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GS Mains 2020 Test Series — 15 Nov 2020

प्रश्न संख्या  
Question No.

**U.P.S.C.**

इस भाग में कुछ न लिखें  
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① Discuss the need to strengthen National Commission for Scheduled Castes to tackle the problems faced by Scheduled Castes in India.

Problems faced by Scheduled Castes in India are:

↳ Caste-based discrimination → in access to residence  
↳ in access to wells, bathing ghats, water tanks and other water sources

↳ Atrocities by other castes

↳ low income levels

↳ low education levels

↳ Institutionalized discrimination

↳ Poor health standards (IMR, MMR, etc-)

Why <sup>(National Commission for Scheduled Castes)</sup> NCSC needs to be strengthened to tackle these and other problems:

↳ Currently, NCSC has only advisory powers.

As such, problems cannot be tackled effectively.

↳ NCSC cannot take harsh decisions because its independence is negatively impacted:

↳ Appointment by President (not a Committee including Judiciary & Opposition)

↳ Serving on the pleasure of the President and can be removed anytime (no safeguards)

↳ Tenure, salary and other conditions of service decided by President

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- ↳ President only places an 'action taken' report in Parliament along with NCSC's annual report.
  - ↳ Parliament has no means to enforce NCSC's decisions on Executive.
  - ↳ Supreme Court recently said that only a few SCs have benefitted from reservation. This requires inclusion and exclusion powers to be given to NCSC.
  - ↳ ~~NG~~ Enforcing mechanism for NCSC's orders in grievance-cases needs to be strengthened.
- Article 338 of Indian Constitution needs to be adequately amended to make NCSC more effective.

② Does the Representation of People's Act ensure an effective mechanism against criminalization of politics in India? Discuss.

Representation of People's Act, 1951, covers (RPA) covers various election offences, election petitions, disqualifications criteria, etc. that could lead to work against criminalization of politics in India. ~~are~~ Some such mechanisms within RPA are:

↳ Section 8 of RPA, 1951

↳ It disqualifies those who have been convicted with sentences of more than two years from being MPs or MLAs.

↳ Earlier, such people could file an appeal in higher courts and get a stay. However, in Lily Thomas case, 2013, Supreme Court nullified this provision within Section 8(4)

↳ Disqualifications:

↳ RPA contains several disqualifications (as per provisions of Article 102 and 191) for candidates standing in elections. These include:

↳ Dowry, Sati, Untouchability

↳ Election offences like bribing voters, creating communal hatred, etc.

↳ Murder, Rape and other heinous crimes

↳ Powers to Election Commission (EC)

↳ Under these powers, EC has mandated political parties to declare criminal antecedents of their ~~cases~~ candidates.

↳ Election Petitions can be filed under RPA if a disqualified criminal gets elected to Parliament or State Legislature.

RPA, 1951 needs to be strengthened to prevent criminalization of politics as per recommendations of Vohra Committee, Padmanabiah Committee and Santharam Committee.

③ Discuss the challenges that are being faced by Gram Nyayalayas in their effective functioning.

Gram Nyayalaya Act, 2008, sought to set up Gram Nyayalayas across the country to aid in justice delivery.

Challenges faced by Gram Nyayalayas are:

- ↳ Gram Nyayalayas not being set up in several states (only around 200 Gram Nyayalayas set up till now)
- ↳ Orders of Gram Nyayalayas not enforced
- ↳ lack of awareness among public
- ↳ lack of willingness among judicial functionaries to serve in remote, rural areas
- ↳ Vacancies in Gram Nyayalayas not being filled up timely.
- ↳ Lack of support staff
- ↳ lack of funds
- ↳ lack of office buildings and other related infrastructure
- ↳ lack of political will, especially among state Governments
- ↳ Appeals from Gram Nyayalayas render their orders non-final, unlike statutory provisions
- ↳ Bureaucratic apathy

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Supreme Court recently gave guidelines to set up more Gram Nyayalayas and strengthen their functioning. These should be followed.

④ Explain the rationale behind setting up 'Alternative Mechanisms' in ensuring effective decision-making in the governance of the country.

Alternative Mechanisms in Judiciary:

- ↳ Arbitration
- ↳ Tribunals
- ↳ Mediation
- ↳ Conciliation
- ↳ Negotiation

Why these mechanisms are set up:

- ↳ Huge backlog in judiciary of 3.5 crore cases as per National Judicial Data Grid
- ↳ Poor contract enforcement leads to anti-business environment and impedes growth.
- ↳ High amount of time and cost needed to get justice through conventional judiciary.
- ↳ Lack of expertise in judiciary, especially in technical and commercial disputes.
- ↳ Access to justice needs to improve as per Article 39A of Constitution.

Alternative mechanisms in Executive (outside the purview of executive government):

- ↳ CAG
- ↳ Election Commission
- ↳ UPSC, SPSC
- ↳ 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule Areas (Autonomous District Councils)

These were set up to ensure:

- ↳ Transparency, Accountability & Reduced corruption
- ↳ Promote grassroots democracy

Alternative mechanisms in Legislature (outside Parliament and State Legislatures):

- ↳ Delegated legislation by Executive
- ↳ 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule Areas where Parliament's or State Legislature's Acts may not apply
- ↳ Gram Panchayats, Urban local bodies

These were set up to ensure:

- ↳ Faster decision-making
- ↳ Lack of expertise of legislators in technical matters
- ↳ Promote grassroots democracy
- ↳ Satisfy regional political aspirations and maintain India's unity and integrity.

- ⑤ The relationship between bureaucracy and democracy is both paradoxical and complementary.  
Comment.

How relationship between bureaucracy and democracy is paradoxical:

↳ Bureaucracy, under Weberian model, is based on strict, unchanging rules and procedures.

Whereas democracy requires responsive government that can change according to people's needs.

↳ Bureaucracy promotes a strict hierarchy, with authority centralized at the top.

Whereas democracy promotes authority of all and prevents centralization of power.

↳ Bureaucracy promotes seniority-based promotion.

Whereas democracy requires merit-based promotion to best serve public interests.

↳ Bureaucracy takes time with its decisions to resolve procedural irregularities.

Whereas democracy wants quick decision-making.

How relationship between bureaucracy and democracy is complementary:

↳ Its promotions in bureaucracy are seniority-driven,

officials need not satisfy political bosses. This serves democracy by making public welfare paramount.

↳ Strict hierarchy of bureaucracy ensures that basic democratic principles like rule of law, equality, etc. can be implemented throughout the country without bias.

↳ Procedures of bureaucracy seek to improve transparency and accountability of government and reduce corruption and discretion, which serves democracy.

⑥ By transforming the way governments work and reinventing people's participation in the democratic process, e-governance empowers the citizen in multiple ways. Discuss in the context of India.

How e-governance transforms the way governments work:

- ↳ Government data is made publicly available instead of secrecy adopted earlier.
- ↳ Quicker decision-making due to technological interventions
- ↳ Evidence-based policy making
- ↳ Incorporating people's feedback

How e-governance reinvents people's participation in democratic process:

- ↳ Online voter registration, voter awareness campaigns like SVEEP, availability of original data of candidates online, etc. enhances democratic process.
- ↳ Two-way communication between government & public
- ↳ Public consultation through online mode can reinvent policy formulation
- ↳ Social audit easily possible through wide dissemination of developmental data.

e-governance empowers the citizens in following ways:

- ↳ Improving transparency and accountability

- ↳ Improving responsiveness of government through faster public feedback.
  - ↳ Improving effectiveness and efficiency through measures like online verification of beneficiaries, social audit, etc.
  - ↳ Improving people's participation through public consultation and making governance consensus-oriented.
  - ↳ Implementing Rule of law by wide publication of all mishappenings.
  - ↳ Overall improving good governance
- NeGD 2.0 (e-Kranti) under Digital India is a huge boon in this regard.

⑦ The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, dilutes the spirit of Supreme Court's NALSA judgement towards self-determination of gender. Discuss.

In NALSA judgement, Supreme Court had said:

↳ Transgenders should have the right to self-identification

↳ Transgenders should be provided with reservation benefits

↳ Third Gender should be introduced in all government forms to publicise and respect transgender identity.

Transgender Persons Act, 2019, dilutes this spirit by:

↳ Not giving right to self-determination

↳ Certificate of transgender identity to be provided by District Magistrate (DM)

↳ No appeal mechanism against decision of Sup DM.

↳ No reservation benefits to transgenders.

↳ Even after Sex Reassignment Surgeries (SRS), certificate by DM required to prove transgender identity.

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However, institutional mechanisms created by the Act, including National Council for Transgender Persons headed by Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment and including 5 members from transgender community can ~~help~~ help to promote rights of transgenders.

⑧ The worthwhile goal of Universal Health Coverage can be achieved by declaring the right to health as a fundamental right. Comment.

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is an aspiration both under UN's SDGs and WHO's Triple Billion Targets.

UHC can be achieved by declaring Right to Health as a fundamental right because:

- ↳ It will make it the State's responsibility to provide healthcare to all.
- ↳ Healthcare might become affordable.  
(Currently, nearly 60% of health expenditure in India is Out of Pocket Expenditure)
- ↳ Healthcare will be available in remote areas and bridge rural-urban divide (Currently, most of the doctors and hospitals in urban areas in private sector)
- ↳ Quality of healthcare can be regulated and quacks can be penalised.
- ↳ It will further Constitutional goals of social and economic justice.

Why Right to Health may not be able to achieve UHC:

- ↳ Lack of funds with government to provide healthcare to all.

- ↳ Lack of skilled manpower
    - ↳ Lack of doctors (especially in rural areas)
    - ↳ Lack of paramedical staff
    - ↳ Lack of public health officials
  - ↳ Lack of medical infrastructure
    - ↳ Hospital beds and Hospitals
    - ↳ Diagnostic machines
    - ↳ Therapeutic drugs manufacturing
  - ↳ Even National Health Policy, 2017, did not declare Right to Health because of these reasons.
- Right to Health and UHC should be on top of government's priority.

9) Indian diaspora in the Gulf countries is an asset beset with multiple challenges. Comment.

Gulf countries house nearly 10 million Indians. How Indian diaspora in Gulf countries is an asset:

- ↳ Sends remittances back home (with India being the largest recipients of remittances in the world)
- ↳ Source of soft-power (especially in countries like UAE where Indians constitute more than 10% of population)
- ↳ Promotes trade and economic relations between India and Middle-East.

How Indian diaspora in Gulf countries is beset with challenges:

- ↳ Strict, inhuman labour laws
- ↳ Anti-immigration rhetoric with Saudisation/Arabization of jobs being demanded.
- ↳ Drop in oil prices has hurt Gulf countries and also Indian diaspora.
- ↳ Low skills of Indian diaspora in Gulf countries.
- ↳ Low bargaining power
- ↳ Slave-like conditions
- ↳ Return of Gulf diaspora exacerbates employment and social challenges in India.

India needs to interact with ~~the~~ Gulf countries to safeguard interests of its diaspora.

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⑩ Briefly outline the genesis and functioning of World Food Programme (WFP). Also highlight its contribution to India's effort in addressing hunger.

World Food Programme (WFP) was born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a part of UN's efforts to eradicate hunger, especially in LDCs and African Countries.

WFP functions mainly as follows:

- ↳ Providing aid and food relief to poor nations
- ↳ ~~Providing~~ Providing a common platform for developed countries to contribute towards hunger
- ↳ Coordinating with other global organizations like FAO, WHO, IFAD, etc., to eradicate hunger and increase agricultural poverty
- ↳ ~~Harmonizing~~ Harmonizing international policies towards hunger eradication.
- ↳ ~~Providing~~ Providing financial and technical assistance to poor countries to aid their policy formulation and implementation with regards to hunger.

It has contributed to India's effort in addressing hunger and malnutrition in the following ways:

- ↳ Providing technical assistance to programmes like POSHAN Abhiyaan

- ↳ Providing Collecting data to help in evidence-based policy making
- ↳ Providing food & nutrition experts to guide policy makers
- ↳ ~~Providing~~ Channelizing financial assistance for India's PDS system and National Food Security Act.
- ↳ Coordinating with FAO to ~~be~~ improve India's agricultural productivity.
- ↳ Coordinating with WHO to remove hidden hunger and malnutrition.

(11) Action against civil society groups is seen as shrinking space for dissent by some while others point out to the imperatives of merit-based action against certain groups. Examine with examples. 'Civil Society' is often seen as the third pillar of governance after public sector and private sector.

Action against civil society groups has often taken the following forms:

- ↳ Strict implementation of Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA)
- ↳ Recent amendments in FCRA which further tighten funding, registration and expenditure norms for NGOs.
- ↳ Cancellation of registration of several NGOs
- ↳ Investigations and raids by agencies like CBI
- ↳ Representation in Supreme Court against NGOs citing the fact that more than 90% of the nearly 3 million NGOs operational in India do not declare <sup>and file</sup> ~~file~~ Income Tax Returns.
- ↳ Arresting officials and executives of NGOs, sometimes even under preventive detention.
- ↳ Denying visas to foreign experts

Such action against civil society is sometimes seen as shrinking space for dissent because:

- ↳ Withdrawing permission to visit troubled areas, like Amnesty International was prohibited from visiting Kashmir, Naxal and other areas.

- ↳ Genuine voices suppressed through high-handed police action
- ↳ Reports discredited and criticised, as seen in the World Press Freedom Index ~~of~~ Reporters Without Borders being criticized.
- ↳ Concerns of tribals and other vulnerable sections disregarded, as seen in ~~the~~ arrest of leaders of Narmada Bachao Andolan, including Medha Patkar.

However, at times, certain groups have worked against Indian interest, like:

- ↳ Environmental terrorism against India's industrial projects, by Greenpeace International, which impedes India's growth
- ↳ Communal hatred being spread by entities like Foundation for Communal Harmony is the name of preserving pluralism.
- ↳ Illicit funds being channeled into India to foment dissent, violence and serve interests of foreign powers.
- ↳ Elections being interfered with by political civil society groups which undermines Indian democracy.

Civil society should be promoted with safeguards as per National Voluntary Sector Policy.

(12) Discuss the implications associated with Prime Minister's Office acting as the most powerful office due to its formidable influence in policy-making in India.

In recent times, centralization of authority in PMO has been observed.

Its positive implications are:

- ↳ Quicker and effective decision-making
- ↳ Reduction of policy-paralysis
- ↳ Reduction of unscientific, populist schemes  
like free laptops, mobile phones, etc.
- ↳ Less chances of corruption as corruption is more at local level than at Central level
- ↳ Greater access to resources (funds) for implementing decisions
- ↳ Uniformity of policy across the country so that basic minimum can be ensured for all.
- ↳ Experts and Skilled manpower can be efficiently consulted.
- ↳ Higher efficiency, with less time and cost overruns
- ↳ Unified policy-making approach instead of fragmented, piece-meal policies earlier (as seen in transport, where fragmented policies by several ministries like Roads, Railways, Shipping, Civil Aviation, etc.)

Its negative implications are:

- ↳ Results in over-centralization of authority
- ↳ Goes against Federalism, which is a basic feature of Indian Constitution
- ↳ Goes against the concept of decentralized planning and grassroots democracy through Panchayats
- ↳ Adopts "one-size-fits-all" approach which may not be suitable for ~~a~~ such a diverse country as India.
- ↳ Does not provide customised solutions based on regional factors
- ↳ Threatens imposition of dictatorship.
- ↳ Goes against Parliamentary system of democracy where the Council of Ministers should ~~not~~ collectively wield authority.
- ↳ Multi-stakeholder consultations avoided
- ↳ Can lead to inter-regional tensions due to political favoritism.

All opinions should be accommodated and decentralized planning should be promoted.

⑬ While judiciary's efforts to infuse accountability in the functioning of government institutions and engender human rights jurisprudence demonstrate the importance of judicial governance, it also leads to concerns around judicial overreach. Discuss. Judiciary's efforts to infuse accountability and engender human rights can be seen in various judgements of Supreme Court like Right to Education, Right to Information, Right to Privacy, Right to Clean Environment, etc., especially under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of Constitution.

It shows importance of judicial governance because:

↳ Executive might not be open to transparency and greater accountability. Here, judicial intervention becomes important, as in Right to Information

↳ Executive might try to assume excess power, as seen in Aadhaar Act, 2016, whose provisions were struck down by Supreme Court to protect Right to Privacy.

↳ Executive might wilt against populist pressure. Here, judicial neutrality becomes important.

↳ Executive has to listen to political party, opposition and alliance partners. Thus, important reforms like GST may take years to get passed. Judiciary can help speed up this process.

↳ Executive needs to be kept under checks and balances, otherwise tyrannical situation of 1970s Emergency might get repeated. Judiciary can provide checks ~~and~~ and balances.

However, it can also lead to judicial overreach:

↳ In Golaknath case of 1967, Supreme Court said that Parliament cannot amend fundamental rights.

Many call this judgement as judicial overreach

↳ In Right to Property vs Land Reforms of 1950s and 1960s, judicial overreach hampered public welfare.

↳ Sometimes, judiciary has engendered human rights that India did not have the capacity to implement.  
For eg: In 1990s, Supreme Court granted citizens the Right to Education upto Secondary level, which was not been implemented even today.

↳ Issue of "selected" judiciary vs "elected" representatives in a democracy.

Judiciary is an important pillar of governance. As such, it should exercise its powers with caution and care.

⑭ The power to punish for contempt of courts is necessary for the administration of justice. Critically analyze.

The power to punish for contempt of court is found in Articles 129 and 215 of Indian Constitution. It is implemented through Contempt of Courts Act of 1971.

It is necessary for ~~the~~ administration of justice because:

- ↳ Breach of undertaking given to courts can be punished
- ↳ Scandalising the authority of courts ~~and~~ can attract criminal punishment
- ↳ Obstructing with judicial proceedings can be prevented.
- ↳ Interference with administration of justice can be stopped.
- ↳ false testimonies and affidavits can be deterred
- ↳ Integrity of justice and criminal system can be ensured.
- ↳ Orders of Court can be implemented throughout the territory of India without fear.
- ↳ Authority and powers of court can be protected.
- ↳ Ensures checks and balances on Executive; without contempt powers, Executive can simply ignore judiciary.

However, contempt powers may be outdated in modern justice administration because:

- ↳ No codification of contempt powers often leads ~~to~~ to discretion of judiciary

↳ Contempt powers are often utilized against fair criticism or defamation of judiciary or defamation of individual judges.

↳ Recent contempt proceedings in Prashant Bhushan case exposed high-handedness of judiciary.

↳ Internationally, countries like UK and Canada no longer use contempt powers.

↳ fear of contempt often leads to stifling of dissent.

↳ Can lead to tyranny of judiciary

↳ Checks and balances on judiciary are weakened.

Contempt proceedings should be ~~resorted~~ resorted to only in cases of extreme urgency.

⑤ What are the legal concerns associated with custodial violence? Discuss the challenges in curbing such incidents. Suggest some ways to address this issue.

Custodial violence refers to the violence inflicted on prison inmates and other arrested people by police.

Legal concerns associated with custodial violence are:

↳ Right to life with dignity under Article 21 is violated

↳ Public trust in police and government is eroded.

↳ Extreme cases even result in custodial deaths.

↳ All basic fundamental, human rights are violated

↳ Goes against international conventions like UN Convention against torture

↳ It is often the poor and marginalized that face custodial violence.

↳ India's image and soft power in international arena is damaged.

↳ Most of the people under police custody are undertrials (nearly two-thirds of all prisoners). Thus, even innocent people may be victims.

↳ Recent case of death of a father-son duo in Tamil Nadu exposed the worst forms of custodial violence.

↳ Goes against UN Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, etc.

Challenges in curbing such incidents are:

- ↳ Opaqueness in police functioning.
- ↳ It is often police that inquires into cases of custodial violence by police. This leads to conflicts of interest.
- ↳ Issue of national security vs individual's rights.  
For eg: can a terrorist claim protection under these rights if he is hiding terror plans?
- ↳ Lack of monitoring mechanisms in jails.
- ↳ Political-police nexus and lack of political will
- ↳ Often, ~~public~~ tacit acceptance of public, as seen in ~~death~~ custodial death of Vikas Dubey and death of four rape accused in Hyderabad
- ↳ Lack of powers with NHRC to enquire

Some ways to address this issue:

- ↳ ~~Sign~~ <sup>Ratify</sup> UN Convention ~~and~~ Against Torture and promote international cooperation
- ↳ Sensitize police functionaries
- ↳ Improve monitoring, especially through video-recording
- ↳ Supreme Court guidelines on custodial violence (like investigation of such cases by another non-related police ~~unit~~ unit) should be followed.
- ↳ NHRC needs to be strengthened to enquire into human rights violations.
- ↳ Public awareness campaigns to ensure accountability.

- ⑩ Civil society interventions, ranging from confrontation to engagement with the government, have played an important role in ushering transparency and accountability in governance in India. Discuss with examples.
- Civil society is regarded as third pillar of governance after public sector and private sector.

Civil society's confrontations with government have helped in:

- ↳ Resettlement and Rehabilitation, as seen in Narmada Bachao Andolan
- ↳ Environmental safeguards, as seen in protests by Greenpeace-International NGO
- ↳ Human Rights violations in Kashmir, North-East, Naxal areas, as seen in protests by Amnesty International
- ↳ Labour law Reforms, as seen in criticism by Labour Unions
- ↳ Right to Information granted due to protests by Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS)
- ↳ Corruption checked due to vigilance by media organizations

Civil society's engagement with governance has helped in:

- ↳ Mid-Day Meal scheme, where the work of Akshay Patra foundation is exemplary.
- ↳ RTI Watch, an NGO, and similar other NGOs, which help people in filing RTIs.

⑰ When it comes to hunger, India faces the paradox of plenty. Discuss. Also suggest ways in which this concern can be addressed.

India is a food-surplus country. It can be seen through following facts:

- ↳ India is a net exporter of foodgrains
- ↳ India is the second largest producer of rice, largest producer of fruits & vegetables, among top 3 producers of fish, among top 10 producers of wheat, etc., in the world
- ↳ India has overflowing FCI godowns, excess procurement of foodgrains under PDS, excess buffer stocks in excess of 70 MMT.
- ↳ Under National Food Security Act (NFSA), India has given Right to Food to nearly two-thirds of its population.

However, still India faces concerns of hunger and malnutrition:

- ↳ Nearly 53% of women in reproductive age are anaemic (iron deficiency)
- ↳ ~~33~~ 36% of children are stunted
- ↳ 20% of children are wasted
- ↳ 38% of children are underweight
- ↳ Poor nutrition of pregnant women is one of the leading causes of high Maternal Mortality and Infant Mortality.

Thus, India faces the paradox of plenty in hunger.

Ways in which this concerns can be addressed are:

- ↳ Strict implementation of government schemes, like
  - ↳ POSHAN Abhiyan
  - ↳ National Nutrition Mission of NITI Aayog
  - ↳ National Food Security Act (NFSA)
- ↳ Reforming PDS to remove inclusion and exclusion errors through biometric-based authentication
- ↳ Food Fortification (looking at the success of iodised salt)
- ↳ Raising awareness of public regarding balanced diet
- ↳ Mid-Day Meal scheme should be expanded to secondary school.
- ↳ More crops under PDS, including millets, jowar, bajra, ragi, pulses, etc; to reduce hidden hunger
- ↳ Collecting data on malnutrition to support evidence-based policy making.
- ↳ Focusing on nutrition of pregnant women through schemes like Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana.
- ↳ Involving nutrition experts in policy formulation
- ↳ Promoting healthy habits like kitchen gardens, as done in Mid Day Meal scheme.

Eradicating hunger would go a long way in helping India achieve SDGs.

⑱ What is the role of wage employment in alleviating poverty? How is MGNREGA different from earlier Wage Employment Programmes in India?

Role of wage employment in alleviating poverty:

- ↳ Helps augment incomes, which directly reduces poverty
- ↳ Provides security of income
- ↳ Helps protect against uncertainties of agriculture and poor growth of MSMEs.
- ↳ Provides ~~an~~ social security and insurance against medical shocks and other mishaps.

MGNREGA is different from earlier Wage Employment Programmes because:

- ↳ Right to Employment provided under MGNREGA
- ↳ Social audit to ensure transparency & accountability
- ↳ Geo-Tagging to ensure durability of assets created
- ↳ Minimum of 60% of MGNREGA's expenditure to be on wages
- ↳ Durable assets created
- ↳ Convergence with other schemes like water conservation, drought relief, road construction, etc.

↳

Success of MGNREGA can be seen from the fact that similar legislation is now being demanded for urban areas.

↳ Public awareness campaigns on government schemes by NGOs

Civil society needs to play an active role to usher in transparency and accountability in India.

- (19) China's aggressiveness in recent times presents not only challenges to India but also opportunities to strengthen itself internationally and domestically.  
Discuss.

China's aggressiveness in recent times is a challenge to India because:

- ↳ Border tensions, with unilateral Chinese incursions into Ladakh
- ↳ Earlier disputes, like Doklam stand-off, also due to China's aggressiveness
- ↳ India's sea lanes of communication in South China Sea can be negatively impacted; it is through here that a significant portion of India's trade passes
- ↳ India has to increase its defence expenditure and divert resources away from social welfare.
- ↳ Possibility of a two-front war with Pakistan & China
- ↳ CPEC in Pakistan passes through PoK and hurts India's sovereignty.
- ↳ Huge trade deficit with China due to aggressive trade policies of China and aggressive protectionism of its domestic market
- ↳ China's encirclement of India through String of Pearls is a strategic challenge.
- ↳ Because of China's aggression, India is moving closer to USA. This can impact Indo-Russian and Indo-Iran relations, and can also hurt India's strategic autonomy.

How China's aggression can help India internationally:

- ↳ China's aggressive debt-trap diplomacy has made countries like Maldives and Sri Lanka move closer to India. Maldives now has India-first policy.
- ↳ Coalition of like-minded countries like USA, Japan, Australia, with India, in the form of QUAD.
- ↳ Japan has started joint projects with India in other countries, like Asia-Africa Growth Corridor.
- ↳ Demands are being raised to include India as permanent member of UN Security Council to counter China.
- ↳ Initiatives like Supply Chain Resilience Initiative, Blue Dot Network, etc., as a counter to China's BRI and China-centric manufacturing can help shift global value chains to India.
- ↳ US has started focusing on Indo-Pacific instead of Asia-Pacific, which provides boost to India.

How China's aggressiveness can help India domestically:

- ↳ Focus on 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India)
- ↳ Boycott of Chinese products and apps has helped soften trade deficit
- ↳ Make in India platform strengthened
- ↳ Bipartisan support against China's border incursions and in favour of military upgradation and border infrastructure.

India must utilise these opportunities fully.

20 Trade and connectivity hold the key for India to better engage its neighbours. Examine the opportunities and challenges in South Asia in this context.

Regional trade in South Asia is only 5% of its global trade. This figure is 35% for East Asia and 60% for Europe.

Trade and connectivity can help India's engagement with neighbours through following opportunities:

↳ BBIN MVA (Motor Vehicles Agreement) can help India's engagement with Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

↳ Kaladan Multimodal Transport project will help India engage with Myanmar

↳ India - Myanmar - Thailand Trilateral Highway.

↳ Protocol on Inland Water Transit & Trade (PIWTT) between India and Bangladesh

↳ Maritime connectivity under BIMSTEC

↳ Land-based connectivity with Afghanistan and other nations under SAARC.

↳ SAARC FTA (Free Trade Agreement) is an opportunity for increasing regional trade.

↳ BIMSTEC FTA is under discussion

↳ RCEP under ASEAN is also an option to engage with neighbours like China and Myanmar.

↳ Integrated Check Posts and Border Haats can improve trade with neighbours

↳ Regional trade is only 5% of global trade, which shows considerable room for improvement.

↳ Export/Import of Power between India, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka can aid engagement.

Challenges for in increasing trade and connectivity in South Asia are:

↳ Geographical constraints, with Bhutan and Nepal being mountainous countries, Sri Lanka separated by water, and Pakistan in between India and Afghanistan.

↳ Lack of complementarity, as most South Asian nations are developing economies with poor industrial base. In fact, India and Bangladesh compete for textile exports in the world.

↳ Huge trade deficit that India has with China has made India cautious of opening up

↳ Political tensions between India-Pakistan, Bangladesh-Pakistan, Bhutan-Pakistan, etc., which has stalled SAARC and other trade and connectivity programs.

↳ Demographic issues, like Tamils in Sri Lanka, Rohingyas in Myanmar, etc., has hindered connectivity.

↳ Lack of funds in developing nations of South Asia to spend on connectivity.

↳ Lack of skilled manpower

↳ Harmful domestic politics, like political parties in Nepal fanning anti-India sentiments.

South Asian countries can benefit from regional integration.