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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. India stands committed to UNCLOS

India remains committed to promoting a free, open and rules-based order rooted in international law and undaunted by coercion, the Centre informed Parliament while reiterating support for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

UNCLOS

- UNCLOS replaces the older 'freedom of the seas' concept, dating from the 17th century.
- According to this concept, national rights were limited to a specified belt of water extending from a nation's coastlines, usually 3 nautical miles (5.6 km; 3.5 mi).
- This was considered according to the 'cannon shot' rule developed by the Dutch rulers.

About UNCLOS

- UNCLOS is sometimes referred to as the Law of the Sea Convention or the Law of the Sea treaty.
- It came into operation and became effective from 16th November 1982.
- It defines the rights and responsibilities of nations with respect to their use of the world's oceans, establishing guidelines for businesses, the environment, and the management of marine natural resources.
- It has created three new institutions on the international scene :
 1. International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea,
 2. International Seabed Authority
 3. Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf

Major conventions:

There had been three major conferences of UNCLOS:

1. **UNCLOS I:** It resulted in the successful implementation of various conventions regarding Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zones, Continental Shelf, High Seas, Fishing Rights.

2. **UNCLOS II:** No agreement was reached over breadth of territorial waters.
3. **UNCLOS III:** It introduced a number of provisions. The most significant issues covered were setting limits, navigation, archipelagic status and transit regimes, exclusive economic zones (EEZs), continental shelf jurisdiction, deep seabed mining, the exploitation regime, protection of the marine environment, scientific research, and settlement of disputes.

The convention set the limit of various areas, measured from a carefully defined baseline.

These terminologies are as follows:

(1) Baseline

- The convention set the limit of various areas, measured from a carefully defined baseline.
- Normally, a sea baseline follows the low-water line, but when the coastline is deeply indented, has fringing islands or is highly unstable, straight baselines may be used.

(2) Internal waters

- It covers all water and waterways on the landward side of the baseline.
- The coastal state is free to set laws, regulate use, and use any resource. Foreign vessels have no right of passage within internal waters.
- A vessel in the high seas assumes jurisdiction under the internal laws of its flag State.

(3) Territorial waters

- Out to 12 nautical miles (22 km, 14 miles) from the baseline, the coastal state is free to set laws, regulate use, and use any resource.
- Vessels were given the **Right of Innocent Passage** through any territorial waters.
- “Innocent passage” is defined by the convention as passing through waters in an expeditious and continuous manner, which is not “prejudicial to the peace, good order or the security” of the coastal state.
- Fishing, polluting, weapons practice, and spying are not “innocent”, and submarines and other underwater vehicles are required to navigate on the surface and to show their flag.
- Nations can also temporarily suspend innocent passage in specific areas of their territorial seas, if doing so is essential for the protection of their security.

(4) Archipelagic waters

- The convention set the definition of “Archipelagic States”, which also defines how the state can draw its territorial borders.
- All waters inside this baseline are designated “Archipelagic Waters”.
- The state has sovereignty over these waters mostly to the extent it has over internal waters, but subject to existing rights including traditional fishing rights of immediately adjacent states.
- Foreign vessels have right of innocent passage through archipelagic waters, but archipelagic states may limit innocent passage to designated sea lanes.

(5) Contiguous zone

- Beyond the 12-nautical-mile (22 km) limit, there is a further 12 nautical miles (22 km) from the territorial sea baseline limit, the contiguous zone.
- Here a state can continue to enforce laws in four specific areas (customs, taxation, immigration, and pollution) if the infringement started or is about to occur within the state’s territory or territorial waters.
- This makes the contiguous zone a hot pursuit area.

(6) Exclusive economic zones (EEZs)

- These extend 200 nm from the baseline.
- Within this area, the coastal nation has sole exploitation rights over all natural resources.
- In casual use, the term may include the territorial sea and even the continental shelf.

(7) Continental shelf

- The continental shelf is defined as the natural prolongation of the land territory to the continental margin’s outer edge, or 200 nautical miles (370 km) from the coastal state’s baseline, whichever is greater.

India and UNCLOS

- As a State party to the UNCLOS, India promoted utmost respect for the UNCLOS, which established the international legal order of the seas and oceans.
- India also supported freedom of navigation and overflight, and unimpeded commerce based on the principles of international law, reflected notably in the UNCLOS 1982.
- India is committed to safeguarding maritime interests and strengthening security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to ensure a favorable and positive maritime environment.

2. Minor cases, major delays

- As per the data recently provided by the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) before the Delhi High Court, **a substantial number of criminal cases have been pending before the Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) over the stipulated time limits** as provided under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015:

- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, was brought in with the purpose of conducting criminal trials of minors or children in conflict with the law (CCLs) who are accused of petty or serious offences before the **Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs)**.
- To **safeguard the children in conflict with law**, the juveniles after being presented before the board, especially those involved in petty offences, are generally granted bail and handed over to their parents. They are sent to an observation home only when the family is untraceable or at the court's discretion.
- To **ensure timely disposal** of related cases, the Juvenile Justice Act states that inquiry pertaining to minors involved in petty offences, for which imprisonment is a maximum of three years, shall stand terminated if it remains inconclusive till six months.

Reasons for high pendency:

- The biggest problem that causes long **delays is ascertaining the minor's age**. The lack of adequate infrastructure with the JJBs, lack of identity documents and legal technicalities leads to an extended age verification process.
- The **JJBs are overburdened** with a large number of cases. The unequal distribution of cases among JJBs is another reason for the increasing delay as some jurisdictions see more juvenile cases than others.
- In some cases, the preparation of the Social Investigation Report of the child, which contains the family background, takes time.
- The **frequent adjournments** also add to the time taken for the disposal of the cases.
- **Police laxity** and the JJB's failure to pull them up for not following the rules laid out under the Act also has been contributing to the delays.

- Apart from the above issues, **COVID-19 further restricted the JJB's functioning**, much like other courts. During the COVID lockdown, there was restricted functioning of JJBs.

Concerns:

- The failure to close the proceedings in cases against juveniles within the legally permissible period amounts to the **encroachment of the personal liberty of the children**.
- The pendency leads to **social stigma** and thus affects the dignity of the child.
- The tag of being a criminal, especially for petty offences, has a negative psychological impact on the child's mind. This could have an **adverse impact on the child's mental health**.
- The **separation of the child from parents in some cases and the pendency in such cases affects the children's upbringing**. It denies them their familial love and personal freedom duly enshrined in the Constitution.
- The long-drawn legal process **affects the child's rehabilitation process**. It affects the minor's after-care plan, which includes educational and vocational training.

Recommendations:

- The officers dealing with juvenile cases must be adequately **trained and sensitised** to handle related cases.
- **More JJBs should be set up** so that there is an equal police station-wise distribution of matters and they should be **adequately resourced** to ensure their smooth functioning.
- Any shortcomings or deviations from the rules laid out by the Act should be strictly dealt with. The judiciary should take the lead in this regard. The Magistrates should come down heavily on police officers and make them follow the law.

3. Central Asian leaders invited for R-Day

- India has invited leaders of five **Central Asian nations - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan** to attend the Republic Day celebrations as chief guests.
 - If the five countries accept the invitation, it will be the first time all five countries will attend the Republic Day parade together.

Diplomatic undertone:

Outreach to Central Asia:

- The invite for Republic Day celebrations has diplomatic undertones and the invitation to the leaders of the five Central Asian nations seems to be part of **India's reach-out to the former Soviet states** that have received enhanced attention during the recent years.
- Central Asia assumes **significance for India**. The region is endowed with **rich fossil fuel resources** critical for India's energy security. It is also endowed with **other mineral resources** as well which can act as a supplier to Indian industries. The Central Asian region has gained increasing **strategic importance** in the rapidly changing regional and global geo-political scenario. Central Asia can also provide India with critical **land access to Europe**.
- India joined the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** in 2017, of which all Central Asian States other than Turkmenistan are members.
- **India-Central Asia Dialogue** was launched in 2019.
- Given India has been seeking to increase its link to the Central Asian region and Pakistan's reluctance to permit land connectivity to Central Asia, India has sought alternatives in the form of **Chabahar and International North-South Transport Corridor**. Central Asia-South Asia connectivity conference was held recently.

Reach out to the neighbourhood:

- The move is also part of the current government's attempts to **bring together immediate neighbours and "far neighbours" in a group format** on multiple occasions. This is in line with previous attempts to get SAARC, BIMSTEC and ASEAN group leaders to attend important events.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

4. The stepping stones in the post-pandemic world

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted lives and livelihoods across the world. Governments, global institutions, industry, academia and non-profit organisations around the world have joined hands to tackle the global challenge and help countries rebuild their economies.

Criticality of international cooperation and role for India

- The novel coronavirus pandemic has once again highlighted the criticality of international cooperation in combating current and future challenges.
- **Areas of cooperation:** Key among these include economic growth, building competitiveness of the investment climate, ensuring sustainable development paths and adapting to technology acceleration.
- **Strengthening global partnership:** Building resilience to cope with the threats posed by pandemics and other man-made and natural disasters has necessitated strengthening global partnerships now more than ever.
- Global partnerships help in building mutual trust and understanding by agreeing upon **common rules and standards** and sharing of best practices.

Areas to focus on

[1] Challenge of long term sustainability of growth process

- While the world economy is rebounding strongly, the long-term sustainability of the growth process needs to be strengthened.
- **Exit from the massive stimulus packages** itself may pose risks of economic and financial instability.

[2] Challenges of supply chain management:

- The pandemic severely disrupted global supply chains and set the global trade trajectory on a downward path.
- Even as the world emerges from the pandemic, facilitating medical supplies and essentials will continue to remain a top priority and for this, supply chains will need to be kept flowing.

- For this year, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) indicates an increase of 22.4% in the value of global merchandise trade compared with 2020.
- World trade is expected to stand about 15% higher than before the COVID-19.
- FDI flows in developing economies also increased significantly, totalling **\$427 billion** in the first half of 2021.
- **Cooperation on trade facilitation** for enhancing open and transparent markets, technical assistance and reduction of complex process and arrangements must be promoted.

[3] Increasing competitiveness

- Competitiveness will be **key in facilitating growth and inclusive development**.
- **New opportunities and avenues** across potential high growth sectors such as manufacturing and start-ups must be leveraged.
- An ecosystem of **entrepreneurship and innovation** with targeted policies and interventions will contribute to enhancing productivity and generating employment.

[4] Structural changes with the emergence of digital economy

- Certain structural changes are likely to become permanent in the future and this is especially true of the **digital economy**
- **Equitable adaptation:** The rise of telemedicine, remote work and e-learning, delivery services, etc. necessitates **equitable adaptation** to advanced technologies and tools, building robust infrastructure, and occupational transitions.
- **Skill development and worker training,** investments in education and vocational training, and capacity building would be some key areas of focus for filling technology gaps and nurturing new and existing talent.
- **Investment in innovation:** At the same time, investments in innovation will be crucial, especially during a crisis.

[5] Climate change

- **Matter of urgency:** Climate change has now **acquired urgency** from policymakers around the world, as seen in the recent COP26 at Glasgow.
- International alliances and cooperation on building sustainable solutions, green technology, resource efficiency, sustainable finance, etc., must be promoted to fast-track meeting the **sustainable development goals** and for ensuring all-round development.

Opportunities for India

- **Attaining faster growth path:** India's recent reforms, role in combating the pandemic, and **startup vibrancy**, among other factors, have attracted global attention and can help it attain a faster growth path, provided its integration with the world economy and trade gains strategic intensity.
- **Reliable and trusted player:** With multiple strategic shifts, India's role as a **reliable and trusted player** in the comity of nations stands enhanced.

Way forward

- In the post-pandemic world, it will be critical for India **to improve on its investment climate and systematically target** its export capabilities across sectors and regions.
- Ease of doing business and **new free trade agreement with major markets** will help it integrate closely with the world through trade and investment partnerships.

Conclusion

The time for India is here and it must leverage international partnerships for ensuring a robust and sustained economic growth path.

5. The challenges in being a chip hub

India is aiming to manufacture silicon semiconductor chips.

Efforts to set up chip fabrication plant

- India has intensified efforts to set up a semiconductor fabrication plant with the help of Taiwan, the market leader.
- For this the government is **investing over \$7.5 billion**.
- The Tata Group is in talks with three States – Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Karnataka – to invest over \$300 million to set up a **semiconductor manufacturing facility**.
- In 2014, NASSCOM wanted to promote a National Technology Corridor along coastal A.P. stretching through the Visakhapatnam, Rajahmundry and Vijayawada region.

- Given the abundance of water, sand (raw material for making silicon ingots), road, rail, ports and airport connectivity, the industry body wanted to push and promote the design and manufacturing of electronic chips.

Challenges

- **IP and design:** While welcoming such moves by the government and technology experts, local players in the segment say that **chip making itself will not be enough.**
- Other aspects such as designing and Intellectual Property are required to make a mark.
- Designing is what brings value to the chips.
- If the **Intellectual Property** lies with the foreign entity, we end up manufacturing the basic material which does not serve the purpose.
- **Need to promote SoCs:** Rather, we need an ecosystem to promote **SoCs (System on a Chip)** which makes more sense.”
- There are several firms in India which are now making SoCs, which is a good sign.
- **Connect related industries:** The bigger challenge and immediate need for the Indian government is to connect related industries in India to create the ecosystem, industry players say.

Conclusion

The initiative is an uphill task as many factors need to come together for India to make a mark in the niche chip making and designing industry. Also, upcoming firms should be able to sustain themselves in the market when subsidies from the government are withdrawn.

6. Home truths on climate change

This article examines the gaps between international commitments and domestic policies aimed to tackle the climate crisis.

Reasons behind the climate crisis

- The reasons for the world’s climate problem may be found in global capitalism’s irresponsible pursuit of profit maximization, driven by the United States and its developed-country allies.
- As a result, environmental degradation has occurred in the name of development.

- The goal at Glasgow was to make ‘net zero’ emissions by 2050 a global benchmark, without accounting for cumulative emissions for which the Global North is primarily responsible.
- The attempt by some to compare India and other emerging countries with the United States and Europe as the worst “emitters” is similarly misguided, owing to cumulative emissions.

Gaps Between International Commitments and Domestic Policies

In the international arena, India’s ruling regime wears the crown of a poor country resisting industrialized nations’ aggressiveness on climate change issues, while internal policies reflect the interests of local and foreign capital. Some examples are:

- **Coal Use Policy:** In India, the government’s coal policy is motivated by its desire to transfer mineral resources, particularly coal, to the private sector. Even as India brags about transitioning to solar energy to fulfil its emission reduction objectives, it is privatizing the coal business, auctioning coal mines, and pushing open cast mines for commercialization and export.
- **Agricultural Policies:** Within India, the promotion of corporatisation policies and the support of contract farming under terms imposed by large agri-businesses jeopardizes food security. Important pledges are made in the same proclamation to “recognise and (extend) assistance to smallholders, indigenous peoples, and local communities.” It was expedient for the administration not to accept significant reforms proposed by international laws and institutions because the policies would have contradicted these promises. For example, the recommendations in the International Monetary Fund’s 2018 Article IV report consider the MSP to be a market distortion that skews farmers’ production decisions, adds to inflation, and enlarges the fiscal burden. But the government promises not to roll back the current Minimum Support Price (MSP).
- **Amendments to Recent Laws:** The government has tried to monetize, privatize, commercialize, and even militarize forests through a host of proposed revisions to current laws and regulations, trampling on the recognised rights of forest people, particularly indigenous populations.
 - The proposed Forest Policy of 2018, proposed amendments to the Forest Act of 1927, proposed amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980, proposed amendments to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act of 1957, and the adoption of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Rules all reflect these measures.
- **Paris Agreement:** The Indian government agreed to construct carbon sinks by 2030 at the 2015 COP in Paris. The government established a Green Mission to promote forest regeneration, afforestation, and increased forest and tree cover, among other things. The Estimates Committee of Parliament indicated

in its 2018-2019 report that 30 million hectares of land are necessary to plant indigenous trees, not monocultures or plantations, to achieve the promise of sequestering CO₂.

- **Reduced Power to Gram Sabhas:** Recent legislative changes have deprived Gram Sabhas of any say in decision-making processes, making it simpler to pass up forests to the corporate sector. The power of the Gram Sabhas is being ignored.

Way Forward:

- To discover long-term answers, we must look at the internal policies of developing-country governments in addition to rejecting the imperialist attitude of the rich world.
- The majority of these regimes are dedicated to the capitalist expropriation of natural and national resources.
- The government must alter its pro-corporate policies, which are manifested in privatization. It must end its unofficial war on the Forest Rights Act and constitutional protections that protect Adivasi populations.
- Only with the participation of people who have saved forests will India be able to make a significant contribution to efforts to manage climate change and serve as an example to the rest of the world.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. The case for deeper technological ties with the United Kingdom

When Delhi thinks of technological cooperation with major powers, the US, Europe and Japan come to mind. The missing link in India's technological mind space, however, is the United Kingdom.

How India can benefit from technology partnership with Britain

- Britain was the **first nation to industrialise** and has a long tradition of scientific research and technological development.

- With top-ranking universities and the **golden triangle of science and innovation** – London, Oxford and Cambridge – Britain is one of the world’s top technology powers.
- **WIPO ranking:** This year, the **World Intellectual Property Organisation** ranked Britain fourth in the global innovation index.
- **India is far behind at the 46th position.**
- India, then, **could gain in a technology partnership with Britain.**

Overview of the India-UK bilateral ties

- **Pakistan angle:** India’s foreign policy community can’t shake off the Pakistan prism in viewing London.
- To be sure, London’s advocacy of Pakistan has always irritated Delhi.
- Instead of complaining about London’s South Asian policy, Delhi now simply **ignores London’s claims for a special role in India’s political disputes with Pakistan.**
- By focusing on the positive, Delhi is betting it can reduce the traditional negative elements in the engagement with the UK.
- At the same time, Delhi recognises the enormous strategic possibilities with Britain and is willing to invest political capital to build on those synergies.
- Meanwhile, the **steady relative decline of Pakistan** – its economy is now about a tenth of India’s – and Delhi’s deepening strategic partnership with Washington are also encouraging London **to rethink its past approach to the Subcontinent.**
- India is fully conscious of UK’s enduring global salience.
- External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar has often highlighted Britain’s continuing weight in the world as the fifth-largest economy, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a major financial centre, and a leading hub of higher education and technology.
- Britain also enjoys a **global maritime reach** and a measure of political influence across the world.

Possibilities for partnership in the technological domain

- While a trade agreement between Delhi and London is said to be imminent, it is in the technological domain that the **prospects are immense but under-explored.**
- There is insufficient awareness in India’s strategic community of the British moves **to put science and technology at the very heart of its political, economic, security and foreign policies.**
- London announced a raft of measures this year starting with a major report on “Global Britain in a Competitive Age: An Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development, and Foreign Policy”.

- One of the broad themes stand out from these initiatives, which is forming a coalition of like-minded countries.
- London wants to build a coalition of like-minded countries to **reshape the global governance of technology**.
- This includes strengthening technological ties with the traditionally close partners in the Anglosphere – US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand – **as well as other partners like Japan and India**.
- All these elements of British policy **mesh with India's own economic, political, and security interests**.
- The British technology initiatives are also aligned with the **technological agenda of the Quad** – or the Quadrilateral forum that brings together Australia, India, Japan, and the US.

Conclusion

For Delhi, the essence of the new alliance with Britain is fourfold – generate domestic prosperity, enhance national security, climb up the global technology hierarchy, and contribute to the construction of a free, open, and democratic global technological order.

2. Lokpal-Online: Platform for management of complaints

The (first) Chairperson, Lokpal of India, Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose has inaugurated' a digital Platform for Management of Complaints called 'Lokpal-Online'.

Lokpal-Online

- Lokpal-Online is an end-to-end digital solution for the management of complaints against public servants filed under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013.
- It is a web-based facility, which will quicken the disposal of complaints in an accountable, transparent and efficient manner with benefits to all stakeholders.
- It facilitates handling of complaints during the complete lifecycle of the Complaint, right from its filing to the final disposal.
- It aims to bring more transparency and efficiency to the complaint handling mechanism.

Notable features of Online-Lokpal

- Convenience to complainants for filing complaints online from anywhere anytime
- Information to the complainant about action on the complaint at every stage through e-mails and SMS
- Facility to the complainant to ascertain the status of complaint at anytime
- Identity of the complaint is kept confidential
- The CVC, CBI and other inquiry agencies can upload their reports directly on the 'Lokpal-Online' platform.
- Reminders to inquiry agencies through e-mails and SMS
- Generation of analytical reports as per requirement

3. Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK)

About: Restructured in May 2018 earlier known as MsDP - Implemented for the benefit of the people from all sections of the society in identified Minority Concentration Areas for creation of assets in education, skill and health sectors.

- Provide better socio economic infrastructure facilities to the minority communities particularly in the field of education, health & skill development as compared to the present situation, which would further lead to lessening of the gap between the national average and the minority communities with regard to backwardness parameters.
- The flexibility introduced in the programme will enable addressing important issues that would result in speedier implementation leading to greater inclusiveness of the minority communities.
- The criteria for identification of Minority Concentration Towns and Clusters of Villages have been rationalized by lowering the population percentage criteria of Minority Communities and fulfilment of backwardness parameters in the following manners:-
 - Earlier only those Towns which were found backward in terms of both in Basic Amenities and Socio-economic parameters were taken up as MCTs. Now, the Towns which were found backward in either or both of the criteria have been taken up as MCT.
 - Earlier only those Cluster of Villages which were having at-least 50% population of Minority Community were taken. Now the population criterion has been lowered to 25%.

4. Commitment towards Freedom of Navigation

Government of India is committed to safeguarding maritime interests and strengthening security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to ensure a favorable and positive maritime environment.

- India remains committed to promoting a **free, open and rules-based order**, rooted in international law and undaunted by coercion.
- India also supports freedom of navigation and over flight, and unimpeded commerce based on the principles of international law, reflected notably in the '**United Nations' Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982**. As a State Party to the UNCLOS, India promotes utmost respect for the UNCLOS, which establishes the international legal order of the seas and oceans.
- India develops its maritime cooperation with regional partners in consonance with the Government's vision of **Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)**. The steps taken include 'Mission based Deployments' of Indian Naval Ships and aircraft to enhance Maritime Domain Awareness, promote maritime security and address contingencies that may arise.
- India proactively engages with regional and extra regional maritime forces through multilateral exercises, joint surveillance, coordinated patrols etc. to promote maritime security in the region in an inclusive and cooperative manner.
- India also participated in regional frameworks such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), East Asia Summit (EAS) and ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus) to promote maritime cooperation and exchanges in the region

5. Europe's Global Gateway

What is Global Gateway initiative of EU?

- It is a new European Strategy to boost smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy and transport and strengthen health, education and research systems across the world.
- It is essentially an umbrella strategy to synchronize already existing EU and member states global infrastructure investment programs.
- Global Gateway aims to mobilize 300 billion euros (around \$337 billion) over a five-year period to invest in digital and transport infrastructure, energy generation and transmission, and health projects.

- In addition to smaller EU grants, Global Gateway taps into national and EU resources from financial institutions and development banks, in the hope that institutional spending will unlock significant private capital, too.

Merits of Global Gateway

- **Challenger to China's BRI:** Observers and officials were quick to frame the GG as a European challenge to China's BRI – itself launched in 2013 to fund infrastructure development projects mostly in developing and middle-income countries in Asia and around the globe.
- **Strengthen EU ties with world:** EU investments have made tangible differences on the ground in much of the developing world as well as in middle-income countries. This strengthens ties with Asia, Africa, and, importantly, the Western Balkan region, and it raises environmental, democracy, and human rights standards.
- **The European model** is about investing in both hard and soft infrastructure, in sustainable investments in digital, climate and energy, transport, health, education and research, as well as in an enabling environment guaranteeing a level playing field.
- **Value Driven Model:** The EU will offer not only solid financial conditions for partners, bringing grants, favourable loans, and budgetary guarantees to improve debt sustainability – but also promote the highest environmental, social and strategic management standards
- **Complements US initiative:** This is Europe's contribution to narrowing the global investment gap. Also, Global Gateway and the US initiative Build Back Better World will mutually reinforce each other.

Criticisms/challenges of Global Gateway

- **Repacking of Existing Projects:** Global Gateway is mostly repackaging existing programs (InvestEU, our research programme, Horizon Europe and the Connecting Europe Facility) and also that the investment sum remains a fraction of what China is mobilizing.
- **Geopolitical Influence:** Overseas infrastructure investments are always partly geopolitical, seeking to increase the investing country's own influence while trying to minimize space for others. The EU is no different and naturally seeks to advance its interests and competitiveness.
- **China factor is exaggerated:** Not China but Japan is the largest infrastructure investor, silently and seamlessly implementing affordable good quality projects, especially in Southeast Asia.
- **Value Driven Agenda of EU:** While Europe meets high standards and enjoys great credibility and reputation, the assumption that China does not is flawed. Many middle- and low-income countries are demanding China's

investment that doesn't come with value-driven agendas unlike that of Western investment which is invariably attached to Democracy & Human rights.

- **China adapting to criticisms:** BRI is now approaching a decade of experience, and China, though relatively new to global investment projects, has learned important lessons from the first phase of BRI (2013-2017). Beijing is also increasingly showing greater empathy for the local economy and sensitivities, and the BRI is moving into new areas of sustainable growth and health where there is great demand.
- **Scope for complementary multi-source investment:** Asian Development Bank estimates Asia's needs to be \$26 trillion through 2030. In other words, even if China were to double the BRI's investment volume, would still be room for 10 Global Gateways.
- **Challenges in mobilising Private Capital:** While the BRI mobilizes state-owned commercial and policy banks, it is unclear whether the EU will indeed be able to tap into private capital. Infrastructure projects are costly and yield uncertain returns.

Conclusion

- Not everything needs to be seen through the lens of binary competition, and not everything Beijing does is ipso facto bad simply because Beijing does it.
- Global Gateway is an excellent and meaningful strategy. But instead of trying to outcompete China and lamenting low standards, the EU could make a difference by setting examples, gradually raising the bar for all.
- Europe should find ways to coordinate and synergize various national and supra-national projects and share best practices and information. It can also prioritize areas less penetrated by the BRI, especially India and Eastern Europe.

6. Russia-Ukraine Tension

Russia has been building up its military forces close to the Ukrainian border. As per reports, Russia has amassed more than 92,000 troops around 300 km from the Russian border with eastern Ukraine.

- This territory is a conflict zone where Ukraine has been battling Russia-backed separatists.
- While Ukraine and the West have accused Russia of preparing for an invasion, Russia has, in turn, accused the West of 'anti-Russia' agenda.

Why the Russian military build-up?

- While the exact reasons remain open to interpretation, most strategic experts believe that an actual invasion is unlikely.
- Rather, the move seems aimed at signaling serious intent to impose costs on Ukraine if certain 'red lines' regarding Moscow's security concerns are crossed.
- The background to Russia's recent escalation vis-à-vis Ukraine is its discomfort with the **steady eastward expansion of the U.S.-led North Atlantic Organisation (NATO)**.
- With even former constituents of the erstwhile Soviet Union such as Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia becoming NATO members, **Russia is determined to protect its domain of influence** in the case of larger neighbours such as Belarus and Ukraine.
- While Belarus has a pro-Russia regime, Ukraine has been courting – and courted by – NATO.
- Russia is alarmed by the gradual expansion of **military aid pouring into Ukraine from NATO** member countries, which is allegedly being used in its war against Russia-backed separatists in the Donbas region (Eastern Ukraine).
- In this context, the troop build-up could be interpreted as a **stern warning** against any plans to escalate NATO activities or presence in Ukraine.

How has Ukraine responded to Russia's mobilisation?

- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky claimed that a coup plot has been hatched to depose him. Without saying so in as many words, he has hinted that Russia was behind the plot.
- Russia has denied any role in the alleged coup attempt.
- Ever since **Russia seized Crimea from Ukraine in March 2014** and war broke out in eastern Ukraine a month after, relations between the two countries have been fraught.
- **Russia annexed Crimea to protect its naval base** in the Crimean capital of Sevastopol, which was necessary to retain its dominance of the strategically critical **Black Sea**, which is otherwise surrounded by NATO states (Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania, with Georgia and Ukraine being aspiring members whose induction has been stalled only by Russian opposition).

Does the Minsk Protocol have any bearing on the current scenario?

- The Minsk Protocol was an agreement signed by representatives of Ukraine, Russia, OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation), and the then heads of the two separatist groups to end the war in the Donbas region.
- It enjoins **Ukraine to devolve more powers to the local governments** – likely controlled by the separatist groups – in the Donbas region.

- Ukraine, which has made no move to implement the agreement, believes that doing so would give Russia too much say in its internal matters.
- Russia, on the other hand, believes the Minsk Protocol to be the basis for lasting peace.

What are the larger geo-political ramifications?

- With the end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO's original objective – to thwart an invasion of Western Europe from the east – had been achieved.
- But NATO, rather than disbanding, reinvented itself as a **vehicle of American strategic dominance**. It began to expand, acquiring new members at a fast clip.
- Recently, with the U.S. viewing China rather than Russia as its primary security threat, American strategic focus has been shifting to the Asia-Pacific theatre.
- Some analysts believe that Russian President Vladimir Putin might have decided that it was a good time to **test NATO's (and the U.S.'s) strategic will** to get involved in case things escalate in Ukraine.

What next?

- In the event of Russia actually invading Ukraine, it is **doubtful if NATO would intervene militarily** to protect Ukraine, which is not currently a member. At the same time, it would not want to be seen as ineffective.
- At the very least, Russia, which already faces an array of economic sanctions sparked by the Crimea invasion, might end up with more painful ones, including possibly against the Nord Stream-2 pipeline, which delivers Russian gas directly to Germany.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

7. What is Q-Commerce Model?

Online grocer Grofers has rebranded itself “Blinkit”, in line with its new focus on “quick commerce”, which essentially involves delivering customer orders much faster than it does currently.

Q-Commerce Model

- Q-commerce (“quick commerce”) – sometimes used interchangeably with ‘on-demand delivery’ and ‘e-grocery’ – is e-commerce in a new, faster form.
- It combines the merits of traditional e-commerce with innovations in last-mile delivery.
- The premise is largely the same, with speed of delivery being the main differentiator. Delivery is not in days but minutes – 30 or less, to be competitive.
- This has in turn expanded the breadth of what individuals can order, with perishable goods – like groceries – being a large niche q-commerce companies speak to.
- It tends to focus on the micro – smaller quantities of fewer goods.

Features of this model

- **Countering pandemic:** The supply chain disruptions triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic led to the emergence of a new sub-vertical in the online grocery segment.
- **Quickest delivery:** It is the unique selling proposition (USP) of which was the promise of delivery within 10-30 minutes of ordering.
- **Micro-warehousing :** The focus of most of these ventures is on setting up micro-warehouses located closer to the point of delivery, and of restricting stocks of high-demand items.

8. Co-Lending Model for Banks-NBFCs

A November 2020 decision by the RBI to permit banks to “co-lend with all registered NBFCs based on a prior agreement” has led to unusual tie-ups between the banks and companies.

The 'Co-Lending Model'

- In September 2018, the RBI had announced “co-origination of loans” by banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) for lending to the priority sector.
- The arrangement entailed joint contribution of credit at the facility level by both the lenders as also sharing of risks and rewards.
- Subsequently, based on feedback from stakeholders, the RBI allowed the lenders greater operational flexibility, while requiring them to conform to regulatory guidelines.
- The primary focus of the revised scheme, rechristened as 'Co-Lending Model' (CLM), was to “improve the flow of credit to the unserved and underserved sector of the economy.

Repercussions of Co-Lending

(1) Bank-NBFC tie-ups at indiscriminate scale

- Several banks have entered into co-lending 'master agreements' with NBFCs, and more are in the pipeline.
- SBI, the country's largest lender, signed a deal with Adani Capital, a small NBFC of a big corporate house, for co-lending to farmers to help them buy tractors and farm implements.

(2) Greater risk in co-lending

- NBFCs are required to retain at least a 20 per cent share of individual loans on their books.
- This means 80 per cent of the risk will be with the banks – who will take the big hit in case of a default.

(3) Corporates in banking

- While the RBI hasn't officially allowed the entry of big corporate houses into the banking space, NBFCs – mostly floated by corporate houses – were already accepting public deposits.
- They now have more opportunities on the lending side through direct co-lending arrangements.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. With reference to Imaging X-ray Polarimetry Explorer (IXPE), consider the following statements:

1. The IXPE observatory is a joint effort of NASA and the Italian Space Agency.
2. IXPE will replace the Chandra X-ray Observatory.

Which of the statements given above is/are not correct?

- A 1 only
B 2 only
C Both 1 and 2
D Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : B

Explanation

- Recently, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) launched a new mission named Imaging X-ray Polarimetry Explorer (IXPE).
 - The IXPE observatory is a **joint effort of NASA and the Italian Space Agency. Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It will study “the most extreme and mysterious objects in the universe – supernova remnants, supermassive black holes, and dozens of other high-energy objects.”
 - Its primary length is two years and the observatory will be at 600 kilometers altitude, orbiting around Earth’s equator.
 - It is expected to study about 40 celestial objects in its first year in space.
- It will **complement other X-ray telescopes such as the Chandra X-ray Observatory** and the European Space Agency’s X-ray observatory, XMM-Newton. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**

2. Noumea Accord is a promise by the French Republic to grant political power to

- a. Réunion
- b. Guadeloupe
- c. New Caledonia

d. Mayotte

Answer: c

Explanation

- New Caledonia is a French special collectivity located in the southwest Pacific Ocean that is now controlled under the “Noumea Accord.”
- The Nouméa Accord of 1998 is a commitment made by the French Republic to give New Caledonia and its native inhabitants, the Kanaks, more political authority.
- **Hence Option C is correct.**

3. Consider the following statements:

1. Radioactivity is the phenomenon of spontaneous emission of particles or waves from the unstable nuclei of some elements.
2. A small amount of radioactive radiation is found in some types of water also.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C Both 1 and 2
- D Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : A

Explanation

- Recently, radioactive pollution in water and associated health impacts have been reported in many parts of the globe.
- Radioactivity is the phenomenon of **spontaneous emission of particles or waves from the unstable nuclei of some elements**. There are three types of radioactive emissions: Alpha, Beta and Gamma. **Hence Statement 1 is correct.**
- Alpha particles are positively charged He (Helium) atoms, beta particles are negatively charged electrons and gamma rays are neutral electromagnetic radiations.
- Radioactive elements are naturally found in the earth’s crust. Uranium, thorium and actinium are three NORM (Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials) series that contaminate water resources.

- A small amount of radiation is found in all types of water but the extended amount of radiation is harmful to human health. Radioactivity in drinking water can be determined by a gross alpha test. **Hence Statement 2 is not correct.**
- Radioactivity is measured in Becquerel (SI unit) or in Curie. The unit Sievert measures the quantity of radiation absorbed by human tissues.

4. The Governor of a State is the Chancellor of

- a. State Universities
- b. State and Central Universities
- c. State and Private Universities
- d. State, Central and Private Universities

Answer: a

Explanation

- The Governor serves as the State Universities' ex-officio Chancellor.
- According to the terms of the relevant University's Act, the Governor selects the Vice Chancellor on the advice of the State Government.
- The honorary chancellor of all State-owned colleges is the governor of the state, who is selected by the president as the union's representative.
- **Hence Option A is correct.**

5. With reference to Laser Communications Relay Demonstration, consider the following statements:

1. It uses infrared light for data transmission.
2. It is launched by NASA
3. It offers higher bandwidth than radio frequency systems.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A 1 and 3 only
- B 1 and 2 only
- C 2 and 3 only
- D 1, 2 and 3

Answer : D

Explanation

- **NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration)** has launched its new **Laser Communications Relay Demonstration (LCRD)**. Hence, **statement 2 is correct**.
 - It is the **first-ever laser communications system** that will **pave the way for future optical communications missions**.
- It uses infrared light and has a shorter wavelength than radio waves. This will **help the transmission of more data** in a short time. Hence, **statement 1 is correct**.
- Further, Optical communications **using lasers, will help increase the bandwidth 10 to 100 times more** than radio frequency systems. Hence, **statement 3 is correct**.

6. With reference to the religious history of India, consider the following statements:

1. Sautrantika and Sammitiya were the sects of Jainism.
2. Sarvastivadin held that the constituents of phenomena were not wholly momentary, but existed forever in a latent form.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b

Explanation

- Buddhist sects include the Sautrantikas and Sammtiyas. The term “Sautrantika” refers to a sutra-follower. Sautrantika is often regarded as another school of Buddhism that arose inside the Sarvastivada sect. **Hence Statement 1 is incorrect.**
- Sarvastivadin believes that everything empirical is ephemeral, but that the dharma components are eternally persistent realities. This Buddhist group

believes that all things exist and will continue to exist in the past, future, and present.

- Hence Statement 2 is correct.

Mains Practice Questions

1. Explain the term welfare state? Discuss to what extent Indian fulfills the criteria of being a welfare state?

Approach

- Explain the characteristics of the Welfare State precisely.
- Highlight the features of the Welfare State of India with suitable examples.
- Highlight a few challenges faced by India in becoming a Welfare State.
- Conclude Suitably.

2. Discuss the schism between the developed and developing world in climate change negotiations and coming up with a collective global action.

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing the context of growing Greenhouse gases emission.
- Discuss the various reasons for conflict between developed and developing countries.
- Conclude Suitably.