

1. What is the 'Most Favoured Nation' status? Should India revoke the MFN status given to Pakistan? Critically examine.

Introduction

"Most Favoured Nation (MFN)" is a free trade principle employed in context of WTO's (World Trade Org) free trade agreements and negotiations. If a nation grants MFN status to another nation that means it would not discriminate imports from that nation in favour of imports from other nations.

This is put in place to to eliminate restrictions on trade and increase overall world trade. Violation of MFN allows a member to take the dispute to WTO dispute settlement body. National Scrutiny clause can be used by nations in extreme situation to deny MFN status to another county.

Should India revoke the MFN status given to Pakistan?

India has granted MFN status to Pakistan in 1996 but Pakistan haven't reciprocated as it would have required to reduce trade tariffs and open trade in more commodities. On the other hand, it came up with a Non-Discriminatory Market Access (NDMA) agreement. The reason Pakistan has chosen to adopt the NDMA with India is due to political mistrust and a history of border conflicts

There are growing voices to revoke MFN to Pakistan, They support such a move claiming:

1. Increasing sponsoring of cross border terror by Pakistan especially in Jammu and Kashmir and constant ceasefire violations.
2. As a diplomatic tool Globally Indian is seeking to isolate Pakistan and declare it as a safe haven for terror, so isolation has to begin by Indian taking strong measures.
3. India has no significant need to depend on Pakistan for any specific import and India's annual trade is worth \$650 bn and total trade with Pakistan is \$2.6 bn. It's not even 0.5 % of the total trade.It will have miniscule impact on Indian trade interest.
4. Pakistans role in CPEC and gross ignorance of sovereign issues flagged by India.
5. Hindrance created by Pakistan in Indian Trade relations with Central Asia and especially Afghanistan.

India should not revoke MFN status given to Pakistan:

1. A ban on trade may give rise to cross-border smuggling, which, is already a multi-billion dollar covert network
2. Harm India's standing: Maybe difficult to explain such a move at global commerce-based forums since Pakistan's trade practices have not raised any questions.
3. Trade balance is in India's favour so India benefits from trade with Pakistan.
4. Greater trade will bring country and people closer to each other creating an atmosphere for peace talks and resolution of disputes.
5. It can help India access Afghanistan, Central Asia via Pakistan and for Pakistan to access South Asian markets like Nepal and Bangladesh.
6. In long term it can help India wean away Pakistan from influence of China.

Conclusion

Currently India benefits from MFN status to Pakistan. Efforts should be made to get Pakistan reciprocate the same and setting stage for greater trade between nations. But such a policy will not be in agreement with India attempting to isolate Pakistan and getting it declared terror sponsor state. A clear policy needs to be drafted with respect to Pakistan and trade and MFN status will have to be part of the larger policy.

Best Answer: Abhijit(ABG)

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2. The Global competitiveness report of the world economic forum (WEF) was released recently which places India at a good 39th. Why is this jump significant for India Discuss?

SYNOPSIS:

The promise of the ruling coalition at the centre of making India an investor friendly destination seems to have borne fruit when India climbed 16 places up to 39th in the Global competitiveness Index of the WEF.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR INDIA:

1. GCI is a global benchmark for India in terms of improvement in both Macro economic climate and Micro economic factors which is a sign of positivity for global investors looking to invest in India
2. The Index specifically mentions India's stellar role in transparency whose image was sullied globally by corruption scandals in previous years has improved.

Eg: e- auction of mines, Spectrum allocation, emphasis on e-procurement has yielded results

3. According to analysts at Forbes reforms like opening the economy to global trade like increasing FDIs limits via automatic route especially in aviation and Defence, abolition of FIPB has made India as an attractive destination amongst BRICS nations.
4. It also shows effectiveness of India's fiscal and monetary policies which have yielded results especially controlling macro-economic indicators like inflation , formulation of MPC etc.
5. Any global index which is highly reputed like GCI also shows areas of readiness like the report mentioned lack of technological readiness which shows programs like Digital India need to pick up speed and rising NPAs among public sector banks will call for reforms like Asset reconstruction companies, Bankruptcy code etc.
6. GCI also mentions Innovation and R&D as the chief drivers of competitiveness which signals that India in order to rise in rankings has to invest significantly in Human capital and better ecosystem for research.
7. More significantly the GCI emphasises Macroeconomic stability which is a great sign for MNCs looking to exit India after not so encouraging reports of last year which will also have a definitive advantage in improving India's credentials in reports of credit rating agencies like Moody's etc.

The report is also a time for inner reflection on shortcomings in India's economy such as need to improve labour market efficiency, health indicators like IMR, MMR etc. and need for more investment in primary and technological education.

Thus furthering Nations transformation into a global superpower.

BEST ANSWER : PRANOTI

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3. Recently, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by the Defense Minister gave its approval to the new Defence Procurement Policy (DPP). What are the major changes and can they give an impetus to indigenization? Critically analyse.

Introduction

Defense Acquisition Council (DAC) is the top decision making body regarding defense procurement in India. It is chaired by Defense Minister. Recently, it released Defense Procurement Policy, 2016.

Major Changes:

- 1.Acquisition schemes are broadly classified as, 'Buy', 'Buy and Make', and 'Make'. 'Buy' is further categorised as 'Buy (Indian indigenously designed, developed and manufactured—IDDM)', 'Buy (Indian)', and 'Buy (Global)'.
- 2.'Buy & Make' essentially is initial procurement of equipment in Fully Formed (FF) state followed by indigenous production through Transfer of Technology (ToT).
- 3.Buy Indian or IDDM must have at least 40% indigenous content. 'Make' portion of the contract has to be minimum 50%.
- 4.'Buy (Global)' is outright purchase of equipment from foreign vendors and the Government to Government route may be adopted. Ministry of Defence will spell out 15 years Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP), the 5 years Services Capital Acquisition Plan (SCAP) and Annual Acquisition Plan (AAP) for clarity.
- 5.Appointment of 'strategic partners' for manufacturing equipment like aircraft, warships, helicopters, submarines, tanks, etc., based on technology from foreign vendors will be a priority.
- 6.The 'Make' procedure will see the government reimbursing 90% of the development cost.
- 7.After successfully developing a prototype, if the vendor does not get an order, even his 10% expenditure would be refunded. DPP-2016 liberalises the 'fast track' procurement of urgently needed equipment.
- 8.Increase in the offset baseline from Rs 300 crore to Rs 2,000 crore. However, even beyond that, the policy promises to make the defence market more lucrative for Indian industry.

Impetus to Indigenization

Through, putting emphasis on building indigenous products, it is expected that companies which wants to win to win that defense tender, will invest in India. DPP 2016 may lead to,

1. Significant technology transfer as more defense companies will built manufacturing bases in India.
2. Development of defense complexes in JV (Joint Venture) with Indian companies and global manufacturing powerhouse.
3. Strategic autonomy of India in defense sector. Currently, India is too much dependent on foreign defense partners for its weapon trade.
4. Ancillary Industries connected to defense industry will develop. It will lead to growth in manufacturing bases.

Critical Analysis

However, there are challenges in indigenization:

1. DPP 2016, falls far short of the expectations raised by the “Make in India” push that aims to transform the country into a global manufacturing hub.
2. The DPP is noticeable for the absence of Chapter VII, titled ‘Strategic Partners and Partnerships’, which the Defense Minister said would be notified separately. Under Strategic Partnerships, select Indian private companies were to be given preferential status in major defense projects.
3. The inability of the Centre to finalize a credible policy to radically increase indigenous military manufacturing is a sure sign that India will remain heavily dependent on defense imports.
4. Other factors like infrastructure, govt policies might not be ready for building high technology defense sector.
5. Unavailability of highly skilled work force that could be employed in such sectors.

Hence, it can be said that though Indigenization is our requirement in defense sector, it should be accompanied by capacity building of our domestic industries and human resources.

Best answer: Ankita

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4. The 7-pronged strategy 'Indradhanush' was announced last year to improve the condition of India's state-run banks. What are the components and features of this strategy? Which additional measures have been taken recently? Discuss.

SYNOPSIS:

Besieged by the problem of rising NPAs, deteriorating governance of banks and increased political interference in its functioning, the Government appointed P J Nayak committee (director of Axis bank) to look into problems of PSBs based on which Government formulated Indradhanush, 7 point formula to overcome present crisis and rectify ills ailing PSBs.

According to Economic Survey 2015, Indian banks face problems on both the policy and structural sides.

- **Policy issues**– Banks face what has been termed as 'double financial repression'- issues with policies of Statutory Liquidity Ratio and Private Sector Lending policies
- **Structural issues**– Governance issues, rising stressed assets (Non- Performing Assets) and lack of diverse funding sources for infrastructure.

Components of Mission Indradhanush

- Mission Indradhanush is a 7-pronged plan to address the challenges faced by public sector banks (PSBs). Many of the measures taken were suggested by P J Nayak committee on Banking sector reforms as indicated.
- The 7 parts include appointments, Banks board bureau, capitalisation, de-stressing, empowerment, framework of accountability and governance reforms (ABCDEFG)
- **Appointments** – separation of posts of CEO and MD to check excess concentration of power and smoothen the functioning of banks; also induction of talent from private sector (recommendation of P J Nayak Committee)
- **Bank Boards Bureau** – will replace the appointments board of PSBs.
 - It will advise the banks on how to raise funds and how to go ahead with mergers and acquisitions.

- It will also hold bad assets of public sector banks.
- It will be a step into eventual transition of the bureau into a bank holding company. It will separate the functioning of the banks from the government by acting as a middle link.
- The bureau will have three ex-officio members and three expert members, in addition to the Chairman.
- **Capitalisation**
 - Capitalisation of the banks by inducing Rs 70,000 crore into the banks in the next 4 years
 - Banks are in need of capitalisation due to high NPAs and due to need to meet the new BASEL- III norms
- **De-stressing**
 - Solve issues in the infrastructure sector to check the problem of stressed assets in banks
- **Empowerment**
 - Greater autonomy for banks; more flexibility for hiring manpower
- **Framework of accountability**
 - The banks will be assessed on the basis of new **key performance indicators**. These **quantitative** parameters such as NPA management, return on capital, growth and diversification of business and financial inclusion as well as **qualitative** parameters such as human resource initiatives and strategic steps to improve assets quality.
- **Governance Reforms**
 - GyanSangam conferences between government officials and bankers for resolving issues in banking sector and chalking out future policy.

RECENT INITIATIVES TO STRENGTHEN BANKING SECTOR:

1. Asset quality review by banks under aegis of RBI to nip the problem of NPAs in the bud.
2. Other initiatives like S4A (scheme for sustainable structuring of stressed assets) by RBI tackle problems of large borrowers
3. SDR initiative (strategic debt restructuring) for converting debt into equity has also been received well
4. 5:25 formula extend loans for large projects to up to 25 years while refinancing them every 5 years.
5. Formation of Joint lenders forum to suggest deadlines for stressed assets problem.
6. Government is in process to set up an Public Sector Asset Rehabilitation Agency (PARA) in lines of a bad bank to take over large loans
7. A three member Banks Board Bureau has been formed under former CAG Vinod Rai to suggest names for top posts in PSBs

8. Merger of SBI & associate banks to form large banking conglomerates with other PSBs to follow suit for consolidation and easy monitoring of the sector
9. Other notable initiatives include formation of Insolvency and bankruptcy board of India (IBBI) and Financial stability and development council (FSDC)
10. have brought a modicum of hope to the banking sector and has set in path of rehabilitation so that the banking sector by self-diagnosis and treatment can get back to being the robust backbone of the Indian economy and set a global example.

BEST ANSWER: KARTIK

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5. There has been an impetus on commissioning high speed trains in the country. Why high speed trains are required? Discuss. Also enumerate the steps taken by the government in this regard.

Introduction

India has the fourth-largest rail network in the world. Considering the size, scale of operations and technology, it is appropriate that the high speed trains are introduced. High speed rail has operational speeds in excess of 200 km/h. The Indian government is planning to introduce high speed trains. At the same time, it intends to raise the average speed of the existing trains by diverting the freight traffic to the dedicated corridors.

Main Body

Why high speed trains are required?

1. Travelling is often considered as unproductive. Reduction of travel time can allow people to do more work in a given period of time. It can also decrease freight time considerably. This will make our industries and plants more efficient and demand responsive.
2. Increasing the rail speed can allow more trains on the same track. It will result in better capacity utilization.
3. This can attract more consumers which have migrated to other means of transportation like roads. This will enhance railway revenues in the future.

4. This can also solve the congestion issues in the big cities. Now the people can travel from peri-urban areas to urban conglomeration on a daily basis.
5. Any such move will increase our overall productivity and make India more attractive to beneficial foreign investments. This in future will increase our export potential.
6. Technology absorption will also require large-scale skill upgradation hence more jobs
7. Increased connectivity with high speed acts as a catalyst for various industries like perishable food industries.
8. Given the low density of highways and low development of airway infrastructure, the onus falls on developing high speed railways.

Government Initiatives

Government is taking multiple initiatives as investment in infrastructure and railways; this will have a multiplier effect.

1. As part of the high-speed train project, a high-speed training centre is proposed
2. high speed rail corporation to undertake feasibility studies and techno-economic investigations and prepare Detailed Project Reports and Bankability Reports of selected corridors for introduction of High Speed trains in India
3. collaboration with Japan for high speed trains Gatiman express is India's first semi highspeed train ,Tejas trains
4. Mission Raftar :measures are being taken to raise average speed of both passenger carrying trains and freight carrying trains
- 5.Proposal for Maglev train a magnetic levitation train

However the steps have been criticized as well due to the following reasons,

1. Existing railways infrastructure and conditions of passenger trains have to be improved before thinking of high speed railways
2. Existing schemes in other transport sectors like UDAN in airways will make the use of high speed railways redundant
3. The bullet train project will be too costly for India in the long run
4. Entire country needs to be connected with railways before thinking of high speed railways e.g no railway connectivity to many of the the North eastern states.

Conclusion

The implementation of high speed trains have few issues as the existing tracks are not suitable for such high speeds and replacing them will require more funds and suitable alternative

transport mode till the construction is done. Implementation while addressing these issues will reap more benefits for demographic dividend.

Best Answer: Gayatri

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6. The Government recently cancelled the registration of NGOs which violated the FCRA act 2010. Though illegality of conduct must be punished, the need of the hour is a structured dialogue between the Government and Civil society. Elucidate.

SYNOPSIS:

The recent crackdown on NGOs for allegedly violating provisions of FCRA act 2010(which monitors foreign contribution to voluntary sector) has resulted in cancellation of licences of more than 20,000 NGOs. Though the act has been termed hasty, arbitrary and discriminatory by prominent personalities, the **Home ministry** under whose aegis the FCRA is implemented mentions the **IB report** in which the bureau terms many NGOs are involved in stalling of developmental projects etc.

Prominent amongst them is **Compassion International** which is allegedly involved in forceful conversions which can cause communal tensions impacting the internal security.

Similarly the **CBI** says though there are about 29 lakh NGOs registered only 2.1 lakh of them file **annual financial statements**, similarly many NGOs are registered under FEMA but continue to disburse money to other sub groups which is gross violation of law.

Even **Supreme Court** has lamented lack of Uniform law to regulate the voluntary sector and has asked the **Law Commission** to look into it.

WAY FORWARD:

But the blanket ban of NGOs including many prominent ones like Green Peace, Ford foundation as has been done by MHA is not the way to go as pointed out by many of them are involved in filling out development lacunae . Many are involved in strengthening democratic process eg: **ADR**, Women and Child welfare like CRY, Help age India. Many are involved in formulating reports used by Government for monitoring eg: **ASER** by **Pratham**, rural

indebtedness survey by CDS etc. **P.Sainath** opines that the misunderstanding is due to **trustdeficit**.

Civil society is important for any dialogue in a nation. In the present situation, every Government needs to look into what is in the larger interest of the states and the nation. Every case should be measured in accordance with the rules and regulations which are in place. Public interest has lot of grey areas. Who decides public interest is a matter of concern. These are the times when Government spokesperson should come forward and clarify why these decisions were made. This **ambiguity** and **lack of information** is something which ferments all kinds of wrong information.

NGOs are not above scrutiny. FCRA cancellation only means that the NGOs cannot get foreign funds. They do not cease to exist. All NGOs cannot be painted with the same brush. There are organizations which are also doing good work. There needs to be **self-regulation** and a body which takes care of monitoring staffed by people from civil society as well. (This idea was mooted as a **National Accreditation council** under National policy on voluntary sector, 2007) There should be a discourse working towards nation building.

BEST ANSWER: ALEX ROD

NGO's play an important role in democracy as – service provider, value generation, community building and as an advocacy group.

NGO's are playing an important role in areas like Human Rights, Environment, Social Service etc. However there are a number of problem in the functioning of NGO's:

1. Accountability -not filing annual returns. As per CBI, out of 30 lakh NGO's, 8-10% have filed their returns.
2. Misuse of Funds – like Zakir Naik's Islamic Research Foundation .
3. Regulation – (i) strict rules under FCRA (ii) conflict between FEMA Act and FCRA Act – NGO's are registered under both act and it bring conflict between Finance and Home Ministry.
4. Change in Definition of Public Servant under Lokpal Act to include NGO's has been criticised.
Government has taken certain measures like -amending FCRA rules, bringing NITI Aayog Darpan portal to register them and has proposed new rules to regulate NGO's.

Can Dialogue work?

1. Above measures were one sided and there is a need for structured dialogue. For e.g, in 2002, Planning Commission had an extensive discussion with NGO's and the result was National Policy on Voluntary Organisation(NPVO),2007.
2. A very important recommendation of NPVO was to set up a National Accreditation Council(NAC) on the lines of Bar Council of India. This was recommended again by Second ARC which has not been implemented. NAC would have representatives from both Government and NGO's there by promoting a dialogue with the objective to promote norms, best practices, protect autonomy of NGO's.
3. NITI Aayog through its DARPAN portal can start a comprehensive dialogue on similar lines what Planning Commission did in 2002 and bring measures to solve above cited problem. For e.g. comprehensive law for NGO's just like firms have Companies Act.
4. Again it is only by dialogue that some self-regulatory bodies can emerge which is important as NGO's work in diverse sectors like Human rights, environment, social service and it is impossible to have single approach to regulate all.
5. Another good example is the National Advisory Council of UPA-I which had civil society members where Government and NGO's worked together on many issues. Such body can be reactivated.

A vibrant civil society is important for democracy to flourish and can only happen if Government and NGO's work together.

7. The government has set up a committee under Shankar Acharya to explore if India should continue with the current Apr 1 to Mar 31 Financial Year. What are your views on the issue? Discuss.

Introduction

Many macro economic reforms have been initiated in recent past. Presentation of budget in February beginning, merger of railway budget into general budget, introduction of GST are few of them. The government has set up a committee under Shankar Acharya to explore if India should continue with the current Apr 1 to Mar 31 Financial Year. The committee needs to take into consideration various factors, its benefits and impact on all stakeholders of any such change.

Main body

The possible benefits of changing financial year are,

1. On average crop periods do overlap with financial year but not the loan periods. A change can bring positive effect in dissipation of loans.
2. This new arrangement will have the benefits of handling agriculture crop periods. Agriculture contributes to about 15% GDP and 58% of income in rural areas. The drought periods are usually between June and September; this will help in actual agriculture estimation and consequent policy correction.
3. Statistics would be more meaningful as they will overlap finance and development of one particular year.
4. Convenience of the legislatures for transacting budget work, a positive result can be seen here as budget will be better targeted.
5. It synergizes with more than 156 countries that follow the Jan- Dec calendar year.

However there are some concerns on shifting from present financial year,

1. Administrative inconvenience as many laws will need to be amended to shift to this system. For eg. Laws on taxation.
2. In the short term it may cause difficulties in the working of the government. These include an early budget presentation in November and reworking of parliament sessions.
3. Market is already stressed, especially when economy is adjusting to GST.
4. Same calendar can hamper business as holidays and festive season will overlap financial year.

Conclusion

In 1984, the LK Jha committee had recommended that the financial year should start from January mainly with reference to the impact of South-West monsoon on the economy. Looking at these factors changing the financial year seems to be a good idea in terms of better targeting and monitoring. There will be some issues in terms of management but it will also bring new zeal and enthusiasm among all. A discussion with industry experts can be helpful before taking final call.

Best answer: RSP

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8. In a historic decision for women, the Shani Shingnapur temple authorities allowed women devotees to enter the inner sanctum of the temple to offer prayers. The debunking of the 400 years old tradition is not only a symbolic victory for the champions of gender equality but an important milestone in the struggle for women rights. Elucidate.

SYNOPSIS:

The temple entry movement led by the **Bhumata brigade** of **Trupti Desai** along with similar movements in **Shabarimala** and **Haji Ali Dargah** is seen as breaking of religious shackles long held in the hands of men of higher echelons.

Though many naysayers see this victory as a mere symbolic one due to presence of discrimination against women in almost all the field right from **womb to tomb** it represents a significant step in the long documented struggle for women's rights and fight against patriarchal system and attitudes in India.

The movement for equality began in the early 18th century with Raja Ram Mohan Roy's fight against the tradition of sati, later carried on by notable social reformers like Eshwara Chandra Vidya Sagar, Jyotiba Phule , Kandukuri Veeresalingam in the field of women's education granting them basic right and treating them at par with women .

Similarly legal reforms like increasing age of consent, providing voting rights took place consequently .In the 20th century formation of women's association led by women such as Mary Carpenter, Durgabai Deshmukh etc. transferred the leadership to Women .

Later their participation in freedom struggle was a significant milestone led by Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, Aruna Asaf Ali etc which proved their indomitable spirit .

Post-Independence women's movement focussed on getting equal rights with Men seen as by rise of feminist movements, for economic and political equality, chipko with its eco – feminist theme and rise of SEWA by Ela Bhatt brought women self-sustainability and confidence into the forefront.

The Temple entry movement thus is a gradual culmination of Women's right for equality (provided by Article 14), right against discrimination (Article 15) , right to life(21) right for religious freedom (Art. 26) .

This step which is also backed by Supreme court and Bombay high court can give a right focus and path for women's movement which was fragmented and lost steam post liberalisation and allow them to achieve greater political participation (women's bill in Parliament) , economic rights (equal wages and removal of Glass ceiling)along with end to arbitrary and discriminatory

religious laws (Triple Talaq , lack of property rights etc.) along with gender sensitisation can achieve the long quest for equality.

BEST ANSWER: ABHIJIT

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9. Why does India want the membership of the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG)? What benefits will accrue if India gets the membership of NSG? What are the hurdles? Discuss.

Introduction

Nuclear supplier group is a group of 48 nuclear supplier countries that seeks to prevent the nuclear proliferation by controlling the export of materials, equipment and technology that can be used to manufacture nuclear weapons. NSG was formed with the objective of averting the proliferation of nuclear weapons and preventing acts of nuclear terrorism.

Main Body

Why to become NSG member?

1. Integrate India in the Global Non-Proliferation regime and reiterate its non-proliferation credentials.
2. NSG is the rule making body for Global Nuclear Order – by becoming a member India could influence the rules made by it – as happened in between 2010 and 2013 when certain restrictions were imposed on Non-NPT countries.

Membership of NSG helps india in the following manner,

1. Membership to the NSG will essentially increase India's access to state-of-the-art technology from the other members of the Group.
2. Access to technology and being allowed to produce nuclear equipment will give a boost to the Make in India program. That will, in turn, boost the economic growth of our country.
3. As per India's INDC under the Paris Climate agreement, we have committed to reducing dependence on fossil fuels and ensuring that 40% of its energy is sourced from renewable and

clean sources. In order to achieve this target, we need to scale up nuclear power production. This can only happen if India gains access to the NSG.

4. Namibia is the fourth-largest producer of uranium and it agreed to sell the nuclear fuel to India in 2009. However, that hasn't happened, as Namibia has signed Pelindaba Treaty, which essentially controls the supply of uranium from Africa to the rest of the world. If India joins the NSG, such reservations from Namibia are expected to melt away.

5. This would boost India's efforts to demand and get access to the membership of permanent security council of UNO.

Some of the hurdles being faced by India,

1. India is not a member of nuclear non proliferation treaty which is pre requisite to join NSG.
2. Despite being supported by most of the countries including US, Russia, UK and France but it lacks support from countries like China.
3. Demand from other non NPT countries like Israel and Pakistan as well to access to NSG membership.
4. Some non-proliferation hardliners (some EU countries) – NSG was actually brought after India's Pokran-I and some countries see it against the spirit of NSG.

Factors in favor of India's membership,

1. France got membership in the elite group without signing the NPT.
2. Commitment to nonproliferation: India's commitment to bifurcate its civilian and military nuclear programs along with its nonproliferation record ensured indigenously developed technology is not shared with other countries.
3. Transparency: India has also ratified an Additional Protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which means that its civilian reactors are under IAEA safeguards and open for inspections.

Conclusion

The recently framed draft proposal for accepting new members into the Nuclear Suppliers Group increases India's chances of entry into NSG. It's a welcome development for India as NSG membership would definitely boost the economic and strategic development in the future. It will also pave the way for clean energy initiatives and continued focus to achieve our commitments to reduce the carbon footprint pledged during the climate summit.

Best Answer: Red Fang

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10. Last year, the RTI law completed 11 years of its enactment. What is your assessment of the performance of the RTI law in these years? What are the concerns? Discuss.

SYNOPSIS:

Introduction

RTI, 2005 has brought a paradigm shift in the transparency and accountability in India. Enacted with much fanfare and hope RTI act 2005 turned out to be the most widely discussed legislation by the citizenry of India.

Assessment of RTI act:

In over one decade of being it's in force, ordinary citizens have used this law to question various acts of commission and omission on part of government. It played big role in exposing the Adarsh scam, irregularity in MGNREGA and other schemes. The largest role played by RTI has been in *institutionalising social audits* as an implicit part of governance. Indeed, RTI has been the weapon of the weak and set India's accountability landscape in a ground-up manner.

What the RTI Act has managed to achieve in the last decade is to unleash a silent citizen's movement for government accountability across the country. The RAAG report found that on an average, 4-5 million applications are filed under the Act every year. But this has not been without its negative consequences.

Areas of concern:

1. Inefficient implementation has delayed the settlement of information appeals. An October 2014 report brought out by the RTI Assessment and Analysis Group (RAAG) showed a waiting period of up to 60 years in Madhya Pradesh and up to 18 years in West Bengal, calculated on the basis of current rates of pendency in Information Commissions
2. Forty activists who had demanded crucial information, with the potential to expose corruption within the government, had been killed. This has necessitated supplementary laws such as whistleblower protection laws to ensure protection for information activists. Which has been further diluted by the 2015 amendments leading to victimisation.

3. Over a period, the enthusiasm over RTI has waned. Political parties have resisted all efforts to bring them in RTI ambit which is a huge roadblock for true effectiveness despite a **2013** order of **CIC** citing them as “**public authorities.**”
4. Appointments to several posts in Information Commissions have been delayed. In fact the post of CIC was vacant for a period of 18 months between 2014 and 2016 when the new government took over despite numerous representations.
5. This apart, RTI has been blatantly misused also. In the initial years, the act was used by the bureaucrats to know about transfers and postings. The government also started putting out less information on a *suo motu*
6. In current times, the RTI Act, media and judicial activism etc. are proving helpful in bringing about greater transparency and accountability in the functioning of the government. But at the same time, it is also observed that these mechanisms are misused. Further, the officers are now afraid of taking prompt and speedy decisions. Thus, this dichotomy between the need for transparency and accountability and protecting honest civil servants from undue harassment needs to be resolved.
7. Many RTI applications are blocked under **section 8(2)** of the act citing the reason of National security the ambit of which remains unclear.
8. The judiciary which is a front runner in implementing RTI via various laws and interpretations and also has urged Political parties and RBI to come under it has itself insulated itself from the ambit of RBI which makes the entire judicial appointments process more opaque.

RTI act is one of the landmark legislations in India which has brewed a social revolution and has played a vital role in the governance with a few structural changes in legislation, robust grievance redressal mechanism and with political and judicial will can usher in an era of transparent, accountable and participatory governance.

BEST ANSWER: RED FANG

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11. What is green tea? What are its benefits? Discuss.

Introduction

Green tea is a type of tea that is made from *Camellia sinensis* leaves that have not undergone the same withering and oxidation process used to make oolong and black tea. Green tea originated in China, but its production has spread to many countries in Asia.

Main Body

Green tea is a type of tea that get its name from the green color unprocessed and unfermented tea leaves are brewed. The differences between green and black tea are,

- 1) Green tea is unprocessed and unfermented, whereas as latter is giving it a colour and flavour transformation.
- 2) Green tea is grown at higher altitudes than black tea.
- 3) Factors such as climate and soil can also be reason for some of the differences.

Some Potential Side Effects of Green Tea

1. Tea and tea extract contain caffeine. Caffeine can cause insomnia, anxiety, irritability, upset stomach, nausea or frequent urination in some people.
2. In extremely high doses, caffeine can raise blood pressure, cause seizures, delirium, or irregular heart rhythms.
3. In addition, people with Heart problems and Kidney disorders should not consume green tea.

However, unlike black tea it is higher value product thus gaining higher income for its growers. This can help Indian farmers to gain much better market prices.

Conclusion

Tea is one of the most popular beverages across the globe. The awareness about health benefits of green tea has increases its demand in recent times. The government should take efforts to promote increase in its production and consumption.

Best Answer: RSP

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12. The disaster preparedness for floods in India is in dire need of an overhaul. Do you agree? Substantiate in the light of the ongoing devastations being caused by floods across India.

SYNOPSIS:

The **Water Resources Institute**(WRI) report ranks India as the **most flood prone** country in the world with as much as **4 crore hectares** and **4.84 million people** prone to flood which calls in for an alert and robust flood monitoring system.

Presence of Centre water commission (CWC) established in 1945, Brahmaputra board, Ganga flood control authority, Farraka barrage authority were formulated to control floods within their jurisdiction the NDMA was established to provide a holistic, coordinated response for prevention and mitigation of floods.

The recent occurrence of floods repeatedly earlier in Chennai and recently in Gujarat and Assam due to culmination of effects of climate change and anthropogenic activities is an indication that the entire mechanism for flood preparedness needs a major overhaul at both policy, infrastructure and implementation level by the authorities and the public in particular.

POLICY OVERHAUL:

The absence of flood control in any of the three lists in the Constitution is a major flaw which does not assign the responsibility to neither state nor centre leading to confusion and shirking of responsibility there is an urgent need to add it to concurrent list.

Interlinking of rivers

- Interlinking is one of the alternatives and has been deliberated by many scientists. It was found very useful. Social scientists have also approved of it even the SC has asked the centre to consider it at the earliest.

Coordination

- National Disaster Response Force is deployed pro-actively where the floods are anticipated. The national force and state forces have enough experience in handling such kind of disasters.
- The national, state and local government machinery is coordinating with each other to tackle the flood situation.
- People have been taken to safer places, relief camps have been started in few places, necessary troops and relief personnel have been deployed etc.

- This is a good example of synchronisation between national, state and local government along with engagement of the local people in terms of addressing the current need of relief management.

Decentralised financing

- The national government has decentralised the financial operation of the relief.
- 70-75% of the disbursement takes place at the state level.

Long term steps

- India needs to take information at a regular basis from the neighbouring countries- China for Brahmaputra and Nepal for Kosi. They are also flood affected countries and flood at upper catchment is gliding down to lower catchment, i.e. India.
- Gol has signed an agreement with these countries. India needs to relook such agreements so that flood situations can be avoided.
- Necessary to revisit the disaster management approach to make drought and flood management more holistic in nature. The districts or states have surplus water but do not have the capacity to absorb and store the water. Sometimes, even the same state, district and talukas are simultaneously affected by flood and drought.
- Watershed management, rejuvenating the pond etc. are development initiatives which have to be rigorously implemented.
- Forming a de-siltation plan: The river is one of the important ingredients when it comes to drainage. The de-siltation plan is very expensive but it is needed.
- Idea is that a holistic plan should engage all the development partners. It should try to address all the issues and modify it as per local needs.

Following the scientific approach

- Managing floods requires a sound understanding of the patterns that rivers such as the Ganga and its tributaries display during the monsoon.
- Governmental understanding of the problem generally relies more on ground-level surveys and anecdotal reporting than advanced techniques such as mapping based on satellite imagery and Geographic Information Systems.
- There should be a **silt management policy**.
- **Flood plain zoning** is a must to be included in all stages of preparedness and also need to educate people at the local levels.

The **Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction**(2015-2030) must be implemented completely involving adopting integrated and inclusive institutional measures so as to work towards preventing vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery and strengthen resilience by inclusion of private sector and local population to prevent such mishaps in the future.

BEST ANSWER : RSP

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13. What are the key changes in the new policy for oil and gas exploration? Why were these changes introduced? Who will benefit from these changes? Elucidate.

Introduction

The government has recently released a new policy for oil and gas exploration known as Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licencing Policy. It is aimed to make the best use of country's limited hydrocarbon reserves so as to reduce the increasing dependance on imports. It replaces the NELP that was in place earlier.

Key changes in HELP

- 1) Open Acreage Policy- Explorers can bid fro any block from the designated areas
- 2) Uniform licensing policy- Single license for all type of hydrocarbon exploration like il, gas, methane etc.
- 3) Change from Profit sharing model to Revenue sharing model
- 4) Concessional royalty for hydrocarbons explored from difficult areas like deep water
- 5) Pricing freedom by adopting arms length policy
- 6) On the tap application

Need for the changes

- 1) The CAG report criticized the Profit sharing model. In KG Basin deal reliance was reducing their production due to lower oil/gas price hence causing loss to the government.

- 2) The Kelkar committee report had pointed out issue in contract management in profit sharing deals.
- 3) Rangarajan committee had suggested adopting revenue sharing model.
- 4) The open acreage and uniform licensing policy is expected to boost investment in exploration sector.
- 5) The policy aims to increase domestic production of hydrocarbons reducing dependence on imports.

Who will benefit

- 1) The government is assured of revenue from extracted hydrocarbon throughout as it does not have to wait for companies to recoup their investments.
- 2) The explorers have advantage of open acreage policy where they can extract any hydrocarbon under their allotted block
- 3) Concessional royalty for deep water area will make it attractive.
- 4) The freedom for pricing will be beneficial for the bidders.

Conclusion

These changes will increase the interest among E&P companies. More competition means better price for the government from bidding. Exploiting local reserves can reduce the import cost which in turn will help the consumer ultimately. Hence, suppliers, facilitators and consumers are benefited from this policy.

Best Answer: Pranoti

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14. What are the salient features of the Real Estate Bill? Why was the Bill required? Also discuss the challenges in the enforcement of the proposed law.

SYNOPSIS:

India's notoriously unregulated and highly murky real estate sector characterised by non-transparent paper work and delays got a modicum of hope with the passing of Real estate regulation act recently by the Parliament.

SALIENT FEATURES:

- 1) It establishes the State Real Estate Regulatory Authority for that particular state as the government body to be approached for redressal of grievances against any builder. This will happen once every state ratifies this Act and establishes a state authority on the lines set up in the law.
- 2) This law vests authority on the real estate regulator to govern both residential and commercial real estate transactions.
- 3) This Act obliges the developer to park 70% of the project funds in a dedicated bank account. This will ensure that developers are not able to invest in numerous new projects with the proceeds of the booking money for one project, thus delaying completion and handover to consumers.
- 4) This law makes it mandatory for developers to post all information on issues such as project plan, layout, government approvals, land title status, sub-contractors to the project, schedule for completion with the State Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) and then in effect pass this information on to the consumers.
- 5) The current practice of selling on the basis of ambiguous super built-up area for a real estate project will come to a stop as this law makes it illegal. Carpet area has been clearly defined in the law.
- 6) Currently, if a project is delayed, then the developer does not suffer in any way. Now, the law ensures that any delay in project completion will make the developer liable to pay the same interest as the EMI being paid by the consumer to the bank back to the consumer.
- 7) The maximum jail term for a developer who violates the order of the appellate tribunal of the RERA is three years with or without a fine.
- 8) The buyer can contact the developer in writing within one year of taking possession to demand after sales service if any deficiency in the project is noticed.
- 9) The developer cannot make any changes to the plan that had been sold without the written consent of the buyer. This puts paid to a common and unpopular practice by developers to increase the cost of project.
- 10) Every project measuring more than 500 square metres or more than eight apartments will have to be registered with the RERA.

WHY SUCH AN ACT WAS NEEDED:

The real estate sector contributes to nearly 9% of our GDP but even then the sector remains highly unregularised, opaque and fluctuating this step is seen as a long pending reform to protect the interest of the buyers and give them a proper appellate structure and will also build more trust in the buyer-seller relationship and being more transparent will benefit the sector in the longer run by bringing in more investment especially FDI and thus benefit the economy.

CHALLENGES:

- Strong builder lobby and nexus with bureaucrats and politicians may prevent any meaningful reform from happening
- Many of the states are yet to implement the Act in total, state has been full autonomy in implementation many fear will lead to dilution of rules.
- In many states, the project may not cover the existing project which may render the reform useless.
- Rate of interest in many states like Rajasthan and Maharashtra has been fixed too low which may not prevent the errant builders from finishing the project on time.
- Teething issues, since much of the work is Online, there needs to be a robust IT infrastructure to depend upon which may cause delay.
- The clause of 70% amount to be held may lead to lack of funds from builders side which may cause further delays.
- The definition of post construction defects within 5 years are still unclear in most of the states.

The RERA seen as a long pending reform needs to be implemented fully in order to revive confidence in the sector and boost up revenues in the sector and to be truly transformative both on paper and on the ground.

BEST ANSWER : LINCOLN

The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act 2016 was much needed law to regulate the booming real estate sector in the country. It aims to bring in transparency and accountability in the sector.

Salient features of the Act

- 1) It sets up Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) at state level and Real Estate Appellate Tribunals above it at state level.
- 2) All projects of at least 500 sq m or 8 flats will have to register with RERA.

- 3) 70% of the sale proceeds have to deposited in an escrow account.
- 4) The details of plans etc. have to uploaded on the RERA website. Quarterly progress reports have to published. Any change in plans will needs at least 66% of buyers agreeing to it.
- 5) Single window clearance have been introduced for projects. RERA will have to decide on application 30 days else deemed approved.
- 6) Real Estate agents have to be registered at RERA.
- 7) Violation of provision of Act will lead to imprisonment of 3 years and or penalty of 10% of cost of projects.
- 8) Builders will be liable for any defects up to 5 years after hand over of the property.

Need for the law

- 1) Lack of transparency in the project details had affected many buyer due to delay of projects wrong information etc.
- 2) Housing for All and other projects will see boom in the sector needing strong regulator.
- 3) Tackles the information asymmetry between builders and buyers.
- 4) Will help attract investment in the sector due to the transparency.

Challenges in enforcement

- 1) The enforcement have to be done at state level. Many states have not set up RERA yet.
- 2) Strong politician builder nexus has lead to diluting the enforcement provisions as seen in Karnataka.
- 3) It is applicable on on going projects too making things difficult for the projects.
- 4) 70% of cost in escrow account will leave very less money with builders leading to higher borrowing from banks.
- 5) The Act is not clear on delays due to permits from other departments like electricity water etc, Builders will be penalised for such delays which should not be the case.
- 6) Commercial real estate is also under the ambit of the bill adding to regulatory burden. The power asymmetry in commercial sector is less.

RERA is truly a revolutionary Act which will bring in transparency and accountability from builders and empower the buyers. But the dilution of provision have to tackled and hurdles in execution due to other permit delays need to factored in when he Act is implemented.

15. The cyber security ecosystem in the country requires to be more robust and agile in order to realise the objectives of Digital India. In view of the statement, examine the necessity of having a National Encryption Policy. What has been the recent controversy over the draft National Encryption Policy?

Introduction

“Encryption as the process of encoding messages or information in such a way that only authorised parties can read it.”

The Draft National Encryption Policy was introduced under Section 84 A of the Information Technology Act (2000). Policy’s objectives were,

1. Provide confidentiality of information in cyber space.
2. Protection of sensitive or proprietary information for individuals & businesses.
3. Ensuring reliability and integrity of nationally critical information systems and networks
4. Promotion of cryptography research and development in the country

Necessity of having a National Encryption Policy

1. Encryption policy is urgently required as a national policy, This is to promote citizen confidence – citizen require strong encryption for data protection and privacy protection.
2. Continued economic growth of Indian industries and business in an increasingly global economy requires availability of cryptography to all legitimate users that include employees and business associates of the corporate sector.

Draft Policy Provisions

The policy sets out its applicability to different groups. By and large, there is the government (G), businesses (B) and consumers (C). The language used for B2B, B2C and C2C transactions is more or less the same.

By and large, there are three requirements: 1. Encryption algorithms and key sizes will be prescribed by the Government through notifications from time to time. (This could mean minimum standards but more likely, it will involve maximum level of encryption permitted)

2. On demand, the user should be able to reproduce the same plain text and encrypted text pairs using the software / hardware used to produce the encrypted text from the given plain text.

3. Such plain text information has to be stored by the user/organisation/agency for 90 days from the date of transaction and made available to law enforcement agencies as and when demanded in line with the provisions of the laws of the country.

Recent controversy

1. Many cyber experts criticized it as “Anti-Privacy” draft. The policy demands storing of all communication of 90 days and hand it over when demanded failing which would attract even imprisonment.
2. Storing passwords in plain text for 90 days make them prone to hacking-More cyber crime incidents severely compromise individual information and privacy.
3. The legal action route suggested is not in compliance with the gender justice compliance. Women are already vulnerable in cyber space. Draft is in opposite direction to India’s global gender justice commitment.
4. While many nations are joining “Privacy protection” (Eg: UK’s “Right to Foget”), the policy is a step in security compromise.

The policy is indeed necessary to ensure security but intrusion or compromise of basic human rights is not a sign of India’s vibrant democracy.

Best Answer: Anant

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16. While India strives to better it’s record on the front of indigenisation of technology, the domestic ecosystem is not conducive for measures like joint development and transfer of technology. Critically comment.

SYNOPSIS

With India getting the tag of largest defence importer according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and steady decline in Manufacturing sector , the Government has set itself on the path of Indigenisation by launching flagship initiatives such as Make in India, New Defence Procurement Policy based on the Dhirendra Singh committee recommendations .

But the renewed thrust on indigenisation needs to have critical technological expertise via foreign collaborations which involves joint ventures and technology transfers but just as they are limited by strategic and geo political considerations there are similarly many limiting domestic factors

DOMESTIC FACTORS:

1. India's poor record in ease of doing business (It ranks 130th in WB index) and delay in getting clearances has deterred foreign ventures from considering JV and tech transfer.
2. The IPR policy with clauses such as 3(d) on incremental innovation, arbitrary use of compulsory licencing clause has also resulted in less JVs in field of pharmaceuticals.
3. The hullabaloo around GM crops and policy flip flops, lack of domestic partners has caused trouble to global agri-giants such as Bayer and Monsanto.
4. Lack of ownership/ management rights in FDI policy is also a major deterrent for many JV from taking off. (Unilateralism)
5. Monopoly of Government sector PSU's in field of Space, Aerospace, Defence has limited the scope of private players to enter into JVs or for technology partnership with foreign partners.
6. Bureaucratic delays and whims, complex laws, regressive taxation policies along with protectionist policies have always been the bane of Indian domestic market which discouraged Foreign JVs.
7. Political climate and policy stability is lacking in India is the opinion curated from across the world.
8. Small market size for innovative products and lack of demand is also a major limiting factor.
9. Human capital issues (lack of large pool of scientists, brain drain, lack of skilled man power, inflexible labour laws) are also factors which prevent technology transfer from happening.

WAY FORWARD:

The Government has now focussed on this critical gap which is preventing India from becoming a technological super power hence the new committee under Amitabh Kant is working for equal foreign strategic autonomy in FDI policy.

Similarly the Reliance – Rafael JV is a landmark in Defence production as it breaks the stranglehold of Government sector and encourages private participation.

New IPR policy, Exit policy, Single window clearances in many states like Maharashtra, Telangana(TS-IPASS) are all seen as steps in the right direction.

There is also a need to set up special R&D zones on the lines of SEZ to encourage foreign players to venture into JVs and technology transfers.

BEST ANSWER : SAURABH GARG

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17. The death of children in Gorakhpur due to sheer negligence and poor administrative response is a blot for 21st century India and a matter of great concern. Comment.

Introduction:

More than 60 children, a majority of them suffering from Acute encephalitis syndrome, died in one of the government hospital in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh.

What led to such tragedy?

The tragedy was a fallout of sheer negligence and poor administrative response.

Sheer negligence:

- As per the primary reports the primary reason behind the incident was lack of oxygen cylinders on account of unpaid dues.
- The newborns can be easily managed by small cylinders that are easily available in the market. All government hospitals have a contingency fund for such emergencies. The BRD hospital where the incident took place told the government about shortage of funds, however, the government didn't pay heed to it.

Poor administrative response:

- The state government insists that the deaths are not linked to any oxygen shortage, though they are unable to explain why so many children have died in two days.
- Systemic issue within administration is highlighted as the deaths due to encephalitis in Gorakhpur district has been taking place since 1978, yet no such step has been taken to improve the situation.

A blot for 21st century India:

- While India on one hand is world-wide known for medical tourism on the other incidents like this shows apathy towards poor people and those located in rural areas.

- Incidents like this have happened in past too including death of about 13 women in a mass-sterilization camp at Bilaspur. But still we see no improvement in public health system of our country.
- Such incidents lead to erosion of public faith while on one hand the government is trying to promote measures like give up subsidy scheme, pay taxes timely etc. which requires people's trust on government.
- The incident also shows the lack of ethics and morality on the part of government officials. The termination of electricity and oxygen supply for non-payment of bills shows the utter disregard for human lives. Since electricity is essential for any hospital this act shows absence of values and morals on the part of government officials

Issues:

What has happened in Gorakhpur isn't merely about oxygen cylinders and unpaid bills—it is a symptom of many deeper problems.

- India's abysmally **low public spending on healthcare with just 4%** of GDP in 2014.
- **Acute manpower shortage**— The country has only about one doctor for every 1,700 patients whereas the World Health Organization (WHO) prescribes at least one for every 1,000 patients.
- A vast majority of **people do not have health insurance** in a country where the public health system has collapsed.
- **Poor governance**— Weak enforcement of rules on quality and governance.
- **Poor social determinants**— In the case of U.P., the epidemics have their roots in weak social determinants such as housing and sanitation, coupled with ecological changes.
- India lags behind its neighboring nations as well. The infant mortality rate in India in 2015 was 38, according to the World Bank—far better than the 165 in 1960 but lagging comparable countries such as Bangladesh (31), Indonesia (23) and Sri Lanka (08).

Way forward:

- The Medical Council of India (MCI) must be reformed so that health education in country improves.
- In the meantime, more healthcare providers need to be brought into the system, including nurses, optometrists, anaesthetists and AYUSH (ayurveda, yoga and naturopathy, unani, siddha and homoeopathy) workers.
- Improving hospital infrastructure.
- Increasing public health expenditure.
- Providing universal healthcare on the lines of Mexico and Thailand.

Best answer: Red fang

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Also refer: [Gorakhpur Tragedy: Learning lessons](#)

18. Which major sectors contribute the maximum to bad loans or NPAs in India? What is the way out? Analyse.

Introduction: Define NPA.

Non-Performing Assets are credits or loans given by banks on which principle and interest payment is due over 90 days of time as specified by RBI. NPAs have turned out to be the biggest hurdle in banks' development in India.

Body: consists of two parts.

1st part: Major sectors which contribute maximum. Always refer to Economic survey for Economy part for authenticity.

Sectors contributing maximum and reasons for lack of revenue generation from these sectors are:

- Corporate sector: During Boom time they borrowed considerably, then global recession couldn't achieve revenue. To continue operation, they borrowed again but still no return on investments.
- Power sector: Selling at very low rate at 2.4/kwh far below break-even rate of 4/kwh. Also most of the time shortage of coal, inefficient machinery and servicing problem.
- Telecoms: Interest coverage ratio has decreased due to entry of new players which fiercely increased competition and results in price war.
- Mining: Environmental clearance hurdles and licensing issues.
- Other sectors like Metals, textiles, chemicals, engineering etc. are not able to produce enough revenue due to lack of investment in modernization and stand up to competition from foreign entrants.

Way out:

- RBI's three mechanism: ARC, Strategic Debt restructuring, S4A (Strategic structuring of Stressed Assets).
- 5/25: This scheme offers wide window for revival.
- AQR: resolution of problem requires loss recognition.
- PARA: To buy bad loans from banks and let banks perform their core work.
- Others like stop of ever greening of loans, 4R's etc.

Conclusion:

Reason for NPA is insufficient revenue generation which lies in hurdles like Environmental clearance, Red tapism and court issues. If this hurdles like this are cleared then NPA problems will get solved in no time.

Best Answer: Cool Monk

Non-performing assets are such stressed assets which are unable to pay the loan amount and on the verge of default. India is gripped with serious NPA problem of worth 11lakh crore. The sectors which have contributed are:

1. Manufacturing: Due to slump in global rates and dumping of cheap products such as steel Indian manufacturing industry collapsed. Having a long gestation period and high funding requirements make it prone to high NPA issue
2. POWER: Indian discoms are famous for their losses due to T&D losses, low tariff etc.
3. Telecom: Due to Cut-Throat competition in telecom sector prices have slumped. And telecom companies are unable to pay the debt
4. Mining: Mining industry is suffering because of coal block cancellations by SC , then environmental concerns such as NiyamGiri Hills , Odisha project cancelled
5. Other sectors are textile, agriculture which are stressed because of lack of modernization , labor reforms etc

WAY OUT

1. Setup of Public sector assest rehabilitation agency as suggested by economic survey
2. Recent banking Regulation amendment bill giving RBI power to tackle the crisis and consequently RBI targeted biggest 12 defaulters
3. P.J. Nayak committe recommendations such as BBB
4. Environmental regulation, Labore reforms, Wages act , LARR act & other leagl reforms
5. Insolvency and bankruptcy code for easy exit mechanism to tackle CHAKRAVYUH challenge

Implementation of these steps will free up the NPA's and resources can be utilized productively thus enhancing the growth. Revival in world economy will boost further the resolution process.

19. GST is definitely a landmark reform, but it is not the magic pill that cures all economic woes of India. Analyse.

Introduction:

Goods and Services Tax(GST) is an indirect tax which subsumes all other such taxes like VAT, service tax, octroi etc.

GST is definitely a landmark reform

It is so because of following reasons:

- The transparency in the process will reduce tax evasion and thus help improve tax-GDP ratio thereby increasing public revenue.
- Improves overall governance as compliance will improve.
- GST will help improve ease of doing business, by bringing in one nation one tax, GST could be seen as a game changer for logistics sector.
- Increase in revenue for government will result into more public expenditure on social goods like providing universal health care to all and on education etc.

Not a magic pill that cures all economic woes:

- Banking sector is saddled with rising non-performing assets this in turn has hurt their lending capacity and thus less credit for private sector for investment.
- Poor infrastructure- structural constraints like connectivity issues, power sector etc remains.
- Jobless growth continues as per various reports. This puts India's demographic dividend at risk. The window for this dividend is small and if not utilised effectively it can convert into demographic disaster.
- Poor agricultural sector growth has in recent times resulted into farmers distress with suicides and agitations by farmers on rise.
- Manufacturing sector is still lagging behind as shown by IIP data.
- Automation is another emerging challenge for which our economy hasn't been geared with.

Way ahead:

The economic problems of India are further aggravated by continuing economic slowdown and following steps must be taken:

- GST itself has issues like multiple tax slabs, exemption of certain goods from its ambit etc., this needs to be resolved by the GST council at the earliest.
- Labour sector reforms are long overdue and must be brought in as early as possible. Same is the issue with land sector acquisition law. State governments must be encouraged to take the necessary steps in this regard.
- Effective implementation of Skill India mission and Make in India plan.
- Effective implementation of ambitious schemes in agricultural sector like PMFBY, PMKSY etc.

Conclusion:

Indian leadership has done a great job in introducing GST. It was the result of cooperative federalism. The centre and states must come together to ensure that Indian economic development is boosted.

Best answer: Rsp

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20. Deep tentacles of corruption and mis-governance have consumed the medical regulatory regime in India. Do you agree? What are the associated issues? Examine.

Introduction:

Death of children in Gorakhpur hospital is an example of prevailing medical condition in India. MCI the statutory and accreditation body for Medicine is firmly placed in corruption and mis-governance which is the primary reason for present medical emergency.

Body:

Corruption is involved in:

- Appointment: Of doctor in government hospitals.
- Approval: Approval for medical college.

- Authorities: Medical council members' appointment.
- Treatment: Patients have to shell out even in government hospitals for most of the things.

Mis-governance in form like:

- Punishment: No process for pulling up negligence.
- Lack of Standard operating procedure: From general ward to ICU.
- Vacancy: At all levels.
- Politics: Recommendations over merits.
- Colleges: Owned by politicians so no actions taken for maladministration.

Associated Issues:

- Pharma-doctor nexus: Prescribing particular brand of medicines.
- Political-doctor nexus: Postings depends on political inclinations.
- Nepotism: Only Doctors children can become doctors' mindset.
- Government-private practice: Government doctors having private clinics.
- Counterfeited Medicines: Fake and low quality medicines.
- Fake doctors: Practice without having proper degree.
- Money: Overmedication and unwanted tests requirement to squeeze money.
- Accountability: Lack of accountability due to different regulators from Chemical ministry to health ministry and autonomous institutes.

Conclusion:

Root cause for all this problem is in first step i.e. joining of medicine. Due to lack of seats and management quota, lakhs and crores of rupees are shelled which becomes an investment and they need to take out the money invested. This is a cycle which has no end unless the root cause is prevented. Public investment is need of hour for effective solution.

Best Answer: Abhijit (ABG)

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21. BRICS countries must extend the synergy being witnessed in economic and strategic areas to the fight against terrorism? Discuss.

Introduction:

BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) countries constitute 40% world population and 22% GDP making it most important Group for south- south cooperation. The summit was conceptualized as largely an economic entity over time other issues related to political, social, and cultural matters have also been added to the BRICS discussions.

Synergy in economic areas:

- BRICS countries have formed New Development Bank in 2011 to acquire loans for development activities specially infrastructure. BRICS bank with joint cooperation of IMF and FATCA can together check terror financing. It could be utilised in building infrastructure and community resilience.
- The BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) is a framework for providing protection against global liquidity pressures these both became a strong competitor for IMF

Synergy in strategic areas:

Conducting defense exercises, operations at horn of africa and trade relations have improved the strategic ties.

Fighting terrorism:

- All the BRICS members suffers from terrorism. India faced by state sponsored terrorism in Kashmir, China in Uyghurs region, Russia in Chechenia region etc.
- BRICS countries should collectively put up the resources for best use to combat with increased surveillance and more cooperation among defense forces. The grouping can work together to expedite the adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) in the UN General Assembly.

However there are certain challenges:

- The denouncement at various platform is not adequately supported by tangible action as seen recently in Hafiz Sayed (a Pakistani terrorist) case was vetoed by China. Every group within the group has different goals and strategic interests which sometimes limits any synergy in action against the terrorism.
- With the risks that emerges from terrorism and affects every nation at the same level it is imperative that the group build a consensus on this issue. This will require a open dialogue supported by comprehensive diplomacy. The concerned of members are divergent but can be converged if the greater risks eg the rise ISIS is focused rather than narrow vested interests.

Way ahead:

- For better strategic cooperation to fight terror the BRICS nation should have a mechanism on the lines of RATS (Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure) of SCO.
- Cooperation on cyber front too – dark net, cyber terrorism, malicious hacking is required as BRICS nations have good IT network and human capital. Internal insurgencies also need to be mentioned in addition of cross border terrorism.
- Further convergence on global issues at WTO and other such bodies is required so as to leverage economic cooperation

Best answer: PD

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22. What is the Sendai Framework? What are the Seven Global Targets associated with this framework? Discuss.

Introduction:

In today's world there is frequent occurrence of disaster which is affecting man and material to the large extent in certain cases huge loss of lives. In order to mitigate and prevent them UN body came up with frame work to reduce the risks in future known as "Sendai Framework"

Body:

The Sendai Framework is a 15-year; voluntary, non-binding agreement which recognizes that the State has the primary role to reduce disaster risk but that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector and other stakeholders.

It has set Seven Global targets:

- Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower average per 100,000 global mortality rate in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015.
- Substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower average global figure per 100,000 in the decade 2020 -2030 compared to the period 2005-2015.
- Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030.
- Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030.
- Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020.
- Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of this Framework by 2030.
- Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to the people by 2030.

Challenges:

- Non-binding: It is voluntary and non-binding in nature.
- Funding: It requires huge funding. Framework doesn't address the issue.
- Technology: Technology transfer to developing countries is not addressed.
- Developed countries: are not involved or taking measures to implement them.

Conclusion:

Recently, India became the first country to implement Sendai framework and released New Disaster Management Plan on line of Sendai framework. In order to achieve the goals, it is not just the government but each and every citizen should contribute to make it a success.

Best Answer: Lokmanya

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23. What is Incredible India Campaign? Do you think the narrative of intolerance and associated controversies have affected the credibility of the campaign? Critically examine.

About Incredible India Campaign:

Incredible India (styled as **Incredible!India**) is the name of an international marketing campaign by the Ministry of Tourism, GOI to promote tourism in India since 2002 to an audience of global appeal.

Controversies affecting credibility of the campaign:

- Recent incidents like Dadri lynching, Muzaffarnagar riots and murder of rationalists like Dhabolkar, Kalburgi and Panasree, Attack on Tanzanians in New Delhi
- Cow vigilantism- Beef eating foreigners have grown skeptical about the controversies associated with cow vigilantism.
- Racial attacks against people from North-East eg. Nido Tania incident.
- Such a narrative of intolerance has affected the image of India as a diverse and tolerant nation thereby affecting the credibility of the campaign.
- Sexual violence against women tourists eg- rape of an Israeli women in Manali deters the female population.

The situation is not that gloomy, as:

- India's rank has improved in the WEF's Travel and Tourism and Competitive Index. As per WTTC our travel and tourism sector ranks 7th in terms of contribution towards GDP.
- Eco-tourism being promoted by government in regions like Northeast, Ladakh etc has attracted foreign tourists.
- Cultural contact is being forged by the government through plans like 'Namaste India' and 'Bonjour India'.
- Project Mousam and Incredible India 2.0 campaign launched recently would help boost tourism in the country.

More needs to be done:

- Proper action on the incidents related to violence against tourists so as to ensure confidence among them.
- Special steps for ensuring safety of women traveler is required.
- Inculcating values of tolerance and respect for others(especially foreigners and people from Northeast) among common people.

Conclusion:

Tourism is a sunrise sector of Indian economy. We need to put in place right policy and framework to ensure the Incredible India campaign stays credible. It's time we revamp the campaign.

Best answer: Peeku

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Best answer: NKY

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24. Recently, the Prime Minister suggested holding of simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections all over the country. Do you think it's a good idea? What are its pros and cons? Discuss.

Introduction:

Recently, the prime minister of country suggested having simultaneous elections to Lok Sabha and Assembly all over the country in order to save time and concentrates more on growth and development. It is a good idea however the possibility and support for it from various quarters are bleak.

Body:

Pros of having simultaneous election:

- Election and campaign: It will allow ministers and members to concentrate on government than spend time in campaigning.
- Money: Huge some of revenue can be saved in form of expenses.
- Availability: Huge man power will be available for which they are meant for.
- MCC: policy implementation and populist policies will find back place.
- Development: Full concentration on growth and development by government.

- Accountability: Government can be held accountability for work done in 5 years.

Cons:

- Safety and security: Huge defense personnel's are needed which will put defense of country at stake.
- Manpower: Huge man power is required which is not available.
- National and regional issues: Both issues get mixed up.
- Regional politics: Regional party will be diminished.
- Employment: Many youths and party workers will become unemployed. In case of election they can earn some money.
- Early dissolution: In case of no-confidence or loss of majority or break up in coalition partners. In such cases what happens next.

Conclusion:

All stake holders should come together and decide keeping in mind the welfare of country and establishing the ideals of our framers of constitution. Utmost care should be taken to preserve the federal structure and our democratic setup.

Best Answer: Event Horizon

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25. What are the challenges for mining in India? Do you think the recently approved National Mineral Exploration Policy (NMEP) can address these challenges? Examine.

Introduction:

Mining sector in India contributes about 2.1% to our GDP. The sector however is riddled with various challenges which the government has sought to remove through National Mineral Exploration Policy.

Issues related to mining in India:

- Environmental concerns- open cast mining which is highly pollution has become a norm for almost all mining activities.

- Rehabilitation issues.
- Political nexus encouraging corruption through non-transparent auctioning is another challenge.
- Social issues- child labor, exploitation of workers
- Lack of scientific data
- Monopoly of state owned companies.

Infrastructural challenges-

- Old and obsolete technology, low skilled manpower, low output etc. Poor connectivity through inland waterways means over-reliance on railways for transportation and thus increased transportation costs as well as delays.
- Non- uniform distribution of minerals as well as unmapped reserves.

The NMEP can address the above-mentioned challenges in following ways:

- Improved transparency- Mining Surveillance System has been launched to check illegal mining. E-auctioning of exploration blocks which replaces first-come-first serve basis of allocation will ensure transparency and accountability.
- By making available baseline geo-scientific data of world standards and quality research in PPP, the private sector will be encouraged to involve in mining activities in India. Involvement of private sector will end monopoly of state owned companies ensuring competitiveness.
- Auctioning of exploration blocks on revenue sharing basis rather than production sharing basis is a win-win for both government and the private sector.
- The policy suggests setting up of National Central for Mineral Targeting to address exploration challenges.

Conclusion:

Effective implementation of the policy will surely revamp mining sector in India. However, other issues like environmental laws, labor exploitation etc. need to be addressed to obtain full potential of this policy. Thus, steps like EIA for environmental issues, involving civil society (eg Chhatisgarh Mines Shramik Sangh) monitoring for child labor and illegal issues etc. Are the need of the hour.

Best answer: Rsp

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Best answer: ORJ

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26. What are the main recommendations of the TSR committee on education? What is your opinion on the recommendations made by the committee?

Introduction:

Government of India to improve the education sector and bring reforms entrusted the task to former cabinet secretary TSR Subramanian. He came up with New Education policy for India which will change the lives of future generations.

Body:

Recommendations of TSR committee:

- IES: Establishing all India education services.
- Budget support: of 6% of GDP.
- TET to be compulsory and minimum 50% in graduation.
- Compulsory licensing: Of teachers.
- No-Detention: only up to 5th and Pre-schooling as right
- National level test: After 12th and on demand board exam earlier.
- Mid-day meal: Up to secondary level
- Management of Higher Education: Separate management and lapse of UGC
- Foreign universities: allowing top 200 universities to enter.

Views on the recommendation:

- The recommendations are positive steps towards reforms especially All India service, budgetary support, Mid-day meals scheme.

- Licensing of teachers might affect the quality especially in higher education. Professional employed as visiting professors provide invaluable insights which will be lost.
- There no formal institution for ranking university. In such case on what basic top 200 will be selected.
- Politics on campus is a sensitive issue. Implementing it will be difficult as most of present leaders were student leaders

Conclusion:

Lastly the most important is retaining teachers in the sector and addressing their issues. The nation is built on the educational foundation provided by them for future generations. Their salary and facility should be improved on par with developed countries to motivate them to give more.

Best Answer: The Silent Guardian

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27. “The right to reputation is a constituent of Article 21 of the Constitution. It is an individual’s fundamental right”. Do you agree? Examine in light of the recent verdict of the Supreme Court to uphold the constitutional validity of the Criminal Defamation law.

Introduction

Right of reputation is one of the derived rights of the Article 21(Right to life and personal liberty). The definition of life under Article is very broadly based and provides adequate opportunity for holistic development of an individual. In social ecosystem in which a individual live, his reputation in public life is important to define his overall identity. The personal allegations which can tarnish the reputation is detrimental for his credibility and social interactions.

Recently with political propaganda used a medium to elicit public opinion and use of social medium for disseminating this at faster pace without knowing the authenticity of such information, the instances of using personal remarks are increasing.

Examination of verdict

Recently, the Supreme Court, in **Subramanian Swamy vs Union of India** case upheld the constitutionality of criminal defamation. As per SC, the right to free speech does not mean that a citizen can defame the other. This judgment is based on following reasoning:

1. Protection of reputation is a fundamental right under Art-21, right to life with dignity and also a human right.
2. Criminalization of defamation to protect individual dignity and reputation is a “reasonable restriction”.
3. A deliberate injury to one’s reputation built over years is not a civil wrong.
4. With the right to freedom of speech and expression, there is a correlative duty on citizens not to interfere with the liberty of others, as everyone is entitled to the dignity of person and of reputation.

However, there are following issues with such a stance:

1. Freedom of speech is important for a vibrant democracy and must not be curbed in the garb of protecting reputation.
2. Right to reputation cannot be extended to collective such as government which has the resources to set right damage to their reputations.
3. Retaining the criminal remedies against defamation will be used less to preserve reputation and more to coerce, harass and threaten.
4. Other countries like Sri Lanka have decriminalized defamation.

Conclusion

Though the arguments given by the court are convincing, in a democracy like India, there is no place for archaic laws restricting a person’s freedom. There are enough evidences that such laws lead to self-censorship. So, the gains made through such laws are not commensurate to the loss. For a society to evolve, democracy to flourish, free speech is a sine-qua-non and the State has to every responsibility to uphold it.

Best Answer: The Silent Guardian

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28. Why does India want the membership of the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG)? What benefits will accrue if India gets the membership of NSG? What are the hurdles? Discuss.

- **Background:**
- NSG was established in the wake of the Pokhran I peaceful nuclear explosion conducted by India in 1974.
- The intent and purpose of the NSG is, however, different from that of the NPT. NSG is not an international treaty. It is a group of “nuclear supplier countries that seeks to contribute to nonproliferation of nuclear weapons through implementation of two sets of Guidelines for nuclear exports and nuclear-related exports.”
- The 48-nation group frames and implements agreed rules for exporting nuclear equipment, with a view to controlling the spread of nuclear weapons; members are admitted only by consensus.
- After more than 25 years of its establishment, some suggested guidelines were evolved in 2001 at Aspen for admitting new members to the organization. Amongst these, membership of NPT is only a guideline, a consideration, and not a mandatory requirement while deciding on a country’s application.
- India was given a unique waiver in 2008, and china supported it then.
- **Why does India need the entry to the group and benefits:**
 1. India is keen to become a member of the NSG and other export control regimes such as the Wassenaar Agreement and Australia Group as it seeks to significantly expand its nuclear power generation and also enter the export market in the coming years.
 2. membership of the NSG will provide greater certainty and a legal foundation for India’s nuclear regime and thus greater confidence for those countries investing billions of dollars to set up ambitious nuclear power projects in India.
 3. as India’s international political, economic, military and strategic profile and clout increases, India would like to move into the category of international rule-creating nations rather than stay in the ranks of rule-adhering nations. For this, it is essential that India gets due recognition and a place on the NSG high table.
 4. India’s track-record in observing the provisions of the NPT and NSG, even though it has not been a member of either body, is impeccable, But the entry into NSG will provide legitimacy to this past record.

5. India became a Member of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) on 7 June 2016. All 34 members of MTCR are members of the NSG. India is hence assured of support of these 34 members in its quest for NSG membership.
6. Provide greater certainty and a legal foundation for India's nuclear regime and thus greater confidence for those countries investing billions of dollars to set up ambitious nuclear power projects in India
7. Access to technology for a range of uses from medicine to building nuclear power plants It can start building updated versions of its own fast breeder reactor and sell it to countries
8. India committed to reducing dependence on fossil fuels and ensuring that 40% of its energy is sourced from renewable and clean sources, there is a pressing need to scale up nuclear power production
9. Nuclear industry and related technology development could give the Make in India programme a big boost
10. Training people in peaceful uses of nuclear energy, including use of radioisotopes, nuclear safety, radiation safety, nuclear security, radioactive waste management and nuclear and radiological disaster mitigation

- **Hurdles:**

1. China been saying that India is not eligible to become a member of the NSG as it is not a member of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT),
2. China has stated that Pakistan also has similar credentials to join the NSG; and that if India is admitted, Pakistan should also be admitted simultaneously.
3. The members of the group want to define the criteria for the entry of new countries, Brazil and Switzerland was in favour of discussing criteria of entry and India's case jointly and Ireland and New Zealand wanted to discuss criteria before discussing India's case.

Best Answer: NYK

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29. The performance of Indian athletes at the Brazil Paralympics last year is testimony to the grit and bravery of differently abled persons. Yet the policy discourse in India has not catered fully to their special needs. Do you agree? Examine.

Note: Many students failed to understand main theme of the question that is differently abled sportsman/athletes their issues and policy measures, instead they wrote about general disability issues.

Introduction

India performed exceptionally well in the latest Summer Paralympics held in Brazil, winning four medals in different events.

1. Devendra Jhajharia set a world record in javelin throw winning gold. The same goes with Marian Thangavelu, whose performance was exceptional in high jump.
2. Deepa Malik, despite her age of 45, not only appeared but won silver in shot put. This shows the hard work, grit and dedication put by the athletes despite severe odds.

Main Body

The policy discourse when it comes to sports (except Cricket) in India is pitiable, it is even worse when it comes to athletes with special needs.

1. Issue with Paralympics Committee of India. Other agencies lack funds, riddled by corruption, nepotism and politicized like any other institution.
2. The infrastructure for training is meager or completely absent, and those present are not differently abled friendly developed after consider training needs of athletes
3. Sponsorship and recognition issues, the athletes have to put their own resources in training, which puts high pressure on their financials.
4. General societal perception, prejudices and attitude towards any differently abled person in general athletes in particular.
5. In other countries huge funds are poured into establishing sporting facilities, many NGOs participating to train players, a whole ecosystem of coaches and training staff is present which is absent in India as a whole.

The recent case of a para-athlete forced to beg in Berlin representing India at the swimming championship, when she fell short of cash shows the apathy of the policy makers.

However there has been change in policy approach towards sports other than cricket in the country. Realizing Indian athlete's capabilities off late various policies try to address few of these issues in piecemeal manner,

1. Target Olympic podium scheme.

2. Rajiv Gandhi khel ratna award to Denendra Jhalaria recognizing his achievement in Rio Paralympics 2016.
3. Financial award declared by states to winners in Paralympics eg. Delhi, Tamil Nadu.
4. Spending on training to promote rural and nationally recognized para-olympic and Olympic sports also qualified for credit under the CSR rules.
5. Person with disabilities Act 2016.

Conclusion

There is no coherent policy for sports ecosystem in the country. Policy efforts are to be made towards decentralized planning of infrastructure, identifying talent at a young age, providing training and other facilities by the state, proper care during their career and post-retirement have to be offered, then only can our country reap its demographic dividend not only in economy but also sports.

Best Answer: Redeemer911

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30. Iran is set to emerge as not only an important supplier of energy, but also as a key regional player in Central Asia and the Near East. Comment. How do you assess India's recent outreach to Iran? Will it benefit India? Examine.

- **Regional significance and importance for india:**

Security aspect:

1. Iran wants a peaceful Afghanistan in its neighbourhood. With the US presence being wound up in Afghanistan Iran can play a major role for a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.
2. Both India and Iran has invested constructively in Afghanistan. Therefore, India and Iran can jointly fight against terrorism.
3. Iran is playing a major role in eliminating ISIS from Syria

Connectivity:

IASbaba TLP Phase II – August Compilation - Current Affairs

1. Iran's Bandar Abbas port conceived as the hub for the INSTC is the shortest and most economic route to central ASIA
2. India is also developing Chabahar port which is the gateway to central Asia and also to Afghanistan bypassing Pakistan.

Economic:

1. Huge oil and gas reserves which can complement Indian needs, Iran has 9.3 per cent of global oil reserves and 18.2 per cent of gas reserves.
2. Chabahar Port: India is now looking to attain two berthing docks at the port, to give the country an edge not only in trade with Iran but access to Central Asia and beyond as well.
3. Investments in Farzad B: India was awarded the development of the Farzad B block in the Farsi gas field, and had committed \$1 billion to the project.
4. International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC): The INSTC is a multi-modal idea to connect Indian trade with Central Asia, Eurasia and Russia.
5. India-Iran gas pipeline: A pipeline connecting Chabahar port via Oman and then taking the subsea route to India.

Co-operation:

1. Iranian authorities have accused Pakistan's ISI of helping the Baloch separatist movement in Iran and its leader Abdulmalik Rigi. This is a chance for India to develop co-operation with Iran as both the countries are facing internal disturbances funded by Pakistan.
2. India has stood by Iran, even when it was facing economic sanctions by the US, by agreeing to pay for oil in kind, now that the sanctions are lifted, both can mutually benefit

Best Answer: The Silent Guardian

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31. The decision by the apex court of India to declare Triple Talaq as unconstitutional addresses a grave problem. However, it is not certain whether the judicial pronouncement will have meaningful effect on the ground reality. Critically comment.

Introduction

Talaq -e- biddat is the irrevocable practice where a Muslim man can divorce his wife by pronouncing the “talaq” at a single time with no time for reconciliation. Though not in Quran it is protected by Sharia (Muslim personal law) Act 1937 framed in pre constitution era.

Main Body

In a judgment coming after long time, the Supreme Court in Shayara Bano vs Union of India Case has declared the practice of Triple Talaq as unconstitutional by giving following arguments,

- This practice is not supported by Quran and a law that is sinful cannot be given constitutional protection.
- It is in violation of Muslim women’s rights and is against article 14 of the constitution.

This is a landmark step for gender equality as,

1. It provides a ground for women to challenge unilateral divorce by their husbands. Earlier women used to be left in the lurch without any legal recourse.
2. It gives Muslim women equal footing in their marriage. Earlier, some women had to deal with the whims of their husbands merely to avoid getting divorced.
3. It not only undermined equality before law, but also smothered gender justice.

So, the judgment was long overdue, as many women organizations have been demanding it for long. But, to what extent the judicial pronouncement will have effect at ground level is of question, because

1. There was severe opposition from the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) on judicial intervention in the matters of personal law and faith. After this judgment it is important how widely it is accepted and incorporated.
2. Women from the marginalized sections of the Muslim community are still not aware and empowered enough to challenge their husbands if they go for Triple Talaq.
3. Court dealt with Issue of Instant talaq only, other important issues of Nikah-e-halala and polygamy also need to be addressed.
4. Modalities of implantation of this judgment is not clear, responsibility of legislature to come up with suitable legislation within six months is a challenge.

Conclusion

Thus there is still some work left to be done in sensitizing both men and women of the community to stand up against the practice. Moreover, this is just one step in our battle to

ensure that conservative elements don't deny women their rights in the name of personal laws. Next steps should be bringing more reforms in personal laws through consensus and to bringing a Uniform Civil Code after wider consultation and negotiation.

Best Answer: NKY

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32. The latest shift in USA's strategy for Pakistan and Afghanistan is a golden opportunity for India to capitalise. Do you agree? Critically analyse.

- **New opportunities for India, as India can –**
 1. Isolate Pak and expose Terror organisation on international stage.
 2. build closer ties with USA will also give more pitch to Indian voice for demanding a permanent seat in UNSC.
 3. Stronger ties with USA will mean, more access to nuclear technology, modern weapons and political influence on world stage and an ally to counter the Chinese advances and hostile assertion.
 4. India's active role in Afghan will do well for energy security with projects like TAPI, give her a second front from Afghan side in case of combat with Pak and make her geopolitically important player.

- **Hurdles or challenges:**
 1. Afghan already urges more role of India. So nothing new in US demanding the same.
 2. More economic resources to be poured in by India, which already runs on strained budgets and fiscal deficits
 3. Demands of 'Boots on the ground' need more political will and proper strategy to achieve the objectives to be accomplished.
 4. The current America is 'isolation-ist', she is only considering her interests like on issues of H1B visas, jobs to Americans etc. So, India must weight her options.
 5. A closer tie with USA will mean taking the opposite camp against old friend like Russia, and it may make China more hostile.

Best Answer: Redeemer.

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33. The devastations caused by floods in Bihar and adjoining states bears testimony to our lack of preparedness to tackle floods. Comment. Also suggest measures to improve India's disaster response.

Introduction

India annually receives 100cm of rainfall on an average distributed unevenly over the entire country. Most of the rainfall occurs in 3-4 period of time, which is one of the main reasons for flooding. Flooding causes enormous hardships in the loss of valuable life, destruction of infrastructure, inundation of agricultural fields.

The recent floods in Bihar (341),Gujarat (220) and Assam (123) has claimed many lives, nearly 1.5crore people in Bihar got affected by the floods, the administration comes to a standstill, infrastructure gets disrupted – North and South Bengal got cutoff by road, railway tracks displaced, Manipur cutoff from rest of the country and many more.

Main Body

A life cycle analysis of flood management will help to analyze the problems.

Mitigation and preparation Phase

Dismally poor capability to handle catastrophic weather events

Shrinking wetlands and increasing urbanization

Lack of preparedness: Even after having continuous history of floods the preparedness is minimal

Faulty data stations of IMD affecting the forecasting

No regulation of settlements in flood plain zone

Institutional problems like interoperability of data received, lack of fund and functionary

2. Phase of response

Lack of co-ordination among institutions and experts

Serious attention is not given to setting up of relief camps, crisis proof infrastructure, stock piling of dry rations etc.

Lack of medical attention resulting in increasing infections and absence of medical care for vulnerable sections

3. Phase of recovery and reconstruction

Techniques used are obsolete. Rather than using modern technology like satellite imagery, GIS etc. field level survey and anecdotal information is preferred

Measures to improve India's disaster response

Flood governance through resilience building could bring about sustainable change in this situation. This could be an outcome of three broad sets of action: Reducing vulnerability, increasing access to services, and maximizing productivity through optimal use of available resources.

The dominant narrative of flood protection includes measures such as embankments, dredging rivers and bank strengthening.

Community-based advance flood warning systems, for example, have been successfully piloted in parts of Assam.

Providing adequate number of boats — the most important, yet scarce resource in the villages — will enhance access to developmental activities during floods and also facilitate safe commute for schoolchildren.

Usual toilets are of limited use in flood-prone areas. Elevated toilets, ecosanitation units — promoted in the flood-prone areas of North Bihar — and elevated dugwells or tubewells with iron filter need to be installed in the Northeast.

If elevated toilets are promoted on a large-scale, they will reduce the public health challenges in the flood-prone areas.

Strategic environment assessment of development activities, a practice followed in several countries needs to be undertaken in flood prone areas like the Brahmaputra basin.

Strengthening planning authorities like the Brahmaputra Board and flood control departments by staffing them with scientists from a wide range of disciplines is essential.

Focus should shift from relief measures to building resilience in flood-prone areas.

A community involvement and awareness generation is necessary for sustainable disaster risk reduction.

Scientific fish farming on the water bodies and the inundated land can ensure that inundation, when it cannot be avoided, is put to optimal use

A holistic and proactive approach is necessary in order to mitigate natural disasters like floods.

Development of GIS (Geographical Information System) based National Database for disaster management. GIS is an effective tool for emergency responders to access information in terms of crucial parameters for the disaster affected areas.

In any disaster management system the warning system plays a very crucial role along with technology

Conclusion:

Disaster risk reduction has a pivotal role in supporting adaption to climate change as well as sustainable development. Therefore, flood-prone regions of the country require a focused approach from the Centre and state governments.

Best Answer: NKY

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34. Railways is considered to be the lifeline of our country but the frequency of fatal accidents have only increased in the recent past. What does it tell about Indian Railway's ecosystem? Critically analyse.

- **Railway accidents:**
- In 2014-15, the number of accidents was 135 which decreased to 107 in 2015-16 and further to 104 in 2016-17.
- Fatal Rail accidents cause havoc and disturbs the operations Railway accidents happen due to several reasons as:
 1. An incorrect signal, a mistake or an act of negligence by one of its staff according to NITI ayog report 6/10 accidents happen due to staff negligence

2. bulk of the accidents take place at unmanned level crossings and railways currently has over 4,000 such crossings across the country
3. deficiency in tracks as most of them are very old, and slow upgradation of present coaches, which are nearly 5-7 years old.
4. A rash act by one of the millions of road users and wandering off of cattle and wild animals on to the tracks
5. an irresponsible act by a passenger who carries inflammable goods
6. Damage of tracks by terrorists, Naxalites and other militant groups.

- **Steps taken by the government to prevent accidents:**

1. Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (fund) (RRSK) was created in the 2017-18 budget for financing critical safety-related works. The fund was set up with a corpus of Rs 1 lakh crore over a period of five years.
2. In the Railway Budget, 2016-17, the Mission Zero Accident was also announced. It comprises two sub-missions — The elimination of unmanned level crossings (UMLC) along broad gauge tracks in the next three-four years and the Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS).
3. There are 27,181 level crossings in India of which 19,480 are manned and 7,701 are unmanned. Planning has been made to eliminate unmanned level crossings along broad gauge tracks by 2020.
4. Government has launched Setu Bharatam programme which aims to make all National Highways free of railway level crossings by 2019. Under this 208 Railway Over Bridges (ROB)/Railway Under Bridges (RUB) will be built at the level crossings at a cost of Rs. 20,800 crore as part of the programme.
5. Government is taking active steps to implement suggestions of Anil Kakodkar committee on railway safety

Best answer: Nana

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35. The right to privacy has been declared as a fundamental right by a 9 judge bench of Supreme Court. What implications will this judgment have on India's data security regime? Examine.

Introduction

9 judge bench delivered landmark judgement and unanimously declaring the Right to Privacy is fundamental right under constitution. SC has categorically held that Right to privacy will be protected as intrinsic part of Right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 of constitution of India. Judgement represents quantum leap in the evolution of legal jurisprudence pertaining to privacy in India.

Main Body

From relevance and contemporary stand point the fact that privacy is extremely important concern in technology intensive society which aims to become information based society especially at a time when we are pushing for Digital India. Right to privacy is intricately related to data security and it may have several implications on India's data security regime.

In this part focus on answer should be on following components,

1. Aadhaar and data security concerns towards Aadhar, need for robust data protection mechanism.
2. Cyber security policy upgradation, filling loopholes in backdrop of increased cyber crime and global ransom ware attacks.
3. Need for revamped National encryption policy considering necessary changes suggested to previous draft.
4. Need to regulate data and information with multinationals and ecommerce websites.
5. Strengthening of Cert-In and data security council, IT Act 2000
6. Crucial task ahead for Justice B.N.Srikrishna committee on draft data protection policy guidelines.

Conclusion

The important implication of this judgment is that now government needs to come with Stringent Privacy Law and Data Protection law. Also, Privacy is not absolute, and the State will always have the Primacy to impose Reasonable Restrictions in the Greater interest. Privacy is the essential part of Vibrant Democracy and it needs to be Protected and Conserved and that is responsibility of all stakeholders.

Best Answer: Redeemr911

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36. What are gravitational waves? From where do they come from? Explain. In this light, discuss about the LISA mission.

- **Gravitational waves:**
- Gravitational waves are ‘ripples’ in the fabric of space-time caused by some of the most violent and energetic processes in the Universe. Albert Einstein predicted the existence of gravitational waves in 1916 in his general theory of relativity.
- Einstein’s mathematics showed that massive accelerating objects (such as neutron stars or black holes orbiting each other) would disrupt space-time in such a way that ‘waves’ of distorted space would radiate from the source (like the movement of waves away from a stone thrown into a pond).
- These ripples would travel at the speed of light through the Universe, carrying with them information about their cataclysmic origins, as well as invaluable clues to the nature of gravity itself.
- The strongest gravitational waves are produced by catastrophic events such as colliding black holes, the collapse of stellar cores (supernovae), coalescing neutron stars or white dwarf stars, the slightly wobbly rotation of neutron stars that are not perfect spheres, and the remnants of gravitational radiation created by the birth of the Universe itself.
- Though gravitational waves were predicted to exist in 1916, actual proof of their existence wouldn’t arrive until 1974, 20 years after Einstein’s death. In that year, two astronomers working at the Arecibo Radio Observatory in Puerto Rico discovered a binary pulsar—two extremely dense and heavy stars in orbit around each other. This was exactly the type of system that, according to general relativity, should radiate gravitational waves. Knowing that this discovery could be used to test Einstein’s audacious prediction, astronomers began measuring how the period of the stars’ orbits changed over time. After eight years of observations, it was determined that the stars were getting closer to each other at precisely the rate predicted by general relativity. This system has now been monitored for over 40 years and the observed changes in the orbit agree so well with general relativity, there is no doubt that it is emitting gravitational waves.
- In September 14, 2015, LIGO, for the first time, physically sensed distortions in spacetime itself caused by passing gravitational waves generated by two colliding black holes nearly 1.3 billion light years away.

- The origins of gravitational waves can be extremely violent, by the time the waves reach the Earth they are millions of times smaller and less disruptive. In fact, by the time gravitational waves from the first detection reached LIGO, the amount of space-time wobbling they generated was thousands of times smaller than the nucleus of an atom.
- **LISA Pathfinder mission:**
- LISA Pathfinder, formerly Small Missions for Advanced Research in Technology-2 (SMART-2), was an ESA spacecraft that was launched on 3 December 2015. The mission tested technologies needed for the Evolved Laser Interferometer Space Antenna (eLISA), an ESA gravitational wave observatory planned to be launched in 2034. In April 2016 ESA announced that LISA Pathfinder demonstrated that eLISA mission is feasible.
- LISA Pathfinder placed two test masses in a nearly perfect gravitational free-fall, and controlled and measured their relative motion with unprecedented accuracy. The laser interferometer measured the relative position and orientation of the masses to an accuracy of less than 0.01 nanometres, a technology estimated to be sensitive enough to detect gravitational waves by the follow-on mission, the Laser Interferometer Space Antenna (LISA).
- The interferometer was a model of one arm of the final LISA interferometer, but reduced from millions of kilometers long to 40 cm. The reduction did not change the accuracy of the relative position measurement, nor did it affect the various technical disturbances produced by the spacecraft surrounding the experiment, whose measurement was the main goal of LISA Pathfinder. The sensitivity to gravitational waves, however, is proportional to the arm length, and this is reduced several billion-fold compared to the planned LISA experiment.
- LISA Pathfinder was an ESA-led mission. It involved European space companies and research institutes from France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, UK, and the US space agency NASA.

Best Answer: Shiva09.

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37. The permanent executive in India is led by civil servants most of whom are generalists. Do you think it is high time that area experts should be given lateral entry into the executive machinery? Critically analyse.

Introduction

In India permanent executive is led by civil servants which are recruited by UPSC which examines the overall knowledge of something of everything.

Earlier this year, the Prime Minister's Office had asked the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) to prepare a proposal for considering the lateral entry of professionals into the middle levels of the civil services in ministries relating to economy and infrastructure. The need for lateral entry into the civil services has been debated for quite some time with even the Second ARC Report recommending the need for formalised procedures for such entry. But this has been met with resistance from many quarters particularly from civil servants themselves. This article discusses the issue of lateral entry into the civil services from both perspectives.

Main Body

The need for lateral entry into the civil services

The idea that the Indian civil services is in need of institutional reform is not a new one. Allegations of corruption, mediocrity, stagnation and inefficiency have been made against the services. There is also a shortage of officers particularly in the middle levels. The Baswan Committee report said that large states like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar have a shortfall of 75 to 100 officers. Lateral entry is suggested to cover up this deficit and also avoid the difficulties of large-scale initial recruitment.

Another belief is that lateral entry will bring in people with experience of the private sector. This can infuse the system with fresh energy and outlook. This can also bring in people with specialized knowledge and expertise. Civil servants are said to be jacks of all trades with mastery in none. This is in part due to the varied nature of their jobs, but the truth is, there are many sectors that need officers with specific domain knowledge. The career progression of a career civil servant is such that there is not much scope for him/her to develop specialised knowledge. The frequent transfers to different places and departments also don't help. Thus, lateral entry can help bridge this gap of individuals with domain expertise. In addition, lateral entry can also bring in people with corporate exposure in the private sector with inherent advantages like faster turnaround of projects and better efficiency due to their target-oriented nature.

The opposition

However, a move by the government to usher in lateral entry will not be easily welcomed by most of the current civil servants. Although the government has frequently roped in private sector individuals to head committees and projects, such a move into the mid-levels of the bureaucracy will affect the existing balance of officers. This can also demotivate current officers

who would have struggled hard to get through to the services in the first place after clearing the tough UPSC civil services exam.

People hostile to the idea of lateral entry also say that it is not the individual but the enabling environment that can bring out the best in him/her. They say that even successful private-sector professionals can falter in an environment riddled with red tape and political interference. So what is needed is to reform the system from within first before looking for solutions outside. It is also said that this move can deter people from applying for the civil services because of a perceived slacking of promotional avenues.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the civil service, which forms the backbone of Indian administration, needs reforms. The country's progress and development depend on this. Even if lateral entry is introduced, it must follow a strictly defined procedure and not give way to nepotism and further corruption. Many developed countries like the UK and Australia follow lateral entry to suit their needs. The need of the hour is to have internal reforms to improve systemic efficiency, and also have a defined structure in place to allow lateral entry of professionals into the civil services.

Best Answer: Red Fang

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38. Judiciary isn't devoid of corrupt practices. It is in this light that enforceable standards of conduct for the judges must become a reality in India. Discuss.

Socrates had said, four things should belong to a Judge; to hear courteously, to answer wisely, to consider soberly and to decide impartially.

- **Problems with the current system of judiciary:**

1. Judge Selection: The current system of Judge selection i.e., the collegium system is opaque and inefficient. People of the country whose rights the courts are supposed to protect, are unaware of the mode of selection and the efficiency of the judges

2. Judges arriving late: It has become a common practice has the proceedings of the court starts after the Judge, who are never on time.
3. Uncle Judge syndrome: The law commission in its 230th report has criticized this practice of Uncle Judges. people who have practiced in the High courts for 20-25 years get elevated to the posts of Judges and are hearing the cases from their erstwhile Colleagues, friends and family members. This compromises the impartiality of the Judge. The equity demands that the justice shall not only be done but should also appear to have been done.
4. Removal procedure: The Constitution-makers only provided for the removal from office of Supreme Court and High Court judges by means of joint action by the two Houses of Parliament, for proved misbehavior or incapacity. Till today, no judge has been removed according to this procedure.
5. Punishment practice: Current practices are that of transferring the errant judges to other state's High Court. This does not solve the core problem i.e., of correcting the wrongs made by the judge, rather only transfers the problem from one High Court to another

- **Solutions:**

1. The U.S. Constitution has the method of removal by impeachment of federal judges, but there is a supplemental law to consider complaints of misbehavior by federal court judges and discipline them, short of their removal. This has to be adopted in India too, so that disciplinary actions short of removal can be taken.
2. Create a dedicated investigative agency to investigate the matters relating to allegations against the judges.
3. judiciary must have a known system to govern and Court hours should not be judge centric.
4. The judges, whose kith and kin are practicing in a High Court, should not be posted in the same High Court. This will eliminate "Uncle Judge"
5. need to develop a uniform court procedure and eliminate the personality driven functioning of Judges.

Best Answer: Redeemer.

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39. The provisions of the Representation of People Act have many loopholes that keep the arena of politics open for criminal elements. Do you agree? What safeguards do you suggest in this regard? Discuss.

Introduction

Article 327 empowers the parliament to enact laws for the conduct of elections. Following which, parliament came up with RPA 1950 and 1951. Criminalisation of politics refers to a situation when people with criminal backgrounds become elected representatives and politicians. It has acquired deep roots in India leading to poor governance.

Main Body

Various sections of RPA to keep a check on criminals in politics are,

1. Disqualification for certain offences is provided for in Section 8.
2. Section 33A under which each candidate has to file an affidavit furnishing details about cases in which he has been accused of an offence punishable with 2 or more years.
3. Section 125A provides for punishment of imprisonment for a term upto six months or with fine for declaring wrong information.
4. Section 123 deals with corrupt practices.
5. Section 29C mandates parties to furnish reports about their financing to keep a check on illegitimate funding by criminals.

However, above provisions are not well equipped to prevent criminalization due to various legal lacunae.

1. As per Section 8, a person is disqualified from contesting election only on conviction by the Court of Law.

Due to huge pendency of cases in courts, persons charged with serious and heinous crimes contest election, pending their trial, and even getting elected in a large number of cases. In power, they tend to distort trials in their favor.

2. Section 8(3) of RPA allows convicts from disqualification if the sentence is less than 2 years.
3. Section 125 provides for imprisonment of just 6 months with fine as optional. It will hardly deter.
4. Due to strong nexus between criminals and parties, there transpires a quid pro quo corruption. Criminals finance parties with illegitimate funds and expect protection in return.

Conclusion

Hence, despite being a well framed legislation, RPA can't tackle criminalisation alone. It needs multiple reforms in tandem – internal democracy, financial transparency, partial state funding, empowered ECI, strong judiciary – to ensure that criminals are not allowed to enter the political arena. Suggestions of ECI, LCI, committees such as NN Vohra need to be taken seriously.

Best Answer: Redeemer911

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40. The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea was in news recently? Why? What is its mandate?

- **The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea:**
- The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea was formed under the The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea which came into force in 1994.
- The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea is an independent judicial body established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to adjudicate disputes arising out of the interpretation and application of the Convention. The Tribunal is composed of 21 independent members, elected from among persons enjoying the highest reputation for fairness and integrity and of recognized competence in the field of the law of the sea.
- **Mandate and Jurisdiction:**

The jurisdiction of the Tribunal comprises all disputes and all applications submitted to it in accordance with the Convention. It also includes all matters specifically provided for in any other agreement which confers jurisdiction on the Tribunal (Statute, article 21). The Tribunal has jurisdiction to deal with disputes (contentious jurisdiction) and legal questions (advisory jurisdiction) submitted to it.

- **Contentious jurisdiction**

The Tribunal has jurisdiction over all disputes concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention, subject to the provisions of article 297 and to the declarations made in accordance with article 298 of the Convention.

Article 297 and declarations made under article 298 of the Convention do not prevent parties from agreeing to submit to the Tribunal a dispute otherwise excluded from the Tribunal's jurisdiction under these provisions (Convention, article 299).

The Tribunal also has jurisdiction over all disputes and all applications submitted to it pursuant to the provisions of any other agreement conferring jurisdiction on the Tribunal. A number of multilateral agreements conferring jurisdiction on the Tribunal have been concluded to date.

- **Advisory jurisdiction**

The Seabed Disputes Chamber is competent to give an advisory opinion on legal questions arising within the scope of the activities of the Assembly or Council of the International Seabed Authority (article 191 of the Convention).

The Tribunal may also give an advisory opinion on a legal question if this is provided for by “an international agreement related to the purposes of the Convention” (Rules of the Tribunal, article 138).

- **Why in news:**

1. Law expert Neeru Chadha has been elected to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Seas (ITLOS). With this election, she has become the first Indian Women to become the judge of the ITLOS.
2. In 2016, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) had rejected the plea of Italy, that it has the sole jurisdiction to try the marines who had killed two Indian fisherman in the Arabian Sea. This had become a reason for bilateral tussle between India and Italy, who both claimed that the trail was to take place under their respective laws.

Best Answer: RSP.

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41. What are quasi judicial bodies? What are their special functions? Do they enjoy adequate powers to perform their mandate effectively? Discuss by taking at least two examples.

Definition

Quasi-judicial bodies are such institutions which have power of enforcement of law but are not courts. These bodies can inquire, investigate, summon & award legal penalties to any administrative agency. Generally these bodies have limited judiciary power in specialized areas such as

1. NHRC/SHRC in human rights violation
2. CVC in corruption cases
3. CIC/SIC related to RTI act
4. NGT in environment cases
5. Income tax tribunals

They lessen the burden of already encumbered Judiciary system.

Since these bodies deal with specific jurisdiction, experts in the particular field work for dispute resolution. Thus expertise is a major advantage.

Quasi judicial bodies are more accessible to the common men and are also cheaper and faster than court process.

Powers

Such bodies usually have powers of [adjudication](#) in such matters as:

breach of discipline,

[conduct rules](#),

trust in the matters of money or otherwise,

Their powers are usually limited to a very specific area of expertise and authority, such as land use and [zoning](#), [financial markets](#), [employment law](#), public standards, and/or a specific set of regulations of an agency.

Examples

Write two examples from the following,

- 1.National Human Rights Commission
- 2.State Human Rights Commission (established at each state)
- 3.Central Information Commission
- 4.State Information Commission (established at each state)
- 5.National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission
- 6.State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (established at each state)
- 7.Competition Commission of India
- 8.Appellate Tribunal for Electricity
- 9.Railway Claims Tribunal
- 10.Income Tax Appellate Tribunal
- 11.Intellectual Property Appellate Tribunal
- 12.Central Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal
- 13.Banking Ombudsman
- 14.Income tax Ombudsman

Limitations

1. A person can again appeal in the court against the decision of the Quasi Judicial body. This fades away the advantage of cost and time provided by the Quasi Judicial body.
2. Most of these bodies are recommendatory in nature, like NHRC and CIC. They can't even award compensation or relief to the victims directly, but can only recommend it.
3. Many Quasi Judicial bodies are suffering with lack of strength. Proper and quick investigation is not being done.

4. These are not as independent as the Judiciary. Frequent interference from the executive is evident.

Best Answer: Lokmanya

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42. Keeping in mind the increasing instances of violence and atrocities against Dalits, do you think giving more powers and teeth to the National Commission for Schedule Castes will address the issue? Examine.

- **About National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC):**

NCSC is a Constitutional Body whose functions, duties and power of the Commission have been laid down in the Article 338 of the Constitution.

- **Functions include:**

1. To investigate and monitor all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the Scheduled Castes under this Constitution or under any other law for the time being in force.
2. To inquire into specific complaints with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the Scheduled Castes;
3. To participate and advise on the planning process of socio-economic development of the Scheduled Castes and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union and any State;
4. to present to the President, annually and at such other times as the Commission may deem fit, reports upon the working of those safeguards.
5. It is the duty of The Union and every State Government to consult the Commission on all major policy matters affecting Scheduled Castes
6. The NCSC has classified the constitutional safeguards it seeks to monitor and evaluate in five broad categories: (a) social safeguards (e.g., untouchability and child labour); (b) economic safeguards; (c) educational and cultural safeguards (such as reservations in technical and professional courses); (d) political safeguards (reserved seats in legislatures); and (e) service safeguards (relating chiefly to reservations in recruitment to public employment). The remedial action that the Commission suggests is purely

recommendatory in character. It also plays an advisory role vis-à-vis the union and state governments who are obliged to consult it on all major policy matters affecting the Scheduled Castes.

- **Evaluation of the functioning:**

1. The Commission's competence in settling service-related grievances may be contrasted with its inability to reduce the incidence of atrocities and violence against dalits, or to effectively fight the persistent scourge of untouchability. The Commission has been active in suggesting ways of streamlining procedures or ensuring fairness in the implementation of reservations and development schemes. It is, however, less active in making a stronger case for fundamental change, or even a frank and sharp analysis of the social realities of discrimination.
2. By choosing to interpret its constitutional mandate narrowly, the Commission has laid itself open to the charge of elite bias. i.e., the complaints that are reviewed are by those who are educated and can articulate. Vast majority of the Scheduled castes have no education and as such no avenue to approach the commission.
3. A particular Commission seems to be only as good as its members, and especially its Chairperson, are. The lack of institutionalisation in the procedures of appointment to the Commission has meant that competent and committed members are less likely to be appointed.
4. The most significant handicap of the Commission is the fact that its decisions are not binding, but recommendatory. Though this is not explicitly stated in the Constitution (as amended), Article 338, with all its sub-clauses, is deeply ambiguous on this issue. It gives the Commission quasi-judicial powers of investigation, but does not mention the form in which the Commission's judgement of a particular issue would be delivered and implemented. It makes it incumbent upon the Central and state governments to consult the Commission, but does not state that its advice would be binding.
5. The Commission is supposed to prepare an Annual Report for presentation to Parliament. Reports are often tabled two or more years after they have been submitted to the President. Such delays are usually on account of the requirement that the Action Taken Report be submitted along with the main report. This means that the President circulates the Report to all the Ministries and Departments which are mentioned in it, and it is only when they have all explained their actions, or justified their inaction, that the Report can be presented in Parliament. The Constitution does not fix any period within which the Report must be discussed in Parliament.

- **What powers should be given to the commission:**

1. The commission should be given powers to act as criminal court that can conduct a trial and announce punishment, current system is highly ineffective, time consuming and costly
2. The commission's report should be tabled in the parliament within 6 months from the date of submission along with the Action taken report from the concerned ministries, this will make the implementations faster and effective
3. The constitution of the members should be changed to include more pro-active members with impeccable integrity. This will not only improve the moral stature of the commission but will also make it look more impartial.
4. The Suo-moto powers must be used more often where the people are either unable to reach NCSC or are being prevented from approaching. This will give more credibility to the commission and help in getting justice to the oppressed people.

Best Answer: AKS

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43. If implemented properly and emulated on a large scale, the Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana has the potential to transform the rural sector. Do you agree? Examine. Also evaluate the performance of this scheme in recent years.

Introduction

Despite the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, made for local self government, the grass-root level organizations are not seen to play the envisaged role in development of villages where majority of Indian population resides. The Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana is a flagship scheme of the central government to promote both self-rule (Swarajya) and good-governance (Surajya) in the villages of India.

Design of the scheme

1. A gram panchayat(GP) would be the basic unit. It will have a population of 3,000-5,000 in plain areas and 1,000-3,000 in hilly, tribal and difficult areas

2. The MP would identify a GP other than his/her own village or that of his/her spouse
3. Village development plan for each GP

This scheme has potential to transform villages

1. Improving the standard of living by improved service delivery of key amenities. This includes human development, personal development, economic development and social development.
2. Improve local governance through increased community participation and bottom up approach.
3. Make the village an ideal prototype which the other GPs can learn from and emulate.
4. The design of this scheme puts the MP at the centre of execution where she has to adopt and transform a village. The scheme also allows for the convergence of various central government projects and programmes with additional funding through MPLADS to produce tangible results. The implementation strategy includes the formulation of a village development plan through stringent situation analysis and repeated reviews.

Performance so far

In terms of the actual implementation or development witnessed on the ground, the programme has been a mixed bag so far.

One can see from the fast tracked development in Chikhli in Navsari constituency (Gujarat) or the green development initiative (100 per cent solar powered villages) promoted in the two villages of Toorputallu and PMLanka (Pedamainavanilanka) in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, SAGY offers the potential to transform villages into islands of excellence.

On the other hand many fundamental and operational flaws in the scheme came to light,

1. Cases have come to the light where villages have good infrastructure, but MPs have still gone ahead to adopt them. Ex : Ugameddi has already been developed as a tourism spot.
2. No clear guidelines for MPs on developing the model villages
3. As per the guidelines of the scheme, urban MPs cannot adopt an urban undeveloped area and have to adopt a village in the nearby district. Since, a part of the funding is to be done through MPLADS, it is unfair for the residents of urban constituencies as the money assigned to them is being diversified.

4. The funding pattern is not clearly articulated by the government leading to extreme confusion among the MPs.
5. Only 50 MPs across both the Houses of Parliament have identified the GP under Phase II of SAGY.

Conclusion

But it is too early in the day to comment about the success of the scheme. The success will be judged not by the allocation of funds and budgets spent, but by its ability to fundamentally transform the culture of rural governance.

Best Answer: Nana

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44. The smart cities project is faced with multiple challenges and ambiguities in terms of its financial model, governance and scale. Critically examine.

The Smart cities schemes envisages cities which are digitally connected, and sustainable, where the physical world and the virtual world are synergized to provide solutions to the real time problems.

The first stage of the Scheme had envisaged 100 smart cities. Out of these 96 have already submitted the master plan to the Urban development ministry.

- **Though very ambitions and potentially game changing, the project is faced with huge challenges:**
- **Finance:**
 1. The central government and urban local bodies are going to work together for funds with assistance of world bank and Asian developmental bank and multilateral loans.
 2. Property tax, Profession tax ,Entertainment tax, Advertisement tax ,Octroi and entry taxes are the sources of funding. The abolition of octroi, the once largest source of municipal revenue for many cities, has negative impact on the fiscal sovereignty of urban local bodies.

3. Municipal bonds are the debt financing instruments but many states have restriction on ULB borrowing Tax free municipal bonds can be a huge incentive.
 4. Most of the projects are done through Public private partnership hence contract model must be transparent and user charges cannot be too high.
- **Governance issues need to be solved for a good collaboration between union, state and local bodies:**
 1. Smart City Advisory Forum will be established at the city level for all 100 Smart Cities to advise and enable collaboration among various stakeholders.
 2. At the planning stage itself, cities must seek convergence in the SCP with AMRUT, SBM, HRIDAY, Digital India, Skill development, Housing for All, etc.
 3. executing projects through Special Purpose Vehicles wherein private corporations can have up to 40 per cent share-holding. Hence bypassing the existing framework Scale of operation is huge as it involves building more physical infrastructure to support the technology.
 4. Understanding the concepts of retrofitting, redevelopment and greenfield development by the policy makers, implementers and other stakeholders at different levels will require capacity assistance.
 5. Promoting a variety of transport options - Transit Oriented Development (TOD), public transport and last mile para-transport connectivity.

Best Answer: Manish Kumar.

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