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सत्यमेव जयते

1. Towards an Atmanirbhar Philanthropy Ecosystem: Rethinking FCRA and Domestic Giving (GS – II: Governance)

Why in News?

A recent opinion article highlighted India's evolving philanthropic landscape, arguing that the debate on the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) should move beyond regulating foreign funding towards strengthening an Atmanirbhar (self-reliant) philanthropy ecosystem driven by domestic giving.

Key Highlights

- Domestic private philanthropy has grown significantly and now exceeds annual foreign philanthropic inflows.
- Major contributors include Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), family philanthropists, High-Net-Worth Individuals (HNIs), and individual donors.
- CSR contributes over ₹40,000 crore annually towards social development.
- Domestic philanthropy is estimated at over ₹1.18 lakh crore annually, compared to foreign contributions of around ₹22,000 crore.
- Only about 14,500 NGOs hold active FCRA registration out of nearly 6 lakh voluntary organisations registered on the NGO Darpan portal.
- Growing adoption of UPI, Demat accounts, SIPs and digital giving platforms has expanded opportunities for citizen-led philanthropy.

Significance

- Reduces dependence on foreign funding for development activities.
- Strengthens local ownership and accountability in social development.
- Promotes citizen participation in nation-building.
- Enhances financial sustainability of the voluntary sector.
- Supports the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat through domestic resource mobilisation.

Challenges

- Delays in FCRA registration and renewal affect genuine NGOs.
- Compliance requirements can be burdensome, particularly for smaller organisations.
- Uneven governance and transparency standards across NGOs.
- Limited tax incentives under Section 80G discourage large-scale philanthropy.
- Continued dependence on foreign funding for research, innovation and specialised development programmes.

Way Forward

- Adopt risk-based, transparent and technology-driven FCRA regulation.
- Ensure timely approvals, deficiency notices and an independent appellate mechanism.
- Strengthen governance, disclosure and financial accountability in the voluntary sector.
- Expand tax incentives to encourage higher domestic donations.

- Facilitate donations of listed securities and promote digital philanthropy.
- Scale up the Social Stock Exchange (SSE) to mobilise social capital and connect credible NGOs with individual donors.

2. India's Demographic Transition: Beyond Fertility Decline to Youth Aspirations (GS - I)

Why in News?

On World Population Day (11 July), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) released the Demographic Futures Survey 2026, covering over 1.08 lakh young adults across 73 countries, including India, to understand the factors influencing family formation and fertility decisions.

Key Findings

- India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has declined to around 2.0, below the replacement level of 2.1, indicating an advanced demographic transition.
- Most young Indians continue to prefer a two-child family, but economic and social constraints are delaying marriage and parenthood.
- Financial insecurity, housing costs, job uncertainty, childcare responsibilities, climate anxiety and mental health concerns are major factors influencing reproductive choices.
- Significant inter-State disparities exist, with higher fertility in States like Bihar and below-replacement fertility in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Sikkim.
- India has nearly 255 million people aged 15–24 years, offering a crucial demographic dividend.

Significance

- Reflects progress in girls' education, maternal healthcare, family planning and women's empowerment.
- Highlights the shift from population control to rights-based reproductive choice.
- Reinforces the need to leverage India's demographic dividend through investments in human capital.
- Provides evidence for designing State-specific population and social policies.

Challenges

- Low Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) and disproportionate burden of unpaid care work.
- Rising youth unemployment, job insecurity and high cost of living delaying family formation.
- Limited access to affordable childcare and family-friendly workplaces.

- Growing concerns over climate change, mental health and economic uncertainty among youth.
- Persistent regional demographic disparities requiring differentiated policy interventions.

Way Forward

- Expand affordable childcare, reproductive healthcare and youth mental health services.
- Increase women's workforce participation through flexible work arrangements, parental leave and shared caregiving.
- Generate quality employment opportunities and strengthen social security for young families.
- Adopt State-specific demographic strategies while safeguarding reproductive rights and informed choice.
- Invest in education, skilling and healthcare to fully harness India's demographic dividend.

3. AISHE 2023–24: Emerging Trends in Higher Education (GS - II)

Why in News?

The Ministry of Education released the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2022–23 and 2023–24 reports after a prolonged delay, revealing the first-ever decline in undergraduate (UG) enrolment since the survey began in 2011.

Key Findings

- Overall higher education enrolment increased marginally, while UG enrolment declined by around 93,000 students, despite an increase in the eligible youth population.
- Undergraduate programmes continue to account for over 75% of total higher education enrolment.
- The decline was observed primarily among male students, whereas female enrolment continued to increase, including in STEM disciplines.
- States such as Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, West Bengal and Jammu & Kashmir recorded significant declines in UG enrolment, while Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Bihar and Odisha reported growth.
- The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education increased marginally to 30, indicating gradual expansion in overall access.

Significance

- Highlights emerging trends in India's higher education ecosystem and provides critical inputs for evidence-based policymaking.

- Reflects improving female participation and greater gender inclusion in higher education.
- Serves as an important indicator for achieving the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 target of 50% GER by 2035.
- Reinforces the importance of higher education in harnessing India's demographic dividend and strengthening human capital.

Challenges

- Declining undergraduate enrolment despite a growing youth population.
- Regional disparities in access to quality higher education.
- Concerns over affordability, employability and transition from school to higher education.
- Need to improve retention, multidisciplinary learning and industry-relevant skills.

Way Forward

- Strengthen implementation of NEP 2020 with emphasis on access, equity and quality.
- Expand scholarships, digital infrastructure and student support services.
- Improve employability through skill development, internships and industry-academia collaboration.
- Address State-specific challenges through targeted interventions to enhance enrolment and learning outcomes.

4. India's Clean Energy Transition: Addressing Technical and Financial Challenges (GS - III)

Why in News?

During his visit to India, UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell stated that decarbonisation and electrification are India's primary responses to the challenges of energy transition, while emphasizing the need to strengthen grid infrastructure, energy storage and climate finance.

Key Highlights

- India's clean energy transition is centred on decarbonisation and greater electrification of the economy.
- Expansion of renewable energy requires modern electricity grids and energy storage systems to effectively integrate variable solar and wind power.
- The electrification agenda seeks to increase the share of electricity in global final energy consumption, reducing dependence on fossil fuels.
- Climate finance from both public and private sources is essential to support clean energy investments and adaptation efforts.

- International cooperation can accelerate technology development, financing and knowledge-sharing for energy transition.

Challenges in India's Energy Transition

- Grid stability due to the intermittent nature of renewable energy.
- Limited energy storage capacity, resulting in curtailment of renewable power.
- Inadequate availability of affordable climate finance, particularly for adaptation.
- High investment requirements for upgrading electricity infrastructure.
- Balancing rapid renewable energy expansion with growing energy demand and energy security.

Significance for India

- Supports India's commitments under the Paris Agreement and Net Zero by 2070.
- Reduces carbon emissions while improving long-term energy security.
- Promotes sustainable economic growth through clean energy investments.
- Strengthens India's leadership in global climate action.

Way Forward

- Accelerate investments in grid modernisation, transmission infrastructure and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS).
- Mobilise greater public, private and international climate finance for mitigation and adaptation.
- Promote technology transfer and international collaboration on clean energy solutions.
- Develop a resilient power system capable of integrating higher shares of renewable energy while ensuring reliable electricity supply.

5. Geopolitical Conflicts and India's FTA Strategy (GS – II, III)

Why in News?

Ongoing geopolitical conflicts in West Asia and Eastern Europe have delayed negotiations on India's proposed Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Israel, and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), affecting trade engagement with partners accounting for nearly 20% of India's total trade.

Key Highlights

- Negotiations with the GCC have been delayed due to the deteriorating security situation in West Asia.
- Progress on the India–Israel FTA has slowed, with in-person negotiations affected by regional conflict.
- Discussions on the India–EAEU FTA have also faced disruptions amid the Russia–Ukraine conflict.

- Despite delays in physical negotiations, technical and back-end discussions continue through diplomatic channels.
- The proposed FTAs aim to improve market access, reduce trade barriers and strengthen India's integration with key regional markets.

Significance

- Strengthens India's export competitiveness and diversifies overseas markets.
- Enhances economic integration with strategically important regions, particularly the energy-rich Gulf.
- Supports resilient supply chains and reinforces India's trade diplomacy amid global economic uncertainties.
- Contributes to India's objective of expanding its global trade footprint and achieving higher export-led growth.

Challenges

- Geopolitical conflicts disrupting diplomatic engagement and negotiation timelines.
- Uncertainty in global trade, logistics and supply chains.
- Security concerns affecting official visits and stakeholder consultations.
- Delays in securing preferential market access for Indian exporters.

Way Forward

- Continue negotiations through virtual and hybrid diplomatic engagements wherever feasible.
- Prioritise early conclusion of strategically important FTAs while maintaining balanced and mutually beneficial outcomes.
- Diversify trade partnerships to reduce vulnerability to regional geopolitical shocks.
- Strengthen economic diplomacy and supply chain resilience to sustain India's long-term trade and investment objectives.