**," prolonged and unexplained inaction may invite limited judicial scrutiny.

Is the Governor Always Bound by Ministerial Advice?

- Under **Article 163**, the general rule is that the Governor acts on ministerial advice. In ***Shamsher Singh v. State of Punjab (1974)***, the Supreme Court held that independent gubernatorial power is exceptional.
- The Governor may exercise discretion in limited situations, such as:
 - reserving Bills under Article 200;
 - recommending President's Rule under Article 356;
 - appointing a Chief Minister after an unclear electoral verdict;
 - requiring a floor test; and
 - functions expressly entrusted by the Constitution.
- In ***Nabam Rebia v. Deputy Speaker (2016)***, the Court held that such discretion cannot be expanded at will.

Conclusion

The Governor must act as an **impartial constitutional sentinel**, not as a parallel political executive. Discretion must remain exceptional, reasoned and consistent with democratic accountability, constitutional morality and federal balance.

12. What is meant by judicial legislation? In this context, discuss the verdicts of the apex court allowing "passive euthanasia" and a "living will". (250 Words, 15 Marks)

Introduction

Judicial legislation refers to judicially evolved rules, guidelines or procedures created through **expansive constitutional interpretation**, particularly when legislative action is absent or

inadequate. In India, such intervention is justified by the judiciary's role as **guardian of fundamental rights**, especially under Article 21, though it must remain consistent with **separation of powers**.

Body

Jurisprudence of Passive Euthanasia

- **Aruna Ramachandra Shanbaug v. Union of India (2011):** The Supreme Court permitted **passive euthanasia in principle**, involving the withholding or withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment, while distinguishing it from unlawful active euthanasia. It required prior High Court approval. However, withdrawal of treatment was denied to Aruna Shanbaug on the facts.
- **Common Cause v. Union of India (2018):** A five-judge **Constitution Bench** held that the **right to die with dignity** is an integral facet of the **right to life under Article 21**. It recognised an individual's right to refuse life-sustaining treatment and upheld **Advance Medical Directives (AMD/ Living Wills)**.
- **Living Will:** An adult possessing decision-making capacity may record beforehand their wishes regarding **future medical treatment** if they subsequently lose decision-making capacity. The judgment also provided safeguards for withdrawal or withholding of treatment where an AMD exists or, in specified circumstances, where it does not. **Active euthanasia, however, remains unlawful.**
- **Procedural evolution:** The original 2018 framework was subsequently **modified and streamlined by the Supreme Court in 2023** to address practical difficulties faced by doctors, patients and families. **The Court retained safeguards involving medical assessment and oversight rather than permitting unilateral withdrawal of treatment.**
- **Harish Rana v. Union of India (2026):** The Supreme Court further clarified the law by holding that **Clinically Assisted Nutrition and Hydration (CANH)** administered through a feeding tube constitutes **medical treatment** and can, in appropriate circumstances, be withdrawn. A two-judge Bench

permitted withdrawal after **Primary and Secondary Medical Boards** unanimously found the patient's condition irreversible and continued CANH therapeutically futile. The Court emphasised **best interests of the patient, palliative care and end-of-life care**, while streamlining the *Common Cause* framework.

Significantly, the Court reiterated that its guidelines are **not a permanent substitute for comprehensive legislation** and urged the Union Government to enact an appropriate statutory framework.

Conclusion

Thus, the passive-euthanasia jurisprudence illustrates **judicial legislation as constitutional gap-filling**, balancing **autonomy, dignity, sanctity of life and medical ethics**. At the same time, the evolution from *Aruna Shanbaug* to *Common Cause* and *Harish Rana* demonstrates that judicial intervention should remain **rights-oriented, procedurally safeguarded and ultimately complemented by legislative action**.

13. How far has the Indian federal framework been successful in accommodating regional and cultural diversities? Highlight the role of asymmetric federalism and suggest measures to make dispute resolution mechanisms more effective. (250 words)

Introduction:

India's federal structure was crafted as a **holding-together federation** to integrate diverse linguistic, ethnic, and cultural identities into a single nation-state. Through constitutional flexibility and adaptive governance, the **Indian federal framework** has largely succeeded in **accommodating socio-cultural diversities** while preventing secessionist tendencies.

Body:

- **Political Accommodation:** Creation of new states has responded to distinct **regional identities and developmental aspirations**.
 - **Example:** Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand (2000) and Telangana (2014)
- **- Tribal Self-Governance:** The **Fifth and Sixth Schedules** provide differentiated governance arrangements for tribal areas, protecting customary institutions and local autonomy.
- **Linguistic Reorganization of States:** The implementation of the **States Reorganisation Act (1956)** and the **Eighth Schedule** preserved linguistic identities and converted potential fault lines into democratic strength.
 - **Example:** Formation of **Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat**.
- **Democratic Integration:** Decentralization through the **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts** empowered local grassroots leadership, integrating regional aspirations into national governance.
- **Three-Language Formula:** Balancing the promotion of regional languages alongside **Hindi and English** reduced linguistic friction in public administration and education.
- **Cultural Protection: Articles 29 and 30** protect minority language, culture and educational institutions, while the **Eighth Schedule** currently recognises **22 languages**.

Role of Asymmetric Federalism:

- **Special Constitutional Provisions: Article 371 (A to J)** grants specific administrative, cultural, and economic protections to states like **Nagaland, Mizoram, and Assam**, safeguarding local customary laws and land rights.
- **Autonomy Under Fifth and Sixth Schedules:** The **Sixth Schedule** provides **autonomous district councils (ADCs)** in the North-East, granting tribal communities legislative and executive self-governance over land and culture.
- **Fiscal and Resource Asymmetry:** Special category status and targeted transfers via the **Finance Commission** address developmental disparities in geographically disadvantaged hill and border states.

Measures to Strengthen Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

- **Invigorating the Inter-State Council (ISC):** Make the **Inter-State Council (Article 263)** a mandatory, permanent deliberative body with fixed annual meetings to resolve political conflicts proactively, as recommended by the **Sarkaria and Punchhi Commissions**.
- **Reforming Water Dispute Tribunals:** Enact time-bound adjudication under the **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act** by establishing a **single permanent tribunal** with standardized data collection mechanisms.
- **Strengthening Judicial Mediation:** Expand the original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court under **Article 131** to facilitate fast-track constitutional mediation between states and the Centre.

Conclusion:

Indian federalism demonstrates that **accommodation, rather than assimilation**, is the true anchor of national unity. Strengthening **institutional dialogue, cooperative federalism and time-bound dispute resolution** will ensure that regional aspirations and national integration continue to reinforce each other harmoniously.

14. Examine how the separation of powers is practiced in India compared to the rigid presidential model of the United States of America. In this context, compare the actual authority of the Indian Prime Minister with that of the President of the USA. (250 words)

Introduction

The United States follows a presidential system based on a relatively **rigid separation of personnel and functions** among the legislature, executive and judiciary. India's parliamentary system, however, adopts a **functional separation accompanied by institutional overlap and checks and balances**.

- In *Ram Jawaya Kapur v. State of Punjab* (1955), the Supreme Court observed that the Indian Constitution does not recognise separation of powers in its absolute rigidity.

Body

Separation of Powers in India and the USA

Basis	India	United States
Design	Fusion of powers within a checks-and-balances	Strict separation of executive, legislature,
Executive–Legislature Link	PM and Council of Ministers are members of Parliament, collectively	President and Secretaries institutionally separate; cannot be
Tenure & Removal	Government survives only on Lok Sabha's confidence; PM removable by simple-majority no-	Fixed 4-year presidential term; removable only via impeachment for "high
Law-Making & Ordinances	Executive dominates via majority; ordinance power under Article 123/213 not immune from judicial review, <i>D.C. Wadhwa v. State of Bihar (1987)</i> held repeated re-promulgation	President cannot introduce bills; recommends measures and holds qualified veto, overridable by two-thirds majority in Congress
Judicial Role	Independent judiciary; judicial review part of basic structure; Collegium system for	Independent judiciary; judicial review traces to <i>Marbury v. Madison (1803)</i> ; judges

Actual Authority of the Indian Prime Minister and US President

- **Source of authority:** The PM is the effective head of government, while the President of India is a nominal executive acting on ministerial advice. In the USA, executive power is constitutionally vested directly in the President.
- **Control over legislature:** A PM with a stable Lok Sabha majority can secure legislation and budgets through party

discipline. A US President may face deadlock when Congress is opposition-controlled.

- **Cabinet:** The PM is *primus inter pares*, bound by collective responsibility. The US Cabinet is advisory, with members individually subordinate to the President.
- **Tenure:** The PM may be removed by loss of parliamentary confidence or party leadership; the US President has fixed tenure, removable only through impeachment.
- **Appointments & foreign policy:** The PM exercises influence through the **Council of Ministers**; the US President has greater personal authority, but major appointments and treaties require Senate approval.
- **Political reality:** A majority-backed PM may wield greater combined **executive-legislative control** than a President facing a divided Congress, while a coalition PM may be considerably weaker.

Conclusion

India substitutes rigid separation with **responsible government and coordinated powers**, whereas the USA stresses institutional independence. Therefore, the US President is constitutionally more independent, but a majority-backed Indian Prime Minister may be politically more powerful because of simultaneous control over the executive and legislature.

15. To what extent do pressure groups, social movements and corporate lobbies deepen pluralistic democracy in India by representing excluded interests? Analyse whether the growing convergence of corporate wealth and political power poses a threat to the autonomy of formal democratic institutions. [15 Marks, 250 Words]

Introduction

Pluralistic democracy disperses political influence among multiple social groups rather than restricting participation in elections. The

pressure groups and movements constitute a form of power-sharing by influencing decision-makers. However, **unequal access to money, media and institutions can turn pluralism into elite dominance.**

Role in Deepening Pluralistic Democracy

- **Voice to Excluded Groups:** Dalit, Adivasi, women's, farmers', workers' and disability-rights movements articulate concerns inadequately represented by political parties.
- **Agenda-Setting:** Movements transform private grievances into public issues. The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan's campaign contributed to the **Right to Information Act, 2005**, while women's movements influenced laws against domestic violence and workplace harassment.
- **Participatory Policymaking:** Trade unions, farmers' organisations, business associations and civil-society groups provide specialised knowledge during consultations and parliamentary deliberations.
- **Accountability Beyond Elections:** Protests, social audits, litigation and media campaigns continuously scrutinise the executive. The Chipko Movement and campaigns against displacement brought ecological justice and community rights into development debates.
- **Democratic Negotiation:** Peaceful mobilisation allows conflicts over land, caste, environment and livelihoods to be resolved within constitutional politics.

However, such representation remains uneven. Informal workers, dispersed tribal communities and marginal farmers often possess fewer organisational and financial resources than organised industries.

Corporate Wealth and Political Power

Corporate participation is not inherently undemocratic: industry bodies provide technical expertise, communicate investment concerns and facilitate state–market coordination. The threat arises when influence becomes opaque and disproportionate.

- **Policy Capture:** Well-funded lobbies may secure favourable taxation, regulation, contracts or access to natural resources.
- **Unequal Political Finance:** Large corporate donations provide privileged access to political parties, while ordinary citizens lack comparable influence.
- **Regulatory Capture:** Close relations between regulators, governments and regulated industries can weaken independent oversight.
- **Media Concentration:** Corporate ownership may narrow public debate and marginalise labour, environmental or community perspectives.
- **Institutional Dependence:** Expensive elections and opaque lobbying can make parties and governments more responsive to donors than citizens.

In its **2024 Electoral Bonds judgment**, the Supreme Court held that anonymous political funding violated citizens' right to information and struck down provisions permitting unlimited corporate contributions. This recognised the danger of quid pro quo arrangements and unequal political influence.

Measures

- Enact a transparent lobbying law with a public register of meetings and policy submissions.
- Ensure real-time disclosure of political donations and strengthen the Election Commission of India's auditing powers.
- Regulate conflicts of interest, revolving-door appointments and beneficial ownership.
- Institutionalise pre-legislative consultation with balanced representation for marginalised groups.
- Protect peaceful protest, civic associations and independent media.
- Strengthen parliamentary committees and autonomous regulators against executive or corporate pressure.

Conclusion

Pressure groups and movements deepen democracy when they broaden participation; they weaken it when influence follows wealth. India must therefore secure **equal access, transparent advocacy**

and institutional autonomy so that organised power remains accountable to constitutional democracy.

Q16. “Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust if stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance.” Comment – 15

Introduction:

Transparency ensures openness in governmental decisions, while **accountability** makes public authorities answerable for their actions. Their purpose extends beyond preventing corruption to building **citizen trust and democratic legitimacy**. The **Good Governance Day 2025** framework identifies transparency, accountability, participation and **Rule of Law** as integral dimensions of good governance.

Body:

Role of Transparency and Accountability in Building Stakeholder Trust

- **Predictability through Rule of Law:** Transparent rules and reasoned decisions **reduce arbitrariness** and **assure citizens** that similar cases receive similar treatment.
 - **Example: Article 14** protects **equality before law** and guards against arbitrary State action.
- **Answerability of Public Institutions:** Accountability requires authorities to **explain and justify decisions**, strengthening confidence in government.
 - **Example: CAG audits** and parliamentary committees subject public expenditure to scrutiny.
- **Informed Citizen Participation:** Access to information **enables citizens** to contribute meaningfully to **policy formulation, implementation and evaluation**.

- **Example:** The **Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005**, particularly **Section 4**, mandates proactive disclosure of public information.
- **Participatory Service Delivery:** Community participation makes policies responsive to local needs and creates **ownership among beneficiaries**.
 - **Example:** **Gram Sabhas** under the **73rd Constitutional Amendment** facilitate grassroots participation in development decisions.
 - **Example:** **Social audits** enable communities to scrutinise expenditure and implementation of MGNREGA like schemes.
- **Answerability and Corrective Governance: Audits, grievance redressal and social audits** enable citizens and institutions to identify failures and demand corrective action.
 - **Example:** **Social audits under MGNREGA** strengthen community oversight.
- **Outcome-Oriented Accountability:** Governance must be judged by **citizen outcomes**, not merely procedural compliance.
 - The **Good Governance Index (GGI)** evaluates States and Union Territories across **10 sectors through 58 indicators**, encouraging measurable and evidence-based governance.
- **Policy Legitimacy:** Consultation with affected stakeholders **reduces information asymmetry** and improves acceptance of difficult policy choices.
 - **Example:** **Pre-legislative consultations** provide civil society and affected groups opportunities to comment on proposed legislation.

Challenges in Realising Trust-Based Governance

- **Information without Accessibility:** Complex or delayed disclosures can create **formal transparency without meaningful transparency**.
- **Tokenistic Participation:** Public consultations may become **procedural exercises** when citizen inputs do not influence final decisions.

- **Weak Accountability:** Delayed grievance resolution, vacancies in oversight institutions and limited enforcement can create an **implementation gap**.
- **Digital Divide:** Increasing reliance on online governance may exclude citizens lacking **digital access and literacy**.

Way Forward

- **Open-by-Default Governance:** Strengthen **proactive disclosure under RTI** and publish accessible, machine-readable government data.
- **Institutionalise Participation:** Strengthen **Gram Sabhas, Ward Committees, public consultations and social audits** throughout the policy cycle.
- **Strengthen Accountability Mechanisms:** Enhance the **independence, capacity and effectiveness of the CAG, Lokpal and Information Commissions**, while strengthening **grievance-redress mechanisms such as CPGRAMS (Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System)** through adequate staffing, timely disposal and effective follow-up.
- **Close the Feedback Loop:** Public authorities should disclose **how stakeholder inputs influenced final policy decisions**, converting consultation into meaningful participation.

Conclusion

Thus, **transparency and accountability are means of democratic legitimacy, not merely anti-corruption instruments**. When combined with the **Rule of Law and participatory governance**, they transform citizens from passive recipients into **stakeholders in governance**, creating the institutional trust necessary for effective and legitimate public policy.

17. Can the constitutional mandate of rights-based welfare be effectively realised in the context of non-integrated governance and minimal public investment? Examine. (250 words, 15 Marks)

Introduction

India's Constitution transforms welfare from **State benevolence into rights-based obligation** through **Articles 21, 21A, 39, 41 and 47**, operationalised through the **RTE Act, MGNREGA and NFSA**. However, **rights without resources and convergence risk becoming paper entitlements**.

Body

Constitutional Foundations of Rights-Based Welfare

- **Article 21:** Judicially expanded to encompass **health, livelihood, shelter and dignity**.
- **Article 21A:** Right to education, implemented through **RTE Act, 2009**.
- **Articles 39, 41 & 47:** Mandate social security, public assistance, nutrition and public health.
- **NFSA, 2013 and MGNREGA** institutionalise food and livelihood entitlements.

Thus, India has moved from **“welfare as charity” to “welfare as citizenship.”**

Barriers to Rights-Based Welfare under Fragmented Governance

- **Departmental Silos:** Nutrition, health, WASH, education and livelihoods are interdependent but institutionally fragmented.
- **Federal Fragmentation:** Centre–State–local overlaps can diffuse responsibility and accountability.
- **Last-Mile Exclusion:** Migrants and informal workers face portability, documentation and awareness barriers.
- **Weak Local Capacity:** Panchayats, ULBs and frontline workers often lack adequate **funds, functions and functionaries**.
 - **Example: POSHAN Abhiyaan** demonstrates that malnutrition requires convergence of **ICDS, health, sanitation and drinking water**, rather than a single-department response.

Constraints on Rights-Based Welfare under Inadequate Public Investment

- **Education Rights** require teachers, schools and digital infrastructure.
- **Health Rights** require PHCs, personnel, medicines and diagnostics.
- Inadequate provisioning creates a **quality deficit**, disproportionately affecting **poor, women, SC/STs, PwDs and remote communities**.
- However, progress is visible: **Economic Survey 2024-25** reports social-services expenditure rising from **3% of government expenditure in FY21 to 26.2% in FY25 (BE)**.
- Government's share in total health expenditure increased from **29% in FY15 to 48% in FY22**.

Hence, the challenge is not merely spending, but its **adequacy, efficiency and equitable utilisation**.

Way Forward: From Fragmentation to Social Citizenship

- Adopt **whole-of-government convergence** across health–nutrition–WASH–education.
- Treat social expenditure as **human-capital investment**, not fiscal burden.
- Strengthen **ONORC and portable entitlements** for migrants.
- Combine **DBT/POSHAN Tracker** with social audits and grievance redressal.
- Empower local bodies with **3Fs—Funds, Functions and Functionaries**.
- Encourage outcome-based governance; NITI Aayog estimates **8 crore people escaped multidimensional poverty during 2013-14–2022-23**.

Conclusion

Drawing on **Amartya Sen's Capability Approach**, constitutional rights become meaningful only when citizens possess the capabilities to exercise them. India must therefore bridge the **rights–resources–governance gap**, moving from **formal**

entitlement to substantive social citizenship through adequate investment, convergence and accountable last-mile delivery.

18. Should education be treated primarily as a welfare obligation of the state or as a strategic investment for building a globally competitive, knowledge-driven nation? Critically evaluate. (Answer in 250 words) 15

Introduction

Education is both a **merit good** essential for dignity and equality and a form of **human-capital investment** that raises productivity and innovation. The Constitution reflects the former through **Article 21A**, while India's aspiration to become a knowledge economy underlines the latter. Therefore, treating these roles as competing alternatives creates a false binary.

Body

Education as a Welfare Obligation

- **Fundamental Right: Article 21A** guarantees free and compulsory education to children aged 6–14, operationalized through the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009**. India's school system serves nearly **7 crore students across 14.7 lakh schools**.
- **Social Justice: Article 46** directs the state to promote the educational interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and weaker sections. Scholarships, **Eklavya Model Residential Schools** and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas seek to reduce social and gender barriers.
- **Democratic Citizenship:** Education promotes constitutional morality, tolerance and informed participation. It also advances the Fundamental Duty under **Article 51A(h)** to develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.
- **Substantive Equality:** In 2023–24, higher-education **GER reached 30%** and the **Gender Parity Index stood at 1.08**;

however, the **GER for Scheduled Tribes was only 22.8%**, underscoring the need for continued affirmative public support.

Education as a Strategic Investment

- **Demographic Dividend:** Quality schooling and vocational training convert India's youth population into productive human capital; otherwise, demographic advantage may become unemployment and social discontent.
- **Global Talent Base:** Higher-education enrolment reached **50 crore in 2023–24**. Institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institute of Science have supplied skilled professionals to technology, space, medicine and entrepreneurship.
- **Science and Innovation:** India's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics enrolment reached **02 crore in 2023–24**, with women constituting **44%**. This strengthens the talent pipeline for emerging technologies.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** Expertise in artificial intelligence, semiconductors, biotechnology, cybersecurity and quantum technology reduces external dependence. The **Anusandhan National Research Foundation** seeks to strengthen research–industry collaboration.

Critical Concerns

- **Access–Quality Gap:** Expansion in enrolment without adequate teachers, infrastructure and learning outcomes may produce certificates rather than meaningful knowledge and capabilities.
- **Commercialization and Exclusion:** Excessive reliance on markets can increase fees, coaching dependence and digital inequality, excluding poor, rural and marginalized learners.
- **Employability–Education Mismatch:** Weak vocational exposure and industry linkages create a mismatch between academic qualifications and the skills required by emerging sectors.

Way Forward

- **Strengthen Foundational Education:** Ensure universal foundational literacy and numeracy through **NIPUN Bharat**,

trained teachers, adequate infrastructure and regular learning assessments.

- **Increase and Target Public Investment:** Progressively move towards the **National Education Policy, 2020** objective of public expenditure on education reaching **6% of GDP**, prioritizing disadvantaged regions and groups.
- **Integrate Education, Skills and Research:** Expand vocational education, apprenticeships, multidisciplinary learning and university–industry collaboration while strengthening the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation**.

Conclusion

The state must guarantee an equitable foundation of quality education while strategically funding skills, research and excellence. Education should therefore be treated as **rights-based social infrastructure** whose widest returns are **economic competitiveness, democratic citizenship** and **national resilience**.

19. "India's global diaspora acts as a living bridge, as a critical economic factor and knowledge network in transforming cultural heritage into geopolitical influence and strategic leverage worldwide." Critically examine this statement.

Introduction

The **Indian diaspora**, comprising over **35 million people living across more than 200 countries**, represents one of the world's largest and most influential diaspora communities. Beyond remittances and economic contributions, it acts as a **living bridge between India and the global community**, carrying India's cultural heritage, values and traditions while creating networks of influence in politics, business, science and technology.

Body

Role of Indian Diaspora in Enhancing India's Global Influence

- **Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power:** The diaspora acts as a carrier of India's civilisational heritage by promoting **Yoga, Ayurveda, Indian cuisine, languages, films and festivals**, thereby strengthening India's cultural influence globally.
 - **Example:** The worldwide celebration of the **International Day of Yoga (since 2015)**, supported by Indian communities abroad. The **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas** and diaspora-led cultural events help maintain connections between overseas Indians and India's heritage.
- **Economic Contribution and Development Support:** The diaspora contributes through **remittances, investments, entrepreneurship and trade networks**, creating strong economic linkages between India and the world.
 - **Example:** India reached a record **\$135.46 billion in inward remittances for the 2024–25 financial year**, reflecting a 14% year-on-year increase according to RBI data.
- **Knowledge and Innovation Networks:** Skilled Indian professionals in **technology, medicine, science, research and academia** act as knowledge bridges by facilitating innovation, mentorship and technology transfer.
 - **Example:** Indian-origin professionals in **Silicon Valley** (example- **Sundar Pichai**(Google/Alphabet CEO) and **Satya Nadella** (Microsoft CEO) have contributed to global technology companies and supported India's startup ecosystem, while initiatives like the **Vaishvik Bharatiya Vaigyanik (VAIBHAV) Fellowship Programme** connect overseas Indian scientists with Indian research institutions.
- **Political and Strategic Influence:** Influential diaspora communities strengthen India's diplomatic outreach by shaping public opinion, promoting bilateral relations and increasing India's visibility in host countries.
 - **Example:** Leaders of Indian origin like **Rishi Sunak (former UK Prime Minister)** and **Kamala Harris (former US Vice President)** have enhanced the visibility of Indian heritage globally.

- **Crisis Support and Humanitarian Role:** The diaspora provides humanitarian assistance during crises through fundraising, medical support and relief activities.
 - **Example:** During the **COVID-19 pandemic**, overseas Indian organisations mobilised oxygen concentrators, medicines and medical supplies for India, demonstrating the diaspora's role as a global support network.

Limitations and Challenges

- **Diverse Interests and Identities:** The Indian diaspora is not a homogeneous group; communities differ in ethnicity, political views and levels of connection with India. Therefore, their actions may not always align with India's foreign policy objectives.
- **Brain Drain:** Outmigration of highly trained professionals may weaken domestic capacity unless converted into “**brain circulation**”.
- **Worker Vulnerability:** Low-skilled migrants, particularly in the Gulf, face recruitment fraud, unsafe conditions and weak social protection.
- **Economic Engagement Gaps:** Despite large remittance flows, diaspora investment in productive sectors and long-term development projects remains below potential.
- **Soft Power versus Strategic Outcomes:** Cultural popularity does not automatically translate into geopolitical influence unless supported by effective diplomacy, economic partnerships and institutional engagement.

Conclusion

India must move from **symbolic engagement to a differentiated diaspora policy** combining migrant welfare, portable social security, diaspora investment instruments and structured research networks. The **diaspora is strategic capital**, but its influence remains sustainable only when based on mutual trust rather than instrumental mobilisation.

20. “China’s Belt and Road Initiative has transformed South Asia from a regional space into a theatre of great-power competition.” Analyse the strategic implications of the BRI for India’s security and regional influence in South Asia. (250 words)

Introduction

Launched in **2013**, China’s **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** seeks to build **transcontinental connectivity** through ports, roads, railways, energy projects and digital networks across South Asia. Projects such as the **China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**, **Gwadar Port**, **Hambantota Port** and **Colombo Port City** have transformed India’s immediate neighbourhood into an arena of **wider Indo-Pacific competition**.

Body

Implications of BRI for India’s Security

- **Sovereignty Challenge:** CPEC passes through **Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir**, **violating India’s sovereignty** and legitimising the China–Pakistan strategic partnership.
- **Strengthening China-Pakistan Nexus:** CPEC deepens the **economic, infrastructural and strategic partnership between China and Pakistan**, strengthening Pakistan’s strategic capabilities and potentially increasing India’s **two-front security challenge**.
- **Maritime Encirclement:** Chinese involvement in **Gwadar, Hambantota and other Indian Ocean ports** raises concerns about their **possible dual use** of commercial infrastructure and sustained Chinese naval presence near India.
- **Strategic Vulnerability:** Chinese-controlled digital networks, telecommunications and power infrastructure in neighbouring countries may create cybersecurity and intelligence risks.
- **Debt and Political Leverage:** Heavy financial dependence on China can provide Beijing influence over the foreign and security policies of smaller South Asian states such as **Srilanka and Maldives**.

Implications of BRI for India’s Regional Influence

- **Erosion of Traditional Primacy:** China's rapid financing and project execution offer India's neighbours an **alternative development partner**, reducing their dependence on New Delhi.
- **Strategic Balancing by Neighbours:** Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Maldives may use competition between India and China to extract **economic** and **diplomatic concessions**.
- **Weakening India- centric Institutions:** Bilateral Chinese projects can marginalise India-led or India-centred regional mechanisms such as the **SAARC**), **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)**, and **Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Initiative**, potentially reducing India's role in shaping regional connectivity and cooperation.
- **Developmental Opportunity:** Better regional infrastructure could **promote trade and connectivity**, provided projects are transparent, financially sustainable and respectful of sovereignty.

Way Forward

India should strengthen **Neighbourhood First Policy** and **MAHASAGAR**, accelerate high-quality development projects, improve **BIMSTEC–BBIN connectivity** and advance alternatives such as **Chabahar Port and the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (INSTC)**.

Conclusion

Thus, BRI represents not merely an infrastructure initiative but a significant **reconfiguration of South Asia's strategic geography**. India's sustainable response lies in combining **security preparedness with faster, transparent and demand-driven regional connectivity**, thereby remaining the region's preferred development and security partner.

