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1. SC Considers SOP for 24×7 Judicial Access in Life and Liberty Cases (GS – II: Polity and constitution)

Why in News?

- The Supreme Court agreed to examine the framing of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to ensure round-the-clock judicial access in urgent cases involving life and personal liberty.
- The proposal arose from a petition seeking an institutional mechanism for emergency constitutional remedies beyond regular court hours.

Background

- A petition highlighted difficulties in accessing courts during nights, weekends, public holidays, and court vacations.
- It cited concerns over late-night arrests, custodial violence, deportations, illegal detentions, and demolition drives, where delays could cause irreversible harm.
- The petitioner argued that constitutional remedies should remain accessible at all times, irrespective of court working hours.
- The Supreme Court observed that an SOP could significantly reduce the response time for urgent constitutional matters.

Constitutional & Legal Dimensions

- **Article 21:** Protects the Right to Life and Personal Liberty, requiring timely judicial intervention.
- **Article 32:** Guarantees the Right to Constitutional Remedies before the Supreme Court.
- **Article 226:** Empowers High Courts to issue writs for enforcement of Fundamental Rights and other legal rights.
- **Article 39A:** Promotes equal access to justice and free legal aid.
- Reinforces the principles of Rule of Law, Judicial Review, and Natural Justice.

Significance

- Ensures immediate judicial protection against violations of fundamental rights.

- Improves accessibility through e-filing, virtual hearings, and digital court infrastructure.
- Enhances public confidence in the judiciary by ensuring timely constitutional remedies.
- Promotes a more citizen-centric and technology-enabled justice delivery system.

Challenges

- Absence of a uniform emergency judicial mechanism across High Courts.
- Administrative and logistical challenges in maintaining after-hours judicial availability.
- Need for robust digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, and trained judicial personnel.
- Balancing continuous accessibility with judicial efficiency and workload.

Way Forward

- Frame a uniform SOP for emergency constitutional cases across courts.
- Establish dedicated emergency benches and digital response mechanisms.
- Strengthen e-Courts infrastructure with secure 24×7 access.
- Ensure coordination between the Supreme Court, High Courts, and Registry for rapid judicial response.

2. India Strengthens Strategic Partnerships with Australia & New Zealand (GS – II: IR)

Why in News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Australia and New Zealand, elevating bilateral cooperation across defence, maritime security, trade, energy, critical minerals, and emerging technologies.
- The visits reinforce India's Act East Policy, MAHASAGAR Vision, and commitment to a Free, Open and Inclusive Indo-Pacific (FOIP).



Background

- India–Australia ties were elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020) and further strengthened through the 3rd Annual Summit (2026).
- India and New Zealand upgraded their relationship to a Strategic Partnership, adopting a four-year cooperation roadmap.
- The engagements come amid increasing geopolitical competition, supply chain disruptions, and the growing strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific.

Key Outcomes

- India and Australia adopted a Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation and launched a Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap.
- Australia operationalised long-term uranium exports for India's civilian nuclear programme and expanded cooperation in critical minerals.
- India and New Zealand agreed on enhanced maritime cooperation, mutual logistics support, agricultural collaboration, and implementation of the India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

- Both partnerships emphasised cybersecurity, emerging technologies, resilient supply chains, and defence interoperability.

Strategic Significance

- Strengthens India's strategic footprint across the Indo-Pacific.
- Enhances energy security, clean energy transition, and critical mineral supply resilience.
- Supports Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), secure sea lanes, and regional stability.
- Reinforces India's policy of Strategic Autonomy through diversified partnerships.

Challenges

- Intensifying great-power rivalry in the Indo-Pacific.
- Supply chain vulnerabilities and resource competition.
- Balancing strategic partnerships while preserving strategic autonomy.

Way Forward

- Deepen defence and maritime interoperability with trusted partners.
- Accelerate cooperation in critical minerals, clean energy, and advanced technologies.
- Strengthen regional institutions to promote a rules-based Indo-Pacific while expanding economic and people-to-people partnerships.

3. India–US Defence Industrial Cooperation: Bridging the Technology Gap (GS – II: IR)

Why in News?

The GE F414 jet engine co-production programme, a flagship initiative under the India–US Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET), has encountered delays over pricing, technology transfer, intellectual property, and export-control issues, highlighting challenges in bilateral defence industrial cooperation.

Background

- India and the US have significantly expanded defence ties, with India procuring over US\$22 billion worth of defence equipment since 2002.
- Bilateral cooperation has evolved through initiatives such as DTTI (2012), iCET (2022), and INDUS-X (2023) to promote co-development, co-production, and defence innovation.
- Despite growing strategic convergence, technology transfer and indigenous manufacturing remain key areas requiring further progress.

Key Developments

- Negotiations continue over licensed production of GE F414 engines for Tejas Mk-II, AMCA, and the Twin-Engine Deck-Based Fighter (TEDBF).
- Other initiatives include MQ-9B UAV acquisition, defence start-up collaboration under INDUS-X, and discussions on the Reciprocal Defence Procurement Agreement (RDPA).
- Cooperation spans artificial intelligence, semiconductors, space, quantum technologies, cybersecurity, and resilient supply chains.

Strategic Significance

- Supports Atmanirbhar Bharat by strengthening indigenous defence manufacturing.
- Enhances interoperability and strategic partnership in the Indo-Pacific.
- Diversifies India's access to advanced defence technologies.
- Contributes to national security through next-generation defence capabilities.

Challenges

- Restrictions under International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR).
- Differences over technology transfer, intellectual property, and commercial terms.
- Delays in translating strategic intent into industrial outcomes.

Way Forward

- Fast-track technology transfer and joint R&D through transparent institutional mechanisms.

- Strengthen public-private partnerships and defence innovation ecosystems.
- Conclude balanced industrial agreements while protecting India's strategic and manufacturing interests.
- Expand long-term collaboration in emerging technologies to deepen the India–US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership.

4. India–UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) Comes into Force (GS – II: IR)

Why in News?

The India–UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Double Contribution Convention (DCC) came into force, marking a new phase in bilateral economic relations. The agreement is among India's most comprehensive free trade agreements, covering goods, services, investment, digital trade, labour, environment, innovation, and government procurement.

Background

- India and the United Kingdom concluded negotiations after multiple rounds of discussions to strengthen post-Brexit economic cooperation.
- Alongside CETA, both countries signed the Double Contribution Convention (DCC) to prevent double social security contributions for temporarily deployed professionals.
- The agreement aims to enhance bilateral trade, investment flows, and supply-chain resilience while facilitating greater market access.



Key Features

- The UK will eliminate tariffs on 98.8% of tariff lines, covering 99.5% of India's exports by value.
- India will liberalise tariffs in a phased manner while protecting sensitive sectors such as dairy, cereals, pulses, gold, smartphones, and critical polymers.
- Covers digital trade, MSMEs, labour mobility, innovation, government procurement, gender, and environmental cooperation.
- Addresses Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) to reduce non-tariff barriers.
- The DCC exempts eligible Indian professionals from paying social security contributions in the UK for up to five years, benefiting over 75,000 workers and 900 employers.

Significance

- Expands market access for Indian goods and services.
- Strengthens India's export competitiveness and global value chain integration.
- Promotes skilled mobility, investment, and ease of doing business.
- Deepens the India–UK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Challenges

- Ensuring effective utilisation of FTA benefits by MSMEs.
- Compliance with stringent UK quality, sustainability, and regulatory standards.
- Addressing adjustment costs for vulnerable domestic sectors.

Way Forward

- Enhance export competitiveness through quality infrastructure and trade facilitation.
- Build awareness among exporters and MSMEs regarding FTA provisions.
- Strengthen standards, logistics, and skill development to maximise gains from the agreement.

5. Implementation of the Three-Language Formula under NEP 2020 (GS – II: Polity and Governance)

Why in News?

The Supreme Court examined petitions challenging the CBSE's implementation of the Three-Language Formula for Classes 5–9 under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, raising concerns over language classification, availability of teachers, and learning resources.

Background

- The Three-Language Formula, envisaged under NEP 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2023, seeks to promote multilingualism and strengthen the use of Indian languages in school education.
- The CBSE issued implementation guidelines requiring students to study at least two Indian languages, while the NCERT is preparing textbooks in all 22 Scheduled Languages.
- Petitions before the Supreme Court highlighted practical challenges in implementation, particularly shortages of teachers and learning materials.

Key Features

- Encourages proficiency in mother tongue/regional language, another Indian language, and an additional language.
- Promotes multilingual education, cognitive development, and preservation of India's linguistic diversity.
- Supports the use of digital learning, virtual classrooms, and inter-school collaboration to bridge resource gaps.

Significance

- Strengthens national integration while preserving cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Improves foundational learning outcomes through multilingual pedagogy.
- Advances the constitutional vision of promoting Indian languages and inclusive education.

- Contributes to equitable access to quality education under NEP 2020.

Challenges

- Shortage of qualified language teachers and teaching resources.
- Uneven implementation across States and schools.
- Administrative and financial constraints in offering multiple language options.
- Balancing educational flexibility with uniform policy implementation.

Way Forward

- Expand teacher recruitment and multilingual teacher training.
- Accelerate development of textbooks and digital content in all Scheduled Languages.
- Promote technology-enabled learning through hybrid and virtual platforms.
- Ensure cooperative Centre–State coordination for phased and effective implementation.

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