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THE HINDU

The cockroach dilemma facing India's political parties

Prelims: General 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.

Why in Focus?

- The emerging “**cockroach protest**” (youth-led **mobilisation**) is influencing political dynamics by mobilising **disgruntled youth**, especially in North India.

Key Highlights:

- The protest, linked to the informal **Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)**, draws attention to frustrations reflected even in observations of the **Supreme Court of India**.
- It is rooted in **structural issues** such as **unemployment, exam irregularities, and economic insecurity**, indicating stress on India's **demographic dividend**.
- Politically, the **Opposition remains divided**-while some parties seek to align with the movement, others fear it may **erode their support base**.
- Past apolitical movements show mixed outcomes:

- ◆ **Anna Hazare Movement (2011)** weakened the Congress and led to rise of Arvind Kejriwal
- ◆ **Nirbhaya protests (2012)** led to legal reforms but limited electoral impact
- ◆ **CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) protests (2019-20)** and **Farmers' protests (2020-21)** remained sectional

- Unlike earlier movements, the current protest is **broad-based and youth-centric**, cutting across social identities and making it difficult to isolate as a **sectional issue**.
- It reflects a shift from **traditional mobilisation** to **digital activism (Instagram generation)**.

Implications:

- Lack of leadership and agenda** may prevent conversion into **political outcomes**.
- The **apolitical and unstructured nature** of the movement may diffuse its impact, preventing sustained outcomes.
- Such movements often face **sustainability issues**, losing momentum over time.
- Rising **anti-politics sentiment** among youth can weaken trust in formal democratic processes.
- Ultimately, **public anger may not translate into electoral change**, limiting its long-term political impact.

Way Forward:

- Political actors must **engage constructively**



with youth concerns instead of treating them as purely disruptive.

- Focus on **targeted policy interventions-job creation, education reforms, and transparent recruitment systems.**
- Channel protest energy into **institutional mechanisms** like **electoral participation and civic engagement.**
- Build **issue-based Opposition coordination** to convert social discontent into a **credible alternative**
- Ensure **democratic handling of protests** without excessive repression.

Mains Question:

“Discuss how apolitical youth-led protests can reshape political competition in India. Analyse with reference to recent developments.” (15 marks, 250 words)

India must lead in securing the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb

Prelims: General Studies Paper 1

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.

Why in Focus?

- Iran's **warning that the Houthis could close the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb if the U.S. attacks Iran has raised concerns over global shipping**, with implications for India's trade, energy security and maritime interests.

Houthis (Ansar Allah) are a Shia Islamist armed group based in Yemen that controls large parts of northern Yemen, including the capital Sanaa. Currently, they have significantly escalated their regional role by declaring a maritime blockade on Saudi Arabia and launching active missile and drone strikes against Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea.

Key Highlights

- The **Strait of Babel-Mandeb, located between Yemen and the Horn of Africa, is a critical chokepoint** connecting the **Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean.** Nearly one-third of India's trade passes through this route.
- During the Gaza War (2023–24), the **Houthis attacked over 40 commercial vessels in the Red Sea**, claiming they were linked to or bound for Israel.
- The **U.S. launched Operation Prosperity Guardian (December 2023)** along with allies to ensure freedom of navigation in the Red Sea.
- The **UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2722 (2024)**, condemning Houthi attacks and demanding respect for freedom of navigation.
- The **Indian Navy rescued the crew of a British tanker** after it caught fire on 26–27 January 2024, highlighting India's role as a net security provider.
- Due to security risks, **over 2,000 ships avoided the Suez Canal and rerouted via the Cape of Good Hope**, increasing transit time and freight costs.
- The crisis caused **Egypt to lose nearly one-fourth of its Suez Canal revenue**, while **Israel's Port of Eilat filed for bankruptcy in 2024.**
- The **current situation is more uncertain as the U.S. is focused on Iran, the UN Security Council remains divided**, and China may continue pursuing unilateral arrangements to secure its shipping.

Implications

- **Renewed Houthi attacks could severely disrupt India's trade**, energy imports and global supply chains.
- **Escalating marine insurance premiums and vessel rerouting would increase logistics costs** and inflationary pressures.
- **Ensuring the safety of Indian merchant vessels and seafarers will become increasingly difficult** amid prolonged regional instability.
- The **absence of a coordinated international maritime security framework could undermine freedom of navigation** in one of the world's busiest sea lanes.



Way Forward

- India **should establish a Trade Protection Task Force with France and Japan, both of which maintain military bases in Djibouti**, to protect commercial shipping through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.
- Strengthen maritime surveillance** through the **Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)**.
- Enhance cooperation with Egypt and Saudi Arabia to secure the Red Sea corridor.
- Pursue proactive diplomacy while reinforcing India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision** and commitment to a rules-based maritime order.

Mains Question

"Discuss the strategic importance of the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb for India's maritime security and trade. Examine the measures India should adopt to safeguard freedom of navigation in the Red Sea amid evolving geopolitical challenges." (250 Words)

Are pellet guns being used at protests?

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

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

Mains: General Studies 2

Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

Why in Focus?

- Pellet guns and shock batons** came into focus after protesters were reportedly injured during a **march to Parliament in Delhi on July 20**.
- The incident has raised concerns about the use of **less-lethal weapons** for controlling protests.

Key Highlights:

- Pellet guns**, technically called **pump-action**

guns, are used as a **less-lethal crowd-control weapon**.

- ◆ **Other methods include tear gas, water cannons, pepper spray, and tasers.**
- A **pellet gun cartridge** contains **hundreds of lead pellets** that spread over a wide area when fired.
 - ◆ **They can penetrate soft tissues and cause serious injuries, especially to the eyes.**
- Pellet guns were first used for crowd control in **Jammu and Kashmir after the 2010 unrest**.
 - ◆ **They were introduced as an alternative to conventional police firing.**
- Their use during the **2016 Kashmir unrest** caused serious injuries, including **loss of vision**.
- In 2017, **less-lethal plastic bullets** were introduced as an alternative.
- Shock batons** are handheld devices used by security personnel for **self-defence and operational purposes**.
 - ◆ **They use electric shocks to control or temporarily disable a person.**

Implications:

- Though considered **less-lethal**, pellet guns can cause **serious injuries and blindness**, and may even cause **death when fired at close range**.
- Their use requires strict rules to ensure **minimum and proportionate force** during crowd control.
- The reported incidents have raised concerns about the **safety and accountability** of using such weapons against civilian protesters.

Mains Question:

The use of less-lethal weapons for crowd control raises concerns about public safety and individual rights. Discuss. (250 Words)

Where does the law stand on internet shutdowns?

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.



Mains: General studies 2

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Why in Focus?

- The **mobile internet shutdown in Delhi** during the 'Chalo Sansad' protest (a march towards Parliament) has reignited the debate on **digital rights, state power, and legality of restrictions**.

Key Highlights:

- An **internet shutdown** refers to the **intentional disruption of internet or electronic communication** to control information flow, often during **protests or public gatherings**.
- In this case, services were suspended amid protests demanding the resignation of Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over **NEET irregularities**, drawing criticism from civil society organisations.
- The legal framework has evolved from the **Indian Telegraph Act, 1885** to the **Telecommunications Act, 2023**, which under **Section 20(2)(b)** permits shutdowns only in cases of **public emergency or public safety**, with **reasoned written orders**.
- These provisions are operationalised through the **Telecommunications (Temporary Suspension of Services) Rules, 2024**, which emphasise **limited duration, defined area, and proportionality**.
- India remains among the **top countries in internet shutdowns globally**, indicating a pattern of frequent use as a **law-and-order tool**.
- The constitutional position was clarified in **Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India (2020)**, where the **Supreme Court of India** held that internet access is closely linked to **freedom of speech and expression (Article 19(1)(a))** and **freedom of trade (Article 19(1)(g))**, and restrictions must satisfy **legality, necessity, and proportionality**.

Implications:

- The **frequent resort to shutdowns** raises concerns about **curtailment of fundamental rights** and democratic freedoms.

- There is a risk of **misuse during protests**, where shutdowns may be imposed without meeting the threshold of **public emergency**.
- Shutdowns lead to **economic disruption**, affecting businesses, digital services, and livelihoods.
- Lack of transparency** in orders reduces scope for **public scrutiny and judicial review**.
- Over time, such practices may normalise **state control over digital communication**, impacting **open society principles**.

Way Forward:

- Ensure **strict compliance with the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and 2024 Rules**, with clear **institutional accountability**.
- Apply shutdowns only as a **last resort**, following the **principle of proportionality**.
- Mandate **timely publication of orders** with detailed reasons to ensure transparency.
- Strengthen **judicial oversight and review committees** for better checks and balances.
- Promote **alternative law-and-order measures** to manage protests without disrupting essential digital services.

Mains Question:

"Examine the constitutional and legal framework governing internet shutdowns in India. Discuss the challenges in balancing state security concerns with fundamental rights." (15 marks, 250 words)

KEYWORDS

Cauvery Water Management Authority

- The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) **was established by the Central Government in June 2018 under the Cauvery Water Management Scheme, 2018** to implement the Cauvery water-sharing arrangement.
- The CWMA is a **statutory, quasi-judicial body notified under Section 6A of the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956**, following the 2018 Supreme Court judgment on the Cauvery dispute.
- The CWMA is **headquartered in New Delhi, functions under the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti**, and is assisted by the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) in monitoring reservoir and water flow data.
- It regulates the release of water from major Cauvery basin reservoirs, **monitors water storage and inflows, and ensures compliance with the final water-sharing formula among Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry.**
- It is headed by a **Chairperson** (a senior eminent engineer or an IAS officer of Secretary/Additional Secretary rank) and comprises 2 Full-Time Members (Water Resources and Agriculture), 2 Part-Time Central Government Members, **4 Part-Time Members representing Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry**, and a Secretary from the Central Water Engineering Services (CWES).

Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)

- The Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) was **established by the Indian Navy in 2018 at the Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC), Gurugram**, to strengthen maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region.
- It **serves as a Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) centre by developing a common and comprehensive maritime**

situation picture through the collection, analysis and sharing of real-time maritime information among partner countries and agencies.

- The Centre **currently hosts International Liaison Officers (ILOs) from Australia, Bangladesh, France, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States.**
- The IFC-IOR has **established 76 information-sharing linkages across 28 countries and multinational agencies, enabling timely responses to maritime threats** such as piracy, armed robbery, terrorism, illegal fishing, smuggling, trafficking and search-and-rescue incidents.

Rome Declaration for an Unarmed and Disarming Peace

- The **Rome Declaration for an Unarmed and Disarming Peace** was signed on **July 16** by **Nobel laureates, AI scientists, religious leaders, and other prominent figures.**
- It calls for an **international treaty** to prevent **autonomous AI systems from accessing or controlling nuclear weapon launches.**
- Its **six main principles** are:
 - ◆ Disarming the next arms race
 - ◆ Responsible development
 - ◆ Responsible use of AI
 - ◆ Responsible governance
 - ◆ Responsible leadership
 - ◆ Nuclear disarmament

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

- India's Net FDI turned negative in May 2026, with **outflows exceeding inflows by \$74 million**, ending a **three-month positive streak** due to a sharp fall in foreign equity inflows.

- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** occurs when a foreign entity acquires at least a **10% equity stake** in an Indian enterprise, indicating **long-term interest and control**.
- Unlike **Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI)** (short-term, volatile stock market flows), **FDI provides stable, long-term capital**, along with **technology transfer and managerial expertise**.
- Most FDI comes through the **Automatic Route** (no prior approval), while sensitive sectors like **defence, space, and broadcasting** require approval under the **Government Route**.
- **Singapore, Mauritius, Japan, and the US** are major FDI sources, with key recipient sectors being **financial services, computer software/hardware, manufacturing, and services**.

Places in News

Port of Eilat



- The Port of Eilat is **Israel's only commercial port on the Red Sea**, located at the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba.
- It was **established in 1952 and became operational in 1957**, serving as Israel's southern maritime gateway.
- It **provides direct access to the Indian Ocean**, enabling trade with **Asia, East Africa and Australia** without passing through the Suez Canal.
- The Port of Eilat suspended operations in July 2025 due to a severe financial crisis caused by a 90% drop in revenue, unpaid local taxes, and a de facto blockade by Houthi attacks in the Red Sea.

Bab el-Mandeb Strait



- The Bab el-Mandeb Strait, **also known as the "Gate of Tears"**, is a strategic maritime chokepoint located at the southern entrance of the Red Sea.
- It **lies between Yemen and the Horn of Africa (Djibouti and Eritrea)**, connecting the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean.
- The strait forms a vital link between the **Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea** through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal.
- It is **about 30 km wide and is divided by Perim Island (Yemen) into the Alexander's Strait (eastern channel) and the Dact-el-Mayun Channel (western channel)**.

- It is **one of the world's most important maritime chokepoints**, carrying a **substantial share of Europe–Asia trade and Middle Eastern oil and gas exports**, making any disruption significant for global shipping and energy security.

Cerrado Savanna



- It is currently in the news because while forest fires in the **Amazon rainforest** have dropped to **historic lows**, the **Cerrado** continues to burn at **high rates**, with climate experts warning of **increased fire risks** due to severe **El Niño** events.
- The **Cerrado** is a massive tropical savanna that covers approximately **24% of Brazil's land area**. It acts as a critical transition zone between the dense **Amazon rainforest** to its north and the drier, more coastal biomes of South America.
- It is often called the **"Upside-Down Forest"** because about **70% of its plant biomass lies underground** in deep root systems adapted to seasonal droughts and natural fires. These roots also make it a major **carbon sink**, storing roughly **118 tons of carbon per acre**.
- The Cerrado is the **most species-rich savanna in the world**, harboring nearly **5% of global biodiversity**. It supports thousands of endemic plant species and iconic wildlife such as the **giant anteater, jaguar, and giant armadillo**.
- It is also known as the **"cradle of waters"**, as its deep root systems function like a

sponge, feeding major South American river basins and underground aquifers. However, **deforestation and excessive water extraction for agriculture** are drying its rivers, creating a serious **water security crisis** in the region.

Amazon Rainforest



- The **Amazon Rainforest** is a vast **tropical rainforest** located in the **Amazon River basin in northern South America**.
- It is bordered by the **Guiana Highlands** in the north, the **Andes Mountains** in the west, the **Brazilian Central Plateau** in the south, and the **Atlantic Ocean** in the east.
- The **Amazon Rainforest** has a very rich variety of **plants and animals**, including many species that are still **unknown to science**.
- The **Amazon Rainforest** covers about **40% of South America**, and the **Amazon basin** is home to more than **30 million people**.
- It extends across **nine territories/countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela**.