

## General Studies Paper-II

**Q1. In the light of recent controversy regarding the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM), what are the challenges before the Election Commission of India to ensure the trustworthiness of elections in India?**

(150 words) [10]

### Approach to question:

1. **Transparency:** Enhancing transparency by addressing concerns related to the lack of a paper trail and enabling a verifiable audit trail for EVMs.
2. **Technology upgrades:** Adopting advanced technologies, such as end-to-end verifiable voting systems, to further enhance the security and reliability of EVMs.
3. **Legal framework:** Strengthening the legal framework to address any gaps or challenges related to EVMs, including provisions for penalties and strict enforcement.

### Answer:

The use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) has been a subject of controversy in recent times, raising concerns about the trustworthiness of elections in India. The Election Commission of India (ECI) faces several challenges in order to address these concerns and ensure the credibility and integrity of the electoral process.

### Challenges before the ECI:

1. **Security and integrity of EVMs:** Implementing robust measures to protect EVMs from tampering, hacking, or unauthorized access and continuously updating the technology to stay ahead of potential threats.
2. **Transparency and verifiability:** Enhancing transparency by introducing voter-verifiable paper audit trails (VVPATs) or similar mechanisms to provide a physical record of each vote cast.
3. **Regular audits and testing:** Establishing an independent body to oversee testing and certification of EVMs and conducting periodic audits to verify their integrity.

The challenges before the Election Commission of India in ensuring the trustworthiness of elections in light of recent controversies surrounding EVMs are manifold.

It requires a multi-pronged approach involving robust security measures, transparency mechanisms, voter education, trust-building initiatives, regular audits and a strengthened legal framework.

**Q2. Whether National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) can enforce the implementation of constitutional reservation for the Scheduled Castes in the religious minority institutions? Examine.**

(150 words) [10]

### Approach to question:

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) does not have the authority to enforce the implementation of constitutional reservations for Scheduled Castes in religious minority institutions. The rights of religious minority institutions are protected under Article 30 of the Indian Constitution, which grants them autonomy in matters of administration and the right to establish and administer educational institutions. However, the NCSC can play a role in advocating for the implementation of reservations in religious minority institutions through dialogue and persuasion.

### Answer:

Article 338 of the constitution of India deals with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes. The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) holds a crucial role in safeguarding the rights and interests of Scheduled Castes in India. This issue requires detailed examination to strike a balance between minority rights and social justice objectives.

### Examination of the issue:

1. **Constitutional provisions and autonomy of religious minority institutions:** Article 30 of the Indian Constitution grants religious and linguistic minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions, including the autonomy to determine admission policies. This autonomy may not align with constitutional reservations, emphasizing the importance of protecting minority rights for the diversity and pluralism of Indian society.

2. **Conflict between minority rights and social justice:** The implementation of constitutional reservations in religious minority institutions can create a conflict between uplifting marginalized communities and preserving the autonomy and values of these institutions.
3. **Supreme Court judgments and exemptions:** The Supreme Court has upheld the autonomy of religious minority institutions, exempting them from the obligation to provide reservations unless explicitly specified.

The NCSC, though unable to enforce reservations in religious minority institutions, can advocate for social justice through dialogue and persuasion. Balancing minority rights and affirmative action calls for policy changes and legislative measures within the constitutional framework.

- Q3. Under what circumstances can the Financial Emergency be proclaimed by the President of India? What consequences follow when such a declaration remains in force?**  
(150 words) [10]

**Approach to question:**

The President of India can proclaim a Financial Emergency under the following circumstances:

1. **Threat to financial stability:** If the President is satisfied that the financial stability or credit of India or any part of its territory is threatened, they can proclaim a Financial Emergency.

**Consequences of a Financial Emergency:**

1. **Central control over state finances:** The President can direct the states on various financial matters, including the reduction of salaries and allowances of public servants.

**Answer:**

The proclamation of a Financial Emergency under Article 360 of the Indian Constitution is an exceptional measure taken by the President of India when the financial stability or credit of India or any part of its territory is threatened.

**Consequences of a Financial Emergency:**

1. **Central control over state finances:** The President can issue directions to the states on various financial matters, including reducing salaries and allowances of public servants and reserving all money bills for the President's consideration.
2. **Parliamentary approval:** The proclamation must be approved by both houses of Parliament within two months and if approved, it can remain in force for an indefinite period, subject to extension by Parliament every six months.
3. **Modification of laws and constitutional provisions:** Parliament gains the authority to make

laws or modify existing ones on financial matters, temporarily increasing the Union government's control over state finances. Constitutional provisions related to financial matters can also be temporarily suspended or altered.

A Financial Emergency is an extraordinary measure to address severe financial threats to India's stability. Its consequences entail central control over state finances, modifications of laws and constitutional provisions, state government intervention and a temporary impact on federalism.

- Q4. Why do you think the committees are considered to be useful for parliamentary work? Discuss, in this context, the role of the Estimates Committee.** (150 words) [10]

**Approach to question:**

1. **Expertise and Specialization:** Committees consist of members with diverse backgrounds and expertise. Their specialized knowledge allows for in-depth analysis and scrutiny of various subjects, ensuring informed decision-making.
2. **Checks and Balances:** Committees act as a check on the executive's power by overseeing its actions. They scrutinize budgets, evaluate policies and monitor the implementation of laws, ensuring accountability and preventing misuse of authority.
3. **Public Participation:** Committees provide a platform for public participation in the lawmaking process. This helps in efficient resource allocation and prevents wastage of public funds, ultimately fostering good governance.

**Answer:**

Committees play a vital role in parliamentary work, offering numerous benefits in ensuring effective governance. Among these, the Estimates Committee holds significant importance, focusing on scrutinizing government expenditure and financial proposals. This points-based analysis explores the advantages of committees and highlights the key functions of the Estimates Committee.

**Benefits of Committees:**

1. **Expertise and Specialization:** Committees comprise members with diverse backgrounds and expertise, allowing informed decision-making and comprehensive understanding of legislative matters.
2. **In-depth Analysis and Examination:** Committees undertake detailed examinations, leading to well-

informed and comprehensive legislation and policies.

3. **Division of Labor:** Committees distribute work among members, enabling focused examinations of various subjects and enhancing parliamentary efficiency.
4. **Checks and Balances:** Committees oversee the executive's actions, promoting transparency, accountability and preventing misuse of power.

Committees are crucial for effective governance and the Estimates Committee's role in examining government expenditure and promoting transparency and accountability makes it an essential pillar of the parliamentary system. Its functions contribute to sound financial decision-making, bolstering democracy and good governance.

**Q5. "The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has a very vital role to play". Explain how this is reflected in the method and terms of his appointment as well as the range of powers he can exercise. (150 words) [10]**

**Approach to question:**

1. **Security of Tenure:** The CAG enjoys security of tenure, as specified in the Constitution. The CAG's term of office is fixed at six years or until the age of 65, whichever is earlier.
2. **Report to Parliament:** The CAG submits audit reports to the President, who lays them before Parliament. These reports highlight instances of financial irregularities, inefficiencies, or non-compliance with rules and procedures.
3. **Role in Public Accounts Committee:** The CAG plays a vital role in the functioning of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), a parliamentary committee responsible for examining audit reports.

**Answer:**

The Constitution of India under Article 148 provides for an independent office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG). The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India plays a vital role in ensuring financial accountability, transparency and good governance. The method of appointment, security of tenure, audit powers, reporting mechanism and independence of the CAG reflect the significance of their role in upholding financial integrity.

**Elaboration of Aspects:**

1. **Method of Appointment:** The CAG is appointed by the President after consulting the Prime Minister and the Lok Sabha Speaker, ensuring a transparent and fair selection process based on competence, integrity and independence.

2. **Extensive Audit Powers:** Derived from the Constitution and audit laws, the CAG can conduct financial audits of government entities, scrutinizing financial transactions and compliance with laws.
3. **Reporting to Parliament:** The CAG submits comprehensive audit reports to the President, who presents them before the Parliament. These reports empower lawmakers to hold the executive accountable for financial management.

The CAG's appointment process, tenure, audit powers, reporting to the Parliament, role in the PAC, special audits, independence and objectivity collectively underscore the crucial role they play in upholding financial integrity, efficiency and responsible governance in India.

**Q6. "Policy contradictions among various competing sectors and stakeholders have resulted in inadequate "protection and prevention of degradation to environment". Comment with relevant illustrations. (150 words) [10]**

**Approach to question:**

1. **Industrial Development vs. Environmental Conservation:** Conflicting policies often arise between industries seeking expansion and environmental conservation efforts.
2. **Energy Production vs. Climate Change Mitigation:** Policies promoting fossil fuel-based energy production can conflict with efforts to mitigate climate change.
3. **Agriculture and Forest Conservation:** Policies supporting intensive agriculture practices sometimes lead to deforestation, as farmers clear land for cultivation.

**Answer:**

Policy contradictions among competing sectors and stakeholders often lead to inadequate protection and prevention of environmental degradation. This issue is observed in various areas, where conflicting interests and priorities hinder sustainable development and environmental conservation efforts.

**Illustrations of Policy Contradictions:**

1. **Industrial Development vs. Environmental Conservation:** Conflicts arise when policies prioritize industrial growth over preserving the environment, leading to deforestation, habitat destruction and pollution.
2. **Energy Production vs. Climate Change Mitigation:** Policies favoring fossil fuels contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, undermining climate change mitigation efforts.

3. **Agriculture and Forest Conservation:** Intensive agriculture can clash with forest conservation objectives, resulting in deforestation and loss of wildlife habitats.
4. **Infrastructure Development vs. Ecological Balance:** Infrastructure projects disrupt ecosystems and wildlife habitats, compromising ecological balance.

Effective environmental protection and prevention of degradation require a harmonized and sustainable approach to policy-making. By balancing economic growth with environmental preservation and engaging stakeholders in decision-making, we can achieve long-term sustainability and protect our ecosystems for future generations.

**Q7. Appropriate local community level healthcare intervention is a prerequisite to achieve 'Health for All' in India. Explain.**

(150 words) [10]

**Approach to question:**

1. **Proximity and Accessibility:** Local community-level interventions ensure healthcare services are accessible and within reach of the population.
2. **Holistic and Comprehensive Approach:** Local community-level interventions can focus on comprehensive healthcare, including preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative services.
3. **Cost-Effective and Sustainable:** Local interventions tend to be cost-effective and sustainable in the long run. By focusing on community-level healthcare, resources can be allocated efficiently and preventive measures can reduce the burden of expensive curative care.

**Answer:**

Appropriate local community-level healthcare interventions are crucial to achieving "Health for All" in India. These interventions focus on proximity, tailored healthcare, community engagement and cost-effectiveness, ensuring equitable and accessible healthcare services for the population.

**Elaboration of Importance:**

1. **Proximity and Accessibility:** Local interventions bring healthcare services closer to individuals, especially in remote and underserved areas, enabling timely healthcare seeking and early intervention.
2. **Tailored to Local Needs:** Understanding local health challenges, cultural practices and socioeconomic factors helps design targeted interventions that effectively address prevalent diseases and promote preventive measures.

3. **Community Engagement and Empowerment:** Involving communities in planning and implementation empowers individuals in their own health, fostering ownership, health literacy and healthy behaviors.

By prioritizing local community-level healthcare interventions, India can ensure equitable access to quality healthcare, improve health outcomes and work towards the goal of "Health for All". These interventions empower communities, promote preventive measures and build trust between healthcare providers and individuals, fostering a healthier and more resilient nation.

**Q8. E-governance is not only about utilization of the power of new technology, but also much about critical importance of the 'use value' of information. Explain. (150 words) [10]**

**Approach to question:**

1. **Data-driven Decision-making:** E-governance recognizes the value of information in decision-making processes. By collecting and analyzing data, governments can gain insights, identify trends and make evidence-based policy decisions, leading to effective governance and targeted interventions.
2. **Participatory Governance:** E-governance promotes participatory governance by facilitating the exchange of information between the government and citizens.
3. **Data Security and Privacy:** E-governance recognizes the importance of safeguarding the use value of information through data security and privacy measures.

**Answer:**

E-governance encompasses more than just the adoption of new technology; it emphasizes the "use value" of information. This concept recognizes the critical importance of making government information accessible, empowering citizens and enhancing decision-making processes through the effective use of information.

**Elaboration of Concept:**

1. **Information Accessibility:** E-governance prioritizes transparency and user-friendly access to government information, enabling citizens to make informed decisions and engage actively in governance processes.
2. **Empowering Citizens:** By providing citizens with accurate and timely information, e-governance empowers them to participate in decision-making, hold authorities accountable and contribute to policy formulation.



3. **Enhancing Service Delivery:** E-governance streamlines service provision through digitization and data analytics, ensuring efficient and citizen-centric public services.
4. **Data-driven Decision-making:** E-governance leverages data for evidence-based policy decisions, enabling effective governance and targeted outcomes.

The use value of information in e-governance transforms governance processes, strengthens democracy and promotes citizen-centric governance. By prioritizing information accessibility, empowering citizens, enhancing decision-making and ensuring data security, e-governance fosters transparency, accountability and active citizen participation in governance.

**Q9. "India's relations with Israel have, of late, acquired a depth and diversity, which cannot be rolled back". Discuss. (150 words) [10]**

**Approach to question:**

1. **Strategic Cooperation:** India and Israel have strengthened their strategic ties, especially in defense and security sectors.
2. **Diplomatic Outreach:** India's diplomatic engagement with Israel has gained momentum, with high-level visits, reciprocal state visits and exchange of delegations.
3. **Shared Interests:** Both nations face common challenges such as terrorism, regional stability and energy security. India's growing engagement with Israel reflects shared interests and a pragmatic approach to addressing these concerns.

**Answer:**

India's relations with Israel have undergone a significant transformation, witnessing a deepening of ties in recent years. The bilateral engagement between the two nations has evolved across various sectors, ranging from defense and technology to economic collaboration and people-to-people interactions.

**Elaboration of Evolving Dynamics:**

1. **Strategic Partnership:** India and Israel have established a robust strategic partnership, particularly in defense and security cooperation, to address common challenges such as terrorism and regional instability.
2. **Defense Cooperation:** India has become one of the largest buyers of Israeli defense equipment, enhancing its defense capabilities and fostering joint research and development initiatives.
3. **Technological Advancements:** Collaborative efforts in science, technology and innovation have

yielded significant results, especially in sectors like agriculture, water management, renewable energy and cybersecurity.

India's evolving relationship with Israel is characterized by shared values, mutual interests and multifaceted engagement. The strategic partnership, defense collaboration, technological advancements, economic cooperation, people-to-people relations, diplomatic engagement and international support all contribute to the strengthening of the bilateral ties.

**Q10. A number of outside powers have entrenched themselves in Central Asia, which is a zone of interest to India. Discuss the implications, in this context, of India's joining the Ashgabat Agreement, 2018.**

(150 words) [10]

**Approach to question:**

1. **Enhanced Regional Connectivity:** The Ashgabat Agreement aims to establish an international transport and transit corridor between Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.
3. **Diversification of Energy Sources:** Central Asia is rich in energy resources and India's participation in the Ashgabat Agreement provides avenues for diversifying its energy sources.

**Answer:**

India's participation in the Ashgabat Agreement, 2018, holds significant implications in the context of Central Asia, a region of strategic interest to India. This agreement aims to establish a transport and transit corridor connecting Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, fostering regional connectivity and economic integration.

**Elaboration of Implications:**

1. **Strengthening Regional Connectivity:** India's involvement in the Ashgabat Agreement enhances regional connectivity, providing better access to Central Asia and facilitating the movement of goods and people, leading to increased trade and economic integration.
2. **Countering Influence of Other Powers:** By joining the agreement, India aims to counterbalance the influence of external powers in Central Asia and protect its interests in the region, ensuring a voice and presence in regional affairs.
3. **Economic Opportunities:** The agreement opens up economic opportunities for India in Central Asia, particularly in sectors like energy, infrastructure development and trade, contributing to economic growth and diversification.

India's decision to join the Ashgabat Agreement is instrumental in strengthening regional connectivity,

countering external influence, exploring economic opportunities, ensuring energy security, fostering strategic partnerships and maintaining a balanced regional power structure.

**Q11. Whether the Supreme Court Judgement (July 2018) can settle the political tussle between the Lt. Governor and elected government of Delhi? Examine. (250 words) [15]**

**Approach to question:**

- 1. Clarity on Constitutional Provisions:** The judgment clarified the powers and responsibilities of the Lt. Governor and the elected government, emphasizing that the Lt. Governor must act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.
- 2. Discretionary Powers:** While the judgment restricted the Lt. Governor's discretionary powers, certain areas such as police, public order and land remained within the Lt. Governor's purview.
- 3. Need for Cooperation:** The judgment highlighted the importance of cooperation and mutual respect between the Lt. Governor and the elected government for effective governance.

**Answer:**

The Supreme Court's judgment in July 2018 aimed to resolve the political tussle between the Lt. Governor and the elected government of Delhi. However, certain factors limit its ability to completely settle the issue and the political conflicts persist. The following points elaborate on these reasons:

**Elaboration of Reasons:**

- 1. Limited Scope:**  
The Supreme Court's judgment focused on interpreting constitutional provisions and defining powers, but it did not address all possible scenarios that could lead to conflicts in the future. Ambiguities in the judgment can lead to potential disputes and challenges in governance.
- 2. Discretionary Powers:**  
The judgment restricted the Lt. Governor's discretionary powers, but areas like police, public order and land remain within their purview. This can lead to continued power struggles and conflicts between the Lt. Governor and the elected government.
- 3. Interpretation and Implementation:**  
Differing viewpoints and interpretations by different stakeholders can impact the judgment's practical implications.

Varying interpretations can result in political tussles and legal battles between the parties.

**4. Need for Cooperation:**

The judgment emphasized the importance of cooperation between the Lt. Governor and the elected government for effective governance.

**5. Legislative Amendments:**

A long-term settlement may require legislative amendments defining the powers and functions of both parties more explicitly.

**6. Evolving Dynamics:**

The political landscape and power dynamics may continue to evolve over time, impacting the tussle between the Lt. Governor and the elected government.

While the Supreme Court's judgment in July 2018 attempted to address the political tussle in Delhi, it may not completely resolve the issue. The limited scope, discretionary powers, interpretation challenges, the need for cooperation, potential legislative amendments and evolving dynamics all contribute to the ongoing nature of the conflicts.

**Q12. How far do you agree with the view that tribunals curtail the jurisdiction of ordinary courts? In view of the above, discuss the constitutional validity and competency of the tribunals in India. (250 words) [15]**

**Approach to question:**

- 1. Specialized Jurisdiction:** Tribunals have exclusive jurisdiction over specific areas, reducing the scope for ordinary courts to adjudicate on such matters.
- 2. Efficient and Expert Resolution:** Tribunals offer faster and specialized resolution, ensuring expertise in complex areas and reducing the burden on ordinary courts.

**Regarding constitutional validity and competency in India:**

- 1. Judicial Review:** The constitutional validity of tribunals is subject to judicial review. The Supreme Court has struck down certain tribunal provisions that were seen as compromising judicial independence.

**Answer:**

The assertion that tribunals curtail the jurisdiction of ordinary courts has merit, given their exclusive jurisdiction and specialized expertise. However, it is imperative to critically examine the broader implications and the constitutional validity and competency of tribunals in India. This analysis explores both sides of the argument.

Agreeing with the view that tribunals curtail the jurisdiction of ordinary courts:

1. **Exclusive Jurisdiction:** Tribunals are established to handle specific areas of law, such as tax, labor, environment, etc.
2. **Expertise and Efficiency:** Tribunals consist of members with expertise in their respective fields, ensuring a better understanding of complex issues.
3. **Reducing the Burden:** By diverting specific categories of cases to tribunals, ordinary courts are relieved of the burden associated with handling these specialized matters.

However, it is essential to consider the constitutional validity and competency of tribunals in India:

1. **Constitutional Validity:** The establishment of tribunals in India is based on the authority granted by Articles 323A and 323B of the Indian Constitution.
2. **Composition and Appointment:** The competency of tribunals depends on their composition and the appointment process.
3. **Judicial Review:** The constitutional validity of tribunals is subject to judicial review.
4. **NCLT Case:** In the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) case, the Supreme Court declared certain provisions related to the composition of tribunals as unconstitutional.

While the argument that tribunals curtail the jurisdiction of ordinary courts is supported by their exclusive jurisdiction and specialized expertise, it is essential to consider the constitutional validity and competency of tribunals in India. While tribunals serve a crucial purpose in specialized dispute resolution, maintaining their independence, impartiality and adherence to constitutional principles remains a challenge.

**Q13. Indian and USA are two large democracies. Examine the basic tenets on which the two political systems are based. (250 words) [15]**

**Approach to question:**

1. **Popular Sovereignty:** Both countries recognize the ultimate authority of the people. Power is vested in the citizens, who exercise their rights through voting and participation in political processes.
2. **Separation of Powers:** Both countries adopt the principle of separation of powers, dividing authority among the executive, legislative and judicial branches to prevent the concentration of power.
3. **Fundamental Rights:** India and the US guarantee fundamental rights to their citizens, such as freedom of speech, religion and assembly.

**Answer:**

India and the USA are two large democracies with distinct political systems that have evolved based on their historical and cultural contexts. While both systems are grounded in the principles of popular sovereignty, fundamental rights, rule of law and independent judiciaries, they exhibit key differences in their structures and functioning.

**Indian Political System:**

1. **Sovereignty of the People:** The Indian political system is based on the principle of popular sovereignty, where ultimate power resides with the people.
2. **Parliamentary Democracy:** India follows a parliamentary system, where the executive branch is accountable to the legislature, specifically the lower house known as the Lok Sabha.
3. **Federal Structure:** India operates as a federal system, with powers divided between the central government and the states.
4. **Fundamental Rights:** The Indian Constitution guarantees fundamental rights to its citizens, such as freedom of speech, expression, religion and equality before the law.

**US Political System:**

1. **Constitutional Republic:** The United States operates as a constitutional republic, where the authority of the government is derived from the Constitution.
2. **Presidential System:** The US political system follows a presidential system, where the President is both the head of state and the head of government.
3. **Separation of Powers:** The US political system is founded on the principle of separation of powers among the executive, legislative and judicial branches.
4. **Bill of Rights:** The US Constitution includes a Bill of Rights, which guarantees individual freedoms, such as freedom of speech, religion and the right to bear arms.

While India and the US are both large democracies with shared values of popular sovereignty, fundamental rights, rule of law and independent judiciaries, their political systems are shaped by their historical trajectories and unique societal contexts.

**Q14. How is the Finance Commission of India constituted? What do you know about the terms of reference of the recently constituted Finance Commission? Discuss.**

(250 words) [15]

**Approach to question:**

1. **Composition:** The Finance Commission consists of a Chairman and four other members appointed by the President of India.
2. **Appointment:** The members are selected by the President based on their knowledge and experience in finance, economics, or public administration.

Regarding the terms of reference of the recently constituted Finance Commission:

1. **Grants-in-Aid:** It examines the need for and recommends the quantum of grants-in-aid to states from the central government's resources.
2. **Any Other Matters:** The Commission may also be assigned additional matters by the President of India that are related to fiscal federalism.

**Answer:**

The Finance Commission is constituted by the President under Article 280 of the Indian Constitution. The Finance Commission of India plays a vital role in shaping fiscal federalism by examining the distribution of tax revenues between the central and state governments, recommending grants-in-aid and evaluating the fiscal positions of various tiers of government.

**Constitution of the Finance Commission:**

1. **Appointment:** The President of India appoints the members of the Finance Commission, including the Chairman and four other members.
2. **Composition:** The Chairman is typically an individual with expertise in economics, finance, or public administration, while the other members are experts from related fields.
3. **Qualifications:** The members are selected based on their knowledge and experience in finance, economics, or public administration, ensuring their competence in dealing with fiscal matters.

**Terms of Reference of the Finance Commission:**

1. **Vertical Devolution:** The Commission examines the distribution of tax revenues between the central government and the state governments. It recommends the percentage share of taxes that should be allocated to the states from the divisible pool of central taxes.
2. **Horizontal Devolution:** The Commission recommends the distribution of tax revenues among the states based on factors such as population, area, income disparities and special needs of states. This ensures a fair and equitable distribution of resources among the states.
3. **Grants-in-Aid:** The Commission assesses the need for grants-in-aid to states from the central government's resources.

The terms of reference of the Finance Commission provide a comprehensive framework for its work, ensuring it reviews various aspects of fiscal federalism. By addressing resource distribution, grants-in-aid, fiscal consolidation, local government finances and the macro-fiscal framework, the Commission's recommendations play a crucial role in promoting balanced economic development, fiscal discipline and meeting the diverse needs of different states and local bodies in India.

**Q15. Assess the importance of the Panchayat system in India as a part of local government. Apart from government grants, what sources the Panchayats can look out for financing developmental projects? (250 words) [15]**

**Approach to question:****Importance of the Panchayat System:**

1. Grassroots representation and democratic governance.
2. Empowerment and decentralization of power.
3. Local development planning and implementation.
4. Promoting social and economic inclusion.

**Alternative Sources of Financing:**

1. Own source revenue through local taxes, fees and charges.
2. Utilization of rural local resources for sustainable development.
3. Accessing funds from rural development programs.
4. Financial assistance from banks and financial institutions.

**Answer:**

The Panchayat system in India is a crucial part of local government and holds immense importance in promoting democratic governance and grassroots development. It empowers local communities and provides them with a platform for participation in decision-making processes.

**Importance of the Panchayat System in India:**

1. **Grassroots Representation:** Panchayats serve as democratic institutions that represent the interests and aspirations of people at the grassroots level, fostering community participation in governance.
2. **Empowerment and Decentralization:** Panchayats empower local communities by decentralizing power and bringing governance closer to the people, enabling effective local autonomy.
3. **Local Development:** Panchayats are responsible for planning and implementing developmental projects at the village, block and district levels, ensuring effective resource utilization and addressing local priorities.



4. **Service Delivery:** Panchayats play an instrumental role in delivering essential services such as health, education, sanitation and infrastructure, bridging the gap between the government and the community.

#### Alternative Sources of Financing for Panchayats:

1. **Own Source Revenue:** Panchayats can generate revenue through local taxes, fees and charges, such as property taxes, professional taxes, user fees and licenses.
2. **Rural Local Resources:** Utilizing local resources like common lands, village forests and water bodies can generate revenue for sustainable development.
3. **Rural Development Programs:** Accessing funds from rural development programs initiated by the central and state governments can provide financial assistance for various projects.
4. **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Funds:** Collaborating with corporates allows Panchayats to access CSR funds for development projects, leveraging private sector resources.

The Panchayat system in India plays a vital role in democratic governance and grassroots development. Besides government grants, Panchayats can diversify their sources of financing for developmental projects.

**Q16. Multiplicity of various commissions for the vulnerable sections of the society leads to problems of overlapping jurisdiction and duplication of functions. Is it better to merge all commissions into an umbrella Human Rights Commission? Argue your case.**

(250 words) [15]

#### Approach to question:

1. **Specific Focus:** Different commissions cater to the specific needs and rights of various vulnerable sections like women, children, minorities and SC/ST communities.
2. **Representation:** Individual commissions provide dedicated representation and advocacy for each vulnerable group, amplifying their voices and ensuring their concerns receive due attention.
3. **Targeted Interventions:** Specific commissions enable tailored interventions, policies and programs that address the distinct needs of different vulnerable sections. This targeted approach leads to more effective outcomes.

#### Answer:

The existence of multiple commissions for various vulnerable sections of society, such as women, children,

minorities and scheduled castes/tribes, has been instrumental in addressing their specific concerns. However, the proliferation of such commissions has given rise to challenges of overlapping jurisdiction and duplication of functions.

#### Arguments in favor of merging commissions into an umbrella Human Rights Commission:

1. **Streamlined Functionality:** Consolidating various commissions under a single umbrella body can streamline their functioning, reducing bureaucratic redundancies and administrative costs. This can lead to better utilization of resources and improved efficiency in addressing human rights violations.
2. **Comprehensive Approach:** An overarching Human Rights Commission can adopt a more holistic perspective while dealing with human rights issues. By considering the interconnectedness of various vulnerable groups' rights, it can devise more inclusive policies and interventions.
3. **Avoidance of Overlapping Jurisdiction:** Merging commissions would prevent the confusion and potential conflicts arising from overlapping jurisdiction, ensuring a clear delineation of responsibilities and a more coordinated approach.

#### Arguments against merging commissions into an umbrella Human Rights Commission:

1. **Specificity of Concerns:** Different vulnerable sections of society have unique challenges and experiences. Separate commissions allow for specialized attention to their distinct issues, ensuring a more nuanced and targeted approach.
2. **Inclusivity:** An umbrella commission might face difficulties in accommodating the specific needs of all vulnerable groups, potentially diluting their representation and engagement.
3. **Dilution of Focus:** Merging commissions could dilute the focus on specific concerns, making it challenging to address complex issues effectively.

While consolidating all commissions under an umbrella Human Rights Commission offers the advantages of streamlined functionality and a comprehensive approach, it must be weighed against the potential drawbacks of losing specificity and inclusivity. Striking a balance between a centralized approach and retaining specialized bodies might be the most prudent course of action.

**Q17. How far do you agree with the view that the focus on lack of availability of food as the main cause of hunger takes the attention away from ineffective human development policies in India?** (250 words) [15]

**Approach to question:**

1. **Multi-faceted Issue:** Hunger is a complex problem influenced by various factors, including poverty, inadequate infrastructure, inequality and ineffective policies.
2. **Holistic Approach:** Addressing hunger requires a comprehensive strategy that encompasses not only food availability but also broader socio-economic development, poverty alleviation and social safety nets.
3. **Policy Reforms:** Recognizing the role of ineffective human development policies shifts the focus towards necessary reforms in areas such as education, healthcare, rural infrastructure and social welfare programs.

**Answer:**

The issue of hunger in India is complex and multi-dimensional, influenced by various factors. While food availability is often highlighted as the main cause of hunger, this perspective argues that a focus on this aspect alone can divert attention from the role of ineffective human development policies. This viewpoint emphasizes the need to address systemic issues, invest in human development and empower marginalized communities to achieve sustainable solutions to hunger.

**Supporting Points:**

1. **Multi-dimensional Nature of Hunger:** Hunger is not solely about the lack of food availability. It is influenced by poverty, inequality, limited access to education and healthcare and ineffective policies. Addressing these underlying factors is essential to tackle hunger comprehensively.
2. **Systemic Issues:** Ineffective human development policies contribute to perpetuating hunger and poverty. Insufficient investment in education, healthcare, rural infrastructure and social welfare programs limits opportunities for marginalized populations to escape the cycle of poverty and food insecurity.
3. **Poverty Alleviation:** Hunger often results from poverty. Focusing solely on food availability neglects the need for poverty alleviation measures, such as income generation, employment opportunities and social safety nets, which can provide long-term solutions to hunger.
4. **Capability Development:** Enhancing people's capabilities is crucial. Investing in education and skill development equips individuals with the knowledge and skills to access better livelihood opportunities and improve overall well-being, reducing their vulnerability to hunger.

While food availability is undeniably critical in addressing hunger, effective human development policies play a crucial role in its persistence. An integrated approach that addresses systemic issues, invests in human development and empowers marginalized communities is necessary for sustainable solutions.

**Q18. The Citizen's Charter is an ideal instrument of organisational transparency and accountability, but it has its own limitations. Identify the limitations and suggest measures for greater effectiveness of the Citizen's Charters. (250 words) [15]**

**Approach to question:****Limitations**

1. **Lack of Awareness:** Many citizens may be unaware of the existence and content of the Citizen's Charters, limiting their ability to hold the organization accountable.
2. **Insufficient Monitoring:** Inadequate monitoring of Charter implementation may result in non-compliance or inconsistent adherence to the stated standards.

**Measures for Greater Effectiveness:**

1. **Empowering Citizens:** Facilitate citizen participation through grievance redressal mechanisms, helplines and online platforms, empowering them to voice their concerns.
3. **Training and Capacity Building:** Provide adequate training to officials responsible for implementing the Citizen's Charter, enabling them to understand its importance and enhance transparency.

**Answer:**

The Citizen's Charter is widely recognized as an important tool for promoting transparency and accountability in organizations. However, it is not without its limitations, which can hinder its effectiveness. This concise analysis will highlight the key limitations of Citizen's Charters and propose measures to enhance their effectiveness.

**Limitations:**

1. **Lack of Awareness:** Many citizens are unaware of the existence and content of Citizen's Charters, limiting their ability to hold organizations accountable for their commitments.
2. **Limited Enforcement Mechanisms:** Citizen's Charters often lack strong enforcement mechanisms, leading to non-compliance with stated standards.
3. **Insufficient Monitoring:** Inadequate monitoring of the implementation of Citizen's Charters can result in inconsistent adherence to the stated commitments.

4. **Ambiguity and Complexity:** Some Citizen's Charters may be drafted in complex language or contain ambiguous clauses, making it difficult for citizens to understand their rights and entitlements.

**Measures for Greater Effectiveness:**

1. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct extensive public awareness campaigns to inform citizens about the existence and significance of Citizen's Charters.
2. **Strengthened Accountability Mechanisms:** Implement strong enforcement mechanisms, including penalties for non-compliance and the establishment of an independent oversight body.
3. **Regular Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish a systematic monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the implementation of Citizen's Charters.
4. **Simplification and Clarity:** Draft Citizen's Charters in a clear and concise manner, minimizing ambiguities and complexities for better understanding.

The Citizen's Charter is a valuable tool for promoting transparency and accountability, but its limitations must be addressed to enhance its effectiveness. Through public awareness campaigns, strengthened accountability mechanisms, regular monitoring, simplification of language, citizen empowerment, training and continuous improvement, Citizen's Charters can better serve their purpose of fostering transparency and accountability in organizations.

**Q19. What are the key areas of reform if the WTO has to survive in the present context of 'Trade War', especially keeping in mind the interest of India? (250 words) [15]**

**Approach to question:**

1. **Dispute Settlement Mechanism:** Strengthen the dispute settlement process to ensure timely resolution of trade disputes and restore confidence in the system.
2. **Special and Differential Treatment:** Preserve and enhance special and differential treatment provisions for developing countries like India to address their unique development needs and support their participation in global trade.
3. **Agricultural Subsidies:** Reform agricultural subsidies to ensure a level playing field, particularly by reducing trade-distorting domestic subsidies that negatively impact Indian farmers.

**Answer:**

The World Trade Organization (WTO) faces significant challenges in the present context of trade wars and

growing protectionism. As a developing economy, India has a vested interest in ensuring the survival and effectiveness of the WTO. This concise analysis will outline key areas of reform that would benefit India and other developing countries in the global trading system.

**Key Areas of Reform for the Survival of the WTO:**

1. **Dispute Settlement Mechanism:** Address the impasse in the Appellate Body and strengthen the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism to ensure timely and effective resolution of trade disputes.
2. **Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT):** Preserve and strengthen the principle of S&DT for developing countries like India, tailoring provisions to address their unique challenges and development needs.
3. **Agricultural Subsidies:** Tackle the issue of agricultural subsidies, particularly from developed countries, to promote fair competition in global agricultural trade and protect the interests of countries like India.
4. **Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs):** Minimize unjustified NTBs that hinder Indian exports, by establishing clearer rules and guidelines to enhance market access for Indian goods and services.
5. **Services Trade:** Strengthen the GATS to address barriers and promote market access in services sectors where India holds a competitive advantage.
6. **Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs):** Balance IPR protection with access to affordable medicines, safeguarding India's interests and promoting access to essential drugs.

Reforming the WTO in these key areas is essential for its survival and relevance in the face of trade wars and protectionism. By addressing the concerns of developing countries like India, the WTO can promote a more inclusive and equitable global trading system. These reforms will enable India to leverage its strengths and benefit from international trade while addressing its unique development needs.

**Q20. In what ways would the ongoing US-Iran Nuclear Pact Controversy affect the national interest of India? How should India respond to its situation? (250 words) [15]**

**Approach to question:**

1. **Energy Security:** India heavily relies on Iranian oil imports and any disruption in the US-Iran nuclear pact may lead to increased oil prices.
2. **Regional Stability:** Escalation of tensions between the US and Iran could impact the stability of the Middle East, which has significant implications for India's strategic interests in the region.

**India should respond to the situation by:**

1. **Diplomatic Engagement:** Engage with both the US and Iran diplomatically to promote dialogue and peaceful resolution of issues.
2. **Regional Diplomacy:** Engage with other regional stakeholders, to promote stability and encourage dialogue between the US and Iran.

**Answer:**

The ongoing controversy surrounding the US-Iran nuclear pact can have significant implications for India's national interests. As a country heavily reliant on Iranian oil and invested in regional connectivity projects, India must carefully navigate the situation to safeguard its energy security, regional stability and economic interests.

**Implications for India's National Interests:**

1. **Energy Security:** India is a major importer of Iranian oil and any disruption in the US-Iran nuclear pact could lead to sanctions or tensions that impact oil supplies from Iran. This poses challenges for India's energy security and meeting its growing demands.
2. **Regional Stability:** Tensions between the US and Iran have the potential to destabilize the region, impacting India's strategic interests, trade routes and security of sea lanes in the Persian Gulf.
3. **Chabahar Port Project:** India's investment in the Chabahar Port, a crucial link for regional trade and

connectivity with Afghanistan and Central Asia, could face hurdles due to escalating tensions or sanctions on Iran.

**India's Multifaceted Approach:**

1. **Diplomatic Engagement:** India should actively engage with both the US and Iran to express its concerns and advocate for peaceful dialogue. Leveraging its historical ties, India can play a constructive role in facilitating negotiations.
2. **Diversification of Energy Sources:** To reduce dependence on Iranian oil, India should diversify energy imports from other oil-producing countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE and Iraq.
3. **Regional Cooperation:** Strengthening cooperation with Middle Eastern and Gulf countries will promote stability and a peaceful resolution to conflicts.

India's response to the US-Iran nuclear pact controversy should protect its interests, maintain strategic autonomy and promote peace and stability in the region. By employing diplomatic initiatives, diversifying energy sources, strengthening regional cooperation and engaging with international forums, India can navigate the challenges and contribute to finding a diplomatic solution.