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Headlines:

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- Judicial Pendency in India: Ensuring Timely Justice (GS – II: Polity)
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- Judicial Infrastructure in India: Strengthening Access to Justice (GS – II: Polity)



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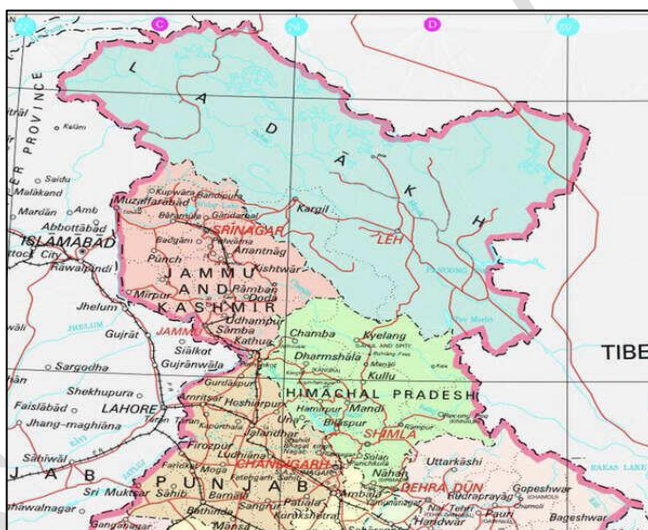
1. Jammu & Kashmir Statehood: Renewed Demand for Restoration (GS – II: Polity and Governance)

Why in News?

Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has reiterated the demand for the restoration of Statehood, urging the Union Government to fulfil its commitment. The issue has once again brought the constitutional status of Jammu & Kashmir and India's federal structure into focus.

Background

- The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 bifurcated the erstwhile State into:
 - Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir (with a Legislature).
 - Union Territory of Ladakh (without a Legislature).
- In December 2023, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of the reorganisation while recording the Union Government's assurance that Statehood to Jammu & Kashmir would be restored at an appropriate time.
- The recent demand has revived the debate on restoring full-fledged representative governance in the region.



Constitutional & Governance Perspective

- **Articles 2 & 3** empower Parliament to create, alter and reorganise States and Union Territories.
- **Article 239** provides for the administration of Union Territories through the President acting via the Lieutenant Governor or Administrator.
- Restoration of Statehood would strengthen representative democracy by expanding the legislative and executive powers of an elected government.
- The issue also reflects the principles of cooperative and asymmetric federalism, balancing national security considerations with regional aspirations.

- A return to Statehood could enhance administrative responsiveness, policy flexibility and public accountability in addressing local developmental priorities.

Present Challenges

- Balancing national security imperatives with democratic aspirations in a strategically sensitive border region.
- Ensuring administrative stability during the transition from Union Territory to Statehood.
- Addressing employment, infrastructure and developmental concerns through effective governance.
- Maintaining public trust by ensuring timely fulfilment of constitutional commitments.

Way Forward

- Restore Statehood through the constitutional process after assessing governance and security requirements.
- Strengthen Centre–State cooperation to ensure smooth institutional and administrative transition.
- Empower democratic institutions and local self-governance to deepen citizen participation.
- Promote inclusive development, transparent governance and sustained peace while preserving the constitutional balance between national integration and federal autonomy.

2. India–Afghanistan Agricultural Cooperation: Expanding Development Partnership (GS – II: IR)

Why in News?

Afghanistan's Acting Minister for Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Ataulah Omari, visited India to strengthen bilateral cooperation in agriculture, irrigation, food processing and agri-trade. The visit reflects the growing engagement between the two countries despite the absence of formal diplomatic recognition of the Taliban administration.

Key Areas of Cooperation

- Discussions focused on agricultural trade, irrigation, livestock development, food processing and value addition.
- Both sides explored collaboration in agricultural research, education, capacity building, seed systems and crop productivity enhancement.
- India reiterated its support for climate-resilient and bio-fortified crop varieties to strengthen Afghanistan's food security.
- The Afghan delegation also interacted with ICAR, IARI, NABARD, FICCI and PHDCCI to explore research, institutional and commercial partnerships.



Strategic Significance

- Agriculture serves as a key pillar of India's development partnership with Afghanistan.
- Enhanced cooperation supports food security, rural livelihoods and sustainable agricultural development in Afghanistan.
- The engagement reflects India's policy of maintaining people-centric and humanitarian assistance while safeguarding its strategic interests in the region.
- India continues to provide humanitarian aid, including food grains, medicines and essential supplies, reinforcing its role as a reliable development partner.

Challenges

- India has not formally recognised the Taliban government, limiting the scope of official engagement.

- Political instability and security concerns continue to affect long-term developmental cooperation.
- Regional geopolitical developments and disruptions to connectivity routes, including Chabahar Port, may impact the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance and trade.

Way Forward

- Strengthen cooperation in agriculture, research, technology transfer and capacity building through institutional partnerships.
- Enhance connectivity and trade to ensure uninterrupted humanitarian assistance.
- Continue a calibrated engagement that balances humanitarian concerns, regional stability and India's strategic interests while promoting sustainable development in Afghanistan.

3. Judicial Pendency in India: Ensuring Timely Justice (GS – II: Polity)

Why in News?

A renewed debate on judicial reforms has emerged amid concerns over long court vacations, rising case pendency and delays in justice delivery. The issue has once again highlighted the need for structural reforms to ensure timely and accessible justice.

Present Scenario

- As of December 2025, over 5.39 crore cases were pending across Indian courts, with the majority in district courts.
- Nearly 75% of prison inmates are undertrial prisoners, raising concerns over prolonged incarceration without conviction.
- Judicial vacancies, procedural delays and inadequate infrastructure continue to affect the efficiency of the justice delivery system.

Constitutional & Legal Safeguards

- **Article 21:** Guarantees the Right to Life and Personal Liberty, which includes the Right to a Speedy Trial.
- **Article 39A:** Directs the State to ensure equal justice and free legal aid.

- **Articles 124–147:** Provide the constitutional framework for the Supreme Court.
- **Articles 214–231:** Define the composition and jurisdiction of High Courts.
- **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987:** Promotes access to justice through NALSA and Lok Adalats.
- **Mediation Act, 2023:** Encourages mediation for speedy and cost-effective dispute resolution.
- **Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996:** Facilitates out-of-court settlement of disputes.
- **e-Courts Mission Mode Project:** Promotes digitisation, e-filing and virtual hearings to improve judicial efficiency.

Key Challenges

- Large-scale judicial vacancies and inadequate court infrastructure.
- Delay in disposal of civil and criminal cases, leading to erosion of public trust.
- High proportion of undertrial prisoners due to prolonged trials.
- Limited adoption of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms.
- Need for improved case management and institutional efficiency.

Way Forward

- Fill judicial vacancies through a transparent and time-bound process.
- Strengthen judicial infrastructure, digital courts and AI-enabled case management.
- Promote Lok Adalats, Mediation and Arbitration to reduce litigation.
- Improve case management practices, including staggered court schedules and efficient roster systems.
- Periodically review long-pending and undertrial cases while expanding legal aid services.

An efficient judiciary is fundamental to the Rule of Law and constitutional governance. A comprehensive reform strategy combining judicial capacity, technological innovation, institutional efficiency and wider use of ADR mechanisms is essential to ensure timely, affordable and accessible justice for all.

4. Gaganyaan Mission: ISRO Validates Critical Crew Safety Systems (GS – III: Science & Technology)

Why in News?

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully completed three major qualification tests of the Gaganyaan Crew Module systems, marking another significant milestone towards India's first indigenous human spaceflight mission.



Recent Developments

- ISRO successfully tested the Crew Module Uprighting System (CMUS) to ensure the capsule regains an upright position after splashdown, a critical crew safety requirement.
- The Crew-Module Umbilical Unit (CSU-2) separation test validated the safe detachment of the service module before atmospheric re-entry.
- The Apex Cover Separation Test confirmed the structural integrity of the crew module and the reliable deployment of parachute systems during descent.

About Gaganyaan Mission

- Gaganyaan is India's first indigenous human spaceflight mission, aimed at demonstrating the capability to send Indian astronauts (Gaganyatris) into Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and safely return them to Earth.
- The mission will be launched aboard the LVM3 launch vehicle and incorporates advanced systems such as the Crew Escape System, Crew Module, Service Module, and human-rated launch vehicle technologies.
- The programme is expected to strengthen India's long-term ambitions in human space exploration, including the Bharatiya Antariksh Station and future deep-space missions.

Significance

- Demonstrates India's growing capability in human-rated space technologies and indigenous aerospace engineering.
- Enhances crew safety through rigorous validation of critical recovery and re-entry systems.
- Strengthens India's strategic and technological capabilities in the global space sector.
- Promotes innovation in advanced materials, avionics, robotics, life-support systems and precision manufacturing with spill-over benefits to civilian industries.

Challenges

- Ensuring the highest standards of astronaut safety and mission reliability.
- Integrating complex life-support, re-entry and recovery systems.
- Managing mission timelines while maintaining stringent quality and safety standards.

Way Forward

- Complete the remaining uncrewed demonstration missions before the crewed flight.
- Strengthen collaboration between ISRO, academia and industry for advanced space technologies.
- Expand investments in indigenous research, astronaut training and space infrastructure.
- Leverage Gaganyaan to advance India's vision of a self-reliant and globally competitive space ecosystem, supporting future space stations, lunar missions and international collaborations.

5. Judicial Infrastructure in India: Strengthening Access to Justice (GS – II: Polity)

Why in News?

The Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant, emphasized that robust judicial infrastructure is a necessity for effective justice delivery and called for mandatory gender-inclusive facilities, including separate Bar rooms and childcare centres for women advocates, in all newly constructed court complexes.

Constitutional & Legal framework

- **Article 14:** Guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of laws.
- **Article 21:** Ensures access to justice as an integral part of the Right to Life and Personal Liberty.
- **Article 39A:** Directs the State to secure equal justice and provide free legal aid.
- The National Mission for Justice Delivery and Legal Reforms and the e-Courts Mission Mode Project seek to modernise judicial infrastructure and improve service delivery.

Need for Robust Judicial Infrastructure

- Modern court complexes enhance accessibility, efficiency and transparency in justice delivery.
- Basic amenities such as waiting areas, drinking water, sanitation and digital facilities improve the experience of litigants.
- Gender-sensitive infrastructure, including women's Bar rooms and childcare facilities, promotes greater participation of women in the legal profession.
- Dedicated mediation centres, libraries and digital courtrooms support faster and more effective dispute resolution.

Challenges

- Inadequate infrastructure and overcrowded court complexes in several States.
- Shortage of courtrooms despite increasing case pendency.
- Limited accessibility for women, senior citizens and persons with disabilities.
- Uneven implementation of digital judicial infrastructure across districts.

Way Forward

- Increase public investment in judicial infrastructure under a time-bound national strategy.
- Ensure gender-responsive and disability-friendly court complexes across the country.

- Expand digital infrastructure through e-filing, virtual hearings and AI-enabled case management.
- Strengthen Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) facilities, including mediation centres, within court complexes.
- Foster greater coordination between the Union, States and the judiciary to build citizen-centric judicial institutions.

An efficient justice delivery system depends not only on judicial reforms but also on modern, inclusive and technology-enabled infrastructure. Strengthening judicial infrastructure will improve access to justice, reduce procedural delays, promote gender inclusivity and reinforce the Rule of Law, thereby contributing to the constitutional vision of timely, affordable and equitable justice for all.

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