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MCQs

THE HINDU

A Palestinian state is the foundation for regional peace

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 2

Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Context

- **West Asia continues to face prolonged conflict and instability**, with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the centre of many regional tensions.
- A **sovereign, viable Palestinian state and international mediation are seen as important to** achieving lasting peace and stability in the region.

Key Highlights

- A **viable Palestinian state** is presented as essential for resolving the wider conflicts and tensions in West Asia.
- **Israel's acceptance of Palestinian statehood** is considered necessary for improving its relations with Arab countries.
- **Iran has not always been hostile to Israel**, and relations were cordial under the Shah.

- After the **1979 Islamic Revolution**, most Iranian Jews moved to Israel, but around **15,000 Jews remain in Iran**, with a reserved seat in Parliament.
- The hostility of **Iran and Arab countries towards Israel** is linked to the creation of Israel and the **displacement of Palestinians**.
- **Iran and Hezbollah support Hamas** despite their different sectarian backgrounds because of their stated support for **Palestinian self-determination**.
- A clear **roadmap to Palestinian statehood** could help reduce wider regional tensions, including those around the **Strait of Hormuz**.
- **External mediation** is considered important because direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians have repeatedly faced difficulties.
- The **United States** is identified as a key potential mediator because of its influence and relations with both sides.
- The **Oslo Accords of 1993**, facilitated by **Norway**, led to the creation of the **Palestinian Authority** and the Palestine Liberation Organization's recognition of Israel.
- The **United Nations** is identified as another possible mediator despite current tensions between Israel and the UN.

Implications

- The absence of a viable Palestinian state could continue to fuel **regional conflict and instability**.



- A credible political process towards **Palestinian self-determination** could reduce support for armed groups and regional confrontation.
- Continued conflict could further weaken **regional development, economic stability and human security**.
- Successful mediation could create conditions for **broader regional cooperation and long-term peace**.

Way Forward

- Promote a **credible and irreversible political roadmap** towards an independent Palestinian state.
- Strengthen **international mediation** involving countries and institutions capable of engaging all major parties.
- Encourage **dialogue and negotiations** rather than relying solely on military solutions.
- Ensure that any peace process addresses **security, self-determination and political rights** of the concerned populations.
- Build sustained international support for a **negotiated and peaceful settlement** in West Asia.

Mains Question

The absence of a viable Palestinian state remains a major obstacle to lasting peace and stability in West Asia. Discuss the role of Palestinian statehood and international mediation in resolving regional conflicts. (150 Words)

Before new taxes, making every rupee count

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies 2

Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context

- **Tamil Nadu faces fiscal pressure** due to high

debt, revenue deficits, and high spending on salaries, pensions, welfare, and interest.

- The focus is on **improving revenue collection and spending efficiency** before imposing new taxes.

Key Highlights

- Tamil Nadu spent about **₹4.14 lakh crore** against a budget of **₹4.47 lakh crore** in 2023-24, leaving an underspend of **₹33,302.53 crore**.
- **₹1,078 crore** in **supplementary provisions across 81 cases** were found unnecessary because the original allocations had not been fully used.
- **Zero-based budgeting** requires every allocation to be justified afresh instead of automatically continuing from the previous year.
- **Performance-based budgeting** links government spending to measurable outcomes rather than simply tracking expenditure.
- CAG identified **₹1,538.18 crore in GST irregularities** across 337 cases, while only **₹8.64 crore** had been recovered at the time of audit.
- The **Revenue Augmentation Committee** is examining **compliance gaps, tax exemptions, and untapped revenue sources**.
- The **Expenditure Reforms Committee** is reviewing government schemes based on their **outcomes and effectiveness**.

Implications

- Improving **tax compliance and expenditure efficiency** can increase fiscal space without immediately imposing new taxes.
- **Outcome-based spending** can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of welfare programmes.
- Better **budgeting and accounting discipline** can reduce unnecessary allocations and improve public financial management.
- Greater **transparency and competition** in government contracts can improve value for public money.



Way Forward

- Adopt **zero-based and performance-based budgeting** across government departments.
- Strengthen **GST compliance and revenue collection** before increasing the tax burden.
- Link government spending to **measurable outcomes** and service-delivery indicators.
- Improve **budget monitoring, accounting reconciliation and expenditure reviews**.
- Promote **transparent and competitive public procurement** to improve value for public money.

Mains Question

Tamil Nadu's fiscal challenges require greater emphasis on revenue efficiency and outcome-based expenditure rather than merely increasing taxation. Discuss. (150 Words)

The myth called 'perfect victim'

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.

Mains: General studies 2

Role of women and women's organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

Why in Focus?

- The Bombay High Court's Goa Bench overturned the 2021 acquittal of Tarun Tejpal and convicted him of rape, highlighting the problem of judging survivors based on the idea of a **"perfect victim"**
- The case brings attention to **Nils Christie's Ideal Victim theory**, victim blaming and the need for a **gender-sensitive justice system**

Key Highlights

- **Nils Christie's Ideal Victim theory** was developed in 1986. It explains how society often expects a victim to behave in a particular way to be considered genuine and deserving of sympathy

- According to Christie, an **ideal victim** is usually seen as weak, respectable, innocent, unfamiliar with the offender and attacked by a clearly dangerous offender
- This creates a **hierarchy of victimisation** where victims who do not fit these expectations may face greater suspicion and receive less sympathy
- Christie also discussed the idea of an **ideal offender**. Society tends to view the offender as a clearly dangerous stranger. When the accused is respected or known to the victim, this stereotype becomes difficult to apply
- Indian cases such as the **Mathura custodial rape case 1979** and the **Bhanwari Devi case 1992** showed how a survivor's sexual history, caste and behaviour were used to question her credibility
- The **Bhanwari Devi case** also contributed to the development of the **Vishakha guidelines** and later the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2013 (POSH Act)**
- In the **Tejpal case**, the High Court criticised the trial court for focusing on the survivor's behaviour and emotional responses rather than assessing the evidence objectively

Implications

- **Victim blaming** can shift attention from the alleged offence to the survivor's behaviour, lifestyle or sexual history
- Survivors are often expected to show a particular form of **fear, resistance or emotional trauma**, even though people respond differently to traumatic experiences
- **Caste, class and gender** can influence how society and institutions perceive the credibility of victims
- Judicial reliance on stereotypes can undermine **dignity, equality and access to justice** and may discourage survivors from reporting sexual violence
- Delayed reporting, absence of physical injuries or differences in testimony should not automatically be treated as evidence that the survivor is unreliable

Way Forward

- Provide regular **gender-sensitive and trauma-**



informed training to judges, police officers and prosecutors

- Ensure that judicial decisions are based primarily on **evidence and law** rather than stereotypes about how a victim should behave
- Protect the **privacy, dignity and confidentiality** of survivors during investigation and trial
- Strengthen implementation of the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2013** and improve institutional support for survivors
- Promote responsible media reporting and public awareness to challenge **victim blaming and gender stereotypes**

Mains Question

“The idea of the ‘ideal victim’ creates a hierarchy of victimisation and can influence the administration of justice.” Discuss its relevance in understanding gender-based violence in India. Suggest measures to make the criminal justice system more gender-sensitive. (15 marks, 250 words)

Why is the Supreme Court examining polygamy again?

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.

Mains: General studies 2

Role of women and women’s organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

Why in Focus?

- The Supreme Court has sought the Centre’s response on a petition challenging the **constitutional validity of polygamy under Muslim Personal Law**.
- The case raises questions about **gender equality, religious freedom, personal laws and the relationship between personal laws and fundamental rights**.

Key Highlights

- The petitioners challenged **Section 2 of the**

Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, which allows the application of Muslim Personal Law in matters including marriage.

- They argued that polygamy violates **Articles 14, 15 and 16** of the Constitution by creating unequal treatment based on religion and gender.
- The petitioners sought **compulsory registration of Muslim marriages and divorces** to prevent a second marriage while the first marriage is still valid.
- They also sought **codification of Muslim Personal Law** relating to marriage, divorce and succession in accordance with **constitutional principles of gender equality**.
- In **Shayara Bano v. Union of India 2017**, the Supreme Court invalidated **instant triple talaq**. The Court had not decided the constitutional validity of polygamy and **nikah halala** at that time.
- Following the triple talaq judgment, Parliament enacted the **Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019**, making instant triple talaq a punishable offence.
- In **Sarla Mudgal case 1995** and **Lily Thomas case 2000**, the Supreme Court held that a Hindu man cannot convert to Islam merely to contract a second marriage without dissolving the existing marriage.

Implications

- **Gender equality vs personal laws** remains a major constitutional question, particularly when religious practices affect the rights and dignity of women.
- The issue requires balancing **Articles 14 and 15** with the **freedom of religion under Article 25**, while determining the constitutional limits of personal laws.
- **Lack of uniform marriage registration** can create difficulties in protecting the legal and economic rights of women and children from subsequent marriages.
- Reform of personal laws can raise concerns about **religious autonomy and minority rights**, making consultation and a sensitive approach important.
- The debate also raises the broader question of whether **personal laws should conform to constitutional morality, equality and dignity**.



Way Forward

- Ensure **compulsory registration of all marriages** to strengthen legal protection and prevent fraudulent or multiple marriages.
- Promote reforms through **constitutional principles of equality, dignity and non-discrimination**, while respecting legitimate religious freedoms.
- Undertake wider **consultation with religious scholars, women's organisations, legal experts and affected communities** before legislating.
- Consider **codification and progressive reform of personal laws** through a transparent and inclusive legislative process.
- Strengthen legal awareness and access to **legal aid and economic support** for women affected by marital disputes and unequal personal-law practices.

Mains Question

"Reforming personal laws requires a careful balance between religious freedom and the constitutional principles of equality and dignity." Discuss. (15 marks, 250 words)

KEYWORDS

Southern Zonal Council

- The **Southern Zonal Council** comprises **Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana**, along with the UTs of **Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep**.
- The **five Zonal Councils** were established under **Part III of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956** to promote **cooperation and coordination among States and Union Territories**.
 - ◆ India has **five Zonal Councils: Northern, Central, Eastern, Western and Southern**.
- The Southern Zonal Council functions under **Sections 15-22** of the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956**.
- The **Union Home Minister** is the **Chairman** of the Zonal Council.
- The **Chief Ministers of the member States** serve as **Vice-Chairman by rotation**.

National Medical Commission (NMC)

- The **National Medical Commission (NMC)** is a **statutory body** under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**,

established under the **National Medical Commission Act, 2019**.

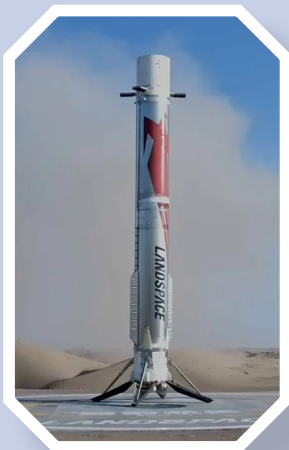
- It aims to improve access to **quality and affordable medical education** and ensure adequate availability of **qualified medical professionals** across the country.
- The NMC promotes **equitable and universal healthcare** and encourages a **community health perspective** in medical services.
- It encourages medical professionals to adopt the latest **medical research** and contribute to **research and innovation**.
- It periodically assesses **medical institutions** in a **transparent manner** and maintains the **National Medical Register**.
- It seeks to ensure **high ethical standards** in medical services and provides an effective **grievance redressal mechanism**.

Zhuque-3

- It is in the news because it recently achieved **China's first successful land-based recovery of an orbital-class rocket booster using deployable landing legs**.



- **Zhuque-3** is a **76.6-metre tall launch vehicle** constructed with a **stainless-steel exterior** and powered by a **liquid oxygen and liquid methane (methalox) fuel mixture**, similar to the propellant used in SpaceX's Starship.



- It is designed to carry up to **21 tonnes of payload to Low Earth Orbit (LEO)** in an expendable configuration, and its **first-stage booster** is engineered to be **reused up to 20 times** to significantly reduce the cost of space exploration.
- This milestone places **LandSpace** among a select few global private entities, such as **SpaceX and Blue Origin**, that have demonstrated **controlled recovery of an orbital-class rocket booster**, positioning Zhuque-3 as a potential future rival to the **Falcon 9**.
- The achievement highlights the intensifying global race for **reusable and sustainable space launch technology**, a domain where India is also making active strides through **ISRO's ADMIRE test vehicle for Vertical Take-Off and Landing (VTVL)** and initiatives by private startups like **Agnikul Cosmos**.

Public Accounts Committee

- Established first in **1921** under the **Government of India Act, 1919** (Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms), it is the **oldest financial standing committee** of the Indian Parliament.
- It consists of **22 members- 15 from the Lok Sabha and 7 from the Rajya Sabha** - elected annually by **proportional representation through a single transferable vote**, and a **Minister cannot be elected** as its member.

- By an established parliamentary convention since **1967**, the **Chairperson of the committee is selected by the Lok Sabha Speaker from the Opposition**.
- Its core role is to serve as the **guardian of the public purse** by examining the **annual audit reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** to ensure public funds are spent **legally, prudently and strictly for sanctioned purposes**.

PM-KUSUM (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan)

- It is in the news as the government prepares to roll out **PM-KUSUM 2.0** following the installation of over **2.5 million solar pumps**, with a policy focus on balancing **clean energy expansion with sustainable groundwater usage** through tailored solar irrigation models.
- Launched in **2019** by the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)**, the scheme aims to **de-dieselise India's agricultural sector**, provide **energy security to farmers**, and reduce the **subsidy burden on electricity distribution companies (DISCOMs)**.
- It consists of **three main components: Component A** for setting up small, decentralised ground-mounted solar power plants up to **2 MW**, **Component B** for installing **standalone off-grid solar pumps**, and **Component C** for **solarising existing grid-connected agricultural pumps**, including feeder-level solarisation.
- Financially, the scheme provides significant subsidies where the **Central Government bears 30% up to 50% for Northeastern/Himalayan States and UTs**, the **State Government contributes 30%**, and the remaining **40% is funded by the farmer**, often through **bank loans**.
- Beyond generating clean energy, its grid-connected models allow farmers to **sell surplus electricity back to the grid under Feed-in Tariffs (FIT)**, transforming farmers into **energy producers (Urjadas)** while creating a **financial incentive to conserve water**.

Places in News

Kherson

- It is a **strategically vital port city in southern Ukraine**, situated on the **right bank of the Dnipro (Dnieper) River** near its estuary at the **Black Sea**.
- Serving as the **geographic gateway to the Crimean Peninsula**, Kherson is a major regional economic hub known for its **shipbuilding industry** and is often referred to as Ukraine's "**fruit basket**" due to its rich agricultural output.
- In the context of the ongoing **Russia-Ukraine war**, Kherson was the **only regional capital fully captured by Russian forces in early 2022**, before being liberated by a **Ukrainian counter-offensive in November 2022**.
- The broader **Kherson region** suffered **catastrophic flooding, ecological destruction and long-term agricultural damage** following the collapse of the nearby **Kakhovka Dam** on the Dnipro River in **June 2023**.

