

GS PAPER3- ECONOMY-INDIAN ECONOMY AND ISSUES RELATING TO PLANNING, MOBILISATION, OF RESOURCES, GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT**Addressing Key Challenges to Boost India's Growth**

The article discusses India's slowing economic growth, highlighting struggles in private investment, low manufacturing capacity, and challenges in infrastructure. It emphasizes the need for proactive policies, increased public investment, a new public-private partnership model, and a stronger bond market for economic expansion.

What Issues are Hindering Economic Growth?

1. **Slowing Growth Rate:** India's growth rate for 2024-25 is estimated at **6.4%**, as per the National Statistics Office, which is lower than earlier projections and the central bank's revised estimates.
2. **Low Private Investment:** Manufacturing capacity utilization has been stuck at **75%** for about a decade, leading to a lack of incentive for private sector investments in factories.
3. **Household Debt:** Household indebtedness has risen, indicating financial strain on families and reducing their ability to spend, which impacts economic growth.
4. **Public Spending Delays:** Up to **November 2024**, the government spent only **46.2%** of its budgeted capital outlay, despite collecting **59%** of budgeted revenues, slowing public investment.
5. **Infrastructure Challenges:** Infrastructure development relies heavily on the government as private sector participation has declined, disrupting the balance needed for optimal results.
6. **Weak Bond Market:** India's bond market is underdeveloped, with uneven regulation by the RBI for government securities and SEBI for corporate bonds. Long debt recovery processes and weak contract enforcement further stifle growth.

What should be done?

1. **Revitalize PPP Models:** Establishing clear public-private partnership frameworks can attract private investment, especially in infrastructure.
2. **Improve the Bond Market:** By reforming the bond market to better integrate government and corporate bonds, and reducing regulatory discrepancies, investment in long-gestation projects could be supported more effectively.
3. **Address Debt Market Issues:** Fixing issues like long debt recovery times and weak contract enforcement is crucial. Making the bond market more accessible can reduce the costs and increase the efficiency of funding infrastructure projects.

GS PAPER2- GOVERNANCE-GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN VARIOUS SECTORS AND ISSUES ARISING OUT OF THEIR DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION**National Sample Survey Contributions and Key Lessons**

The article highlights the National Sample Survey's (NSS) contribution to India's policymaking since the 1950s. It discusses its successes, autonomy, global impact, a flawed 1999-2000 survey, and missed opportunities to involve states and universities in data collection.

What is the Significance of the NSS?

The National Sample Survey (NSS) has provided critical data for India's development plans since the 1950s. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee praised the NSS for its dedicated and often unrecognized work in collecting valuable statistical data through detailed field surveys.

What are the Key Lessons from the NSS?

1. **Importance of Public-Spirited Innovation:**
 - The NSS was established through collaboration with the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) and Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics (GIPE).
 - Its methodology inspired global practices and influenced the US Census modifications in the 1960s.
2. **Need for Autonomy:**
 - The NSS was initially managed by researchers from ISI and became autonomous in 1970, ensuring unbiased data collection.
 - However, autonomy was compromised during the controversial 1999-2000 survey, where political pressures led to a flawed survey design, as criticized by Nobel laureate Angus Deaton.
3. **Challenges of a Centralized Model:**
 - Centralized data collection limited the usefulness of state-level data for policymaking.
 - The original vision of utilizing state data to validate central data never materialized, reducing the potential for localized policy interventions.

What Could Have Been Improved?

1. **Decentralized Data Collection:** The centralized model of the NSS limited the use of state-level data, which was often viewed as unreliable by policymakers. Collaborating with local institutions could have enhanced the diversity and reliability of data sets.
2. **Collaboration with Academic Institutions:** Expanding partnerships beyond initial collaborators like the Indian Statistical Institute could have fostered a richer data ecosystem, improving survey methods and results.
3. **Continuous Innovation:** Following the early years, innovation slowed. Reinvigorating the initial spirit of pilot experiments and analytical studies recommended by the Rangarajan commission could have maintained the NSS's relevance and accuracy.

GS 2- POLITY**Right to Information Act**

The article highlights the challenges facing the implementation and efficacy of the Right to Information (RTI) Act in India, which was enacted nearly two decades ago to promote transparency and accountability in governance. Despite its potential to empower citizens and ensure governmental accountability, successive governments have shown discomfort with the Act's provisions, often attempting to dilute its effectiveness.

Why is the Right to Information Act under threat?

1. Nearly two decades after its enactment, governments remain uncomfortable with the transparency and empowerment the Right to Information (RTI) Act brings.
2. Efforts to weaken the law include:
 - a. Amendments to dilute its efficacy.
 - b. Delays or denials of requested information.
 - c. Undermining the functioning of Information Commissions by leaving vacancies unfilled.

What is the current status of Information Commissions in India?

The Supreme Court noted significant vacancies in both central and State Information Commissions:

- Eight vacancies exist in the Central Information Commission (CIC), with 23,000 appeals pending.
- Some State-level Information Commissions are nearly defunct due to a lack of members to handle cases.

Why are Information Commissions important?

These commissions handle appeals from the public when:

- Access to information is denied.
- No response is received from designated information officers.

What concerns has the Supreme Court raised?

1. The Court questioned how the RTI framework can function effectively without adequate personnel.
2. It highlighted the urgent need to address vacancies to ensure the RTI Act's purpose is fulfilled.

What steps has the Supreme Court mandated?

1. Directed the Department of Personnel and Training to:
 - a. Provide timelines within two weeks for completing the appointment process for CIC vacancies.
 - b. Share details of the search committee and applicants for the posts.
2. States were instructed to complete their appointment processes within a fixed timeframe.

What additional challenges hinder the RTI framework?

1. Non-compliance with the 2019 Supreme Court verdict:
 - a. Governments were instructed to proactively fill vacancies by advertising early.
2. Autonomy of the CIC undermined:
 - a. A fixed five-year tenure for Information Commissioners was replaced with an open-ended tenure.
3. Limited diversity in appointments:
 - a. Preference for retired civil servants over candidates from varied backgrounds, as noted by the Supreme Court.

What are the consequences of vacancies and delays?

1. A large backlog of cases discourages people from filing appeals or seeking information.
2. This aligns with suspicions that those in power deliberately undermine the RTI framework to reduce accountability.

What needs to be done to restore the RTI Act's efficacy?

1. Governments must:
 - a. Expedite appointments and maintain full staffing in Information Commissions.

- b. Comply with court directives on early advertisements for vacancies.
- c. Ensure appointments include diverse candidates and restore the autonomy of the CIC.
2. Without these measures, the RTI Act risks losing its purpose of ensuring transparency and empowering citizens.

GS PAPER- 3- ECONOMY

The Right to Food and Challenges with the PDS

The article delves into the challenges faced by marginalized communities in accessing their fundamental right to food through the Public Distribution System (PDS), particularly in states like Jharkhand, Odisha, and Bihar. It highlights the systemic failures, corruption, and bureaucratic hurdles that have compounded the issues surrounding food security for some of India's most vulnerable populations.

What recent reports have highlighted issues with the Public Distribution System (PDS)?

1. In 2023, reports from Jharkhand and Odisha revealed alarming issues: a substantial number of households were removed from the PDS rolls.
2. Bihar also faces its own PDS crisis, affecting vulnerable communities.

What challenges does the Musahar community face with the PDS in Bihar?

1. **Supply Crisis:** The COVID-19 pandemic left many communities, including the Musahars, without a stable supply of rations.
2. **Ration Card Issues:**
 - a. Many Musahar households in Patna district lack active ration cards.
 - b. Existing ration cards often fail to include all family members.
3. **Biometric Verification Problems:**
 - a. Mandatory biometric verification has resulted in many losing access to rations.
 - b. Names are often struck off the PDS rolls, forcing individuals to apply for new ration cards.
4. **Quality and Quantity of Rations:**
 - a. FPS dealers often provide only 4 kg of rice per person instead of the entitled 5 kg under Priority Household (PHH) cards.
 - b. The rice distributed is of the lowest quality ("Usna" rice), with no wheat issued.

What are the documentation challenges for PDS enrolment?

1. **Application Process in Bihar:**
 - a. Paper-based forms require Aadhaar details.
 - b. Online applications mandate additional documents, including caste, income, and residence certificates.
2. **Legal Basis:**
 - a. The demand for these certificates lacks legal support under the National Food Security Act (2013) or the PDS Control Order (2015).
 - b. Officials acknowledge this requirement as an oversight in the digitised system.

How does systemic failure lead to exploitation?

1. **Middlemen Exploitation:**
 - a. Vulnerable communities, particularly the Musahars, lack resources or knowledge to navigate online systems.
 - b. Middlemen exploit them by charging over ₹3,000 for ration card processing.
 - c. In many cases, neither the card is issued nor the middleman traceable after payment.
2. **Delayed Applications:**
 - a. Applications often remain pending for 4–18 months, far beyond the 30-day timeline stipulated in the 2015 order.

What is the broader implication of these challenges?

1. The government's failure to address systemic flaws has created a bureaucratic maze that denies people access to their basic means of subsistence.
2. Despite the right to food being declared a fundamental right in 2001 (People's Union of Civil Liberties vs Union of India), excessive red tape has obstructed its implementation, harming the very people it aims to serve.

PRELIM FACTS

1. AnemiaPhone

Cornell University researchers have developed AnemiaPhone, a revolutionary technology transferred to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to aid in anaemia alleviation programs.

About AnemiaPhone:

- **Developed by:** Cornell University researchers.
- **Features:**
 - Portable, rapid, and cost-effective.
 - Requires only a finger prick and a drop of blood.
 - Results in minutes, uploaded to a clinical database via mobile, tablet, or computer.
 - Enables healthcare workers to screen, diagnose, and guide on-the-spot interventions.
- **How it works:**
 - Blood is applied to a test strip.
 - The AnemiaPhone reader analyzes the sample.
 - Data is processed and uploaded for immediate action or referral.

About Anaemia:

- **What it is:** A blood disorder caused by insufficient or dysfunctional red blood cells.
- **Causes:**
 - **Iron Deficiency:** The most common cause.
 - **Inherited:** Certain types are passed genetically.
 - **Acquired:** From injuries, illnesses, or poor diet.
- **Symptoms:**
 - Fatigue, chest pain, headache, pale skin, dizziness, shortness of breath, and heart palpitations.

2. Miyawaki Technique

Prayagraj Municipal Corporation has transformed over 56,000 square meters of garbage dumps and barren lands into lush green forests using the Miyawaki Technique.

About Miyawaki Technique:

- **What it is:** A method developed by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki in the 1970s to create dense, fast-growing forests by mimicking natural ecosystems.
- Often referred to as the '**pot plantation method**', it involves planting trees and shrubs close to one another to accelerate their growth.
- **Features:**
 - **Dense Planting:** Plants are placed close together using native species.
 - **Accelerated Growth:** Trees grow 10 times faster than in traditional forests.
 - **Soil Restoration:** Enhances soil fertility and promotes natural regeneration.
 - **Biodiversity Boost:** Supports a wide variety of flora and fauna.
- **Significance:**
 - **Urban Reforestation:** Converts barren and polluted lands into green spaces.
 - **Environmental Benefits:** Reduces air and water pollution, absorbs more carbon, and lowers temperatures by 4-7°C.
 - **Sustainability:** Prevents soil erosion and promotes ecological balance, contributing to long-term environmental restoration.

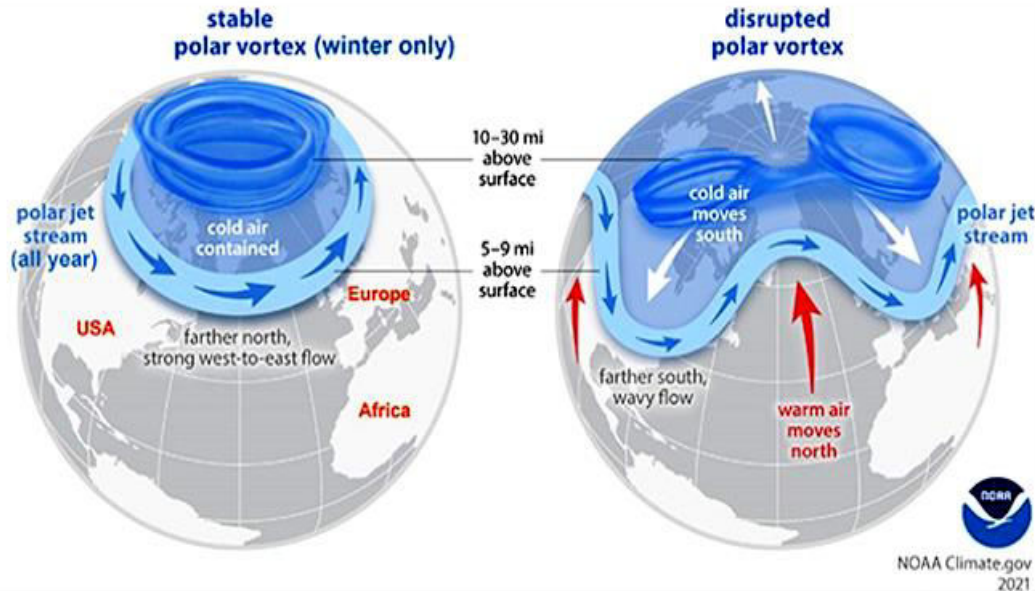
3. Polar Vortex

A severe winter storm recently struck the United States, affecting 60 million people across 30 states, causing power outages and dangerous road conditions.

About Polar Vortex:

- **What it is:** The polar vortex is a massive area of low-pressure, cold air swirling in the Earth's polar regions. It is categorized into **tropospheric** (surface to 15 km) and **stratospheric** (15 to 50 km) vortices.
- **Formation:** Driven by Earth's rotation and temperature differences, it is stabilized by a strong jet stream that separates cold arctic air from warmer regions.
- **Characteristics:**
 - Usually confined to the poles but can weaken and expand southward.
 - Strong polar vortex maintains a steady circular jet stream; a weakened vortex causes wavy jet streams.

What is the polar vortex, anyway?



- **Impacts:**

- **Cold Weather:** Weakening allows cold air to travel southward, affecting areas as far as Florida.
- **Extreme Weather:** Disrupts jet streams, leading to unusual weather patterns, including storms and prolonged cold spells.
- **Economic and Social Disruptions:** Causes power outages, travel delays, and increased heating costs.

4. Recalculated Coastline

India's coastline expanded by almost half in just over five decades from 7,516km in 1970 to 11,098km in 2023-24 according to Ministry of Home Affairs.

About Recalculated Coastline of India:

- **Old vs. New Length:** The coastline expanded from **7,516 km (1970)** to **11,098 km (2023-24)**, marking a **47.6% increase**.
- **Revised Parameters:** Updated methodology incorporates bays, estuaries, inlets, and other geomorphological features, replacing the older straight-line measurement approach.
- **Leading States:**
 - **Gujarat:** Increased from **1,214 km** to **2,340 km**, contributing the most.
 - **West Bengal:** Notable rise of **357%**, from **157 km** to **721 km**.
 - **Tamil Nadu:** Revised to **1,068 km**, overtaking Andhra Pradesh's **1,053 km**.
 - **Puducherry:** Decreased by **4.9 km (10.4%)**, marking a rare contraction.
- **Smallest Increase:** Kerala, with an addition of just **30 km (5%)**.
- **Ministry:** The recalculation was conducted under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), guided by the National Maritime Security Coordinator.
- **Methodology Update:**
 - Based on data from the National Hydrographic Office and Survey of India.
 - Employs advanced technologies for precise measurements, providing a dynamic understanding of the coastline.

5. Flamingo Festival 2025

The Flamingo Festival 2025 is set to return to Andhra Pradesh after a four-year hiatus, celebrating the arrival of migratory birds, particularly flamingos, to Pulicat Lake and Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary.

About Flamingo Festival:

- **What it is:** An annual event celebrating the arrival of migratory birds, focusing on flamingos, to Pulicat Lake and Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary.
- **Locations:** Spread across five key sites Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary, Atakanithippa, BV Palem (Pulicat Lake), Government Junior College in Sullurpet, and Sri City.
- **Features:**
 - Bird-watching tours, eco-friendly biodiversity sessions, and boating activities.
 - Cultural programs, competitions, and stalls promoting local art and heritage.
 - Collaboration with organizations like the Bombay Natural History Society.

About Pulicat Lake:

- **Significance:** India's second-largest brackish water lake after Chilika Lake (Odisha).
- **Location:** On the Andhra Pradesh-Tamil Nadu border, with 96% in Andhra Pradesh.
- **Biodiversity:** A critical feeding and breeding ground for migratory birds, including flamingos, and home to diverse flora and fauna.
- **Economic Importance:** Supports fisheries, acting as a livelihood source for local communities.

About Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary:

- **Importance:** Southeast Asia's largest breeding site for **spot-billed pelicans** (*Pelecanus philippensis*).
- **Location:** 20 km north of Pulicat Lake, Andhra Pradesh-Tamil Nadu border.
- **Biodiversity:**
 - Home to 189 bird species, including migratory birds like painted storks and glossy ibises.
 - Features **Barringtonia swamp forests** and **southern dry evergreen scrub**.
- **Ecological Role:** Supports local agriculture through natural fertilizers like guano and enhances biodiversity conservation.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. The dominance of retired civil servants as Information Commissioners has raised concerns about the independence and diversity of the RTI framework. Analyze the impact of this practice and discuss whether reforms should be introduced to broaden the pool of eligible candidates.

The dominance of retired civil servants as Information Commissioners in India has raised concerns about the independence and diversity of the Right to Information (RTI) framework. While their experience may be valuable, this practice has sparked debates over potential biases and limited representation. This essay examines the implications of such dominance and explores the need for reforms to widen the eligibility criteria for candidates.

Concerns About Independence and Diversity in the RTI Framework

- **Limited Perspectives:** The dominance of retired civil servants creates a narrow, **uniform viewpoint**, reducing diversity in decision-making processes.
For example: Retired bureaucrats are often seen as part of the **establishment**, limiting their ability to challenge government actions objectively.
- **Potential Bias:** Former government employees may exhibit bias towards their former colleagues, undermining impartiality in handling appeals.
For example: A retired officer may hesitate to make decisions against departments they once worked for, leading to compromised rulings.
- **Lack of Expertise in Transparency:** Retired civil servants may lack the specialised knowledge required for promoting transparency, which is central to the **RTI Act**.
- **Limited Engagement with Civil Society:** Retired bureaucrats may be disconnected from current societal issues, reducing their ability to address public grievances effectively.
For example: Information Commissioners from administrative backgrounds may not fully understand **public concerns** about accessing information from contemporary perspectives.
- **Reduced Accountability:** Appointing bureaucrats with long-term government affiliations might lead to less accountability, as their decisions may align with governmental interests.
For example: Bureaucrats with ties to specific political parties might display a reluctance to challenge **government decisions**, reducing the RTI framework's independence.

Impact of Dominance of Retired Civil Servants

- **Erosion of Public Trust:** When the selection pool lacks diversity, the public may lose trust in the neutrality of the RTI framework.

- **Increased Backlog:** The dominance of bureaucrats with limited fresh perspectives contributes to inefficiency, increasing delays in processing RTI appeals.
For example: CIC's backlog of 23,000 appeals suggests that bureaucratic appointments without **fresh perspectives** may hinder timely resolution of citizen grievances.
- **Concentration of Power:** A lack of diversity in appointments results in concentrated power in the hands of a few individuals with similar backgrounds.
- **Stagnation of Reform:** This practice stifles innovative ideas or changes in approach that could improve the efficacy of the RTI Act.
For example: Without diverse inputs, the **RTI framework** may fail to adapt to modern needs, stalling reforms that could make it more effective.
- **Discouraging Participation:** People may feel less inclined to engage with the RTI process if they believe decisions are biased or influenced by former government officials.

Reforms To Broaden The Pool Of Eligible Candidates

- **Incorporating experts from diverse fields:** Including professionals with varied expertise will bring a broader perspective to decision-making. This ensures diverse viewpoints in the RTI framework.
For example: In countries like the **UK**, Information Commissioners come from backgrounds such as law, journalism, and academia, promoting independence and impartiality.
- **Ensuring a transparent selection process:** A public, transparent selection process will promote fairness and give everyone an equal opportunity to apply for Information Commissioner roles.
For example: The US uses a public nomination process for many government oversight roles, ensuring transparency and accountability in the selection of candidates.
- **Introducing age and tenure limits:** Limiting tenure and introducing age restrictions could promote fresh perspectives and allow for dynamic leadership within Information Commissions.
For example: Many nations like **Australia** limit the tenure of senior officials to avoid long-term entrenchment and encourage new ideas.
- **Encouraging greater representation from civil society:** A more inclusive approach, with representatives from civil society, can help ensure that the RTI system is responsive to the needs of the public.
For example: **National Human Rights Commission** includes members from non-governmental organizations, strengthening its approach to human rights through diverse perspectives.
- **Expanding outreach and awareness for applications:** Actively publicizing vacancies and increasing outreach programs will help attract candidates from different professional backgrounds, leading to a more diverse pool.
For example: Countries like **New Zealand** run nationwide campaigns to raise awareness about public sector vacancies, attracting skilled professionals from various fields.

To ensure the independence and diversity of the RTI framework, reforms are essential. Expanding the pool of eligible candidates by including professionals from diverse fields can bring fresh perspectives, reduce bias, and enhance accountability. A more inclusive approach will strengthen the transparency of the system, fostering public trust in the long term.

MCQ

- With reference to flamingos found in India, consider the following statements:
 - Lesser flamingos are more widely distributed in India compared to greater flamingos.
 - Under the IUCN classification, both greater and lesser flamingos Lesser flamingos are classified as "endangered".
 Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?
 - 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- Which of the following is the objective of the 'GenomeIndia' project?
 - To construct a comprehensive catalogue of genetic variations for India's population
 - To develop Genetically modified organisms
 - To map the genomes of livestock.
 - None of the above
- With reference to 'Future of Jobs Report 2025', consider the following statements:
 - It is a flagship publication of the World Economic Forum (WEF).
 - Postal service clerks, Bank tellers & related clerks and Data entry clerks have found their place in the top 3 declining job roles as per its findings.

- Which of the statements given above is/are Correct?
- a) 1 only b) 2 only
c) **Both 1 and 2** d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. With reference to the “International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)”, consider the following statements:
1. It is the only United Nations organization focused on biodiversity conservation.
 2. It was instrumental in the establishment of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.
 3. The Global Invasive Species Database is managed by the IUCN.
- How many of the statements given above are incorrect?
- a) **Only one** b) Only two
c) All three d) None
5. This technology involves a simple finger prick and a drop of blood placed on a test strip, similar to a COVID-19 home test, to detect iron deficiency anaemia. Which one of the following technologies is being described above?
- a) AnemiaCare b) AnemiaShield
c) AnemiaPhone d) AnemiaTrack
6. Consider the following statements:
1. The Interlinking of Rivers (ILR) is aimed at addressing India's water challenges by transferring water from surplus river basins to deficit areas.
 2. The ILR is implemented under the National Perspective Plan (NPP).
 3. National Interlinking of Rivers Authority (NIRA) is the nodal agency responsible for implementing ILR projects.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
- a) **1 and 2 only** b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 and 3 only d) 1, 2 and 3
7. Which of the following food grains are primarily distributed under the Public Distribution System (PDS) in India?
- a) Rice, wheat, and pulses
b) Wheat, rice, and sugar
c) **Rice, wheat, and coarse grains**
d) Wheat, sugar, and edible oil
8. Consider the following statements:
1. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) purchases gold as a hedge against inflation and to reduce foreign currency risks.
 2. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) uses its gold reserves to manage foreign currency risks by using gold to repay foreign debt.
- Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
- a) **1 only** b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2
9. Kandla Port, also known as Deendayal Port, holds a strategic position in India's maritime trade. Which of the following statements about Kandla Port are correct?
1. It is situated on the eastern coast of India.
 2. It primarily handles petroleum products, chemicals, and grains.
 3. It was the first port in India to be developed after independence.
- Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
- a) 1 and 2 only b) **2 and 3 only**
c) 1 and 3 only d) 1, 2, and 3
10. What is the primary cause of tidal tail formation in galaxies?
- a) Accretion of interstellar gas from neighboring stars
b) Supernova explosions in the core of the galaxy
c) **Gravitational interactions during close encounters or mergers of galaxies**
d) High rotational velocity of spiral galaxies