FWD

FORTUNE WEEKLY DIGEST

FORTUNE IAS ACADEMY

"Achieve your Dreams with Fortune"

GST COUNCIL FINANCE MINISTERS

> Right to Disconnect > 55th GST Council Meeting > Martial Law

FWD
FORTUNE WEEKLY DIGEST

EDITOR'S NOTE

As UPSC aspirants, it is essential to stay updated on current affairs to excel in the examination. This **Fortune Weekly Digest (ForWarD)** brings you the latest news and developments from around the world, carefully curated and analyzed to help you prepare for the Civil Services (Main) Examination.

We understand that time is precious, and we have made sure to present the information in a concise and easy-to-understand manner.

The magazine is divided into different sections. Mains relevant topics have been covered in detail with a UPSC previous year question perspective. The jot downs are examples and interesting facts to enrich your answer writing. Cherrypicks has some key words from the week, helpful again in answer writing and essay. We have also included essay topics and sample questions to help you guage your preparation.

We have designed this magazine to best supplement the daily current affairs notes we have launched by the name of **FIND (Fortune IAS News Daily)** and **FINDER (Fortune IAS News Daily Explainer)** and the **Fortune Prelims Precise** monthly compilation. This magazine will be explained in detail and your queries addressed in a live class we conduct.

At a time when there is no dearth of current affairs materials, our hope is help you get a one-stop solution for all your current affairs needs.

This magazine is a work in progress and your feedback will be appreciated.

We hope that this magazine will serve as a valuable resource for your exam preparation and contribute to your success in the UPSC examination.

INDEX

RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

> *"Someone who's not paid 24 hours a day shouldn't be penalized*
> *if they're not online and available 24 hours a day."*
> *- Anthony Albanese, Prime Minister of Australia, defending the introduction of the "Right to Disconnect" law.*

Syllabus 1: Salient features of Indian Society

PYQ MAPPING

Q) Explain why suicide among young women is increasing in Indian society **(2023)**

SHORT TAKES

➤ **Burnout:** A state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress and overwork. It can lead to reduced productivity, health problems, and disengagement from work.

➤ **Good Business Lab (GBL):** A non-profit organization founded to improve worker wellbeing by demonstrating its positive impact on business outcomes through evidence-based research

WHY IN NEWS

A recent *The Hindu* article emphasizes the need for India to recognise the right to disconnect. It argues that implementing this right will enhance productivity and contribute to the overall growth and well-being of both employees and employers.

INTRODUCTION

Amid growing concerns over burnout and diminishing work-life balance, the "Right to Disconnect" has gained traction as a progressive labour policy. . It reflects a global shift towards prioritising mental health and sustainable productivity in the modern workforce.

What is 'Right to Disconnect'?

A right that allows a person to exist beyond the work that he has chosen to do. He is allowed to not entertain work-related matters outside of working hours and working space.

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

France:

o In 2001, the **Labour Chamber** of the French Supreme Court ruled that **employees are not obligated to work from home or be reachable outside working hours.**

o Later the Cour de Cassation (the highest court in the French judiciary) also confirmed that not being reachable outside work hours does not constitute misconduct.

o The "right to disconnect" came into effect in France on **January 1, 2017**, as part of a labour reform law adopted in August 2016.

Portugal:

o Enacted a Right to Disconnect law, making it illegal for employers to contact employees outside working hours, except in emergencies.

Spain:

o Article 88 of the Organic Law 3/2018 on Protection of Personal Data and Guarantee of Digital Rights guarantees public workers and employees the **right to switch off devices outside working hours** to ensure personal and family privacy and promote work-life balance.

Australia:

o Passed the **Fair Work Legislation Amendment in 2023**, granting employees the right to disconnect from work outside official hours.

Ireland:

o Recognised the right to disconnect, ensuring employees can disengage from work-related communications after working hours.

INDIA'S POSITION ON THE RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

- **No Specific Laws**:
  - o India lacks specific legislation recognising the right to disconnect from work-related communications outside working hours.

- **Private Member Bill on Right to Disconnect (2018)**:
  - o MP Supriya Sule introduced a bill in the Lok Sabha to grant employees the right to disconnect from work after working hours.
  - o Proposed a **penalty of 1% of the total remuneration of all employees** for noncompliance by companies.

- **Constitutional Provisions**:
  - o **Article 38**: Mandates the State to promote the welfare of the people.
  - o **Article 39(e)**: Directs the State to ensure the strength and health of workers.

- **Judicial Pronouncements**:
  - o **Vishakha v. State of Rajasthan (1997)**:

    - Ruled that sexual harassment at the workplace violates fundamental rights and recognised the right to dignity at the workplace.
    - Issued guidelines for a safe and gender-equal working environment.

  - o **Praveen Pradhan v. State of Uttaranchal (2012)**:

    - The High Court of Uttarakhand held that administrative control does not permit extreme humiliation or inhuman scolding of subordinates.

  - o **Ravindra Kumar Dhariwal & Ors v. Union of India (2021)**:

    - Interpreted Article 14 to include inclusive equality and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities.
    - Justice D.Y. Chandrachud emphasised considering employees' individual differences and capabilities.

ARGUMENTS FOR THE RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

- **Lack of Specific Legislation**: India does not have explicit laws granting employees the right to disconnect from work-related communications outside working hours.

- **Productivity Benefits**: A healthy work-life balance is beneficial for employees and companies, as it enhances overall performance and reduces burnout-related costs.
  - o **Example**: Iceland's nationwide trials (2015-2019) demonstrated that reducing work hours without reducing pay resulted in less stress and burnout, with productivity remaining unaffected or even improving.

- **Workplace Realities**: Despite constitutional and judicial safeguards, violations of workplace dignity and excessive work hours are still widespread.
  - o **Example**: The 2024 Gallup State of the Global Workplace report shows that 86% of Indian employees feel they are "struggling" or "suffering.

- **Health Neglect**: Employers often fail to address workplace stress and mental health concerns, undermining employees' overall well-being.
  - o **Example**: Harvard Business Review research highlights that long working hours lead to stress, coronary heart diseases, and deteriorating overall health.

- **Over-reliance on Judicial Safeguards**: The absence of comprehensive legislation places excessive reliance on courts to uphold workplace rights, which may not address systemic issues effectively

- **Cultural Normalisation of Overwork**: The belief that long hours and constant connectivity enhance productivity blurs the boundaries between personal and professional life.
  - o **Example**:
    - A University of Oxford study, in collaboration with British multinational telecom BT, established a direct link between happiness and productivity.
    - A 2014 Stanford University study found that working over 50 hours a week doesn't boost productivity, with output declining after 60 hours.
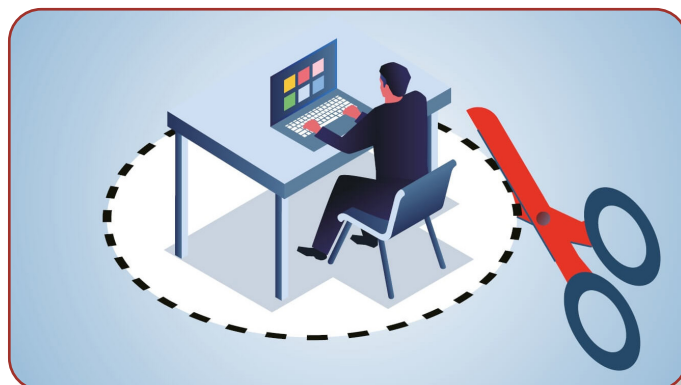
ARGUMENTS AGAINST RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

🚩 **Economic Context**: India's private-sector-driven economy requires high performance, unlike Iceland's public-sector focus, making the right to disconnect less applicable.

🚩 **Work as a Source of Satisfaction**: For many, work provides satisfaction and pride. Overemphasis on leisure may undermine the motivation that drives long-term success.

🚩 **Innovation and Growth Depend on Hard Work**: Many significant advancements and innovations have come from environments where long hours and intense focus were the norm.

🚩 **Potential Economic Risks**: The Indian economy, with its growing youth population, cannot afford to slow down in a competitive global market.

🚩 **Impact on High-Performing Workers**: Excess focus on leisure slows down medium-performing workers while high-performing professionals will almost always be on the top of the ladder.

BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPROVING WORKPLACE CULTURE

🌀 **LinkedIn :**

o **Year-End Shutdown:** A shutdown from Christmas to New Year allows employees to fully disconnect and recharge.

o **'PerkUp!' Programme**: Employees can use allowances for personal needs like elder care, pet care, and student-loan repayments.

o **Leadership Dialogue**: Regular fortnightly discussions between employees and leadership promote transparency and engagement.

o **Personal Focus Day**: One day each month for employees to pursue personal passions, learning, or community service.

🌀 **Axis Bank:**

o **Wellness Sherpa Programme:** Counsellors train employees to offer "emotional first aid" to colleagues in need of support.

🌀 **Barclays**:

o **'Olympiad' Event**: A two-month long event featuring various sports, including cricket, carrom, and badminton, with over 70 cricket teams this year.

🌀 **Godrej Industries:**

o **Eldercare Support:** Introduced policies to support employees in caring for elderly family members, allowing time off for better care.

o **Chronic Illness Support**: Offers unlimited sick leave and flexible work options for employees with chronic illnesses.

WAY FORWARD

✳ **Legislative Action:** India should consider laws granting the right to disconnect, similar to those in other countries, to establish clear work-life boundaries.

✳ **Workplace Culture Shift:** Employers must shift away from equating long hours with productivity and promote healthier work-life balance.

✳ **Adoption of Flexible Work Models:** Encourage the adoption of hybrid work models and shorter workweeks, as seen in several countries, to reduce stress and improve employee well-being.

✳ **Support for Women Workers**: Address the impact of long hours on women by promoting flexible work arrangements and equitable domestic responsibilities.

✳ **Leveraging Technology for Efficiency**: Companies can improve employee well-being by using AI to handle repetitive tasks as well as grievance redressal, allowing employees to focus on more meaningful work and reduce stress.

o **Example**: Inache, an anonymous tool for workers to report grievances developed by Good Business Lab (GBL), a not-for-profit labor innovation company

CONCLUSION

Recognising the right to disconnect is essential for fostering a healthy work-life balance, improving employee well-being, and enhancing productivity. As India progresses towards economic growth, prioritising such reforms will benefit both individuals and the broader workforce.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Discuss the significance of the Right to Disconnect in promoting work-life balance and safeguarding mental health. Critically analyse the challenges in implementing such a policy in India **(10marks)(150 words)**

INDIA - KUWAIT

Syllabus: GS II - International Relations

PYQ MAPPING

Q) How will I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE and USA) grouping transform India's position in global politics? **(2022)**

Q) The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyze India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian Countries. **(2017)**

INTRODUCTION

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kuwait, the first by an Indian PM in over four decades, marks a significant step in strengthening India's Gulf ties amidst shifting dynamics in the Middle East following the fall of the Assad dynasty in Damascus.

WHY IN NEWS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Kuwait on December 21-22, marking the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to the Gulf nation in 43 years.

SHORT TAKES

➢ **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**

o It is a joint initiative between **India and France, established at COP21 in Paris in 2015** to combat climate change through solar energy solutions. Following a 2020 amendment, all UN member states can now join.

o Over 100 countries are signatories, with 90+ ratifying full membership.

o Its mission is to secure **US$1 trillion in solar investments by 2030**, reduce technology and financing costs, and promote solar energy use in agriculture, health, transport, and power generation.

➢ **Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD)**

o It is a body created in 2002 to promote Asian cooperation at a continental level, helping to integrate the previously separate regional organizations of political or economical cooperation such as ASEAN, SAARC or the Gulf Cooperation Council.

o A key principle is to consolidate Asian strengths and fortify Asia's competitiveness by maximizing the diversity and rich resources evident in Asia.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VISIT

➡ **High-Level Engagements**

o Received by His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of Kuwait, at Bayan Palace.

o PM Modi was conferred Kuwait's highest civilian honor, **"The Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer"**, in recognition of his efforts to strengthen ties.

o Discussions were held with the Amir, Crown Prince, and Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

➡ **Key Agreements and Initiatives**

o **Establishment of a Strategic Partnership**: Both nations agreed to deepen cooperation across sectors, including trade, investment, defence, energy, technology, and education.

o **Signed Documents**:
  • **Defence Cooperation MoU** for joint exercises, training, and maritime safety.
  • **Cultural Exchange Programme (2025-2029)**.
  • **Executive Programme on Sports Cooperation (2025-2028)**.
  • Kuwait's formal membership in the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**.

➡ **Sectoral Cooperation**

o **Energy**:
  • Agreement to expand from a buyer-seller relationship to upstream and downstream collaborations.
  • Discussion on Kuwait's participation in India's **Strategic Petroleum Reserve Programme**.

o **Trade and Investment**:
- Reaffirmed commitment to enhance trade and diversify it.
- Focus on investments in **technology, healthcare, food security, and infrastructure**.
- Accelerate negotiations on the **Bilateral Investment Treaty**.

o **Food Security**: Kuwait showed interest in investing in **Indian food parks** to secure its food supply chains.

o **Technology**: Agreed on collaboration in **emerging technologies**, semiconductors, and artificial intelligence.

Institutional Mechanisms

o **Joint Commission on Cooperation (JCC)**: To oversee bilateral ties, with new **Joint Working Groups (JWGs)** formed in areas such as education, trade, and counter-terrorism.

o **Consular Dialogue and Labor Mobility**: To address issues related to the welfare of the Indian diaspora and promote smoother labor movement.

Defence and Security

o **Defence**: Strengthened cooperation through the Defence MoU, emphasizing joint development, military training, and maritime safety.

o **Counter-Terrorism**:
- Agreed to disrupt terror financing and dismantle terror infrastructure.
- Enhanced cooperation in cybersecurity and law enforcement.

People-to-People and Cultural Ties

o **Diaspora**: Acknowledged the Indian community's contribution to Kuwait's development.

o **Education**: Focused on **institutional linkages, EdTech, and digital learning platforms**.

o **Sports and Culture**: Renewed emphasis on **cultural exchanges** and sports cooperation.

Regional and Multilateral Cooperation

o **India-GCC Relations**: Welcomed Kuwait's Presidency of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and emphasized the importance of the **India-GCC Free Trade Agreement**.

o **UN Reforms**: Reiterated the need for **Security Council expansion** to reflect contemporary realities.

o Recognized Kuwait's role as a dialogue partner in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and its active participation in the **Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD)**.

HISTORY OF INDIA-KUWAIT RELATIONS

Political Relations

o India was among the first nations to establish diplomatic ties with Kuwait after its independence from the British Protectorate in 1961.

o A **Joint Commission on Cooperation (JCC)** has recently been established to review and monitor the comprehensive spectrum of bilateral relations.

Energy Partnership

o Kuwait plays a pivotal role in India's energy security as its **sixth-largest crude oil supplier** and **fourth-largest LPG supplier**.

o Holding approximately **6.5% of global oil reserves**, Kuwait is a vital energy partner for India.

Indian Community in Kuwait

o Indians form **21% of Kuwait's population** (1 million) and **30% of its workforce** (approximately 9 lakh).

o Indian workers dominate both the private and domestic sectors in Kuwait.

Trade Relations

o Kuwait is one of India's top trading partners, with **bilateral trade valued at $10.47 billion** in FY 2023-24.

Medical Cooperation

o A **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Medical Cooperation** was signed in 2012, with a Joint Working Group monitoring progress.

o During the **COVID-19 pandemic**, Kuwait provided critical medical support, including over **425 metric tons of liquid medical oxygen**, oxygen concentrators, and ventilators.

SIGNIFICANCE

☼ **Strengthening Bilateral Ties**:

o Elevated India-Kuwait relations to a **Strategic Partnership**, ensuring deeper collaboration across diverse sectors.

☼ **Energy Security**:

o Enhanced cooperation in the energy sector, moving beyond a buyer-seller relationship to a comprehensive partnership in upstream, downstream, and renewable energy.

☼ **Economic and Trade Boost**:

o Discussions on **Bilateral Investment Treaty** and opportunities for Kuwaiti investments in India's infrastructure, technology, and food security sectors.

o Focus on diversifying and expanding bilateral trade valued at $10.47 billion.

☼ **Defense and Security**:

o Signed an **MoU on Defence Cooperation** to enhance joint exercises, coastal defense, and counter-terrorism efforts.

☼ **Cultural and People-to-People Ties**:

o Renewal of the **Cultural Exchange Programme (2025-2029)** and Executive Program for Sports Cooperation.

• Acknowledgment of the significant contribution of the **Indian diaspora**, constituting 21% of Kuwait's population.

☼ **Multilateral Cooperation**:

o Kuwait joined the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**, advancing global solar energy collaboration.

o Enhanced India-GCC cooperation with Kuwait as the **GCC Chair**.

CHALLENGES

🔴 **Geopolitical Instability**:

o The Gulf region is often subject to geopolitical tensions, which can impact bilateral relations and cooperation efforts.

🔴 **Labour Rights**:

o In Kuwait, labor rights issues primarily affect migrant workers, especially domestic workers, who face long hours, low wages, limited freedom, and difficulties accessing legal recourse.

o Despite improvements like weekly days off and paid leave for domestic workers, challenges such as employer abuse, restricted unionization rights, and the sponsorship system continue to persist.

🔴 **International Pressures**:

o Aligning foreign policies with regional powers and addressing international pressures can create diplomatic strains.

🔴 **Trade Imbalances**:

o Addressing trade imbalances and ensuring mutual benefits from economic partnerships is crucial.

WAY FORWARD

✳ **Economic Diversification**: Both countries need to diversify their economic ties beyond traditional sectors like energy to include areas such as healthcare, agriculture, and technology.

✳ **Collaborate on Security**: Joint efforts in counter-terrorism and regional security can enhance stability and build trust between the two nations.

✳ **Cultural Exchange**: Promoting cultural exchanges and people-to-people connections can strengthen the social fabric and mutual respect between the countries.

✳ **Promote Labour Rights**: Ensuring the welfare and rights of expatriate workers through bilateral agreements and cooperation can improve the living conditions of Indian workers in Kuwait.

CONCLUSION

The Prime Minister's visit reaffirmed the depth of India-Kuwait relations, strengthening historic ties through forward-looking agreements and shared visions for regional stability, economic growth, and multilateral collaboration. Kuwait's leadership has been invited to visit India, further underscoring the commitment to deepening this strategic partnership.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Examine the key areas of cooperation and challenges in the bilateral relationship between India and Kuwait. Suggest measures to enhance their strategic partnership. **(10marks)(150 words)**

REMOVAL OF VICE PRESIDENT

> *Syllabus: GS II - Indian Polity*

PYQ MAPPING

Q) *Critically examine the procedures through which the Presidents of India and France are elected.* **(2022)**

Q) *Discuss the role of the Vice –Presidents of India as the chairman of the Rajyasabha* **(2022)**

Q) *Instances of the President's delay in commuting death sentences has come under public debate as denial of justice. Should there be a time limit specified for the President to accept/reject such petitions? Analyse.* **(2014)**

INTRODUCTION

For the first time in Rajya Sabha's history, a no-confidence motion to remove Chairman and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar was introduced, but it was rejected by Deputy Chairman Harivansh on December 19, 2024, who termed it an act of impropriety aimed at tarnishing the Vice President's reputation.

WHY IN NEWS

Recently, Rajya Sabha deputy chairman Harivansh dismisses Opposition notice seeking removal of Vice-President Dhankhar.

WHAT ARE THE ALLEGATIONS?

➡ **Bias in Chairing Rajya Sabha Proceedings**:
- o The opposition accused Dhankhar of conducting parliamentary proceedings in a "highly partisan" manner, favoring the BJP over opposition voices.

➡ **Acceptance of Controversial BJP Speeches**:
- o Dhankhar was criticized for allowing BJP members to deliver speeches linking Sonia Gandhi to George Soros, despite their contentious nature.

➡ **Dismissal of Opposition Notices**:
- o He reportedly dismissed 11 notices submitted by opposition MPs on various critical issues, reflecting an alleged pattern of bias.

➡ **Refusal to Permit Debates on Key Issues**:
- o The opposition alleged that Dhankhar denied debates on pressing national matters, including:
  - Communal violence in Uttar Pradesh.
  - Cyclone damage in Tamil Nadu.
  - Ethnic clashes in Manipur.
  - The prolonged farmers' protests.

➡ **Frequent Adjournments Favoring the Ruling Party**:
- o Opposition alleged that frequent adjournments under Dhankhar's leadership were orchestrated to suit the BJP's agenda, disrupting meaningful discussions in Parliament.

REASONS FOR REJECTING THE NON-CONFIDENCE MOTION

♣ **Procedural Flaws:**
The notice failed to meet Article 67(b)'s 14-day prior notice requirement, with the Winter Session ending before the period concluded. It also lacked proper addressing and resolution text.

♣ **Errors in Notice:**
The Vice President's name was misspelled, evidence like documents and videos was missing, and assertions relied on unauthenticated media reports.

♣ **Lack of Bona Fides:**
The notice was seen as a publicity stunt to tarnish the Vice President's reputation and demean the constitutional office.

♣ **Prejudicial Intent:**
A coordinated media campaign, including a press conference by senior Congress leaders, was cited as evidence of bias.

♣ **Violation of Norms:**
The motion disregarded constitutional and parliamentary norms, undermining the dignity of the Vice President's office, particularly given its historic and symbolic importance.
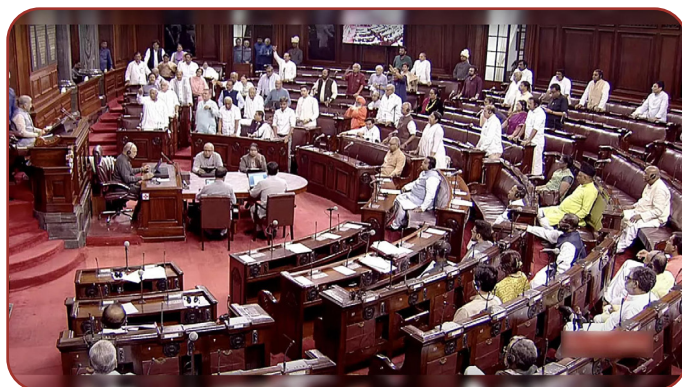
CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS REGARDING THE OFFICE OF VICE PRESIDENT

Article 66	Election Procedure of Vice-President.
Article 67	Term of office of Vice-President
Article 68	Time of holding the election to fill the vacancy in the office of Vice-President and the term of office of the person elected to fill the casual vacancy.
Article 69	Oath or affirmation by the Vice-President.
Article 70	Discharge of President's functions in other contingencies.
Article 71	Matters relating to, or connected with, the election of a President or Vice-President.

ELECTION OF VICE PRESIDENT

Election Process (Article 66):

The Vice-President is elected by an electoral college comprising members of both Houses of Parliament through proportional representation using a single transferable vote and secret ballot.

Eligibility (Article 66(3)):

- Must be an Indian citizen.
- At least 35 years old.
- Qualified to be elected as a Rajya Sabha member.

Disqualifications (Articles 66(2) & 66(4)):

- Cannot hold an office of profit under the government or controlled authorities.
- Cannot be a member of Parliament or any state legislature.

Nomination:
Requires a proposal by 20 MPs and seconded by another 20 MPs.

Disputes (Article 71):
Election disputes are resolved by the Supreme Court, whose decision is final.

TERM OF OFFICE

◑ **Duration**:
  - The Vice-President holds office for a **five-year term** starting from the date of assumption.
  - He/she can continue beyond the term until a **successor assumes office**.

◑ **Resignation**:
  - The Vice-President may resign at any time by submitting a written resignation to the **President**.

◑ **Removal**:
  - No formal impeachment is required for removal.
  - Removal involves a **resolution in the Rajya Sabha**, passed by an **effective majority** and agreed upon by a **simple majority** in the Lok Sabha.
  - The resolution can only be introduced in the Rajya Sabha and requires **14 days' advance notice**.
    - The 14-day notice for the resolution to remove the Vice-President of India, as outlined in Article 67(b) of the Constitution, must be given to the Secretary-General of the Rajya Sabha. This notice is a formal requirement before the resolution can be taken up for discussion in the Rajya Sabha

  - No specific grounds for removal are mentioned in the Constitution.

◑ **Re-election**:
  - The Vice-President is eligible for **re-election** and may serve any number of terms.

Vacancy in the Office of the Vice-President:

◑ **Expiry of Term**, **Resignation**, **Removal**, **Death**, **Other Situations** If the Vice-President becomes disqualified or if the election is declared void.

Filling the Vacancy:

◑ **Scheduled Vacancy**:
  - If the vacancy arises due to the **expiration of the term**, the election must be held **before the term ends**.

◑ **Unscheduled Vacancy**:
  - For vacancies due to resignation, removal, death, or other reasons, the election must be held **as soon as possible** after the occurrence of the vacancy.
  - The newly elected Vice-President serves a **full five-year term** from the date of assuming office.

POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
(AS EX OFFICIO CHAIRMAN OF THE RAJYA SABHA)

◆ **Presiding Officer of the Rajya Sabha:**

The Vice-President serves as the ex officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, presiding over meetings to ensure adherence to constitutional provisions, rules, and decorum.

◆ **Authority to Interpret Rules and Constitution:**

The Chairman's rulings on constitutional and procedural matters are binding precedents and cannot be questioned or criticized, with protests against them considered contempt of the House.

◆ **Casting Vote:**

The Chairman has a casting vote in case of a tie but cannot vote on other matters, including during a session to remove them.

◆ **Adjournment and Quorum:**

The Chairman can adjourn or suspend Rajya Sabha sessions due to a lack of quorum.

◆ **Disqualification Powers:**

Under the Tenth Schedule, the Chairman decides on member disqualifications due to defection and formulates related rules.

◆ **Language Permissions:**

The Chairman may allow members to speak in their mother tongue if they cannot communicate in Hindi or English.

◆ **Parliamentary Committees:**

The Vice-President nominates and directs committee members and appoints Rajya Sabha members to various bodies.

COMPARISON OF THE ELECTION PROCESS FOR THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT OF INDIA

Aspect	President	Vice-President
Electoral College	Members of both Houses of Parliament (MPs) and Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) of States and UTs with Assemblies.	Only Members of Parliament (MPs) from both Houses.
Voting System	Proportional representation through a single transferable vote (secret ballot).	Proportional representation through a single transferable vote (secret ballot).
Eligibility	• Citizen of India. • 35 years of age or older. • Qualified for election as an MP in the Lok Sabha.	• Citizen of India. • 35 years of age or older. • Qualified for election as an MP in the Rajya Sabha.
Disqualification	Cannot hold any office of profit under the Government or its authorities.	Same as for the President.
Nomination Requirements	Proposed by at least 50 electors and seconded by another 50 electors.	Proposed by at least 20 MPs and seconded by another 20 MPs.
Authority Conducting the Election	Conducted by the Election Commission of India.	Conducted by the Election Commission of India.
Resolution of Disputes	The Supreme Court decides disputes regarding the election.	The Supreme Court decides disputes regarding the election.
Tenure	5 years, but eligible for re-election.	5 years, but eligible for re-election.
Continuity in Office	Continues to hold office until a successor assumes charge.	Same as for the President.
Key Difference	Involves MLAs in addition to MPs in the electoral college.	Only MPs form the electoral college.

COMPARISON OF THE REMOVAL FOR THE PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT OF INDIA

Aspect	President	Vice-President
Grounds for Removal	• **Impeachment** for violation of the Constitution (Article 61). • However, the Constitution does not define the meaning of the phrase 'violation of the Constitution.	No specific grounds mentioned in the Constitution for removal.
Initiation of Removal	Initiated in either House of Parliament.	Initiated only in the **Rajya Sabha** (Article 67).
Required Majority	**Two-thirds** of members present and voting in both Houses of Parliament.	**Effective majority** in the Rajya Sabha and **simple majority** in the Lok Sabha.
Impeachment Process	A **formal impeachment process** is required (Article 61).	No formal impeachment process is required for removal.

Election & Impeachment of American Vice President

ELECTION

- **Election Process**: The Vice President is elected concurrently with the President during a national election, which takes place every four years on Election Day, the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

- **Electoral College**: Voters cast ballots for a presidential candidate and their running mate (the Vice President) on a single ticket. The results are determined by the Electoral College, which consists of 538 electors, with each state's electors based on its representation in Congress (Senators and Representatives).

- **Majority Vote**: To win the election, a vice-presidential candidate must receive a majority of the Electoral College votes (at least 270 out of 538).

- **Tie or No Majority**: If no candidate receives a majority, the decision is made by the Senate, where each Senator casts one vote to select the Vice President from the top two candidates.

- **Inauguration**: The elected Vice President is inaugurated on January 20th, the same day as the President, officially assuming office.

IMPEACHMENT

- **Grounds for Impeachment**: Like the President, the Vice President can be impeached for "high crimes and misdemeanors," as stated in the U.S. Constitution.

- **Initiation**: The impeachment process starts in the House of Representatives, where members may introduce articles of impeachment against the Vice President. These articles outline the charges against the Vice President.

- **House Vote**: The House of Representatives votes on the articles of impeachment. A simple majority (51%) is required for the articles to pass.

- **Senate Trial**: If the House approves the articles, the case is sent to the Senate for trial. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court presides over the trial.

- **Conviction**: The Senate must then vote to convict the Vice President. A two-thirds majority is required for conviction.

- **Removal from Office**: If convicted, the Vice President is removed from office. The Senate can also vote to bar the Vice President from holding future office.

CONCLUSION

The Opposition's motion against the Vice-President, although largely symbolic, reflects its dissatisfaction with what it perceives as unfair and partisan conduct in the Rajya Sabha. The allegations highlight concerns about the neutrality of the Vice-President in his role as the Chairman, especially regarding his rulings and the handling of parliamentary proceedings.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Examine the role and powers of the Vice President of India as the ex officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. How does this position contribute to the functioning of Parliament, and what challenges does it face in maintaining impartiality? **(10marks)(150 words)**

55TH GST COUNCIL MEETING

Syllabus: GS III - Government Budgeting

PYQ MAPPING

Q) Discuss the rationale for introducing Good and services tax in India. Bring out critically the reasons for delay in roll out for its regime **(2013)**

Q) Enumerate the indirect taxes which have been subsumed in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India. Also, comment on the revenue implications of the GST introduced in India since July 2017 **(2019)**

Q) Explain the rationale behind the Goods and Services Tax (Compensation to States) Act of 2017. How has COVID-19 impacted the GST compensation fund and created new federal tensions? **(2020)**

INTRODUCTION

The 55th GST Council meeting was a significant yet largely uneventful gathering, with limited progress on long-pending issues. While important clarifications were made, such as the taxability of vouchers and GST on old vehicles, key matters remained unresolved.

WHY IN NEWS

The 55th GST Council meeting, chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, was held in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, on December 21.

SHORT TAKES

➤ **Input Tax Credits**: Tax credits that businesses can claim for taxes paid on purchases used for producing taxable goods or services.

➤ **Retrospective Taxation**: The application of tax laws to past transactions or events, which were not previously subject to the law.

WHAT IS THE GOODS AND SERVICE TAX (GST) COUNCIL

➡ **About GST:**

o Passed as the 122nd Amendment Bill in 2016, ratified by over 15 states, and received Presidential assent.

o GST was introduced as the 101st Amendment Act.

o **Aim**: The GST was implemented in **2017**, with the aim of simplifying India's tax structure by replacing multiple Centre and state taxes with a uniform system.

➡ **About GST Council:**

o The President set up the GST Council as a joint forum of the Centre and the states under **Article 279A (1)** of the amended Constitution.

o **Composition**: The GST Council includes the Union Finance Minister (as chairperson), the Union Minister of State (Finance), and a finance or taxation minister from each state, or any other minister nominated by the state.

o **Purpose**:

• To make recommendations to the Union and states on critical issues related to GST

• To decide on the various GST rate slabs and whether modifications are needed for specific product categories.

o **Voting**: States have two-thirds voting share in the GST Council, while the Union has one-third.

➡ **Supreme Court Judgement:**

o SC ruled that the recommendations made by the GST Council are **not binding in** the case *Union of India and Anr versus M/s Mohit Minerals Through Director*.

o The court highlighted that **Article 246A** of the Constitution grants both Parliament and state legislatures the "simultaneous" power to legislate on GST.

IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 55TH GST COUNCIL MEETING

Key

» **Fortified Rice Kernel (FRK):** A rice product enriched with essential vitamins and minerals to combat nutritional deficiencies, often used in government nutrition schemes.

» **Compensation Cess:** An additional tax levied on certain goods to compensate states for revenue loss due to GST implementation.

» **Gene Therapy:** A medical technique that modifies genes to treat or prevent diseases, often involving the insertion, alteration, or removal of genes within a patient's cells.

» **Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (ACC) Blocks:** Lightweight, precast building materials made by mixing cement, lime, and fly ash, commonly used in construction.

» **Payment Aggregators:** Entities that facilitate online payments by aggregating multiple payment options (cards, UPI, etc.) for businesses.Eg: Razorpay, PayU

» **Payment Gateway**: A technology that securely facilitates online transactions by transferring payment data between the customer, merchant, and bank.Eg: Google Pay

» **Principal-to-Principal Basis:** A transaction where two independent entities deal directly without intermediaries or agents.

» **Principal-to-Agent Basis:** A transaction where an intermediary (agent) acts on behalf of the principal, earning a commission or fee.

» **Reverse Charge Mechanism:** A GST provision where the buyer, not the seller, is responsible for paying the tax directly to the government.

» **Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC)**: A financial institution that provides various financial services like loans and insurance, but does not have a banking license to accept deposits from the public.

» **Composition Levy Scheme:** A simplified GST scheme allowing small businesses whose turnover is up to Rs. 75 lakhs (Rs. 50 lakhs in case of few States) to pay a fixed percentage of turnover as tax instead of regular GST rates.

Reduction	• Reduce GST on **Fortified Rice Kernel (FRK)** to 5%. • Reduce **Compensation Cess** to 0.1% for merchant exporters.
Exemption	• Exempt GST on **gene therapy**. • Exempt IGST on **imports by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Inspection Team,** subject to conditions. • Exempt GST on fresh or dried **pepper and raisins** supplied by agriculturists. • Exempt GST on contributions to the **Motor Vehicle Accident Fund** by insurance companies.
Extension	• Extend IGST exemption to **Long-range Surface-to-Air missile (LRSAM)** system components under Notification 19/2019-Customs. • Extend 5% GST on **food inputs for free distribution** to economically weaker sections.
Clarification	• Clarified that **Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (ACC) blocks** with over 50% fly ash content fall under HS 6815 and attract 12% GST. • Clarified GST rates on **ready-to-eat popcorn**: 5% for unlabelled, 12% for labelled; 18% for caramel popcorn. • Clarified that RBI-regulated **Payment Aggregators** are eligible for GST **exemption** under specific conditions, excluding payment gateways and fintech services.

	• Clarified that **no GST** is payable on **'penal charges'** levied by banks and NBFCs for non-compliance with loan terms.
	• Clarified that **vouchers distributed on a principal-to-principal basis** are **not subject to GST**, but any commission or fee charged by an agent for distributing vouchers on a principal-to-agent basis is taxable under GST.
Increase	• Increase GST from 12% to 18% on the sale of **old and used vehicles, including EV**s, with exceptions for certain vehicle types.
Amendment	• Amend GST rates for r**estaurant services in hotels** based on accommodation value.
	• Amend **'pre-packaged and labelled' definition** to cover commodities for retail sale under 25 kg or 25 litres.
Exclusion	Exclude **composition levy scheme taxpayers** from reverse charge on renting commercial property from unregistered persons.

ISSUES

▼ **Delayed Clarifications:** The need to clarify basic issues like the **pepper and raisins supplied by farmers, gift vouchers, and penalties levied on borrowers** by banks and non-banking finance companies are not taxable reflects a lack of proactive governance.

▼ **Complex Taxation on Popcorn:** The clarification of a **three-tiered levy on popcorn**, despite the rationale being based on health, complicates the tax system and undermines the claim that GST is a "Good and Simple Tax."

▼ **Failure to Address Rate Rationalisation:** The Council did not consider recommendations of the ministerial panel to **simplify GST rates or review life and health insurance taxation**, despite prior commitments.

▼ **Delay in Insurance GST Cuts:** Delays in decisions on GST cuts for life and health insurance have hurt the industry, with **new business declining** in anticipation of tax cuts.

▼ **Impact on Consumption and Investment:** Ongoing indecision and delays in GST rationalisation are negatively affecting consumption and private investment plans

▼ **Retrospective Changes in Taxation:** The Council's decision to reverse a Supreme Court ruling allowing **realty players to claim input tax credits on costs of construction for commercial structures intended for renting or leasing** has raised concerns about retrospective taxation, which could hurt investor confidence.

▼ **Fate of GST Compensation Cess**: The extension of GST Compensation Cess until June 2025 for deliberation on its continuation after March 2026 has left sectors like automotive and aerated beverages uncertain, as it was initially meant for a limited period.

▼ **Food Delivery E-Commerce**: The decision on revising tax rates for food delivery through e-commerce platforms has been deferred, pending further discussions by the Fitment Committee.

▼ **Inclusion of Aviation Turbine Fuel**: The inclusion of aviation turbine fuel under the GST framework remains unresolved, as no consensus has been reached.

CONCLUSION

The 55th GST Council meeting saw several important issues deferred, including the tax rates on health insurance premiums and food delivery services. The Council's discussions highlight the ongoing complexity in rate rationalisation and the need for further deliberation on key matters like aviation turbine fuel and disaster-related tax levies.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Discuss how the GST Council addresses the diverse economic needs of states while maintaining national fiscal goals**.**
 (15 marks) (250 words)

MARTIAL LAW

> *Syllabus: GS II - Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests*

PYQ MAPPING

Q) Human rights activists constantly highlight the view that the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) is a draconian act leading to cases of human rights abuses by the security forces. What sections of AFSPA are opposed by the activists? Critically evaluate the requirement with reference to the view held by the Apex Court **(2015)**

SHORT TAKES

➢ **Approval ratings:** Refer to the percentage of people who express support or approval for a person, typically a political leader or government, based on surveys or polls. These ratings are used to gauge public opinion about the leader's performance, decisions, and overall popularity.

➢ **Influence peddling:** Involves using one's position or connections to secure advantages or favors for personal gain.

   o   For example, a government official might offer to expedite a business permit in exchange for a bribe or other personal benefits.
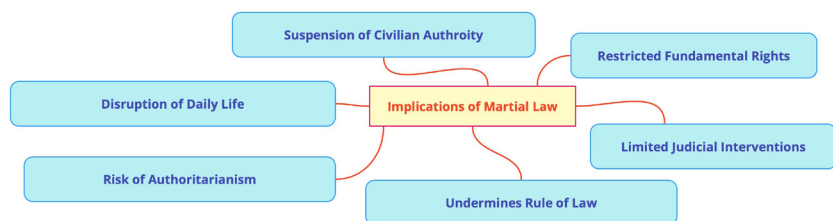
WHY IN NEWS

South Korea's parliament recently voted to impeach **President Yoon Suk Yeol** over his **brief martial law declaration**, with the **motion passing in 204-85 votes**. As a result, his presidential powers will be suspended pending review by the Constitutional Court.

INTRODUCTION

Martial law often emerges in discussions about governance during crises, reflecting the delicate balance between maintaining order and upholding democratic principles. Its invocation raises profound questions about the limits of state power and the protection of individual rights.

What is Martial Law?

Martial law is the replacement of civilian government by military rule, and the suspension of civilian legal processes for military ones. Standard civil liberties may be suspended for as long as martial law continues.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN SOUTH KOREA?

History of Martial law in South Korea

Event	Details
Post-War Martial Law	After the 1950-53 Korean War, martial law was periodically declared by leaders to suppress anti-government protests.
1961 Coup	**Gen. Park Chung-hee** led a coup on May 16, 1961, with troops entering Seoul, marking **South Korea's first military coup**. He ruled for nearly 20 years and frequently declared martial law. Park was **assassinated by his spy chief in 1979**, but his martial law legacy continued under his successor
1979 Coup	**Maj. Gen. Chun Doo-hwan** led tanks and troops into Seoul in December 1979, marking the second military coup. He later ordered a brutal crackdown on the Gwangju pro-democracy uprising in 1980, killing at least 200 people
1987 Protests and Democratic Shift	Protests in 1987 forced Chun's government to accept direct presidential elections and his ally, Roh Tae-woo, won the presidency

Current Scenario

Constitutional Provision:

Article 77 of South Korea's Constitution permits the President to declare martial law during war, armed conflict, or national emergencies to maintain public order and enact special measures limiting rights like freedom of speech and press.

Declaration:

On December 3, 2024, President Yoon Suk Yeol declared martial law in Seoul, citing governance challenges due to opposition control of the National Assembly, declining approval ratings, and tensions over the 2024 budget.

Response:

The National Assembly voted 204-85 to impeach Yoon, accusing him of rebellion and claiming martial law is reserved for wartime. Massive protests erupted in Seoul.

Consequences:

» **Presidential Suspension**: Yoon's powers will be suspended upon impeachment delivery. The Constitutional Court has up to 180 days to decide his fate. A unanimous decision by the six current justices is needed to remove him. If upheld, elections must occur within 60 days.

» **Legal Investigation**: Yoon faces potential charges of rebellion and abuse of power, with penalties ranging from life imprisonment to the death penalty.

» **Defense**: Yoon argued his declaration aimed to preserve constitutional order, not rebellion.

Disputes over judicial appointments and precedents complicate the process.

MARTIAL LAW IN INDIA

Has Martial Law Ever Been Used in India?

» India has **never declared martial law since independence** and the Indian Constitution **does not explicitly define "martial law**."

  o However, **Article 34** allows Parliament to indemnify individuals for acts performed in connection with maintaining order during martial law in specific areas, suggesting its potential invocation.

What Mechanisms Does India Use Instead of Martial Law ?

» Instead, India relies on constitutional emergency provisions like **Article 352** (national emergency), **Article 356** (state emergency), and **Article 360** (financial emergency) to address extraordinary situations.

» Although these provisions are less severe than martial law, they have faced criticism for overreach, particularly during the **Emergency of 1975-77**.

Why Is Martial Law Included in the Constitution?

» Martial law is included in the Constitution as a last resort for extreme situations, such as insurrections or invasions, where civilian governance fails, ensuring a legally defined mechanism to restore order

How does Habeas Corpus protect civil liberties during emergencies?

» Known as the 'first security of civil liberty,' the writ of Habeas Corpus ensures protection against illegal detention.

  o **Case Laws & Constitutional Safeguards:**

    • **ADM Jabalpur v. Shivkant Shukla (1976)**:

      ◦ The Supreme Court held (4:1 majority) that **fundamental rights**, including the writ of Habeas Corpus, **can be suspended during emergencies.**

      ◦ Justice H.R. Khanna's dissent argued that the right to life and liberty cannot be at the mercy of the State.

    • **Constitution (44th Amendment) Act, 1978**:

      ◦ Amended Article 359 to ensure that Articles 20 (protection in respect of conviction for offences) and 21 (protection of life and personal liberty) cannot be suspended during emergencies.

      ◦ **Guarantees the availability of Habeas Corpus** even under martial law or emergency conditions.

    • **K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)**:

      ◦ Explicitly overruled the ADM Jabalpur case.

      ◦ Held that the **right to life and personal liberty**, including Habeas Corpus, is inalienable and **cannot be suspended even during emergencies.**

ARMED FORCES (SPECIAL POWERS) ACT (AFSPA), 1958

➡ **Timeline of AFSPA's Evolution**

o **1942**: Originated from British-era legislation used to suppress the Quit India Movement.

o **1947**: Introduced as four ordinances post-Independence to address internal disturbances.

o **1948**: Replaced by an act to formalise its enforcement.

o **1958**: Enacted as the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act, targeting the Naga uprising.

• Extended to Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland as these states were created

o **1972**: Amended to empower both central and state governments to declare areas as "disturbed."

o **1990**: Enforced in Jammu and Kashmir under the Armed Forces (J&K) Special Powers Act, 1990.

➡ **A De-Facto Martial Law:** While martial law has never been officially declared in India, AFSPA's provisions function similarly, granting military personnel powers that override civilian governance and legal processes.

➡ **Status:**

o Currently applicable in Arunachal Pradesh,Assam, Nagaland,Manipur.

o Completely withdrawn in Meghalaya in 2018, Tripura in 2015 and Mizoram in the 1980s.

➡ **Features**

o **Section 3: Empowerment to Declare Disturbed Areas**

• Allows the government or governor to declare any area as "disturbed" and deploy military forces to restore order, similar to martial law.

o **Section 4(a): Use of Force**

• Military personnel can use lethal force to maintain public order, even for minor violations such as unlawful assemblies.

o **Section 4(c): Arbitrary Arrests**

• Grants military personnel the power to arrest individuals without a warrant based on suspicion of committing a cognizable offense

o **Section 4(d): Search Powers**

• Allows military personnel to search premises without a warrant

o **Section 6: Immunity for Military Personnel**

• Grants immunity to military personnel from legal action for acts performed under the Act

CONCLUSION

Martial law, while addressing immediate crises, must not erode the foundational principles of democracy and justice. Ensuring accountability and adherence to constitutional safeguards is essential to prevent misuse and uphold public trust.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Critically examine the role of emergency provisions in addressing governance challenges and discuss how these provisions can be balanced to prevent authoritarian overreach **(10 marks) (150 words)**

WEEKLY DOSSIERS

PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU - THE ARCHITECT OF MODERN INDIA

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first and longest-serving Prime Minister, was instrumental in shaping the nation's post-independence trajectory. A visionary leader, he laid the foundations of democratic governance, industrial development, secularism, and a pluralistic society. His leadership during India's formative years serves as a model for navigating challenges while holding onto principles.
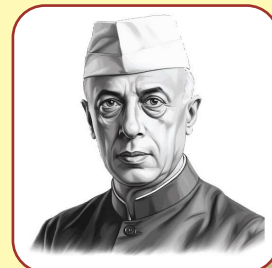
KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

◊ **Visionary Leadership**

o Nehru's idea of nation-building included modern education, industrialization, and scientific advancement. He referred to dams, steel plants, and research institutes as **"temples of modern India."**

o His emphasis on long-term planning was evident in his **Five-Year Plans, prioritizing infrastructure, education, and self-reliance.**

◊ **Democratic Foundations**

o Nehru was committed to democracy despite the complexities of a diverse nation. He ensured free and fair elections, beginning with the **1952 general elections**, where symbols were introduced to help illiterate voters.

o He promoted decentralization and allowed state-level party organizations to select their leaders, respecting democratic processes.

◊ **Secularism and Pluralism**

o Nehru practiced secularism, refusing to retaliate against minorities during Partition violence and advocating equality for all citizens regardless of religion.

o He resisted pressures to create a Hindu state, emphasizing India's secular ideals. His actions during the Partition riots and personal decisions, like retaining Muslim staff in his household, reflected his commitment.

◊ **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)**

o Nehru maintained India's sovereignty in foreign policy, steering clear of **Cold War alliances with the United States or the Soviet Union.**

o He championed Panchsheel, a set of principles for peaceful coexistence, and played a pivotal role in the NAM, emphasizing India's neutral stance in global conflicts.

◊ **Industrial and Educational Advancement**

o Nehru established premier institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

o He supported large-scale industrialization, believing it essential for economic transformation and global relevance.

◊ **Social Reforms**

o Nehru championed women's rights, land reforms, and measures to reduce caste-based inequalities.

o His secular and inclusive policies fostered social cohesion in a deeply divided society.

CHALLENGES AND CRITICISMS

◊ **China Conflict**

o The 1962 Sino-Indian War was a significant setback, with the betrayal of Panchsheel principles by China leading to Nehru's emotional distress.

◊ **Economic Criticism**

o While Nehru emphasized large-scale industrialization, critics argue that neglecting small-scale industries and agriculture contributed to economic disparities.

LEGACY

◊ **Democratic Resilience**

o Nehru nurtured India's democracy, setting strong institutional foundations that endure today. His respect for judicial independence and willingness to amend laws democratically highlight his dedication.

◊ **Secular Values**

o He instilled secularism as a national ethos, safeguarding minorities and promoting harmony.

LESSONS FOR LEADERSHIP

◊ **Balancing Vision with Pragmatism**

o Nehru exemplified how leaders must balance long-term vision with immediate priorities, making hard choices while considering resource constraints.

◊ **Inclusive Governance**

o His respect for diverse opinions and decentralized

◊ **Industrial and Scientific Progress**

o Nehru's focus on education and science paved the way for India's global achievements in technology, space exploration, and research.

decision-making underscores the importance of inclusive governance in a democracy.

◊ **Adapting to Challenges**

o Despite setbacks like the Sino-Indian War, Nehru remained committed to his principles, showing resilience and adaptability.

CONCLUSION

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's legacy as the father of Indian democracy is a testament to his vision, dedication, and leadership. His efforts to build a pluralistic, democratic, and self-reliant India offer invaluable lessons for modern governance.

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH - MAN BEHIND MODERN INDIA'S ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

Dr. Manmohan Singh, India's 14th Prime Minister, served from 2004 to 2014, overseeing an era of unprecedented economic growth and social development. A celebrated economist and visionary, his leadership played a pivotal role in shaping India's economic trajectory and emphasizing inclusive growth. This case study explores his contributions, leadership style, and challenges during his tenure.

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

◊ **Economic Growth**

o **Prime Minister (2004–2014):**

- India's economy grew at an average rate of **7.7%**, achieving its highest growth in history.

- Under his leadership, India emerged as the **third-largest global economy** (PPP terms) by 2014, growing from 10th place in 2004.

- The economy nearly doubled in size, reaching close to a **$2 trillion GDP**.

o **Finance Minister (1991–1996):**

- Instrumental in launching **economic reforms in 1991**, liberalizing trade, reducing fiscal deficits, and opening markets to foreign investment.

- His 1991 Budget Speech marked the beginning of India's transformation into a global economic power.

o **Global Economic Crises**

- Navigated the **2008 global financial crisis** successfully, implementing stimulus measures to sustain growth and employment.

◊ **Rights-Based Policies for Inclusive Growth**

o Introduced landmark legislation to ensure **inclusive growth** and socio-economic equity:

- **Right to Education Act (2009):** Guaranteed free and compulsory education.

- **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA, 2005):** Provided rural employment opportunities.

- **Right to Food Act (2013):** Ensured food security for millions.
- **Right to Information Act (2005):** Empowered citizens with transparency in governance.

◇ **Global Leadership**

o **Foreign Policy Initiatives:**

- Signed the **Indo-US Civil Nuclear Agreement**, ending decades of nuclear isolation and enabling energy security.
- Strengthened India's position in global forums like the **G20** and **BRICS**, showcasing India as an emerging economic leader.

o Advocated for peace and economic cooperation with neighboring countries, including initiating talks with Pakistan and pursuing closer ties with ASEAN nations.

◇ **Institution Building**

o Laid a strong foundation for **higher education and innovation**, enhancing funding for institutions like IITs and IIMs.

o Advocated for increased investment in science, technology, and renewable energy.

◇ **Steady Leadership and Integrity**

o Known for his **humble demeanor** and intellectual rigor, Dr. Singh inspired trust among global leaders and the Indian populace.

o His ability to navigate political complexities within a coalition government underscored his commitment to governance.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

◇ **Accountable Prime minister**

o During his tenure as Prime Minister from 2004 to 2014, Dr. Manmohan Singh attended a total of 117 press conferences. This included various types of interactions, such as those on foreign trips, annual pressers, domestic/state visits, and election-related events

◇ **Consensus-Driven Leadership**

o Dr. Singh emphasized collaboration and consensus,

especially in coalition settings, ensuring stability and continuity.

◇ **Technocrat Prime Minister**

o Leveraged his background as an economist and administrator to make informed policy decisions.

◇ **Ethics and Humility**

o Renowned for his integrity and unassuming nature, he remained steadfast in prioritizing national interests over personal or political gains.

LEGACY

◇ **Economic Architect:**

o Dr. Singh will be remembered as the architect of modern India's economic reforms, initiating policies that transitioned India into a global economic power.

◇ **Champion of Inclusivity:**

o His focus on rights-based legislation redefined governance by placing the welfare of marginalized sections at the forefront.

◇ **Global Statesman:**

o Strengthened India's global standing through strategic partnerships and advocacy for multilateralism.

CONCLUSION

Dr. Manmohan Singh's tenure as Prime Minister represents an era of transformative growth, resilience, and inclusive development in India. His legacy as a statesman, reformer, and visionary continues to inspire leaders in India and beyond. His leadership style, rooted in humility and intellect, offers enduring lessons for governance in complex democracies.

M T VASUDEVAN NAIR - CHRONICLER OF A TRANSFORMING KERALA

M.T. Vasudevan Nair (1933-2024), fondly known as M.T., stands as a towering figure in Indian literature and cinema. His works, spanning novels, short stories, screenplays, and films, provide a deep insight into the socio-political evolution of Kerala. This case study examines his contributions, exploring the themes, societal impact, and legacy of his multifaceted career

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF M T VASUDEVAN NAIR

◊ **Novels**

o *Naalukettu* (1958), *Pathiravum Pakalvelichavum* (1959), *Arabi Ponnu* (1960), *Asuravithu* (1962), *Manju* (1964), *Kaalam* (1969), *Vilapayathra* (1978), *Randamoozham* (1984), *Varanasi* (2002).

◊ **Short Story Collections**

o *Raktham Puranda Mantharikal* (1952), *Veyilum Nilavum* (1954), *Vedanayude Pookkal* (1955), *Ninte Ormakku* (1956), *Olavum Theeravum* (1957), *Iruttinte Athmavu* (1957), *Kuttyedathy* (1959), *Nashtappetta Dinangal* (1960), *Bandhanam* (1963), *Kaliveedu* (1966), *Pathanam* (1966), *Varikkuzhi* (1967), *Dar-S-Salam* (1970), *Swargam Thurakkunna Samayam* (1980), *Vanaprastham* (1992), *Sherlek* (1998).

◊ **Screenplays**

o *Ente Priyapetta Thirakathakal*, *Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha*, *Vaisali*, *Perumthachan*, *Panchagni*, *Aalkkoottathil Thaniye*, *Nakhakshathangal*, *Sukrutham*, *Ennu Swantham Janakikutty*, *Adiyozhukkukal*, *Nirmalyam*, *Olavum Theeravum*, *Daya*, *Oru Cheru Punchiri*, *M.T.yude Anchu Thirakathakal*, and *Naalu Thirakathakal*.

◊ **Early Life and Rise in Literature**

o **Background**: Born in Kudallur, a village near Ponnani, M.T.'s early environment was deeply rooted in Kerala's agrarian culture, which heavily influenced his works.

o **Early Achievements**: His short story *Valarthumrigangal* marked his literary debut, winning a prestigious competition. At 29, he wrote *Asuravithu*, hailed as a masterpiece of Malayalam literature.

◊ **Themes in Literature**:

o **Sociopolitical Context**: His works reflected the disintegration of feudal systems, migration to urban centers, and the struggles of adapting to a modern economy.

o **Human Condition**: M.T.'s protagonists were deeply flawed, mirroring the challenges of Kerala's middle-class aspirations and cultural transitions.

◊ **Literary Contributions**

o **Notable Works**:

- *Naalukettu* (1958) explored the decline of Nair taravads (joint families) and their socio-economic collapse.

- *Kaalam* (1969), *Randamoozham* (1984), and *Swargam Thurakkunna Samayam* delved into existential struggles and mythological reinterpretations.

o **Recognition**:

- Awarded the Jnanpith Award (1995) and Kerala Sahitya Akademi accolades.

- *Randamoozham*, a retelling of the Mahabharata from Bhima's perspective, won the Vayalar Award in 1985.

◊ **Screenwriting and Cinematic Vision**

o **Entry into Cinema**: Debuted with *Murappennu* (1965), which set the tone for a prolific screenwriting career.

o **Phases of Screenwriting**:

- **Early Phase (1960s-70s)**: Focused on rural Kerala and traditional Nair life (*Murappennu*, *Nirmalyam*).

- **Commercial Success (1980s)**: Explored urban conflicts, middle-class aspirations, and interpersonal relationships (*Panchagni*, *Aalkoottathil Thaniye*).

- **Mythological Retellings (1990s-2010s)**: Focused on legends and historical narratives (*Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha*, *Pazhassi Raja*).

  o **Distinctive Style**:

  - Balanced artistic sensibility with mass appeal.

  - Intertwined personal dilemmas with larger socio-cultural shifts.

◊ **Impact on Kerala's Socio Political Landscape**

o **Chronicler of Change**: M.T.'s narratives captured Kerala's transition from feudalism to modernity, highlighting the tension between tradition and progress.

o **Advocacy for Secularism**: A staunch believer in Nehruvian ideals, his works championed pluralism and democratic values.

o **Environmental and Social Activism**:

- Vocal against ecological degradation, including protests against the Mavoor Gwalior Rayon factory and a proposed atomic power plant at Peringome.

- Advocated for tribal rights and sustainable development.

◊ **Legacy and Influence**

o **Mentorship**: As editor of *Mathrubhumi Magazine*, M.T. nurtured young writers, ensuring a vibrant literary future for Malayalam.

o **Cultural Significance**:

- His films and writings remain cultural touchstones, exploring timeless themes of human vulnerability, resilience, and adaptation.

- Contributions to cinema elevated Malayalam filmmaking on the global stage.

o **Recognition and Honors**:

- Padma Bhushan (2005), Sahitya Akademi Award (1970), and Kerala's Ezhuthachan Award (2011).

KEY TAKEWAYS FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS AND WRITERS

◊ **Understanding Locality**: M.T. demonstrated the power of rooting narratives in local culture while addressing universal themes.

◊ **Interdisciplinary Creativity**: His seamless transition between literature and cinema serves as an inspiration for modern storytellers.

◊ **Commitment to Craft**: His meticulous approach to writing and filmmaking underscores the importance of craft in achieving timeless appeal.

◊ **Social Responsibility**: Advocated for freedom of expression and remained a vocal critic of autocracy, setting a benchmark for intellectual integrity.

CONCLUSION

M.T. Vasudevan Nair's life and works embody a bridge between tradition and modernity, chronicling Kerala's cultural renaissance with unparalleled depth. His legacy as a writer, filmmaker, and public intellectual will continue to inspire generations, making him a timeless icon of Indian cultural history.

ETHICS - CASE STUDY

Q) Sathish, a young employee, has been diagnosed with a chronic illness that severely affects his ability to work. As the condition recurs, he frequently misses work, leading to an accumulation of tasks. This situation creates a dilemma for his manager, who must balance the desire to support Sathish during his difficult time with the need to meet the department's productivity goals. Sathesh, being the only child of elderly parents, faces the additional concern that losing his job would impact not only him but also his family.

a. What course of action should the superior take that does not undermine Sathish, and yet, at the same time help him carry out his responsibilities?

ETHICS - EXAMPLES

1. **Freedom of Choice:** A planned get-together in Aligarh to celebrate the return of an interfaith couple was cancelled after protests from Hindu outfits over concerns about interactions between different communities. The couple, married in the US under the Special Marriage Act, decided to call off the event due to the protests.

2. **Resilience:** Simran Shaikh, a cricketer from Dharavi, was bought by Gujarat Giants for Rs 1.90 crore at the Women's Premier League (WPL) auction. Despite early criticism from neighbours for playing with boys, Simran's father who is an electrician supported her passion for cricket.

3. **Workplace Ethics:** Tata Steel launched India's first all-women shift at its Noamundi Iron Mine, involving women in roles like operating Heavy Earth Moving Machinery (HEMM) . This initiative builds on diversity programmes like "Women@Mines" and "Tejaswini," training local women for mining operations.

4. **Environmental Ethics:** Padma Shri awardee Tulsi Gowda, an 86-year-old environmentalist from Karnataka revered as the "tree goddess," passed away. Known for planting over 1 lakh trees, she contributed to afforestation, strengthened community and wildlife reserves, and played a key role in conserving Karnataka's diverse ecosystems.

5. **Empowerment:** Vijaya Vasave, Maharashtra's first transgender forest guard, overcame abuse, societal rejection, and physical challenges to achieve this historic milestone. Born into a tribal family, she pursued higher education, completed her gender transition, and cleared rigorous recruitment tests.

6. **Fairness/Justice:** Pawan Kumar Rai, a chhole bhature seller, had his bank account frozen for over two months due to a Rs 105 UPI credit linked to a cyber fraud case, affecting his livelihood. The Delhi High Court intervened, ordering the bank to unfreeze the account while marking a lien on the amount, emphasizing the violation of his fundamental right to livelihood.

7. **Environmental Ethics:** The National Green Tribunal ordered Kerala to remove biomedical and mixed waste, including waste from the Regional Cancer Centre in Thiruvananthapuram, dumped in Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli district within three days. This recurring issue remains unresolved despite previous incidents and unpaid dues of ₹69,000 from Kerala.

8. **Social Responsibility**: The 29th International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) hosted Cine Blood, a blood donation drive blending cinema and social responsibility. Inaugurated by Prem Kumar, it aims to inspire a cultural movement combining art and humanitarian efforts.

9. **Ethics in Public Administration:** Puvarti, a Maoist-affected village in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district, experienced television for the first time under the state's Niyad Nellanar Yojana. Solar-powered appliances and TV sets were provided, marking a milestone in connecting the remote village to the wider world.

MODEL ESSAY

"Progress is the attraction that moves humanity"

Introduction

- Quote by Jamaican activist Marcus Garvey

- Define progress - continuous improvement and innovation.

- Meaning: Progress is a fundamental driving force for humanity, inspiring advancements across various domains.

Essence of Progress

- **Continuous Improvement**: Progress reflects humanity's pursuit of betterment in living standards, knowledge, and capabilities.

- **Innovation and Adaptation**: It thrives on creativity and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

- **Collective Growth**: True progress ensures inclusivity, balancing individual and societal advancements.

Types of Progress

- **Technological**: Advancements in science and technology, such as AI, space exploration, renewable energy.

- **Economic**: Growth in GDP, improved trade, industrialisation, increased employment.

- **Social**: Advancements in education, healthcare, gender equality, social justice.

- **Cultural**: Preservation and promotion of art, heritage, diversity while embracing new ideas.

- **Political**: Strengthening democratic institutions, governance reforms, global cooperation for peace.

Challenges to progress

- **Ethical Dilemmas:** Balancing innovation with morality and privacy concerns. **Eg**: CRISPR raises concerns over "designer babies."

- **Environmental Degradation:** Overexploitation of natural resources due to industrialisation and urbanisation.**Eg**: Amazon deforestation worsens climate change.

- **Social Inequality:** Uneven distribution of the benefits widening rich -poor gap **Eg**: Digital divide limits rural development.

- **Cultural Erosion:** Loss of traditional values and indigenous practices in the face of modernisation **Eg**: Indigenous languages vanish due to globalisation.

- **Technological Dependence:** Overreliance on technology leading to vulnerabilities and reduced human skills.**Eg**: Cyberattacks disrupt essential services

Way Forward

- Ensure progress **benefits all sections of society**, bridging gaps in income, education, and healthcare access.

- Integrate **environmental sustainability**-balance growth with ecological preservation.

- **Invest in science, technology, and research** -address pressing global challenges.

- Facilitate c**ollaboration between governments, businesses, and communitie**s to achieve shared developmental goals.

Conclusion

- Emphasis on the need for balanced, sustainable, and ethical progress.

- Progress defines the purpose and potential of humanity.

Sample Quotes

- The world is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced- Soren Kierkegaard

- A man who stands for nothing will fall for anything- Malcom X

- Cultivation of mind should be the ultimate aim of human existence- B R Ambedkar

MAINS JOT DOWN

GS- II - *HEALTH*

➡️ Tamil Nadu has requested the Union government to include the **mumps vaccine** in the **Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)**.

➡️ Mumps

» It is a viral infection affecting the salivary glands, usually mild, with symptoms like jaw swelling, fever, and fatigue.

» It spreads through direct contact or airborne droplets from infected individuals.

GS- III - *INDUSTRY*

➡️ The Union Minister of Jal Shakti inaugurated the **Climate Smart Agro-Textile Demonstration Center in Navsari, Gujarat**, under the **National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM).**

➡️ Agrotextiles are technical textiles used in agriculture for protection, collection, and storage of products.

➡️ They include woven, nonwoven, and knitted fabrics designed for performance rather than decoration.
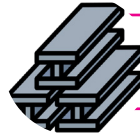
GS- II - *GOVERNANCE*

➡️ On Good Governance Day (25th December), the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions launched the **'Viksit Panchayat Karmayogi'** initiative.

» **Objective:** To strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) by providing elected representatives and officials with the skills and knowledge for effective governance and participatory planning.

» The initiative is part of the **'Prashasan Gaon Ki Aur'** campaign, promoting decentralized governance and decision-making at the grassroots level.

GS- III - *ENERGY*

➡️ **Masali village (Gujarat) has become India's first border solar village**, generating 100% of its electricity through solar power.

➡️ This was achieved under the **Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana**, which aims to provide free rooftop solar installations and up to 300 monthly units of electricity for 1 crore households.

➡️ The scheme, managed by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, will run until the financial year 2026-27.

GS- III -*POLLUTION*

➡️ Recent studies show that **indoor air pollution, primarily from household sources, contributes significantly to PM 2.5 emissions in 29 cities**, including Srinagar, Kanpur, and Allahabad.

➡️ Household air pollution arises from the use of inefficient fuels (kerosene, biomass) and poorly ventilated homes.

➡️ It releases black carbon and methane, both potent climate pollutants.

➡️ Health impacts include stroke, heart disease, and lung cancer, especially affecting women and children.

➡️ High arsenic levels have been found in rice and wheat in 11 districts of Bihar, linked to groundwater contamination, as detected by Patna's Cancer Research Centre.

➡️ **Arsenic:**

» A toxic, odorless metalloid.

» **Causes:** Natural (river pattern changes) and anthropogenic (mining, excessive groundwater extraction).

» **Health Effects:** Skin keratinization, hyperpigmentation, arsenicosis, and hyperkeratosis.

GS- II - *GOVERNEMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS*

- ROn National Consumer Day 2024 (24th December), the Ministry of Consumer Affairs launched key initiatives to protect consumer rights:
  - » **Jago Grahak Jago App**, **Jagriti App**, and **Jagriti Dashboard** to safeguard consumers from deceptive practices.
  - » **National Legal Metrology e-Mapp** to enhance transparency and efficiency in governance.
  - » **Revamped National Consumer Helpline Portal (NCH 2.0)** for quicker grievance resolution, multilingual support, and AI-powered features.
- National Consumer Day commemorates the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

GS- II - *EDUCATION*

- CSIR conducted a Scientific Aptitude Assessment under the **JIGYASA** program, launched with Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS).
- **About JIGYASA:**
  - » Enhances classroom learning with research-based, hands-on lab experiences for school students.
  - » Promotes curiosity and scientific temperament under Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR).
  - » Activities: Lab visits, experiments, science clubs, tinkering labs, and student residential programs.

GS- III - *INFRASTRUCTURE*

- India's first **National Highway made with Bio-Bitumen** was inaugurated on the **Nagpur-Mansar Bypass of NH 44.**
- Bio-bitumen
  - » It is a petroleum-free alternative made from organic materials like bio-char, stubble, and bio-oil.
  - » It reduces bitumen usage, addresses stubble burning, and promotes the bio-economy.
  - » Other sustainable road construction methods include copper slag, geotextiles, and cold asphalt mix. Benefits include reduced imports and environmental impact.

GS- II - *STATUTORY BODY*

- The President of India appointed former **Supreme Court Judge V. Ramasubramanian as the Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).**
- **About NHRC**
  - » **Established**: Under the Protection of Human Rights (PHR) Act, 1993, amended in 2006 and 2019.
  - » **Composition**: Chairperson (former CJI or SC Judge), 5 full-time members, and 7 deemed members.
  - » **Tenure**: Chairperson and members serve for 3 years or until age 70, whichever is earlier, with reappointment eligibility.

CHERRYPICKS OF THE WEEK

WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH

- It is a collaborative effort between different government agencies, ministries, and public administrations to tackle issues and provide solutions.
- It involves working across government sectors and levels, and can include restructuring and cross-boundary work.

PPIS (PREPAID PAYMENT INSTRUMENTS)

- They are tools used for purchasing goods, services, conducting financial transactions, and enabling remittances, with value stored in them (e.g., mobile wallets, gift cards).
- They can be issued by banks or non-banks and are classified into two types: **small PPIs** (with minimal holder details) and **Full KYC PPIs**.

E-WAY BILL

- It is a document required for goods worth over Rs. 50,000, to be carried by the person in charge of the conveyance.
- Mandated by Section 68 of the GST Act, it must be generated on the GST Common Portal by registered persons or transporters before goods are moved.

LANDSLIDE DAM LAKE

- It forms when earth slumps, slides, mudflows, or rock avalanches block narrow river valleys with steep mountain slopes.
- The resulting dam traps water, forming a lake behind it due to continuous river inflow.

GENCAST AI

- Google DeepMind's **GenCast AI** is an advanced weather forecasting model that offers improved accuracy and extended forecasting range.
- It uses AI-powered ensemble forecasting, which combines multiple numerical weather prediction models with varied starting conditions to predict a range of weather outcomes.