

INDIAN POLITY**India celebrates 73rd Republic Day**

Republic Day (73rd) is celebrated every year on 26th January to commemorate the adoption of the Indian Constitution, which came into effect on this day in 1950. The Constitution is the supreme law of the land and citizens are expected to abide by it.

Important Points

- India became an independent nation on 15th August, 1947 — a date thrust upon by Lord Louis Mountbatten, as it marked the second anniversary of Japan's submission to allied powers after World War II.
- After India became independent, it did not have its own constitution. The laws were based on a common law system and a modified version of the "Government of India Act, 1935", which was brought in by the British government.
- Approximately two weeks later, a Drafting Committee was appointed to draft the Indian Constitution with Dr BR Ambedkar as the chairman. The Indian Constitution was finally ready and adopted on 26th November, 1949 (Constitution Day).
 - The Constitution came into effect after two months, on 26th January, 1950.
- The Indian National Congress, on 19th December, 1929, passed a historic resolution of "Purna Swaraj" or complete self-rule at its Lahore session.
- It was declared by the Congress party that 26th January, 1930, will be celebrated as "Independence Day" by the Indians.
 - Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who was the President of Congress party, hoisted the tricolor on the banks of the Ravi river in Lahore. This day was celebrated as Purna Swaraj day for the next 17 years.
- Thus, when the Constitution of India was adopted on 26th November, 1949, many considered it necessary to celebrate and enforce the document on a day associated with national pride, which was – 26th January.

Significance:

- Republic day is a monumental day in Indian history because it was on this day that India adopted its own Constitution and declared its own laws of the land.
- The British colonial Government of India Act (1935) was finally replaced and the country was set to make a fresh start.
- Additionally, it was also on this day that the Preamble of the Constitution of India came into effect.
- The Preamble is largely a comprehensive statement that presents the key principles of the Constitution.
- On this day India shed the last relic of the colonial system and effected a new dawn by becoming a Sovereign Democratic Republic.
- The day is an occasion to commemorate the values of our democracy and Republic, to reaffirm our commitment to liberty, fraternity and equality across our society and among all our citizens.
- The day celebrates the desire of a huge nation that wants to be governed through one single constitution giving another example of India's unity in diversity.

Threats to Indian Democracy:

- Although India has made a place for itself as one of the fastest growing economies in the world, it loses behind a lot in the name of growth.
- **Poverty** remains the biggest challenge of present day India, the majority of the people continue to live below the poverty line with a huge divide between the rich and the poor.
- Gender discrimination remains at all level with skewed female ratio, few economic opportunities, disparities in wages, violence, malnutrition etc.
- Communalism and religious fundamentalism have acquired a very dangerous form and alarming proportion in India. It is an affront to India's nationalist identity and a tragic setback to its evolving secular culture.
- Indian democracy also struggles with regionalism which is primarily an outcome of regional disparities and imbalances in development.
- Continued feeling of inequality both among and within state creates a feeling of neglect, deprivation and discrimination.

- Elections which serve as the most evident expression of democracy are affected by money and muscle abuse by politicians and political parties.
- Most of the politicians have pending criminal cases against them, source of funding for elections remains questionable.

Sovereign, Democratic, Republic

- **Sovereign:** The word 'sovereign' implies that India is neither a dependency nor a dominion of any other nation, but an independent state. There is no authority above it, and it is free to conduct its own affairs.
- **Democratic:** It is based on the doctrine of popular sovereignty, that is, possession of supreme power by the people.
- **Republic:** Preamble indicates that India has an elected head called the President. He is elected indirectly for a fixed period of five years.

Governance

India's Rank is 85th in Corruption Perception Index

Recently, the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2021 was released by Transparency International. Overall, the CPI shows that control of corruption has stagnated or worsened in 86% of countries over the last decade.

Transparency International

It is an international non-governmental organisation founded in 1993 based in Berlin, Germany. Its non-profit purpose is to take action to combat global Corruption with civil societal anti-corruption measures and to prevent criminal activities arising from corruption. Its most notable publications include the Global Corruption Barometer and the Corruption Perception Index.

Important Points

- The Index ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and businesspeople.
- It relies on 13 independent data sources and uses a scale of zero to 100, where zero is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.
- More than two-thirds of countries (68%) score below 50 and the average global score remains static at 43. Since 2012, 25 countries significantly improved their scores, but in the same period 23 countries significantly declined.

Top performers:

- This year, the top countries are Denmark, Finland and New Zealand, each with a score of 88. Norway (85), Singapore (85), Sweden (85), Switzerland (84), the Netherlands (82), Luxembourg (81) and Germany (80) complete the top 10.

Bottom Performers:

- South Sudan (11), Syria (13) and Somalia (13) remain at the bottom of the index. Countries experiencing armed conflict or authoritarianism tend to earn the lowest scores, including Venezuela (14), Afghanistan (16), North Korea (16), Yemen (16), Equatorial Guinea (17), Libya (17) and Turkmenistan (19).

India's Performance:

- India ranked 85 among 180 countries in the current index (86 in 2020 and 80 in 2019). Transparency International gave India a CPI score of 40.
 - Except Bhutan, all of India's neighbours are ranked below it. Pakistan dropped 16 spots in the index and was ranked at 140.
- The country's score has remained stagnant over the past decade, some of the mechanisms that could help reign in corruption are weakening.
- There are concerns over the country's democratic status, as fundamental freedoms and institutional checks and balances decay.
 - Anyone that speaks up against the government has been targeted with security, defamation, sedition, hate speech and contempt-of-court charges, and with regulations on foreign funding.

Fall of Democracy:

- From the repression of opposition supporters in Belarus, to the closing of media outlets and civil society organisations in Nicaragua, the deadly violence against protesters in Sudan and the killing of human rights defenders in the Philippines, human rights and democracy are under threat around the world.

- Increasingly, rights and checks and balances are being undermined not only in countries with systemic corruption and weak institutions, but also among established democracies.
 - Since 2012, 90% of countries have stagnated or declined in their civil liberties score on the Democracy Index.
- The global Covid-19 pandemic has also been used in many countries as an excuse to curtail basic freedoms and side-step important checks and balances.
- And despite the increasing international momentum to end the abuse of anonymous shell companies, many high-scoring countries with relatively “clean” public sectors continue to enable transnational corruption.
- The current wave of authoritarianism is not driven by coups and violence, but by gradual efforts to undermine democracy. This usually begins with attacks on civil and political rights, efforts to undermine the autonomy of oversight and election bodies, and control of the media.
- Such attacks allow corrupt regimes to evade accountability and criticism, allowing corruption to flourish.

Suggestions:**Peoples Demand:**

- To end the vicious cycle of corruption, human rights violations and democratic decline, people should demand that their governments:
 - Uphold the rights needed to hold power to account.
 - Restore and strengthen institutional checks on power.
 - Combat transnational forms of corruption.
 - Uphold the right to information in government spending.

Address Fundamental Failings:

- To forge ahead together in sustainable anti-corruption efforts, economic recovery strategies should address the fundamental failings that have led to many countries’ corrupt systems.
- Effective control of corruption and common prosperity can only be achieved through the engagement of informed people who are able to assemble freely, speak openly and blow the whistle on corruption without fear of reprisal.

Anti-Corruption Agencies:

- Countries with no anti-corruption agency or weakening institutions should uphold the 2012 Jakarta Statement on Principles for Anti-Corruption Agencies, its Colombo Commentary and regional commitments such as the Tejenywa Vision, alongside all other steps required by the United Nations Convention against Corruption.
 - The United Nations Convention against Corruption is the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument.

International Relation**Diplomatic Ties Between India and Israel**

To mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries, India and Israel launched a commemorative logo. The logo features the Star of David and the Ashoka Chakra—the two symbols that adorn the national flags of both countries— and forms the numeral 30 depicting the 30th anniversary of bilateral relations.

Important Points**Diplomatic Ties:**

- Though India officially recognised Israel in 1950, the two countries established full diplomatic ties only on 29th January 1992. As of December 2020, India was among 164 United Nations (UN) member states to have diplomatic ties with Israel.

Economic and Commercial Relations:

- From USD 200 million in 1992, bilateral merchandise trade stood at USD 4.14 billion (excluding defence) during the period April 2020 – February 2021 with the balance of trade being in India’s favour.
 - Trade in diamonds constitutes about 50% of bilateral trade..
- India is Israel's third-largest trade partner in Asia and seventh largest globally.
 - Israeli companies have invested in India in energy, renewable energy, telecom, real estate, water technologies, and are focusing on setting up R&D centers or production units in India.
- India is also in dialogue with Israel for concluding a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Defence:

- India is the largest buyer of military equipment from Israel, which, in turn, is the second-largest defence supplier to India, after Russia.
- The Indian armed forces have inducted a wide array of Israeli weapon systems over the years, which range from Phalcon AWACS (Airborne Warning And Control Systems) and Heron, Searcher-II and Harop drones to Barak anti-missile defence systems and Spyder quick-reaction anti-aircraft missile systems.
- The acquisitions also include a host of Israeli missiles and precision-guided munitions, from Python and Derby air-to-air missiles to Crystal Maze and Spice-2000 bombs.
- At the 15th Joint Working Group (JWG 2021) meeting on Bilateral Defence Cooperation, countries agreed to form a Task Force to formulate a comprehensive Ten-Year Roadmap to identify new areas of cooperation.

Cooperation in Agriculture:

- In May 2021, “a three-year work program agreement” for development in agriculture cooperation, was signed.
- The programme aims to grow existing Centres of Excellence, establish new centers, increase CoE’s value chain, bring the Centres of Excellence into the self-sufficient mode, and encourage private sector companies and collaboration.

Science & Technology:

- Recently, experts from India and Israel deliberated on widening the scope of India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F) at its 8th Governing Body meeting.
- They approved 3 joint R&D projects worth 5.5 million USD and suggested measures to create a broader India-Israel collaborative ecosystem.
 - I4F is a cooperation between the two countries to promote, facilitate and support joint industrial R&D projects between companies from India and Israel to address the challenges in the agreed ‘Focus Sectors’.

Others:

- Israel is also joining the India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA), which aligns very well with the objectives of both countries to scale up their cooperation in renewable energy and partner in clean energy.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**The United States has unveiled the ambitious COMPETES Act, 2022**

The United States has unveiled the ambitious America Creating Opportunities for Manufacturing, Pre-Eminence in Technology, and Economic Strength (COMPETES) Act, 2022, which proposes to open up new vistas for talented individuals from across the world with a new start-up visa. It aims to make the supply chains stronger and reinvigorate the innovation engine of the country's economy to outcompete China and the rest of the world for decades to come.

Important Points**Provisions:**

- USD 52 billion to encourage semiconductor production in the US and USD 45 billion for grants and loans to improve supply chain resilience and manufacturing, among other programs.
- Funding to address social and economic inequality, climate change and immigration. For example, it offers an exemption for STEM (science, technology, engineering or mathematics) PhDs from the green card limit and creates a new green card for entrepreneurs.
 - A Green Card holder (permanent resident) is someone who has been granted authorization to live and work in the United States on a permanent basis.
- The bill issues USD 600 million a year to build manufacturing facilities to make the United States less dependent on solar components manufactured in Xinjiang, China.
- It creates a new “W” classification of non-immigrants for entrepreneurs with an ownership interest in a start-up entity, essential employees of a start-up entity, and their spouses and children.

Significance:

- It would mean more opportunities in the US for Indian talent and skilled workers.
- Every year, Indians and Indian companies corner the lion’s share of H-1B work permits issued that year. With this new category, Indian professionals will likely have a better shot at opportunities that the Act is likely to provide.

Work Visas

About:

- The IT revolution, arrival of internet and low-cost computers in developing nations like India has given rise to the number of people who are willing to work at relatively low costs in the US which is a win-win situation for both the employer and the employee.
- The US administration issues a certain number of visas each year to fill a vacuum of highly-skilled low-cost employees in IT and other related domains.
- These visas allow companies from outside the US to send employees to work on client sites.

Some Examples from US:

H-1B Visa:

These are issued to skilled workers and are the most popular among Indian IT companies. H-1B is for people in Specialty Occupation and requires a higher education degree or its equivalent.

H-2B Visa:

These are issued to seasonal workers in the landscaping and hospitality industries.

L-1 Visa:

It allows companies to transfer highly skilled workers to the US for a period of up to seven years.

H-4 Visas:

It is for dependents of H-1B visa holders.

J-1 Visas:

It is for students on work-study summer programmes.access to opportunities for improvement.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Highlighting some of the objectives of Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan (Accessible India Campaign), discuss the steps to move towards universal accessibility. (250 words)

Introduction

Accessible India Campaign (AIC) is the nationwide flagship campaign of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPWD), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. The aim of the Campaign is to make a barrier free and conducive environment for Divyangjans all over the country. The campaign has the vision to build an inclusive society in which equal opportunities are provided for the growth and development of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) so that they can lead productive, safe and dignified lives.

Recently, the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) released the new Harmonised Guidelines and Standards for Universal Accessibility in India 2021.

Body

Components of AIC

- Built Environment Accessibility
- Transportation System Accessibility
- Information and Communication Eco-System Accessibility

Objectives of Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan

- Making 50% of all the government buildings of National Capital and all the State capitals fully accessible by December 2018.
- Completing accessibility audit of 50% of government buildings and making them fully accessible in 10 most important cities/towns of States by December 2019.
- Ensuring that 50% of railway stations in the country are converted into fully accessible railway stations by March 2018.
- Ensuring that 25% of Government owned public transport carriers in the country are converted into fully accessible carriers by March 2018.
- Conducting accessibility audit of 50% of all government (both Central and State Governments) websites and converting them into fully accessible websites by March 2017.

About the new guidelines and Steps to move towards universal accessibility

- Earlier, the guidelines were for creating a barrier-free environment, but now we are focusing on universal accessibility.
 - Universal Accessibility refers to the degree to which the environment, products, and services are accessible to people with disabilities.
 - The term barrier-free design used to describe the effort of removing physical barriers from the “built environment” for people with disabilities.

