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- India's Demographic Dividend: Opportunity or Promise Deferred? (GS- I, III)
- India-Australia Strategic Partnership: Expanding Cooperation Across Sectors (GS – II: IR)
- Statutory Protection for Vande Mataram: Proposed Amendment to the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 (GS – II: Polity)
- Madhya Pradesh Uniform Civil Code Bill: Constitutional and Legal Dimensions (GS – II: Polity).



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1. India–U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA): Opportunities and Challenges (GS – II: IR)

Why in News?

India and the United Kingdom have concluded the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), reflecting India's calibrated approach to Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) by balancing market access with protection of sensitive domestic sectors.

Key Highlights

- Provides zero-duty access to 99% of India's exports, covering nearly the entire value of bilateral trade.
- Enhances India's access to a high-income market while strengthening integration into Global Value Chains (GVCs).
- Includes provisions on services, investment, non-tariff measures and mobility of professionals.
- The Double Contribution Convention reduces social security contribution burdens for Indian professionals working in the U.K.



Significance

- Expected to boost exports in sectors such as textiles, engineering goods, gems & jewellery, pharmaceuticals and marine products.
- Demonstrates India's shift towards balanced and strategic trade negotiations, unlike earlier FTAs that widened trade deficits.
- Encourages foreign investment, technology transfer and deeper economic cooperation.

Challenges

- MSMEs may face difficulties in meeting stringent Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS), Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) and sustainability standards.
- High compliance costs, limited awareness and documentation requirements could restrict utilisation of FTA benefits.
- Climate-related trade measures and carbon regulations may affect India's carbon-intensive exports.

Way Forward

- Strengthen MSME competitiveness through quality certification, digital compliance and export facilitation.
- Improve trade infrastructure, regulatory efficiency and intellectual property protection.

- Ensure effective implementation so that market access translates into greater market share for Indian exporters.

2. India's Demographic Dividend: Opportunity or Promise Deferred? (GS-I, III)

Why in News?

Recent analysis based on the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023–24 highlights persistent challenges in youth employment, raising concerns over India's ability to convert its demographic dividend into sustained economic growth.

Key Findings

- India has **371 million youth (UN, 2025)**, making it one of the world's largest young populations.
- **Gen Z (15–26 years)** faces significantly higher unemployment than Millennials, with urban youth and women experiencing the greatest employment challenges.
- Graduate unemployment remains particularly high, reflecting a widening gap between educational attainment and labour market opportunities.

Why is India's Demographic Dividend at Risk?

- **Skill Mismatch:** Education and training remain inadequately aligned with industry needs.
- **Informal Employment:** A large share of youth are engaged in casual, unpaid or low-productivity jobs.
- **Low Female Labour Force Participation:** Care responsibilities, safety concerns and social norms continue to restrict women's participation in paid work.
- **Weak Social Security:** Most young workers lack formal employment contracts and social security coverage.
- **AI & Automation:** Rapid technological advancements are transforming entry-level jobs and increasing demand for future-ready skills.

Economic Implications

- Slows productivity growth and economic transformation.
- Increases educated unemployment and underemployment.
- Reduces the potential gains from India's demographic dividend.
- Worsens income inequality and socio-economic vulnerability.

Way Forward

- Expand labour-intensive manufacturing and service sectors to create quality jobs.
- Strengthen industry-linked skilling, apprenticeships and school-to-work transition programmes.
- Promote women's workforce participation through safe transport, childcare facilities and flexible work arrangements.

- Accelerate formalisation of employment and expand social security coverage for young workers.

Demographic dividend becomes a growth engine only when a young population is equipped with skills, productive employment and social protection.

3. India–Australia Strategic Partnership: Expanding Cooperation Across Sectors (GS – II: IR)

Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Australia, where India and Australia announced several initiatives to deepen cooperation in defence, maritime security, critical technologies, education, energy and investment.

Key Outcomes

- Signed a Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation to strengthen strategic collaboration in the Indo-Pacific.
- Launched a Partnership on Cyber, Critical Technologies and Supply Chains to enhance technological resilience.
- Adopted a Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap to expand cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- Issued a joint statement on Energy Security, including cooperation in resilient supply chains and peaceful uranium exports.
- Enhanced collaboration in sports, supporting India's aspirations to host major international sporting events.



Economic & Educational Cooperation

- Australia's AustralianSuper announced investment in India's National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF).
- Australian companies committed investments in data centres and digital infrastructure.
- Several Australian universities are establishing branch campuses in India, strengthening educational and research partnerships.

Strategic Significance

- Reinforces the India–Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and supports a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.
- Enhances cooperation under regional frameworks such as the Quad and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

- Diversifies supply chains through collaboration in critical minerals, emerging technologies and clean energy.
- Strengthens economic resilience and people-to-people ties through expanding trade, investment, education and the Indian diaspora.

Challenges

- Managing geopolitical competition in the Indo-Pacific amid China's growing influence.
- Ensuring timely implementation of agreements and strategic projects.
- Addressing supply chain disruptions and evolving cyber security threats.
- Balancing economic cooperation with sustainability and regulatory standards.

Way Forward

- Fast-track implementation of bilateral initiatives in defence, critical technologies and maritime security.
- Expand cooperation in critical minerals, clean energy, innovation and higher education.
- Leverage the partnership to enhance regional stability, resilient supply chains and sustainable economic growth.

4. Statutory Protection for Vande Mataram: Proposed Amendment to the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 (GS – II: Polity)

Why in News?

The Union Government introduced the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026 during the Monsoon Session to extend statutory protection to Vande Mataram.

Key Provisions

- Amendment to Section 3 of the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.
- Makes intentional obstruction or insult to the National Song a punishable offence.

Constitutional & Legal Dimensions

- Linked to Article 51A(a) (Fundamental Duty).
- Complements the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.
- Raises questions on balancing Fundamental Duties with Fundamental Rights under Articles 19 and 25.

Parliamentary Dimension

- The Bill has been introduced in the Rajya Sabha, highlighting its role as a legislative House empowered to initiate and deliberate on Ordinary Bills (except Money Bills under Article 109).

- Reinforces the Rajya Sabha's role in legislative scrutiny, debate and federal representation before passage by both Houses.

Historical Significance

- Vande Mataram was composed by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and became a symbol of the freedom movement.
- 2026 marks the 150th anniversary of the song.

Challenges

- Balancing protection of national symbols with freedom of speech and conscience.
- Avoiding misuse of penal provisions against legitimate expression.
- Ensuring uniform interpretation and implementation across States.
- Promoting voluntary respect rather than coercive compliance.

Related Supreme Court Position

- Bijoe Emmanuel: Respect for national symbols cannot override genuine religious freedom when no disrespect is shown.
- Courts have consistently emphasised harmonising Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties.

Way Forward

- Implement the law in line with constitutional morality and judicial precedents.
- Promote awareness of the historical significance of Vande Mataram through civic education.
- Ensure that enforcement protects national honour while safeguarding constitutional freedoms.

5. Madhya Pradesh Uniform Civil Code Bill: Constitutional and Legal Dimensions (GS – II: Polity)

Why in News?

The Madhya Pradesh Cabinet has approved the draft Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill, which seeks to establish a common legal framework for marriage, divorce, succession and live-in relationships, while exempting Scheduled Tribes from its ambit.

Key Features of the Bill

- Prohibits polygamy, triple talaq and nikah halala across all communities.
- Mandates registration of marriages and divorces through government portals.
- Introduces legal provisions governing live-in relationships, including compulsory registration and maintenance rights.
- Grants equal legal status and inheritance rights to children irrespective of the marital status of their parents.

- Exempts Scheduled Tribes (STs) to safeguard their customary practices and cultural identity.

Constitutional & Legal Dimensions

- Advances the objective of Article 44 (Directive Principles of State Policy), which urges the State to secure a Uniform Civil Code for citizens.
- Must be harmonised with Articles 14 and 15 (equality), Article 21 (right to life and dignity) and Articles 25–28 (freedom of religion).
- Since marriage, divorce, adoption and succession fall under Entry 5 of the Concurrent List (List III), States are competent to legislate on these matters, subject to constitutional provisions.
- The exemption for STs recognises constitutional protections under Articles 342 and 366(25) and safeguards customary laws.

Challenges

- Balancing legal uniformity with India's religious and cultural diversity.
- Addressing concerns regarding religious freedom, privacy and individual autonomy.
- Ensuring effective implementation while preventing legal ambiguities and social polarisation.

Way Forward

- Build broad stakeholder consensus through consultations and public awareness.
- Ensure that reforms uphold constitutional morality, gender justice and equality, while respecting India's pluralistic traditions and the rights of constitutionally protected tribal communities.

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