

GS PAPER 2 – GOVERNANCE, CONSTITUTION, POLITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**Revitalizing India's Justice System**

India's justice system, though robust in constitutional architecture, faces severe structural deficiencies, impeding access, equity, and timely delivery of justice. Over 5 crore cases remain pending across courts, and undertrials constitute 76% of the prison population, reflecting deep-rooted institutional dysfunction.

Institutional Framework:

The justice system comprises the Supreme Court (Article 124), 25 High Courts (Articles 214–231), and subordinate courts (Article 233). Law and order are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule. Police are governed by outdated laws like the Police Act, 1861, despite reform efforts such as the *Prakash Singh* judgment. Legal aid is anchored in Article 39A through NALSA, while prison administration remains under state control.

Key Issues:

- **Judicial Backlog:** Over 5 crore pending cases strain court functioning, especially in lower courts.
- **Vacancies & Understaffing:** India has only 15 judges per 10 lakh population, far below the Law Commission's recommended 50.
- **Underfunding:** Justice receives less than 5% of state budgets; infrastructure and tech investments remain minimal.
- **Access Barriers:** Marginalized communities, especially in rural areas, face cost, distance, and social barriers to justice.
- **Custodial Violence:** Despite the *D.K. Basu* guidelines, custodial deaths persist due to lack of police accountability.
- **Legal Aid Gaps:** Legal aid spending is only Rs.0.78 per capita, and services are urban-centric.
- **Lack of Representation:** Women and SC/ST/OBCs remain under-represented across judiciary and police.
- **Fragmented Institutions:** Weak coordination between police, judiciary, prisons, and legal aid undermines system coherence.

Reform Measures:

- **National Judicial Infrastructure Authority (NJIA):** A central agency to plan and fund court infrastructure.
- **Regional SC Benches:** Decentralize appellate justice to improve accessibility under Article 130.
- **Victim-Centric Justice:** Enact a law ensuring victim participation, legal counsel, and compensation.
- **Judicial Accountability:** Introduce performance reviews, disposal metrics, and asset disclosures.
- **Court Vacation Reform:** Replace colonial-style long vacations with staggered leave systems.
- **Tech-Enabled Legal Aid:** Use AI, mobile vans, and paralegals in rural areas to expand access.
- **Police Modernization:** Separate investigation from law and order, strengthen forensics, and ensure compliance with *Prakash Singh* reforms.

Conclusion:

India must prioritize coordinated, inclusive, and well-funded reforms across all pillars of justice.

Only a holistic overhaul—integrating infrastructure, human capital, and accountability—can transform justice from a privilege to a democratic right.

GS PAPER 2 – ISSUES RELATING TO HEALTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND SOCIAL SECTOR SERVICES

Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (VPDs)

Global health agencies like WHO, UNICEF, and Gavi have raised alarms over the global resurgence of vaccine-preventable diseases due to missed immunisation, misinformation, and budget cuts.

What are Vaccine-Preventable Diseases?

These are diseases that can be prevented through effective vaccination. Vaccines stimulate the immune system to recognize and fight pathogens without causing the disease itself.

Significance of Vaccination:

- **Lives Saved:** Vaccines save ~4.2 million lives annually. Measles vaccine alone accounts for 60% of these.
- **Improved Child Survival:** Contributed to a 40% rise in global child survival since 1974.
- **Economic Return:** WHO estimates a \$54 return for every \$1 spent on vaccination.
- **Herd Immunity:** Protects vulnerable groups (e.g., infants, immunocompromised).

Recent Alarming Trends:

- 14.5 million children missed all routine vaccines in 2023 (WHO-UNICEF).
- Measles cases in the U.S. tripled in 2025 compared to 2024.
- Polio re-emerged in parts of Africa due to delays in immunisation.
- Over 50% countries reported disruptions in vaccine delivery.

Challenges in Global Immunisation:

- **COVID-19 Disruptions:** Delayed routine immunisation services.
- **Misinformation:** Anti-vaccine content on social media has increased vaccine hesitancy.
- **Conflict Zones:** Fragile states like those in Africa, South Asia lack outreach mechanisms.
- **Funding Gaps:** Budget cuts threaten initiatives like Gavi, COVAX.
- **Cold-Chain Gaps:** Delivery suffers in remote and rural areas.

Vaccination in India:

- **Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP):** Targets 26 million children annually.
- **Achievements:** Polio-free (2014), Tetanus eliminated (2015), New vaccines introduced (MR, PCV).
- **Challenges:** NFHS-5 shows 76.1% full immunisation; 1 in 4 children still misses vaccines.
- **Mission Indradhanush (2014):** Focuses on unvaccinated and underserved populations.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen primary healthcare and cold chain logistics.
- Counter misinformation through AI tools and grassroots awareness.
- Sustain political and financial support for immunisation.
- Leverage public-private partnerships for outreach.
- Commit to global goals like Immunisation Agenda 2030 and Gavi's pledges.

Conclusion:

Vaccination remains one of the most cost-effective public health tools. To reverse the rise in VPDs, global and national efforts must realign to ensure equitable and universal access to life-saving vaccines.

PRELIM FACTS

1. Western Disturbances

Recently, heavy rain and strong winds lashed Delhi and nearby areas, causing waterlogging and flight delays at the airport. The weather was triggered by a fresh Western Disturbance over northern India.

About Western Disturbances

- **Definition**– Western Disturbances are *eastward-moving, extra-tropical weather systems* that bring sudden winter rainfall to the northwestern parts of the Indian subcontinent. These disturbances originate beyond Iran and Afghanistan and travel across these countries, as well as Pakistan, before reaching India.
- **Origin and Characteristics:**
 - They are *driven by low-pressure systems* that form due to the interaction of polar and tropical air masses.
 - These systems *pick up moisture from the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, Caspian Sea, and occasionally the Arabian Sea.*
 - They are embedded in the *Subtropical Westerly Jet Stream (STWJ)*, which flows from west to east at high altitudes over the Himalayas and Tibetan Plateau.
- **Seasonal occurrence:** Most active during the boreal winter months (December to March), but can also affect weather patterns during the pre-monsoon and post-monsoon periods.
- **Geographical impact:**
 - Affect weather in northwestern India, northern Pakistan, parts of Afghanistan, and Tajikistan.
 - In India, they bring winter rainfall to states like Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and parts of Uttar Pradesh.
 - Often responsible for snowfall in the Himalayas and cold wave conditions in the plains.
- **Importance for Agriculture:**
 - *Beneficial for Rabi crops*, especially wheat, by providing much-needed winter rainfall.
 - However, excessive rainfall or untimely storms can damage standing crops and disrupt normal life

2. Stratospheric Airship Platform

India successfully conducted the maiden flight trial of the Stratospheric Airship Platform developed by DRDO, reaching an altitude of 17 km.

About Stratospheric Airship Platform:

- **What is the Stratospheric Airship Platform?**
 - A **lighter-than-air, high-altitude airship** designed to operate in the **stratosphere (~17 km altitude)** for extended surveillance and observation missions.
- **Developed By:** Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE), Agra
 - Under the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**
- **Objectives of the Test:**
 - Validate **envelope pressure control system**.
 - Test **emergency deflation mechanisms**.
 - Collect real-time **sensor data** for future simulation models.
 - Demonstrate **system recovery** after mission.
- **Key Features:**
 - Operates at ~17 km altitude (stratosphere).
 - Carries **instrumental payloads** for ISR tasks.
 - **62-minute endurance flight** successfully completed.
 - Capable of **long-duration airborne operation**.

- Deployable for **static surveillance and real-time observation.**
- **Applications & Strategic Significance:**
 - **ISR Capability Enhancement:** Improves India's **Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance** operations for military and disaster response.
 - **Earth Observation:** Supports **border monitoring, coastal surveillance,** and high-resolution atmospheric sensing.
 - **Low-Cost Alternative to Satellites:** Offers **persistent coverage** without requiring costly satellite launches.
 - **Dual-Use Potential:** Can assist in **civilian use cases** like disaster management, communication relays, and environmental monitoring.
 - **Strategic Independence:** Places India among a few nations with **indigenous high-altitude airship technology**, crucial amid rising border threats.

3.Chenab River

India has halted the flow of water from the Chenab River through the Baglihar Dam in Jammu and Kashmir following the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty after the Pahalgam terror attacks.



About Chenab River:

- Formed by the **confluence of Chandra and Bhaga rivers** at Tandi in Lahaul & Spiti, Himachal Pradesh.
- Chandra originates near **Bara-lacha la Pass** (east), Bhaga from **Surya Taal lake** (west of the pass).
- Known as **Chandra-Bhaga** in upper reaches, it becomes **Chenab** downstream.
- Flows through **Himachal Pradesh** and **Jammu & Kashmir**, enters **Pakistan** in Punjab province, and joins **Sutlej River** to form **Panjnad River**.
- **Major Tributaries:**

- **Right Bank:** Marusudar (largest tributary), Miyar Nalla, Bhut Nalla, Bichleri, Ans, and Kalnai
- **Left Bank:** Niru, Tawi, Neeru, and Liddrari
- **Major Hydroelectric Projects on Chenab River (Run-of-the-River Projects):** Baglihar Dam, Salal Dam, Dul Hasti, Ratle Project, Pakal Dul Dam, Kiru Project, and Kishtwar Project.
- **Historical Significance:**
 - Known since **Vedic period**, part of **Rigvedic Sapta Sindhu**.
 - Cited in accounts of **Alexander the Great's Indian campaign** (325 BCE).
 - Site of the historic **Battle of Chenab** between Sikhs and Afghans.

About Baglihar Dam:

- **Location:** Ramban district, Jammu & Kashmir, on the Chenab River.
- **Type:** Run-of-the-river hydroelectric project with limited storage capacity.
- **Installed Capacity:** Around 900 MW (in two phases).
- **Commissioned By:** NHPC Limited, supported by Government of India.
- **Controversy:**
 - Opposed by Pakistan for alleged **treaty violations** under **Indus Waters Treaty (1960)**.
 - Subject to **World Bank arbitration**, which ruled in India's favour for certain technical modifications.

4. Biodiversity Benefit Sharing Regulations 2025

The National Biodiversity Authority **has notified the Biodiversity Benefit Sharing Regulations 2025**, introducing new rules to regulate **equitable benefit sharing** from the use of India's biological resources, including **digital sequence information**.

About Biodiversity Benefit Sharing Regulations 2025:

- These are updated rules under the **Biological Diversity Act**, aimed at ensuring that users—especially industries—share a part of their economic benefits with local communities and biodiversity conservers.
 - This aligns **India with global Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS)**

Key Provisions

- **Turnover-Based Slabs for Benefit Sharing:**
 - Rs.0–5 crore: No sharing
 - Rs.5–50 crore: 0.2% of ex-factory turnover
 - Rs.50–250 crore: 0.4%
 - Above Rs.250 crore: 0.6%
- **Mandatory Reporting:**
 - Firms with **turnover over Rs.1 crore** must disclose annual biodiversity usage.
- **Cultivated Plant Exemption:**
 - Medicinal plant cultivators **exempted** from sharing benefits—aligns with Biological Diversity (Amendment) Act 2023.
- **High-Value Species Clause:**
 - For species like **red sanders, sandalwood, agarwood**, minimum benefit sharing is **5%**, extendable to **20% or more**.
- **Digital Sequence Information (DSI):**
 - **Now covered** under the benefit-sharing regime—critical update from the 2014 guidelines.
- **IPR and Research Use:**

- Researchers and IPR applicants must comply with benefit-sharing norms.
- **Revenue Utilization:**
 - **10–15% retained** by National Biodiversity Authority (NBA); remainder to benefit claimant communities.

Global Context: COP16 & Multilateral Sharing

- At COP16 of the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Cali, Colombia (2024)**, member countries adopted a mechanism for sharing **DSI-related benefits multilaterally**.
- Industries like pharma, cosmetics, agriculture, and biotech were asked to equitably compensate indigenous communities and biodiversity custodians.

Organizational structure:

- **Chairperson** (nominated by Central Government)
 - Must have knowledge or experience in biodiversity conservation, sustainable use of biological resources, or equitable benefit sharing
- **Ex-officio members:** Representatives from Ministries of Environment, Agriculture, Science & Technology, AYUSH, Tribal Affairs, etc.
- **Expert members** from fields like ecology, biotechnology, and law

Key Functions and Powers

- **Regulatory Role:** Grant approvals for access to **biological resources and associated traditional knowledge** by foreign nationals, companies, and NRIs
 - Regulate transfer of research results on Indian biodiversity to non-Indian entities
- **Benefit Sharing Mechanism:** Ensure fair and equitable sharing of **benefits with local communities and knowledge holders**
- **Advisory Role:** Advise the Central Government on biodiversity conservation, sustainable use, and policy matters
- **Oversight of State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs):** Coordinate and oversee the functioning of **SBBs and Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)**
- **Promotion of Conservation:** Support documentation, preservation, and promotion of **biological heritage** and associated traditional knowledge
- **Compliance with International Conventions:** Ensure national alignment with protocols like the **Nagoya Protocol** under the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. India's justice system is structurally well-established but functionally paralyzed due to chronic resource deficits, delays, and systemic exclusion. Critically examine the key challenges facing the justice delivery system in India and suggest comprehensive reforms to address them.

India's justice system, while institutionally sound with a layered structure comprising the Supreme Court, High Courts, subordinate judiciary, police, prisons, and legal aid authorities, is plagued by systemic inefficiencies that obstruct equitable and timely justice.

Key Challenges:

A major challenge is the **massive backlog of over 5 crore cases**, including 80,000 in the Supreme Court alone, which undermines public trust and violates the right to speedy justice under Article 21. Chronic **staff shortages**—with judicial vacancies and only 15 judges per 10 lakh population (against the Law Commission's recommendation of 50)—cripple institutional capacity.

The **underfunding of the justice sector** further aggravates the issue, with states allocating just 4.3% of their budgets to it, primarily for salaries, leaving little for infrastructure or innovation. The **undertrial crisis** is another concern, with 76% of prisoners awaiting trial, reflecting delayed procedures and poor legal aid, particularly in rural areas.

Additionally, the **marginalized sections**, including Dalits, Adivasis, minorities, and women, face barriers due to geographical, financial, and social constraints. **Custodial violence**, illegal detentions, and poor accountability of police highlight a culture of impunity. Further, the **Collegium system's opacity**, lack of performance benchmarks, and limited diversity within the judiciary weaken public confidence.

Suggested Reforms:

- Establish a **National Judicial Infrastructure Authority (NJIA)** to ensure adequate court facilities and digitization.
- Create **regional benches of the Supreme Court** under Article 130 to decentralize access.
- Enact a **Victim Rights and Compensation Law** for participatory and restorative justice.
- Introduce a **judicial accountability framework**, with regular performance appraisals and public asset declarations.
- Expand legal aid through **AI tools, mobile vans, and community paralegals** under Article 39A.
- Implement **forensic and investigative reforms**, separating law and order from investigation and modernizing police forces.

Conclusion:

India's justice system needs a **multi-pronged, inclusive, and technology-driven overhaul**. Reforming its structural and procedural faults is vital to transform justice from a privilege into a guaranteed democratic right for every citizen.

MCQ

1. With reference to Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (VPDs), consider the following statements:
 1. The Measles vaccine alone accounts for about 60% of lives saved globally through vaccination.
 2. Mission Indradhanush aims to target only urban slum areas for vaccination.
 3. UNICEF has raised concerns about vaccine delays in conflict-hit regions affecting millions of children.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 1 and 3 only**
 - c) 2 and 3 only
 - d) 1, 2 and 3
2. It has successfully led to the elimination of maternal and neonatal tetanus in India.
 3. It is implemented solely by private health organizations in partnership with WHO.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 only**
 - c) 1 and 3 only
 - d) 2 and 3 only
3. Which of the following statements correctly describes the Prakash Singh judgment (2006)?
 - a) It deals with separation of powers between Judiciary and Executive.
 - b) It laid down directives for police reforms in India.
 - c) It mandated victim compensation in criminal trials.
 - d) It abolished the collegium system for judicial appointments.

4. Which of the following are part of India's institutional framework for access to justice?
1. National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)
 2. District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs)
 3. National Investigation Agency (NIA)
 4. Lok Adalats
- Select the correct answer using the code below:
- a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 1, 2 and 4 only**
 - c) 1, 3 and 4 only
 - d) 2 and 3 only
5. Which of the following statements regarding the Stratospheric Airship Platform developed by DRDO is/are correct?
1. It operates in the troposphere at altitudes below 10 km.
 2. It is capable of real-time surveillance and intelligence gathering.
 3. It is a heavier-than-air platform requiring a runway for launch.
- Select the correct answer using the code below:
- a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 only**
 - c) 1 and 3 only
 - d) 1, 2 and 3
6. The **Chenab River** originates from the confluence of which of the following rivers?
- a) Ravi and Beas
 - b) Indus and Jhelum
 - c) Chandra and Bhaga**
 - d) Tawi and Marusudar
7. Which of the following is/are correct about the Biodiversity Benefit Sharing Regulations, 2025?
1. Cultivators of medicinal plants are exempt from benefit sharing.
 2. Digital Sequence Information (DSI) is now covered under the regulations.
 3. Only firms with turnover above Rs.10 crore need to report biodiversity usage.
- Select the correct answer using the code below:
- a) 1 and 2 only**
 - b) 1 and 3 only
 - c) 2 and 3 only
 - d) 1, 2 and 3
8. The Baglihar Dam, recently in news, is a hydroelectric project located on which river?
- a) Sutlej
 - b) Chenab**
 - c) Ravi
 - d) Beas
9. Which of the following statements regarding Western Disturbances is/are correct?
1. They are associated with low-pressure systems originating over the Pacific Ocean.
 2. They are embedded in the Subtropical Westerly Jet Stream.
 3. They bring winter rainfall to northwestern India and snowfall in the Himalayas.
- Select the correct answer using the code below:
- a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only**
 - c) 1 and 3 only
 - d) 1, 2 and 3
10. The **primary agricultural significance** of Western Disturbances in India is:
- a) Enhancing the Kharif crop yield through summer rains
 - b) Assisting in the pollination of fruit crops in southern India
 - c) Providing crucial winter rainfall for Rabi crops like wheat**
 - d) Triggering early onset of the southwest monsoon