

## 1. How did the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report change the socio-political discourse in India? Discuss.

### Introduction

The Mandal Commission, or the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Commission (SEBC), was established in India on 1 January 1979 by with a mandate to "identify the socially or educationally backward classes" of India. It was headed by the late B.P. Mandal an Indian parliamentarian, to consider the question of reservations for people to redress caste discrimination, and used eleven social, economic, and educational indicators to determine backwardness.

### Body

The commission estimated that 52% of the total population of India (excluding SCs and STs), belonging to 3,743 different castes and communities, were 'backward'.

Recommendations of Mandal commission-

1. A roster system should be prepared for the backward classes on the pattern of that for the SCs and STs.
2. Reservations to be made in PSUs, banks, private sector undertakings receiving government grants, colleges and universities
3. Reservation of 27% public sector and government jobs for OBCs for those who do not qualify on merit.
4. Reservation of 27% for promotions at all levels for OBCs in public service.
5. The reserved quota, if unfilled, should be carried forward for a period of 3 years and dereserved after that.
6. Age relaxation for OBCs to be the same as that for SCs and STs.
7. The government to make the necessary legal provisions to implement these recommendations.

### Effects

#### Positive impact

- Provision of employment opportunity for 'backward classes' improved the economic condition of 'backward classes'.
- Enabled the community to have a better socio-political representation. • Because of reservations in jobs on the basis of caste, the backwards now have an identity as a composite pressure group.
- Reservations will also achieve social egalitarianism by breaking the psychological barriers of the backwards by bringing them into positions of power in the Government.
- The scheme is necessary because it gives the backwards a sense of being part of governance - the system - and compensates for generations of discrimination.
- Because backwards have been deprived for ages on the basis of their caste, now they should be provided facilities on the same basis. That is why we

need representation in the Government on a caste basis, where wealth and respect go hand in hand. These reservations are not for the economic good, but to link backwards with the state

### Negative impact

- The implementation of the report providing reservation to the backward classes further deepen the class divide between upper and lower class.
- This may lead to an Orwellian situation where some castes will be more equal than others. It will strengthen the caste-system because genetic heritage will become the basis for discrimination. Caste-based quotas will lay down that privileges should be extended to the groups and not to the individuals.
- This lowered the importance of merit in securing job by emphasizing more on class reservation.
- It may unleash a more-backward-than-thou race among various castes for the limited spoils, lead to corruption in the certification of castes, and raise expectations.
- The already intense competition gets worsened when caste becomes the basis for selection. Thus it will lead to inter-caste rivalries. Since the new policy does not consider all castes equal, inequalities within the government departments will increase.
- Politics based on caste and region became more prominent. Eg Jat reservation agitation.
- it led to entrenchment and institutionalization of caste as an important determinant in India's socio-politico structure and thus impacting every aspect of life, which is inherently against equality and creates fissures in society.

### Conclusion

A modern democratic state recognises the necessity of preferential treatment to the disadvantaged. But if done on the basis of whole caste-groups, it will be holding responsible the present generation for the follies of its previous generation. Thus Mandal commission decision had chequered outcomes, although reservation is based on principle of positive discrimination and affirmative action, its misuse will dilute its utility

**2. Give a brief description of the way in which environmental movements took Shape in post- Independence India? What are the major achievements of these movements? Examine.**

### Introduction

The environmental movements in India were of special significance in the history of new social movements in India. The post-independence era has witnessed

environmental degradation on an unprecedented scale. Soil erosion, air and water pollution, rapid depletion of forest cover and wild life are just some of the effects of environment degradation. These problems led to emergence of environmental movements.

### Body

#### The way in which environmental movements took Shape in post-independence India

The major environmental movements in post independent India were chipko movement, Save Silent valley movement, Jungle Bachao Andolan, narmada bachao andolan etc.

- The movements were addressed novel issues like environmental degradation
- The movements were massive with the active participation of marginalized groups
- The demands of the new movements were novel in the sense that it demanded right to livelihood and rights of displaced
- The environmental movements adapted non-violent Strategy
- The movements incorporated hitherto unrepresented sectors of society including Adivasi's, women and the marginalized.
- Many of the new environmental movements forced the governments to take affirmative policies in the form of new laws and provisions.

#### The achievements of these movements

1. **Chipko movement:** This renowned movement began in 1971 in the hills of Uttarakhand. Chipko Movement means hug-the-tree movement. The Chipko Movement's first action started in March 1974 in Reni village in the Garhwal Himalayas, when a group of village of women led by Gauri Devi hugged the trees and prevented the hired sawyers to cut them down for a sports goods company. Women, being most affected by the hardship of both the ongoing degradation to their environment and the privatization of basic resources, played a prominent and decisive role.
2. **Save Silent valley movement:** Another significant anti-dam movement is against the Kerala Government's proposal to construct a dam across the river Kunthi in the Silent Valley. The government has argued that it is a viable alternative to the more expensive and polluting sources of thermal power. However, environmental and citizen groups oppose it due to a threat that it may upset the delicate ecological balance of the bio-diversity reserve inhabited by some rare species in the Silent Valley. International organization such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and International Union for the conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) mounted pressure on the government, leading to the shelving of the project in 1983 by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. This movement met with success fairly early and is one of the very rare instances where the State yielded to pressure and

retracted.

3. **The Jungle Bachao Andolan:** it began in Bihar and later spread to states like Jharkhand and Orissa. The tribals of Singhbhum district of Bihar bubbled up a protest when the government decided to replace the natural Sal forests with highly-priced teak, a move that was termed “a greed game, political populism”.

### Conclusion

These environmental movements are an expression of the socio-ecological effects of narrowly conceived development based on short-term criteria of exploitation. The movements reveal how the resource-intensive demands of development have built-in ecological destruction and economic deprivation.

### 3. What were the precursors to the computer and IT revolution in India? How did it Shape the socio-economic landscape in India? Analyse.

#### Introduction

The IT industry emerged in the 1960s, and its export prospects were recognized as early as the early 1970s. The government adopted suitable policies to develop the export potential of this sector, the most important of which was to allow duty-free import of computer systems for software export purposes. The second phase follows the announcement of the New Electronics Policy and the New Computer Policy, both in 1984.

#### Body

##### The precursors to the computer and IT revolution in India

**1. Relaxation in immigration laws and IT revolution in USA:** Fast growing IT sector in USA resulted and relaxation in immigration law in 1965 enabled Indian immigration into the USA. As a result, it also led to the creation of IT professionals in India.

**2. Establishment of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Wipro, Patni Computers and Infosys in the pre-1991 era** - The establishment of these firms between 1960s and 1980s led to the development of IT business model in India.

**3. Pre-1991 policy intervention** - The Policy on Computer Software Export, Software Development and Training announced in 1986 facilitated the development of the software industry. It recognized software as an industry to invest and made it eligible for incentives as other domestic industries, reducing import tariffs and announcement of CSDT policy which liberalized exposure to the latest technologies to compete globally and to capture a share of global software exports.

**4. Economic liberalization in 1991** - relaxed the strict control over private entities and gave a further boost to the IT sector in India. After the economic reforms of 1991-92, liberalization of external trade, elimination of duties on imports of



information technology products, relaxation of controls on both inward and outward investments and foreign exchange and the fiscal measures taken by the Government of India and the individual State Governments specifically for IT and ITeS have been major contributory factors for the sector to flourish in India and for the country to be able to acquire a dominant position in offshore services in the world.

**5. Government policies that facilitated IT revolution post 1991 reforms** - The major fiscal incentives provided by the Government of India have been for the Export Oriented Units (EOU), Software Technology Parks (STP), and Special Economic Zones (SEZ).

#### **How it shaped the socio-economic landscape in India**

- With the number of jobs steadily increasing and has resulted in creation of new class of young consumers with high disposable incomes causing changes in lifestyles, forms of sociality, family structure, and self-identity. These changes fuel the rapid upward socio-economic mobility experienced by employees in this industry. This workforce has been identified as a distinct occupational group, which affects their identity, attitude, interest, collegueship, collective actions, power, and status and work consciousness.
- This sector has emerged as the biggest employment generator. For each person employed in IT sector, around four people were employed in the rest of the economy (NASSCOM News line, 2007). Every rupee spent by IT sector (on domestically sourced goods and services) translates into a total output of Rs.2.00 in the economy. In addition, for every job created in this sector, four new jobs are created in the rest of the economy.
- The rapid growth of IT-BPO and IT industry as a whole is having a profound impact on the socio-economic dynamics of the country. The IT workforce has its own distinct forms of work, employment, organization, and management. Along with its distinct work culture emerged a distinct lifestyle, attitude, sociality and identity.
- This industry is also positively influencing the lives of its people through an active direct and indirect contribution to the various socio-economic parameters such as employment, standard of living and diversity among others. The industry has played a significant role in transforming India's image from a slow moving bureaucratic economy to a land of innovative entrepreneurs and a global player in providing world class technology solutions and business services. The industry has helped India transform from a rural and agriculture based economy to a knowledge based economy.

#### **Conclusion**

The IT sector in India today outsources software services across the world and because of the economic reforms in 1991 and the various liberalization acts introduced by the subsequent Governments helped the IT sector in India grow immensely.

**4. Examine the factors that led to the balance of payment crisis of the early 90s. How did the political class handle this crisis? Explain.**

## Introduction

A default on payments, which would have a disastrous consequence for the Indian economy, had become for the first time in our history a serious possibility in June 1991. This balance of payment crisis had its genesis in the policies of earlier governments and was ably handled by the then government at the centre, headed by P V Narsimha Rao and finance minister Manmohan Singh.

## Body

The balance of payments (BOP) is a statement of all transactions made between entities in one country and the rest of the world over a defined period of time, such as a quarter or a year. These transactions consist of imports and exports of goods, services and capital, as well as transfer payments, such as foreign aid and remittances.

The following factors can be seen as responsible for the balance of payment crisis in 1991:

1. The first important factor responsible for this growing crisis in BOP was the policy of import liberalisation introduced by the Congress (I) Government headed by Late Rajiv Gandhi resulting in a huge inflow of imports particularly after the announcement of Exim Policy in 1985.
2. The second factor responsible for the crisis was the existing heavy import base of the country. In spite of attaining an encouraging 18.7 percent annual growth rate of exports during Seventh Plan, which was even higher than the annual growth rate of imports (16.8 per cent), the BOP position deteriorated to a serious point as the country started with larger volume imports.
3. The third factor responsible for this BOP crisis is the higher import intensity in the industrial development resulting from import intensive industrialisation process followed in the country for meeting the requirements of elitist consumption (viz., colour TVs, VCRs, refrigerators, motor cycles, cars) etc.
4. The steep depreciation of rupee with dollar and other currencies during 1987-91 had resulted in a considerable increase in the value of imports.
5. The worsening of the current account deficit in BOP in 1990-91 and therefore was partly on account of Gulf war and the higher price of petroleum imports and higher volume of petroleum imports continuously.
6. The current account deficit in 1990-91 weakened the ability to finance deficit massively. Political uncertainty at home, coupled with rising inflation and widening fiscal deficits, led to a loss of international confidence. This had resulted in drying up of commercial borrowing and an outflow of NRI deposits.

To tackle such a grave crisis, the government's immediate response was to secure an emergency loan from the International Monetary Fund by pledging tons of India's gold reserves as collateral security. Furthermore, the Narsimha Rao government brought wide ranging reforms which were collectively called LPG reforms

(Liberalisation-Privatisation-Globalisation) and these formed part of the New Economic Policy (NEP).

The thrust of the policies was towards creating a more competitive environment in the economy and removing the barriers to entry and growth of firms. This set of policies can broadly be classified into two groups: the stabilisation measures and the structural reform measures.

Stabilisation measures are short term measures, intended to correct some of the weaknesses that have developed in the balance of payments and to bring inflation under control. In simple words, this means that there was a need to maintain sufficient foreign exchange reserves and keep the rising prices under control. On the other hand, structural reform policies are long-term measures, aimed at improving the efficiency of the economy and increasing its international competitiveness by removing the rigidities in various segments of the Indian economy.

The government initiated a variety of policies which fall under three heads viz., liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. These can be seen as below:

- Liberalisation- Liberalisation was introduced to put an end to restrictions and open up various sectors of the economy. Deregulation of Industrial sector, financial sector reforms, tax reforms, foreign exchange reforms and trade and investment policy reform formed part of this measure.
- Privatisation- It implies shedding of the ownership or management of a government owned enterprise. Privatisation of the public sector enterprises by selling off part of the equity of PSEs to the public is known as disinvestment.
- Globalisation- Globalisation is the outcome of the policies of liberalisation and privatisation. It means an integration of the economy of the country with the world economy.

### Conclusion

The crisis that erupted in the early 1990s was basically an outcome of the deep-rooted inequalities in Indian society and the economic reform policies further aggravated the inequalities. But the process of globalisation through liberalisation and privatisation policies has produced positive as well which has helped leapfrog economic development in India.

**5. The surgical strikes in Uri and the operation by the Indian Airforce in Balakot signify a marked departure from India's past responses to terrorism and associated activities. Do you agree? Substantiate.**

### Introduction

In the words of IAF chief “The strategic relevance of the Balakot air strikes is the resolve of the political leadership to punish the perpetrators of terrorism. There is a major shift in the government's way of handling terrorist attacks. “

### Body

#### India's past responses to terrorism:

India since independence vouch for peace and has not taken unilateral offensive steps. It relied on

- Public condemnation with a passive response relying on bilateral talks and investigation. E.g. joint investigations after 26/11 attack.
- Institutional reforms overhauling the counter terrorism structure. E.g. creation of NIA after Mumbai attack.
- Responses to the attacks were within the borders which included arrest/killing of terrorists. E.g. Afzal guru after parliament attack, Kasab after Mumbai attack etc.,
- Focus more on peace time border management than on preparation for retaliation.

#### India's response marking a change:

Along with the above steps, there is a change in intensity and form of response like

- Retaliation: Use of limited force to give a befitting reply as well as ensuring the non-escalation of the conflict. E.g. Balakot air strikes.
- Limited emphasis on bilateral talks. The view that “ talks and terrorism cannot go together”. Also, other areas like trade linked to the terrorism issue. E.g. India closed down its border for several imports from Pakistan.
- Joint operations with neighboring countries using force to eliminate insurgency incidents. E.g. Operation sunrise with Myanmar.
- Countering the act with stand on similar issues in the other country. E.g. The prime minister talk on issues in Balochistan during Independence Day.
- The areas hitherto untouched taken up and made part of counter terror talks. E.g. Statements on Indus water treaty where the PM said “blood and water cannot flow together”.
- A shift from politically dealing the terrorism issue to militarily – similar to USA but on a small scale. E.g. free hand given to the army chief to take steps to curb terrorism after Pulwama attack.
- Taking unprecedented stands on settled propositions like ‘No first use policy’ for the sake of National Unity and security.
- Mainstreaming terrorism issue in every bilateral talks and multilateral forum and also coming up with strategies to handle the issue. Previously, the discussion on terrorism attacks were mainly limited in bilateral talks. E.g. Counter terrorist exercise in SCO (RATS) etc.,



**Conclusion**

Thus, the way in which India handle the terrorism issue has changed from passive defensive pressure relying on talks to active offensive immediate response to create a deterrent effect. Both ways have its own positives and collaborative effort of talks with deterrent response is needed. In the words of PM, 'the responses were to teach terrorists a lesson in the language they understand'.

