FINDER
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Where does India stand on child marriage?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2
Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

1.Context

- The Union government launched a 100-day awareness campaign on December 4, 2025, **marking the first anniversary of Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat Abhiyan to eliminate child marriages by 2030, per UN commitments.**

2. Global Child Marriage Situation

- **UN SDG 5 targets gender equality, with Target 5.3 specifically aiming to eliminate child marriage by 2030,** measured by the proportion of women aged 20-24 married before 18.
- **UNICEF estimates that 640 million girls** alive today were married as children, with about 12 million girls wed annually, and **India accounting for one-third of the global total.**
- **Highest child marriage rates persist in sub-Saharan Africa, where 1 in 3 girls is affected, followed by South Asia**, but progress has slowed and requires 20 times faster acceleration to meet the 2030 goal.

3. Child Marriage in India

- India **reduced child marriage rates from 47.4% in 2005-06 to 26.8% in 2015-16 per NFHS data,** a 21 percentage point decline over a decade.
- Progress slowed to a 3.5 percentage point drop from 2015-16 to 23.3% in 2019-21 (NFHS-5).
- **Highest rates among women aged 18-29 appear in West Bengal (42%), Bihar (40%),** and Tripura (39%).
- **Lowest rates occur in Lakshadweep (4%), Jammu & Kashmir (6%), Ladakh (6%),** and states like Himachal Pradesh, Goa, Nagaland (7% each).
- Girls with no education and from poorest families face much higher child marriage rates than educated girls or those from richest families.

4. Actions Against Child Marriage

- **The Prevention of Child Marriage Act (2006) halved national rates,** aided by POCSO Act (2012).
- Experts emphasize shifting social norms through girls' education, which has the highest impact on delaying marriage.
- **Bal Vivah Mukt Abhiyan** appointed around 50,000 prevention officers; it stopped 1,520 child marriages (highest in Madhya Pradesh, Haryana) but 198 persisted as of December 20.
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Laadli schemes promote girls' education and financial aid, with school cycle**s and sanitation boosting enrollment.

5. Raising Marriage Age

- The **Union government proposed raising women's minimum marriage age to 21 years, matching men,** to enable higher education, skills, maturity, and independence.
- The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill faced opposition calls for scrutiny from MPs.
- Critics argue **legal change alone risks criminalising communities without social reforms, as 61% of women aged 20-24 married before 21.**

Why does the govt. want to replace MGNREGA?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Indian Polity and Governance - Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues

Mains: General Studies - 2
Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

1. Context

- On December 18, Parliament passed the **Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill** to replace MGNREGA (2005), amid protests and allegations of no stakeholder consultation

2. Origin and intent of MGNREGA

- Conceived in 2004 by the **National Advisory Council (NAC)** after UPA's victory;
- Key roles played by Aruna Roy and Jean Drèze.
- **Initial dilution** (no universal guarantee, BPL targeting, government opt-out) was reversed after Standing Committee review and civil society protests.
- Passed in 2005, **extended nationwide by 2008**, renamed **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** in 2009.

3. Significance and impact of MGNREGA

- Guaranteed **100 days of unskilled work per rural household** at notified wages (**₹241 - ₹400 in 2025-26**), acting as a **universal, non-targeted safety net** against destitution.
- Its **universality**, without BPL or social-category filters, ensured **access despite disputed poverty metrics.**
- The scheme supports **12.61 crore workers**, with **~58% women**, many entering paid work for the first time.
- **SC/ST workers form 35%**, and **lean-season consumption** rose by up to 30% among Dalit and Adivasi households.
- During **COVID-19,** over 60% households in **Karnataka** credited MGNREGA with village development and reduced migration.

4. Government's justification for replacement

- MGNREGA allegedly suffered from **rampant corruption** and **misuse by States.**
- **Critique**: Issues were **implementation-related,** despite robust social audits and transparent IT-based monitoring.

5. Key changes under VB-G RAM G Bill

- **Demand-driven right** to **supply-driven scheme** with budget caps fixed by the Centre.
- Employment only in **Centre-notified rural areas**; **ends universality.**
- **Guaranteed workdays** rise from **100 to 125**, but access depends on Union allocations.
- The **States' financial share increases** from about **10% to 40%**
  - **60:40** Centre-State share for most States/UTs with legislature.
  - **90:10** only for **NE States** and **Himalayan States/ UTs**.
  - **Earlier practice**: Centre bore **100% labour wages** and **75% material costs** (~90:10).
- **Greater centralisation**:Centre determines **State-wise** allocations and **implementation areas.**
- Allows **blackout periods**, suspending work during peak agricultural seasons to **ensure labour availability.**

Will new Act aid India's nuclear development?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3
Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

1.What is the SHANTI Act and Why is it Important?

- The **Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act repeals the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and Civil**

Liability for Nuclear Damage (CLND) Act, 2010, to modernize nuclear governance.

- It **allows private companies to build and operate nuclear plants, previously restricted to public sector enterprises** and allow foreign funding flow into the sector.
- India **aims to grow nuclear capacity from 8.8 GW (1.5% total) to 100 GW by 2047,** raising electricity contribution from 3%, with 54 GW from state utilities and the rest from private players.

2. Major Changes

- Global **consensus requires plant operators to immediately compensate accident victims** without determining causes first.
- Operators **can later seek recourse from suppliers if faulty equipment caused the damage.**
- The CLND Act allowed recourse in three cases:
  - The **supplier and an operator have an explicit agreement**
  - The **nuclear incident has proved to be due to the suppliers or their equipment's fault**
  - There was a **deliberate intent to cause nuclear damage.**
- **SHANTI Act removes clause (b), eliminating automatic recourse for proven supplier fault,** and deletes "supplier" term entirely.
- This addresses foreign firms' (US, French) liability fears post-2008 Indo-US deal.

3. SHANTI Liability Concerns

- Earlier laws capped operator compensation at 1,500 crore rupees, with the Centre covering excess up to 4,000 crore rupees via insurance pool.
- SHANTI introduces graded liability:
  - **3,000 crore rupees for plants over 3,600 megawatts** (none exist)
  - **1,500 crore rupees for 3,600 to 1,500 megawatts**
  - **From** 1,500 MW-750 MW, it is ₹750 crore
  - From 750 MV-150 MV, it is ₹300 crore
  - **Down to 100 crore rupees for under 150 megawatts,**
- All current Indian plants are under 3,000 megawatts.
- Science Minister Jitendra Singh defended gradation to attract private players, despite critics noting global accident reparations often exceed billions of dollars.

4. SHANTI and India's Nuclear Vision

- India follows a three-stage nuclear programme envisioned by Homi J. Bhabha to ensure energy security and leverage thorium reserves amid uranium scarcity.

The 3 Stage Nuclear Programme of India

- **Stage 1:** Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) use natural uranium (U-238) to generate energy and produce plutonium as a byproduct.
- **Stage 2:** Fast Breeder Reactors utilise the plutonium from Stage 1 to breed more plutonium and Uranium-233 (U-233), producing additional energy.
- **Stage 3:** U-233 combines with abundant thorium to create a self-sustaining thorium-U-233 fuel cycle for long-term electricity generation.

- India has not yet reached the second stage; it only has a prototype Fast Breeder Reactor , which commissioning is further delayed until 2026.
- SHANTI allows small modular reactors (SMRs) from private firms, but they need rare enriched uranium and make waste like big reactors.

Small Modular Reactors are defined as small nuclear reactors with a maximum output of 300 Megawatt electric (MWe) and can produce 7.2 million kWh per day

- Hence, the **way forward requires accelerating Stage 2 commissioning, balancing SMR imports with thorium research, and using SHANTI to attract safe private investment** toward the 100 GW target.

KEYWORDS

Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat Campaign

- The **Ministry of Women and Child Development launched the campaign in 2024, to eliminate child marriage** through collective stakeholder efforts.
- It **targets seven high-burden states: West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Tripura, Assam, Andhra Pradesh** and 300 high-burden districts above national averages.
- **States and Union Territories must create action plans to reduce child marriage rates below 5%** by 2029.
- National rates fell from 47.4% in 2006 to 23.3% in 2019-21 per government data.
- The **Child Marriage Free Bharat portal under the campaign enables awareness, case reporting, progress monitoring**, and supervision of Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs).
- The portal strengthens evaluation of Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) to prevent marriages and support victims

Tuberculosis (TB)

- **Tuberculosis (TB)** is caused by **Mycobacterium tuberculosis** and mainly affects the **lungs**.
- It **spreads through the air** when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or spits, and **inhaling a few bacteria can cause infection**.
- Inside the body, TB bacteria infect **macrophages**, the immune cells meant to destroy them.
- Instead, the bacteria **survive for long periods and tolerate strong antibiotics**, making **TB treatment prolonged** and increasing the risk of **poor adherence and drug resistance**.
- A recent study in **Nature Communications** by **Indian researchers** proposes **rewiring the metabolism of host macrophages** rather than relying only on new antibiotics, which could **improve TB treatment effectiveness**.
- TB is the **leading cause of death among people living with HIV** and a **major contributor to antimicrobial resistance**.
- About **one-fourth of the global population is estimated to have been infected with TB bacteria**, but most people will not go on to develop TB disease and some will clear the infection.
- Those who are **infected but not (yet) ill with the disease cannot transmit it.**
- Only **5–10% of infected individuals** develop TB in their lifetime.
- The risk is **much higher** for people with **weakened immunity**, including those with **HIV, malnutrition, diabetes**, or **tobacco use**

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)

- The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** was established under the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006**.
- The Act **consolidated several existing laws and orders** that earlier regulated food-related issues across **multiple ministries and departments**.
- The Act seeks to create a **single reference point for all matters related to food safety and standards** in India.
- The **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006** is enforced by both **FSSAI and the State Food Safety Authorities**.
- FSSAI has been created to **lay down science-based standards for food articles**.
- It also **regulates the manufacture, storage, distribution, sale, and import of food** to ensure the **availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption**.
- **The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**, Government of India is the Administrative Ministry for the implementation of FSSAI.

Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)

- The **Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)** was established on **31 July 1970** as a **Public Sector Undertaking (PSU)** under the **Companies Act, 1956**.

- It functions under the **administrative control of the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India**.
- The **primary role of CCI** is to undertake **price support operations** whenever **market prices of kapas (seed cotton)** fall below the **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** announced by the **Government of India**, **without any quantitative limit**.
- In addition to **MSP operations**, CCI also carries out **commercial purchase operations** to meet the **raw material requirements of the domestic textile industry**, especially during the **lean season**.
- To **protect the economic interests of cotton farmers** across **all cotton-growing regions** and to ensure a **smooth supply of good-quality cotton** to the **Indian textile industry**, CCI has a **PAN-India presence**.
- Its **headquarters is located at CBD Belapur, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra**.

Atomic Clock

- An atomic clock measures time using the **stable frequency of energy** transitions in atoms, making it far more accurate than quartz clocks.
- In **space navigation,** atomic clocks allow **precise distance and trajectory determination** by measuring signal travel time at the speed of light.
- **Conventional atomic clocks** rely on **electron transitions** in atoms such as **cesium or mercury.**
- **NASA's Deep Space Atomic Clock** is highly stable, drifting by less than a nanosecond in four days.
- This stability enables greater spacecraft autonomy, reducing reliance on Earth-based navigation.
- Scientists are now developing **nuclear clocks,** which count nuclear energy transitions instead of electronic ones.
- Thorium-229 is the **leading candidate for nuclear clocks** due to its exceptional stability.
- Its **laser-excitable low-energy nuclear state** is **less sensitive to external disturbances**, enabling **highly precise timekeeping**.
- Nuclear clocks could achieve an accuracy of **one-second error in about 15.8 billion years**, revolutionising precision timekeeping.