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1. Question of Numbers: The Political Situation In Tamil Nadu

G.S. Paper II: Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions; Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these; Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.

Context:

- ❖ On August 22, the dissident legislators approached the Governor with a memorandum expressing lack of confidence in the Chief Minister.
- ❖ On September 18, Speaker P.Dhanapal ruled that this amounted to voluntarily giving up their membership of the party and disqualified 18 of them.
- ❖ The DMK leader, M.K. Stalin, who also heads the Opposition in the Assembly, approached the Governor.
- ❖ The Leader of the Opposition's demand was that the Governor order a floor test as the ruling party has lost the majority.
- ❖ Governor's inaction for weeks prompted the opposition leader to move the Madras High Court for a direction to the Governor to direct the Chief Minister to seek a confidence vote.
- ❖ The disqualification of the ousted legislators by the Speaker of the house saw them approach the High Court.
- ❖ The key political question that has arisen in Tamil Nadu is whether Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami commands a majority in the State Assembly.

Abdicating their responsibilities:

- ❖ The Governor of Tamil Nadu is obviously averse to ordering a floor test.
- ❖ The Chief Minister is not keen on demonstrating his strength on the floor of the House.
- ❖ The Speaker is concentrating on ensuring that dissidents are kept out of any possible confidence vote, if and when one takes place.
- ❖ The Leader of the Opposition has not moved a motion of no confidence, but, on the contrary, believes that the Governor should order a floor test.
- ❖ Dissident legislators from the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) has not asked for a meeting of the legislature party to replace Mr. Edappadi Palaniswami with some other leader.

The Interim Orders Passed By the Madras High Court:

- ❖ Instead of grappling with the core question concerning the government's legislative majority or lack of it, the Madras High Court has passed two interim orders which add to the prevailing confusions.
- ❖ These interim orders are contrary to the doctrine of separation of powers and touch on matters outside the judicial domain.
- ❖ Between the rebel group, the ruling party, and the main opposition Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), they have used High court as a battleground for the three way political sparring.

- ❖ In the prevailing melee, the State Legislative Assembly – the highest deliberative body in the state, which should ideally witness an informed debate based on reasoned arguments, has been given a go by.

The Two Prime Issues before the High Court:

- ❖ The Madras High Court needs to arrive at a decision on the following questions:
- ❖ The question whether the Governor ought to intervene.
- ❖ The question whether the Speaker was helping the ruling party by disqualifying rebels and thereby converting its minority into a majority.

Is Governor's Inaction Justified?

- ❖ The principal reason for the political impasse is Governor Ch. Vidyasagar Rao's silence.
- ❖ Going by the observations made by the Supreme Court last year, his inaction is possibly justified.

The Arunachal Pradesh Precedent:

- ❖ The observations of the Constitution Bench which dealt with the Arunachal Pradesh crisis last year is important.
- ❖ It read as follows: "The activities within a political party, confirming turbulence, or unrest within its ranks, are beyond the concern of the Governor".
- ❖ "Who should or should not be a leader of a political party, is a political question, to be dealt with and resolved privately by the political party itself".
- ❖ "The Governor cannot, the Constitution Bench observed, make such issues, a matter of his concern".
- ❖ A breakaway group, according to the judgment, could be legitimate and recognizable only if it constituted two thirds of a party as stipulated in the Tenth Schedule.
- ❖ The Governor could embark on a constitutional course of action only on the claims of such a group.

The Scope for Recourse:

- ❖ Does it necessarily mean that Governors should not act until a rebellion touches the two-thirds mark within the legislature party?
- ❖ A Governor can act even if the dissidents' legislators within a party are less than two third majority of the political party during a Constitutional Crisis.

Governor's role during A Constitutional Crisis:

- ❖ A Constitutional Crisis is said to have occurred when the government is seen to have lost the confidence of the House.
- ❖ The correct reading of the judgment in the Arunachal Pradesh case is that the court bars Governors only from political embroilment.
- ❖ The court, at the same time, has not restrained the Governors from their constitutional duty to allay doubts that a particular regime has lost its majority.

- ❖ But the Governor of Tamil Nadu has not acted on a reasonable apprehension that the Palaniswami government has been reduced to a minority.

Profound questions: Should the court prompt the Governor for a floor test:

- ❖ The question now is this: Should DMK's petition for a direction to the Governor to order a floor test be allowed by the Madras High Court?
- ❖ But since ordering a floor test is a matter that falls under the Governor's discretion, is such a petition maintainable?

Court's concern about a truncated majority:

- ❖ The court's attention was drawn to the fact that the Speaker of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly was planning to disqualify the dissenters in an effort to bring about a majority in a truncated House and not about directing the Governor.
- ❖ Hence, the Madras High Court passed an order staying a possible floor test that may have taken place after the feared disqualification.
- ❖ This, according to the High Court, was said to be in the interests of justice, as otherwise the government would have sailed through the vote.

Speaker disqualifies dissident members and the stay on floor test:

- ❖ But the disqualification of dissident Members of the legislative assembly was carried out by the Speaker.
- ❖ And once again, on petitions challenging the Speaker's order, the court did not grant a stay.
- ❖ Instead the Madras High Court extended the stay on the floor test.

Can the Court stall a floor test:

- ❖ It is not clear what provision in the Constitution empowers the court to stall a floor test, but there are precedents.

Lessons from precedents:

- ❖ The Supreme Court had ordered a 'composite floor test' in 1998 and 2005 in Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand, but these directions attracted considerable criticism.
- ❖ The only persons aggrieved by the possible adoption of a confidence vote in their absence will be the disqualified MLAs.
- ❖ Therefore, only a stay of their disqualification or an interim direction allowing them to vote during a floor test could have met the interests of justice.

The Court Setting a legislative agenda: Judicial Overreach:

- ❖ Instead of adopting this constitutionally permissible course — disqualification under the anti-defection law is justiciable, whereas setting the legislative agenda is outside judicial purview — the court chose to stay the trust vote.
- ❖ A stay of the disqualification would have addressed the fears of those disqualified as well as obviated the need for the questionable stay on the floor test to be extended.

- ❖ Thereafter, only the constitutionally relevant question on whether the Governor ought to be directed to order a trust vote would have remained for adjudication.

The Supreme Court's Judgement in the Karnataka Case in 2011.

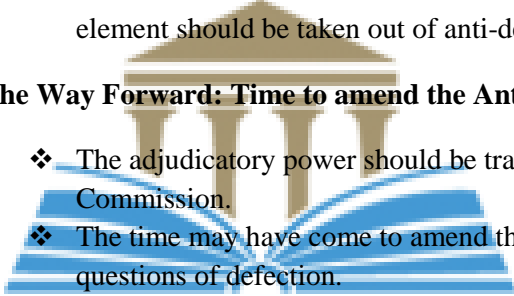
- ❖ The main basis for the challenge to the disqualification of 18 legislators is the 2011 judgment in the Karnataka case.
- ❖ The Supreme Court had quashed the disqualification on the ground that the Speaker had given insufficient opportunity and time.
- ❖ The Court had also noted that approaching the Governor to set in motion a constitutional process to replace the Chief Minister could not attract the drastic action of removal from the House.
- ❖ Speaker of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, Mr. Dhanapal's decision will still have to be tested against the proposition that expressing lack of confidence in the Chief Minister may not amount to voluntarily giving up the party membership.

Emergence of A Pattern:

- ❖ Taking up disqualification petitions for adjudication just ahead of a floor test has now become a pattern.
- ❖ When the floor test remains the sole and supreme means of ascertaining majority, the partisan element should be taken out of anti-defection law.

The Way Forward: Time to amend the Anti Defection Law

- ❖ The adjudicatory power should be transferred to an independent body such as the Election Commission.
- ❖ The time may have come to amend the law conferring on the Speaker the authority to adjudicate questions of defection.



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2. Will Swatch Bharath Abhiyaan be a success?

G.S. Paper II: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

The Criticism of the Scheme:

Forgetting The Real Targets: Rehabilitation of Safai Karmcharis

- The purpose of Swachh Bharat is still not clear.
- The people who actually make the country *swachh* (clean), and have kept it *swachh* so far, have been left behind: The Safai Karmcharis.
- You have to address the problems of those who have spent a lifetime cleaning the country.

New Wine In Old Bottle:

- The SBM was earlier known as the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan under the previous government.

- Moreover, duplicate entries, ghost beneficiaries and missing households were the first stumbling blocks in SBM.
- The World Bank report dated February 2, 2017 says that progress towards achievement of Swachh Bharath Abhiyan's development objectives has only been 'satisfactory' to 'moderately satisfactory'.
- Moreover, the report also claims that the overall implementation progress has gone down from 'satisfactory' to 'moderately unsatisfactory'; and overall risk rating has fallen from 'nil' to 'substantial'.

Misplaced Allocations:

- For the Swachh Bharat Mission- Urban (SBM-U) project, the allocation for the year 2017 - 18 was merely ₹2,300 crore.
- This was way too short when compared with the rural component of the program.
- This misplaced allocation has to be seen in the light of the 2011 Census, according to which 31.16% of the total population lives in urban areas.
- The growth of population in urban areas is at 32% and rural is 12% in a decade.
- The urban population is growing at a much more rapid rate and has been ignored by the government.

The Growing Problems of Urbanization:

- In urban areas, huge landfill sites running beyond capacity are the biggest problem.
- Decentralization, segregation of garbage at source, and encouraging community/household treatment of waste is the only viable alternative to the problems of Urbanization.
- These alternatives have been successfully implemented at various places including Alappuzha in Kerala.
- Alappuzha has been rated as one of the leading cities in terms of innovation and improvement of the Solid Waste Management, but the government's Swachh Survekshan rated it poorly.
- Such an erroneous approach by the government has a cascading effect as government ratings motivate cities and their administration in the right or wrong direction.

Different Problems demands Different Approaches:

- The components of the problem in urban areas are very different from those in rural areas but Swachh Bharath Abhiyan has painted both with the same brush.
- A case study (Annual Status of Education Report) done in 2016 revealed that as many as 96.5% of rural elementary government schools had toilets, but more than one in four toilets (27.79%) were dysfunctional or locked.
- Under the SBM, no importance is being given to the upkeep, maintenance and sustainability of these community infrastructures.
- The guidelines also require that 8% of the funds be allocated for information, education and communication activities.
- But during 2016-17, up to January 2017 only 1% of the total expenditure had been made on information, education and communication.

Break The Link Between Occupation And Caste:

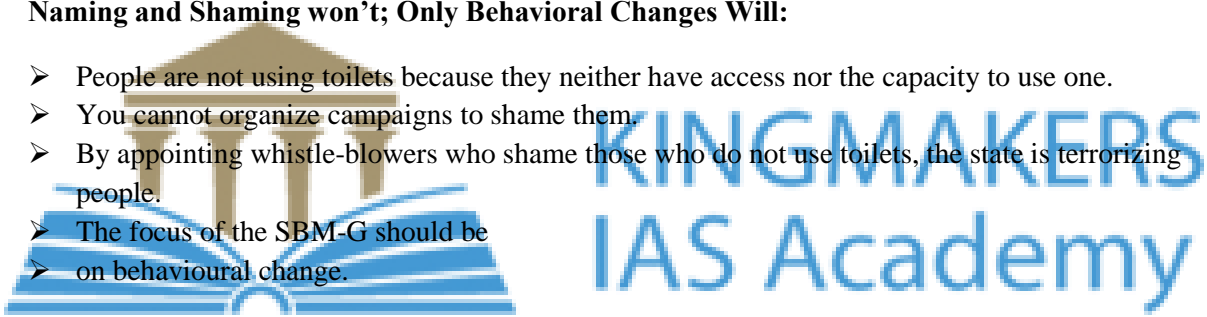
- In India, there is an inexorable link between occupation and caste.
- The occupation of manual scavenging is linked with caste.
- First and foremost, we have to break the link between caste and occupation before we set out to achieve Swachh Bharat.
- Without breaking the chain, those who make Bharat *swachh* will never be a part of the campaign.
- Despite the Constitution declaring the abolition of untouchability in Article 17, it is still practised by perpetuating occupations such as scavenging.
- The concerned leaders who promote the Swachh Bharath Abhiyan need to acknowledge the fact that caste is the root cause of the problem he wishes to annihilate.

Do not Glorify Cleaning:

- Cleaning India is not a spiritual experience and it should not be glorified.
- In the Indian context, manual scavenging is a misery, drudgery, so one cannot worship it.
- One has to begin by recasting society and its target, reconstructing society first by breaking the links between occupation castes.

Naming and Shaming won't; Only Behavioral Changes Will:

- People are not using toilets because they neither have access nor the capacity to use one.
- You cannot organize campaigns to shame them.
- By appointing whistle-blowers who shame those who do not use toilets, the state is terrorizing people.
- The focus of the SBM-G should be on behavioural change.



Modernization Deserves More Attention:

- Each toilet requires a septic tank which needs to be cleaned more often. The question is: Who will clean the septic tanks?
- Modernizing the sewer lines and septic tanks and investing money and energy on smart techniques of sanitation is the need of the hour.
- Thoughts need to go into introducing mechanized cleaning of manholes in the city.
- Every month, there is news about people dying in manholes after being ordered to clean them. Concern for those who are dying cleaning sewers must be shown.
- The state must realize that the Right To Life exist for the most depressed man who does the most inhuman task in the world: carrying the night soil.

Positives of The Swachh Bharath Abhiyaan:

- *Swachhta* (cleanliness) was an idea first articulated by Mahatma Gandhi, who said that sanitation is even more important than political freedom.
- A Transformative Mission:
- Swachh Bharath Abhiyan will not only result in intended physical outcomes but also a lifestyle and mindset change.

- In the larger scheme of things, sanitation is social transformation and is as, if not more, important than economic transformation.
- Proper integration of various components of the sanitation chain such as ensuring water supply, seepage management, sewerage networks, prevention of manual scavenging and solid waste management form the key for the Swachh Bharat Mission.

Swachhata Hi Seva Campaign:

- The ongoing mass mobilization campaign 'Swachhata Hi Seva' highlights sanitation as the real service to the nation.
- The demand-driven performance in the last three years is anchored in passion which is the main driving force behind the success of the program.
- In the short span of three years, about 50 million toilets have been constructed in rural India.
- This has increased the coverage from 39% to 69% now.
- Another 3.8 million have sprung up in cities and towns and another 1.4 million are presently under construction.

The Coveted Open Defecation Free Status:

- So far, 248,000 villages have been resurrected from the ignominy of open defecation.
- 203 districts, over one third of the total, have banished open defecation.
- About 1,200 of our cities and towns, about one-third of the total, have already become ODF.
- Five States have declared themselves Open Defecation Free (ODF) in rural areas: Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Uttarakhand and Haryana.
- All ODF claims are scrutinised by third-party independent verification.
- Credible surveys show that 85% of toilets built under this mission are being used.
- The alternative to not using toilets is to walk long distances either at night, as is the case mostly with women and girl children, or at sunrise.
- Surely no one can seriously believe that defecating in the open is a safe and viable option for women.
- This is more a forced option and a habit than a preferred choice. Such habits must be made to vanish, and will for sure.

Dovetailing Various Schemes:

- Long-inculcated or forced habits take time to change, but they definitely will.
- All houses being built under the 'Housing for All' mission will have toilets and the title will vest in the name of women, either individually or jointly.

Women Empowerment:

- This is about women's empowerment, freeing them from domestic subjugation besides liberating them from humiliating open defecation.
- The success of this program will have the most liberating impact on the women of our country.
- Given the efforts underway to make various components of the Swachh Bharath Abhyan work, the way forward is towards a Clean India.

Our Tribute To Mahatma Gandhi:

- We owe a 'Swachh Bharat' to the Mahatma on the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary in 2019.

3. Hope In Darjeeling

G.S. Paper I: Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country.

Context:

- The Blockade in the Darjeeling Hills as a consequence of the renewed demand for a separate state demand of the Gorkhas had brought life and commerce to a grinding halt.
- The renewed agitation was sparked by grievances over initial statements about Bengali being made a compulsory language of study in the State.
- The language issue gradually merged with the revived demand for statehood.

Hill Inhabitants: the worst affected

- Consequently, people of the hill area have suffered from reduced mobility and the worsening security situation in the state.
- But hopes were revived as a consequence of a breakthrough.
- This was due to the appeal of the Central Government to the Gorkha Janmukthi Morcha to end the 104-day-long blockade in the Darjeeling hills.
- Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh's appeal to the protesters and his tentative offer of talks brought about this turnaround.
- To further build on the renewed understanding between the two parties, the Union and West Bengal governments must move forthwith to consolidate the 'truce'.
- It must also address the set-back to livelihoods and the local economy suffered over this period.

Ending the Impasse:

- The blockade had severely hit life in the hill districts, and it is clear that local support for the agitation was waning.
- The announcement on ending the bandh came from Bimal Gurung of the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha, which had led the agitation.
- This decision looked a forced one since a section of the Gorkha Janmukthi Morcha, led by Binay Tamang, had shown an inclination to negotiate with the State government.

Cashing in on the difference within the agitators:

- To cash in on the differences within the GJM, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had, a week ago, named Mr. Tamang the chairperson of a new board of administrators to head the now-defunct Gorkhaland Territorial Administration.

- The Gorkhaland Territorial Administration which had been set up in 2012 as a semi autonomous body with substantive powers.

The pending issue of separate Statehood demand:

- The Home Ministry did not commit to “tripartite talks” on the separate statehood issue as demanded by the GJM.
- Discussions were promised on other issues while impliedly recognizing the leadership of the official faction.

Visible Failures from the Past:

- The current deadlock is a direct outcome of the failure to substantively devolve power to the GTA as promised.
- The State government through its gesture of requesting the rebel factions to come for talks has suggested that it is not averse to tripartite talks over some of the GJM’s demands.
- But it is still not clear whether Ms. Banerjee’s state will agree to talk to Mr. Gurung and his Gorkha Janmukthi Morcha.

The Way Forward: A Tripartite Talk

- Talks involving the Centre, the State government and the Gorkha Janmukthi Morcha are, however, essential.

Empowerment of The Gorkhaland Territorial Administration:

- This is the best mechanism to discuss the empowerment of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration, which is necessary to address the grievances of the residents of Darjeeling.
- The concerned parties should come to the table to discuss the way forward to find a permanent solution because it is the people of the hills whose life becomes miserable as a consequence of these uncertainties.

4. Power Problems

G.S. Paper III: Infrastructure: Energy

Context:

- The Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana, or the ‘Saubhagya’ scheme, launched by the central government aims to make electricity accessible to every household by the end of 2018.
- Universal access to electricity has been a familiar and long-standing promise of governments at the Centre.
- Success, however, will require more than just budgetary fund allocation.
- The success of the Pradhan Manthri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana will depend largely on addressing structural issues that plague the broken power sector.

What is the aim of Saubhagya scheme?

- Under the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana scheme, expected to cost a little over ₹16,000 crore, poor households that have no access to electricity will be provided electricity connections free of cost.
- In particular, the Saubhagya scheme hopes to improve electricity access within villages that are already classified as “electrified”, according to the criterion that 10% of households enjoy access to electricity.
- This programme builds on previous work carried out under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana launched in 2015, and the Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Viduyutikaran Yojana launched by the UPA government in 2005.
- Both these schemes aimed to provide free electricity connections to the poor.

The Real Problem of Affordability remains unaddressed:

- However, the Saubhagya scheme does very little to address the real problem of affordability.
- In fact, by failing to account for illegal connections taken by households which find it difficult to afford legal access to power, government data on electricity accessibility understate penetration.

The Recurring Burden of Power Bills:

- A free electricity connection can ease the financial burden on the poor to some degree, but it will not address the recurring burden of power bills.
- The aim of improving affordability would require that supply be increased drastically to lower the price paid by retail consumers.

The Underutilized Power Generation Units:

- Paradoxically, amidst the government’s claims that India is a power-surplus nation, the power generation utilities remain vastly under-utilized.
- The plant load factor (PLF) of coal and lignite-based plants, an indicator of capacity utilization of power generation units, has dropped consistently over the decade from 77.5% in 2009-10 to 59.88% in 2016-17.

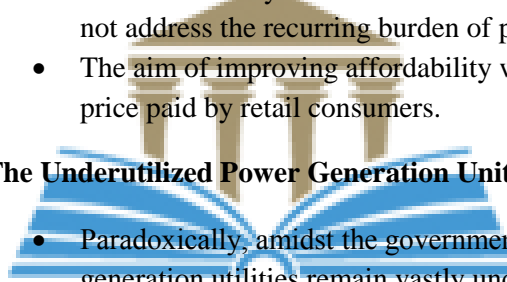
Due to the demand drop:

- This is due to demand for electricity from State distribution companies dropping in tandem with their deteriorating financial status.

The Status of UDAY scheme:

- The Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY), introduced two years ago to restructure the debt of State distribution agencies, has failed to make enough of a difference to this state of affairs.
- The outcome is not surprising, given that UDAY has failed to address the root problem of populism in the pricing of electricity.

The Stark Reality:



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- In the absence of the freedom to sell at a profitable price, distribution agencies have had very little incentive to demand more electricity from power generators, as evident in the constantly falling PLF.
- This in turn holds back investment in power generation units.
- Saubhagya scheme, unfortunately, does very little to address the fundamentals of India's crippling power problem.

The way forward:

- The government must realize the real problems of the power sector which includes addressing the Structural problem of the plight of the distribution companies.
- Improving their finances will usher in investments and eventually the profits leading to surplus generation of power.
- However, one needs to keep the power sector away from populist politics during the election times to achieve the above aims.

5. Confusing Consent

G.S. Paper I: Role of women and women's organization; Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.

Context:

- Writer-film-maker Mahmood Farooqui was acquitted of the charge of rape by the Delhi High Court.
- It concluded that it could not be established without reasonable doubt whether the incident took place.
- The rationale of arriving at such a conclusion may be debatable.
- But it is the court's reasoning on the issue of consent that is unsettling.

The Notion of Consent as a Defense in Rape Cases:

Widening the Notion of Consent as defence:

- The Farooqui verdict risks widening the notion of 'consent' as a defence in rape cases.
- It ruled that even if rape had taken place, it is doubtful that it was without the consent of the American researcher who pressed the charges.
- The court, by and large, accepted her version of events, described her as a stellar witness, and found that vital aspects of her testimony were corroborated.
- It rejected doubts raised by the defence based on her behaviour after the incident, saying she was only manifesting signs of post-rape trauma and disorientation.

Unwillingness only in Mind:

- At the same time, in saying that the victim's unwillingness was only in her mind, the judge gave credence to Farooqui's defence that he was unaware of the lack of consent.
- When the court raises a doubt as to when exactly the consent was withdrawn, it seems the victim is being faulted for the man failing to comprehend a 'no'.

Burden of Proof on Victim:

- Requiring a victim to prove that her refusal had been understood by the person who assaulted her is an unreasonable burden.
- It may aid the use of consent as a defence against a rape charge.
- Consent, a major ground for defence in rape cases, was allowed to be raised in the appeal although it was not made during the trial, which resulted in the conviction and imprisonment.

Moralizing in Judgements:

- The Delhi High Court's verdict may be largely free of the kind of moralising that finds its way into judgments in such cases.
- Also for unnecessary and indefensible remarks such as the one about "feeble hesitation", which it said does not amount to a positive negation of advances.

The Degenerative Mindset comment:

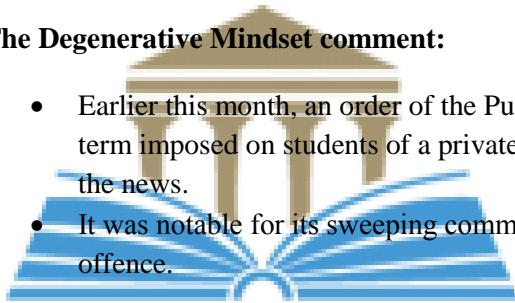
- Earlier this month, an order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court suspending the 20-year prison term imposed on students of a private university for gang-rape, and granting bail to them was in the news.
- It was notable for its sweeping comments blaming the "degenerative mindset" of youth for the offence.

Shaming the Victim:

- In effect, it sought to shame the victim as one given to casual relationships and adventurism.
- Judicial decisions containing a mix of sound law and regressive personal opinion are not uncommon.
- Some blame victims of rape or insinuate that they had brought shame on themselves and their families.

The Way Forward: Bring forth the Constitutional Morality not Individual Morality:

- When superior court orders contain such remarks, there is an inherent danger that they could be seen as a legal basis for deciding cases of rape.
- These cases, like any other, must be decided on evidence, and courts should avoid tangential theorizing.



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6. The Way the Wind Blows

G.S. Paper III: Infrastructure: Energy

Context:

- Tamil Nadu has reached a milestone for the wind energy sector.
- On July 11, the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) evacuated more than 5,000 MW of wind power.
- This was achieved by replacing almost 1,000 MW of thermal power and operating several other plants at half capacity.
- Wind power accounted for almost a third of the State's electricity demand that day.

Better Forecasting Techniques:

- Tamil Nadu has been historically struggling to evacuate the huge amount of power generated by its wind farms, especially from June to September when the winds are the strongest.
- This was partly attributed to its inability to predict wind-power generation ahead of time and plan contraction of coal power accordingly.
- Starting 2015, the State took the lead in using good forecasting techniques, with the support of the National Institute of Wind Energy.
- As a result, there has been a steady rise in the amount of wind power evacuated.

Realizing its Renewable Energy Potential fully:

- Tamil Nadu is also expected to fully realize its renewable energy potential once the Raigarh-Pugalur green power transmission corridor, with a capacity of 6,000 MW, is completed by May 2019.
- It has progressive plans that take into account the increased potential for wind energy markets once the green corridor is put in place. And it has the largest wind capacities in the country and significant developer and manufacturer interest.

Bleak Market Sentiment for Wind Developers:

- The second revolves around the bleak market sentiment for wind developers in the State and across the country.
- India took baby steps towards discovering wind energy tariffs through auctions rather than feed-in tariffs fixed by regulatory commissions.
- While auctions are a step in the right direction to ensure competition and transparency, this development has led to a situation where States like Tamil Nadu refuse to sign future power purchase agreements (PPA) at feed-in tariffs.

The Eroding participation from Private Players:

- States are also rethinking their existing PPAs that are priced higher than the auction price. For instance, Karnataka cancelled 400 MW of existing PPAs leaving developers with no option but to go for resource-intensive legal remedies.
- Additional problems such as arbitrary curtailment of wind power and backlogs in payment by Tamil Nadu's electric utility further eroded their faith in participating in the auctions at low margins.

The Way Forward:

- Flexibility for cheaper, better energy options need to be balanced with market stability and investor confidence.
- Tamil Nadu, like other States, needs to ensure this balance for regulatory clarity and sending the right signals.
- And most importantly, it must continue to build on its planning process for the sector to truly integrate clean energy into its grids.
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7. The Rohingya Issue

Paper II: India and its neighborhood- relations.

The Barbaric violence in the Rakhine state against the Rohingyas:

Villages, home to the Rohingya community, in the fractious state of Rakhine in western Myanmar, are being mercilessly, horrifically burnt down by the Myanmar Army.

The military, it is being alleged, separates the women and men and rape and mutilate the bodies of women and girl children.

Moreover, the United Nations report had documented numerous instances of gang rape and killings, including of babies and young children, by Myanmar's security forces.

The Myanmar Army's viciousness, already unimaginably ghastly, has escalated even further.

Reaction of the United Nations Human Rights Chief:

The U.N. human rights chief, Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini, called on Myanmar to put an end to this "brutal security operation".

He termed the state's actions against the Rohingya as a textbook example of ethnic cleansing.

The Rohingya are at the centre of a humanitarian catastrophe of terrifying proportions.

The Context: Plea to the Supreme Court of India by Rohingya Refugees:

The Supreme Court of India has agreed to hear an urgent plea made by two Rohingya Muslim refugees namely Mohammad Salimullah and Mohammad Shaqir, against the Indian government's proposed move

to deport their 40,000-strong refugee community back to their native land of Myanmar, where discrimination and possibly summary executions await them.

The Security Concerns of the Government of India:

The government of India has condemned only the terrorist attack in Rakhine state, wherein several members of the Myanmar security forces lost their lives in the India – Myanmar Joint statement 2017.

The Minister of State for Home, Kiren Rijiju's statement read: "As far as we are concerned they are all illegal immigrants. They have no basis to live here. Anybody who is [an] illegal migrant will be deported".

Turning Back the Rohingyas:

In India, the state is so much as considering returning the refugees back to the jaws of not merely political persecution but of mind-boggling terror and savagery.

India's national security fears are based on intelligence reports linking the radical Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army to the Lashkar E Taiba. The Rohingya Solidarity Organization are allegedly close to Hafiz Syed.

If translated into action, the stand of the Indian government and the comments of the minister would also constitute a contravention of India's obligations under both domestic and international law.

India's obligations under Indian Constitution:

The submissions of two Rohingya refugees to the Supreme Court in the form of a petition, rests on two broad planks:

One, that any deportation would violate their fundamental rights to equality and to life, under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution.

And, two, that any action by India in returning them to Myanmar would infringe international law, particularly the principle of non-refoulement.

India and the U.N. Convention on the status of Refugees:

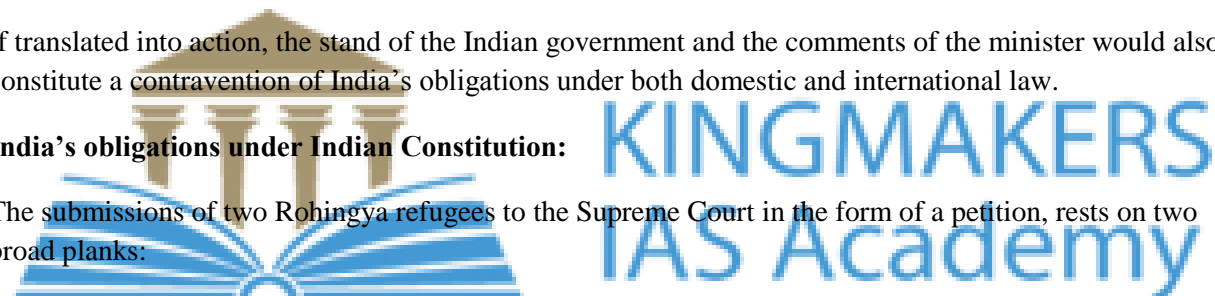
India might find itself committing a grave error of substantial moral purport by denying the Rohingyas asylum.

India is not bound to follow the principle of non-refoulement, since it is not a signatory to the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

In any event, any deportation would be saved by the exceptions to the principle, in that the Rohingya are guilty of committing crimes against peace and are a threat to India's national security.

The Principle of Non Refoulment:

The principle of non-refoulement is articulated in Article 33 of the 1951 Convention.



It mandates that no state shall expel or return a refugee to “the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion”.

Exceptions to the Principle of Non Refoulment:

However, it allows for an exception in cases where there are “reasonable grounds” for regarding a refugee as a “danger to the security of the country.”

The Convention also excludes generally from refugee status individuals guilty of, among other things, committing war crimes or crimes against peace and humanity.

India is not a party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

Laws that stretch beyond treaty obligations:

But we need to heed the existence of sources of law that stretch beyond treaty obligations.

These include norms of customary international law, where binding rules have been crystallised as a result of the practice of states.

The principle of non-refoulement is widely regarded as one such rule.

The principle is so well enshrined that it constitutes a peremptory norm from which no derogation whatsoever is permitted.

The Universal Acceptance of the Principle of Non Refoulment:

But there is no denying that non-refoulement is now nearly universally accepted as constituting a fundamental rule of international law.

The two precedents by Gujarat and Delhi High Courts:

At least two high courts in India have expressly held that the country is bound to follow the principle.

In their judgments respectively in **Ktaer Abbas Habib Al Qutai v. Union of India (1998)** and **Dongh Lian Kham v. Union of India (2015)** the Gujarat and Delhi High Courts have virtually incorporated non refoulement into the guarantees of Article 21 of the Constitution.

“This principle’s application”, the court noted, “protects life and liberty of a human being irrespective of his nationality”.

The court also mentioned that “It is encompassed in Article 21 of the Constitution, so long as the presence of a refugee is not prejudicial to the law and order and security of India.”

Incorporation of Customary International Principles by the Supreme Court:

The Supreme Court in different cases has incorporated other principles of customary international law into municipal law, where there are no local statute embodying rules to the contrary.

The Supreme Court can have little option but to recognise, as the Gujarat and the Delhi High Courts have done, that non refoulement is a foundational principle that creates obligations under both domestic and international law alike.

Addressing the concern of Indian State:

It might well be true that the state must be accorded an element of latitude in shaping its policies.

The government cannot plausibly be arguing that each of the 40,000 Rohingya constitutes a threat to India's safety, or that each of them is guilty of committing crimes against peace.

The petitions led by the Rohingya refugees are an important test of both the Supreme Court and the Indian state's moral calibre.

The Gravity of the present crisis and the way forward:

However, the present crisis goes beyond matters of mere perception.

It goes to the root of what it means to be a civilised state, of treating every person, irrespective of constructs of citizenship, with equal care, compassion and respect.

This calls for India to adopt a moral stand based on principles and legislate a permanent asylum law which takes into account the evolving concepts of migration, asylum and refugees into context.

8. Evolving India Japan Ties:

Paper II: India and its neighbourhood- relations. Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Context:

- Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to India, part of annual summits between the two countries, has set strategic ties on a fast track.
- The bilateral agenda between India and Japan will range from issues of maritime security to nuclear energy and trade.
- At the centrepiece of their summitry will be the inauguration of India's first high-speed rail corridor from Mumbai to Ahmedabad.
- India's decision to partner with Japan for the 508-km, ₹1.1 lakh-crore project is as much about politics as it is about infrastructure:

The Shinkansen Technology and its track record:

- The image of the platypus-snouted blue and white Shinkansen streaking past a snow topped Mount Fuji has become as synonymous with Japan
- Japan, over the years, has been keen to export its high-speed train technology along with rolling stock.
- Since October 1964, Shinkansen has emerged as the symbol of Japan's post-World War II ascent to economic superpowerdom.

- The Shinkansen encapsulates the archipelago's engineering might and almost preternatural standards of safety and punctuality.
- It has, over the years, carried over 10 billion passengers to date, without a single accident or casualty and an average delay of less than one minute.

The Problems faced by Shinkansen from within:

- But despite this admirable track record, Japan has struggled to export its bullet train know-how.
- Before signing on India, Taiwan had been Japan's only successful sale but Taiwan is hardly a poster child for the system, given that its high-speed line has suffered heavy losses since opening in 2007.
- Profitability is a notoriously hard ask for high-speed train networks.
- In Japan itself, some routes, notably Tokyo-Osaka, are profitable, but to achieve this requires high volumes of passengers and highly priced tickets.
- Over 350 trains operate on the Tokyo – Osaka Shinkansen line daily, ferrying about 163 million passengers a year.
- The region served is demographically dense, home to over half of Japan's population and such conditions are not easy to replicate and other high-speed lines in Japan have struggled.

The Chinese Challenge:

- The latest challenge to Japan's ambitions is the emergence of China as the new emperor of the superfast train.
- Over the last decade, China has developed a 22,000 km high-speed rail network which boasts the 'world's fastest train': the Shanghai Maglev that hits speeds of 430 km.
- The Chinese Technology is also cheaper, making it an attractive proposition for the cost-conscious developing and middle-income countries of Asia.

The Battle To Export Bullet Trains:

- China pipped Japan to the post at the last minute by securing a high-speed rail project in Indonesia that had been considered by Tokyo to be in the bag.
- This last minute victory in 2015 happened because China offered to finance the line without any recourse to Indonesia's government coffers.
- China has also beaten Tokyo to becoming Thailand's partner of choice for its first high-speed rail line.
- The above battle to export bullet trains is clearly reflective of the broader rivalry between China and Japan for influence in Asia.
- Consequently, the India deal is not only a business coup for Japan but also a geostrategic one.

The Ahmedabad-Mumbai bullet train project:

- The Mumbai-Ahmedabad contract has been hard-won.
- The project entails a loan worth \$12 billion, at 0.1% interest, to be paid back over 50 years, taking care of over 80% of the project's estimated costs.
- Moreover, Japan will also supplement the financing with a generous package of technical assistance and training.

- The significance of the Indian Bullet Train Project funded by Japan is reflected in these words: “India is not Indonesia or Thailand. It is a great nation, totally autonomous”.
- And India is not as likely to submit to Chinese pressure because India is the only country in South Asia not to accede to the One Belt One Road Initiative of China.

Concerns related to the Indian Bullet Train Project:

- In India, concerns related to costs, safety and misplaced priorities of the Bullet Train persist.
- But the Japanese officials who are helping the Bullet Train Project in India were confident of ironing these problems out with some tweaks to the Japanese technology.
- The necessary adjustments include the following: taking into account climatic differences, the possibility of electrical blackouts, as well as dust and other environmental conditions in India.

Some Interesting Parallels between India and Japan:

- But there are some interesting parallels between India and Japan with regard to the Shinkansen technology.
- When Japan developed its first Shinkansen lines in the 1960s, it was a poor country.
- It had required financial assistance from the World Bank to carry the ambitious project forward.

Other aspects of the Indo Japan Summit:

- The joint statement and comments by the two Prime Ministers in Gandhinagar also sent out a similar message that will be read closely in China on several counts.

On North Korea:

- North Korea was mentioned as a “joint” challenge for India and Japan.
- The statement on North Korea contained a phrase about holding countries “that have supported North Korea’s nuclear and missile programmes” accountable.
- This statement was obviously aimed at Pyongyang’s benefactors in Beijing.

On Zero Tolerance Against Terrorism:

- The clause calling for zero tolerance on terrorism referenced China’s veto on the Jaish-e-Mohammad chief being put on the list of UN-designated terrorists.

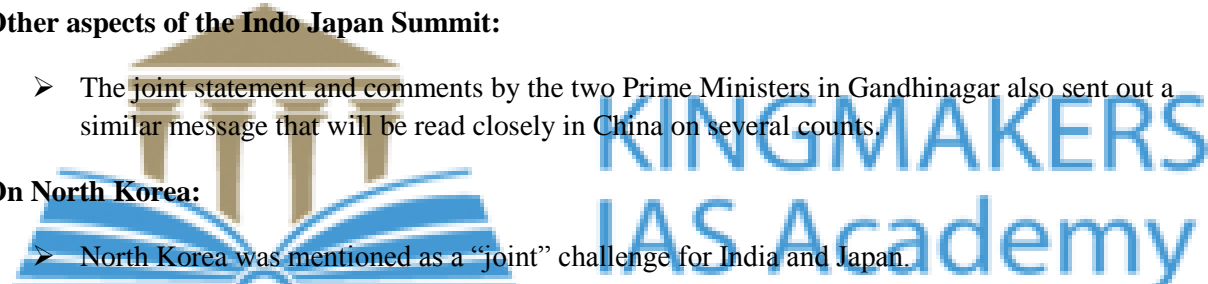
On Indo Pacific Region:

- The title of the joint statement, “Toward a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific”, and statements on cooperation in the Indo Pacific region, indicate a much closer alignment between India and Japan in countering China’s influence in the South China Sea.

On The Indo Japan Nuclear Deal:

- The coming into force of the India-Japan nuclear deal and more military and maritime exercises will buttress efforts to counter China in the Indo Pacific.

On The North East India:



- India has also extended to Japan an offer denied to any other country, which is to assist in infrastructure development in the Northeast.
- It is clear that the Indian government has set India-Japan ties on an accelerated geopolitical course that will be a major factor in its dealings with the rest of the world, especially China.
- This is a significant move since it is widely perceived that the United States is retreating from the region.
- But there are many regions where the scope for improvement between the two countries is high.
- While Japan is India's largest donor and the third largest provider of FDI, bilateral trade has steadily declined since 2013.
- The decision to finalise four new locations for special Japanese industrial townships may be only one way of addressing the difficulties businessmen face in India.

The Way Forward:

- India and Japan should also look beyond their lofty geopolitical aims, at the more basic aspects of bilateral engagement.
- However, both the countries should keep in mind the larger geopolitical context which is playing out itself in the region and make their moves accordingly.



9. India – U.S.A. Ties

Paper II: India and its neighbourhood- relations. Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Context:

- If you look at the world from a geostrategic perspective, there are trend lines of slow-moving geopolitical changes which come together at a particular moment in time resulting in an inflexion point.
- And many signs suggest that 2017 may well be the year which marked the re ordering of the Asian strategic landscape.
- In this context, one must look at the emerging India-Japan alignment and its potential to sets the stage for the reordering of the Asian strategic landscape.

The Two slow moving Trends now visible:

- The two slow moving trend lines clearly discernible since the Cold War ended a quarter century ago are:
 - The shift of the geopolitical centre of gravity from the Euro-Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific region.
 - The Rise of China.

The Belated recognition of the trends by the U.S.A.:

- The U.S. 're balancing' announced in 2011 was a belated recognition of the above changes.

- The impact of the Sub Prime Mortgage Loan crisis in 2008 hastened the process and drove home the message.

The new center of gravity called the Indo Pacific:

- Most of the rivalries are being played out in the crowded geopolitical space of the Indo-Pacific.
- Asian economies now account for more than half of global GDP and becoming larger in coming years.

A Rising China abiding by the Two Guides Policy:

- China's rise is reflected in a more assertive China.
- President Xi Jinping's announced the two guides' policy in February 2017.
- According to the Two Guides Policy China should guide 'the shaping of the new world order' and safeguarding 'international security'.

China's eagerness to assume leadership:

- During the last quarter century Deng Xiaoping advised China 'to observe calmly, secure its position, hide its capability, bide its time and not claim leadership' since it suited the Chinese back then in the 20th century.
- Much water has flown under the bridge and the times have clearly changed for China.
- Today's China is not just willing but eager to assume leadership and expects other countries to yield space.

The New Great Power Relations Followed by China:

- China has suggested 'a new type of great power relations' to the U.S.
- China's assertiveness in the East China Sea with Japan and in the South China Sea with its Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) neighbours sends signals of the above mentioned Great Power Relationship.

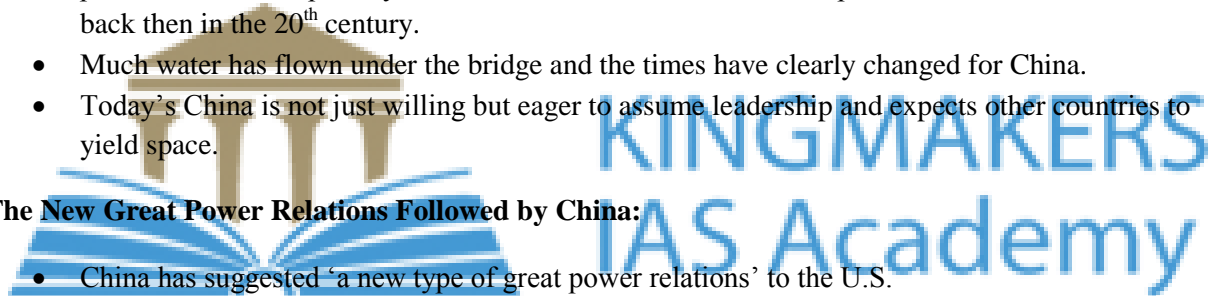
Multipolarity across the world and Chinese Dominance in Asia:

- The message that while multipolarity may be desirable in a global order, in Asia, China is the predominant power and must be treated as such is loud and clear.
- Until now, China has been one of the beneficiaries of the U.S.-led global order.

China's impatience and the creation of an Alternative Financial Mechanism:

- It is impatient that it does not enjoy a position that it feels it deserves, especially in the Bretton Woods institutions.
- During the last five years, China has set about creating a new set of institutions (the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank) and launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Aiming to create a new trading infrastructure:



- China aims to create a new trading infrastructure that reflects China's centrality as the largest trading nation.

Chinese Assertions in the Indian Ocean:

- The BRI is also complemented by a growing Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean.
- In 2009, the PLA Navy started rotating three ship task forces through the Indian Ocean as part of the anti-piracy task force off the Somalia coast.
- Visits by nuclear attack submarines to littoral ports began to take place.

The Full Fledged Military Base at Djibouti:

- In addition, China is now converting the supply facility at Djibouti into a full-fledged military base.

Events accelerating the ascent of China recently:

- Recent developments have accelerated these geopolitical trends.
- The first was the outcome of the U.S. elections last year.

Donald Trump's America first and absolving responsibility in the Western Pacific:

- By invoking 'America first' repeatedly, President Donald Trump has made it clear that the U.S. considers the burden of leading the global order too onerous.
- American allies, particularly in the Asia-Pacific, are nervous about Mr. Trump's harangues that they are enjoying the benefits of the U.S. security umbrella on the cheap.

The growing anxiety of South Korea and Japan and their waning confidence on America:

- Recent nuclear and long-range missile tests by North Korea have added to South Korean and Japanese anxieties.
- Japan has been particularly rattled by the two missiles fired across Hokkaido.
- The U.S.'s push for more sanctions that depend on China for implementation, is seen by most Japanese that it is unlikely to be dismantle North Korea's nuclear and missile capability any time soon.

China playing by their rule book in Doklam:

- The Doklam stand-off between India and China that lasted from June to August 2017.
- The Chinese playbook followed the established pattern creating a physical presence followed by sharpened rhetoric, together becoming an exercise in coercive diplomacy.
- This worked in pushing the nine-dash line in the South China Sea with the Philippines and Vietnam even as China built additional facilities on reclaimed land in the area.
- India, however, chose to block China and a few hundred soldiers on the plateau maintained their hostile postures.

The differences between India and China:

- Differences with China did not begin with Doklam.
- It was preceded by the stapled visa issue for Indians belonging to Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.
- Growing incidents of incursions along the disputed boundary.

Protecting Pakistan and Frustrating India:

- Blocking of India's bid to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group last year.
- Ensuring that no language relating to Pakistan-based terrorist groups found mention in the BRICS summit in Goa.
- And preventing the inclusion of Masood Azhar from being designated as a terrorist by the UN Security Council.

India's consistent policy on China since 1988:

- Since 1988, India has followed a consistent China policy based on putting aside the boundary dispute and developing other aspects of the relationship in the expectation that this would create mutual trust and enable a boundary settlement.

The Growing Gap between India and China and the futility of a shared future:

- However, the gap between India and China has grown, both in economic and military terms, and with it has emerged a more assertive China.
- The shared vision of an Asian century with a rising India and rising China is long past.
- After Doklam, there is finally a consensus that the old China policy does not serve our national interests and a review is long overdue.

The India – Japan Angle and the scope for a new relationship adding critical dimension:

- It is against this backdrop that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe's visit to India took place last week.
- The contours of a new relationship were defined during Mr. Abe's earlier tenure, in 2006-07, when annual summits were introduced; the relationship became a 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership'.

Growing synergy from Naval exercises and peaceful use of Nuclear Energy:

- Japan was invited to join in the Malabar naval exercises and a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation was concluded.
- A singular achievement was the conclusion of the agreement for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy last year.

Deepening strategic dialogue:

- To deepen strategic understanding, the two sides initiated a 2+2 Dialogue involving the Foreign and Defence Ministries in 2010.

- A memorandum on enhancing defence and technology/security cooperation was signed and talks on acquiring the amphibious maritime surveillance ShinMaywa US-2i began in 2013.

The India, China, U.S.A. trilateral dialogue:

- Trilateral dialogue involving both the U.S. and Japan and covering strategic issues was elevated to ministerial level in 2014.
- Once the agreement for the 12 US-2i aircraft is concluded with a follow-up acquisition as part of Make in India, the strategic relationship will begin to acquire critical mass.

Languishing India Japan Trade ties:

- Today, India-Japan trade languishes at around \$15 billion, a quarter of trade with China while Japan-China trade is around \$300 billion.
- Therefore, the primary focus during the recent visit has been on economic aspects.
- The Mumbai-Ahmedabad high speed rail corridor is more than symbolism, in demonstrating that high-cost Japanese technology is viable in developing countries and that India has the absorption capacity to master it.

Far Bigger challenge than completion: Transferring the know how:

- Completing it in five years is a management challenge but the bigger challenge will be to transfer the know-how of best practices to other sectors of the economy.

One more major initiative: The Asia – Africa growth corridor:

- Another major initiative is the recently launched Asia-Africa Growth Corridor to build connectivity for which Japan has committed \$30 billion and India \$10 billion.
- This adds a critical dimension to the ‘global partnership’ between the two countries.

The way ahead for India to benefit from the synergy with Japan:

- However, to make this productive, India needs to change its style of implementing projects abroad, most of which have been plagued by cost and time over-runs.
- Ensuring effective implementation and setting up mechanisms for delivery will align Mr. Modi’s Act East policy with Mr. Abe’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.
- This alignment sets the stage for the reordering of the Asian strategic landscape.

10. The Kurdish Vote

G.S.Paper I: History of the world will include events from 18th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, redrawing of national boundaries.

G.S.Paper II: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests, Indian Diaspora.

Context:

- The Kurdistan Regional Government has decided to go ahead with a proposed independence referendum.
- Iraqi Kurdistan is located in the north of Iraq and constitutes the country's only autonomous region.
- The firm decision to adopt an independence resolution scheduled for September 25, 2017 was taken despite strong opposition both from within and outside Iraq.

Creating A Regional Political Storm:

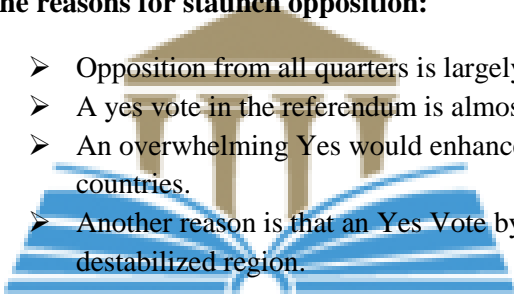
- The independence referendum move by the Iraqi Kurds has created a regional political storm in West Asia.
- The Iraqi Supreme Court has already asked the Kurdistan Regional Government to suspend the vote.
- Instead of referendum, the Supreme Court has asked the Kurdistan Regional Government to adopt a legal settlement.
- Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has threatened to use force if the referendum turns violent.
- The Turkish government has ordered a military drill on the Iraqi border.
- Iran has also issued a warning to the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The reasons for staunch opposition:

- Opposition from all quarters is largely driven by fears of an Yes vote.
- A yes vote in the referendum is almost certain.
- An overwhelming Yes would enhance the nationalist aspirations of Kurds living in other countries.
- Another reason is that an Yes Vote by the Kurds would further destabilize the already destabilized region.

Who are the Kurds?

- The Kurds are an ethnic group.
- They are culturally, historically and linguistically classified as belonging to the Iranian peoples.



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- In the middle eastern region the Kurds mostly inhabit a contiguous area.
- They are the fourth largest ethnic group in West Asia but without a state and are scattered in various countries.
- This area spans adjacent parts of southeastern Turkey (Northern Kurdistan), northwestern Iran (Eastern Kurdistan), northern Iraq (Southern Kurdistan), and northern Syria (Western Kurdistan).
- In Turkey, Kurdish rebels are involved in a protracted civil war with the Turkish government.
- While in Syria they have established a regional government.

What an YES vote means to the Kurds:

- They Kurds, scattered across the Middle East, are all keenly awaiting the outcome of the Iraqi vote.
- A 'yes' vote doesn't necessarily mean that Iraqi Kurdistan would immediately break away from Iraq.
- Both the regional government in Erbil and the federal government in Baghdad are not ready for that.

From Brutal Repression to Limited Autonomy:

- The Iraqi Kurds had been brutally repressed under the regime of Saddam Hussein.
- This was until the regional government was formed following the first Gulf War of 1991.
- Since then, they have exercised autonomy and built institutions for self-governance.
- But Kurdistan has remained part of Iraq.

Message from the Kurdish Regional Government:

- But the Kurdish Regional Government, led by Masoud Barzani, wants to send a message to Baghdad as well as the outside world.
- The message is loud and clear: The Kurdistan Regional Government aspirations for independence are genuine and have popular resonance.

An opportunity for Baghdad to find a permanent solution:

- Baghdad should see this as an opportunity to address the Kurdish question.
- In recent years, both Baghdad and Erbil cooperated in the fight against the Islamic State.
- The Islamic State which posed a greater threat has been largely contained now.
- It's time for both sides to refocus their energies on settling the dispute between themselves.

The Idea of A Confederation:

- Though independence remains the proclaimed goal of Iraqi Kurdistan the Kurdistan Regional Government had once proposed a confederation.
- A united state in which Iraq and Kurdistan could co-exist, sharing resources and a vision on foreign and security policies could be a welcome solution for both the parties rather than outright separation.
- Such proposal was shot down by Baghdad in the past.
- But now the Kurds are trying to change the status quo by pushing for a referendum.

The Way Forward:

- A Federal dialogue is essential to break the prevailing atmosphere.
- The current tensions if not handled properly will deepen the prevailing sectarian fault lines.
- It is neither in Baghdad's nor the Kurds' interest to jeopardize the relative calm in Iraq's northeast which was achieved after a lot of bloodshed and sacrifice.

11. Solving the Afghan Riddle:

G.S.Paper II: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

Context:

- The visit of James Mattis, the United States of America's Secretary Of Defense, to India is being looked forward to by India.
- The following issues are expected to take primacy namely, counter terrorism, Defense ties and Afghanistan.
- The visit of the United States of America's Defense Secretary comes barely a month after President Donald Trump announced the latest U.S. policy on Afghanistan on August 21.

The Situation In Afghanistan:

- The situation in Afghanistan continues to be fragile.
- The Taliban has made some gains by changing their strategy.
- But the Taliban today is not a cohesive movement and has divisions within it.

Major Change in the United States of America's policy in Afghanistan:

- The important issue today is how the U.S. strategy differs from the past in terms of addressing concerns regarding Pakistan's role in Afghanistan.
- In a nutshell, the United States of America's Policy on Afghanistan envisages the following:
- More pressure on Pakistan.
- No early U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.
- Robust military action on counterterrorism
- A greater role for India.

Shift in Pakistan's strategic priority towards China:

- This change in approach of the United States should be analyzed in view of a shift in Pakistan's strategic priority towards China.

More pressure on Pakistan: Part of the New Policy in Afghanistan.

- In 2009, President Barack Obama had spoken of Pakistan's lack of action, but not so strongly and harshly as his successor Mr. Donald Trump.
- Sharp words on Pakistan have been said at different levels by earlier U.S. administrations too.
- They were also codified in the form of conditions in various assistance laws, including the Kerry-Lugar-Berman Bill.

Afghanistan – Pakistan Relationship:

- A study of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations since 1947 will reveal that their relations have always been thorny and replete with problems.
- The only exception was during the brief Taliban era which saw occasional flare ups with regard to the Durand Line.
- India-Pakistan relations, good or bad, has had not impacted Pakistan-Afghanistan relations.

The Indo Afghan Relationship:

- Just after Independence, on January 4, 1950, India signed a Treaty of Friendship with Afghanistan.
- This friendship treaty also permitted opening of consulates in each other's country.
- In October 2011, India was the first country Afghanistan signed a strategic partnership agreement with.
- India has always wanted a democratic, stable and strong Afghanistan able to decide its own future.
- The basic tenets of India's aims, policy and approach towards Afghanistan in respect of bilateral and regional cooperation remain unchanged.

India's Strategic Partnership with Afghanistan:

- India has a close strategic partnership with Afghanistan.
- It covers a broad spectrum of areas which include political, security, trade and economic cooperation as well as capacity development.

- India's assistance in the defense sector has been modest and based on specific requests by the government of Afghanistan.

India's Reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan:

- India is always ready for more intensive bilateral relations.
- It has been at the forefront in respect of assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.
- India is considered, by the Afghan population as non-threatening with its democratic traditions upheld as a model.
- Afghans also appreciate that India had never interfered in their internal affairs.

Scope for a more proactive role for India in Afghanistan:

- The Afghans want more help.
- Speedy augmentation, training and supply of equipment for the Afghan National Security Forces is important to enable Afghanistan to protect its interests and maintain peace in the country.
- India could assist Afghanistan in training as per their requirement and supplying much-needed spare parts and such equipment as is possible without deployment of Indian troops in Afghanistan.

Enabling Afghanistan access the Energy Arc:

- Asia is a region of energy and resources stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea and Central Asia to Siberia and Russia's Far East.
- The energy basket needs to be exploited for the benefit of Afghanistan and the surrounding region.
- The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline, SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) and SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) should help in encouraging regional economic cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours.

Helping Afghans connect with the world at large:

Expeditious action on completion of the Chabahar port will help in increasing Afghanistan's contacts with India and the outside world.

Reducing Outside Interference in Afghanistan:

- There should be no outside interference in Afghanistan.
- To enable this, the infrastructure of terrorism has to be dismantled.

Preventing Safe Sanctuary for the terrorists:

- It is important to deny sanctuary and support to the Taliban's Quetta Shura and the Haqqani network.
- For any effective counterterrorism policy, all major terrorist groups operating in the area should be considered a single group.

The effect of Opium Trading:

- It is also imperative to redouble counter-narcotics efforts as Afghanistan remains the world's largest producer of opium.
- India is in favour of a reconciliation process which has overall Afghan support and is based on internationally accepted redlines.

Peace and Reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan by India:

- Peace and reconciliation were embedded in the very first international compact on Afghanistan, in the text of the Bonn Agreement of December 2001.

How to Ensure Regional Security In Afghanistan:

- For regional security there must be closer involvement of regional powers in international efforts to ensure non-interference and a stable Afghanistan.
- It is important for India to coordinate its efforts with those of Russia, Iran and the Central Asian Republics to ensure success.

The effect of India – Pakistan relations on Afghanistan:

- Unfair attempts have been made now and then to link the Afghan issue with India-Pakistan relations.
- India and Afghanistan have never exploited their friendly bilateral relations to harm Pakistan.
- This is clear from three things:
- In both the 1965 and 1971 wars, Afghanistan was non-committal and did not support India.
- On the Kashmir issue, Afghanistan has not publicly supported India.
- India has not entered the debate on the Durand Line.

India's objective in Afghanistan: A democratic, stable and strong Afghanistan:

- Neither India nor India- Pakistan relations were responsible for the situation which prevailed in Afghanistan following the departure of the Soviet troops.
- No extremist group — the Taliban, Haqqani network, Lashkar-e-Taiba — is based in India or has any Indian connection.
- India, in fact, has always been a part of the solution as far as the problems in Afghanistan is concerned.
- To blame India-Pakistan relations for the situation in Afghanistan is neither fair nor just.

Conclusion:

- The problems affecting Afghanistan has been clearly identified by the United States of America and it are reflected in the changes made to its Afghan policy.
- But the million dollar question is this: Can they implement the same and bring about a much needed change in Afghanistan?
- India too needs to roll up its sleeves and play a pro active role to usher in Peace and Prosperity in Afghanistan.

12. Whither United Nations?

G.S. Paper II: Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate; Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context:

- The Charter of the United Nations was signed on 26 June 1945, in San Francisco and came into force on 24 October 1945.
- After a grueling war which lasted from 1939 to 1945, the vision for a new world had the war-drum throb no longer, and a world where the battle flags furled.
- The charter was a realization of Alfred Tennyson's poem where he called for a Parliament of man, Federation of the world.

War of words at the United Nations General Assembly:

- As the bitterly divided Indian and Pakistani delegations stood up over the past week to face each other more than 70 years later in the United Nations General Assembly, all those words rang hollow.
- Reality was in short supply in the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly.
- The photograph brandished by Pakistan's envoy as being from Jammu and Kashmir turned out to be from Gaza.
- Religion became cause to divide rather than build a common understanding.

The Dignity of the United Nations:

- The dignity of the United Nations, let alone the common man, disappeared.
- India and Pakistan used its multiple rights of reply for name-calling and rhetoric hurled at each other.
- Another war of words was on between the U.S. and North Korea who sparred over Pyongyang's latest provocations.
- It wasn't the language employed that made the UN's 72nd General Assembly one of its most disappointing sessions.

Ineffectiveness of the United Nations to tackle the issues:

- It was the UN's ineffectiveness on each of the issues confronting the world today that was the most disappointing.
- These issues were spelt out by the Secretary General António Guterres in his speech.
- We are a world in pieces; we need to be a world at peace.

World's Seven Biggest Threats:

- Secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres listed out the world's seven biggest threats:
- They were nuclear peril, terrorism, unresolved conflicts and violations of international humanitarian law, climate change, growing inequality, cyber warfare and misuse of artificial intelligence, and human mobility, or refugees.

- Disappointingly each of these issues saw little movement at the UNGA.

United Nations and the ineffectiveness of Sanctions:

- The UN's actions in response to North Korea's missiles and nuclear tests just amounted to another round of sanctions against the Kim Jong-un regime.
- Past history points to the slim chances of success of this tack.
- Since 1966, the UN Security Council has established 26 sanctions regimes, of which about half are still active.
- The Taliban regime in Afghanistan, against which the U.S. and Russia united to pass a slew of economic, political and travel sanctions in the 1990s, didn't change course on its support to al-Qaeda or its brutal treatment of women and minorities.

The ill effects of Sanctions:

- In some cases, the sanctions only squeezed the country's poor.
- This was evident in Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia) and Democratic People's Republic of Korea itself, while not changing its belligerent positions.
- In most cases, the misery was heightened by international military interventions, from Yugoslavia to Libya and Yemen.

The true role of Sanctions:

- The truth is that sanctions do not work on rogue states.
- Sanctions only help isolate their populations from the world, which in turn tightens the regime's stranglehold on its people, and strengthens its resolve to disregard the UN.

Not Reprimanding NATO:

- The UN has done itself no favours by failing to censure NATO on violating its mandate.
- Limiting NATO's mandate only to the responsibility to protect (R2P) and not for regime change in Libya in 2011 was a glaring failure of the United Nations.

The Failure In Myanmar:

- Another instance is the Asian country Myanmar, where the military junta faced sanctions for years.
- Despite inviting former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to prepare a report on Rakhine state, post-democracy Myanmar has been able to carry out one of the region's most frightening massacres just days after the report was submitted.
- The UN Human Rights chief called military action a textbook case of ethnic cleansing.
- Half a million Rohingyas fled for their lives from Rakhine villages that were then burnt down, with landmines laid along the border to Bangladesh to prevent their return.
- The United Nations in the light of the Rohingya refugee crisis looked short on ideas and late on action.
- Restoring more than a million stateless refugees to their homes seems a daunting task for the world body.

- The United Nations which was set up expressly to ensure that such a displacement would “never again” be allowed to occur has clearly been helpless in the face of the situation in the Rakhine state.

Efficacy of the United Nations in saving Deals struck:

- The other countries who decide to enter talks with the United Nations cannot be blamed if they doubted the efficacy of the UN in guaranteeing any deal struck.
- The imminent threat from the U.S. of walking out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (P5+1 agreement) is a case in point.
- Other major decisions such as to walk out of the climate change agreement as well as threaten to cancel its funding contributions to the UN, have also seen little comment from the world body.
- The impunity with which the United States violates the general consensus further reduces the respect with which the United Nations is viewed with.

Impotency in terms of Terrorism:

- A similar impotency has been imparted to the UN on the issue of terrorism.
- The UN’s powerlessness to enforce even the basic strictures against terrorists and sanctions is visible in Pakistan Hafiz Saeed and associates now plan to stand for public office in Pakistan.
- Others like Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, who received bail despite UN financial sanctions, have simply disappeared.

The Indian Struggle:

- India struggles to convince China to allow the Security Council to sanction Masood Azhar, whose release in exchange for hostages in 1999 should have been proof enough.
- But the UN must do more to act on attacks carried out by states, especially those that are permanent members of the Security Council.

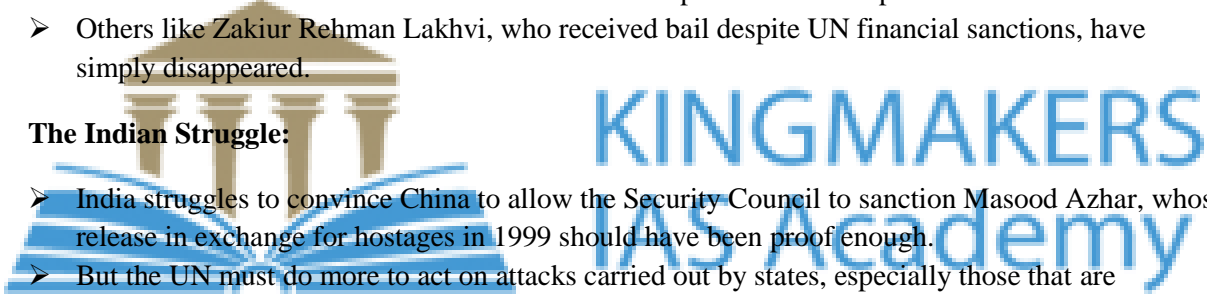
On the Menace of Cyber Warfare:

- Both Russia and the U.S. have been known to use cyber Warfare.
- the use of new-age warfare — drones, robotic soldiers and remote killings — must see more regulation from the inter- national community.

The Way Ahead for the United Nations:

- The important issue is the road the United Nations employs, and the respect the institution is accorded, not just as a mere structure but a shared ideal.
- The United Nations will not work effectively if it is used merely as forum for destructive propaganda.
- Neither will it work if it is used only as a convenience when national interests are directly involved, and regarded with indifference, or bypassed or opposed, when the general world interest is paramount.

A serious need for Reforms at the High Table:



- This calls for a serious rethinking in terms of reforming the United Nations which is still dominated by the forgotten past of the 20th century and oblivious to the complex realities of the 21st century.

13. Hopes and Fears

G.S. Paper II: India and its neighborhood- relations.

Context:

- Only with a great degree of caution and circumspection that the interim report of the Steering Committee of the Constitutional Assembly of Sri Lanka can be welcomed.
- The Steering Committee of the Constitutional Assembly, headed by Ranil Wickremesinghe, has done creditably by producing a forward-looking proposal.
- This comes within 18 months of its first sitting.
- The report marks a milestone, but it is still at a preliminary stage in a long-drawn process of enacting a new constitution.
- The interim report on a new constitution should set off an informed debate in Sri Lanka.

In The Past:

- However, there have been several such reports in the past that envisioned far-reaching reforms in the country's structure.
- None of them found broad acceptance within Sri Lanka's polity.
- Hence it is difficult to see the interim report as the beginning of an irreversible process of constitutional reform.

Hope And Fear In Sri Lanka amidst the churning:

- There is room for both hope and fear in Sri Lanka at the moment.
- There is scope for optimism that Sri Lanka's fractious polity could get its act together eventually.

What feeds Hope?

- This feeds on the hope that it would adopt a durable constitution.
- A constitution that would protect its unity and stability, distribute powers equitably across ethnic and geographical divisions, and ensure economic prosperity for all.

What feeds Fear?

- There is equal scope for the fear that the whole process could be derailed by extremists.
- Yet, there is a sustained effort to build a consensus among all sections of society.

A Framework for key elements of a new Constitution:

- The report incorporates a framework for key elements of a new constitution.

- It envisages an undivided and indivisible country, with the province as the unit for devolution of power.
- It suggests that the controversial terms 'unitary' and 'federal' be avoided.
- Instead Sinhala and Tamil terms that suggest an undivided country be used to describe the republic.

Opposition from Hardliners:

- There is opposition from some parties, which argue that nothing should be done to dilute the state's unitary character.

The End of Executive Presidency?

- The interim report aims to abolish the executive presidency.
- This is in line with suggestions running as far back as the 1990s.

Introducing the Principle of Subsidiarity:

- It introduces the concept of 'subsidiarity', under which whatever function can be performed by the lowest tier of government should be vested in it.

A Mixed Electoral System:

- Other reforms envisaged are a change from the electoral system solely based on proportional representation to a mixed method.
- Under this system, 60% of parliamentary members will be elected under the first-past-the-post system.

A Second Parliamentary Chamber:

- The creation of a second parliamentary chamber representing the provinces is also under consideration.
- Nationalists worried about the ramifications of devolving power to the periphery are likely to oppose some of the federal features.

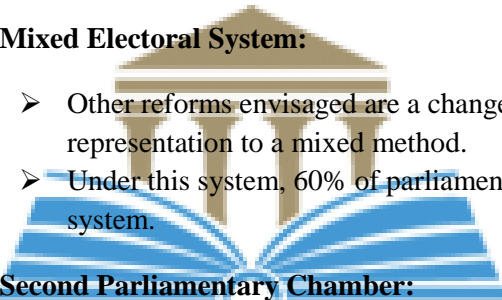
The Pre eminent status to Buddhism:

- They may even seek the retention of the all-powerful executive presidency.
- The government has promised that the pre-eminent status given to Buddhism will remain.
- This assurance by the government that may help overcome opposition from the majority.

The Role Of Tamil National Alliance:

- The willingness of the Tamil National Alliance to accept a founding document arrived at on the basis of a bipartisan consensus is also a good sign.

Towards a new path of Reconciliation:



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- It is time Sri Lanka set itself free from the shackles of divisive notions of nationalism and charted a new path of equality and reconciliation for itself.

14. Investigating Shell Companies

G.S.Paper III: money-laundering and its prevention.

Context:

- The decision by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to crack down on so-called shell companies is a laudable one indeed.
- The disqualification of select directors in these entities and debarring them from taking board positions for a specified period of time by the Ministry cannot be faulted.

Clean Up of Non Transparent Firms:

- This would begin the cleanup of the stables of firms which are less than transparent.
- These firms were set up in many cases with less than bona fide intent and having virtually no business operations.

Easy To Register:

- So many entrepreneurs establishing medium, small or micro enterprises have found to their chagrin, it is far easier to register a firm than it is to dissolve or wind it up.

Breaking the network of Shell Companies:

- The underlying motive for this action, as cited by the ministry, of “breaking the network of shell companies” in the government’s fight against black money is laudable.
- But, the Union government’s move to publicize the identities of some of these individuals with a view to ‘naming and shaming’ them is fraught with risk.

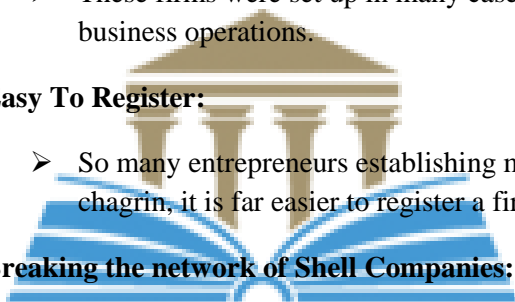
The plight of the genuine firms:

As a consequence of the naming and shaming campaign, there is a real danger of inadvertently tainting genuine firms and individuals.

This was in evidence when the Securities Appellate Tribunal recently gave relief to some entities over trading curbs hastily imposed on them by SEBI.

Huge tasks demand due diligence:

- Given the sheer scale of the task at hand, with the ministry identifying more than 1.06 lakh directors for disqualification, it is imperative that there be great care and diligence.
- This will ensure that the authorities do not penalize anyone who for non-mala fide reasons failed to comply with the relevant provisions of the Companies Act.



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Intention of Government: Create Faith In The System:

- The intention of the government is to create “an atmosphere of confidence and faith in the system”.
- This is as part of improving the climate for ease of doing business by the government.
- The onus must be on taking to task only those who intend to subvert the law.

Address the systemic shortcoming in the system:

The Centre and the regulatory arms need to address the underlying systemic shortcomings in the system.

These loopholes have allowed so many companies, both listed and unlisted, to become vehicles of malfeasance.

Large Mass of smaller companies:

- In the case of public limited companies, a major portion of the extralegal activities have been found to occur in the large mass of smaller companies.
- This includes price rigging of shares, insider trading and other questionable practices
- The problems of acute illiquidity, weak governance and regulatory oversight have combined with the difficulty in delisting to make these firms prime targets for financial fraudsters and money launderers.

Solution: Address the disease than fight the symptoms:

- The solutions, therefore, need to be targeted at addressing the deep-rooted maladies rather than just the symptoms.
- The government should make it easier for entrepreneurs to deregister and/or delist a company.

Government should Respond through legislation:

- The government has already shown it is prepared to act in terms of enacting the necessary legislation to address banking sector stress by adopting the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.

Simplifying Process: The way forward.

- A simplified process, possibly online, to dissolve or delist would usher in significant benefits.
- This includes improved governance, and ensuring that all stakeholders from small retail investors to corporate promoters have an enabling atmosphere.
- The prevailing atmosphere in the country should allow them to operate freely by remaining compliant with the law or risk facing stringent penal action.

15. Nuclear Deal In Danger

G.S.Paper II: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context:

- President Donald Trump's opposition to the Iran nuclear deal is not new but it is out in the open now.
- During his vitriolic Presidential election campaign, Donald Trump came down heavily on the Obama administration for concluding a nuclear deal with Iran.

Axis of Terror:

- The current United States administration believes that Iran is part of the axis of terror and hence needs to be disarmed making them impotent in terms of nuclear capability.
- But by choosing his first address at the UN General Assembly to slam Tehran and the nuclear accord, he has put to rest any hope for improvement in ties with Iran.

Donald Trump's UNGA Speech:

- Donald Trump, in the course of his United Nations General Assembly speech, called the Iran deal, which the U.S. and five other countries had signed with Tehran two years ago, an "embarrassment".
- He branded it one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into.
- The Obama-era pragmatism was an deviation and the decades-old hostility between the U.S. and the theocratic regime in Tehran stands resumed.

The Real Test of Certification:

- The real test before Mr. Trump and the Iranians comes in less than a month.
- According to U.S. law, the administration must certify the Iran deal every 90 days.
- Mr. Trump has already signaled that he would withdraw the certification next time.

The Unraveling of JCPOA:

- If he does so, it would be the beginning of the unraveling of an agreement that was forged after intense negotiation.

Disrespecting An International Agreement:

- Failure of the U.S. to respect an international agreement it's a signatory to would set a dangerous precedent.
- For all its shortcomings, the Iran nuclear deal is a multilateral agreement.
- And it has shown results. What had appeared to be an irresolvable issue only three years ago is now settled.

Certification by International Agencies:

- International agencies have repeatedly certified that Iran is fully compliant with the terms of the agreement, which means the country is not pursuing any nuclear weapons programme.

- In plain terms, the deal is a success as it prevented a country with potential nuclear capabilities from developing weapons, and all this without a shot being fired.

Non serious attitude towards Non Proliferation:

- If the U.S. is serious about non-proliferation, it should use the Iran deal to resolve other complex international conflicts.

Imposing another sanction regime on Iran:

- What's happening is just the contrary. Iran has been slapped with more sanctions by the U.S. over its missile programme.
- If Iran is not spared even after it agreed to give up a substantial part of its nuclear programme under a multilateral agreement, what message does it send to other countries about international diplomacy?

Myopic Policies of the United States under the Trump Administration:

- Mr. Trump's continued attack on the Iran deal pleases hard-line supporters at home as well as Arab allies and Israel in West Asia.
- But it is undermining the global non-proliferation regime and international institutions.

16. A Time for Strategic Partnerships

G.S.Paper III: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

Context:

- The India-Japan "Special Strategic and Global Partnership" — a designation and status New Delhi accords to no other partner — has reached new heights under the stewardship of new leaders at the helm.
- This strategic convergence could be triggered because of two main reasons.

Reasons for India Japan Strategic Convergence:

- The first one is the rise of China and the second one is about questions regarding America's commitment in Asia.
- These developments have drawn them into a deepening security-cum-economic relationship.

Two Key Elements of India – Japan Synergy:

- The India-Japan synergy has two key elements.

Improving Critical Infrastructure:

- Japan is investing heavily in strengthening its critical infrastructure to enhance its economic and potential defence capabilities.

Joint Infrastructure Development:

- Simultaneously, the two countries have begun working on a joint infrastructure development and connectivity drive traversing the Indian Ocean, from Myanmar to Sri Lanka to Iran.

Asia-Africa Growth Corridor:

- This initiative also encompasses the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor too.
- On defence matters, Japan and India have agreed to establish regular consultations in the “2+2” format of their defence and foreign ministries.
- The navies of India and Japan exercise regularly together with the U.S. Navy.
- Japanese investment in the strategically placed Andaman and Nicobar Islands is likely to help New Delhi establish a major security sentinel in the eastern Indian Ocean.
- But this is not an alliance in the making because alliances are passé.

A world driven by Strategic Partnerships:

- We live in a world today driven by “strategic partnerships”.
- States find themselves in an interdependent system where the traditional power politics of yesteryear doesn’t quite fit.

Strategic Tension as well as Economic Gain:

- Every major relationship characterized by strategic tension such as U.S.-China, Japan-China, India - China is simultaneously one of economic gain.
- The U.S. and China are each other’s chief trading partners.
- China ranks at the top for Japan and India when it comes to trade ties.
- Besides, India might confront China at Doklam but it also wants Chinese investment.

Strategic but short of an alliance:

- Strategic partnerships carry certain characteristic features falling short of alliances.

Non Commitment to a partner’s dispute:

- First, unlike alliances, they do not demand commitments to a partner’s disputes with other countries.
- Strategic partnership means, first, that both retain the flexibility to continue political engagement and economic cooperation with their common adversary.

No entrapment in disputes:

- Second, they avoid “entrapment”, or being dragged into a partner’s disputes and potentially into conflict, which happened in the First World War.

Regular Political and Military Interactions:

- Third, regular high-level political and military interactions facilitate a collaborative approach to strategic policies over a range of economic and military activities.

- For instance, India and Japan are not only moving forward on economic and defence cooperation but are also cooperating on other important issues such as civil nuclear energy and Security Council reform.

Aim of major strategic Partnerships:

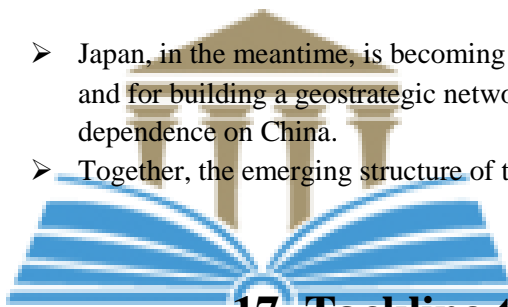
- The aim of major strategic partnerships is to strengthen defences against marginal conflict, convey a determination to stand up to a strategic adversary and, overall, generate a persuasive environment that discourages potential intimidation.
- It is a way of opening a channel of communication and minimal co-operation intended to stabilise and develop the potential for a détente and conceivably something warmer in the case of India and China.

India's partnership with United States of America and Japan:

- India's two main strategic partnerships, with the U.S. and Japan, are dovetailing nicely.
- For New Delhi, the U.S. will remain its chief backer both to enhance India's conventional defence capabilities and to draw political support in global political institutions.

An alternative for Indian Ocean states:

- Japan, in the meantime, is becoming its primary collaborator in developing its economic sinews and for building a geostrategic network that offers Indian Ocean states an alternative to dependence on China.
- Together, the emerging structure of triangular cooperation should give Beijing pause to think.



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17. Tackling the economic slowdown

G.S. Paper II: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development.

Context:

- India has witnessed an economic growth slowdown for five consecutive quarters, that is from late 2015-16 onwards.
- For a government that had promised to turn around the economy through decisive governance, this must serve as a wake-up call.
- But the hand of the government is tied up because it has to stick to the fiscal roadmap.
- An economy that has been slowing for five quarters is unlikely to turn around quickly. Also, it may not be able to do so on its own.
- The Government can find a solution in greater public investment which must now flow into the repair and reconstruction of infrastructure.
- The immediate thing to do is to expand public investment in infrastructure.

Why Slow Growth should concern us:

- Since 2014 the government has focussed aggressively on the supply side by making it easier for private firms to produce.
- But we are now facing a demand shortage in the economy.
- Growth matters in India as a large number of persons have to make do with far too few goods and services as it is, which is how poverty is defined.

Relation between Slow growth and Public Goods:

- These goods also include public goods or goods that are accessed by the entire populace of a country, such as parks, roads and bridges.
- Since these public goods are provided by government, the government needs tax revenues to supply them, and these depend upon national income.

Relationship between Slow growth and Unemployment:

- A demand for labour exists only when there is a demand for goods. So growth is necessary if employment is to be assured.
- In India we have a pool of unemployed persons to absorb.

India's youth bulge may turn into a Demographic Burden:

- But India also needs to provide employment to youth, famously termed as the Demographic Dividend, continuously entering the labour force.
- From this point of view, the slowing of the economy is a source of concern.

Between Fiscal Stimulus and Structural Reforms: What to choose?

- The government itself has not ruled out expansionary macroeconomic policy.
- But other stakeholders have discouraged fiscal profligacy and want instead structural reforms.

The claims and the extent of Reforms in India:

- Reforming is what all governments have been claiming to do for more or less a quarter of a century now.
- Since 2014, in particular, "the Ease of Doing Business" has received great attention from this government.
- The argument made for land and labour market reforms as a pre-requisite for accelerating growth today is very vocal in India today.

Where we need real reforms: The Chakravyuha challenge in the Indian Labour Market:

- It would be correct to say that labour market reforms have not been taken up yet in Parliament and that exit is necessary for a dynamic economy.
- Labour laws in India make exit difficult, and complying with requirements with respect to the hiring of labour is time consuming and therefore costly.
- A possible effect of the Labour reforms could be that the share of manufacturing will rise in the GDP component of the country.

Where we need real reforms: Reforming the Indian Land Market:

- It is when it comes to the land market that the argument for more reforms is obvious.
- Apart from restrictions on conversion of agricultural land, no policy stands in the way of private parties transacting with one another.
- An intervention that government in India should avoid is facilitating land acquired for industry to be alienated from manufacturing activity.
- The government must ensure as much land to private industry as they seek, though at a price, is bad economics.
- This is an intervention out of sync with a market economy.

The Real Reason for slow growth: Declining Capital Formation.

- Capital formation as a share of output has declined almost steadily for six years now.
- In 2014 - 15 it rose slightly, but soon resumed its sliding at a faster rate.

How Low Capital Formation affects Public Capital Formation:

- Low Capital Formation contributed to the downward trend by reversing the rate of growth of expansion of public capital formation from 2015-16.

What drives the Economy forward? Public and Private Investments

- It is capital formation, or investment, that drives growth in the economy.
- Because, investment is an immediate source of demand as firms that invest buy goods and services to do so, but it also expands the economy's capacity to produce.
- Of the two main sources of investment, namely private and public, the first has been depressed for some years.

Slowing Economy and Private Investment:

- In a slowing economy, private investment is unlikely to revive in the absence of some external force.
- This is so as private investment involves committing funds for a long period under uncertainty.

When To Step Up Public Investments in an Economy:

- It is for this reason that economic theory prescribes the stepping-up of public investment when private firms are unwilling to invest more.
- Increased public investment increase demand and quicken growth.
- But the increased public investment may be expected to encourage private investors, as the market for their goods expands.

Advantages of Increased Public Investments:

- Other things being the same, increased public investment leads to a higher deficit, which is the gap between the government's expenditure and its receipts.
- There is not much currency in the argument that government run a deficit for fear that it may become inflationary.

The fear of Inflation due to Increased Public Investments:

But in any such assessment, the increase in inflation must be offset with the increase in growth that would have been achieved due to greater public investment.

The Constant source of Inflation in India: Shortage of Agricultural Goods:

- In India, the increase in inflation that could come with higher growth would be due to the shortage of agricultural goods.
- Any plan for increasing the rate of growth in India, not just at the present moment but in general, must reckon with agricultural shortages.
- It is right to be concerned with the consequences of a fiscal stimulus by increasing the public expenditure.

The Correct Approach: Balancing the budget based on Growth Cycle:

- The correct approach would be to aim to balance the budget over the growth cycle.
- The deficit may be increased as the economy slows and contracted as the economy quickens.
- To object to an increase in the deficit irrespective of the state of the economy is to be irrational.

Way forward through a direct and potent measure: Take up Repair and Reconstruction of Infrastructure:

- Repair and reconstruction of India's creaking infrastructure is the direction in which greater public investment must now flow.
- It is the most direct and potent measure that can be undertaken to address the slowdown the economy is experiencing.

18. Solving food challenges with more research

G.S.Paper II: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation; Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

G.S. Paper III: Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country

Context: How to achieve a hunger and malnutrition free world through sustainable agriculture?

- The second goal of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals says: "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture".

- The million dollar question is this: How to achieve food security amidst a growing population while balancing environment sustainability and economic development at the same time.

The rising Global Population: The Growing Challenge of More Mouths to Feed.

- According to estimates, the global population is likely to exceed 9 billion by 2050, with 5 billion people in Asia alone.

The Falling Agricultural Productivity: The Challenge of providing Food Security especially to the poor.

- But the capacity to produce enough quality food is falling behind human numbers.
- Food production in the region must keep pace, even as environment sustainability and economic development are ensured.

The Need of The Hour: A Rural and Peri Urban Agricultural Movement.

- Providing the world's growing urban population with safe and healthy food requires both a rural and a peri-urban agricultural movement.
- The above movement is a huge challenge, but also an opportunity for ingenuity.

The Indian Story so far: Strong thrust on Scientific Research to achieve better yield.

- India's fivefold increase in grain production over the past 50 years is largely the result of strong scientific research.
- It had focused on high-yielding crop varieties, better agronomic practices, and pro-farmer policies.

Persisting challenges despite the high yield:

- But, India continues to face challenges such as food insecurity and malnutrition, particularly in rural areas.

A new movement spearheaded by Asia:

- For instance, throughout Asia, Integrating agricultural production, nutrition, and health is emerging as a key focal point.

A Holistic Approach with Biodiversity and Local farming systems at its center:

Policymakers are shifting their attention to the role of biodiversity and the power of local farming systems to improve nutritional status.

Tapping into unused crops through sustainable means:

There is considerable potential in targeting underused crops such as millets, pulses, and vegetables.

This will be a sustainable means of increasing agricultural production and improving nutrition and health in high-need areas.

In one project, researchers tested the sustainable use of traditional crops, vegetables, and fruit trees, as well as greater livestock diversity, to increase income and improve food and nutrition security in rural India.

The Importance of Home Gardens:

This project demonstrated that in three Indian “agro-biodiversity hotspots”, home gardens could provide households with up to 135 kg of legumes, vegetables, tubers, leafy greens, and gourds per year.

The above mentioned yield from the home gardens were more than double the amount of vegetables they were buying in local markets.

These crops add value to existing farming systems.

These crops also provide an additional source of income and/or more nutritious food for the family.

Sensible Policy interventions by the State:

The Food Security Act of 2013 passed by the Indian Parliament was a welcome case.

The inclusion of millets in the Public Distribution System too was a welcome move since millets are superior to common grains in many ways and are also climate-resilient.

Overcoming Hidden Hunger through Bio fortification:

Bio-fortification is also important in overcoming hidden hunger caused by micronutrient deficiencies such as iron, iodine, zinc, vitamin A, and vitamin B12.

Ushering in a Woman Centric Approach:

Women are among the most disadvantaged because they are typically employed as marginal workers, occupying low-skilled jobs such as sowing and weeding.

Studies show that women make up nearly half of agricultural labourers, yet they carry out approximately 70% of all farm work.

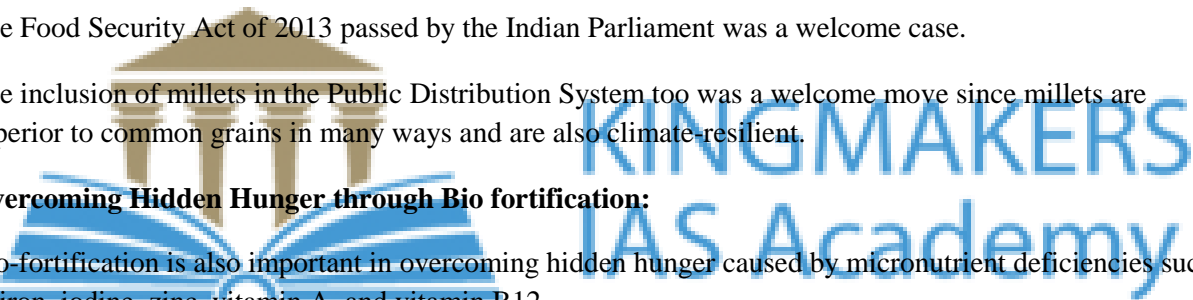
Empowering Women to Improve Nutrition:

Empowering women is one of the best ways to improve nutrition.

Making Women Farmers Direct Recipients:

The needs of women farmers must be met to ensure that they are the direct recipients of development impacts.

This includes making sure, through policy measures, that women have access to markets and income, to improve theirs and their children’s access to adequate and diversified diets.



We should not stop at the above initiatives but it is crucial to continue to identify issues and seek evidence-based solutions through research.

Building on existing efforts to understand nutritional status in India:

Recent efforts by the government to improve understanding of India's nutritional situation must be built on with increased collaboration with all the stakeholders involved.

There is considerable potential in building partnerships to extend the reach of research for development and to improve the connections between agricultural and nutritional research with extension services and policy.

A greater role for the Research Community in India:

India's research community is poised to be a leader in meeting new food challenges by increasing food quantity and quality to improve food security and nutrition.

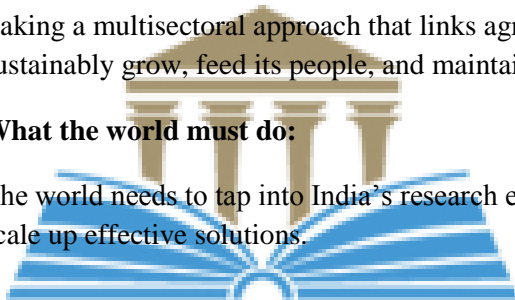
The Way Forward:

What India Must Do:

Taking a multisectoral approach that links agricultural and nutritional outcomes will help India sustainably grow, feed its people, and maintain the agricultural sector over the coming decades.

What the world must do:

The world needs to tap into India's research excellence to experiment, innovate, share knowledge, and scale up effective solutions.



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19 . The Unilateral Vote

G.S. Paper I: History of the world will include events such as redrawing of national boundaries.

G.S. Paper II: Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

What is Referendum?

- It is a procedure whereby a proposed legislation is referred to the electorate for settlement by their direct votes.
- A Referendum is a powerful tool to deepen participation and reflect public opinion in a democracy because it may result in the adoption of a new law.

Context: Referendums in the News again.

- Referendums are in the news again.

- After Columbia, tensions are mounting in Spain and West Asia over regional votes in Catalonia and Iraqi Kurdistan.
- Both in their own ways are a caution on how such instruments of direct democracy need to be used with care.

How to use and not use Referendums:

- When, how and for what reasons referendums should be held need to be carefully laid out so as to ensure their legitimacy.

Famous Referendums so far:

The Brexit Referendum of 2016:

- Brexit referendum proved last year, these instruments can reduce layered issues such as the membership of a single market into a vote on the narrower subject of immigration.

The Scottish and South Sudanese Referendums in 2014 and 2011 respectively:

- The Referendum held in Scotland in 2014 and South Sudan in 2011 were outcomes of agreements with the Central governments in the U.K. and Sudan, respectively.

The Quebec Referendum of 1995:

- The Referendum in Quebec (Canada) in 1995 was the outcome of a provincial decision, which however resulted in failure for secessionists.

The latest referendums in Iraqi Kurdistan and Catalonia:

- The two referendums in Iraq's only autonomous region, of Kurdistan (held on September 25) and in the Catalonia autonomous province in Spain (to be held on October 1) follows the Quebec model.
- These two referendums did not have the stamp of approval or an agreement with national government in Iraq and Spain, respectively.

The Question of Legitimacy:

- The question of legitimacy of referendums is important.
- Central acquiescence to the process of a referendum to decide or infer opinions on sovereignty also allows for a true campaign on both sides of the yes/ no positions in the referendum.
- This is not the case with the Catalonian and the Kurdish referendums.

Outcomes and its implementations:

A “yes” outcome would not necessarily push the envelope in the direction of secession in a peaceful manner.

The Common thread in the Iraqi Kurdistan and Catalanian Referendums:

- A common thread in the Catalanian and Kurdish referendums runs large.
- The rulers of Iraqi Kurdistan sought the nonbinding referendum as a step towards independence from “Arab” Iraq.
- The dominant parties in Catalonia also have a similar aim framing the binding yes/no vote for independence as a decisive step towards the formation of a new republic.

Iraqi Kurdistan’s road to Referendum:

- Iraqi Kurdistan is just one of four Kurd majority areas, the other three being in Syria, Turkey and Iran.

The Homeless ones:

- Kurds were denied a home-land of their own after the break-up of the Ottoman Empire.
- Various movements seeking autonomy and independence in the four countries have been brutally repressed over the years.

Repression during the Baath Regime:

- In Iraq, Kurds were repressed during Ba’ath rule.
- After the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, they managed to get a better deal in the new regime.

Earning and Enhancing Autonomy:

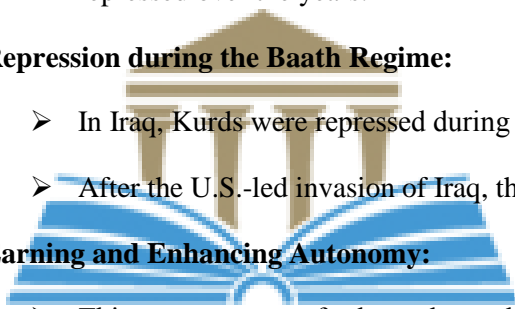
- This autonomy was further enhanced following Baghdad’s entanglement in the civil war against the Islamic State (IS).
- Kurds are an important partner for Baghdad in the fight against the IS, with the U.S. also treating the Peshmerga forces as an ally.
- Baghdad dependent upon Shiite militias and Iran’s proxy forces in the long civil war against the Islamic State.
- But the Kurds used the situation to enhance the territory under their control.

The Alarmed neighbors:

The move by the Iraqi Kurds towards independence is being viewed with alarm by the Turkish and Iranian regimes.

Turkey’s tryst with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK):

- Turkey has in the past treated Kurdish demands for minority rights such as recognition of their language, let alone autonomy, as secessionist.



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- The concessions made by the AKP regime of Recep Tayyip Erdogan towards minority rights of the Kurds in the early 2000s, a long-running battle against the state led by forces such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) eased in Turkey.
- But hostilities were renewed recently by the Erdoğan-led regime.

Iran's experience with the Kurds:

- Iran is also fighting a minor insurgency in the mountains of its northern region led by another affiliate of the PKK, the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK).
- Any moves for independence of "south Kurdistan" in Iraq have severe geopolitical ramifications.
- The referendum move is severely opposed by Turkey and Iran in particular.

The studied silence of Syria:

- The Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, for now remains tactically silent on the matter.

Complicating the Middle Eastern Equation:

- The Kurdish Referendum could complicate matters such as the still unfinished civil war against the IS in Syria and Iraq, regardless of how legitimate the historical claims of the Kurds for a separate homeland are.

Catalonia's road to Referendum:

- Catalonia's referendum does not suffer from these complications.
- Catalans were also subject to similar centralisation and unitary principles during Franco's rule in Spain.
- But this was a fate suffered by other minorities in Spain as well, the Basques for example.

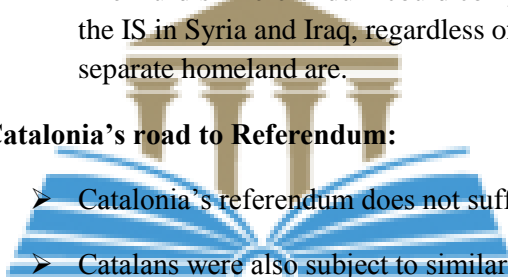
Unlike the Basque Separatist:

- In the Basque region the movements for decentralisation, autonomy and even independence took a violent turn with a raging insurgency led by the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA),
- But the Catalan demands were through the democratic route.
- The movement for secession gained significance in the post-Franco transformation of Spain.

Autonomy and the Process of Devolution:

- A degree of autonomy was guaranteed to its many nationalities such as the Basque region, Galicia and Catalonia apart from other autonomous communities in Spain.
- This process of devolution was regulated by the Spanish Constitution of 1978.

Demands for a true Federation:



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- But there have been demands for a truer federalization and greater devolution of power, especially in Catalonia lately.
- These demands have expressed itself as a movement for independence in the past decade.

Backing by political parties of all hues:

- This movement has the backing of an array of political parties from the Left to the Right.
- They all have unanimously demanded for a separate nation-state due to the distinctiveness of the Catalan identity and notions of economic injustice.

The Perceived Economic Injustice:

- Secessionists point out that while Catalonia is the richest province, it gives more to Spain than it gets from the government in Madrid.
- Catalan nationalists from both the Left and the Right have used independence as the way to answer raging problems such as unemployment and austerity.

The Real Course of Action:

- But the real course of action should involve them pursuing reforms and measures that will relieve Catalonia (and indeed Spain) of these issues.
- The October 1 referendum asks participants if they prefer independence through a yes/no vote and choices such as greater federalization are not provided on the ballot.

The Non Catalans:

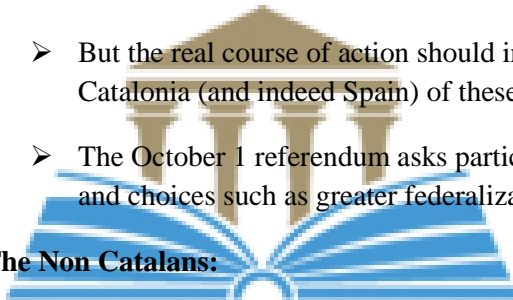
- The parties supporting the “no” option and endorsed mostly by non-Catalan long-time residents of the region are boycotting the referendum.
- Yet, the Catalan government is pushing the referendum as a binding step towards independence.

Vastly different Issues:

- In sum, the issues at stake in Iraqi Kurdistan and Catalonia in Spain are vastly different.
- A push for independence in this milieu by the Iraqi Kurds is fraught with new tensions rising out of geopolitics.
- The Catalan case for independence is lesser as the real problem in Catalonia is related to economic issues, which are shared by the rest of Spain as well.

The Way Forward:

- When referendums are used as blunt instruments to decide upon complicated issues such as independence or secession, there needs to be an additional stress on mechanisms.



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- Additional mechanisms such as questions framed for the vote, legitimacy of the institution calling for the vote and so on needs to be explored.



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