Q1. "The local self-government system in India has not proved to be effective instrument of governance". Critically examine the statement and give your views to improve the situation. **(150 words) [10]**

Approach to question:

1. **Lack of Autonomy:** Local governments often face interference from higher levels of government, undermining their decision-making powers and effectiveness.

2. **Inadequate Resources:** Insufficient financial and administrative resources hinder the capacity of local bodies to carry out their functions efficiently.

To improve the situation:

1. **Empowerment:** Local governments must be granted greater autonomy and decision-making powers to effectively address local issues.

2. **Adequate Funding:** Ensuring adequate financial resources and devolution of funds to local bodies would enable them to deliver services efficiently.

Answer:

The local self-government system in India aims to decentralize power and empower local bodies to address community-specific needs. While the system faces challenges, it has not entirely failed in its objectives. A critical examination of its shortcomings and suggestions for improvement follows.

Challenges in the Local Self-Government System:

1. **Limited Autonomy:** Local bodies face interference from higher levels of government, hindering decision-making and responsiveness to local issues.

2. **Insufficient Resources:** Financial and administrative constraints limit local bodies' capacity to deliver essential services effectively.

3. **Political Interference:** Political influence leads to corruption and nepotism, undermining the system's credibility.

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. **Grant Greater Autonomy:** Local bodies should be given more decision-making power and policy flexibility.

2. **Increase Resource Allocation:** Provide adequate funds and administrative support to enable efficient functioning.

3. **Minimize Political Influence:** Establish mechanisms for transparency, anti-corruption measures and accountability.

Though facing challenges, the local self-government system in India can be improved through greater autonomy, resource allocation, transparency, capacity-building, citizen engagement, ICT integration and knowledge sharing. Addressing these aspects will enhance local governance and fulfill the system's decentralization and empowerment objectives.

Q2. Critically examine the Supreme Court's judgement on 'National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014' with reference to appointment of judges of higher judiciary in India. **(150 words) [10]**

Approach to question:

1. **Upholding Judicial Independence:** The Supreme Court declared the NJAC Act unconstitutional, citing concerns over the independence of the judiciary from the executive and political interference in the appointment process.

2. **Preservation of Collegium System:** The judgment reaffirmed the primacy of the collegium system, where judges themselves have the authority to recommend appointments, ensuring judicial autonomy in the selection of judges.

Answer:

The Supreme Court's judgment on the 'National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, 2014' had significant implications for the appointment of judges to the higher judiciary in India. The judgment upheld judicial independence and favored the continuation of the collegium system for appointments, while also sparking discussions on the need for reforms to address transparency and accountability concerns.

Implications of the Judgment:

1. **Upholding Judicial Independence:** The Supreme Court declared the NJAC Act unconstitutional, emphasizing the need to maintain a separation of powers and prevent any undue influence on judicial appointments.

2. **Continuation of Collegium System:** The judgment reaffirmed the primacy of the collegium system, where judges themselves recommend appointments and transfers, to safeguard judicial independence.

3. **Call for Reforms:** The judgment sparked discussions on reforms to balance judicial independence with accountability and diversity in the appointment process.

4. **Limiting Executive's Role:** The judgment restricted the executive's involvement in appointments to ensure a more independent judiciary.

The Supreme Court's judgment upheld judicial independence, favoured the collegium system and initiated discussions on reforms to ensure transparency and accountability. Striking a balance between independence and inclusion of broader perspectives is essential for a transparent and accountable judiciary.

Q3. **"Simultaneous election to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies will limit the amount of time and money spent in electioneering but it will reduce the government's accountability to the people". Discuss.** **(150 words) [10]**

Approach to question:

1. **Time and Cost Efficiency:** Simultaneous elections can reduce the frequency of elections, saving time and reducing the financial burden on political parties and the exchequer.

2. **Limited Focus on Local Issues:** Simultaneous elections may overshadow local issues, as national-level campaigns dominate the discourse. This could weaken the representation of regional concerns and dilute the voice of state-specific issues.

Answer:

Simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies have been proposed as a way to streamline the electoral process and reduce costs. However, their impact on government accountability needs critical examination.

Advantages:

1. **Time and Cost Efficiency:** Simultaneous elections save time and financial burden, allowing better governance and policy implementation.

2. **Policy Continuity:** Stable governance with fixed terms at both levels leads to better policy planning and implementation.

3. **Increased Coordination:** Better coordination between central and state agencies enhances governance efficiency.

Disadvantages:

1. **Reduced Focus on Local Issues:** Dominance of national issues neglects state-specific problems, undermining federalism.

2. **Weakened Government Accountability:** Fewer elections reduce electoral checks, weakening the link between government performance and voter mandate.

3. **Imbalance in Political Power:** Favouring national parties over regional ones can marginalize regional aspirations and diversity of representation.

4. **Administrative Challenges:** Massive scale simultaneous elections pose logistical, security and coordination challenges.

5. **Voter Fatigue and Turnout:** Continuous campaigns may exhaust voters, resulting in lower turnout and reduced engagement.

Simultaneous elections have benefits, but concerns regarding government accountability, local issues, political power, administrative challenges and voter engagement must be considered.

Q4. **How do pressure groups influence Indian political process? Do you agree with this view that informal pressure groups have emerged as more powerful than formal pressure groups in recent years?**

(150 words) [10]

Approach to question:

1. **Lobbying:** Pressure groups engage in lobbying activities, seeking to influence policy makers and decision-makers through direct interactions, providing information and making persuasive arguments.

2. **Public Awareness and Mobilization:** Pressure groups organize public campaigns, protests and demonstrations to raise awareness about specific issues, attract public support and put pressure on policy makers to address their concerns.

Answer:

Pressure groups in India significantly shape the political process by influencing policy decisions, advocating for issues and mobilizing public opinion. The debate centers on the relative power of formal and informal pressure groups. This analysis discusses their influence and evaluates the view that informal pressure groups have become more powerful in recent years.

Pressure Group Influence:

1. **Lobbying and Advocacy:** Engaging in direct interactions, providing information and making persuasive arguments to influence policy makers.

2. **Public Awareness and Mobilization:** Organizing campaigns, protests and demonstrations to raise awareness and attract public support.

3. **Media Engagement:** Using various media channels to disseminate messages and shape public opinion.

Analysis:

1. **Rise of Informal Pressure Groups:** Social media-driven movements have gained prominence, mobilizing large numbers of people quickly.

2. **Dynamism and Visibility:** Informal groups exhibit greater dynamism and visibility, garnering substantial attention and media coverage.

3. **Democratization of Information:** Social media has democratized access to information, allowing informal groups to reach wider audiences.

Pressure groups, formal and informal, significantly influence the Indian political process through various means. While informal groups have gained prominence due to their dynamism and visibility, formal groups remain influential due to their expertise and organizational strength.

Q5. **Discuss the role of Public Accounts Committee in establishing accountability of the government to the people.**

(150 words) [10]

Approach to question:

1. **Audit of Public Expenditure:** The PAC examines the audit reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) that highlight instances of financial irregularities and non-compliance with rules and regulations.

2. **Scrutiny of Government Actions:** The PAC scrutinizes the actions and decisions of the government, particularly in financial matters.

Answer:

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in India plays a vital role in ensuring government accountability to the people. It achieves this through various means, as highlighted in the following points.

Significance of the PAC:

1. **Examination of Audit Reports:** The PAC scrutinizes audit reports to ensure transparency in the use of public funds.

2. **Financial Accountability:** It reviews government expenditure, revenue generation and financial management to ensure responsible utilization of resources.

3. **Scrutiny of Government Actions:** The PAC examines government actions and policies, identifying mismanagement and irregularities.

4. **Recommendations for Reforms:** Based on its findings, the PAC proposes reforms to strengthen governance and financial management.

5. **Parliamentary Oversight:** As a parliamentary committee, the PAC holds the government accountable to the legislature.

6. **Transparency and Public Awareness:** The PAC's proceedings and reports are transparent and accessible to the public.

7. **Role in Legislative Scrutiny:** The PAC reviews the implementation of legislative measures, ensuring alignment with public interest.

The Public Accounts Committee is a critical institution that fosters government accountability through examination, scrutiny, oversight and transparency. It plays a pivotal role in ensuring financial accountability, effective governance and the welfare of the people.

Q6. **"To ensure effective implementation of policies addressing water, sanitation and hygiene need the identification of the beneficiary segments is to be synchronized with the anticipated outcomes". Examine the statement in the context of the WASH scheme.** **(150 words) [10]**

Approach to question:

1. **Targeted Approach:** Identifying the beneficiary segments based on specific needs and socio-economic conditions allows for a targeted approach in implementing WASH policies.

2. **Resource Allocation:** Synchronizing beneficiary identification with anticipated outcomes enables efficient allocation of resources.

Answer:

The statement emphasizes the importance of aligning beneficiary segment identification with anticipated outcomes in the implementation of policies addressing water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) needs.

Key Points:

1. **Targeted Approach:** Beneficiary identification ensures a targeted approach, tailoring interventions to address specific WASH needs of different segments.

2. **Needs Assessment:** Conducting comprehensive needs assessments helps understand the unique requirements of each segment.

3. **Resource Allocation:** Synchronization optimizes resource allocation, directing funds towards areas with the greatest need and impact.

4. **Customized Solutions:** Tailored interventions provide customized solutions for different beneficiary segments.

5. **Measurable Outcomes:** Alignment allows for measuring progress and evaluating policy effectiveness.

6. **Equity and Inclusivity:** Synchronization ensures equitable reach to vulnerable and marginalized communities.

7. **Stakeholder Participation:** Involvement of local communities enhances engagement and accountability.

8. **Adaptive Management:** Regular monitoring allows for adaptive management of the WASH scheme.

Synchronizing beneficiary identification with anticipated outcomes enhances the impact of WASH policies, promoting efficient resource utilization, measurable progress, inclusivity and community engagement. It enables policy makers to address specific needs effectively, fostering sustainable improvements in water, sanitation and hygiene for all segments of society.

Q7. **Does the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, ensure effective mechanism for empowerment and inclusion of the intended beneficiaries in the society? Discuss.**

(150 words) [10]

Approach to question:

1. **Comprehensive Legal Framework:** The Act provides a comprehensive legal framework to safeguard the rights and promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

2. **Equal Opportunities:** It guarantees equal opportunities in education, employment, healthcare and accessibility, enabling individuals with disabilities to participate fully in society.

Answer:

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, is a landmark legislation in India aimed at promoting the empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Key Points:

1. **Comprehensive Legal Framework:** The Act addresses various disabilities, ensuring broad coverage of beneficiaries.

2. **Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities:** It prohibits discrimination and promotes equal opportunities in education, employment, healthcare, etc.

3. **Accessibility and Barrier-Free Environment:** The Act mandates accessibility standards for public places and transportation.

4. **Reservation and Affirmative Action:** It provides for reservation in education and employment, as well as affirmative action measures.

5. **Rehabilitation and Support:** The Act recognizes the need for rehabilitation services and assistive devices.

6. **Grievance Redressal Mechanisms:** It establishes Commissions for Persons with Disabilities as grievance redressal bodies.

7. **Awareness and Sensitization:** The Act emphasizes awareness programs to foster inclusivity.

8. **Challenges in Implementation:** Challenges include awareness, infrastructure and attitudinal barriers.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, provides a robust legal framework but faces challenges in implementation. Collaborative efforts, awareness and continuous monitoring are essential to empower and include persons with disabilities fully in Indian society.

Q8. **Hunger and poverty are the biggest challenges for good governance in India still today. Evaluate how far successive governments have progressed in dealing with these humongous problems. Suggest measures for improvement.**

(150 words) [10]

Approach to question:

1. **Poverty Alleviation Programs:** Various governments have implemented poverty alleviation programs such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) and Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) to improve livelihoods and provide financial inclusion.

However, challenges remain and measures for improvement include:

1. **Targeted Interventions:** Enhance the targeting of poverty alleviation programs to reach the most vulnerable sections, ensuring that benefits are effectively reaching those in need.

Answer:

Hunger and poverty continue to be significant challenges for good governance in India. Evaluating the progress of successive governments in dealing with these problems reveals the following key points:

Progressive Measures:

1. **Poverty Alleviation Programs:** MGNREGA, NRLM and PMJDY have improved livelihoods and reduced poverty in many areas.

2. **Food Security Initiatives:** NFSA, Mid-Day Meal and ICDS target hunger and malnutrition among vulnerable sections of society.

3. **Social Welfare Schemes:** NSAP, Swachh Bharat Mission and PMAY aim to improve living conditions and provide basic amenities for the poor.

Measures for Improvement:

1. **Targeted Interventions:** Enhance the targeting of poverty alleviation programs to reach the most vulnerable sections of society.

2. **Strengthen Social Safety Nets:** Increase budget allocations and improve coverage and effectiveness of social safety net programs.

3. **Agricultural Reforms:** Implement comprehensive agricultural reforms to boost productivity and ensure better price realization for farmers.

While progress has been made, addressing hunger and poverty requires a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach. Strengthening social safety nets, implementing agricultural reforms, enhancing skill development, exploring UBI, investing in healthcare and education and empowering marginalized communities are essential to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

Q9. **"China is using its economic relations and positive trade surplus as tools to develop potential military power status in Asia". In the light of this statement, discuss its impact on India as her neighbour. (150 words) [10]**

Approach to question:

1. **Border Tensions:** China's military ambitions coupled with territorial disputes have led to heightened border tensions between India and China, most notably in regions like Doklam and Ladakh.

2. **Strategic Encirclement:** China's economic prowess allows it to invest in infrastructure projects in neighbouring countries, creating a network of allies and potential military bases encircling India.

Answer:

China's strategic use of economic relations and positive trade surplus to bolster its military power in Asia has significant implications for India as its neighbour. The following key points highlight the impact of this phenomenon:

Impact on India:

1. **Border Tensions:** Frequent border disputes with China result in military standoffs and pose direct security threats.

2. **Strategic Encirclement:** China's investments in infrastructure projects encircle India, such as the CPEC and "String of Pearls" strategy.

3. **Maritime Security Concerns:** China's expanding naval presence in the Indian Ocean challenges India's maritime security.

4. **Economic Competition:** China's trade surplus and competitive pricing impact India's industries and create a trade imbalance.

5. **Technological and Defense Race:** China's military advancements prompt India to focus on bolstering its own defense capabilities.

6. **Regional Power Dynamics:** China's rise as a military power in Asia affects India's regional influence.

China's pursuit of military power through economic influence has far-reaching implications for India's security, economy and regional standing. India must carefully navigate these challenges to safeguard its national interests and maintain regional stability.

Q10. **What are the main function of the United Nation Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)? Explain different functional commissions attaches to it.**

(150 words) [5+5]

Approach to question:

1. **Policy Coordination:** ECOSOC facilitates international cooperation and coordination on economic, social and environmental issues among member states and specialized agencies of the UN.

2. **Development Planning:** It promotes sustainable development and sets guidelines for economic and social development policies.

The functional commissions attached to ECOSOC include:

1. **Commission on Population and Development:** Examines issues related to population growth, reproductive health and sustainable development.

2. **Commission for Social Development:** Focuses on social issues, poverty eradication and the promotion of social integration.

Answer:

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) plays a crucial role within the UN system. Its main functions include policy coordination, development planning, review and reporting and serving as a forum for dialogue on global challenges.

Main Functions of ECOSOC:

1. **Policy Coordination:** Facilitating international cooperation and dialogue on economic, social and environmental issues to ensure coherence in global development efforts.

2. **Development Planning:** Providing policy advice and promoting sustainable development worldwide to achieve development goals.

3. **Review and Reporting:** Monitoring the progress of member states in implementing development targets and facilitating sharing of experiences and best practices.

Functional Commissions Attached to ECOSOC:

1. **Commission on Population and Development (CPD):** Addressing population growth and reproductive health issues.

2. **Commission for Social Development (CSocD):** Focusing on poverty eradication and social integration.

3. **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW):** Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

ECOSOC and its functional commissions together contribute to advancing global development, fostering inclusive societies and achieving sustainable progress for all. Their efforts aim to address specific thematic areas and contribute to the broader objectives of the United Nations in promoting a more equitable and sustainable world.

Q11. **Explain the salient features of the Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016. Do you think it is efficacious enough "to remove cascading effect of taxes and provide for common national market for goods and services"?**

(250 words) [15]

Approach to question:

1. **Introduction of GST:** The Act introduced a comprehensive indirect tax regime known as the Goods and Services Tax (GST) to replace multiple central and state taxes. It aimed to create a common national market for goods and services.

2. **Dual GST Structure:** The GST system implemented a dual structure comprising Central GST (CGST) levied by the central government and State GST (SGST) levied by the state governments.

Answer:

The Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016, brought significant changes to India's tax structure by introducing the Goods and Services Tax (GST). This new taxation system aimed to create a unified and simplified tax regime, eliminating the cascading effect of multiple indirect taxes and establishing a common national market for goods and services.

Salient Features of the GST Act:

1. **Introduction of GST:** The Act replaced multiple indirect taxes with the GST, creating a single tax applicable across the country.

2. **Dual GST Structure:** The GST implemented a dual structure with CGST and SGST, ensuring both

central and state governments have the power to tax and generate revenue.

3. **Subsuming of Taxes:** Various central and state taxes, such as excise duty, service tax, VAT and central sales tax, were subsumed under the GST regime.

4. **Destination-based Taxation:** The GST adopted a destination principle, where taxes are levied based on the place of final consumption, promoting a common national market.

Assessment of GST's Efficacy: The introduction of GST has made significant progress in removing the cascading effect of taxes and creating a common national market. The elimination of tax barriers and standardization of rates have promoted ease of doing business and facilitated the movement of goods and services across state borders. While the GST Act laid the foundation for a unified tax system and the removal of cascading taxes, continuous reforms are necessary to ensure its efficacy. The government must address challenges, simplify the tax structure and streamline procedures further to promote economic growth, reduce complexities and foster seamless trade and commerce across India.

Q12. **Examine the scope of Fundamental Rights in the light of the latest judgement of the Supreme Court on Right to Privacy.**

(250 words) [15]

Approach to question:

1. The latest judgment of the Supreme Court on the Right to Privacy has expanded the scope of Fundamental Rights in India. The Court ruled that the Right to Privacy is intrinsic to the fundamental rights guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution, which protects the right to life and personal liberty.

Answer:

In 2017, the Supreme Court of India delivered a landmark judgment in the case of Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. Union of India, recognizing the Right to Privacy as a fundamental right protected under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Key Points on the Scope of Fundamental Rights:

1. **Recognition of Privacy as a Fundamental Right:** The judgment explicitly acknowledges the Right to Privacy as a fundamental right, extending the scope of Fundamental Rights to encompass this essential aspect of individual liberty and autonomy.

2. **Broad Interpretation of Article 21:** The Court interprets Article 21 expansively, considering personal autonomy, dignity and privacy as integral to the right to life and personal liberty, underscoring the State's responsibility to protect privacy against encroachments.

3. **Protection against State Surveillance:** The judgment lays down guidelines to prevent arbitrary and excessive State surveillance,

affirming that such surveillance must be lawful, proportionate and necessary to safeguard privacy rights.

4. **Data Protection and Information Privacy:** The judgment recognizes the right to informational privacy and the need for robust data protection, stressing that personal data must be collected, stored and processed with informed consent and appropriate safeguards.

The Supreme Court's judgment on the Right to Privacy has significantly expanded the scope of Fundamental Rights in India. By recognizing privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21, the Court has reinforced the importance of individual dignity, autonomy and personal freedom in the digital age. The judgment sets a strong foundation for addressing privacy concerns, data protection, surveillance and individual autonomy, shaping the contours of Fundamental Rights and ensuring their relevance and effectiveness in safeguarding citizens' rights and liberties.

Q13. **"The Indian Constitution has provisions for holding joint session of the two Houses of the Parliament". Enumerate the occasions when this would normally happen and also the occasions when it cannot, with reason thereof.** (250 words) [15]

Approach to question:

1. **Passage of Bills:** When a Bill passed by one House is rejected or amended by the other House and both Houses fail to reach a consensus, a joint session can be convened to resolve the deadlock and enable the passage of the Bill.

However, there are occasions when a joint session cannot be held, with reasons thereof:

1. **Dissolution of Lok Sabha:** If the Lok Sabha is dissolved before the Rajya Sabha can consider a Bill, a joint session cannot be held as there is no Lok Sabha in existence to participate.

Answer:

The Indian Constitution provides provisions for holding a joint session of Parliament, comprising the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, to address specific situations where differences arise between the two Houses on legislative matters. This mechanism ensures democratic decision-making and consensus-building while upholding the principles of separation of powers and parliamentary sovereignty.

Occasions when a joint session would normally happen:

1. **Passage of Bills:** A joint session can be convened when a Bill is passed by one House but rejected, amended, or not considered by the other House. The purpose is to resolve the deadlock and enable the passage of the Bill through both Houses.

2. **Money Bills:** When a Money Bill, exclusively dealing with taxation and government expenditure, is passed by the Lok Sabha, but the Rajya Sabha fails to return it within 14 days

or proposes amendments, a joint session can be called.

Occasions when a joint session cannot be held:

1. **Dissolution of Lok Sabha:** A joint session cannot be convened if the Lok Sabha is dissolved before a Bill, passed by one House but pending in the other, can be discussed. In such cases, there is no Lok Sabha in existence to participate in the joint session.

2. **Rejection of a Money Bill:** A joint session cannot be called if the Rajya Sabha rejects a Money Bill passed by the Lok Sabha. Money Bills are exclusively under the domain of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha does not have the power to reject or amend them.

The provisions for a joint session of Parliament in the Indian Constitution aim to foster consensus and resolve differences between the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha on legislative matters. This mechanism ensures effective legislative functioning while preserving the roles and powers of both Houses.

Q14. **To enhance the quality of democracy in India the Election Commission of India has proposed electoral reforms in 2016. What are the suggested reforms and how far are they significant to make democracy successful?**
(250 words) [15]

Approach to question:

1. **State Funding of Elections:** The Commission recommended state funding of elections to reduce the influence of money power and ensure a level playing field for all candidates.

2. **Stricter Regulation of Political Parties:** The reforms propose stricter regulations on the registration and functioning of political parties, including internal democracy, financial transparency and accountability.

Answer:

The Election Commission of India proposed a set of electoral reforms in 2016 with the aim of improving the quality of democracy in the country. These reforms address various challenges faced by the electoral system and focus on issues like the influence of money in politics, criminalization of politics, transparency in party functioning and the use of technology in elections.

Key Suggested Reforms and Their Significance:

1. **State Funding of Elections:** The proposal seeks to curb the influence of money power in politics by providing financial assistance to political parties and candidates. This can level the playing field, encourage fair competition and minimize corruption in the electoral process.

2. **Stricter Regulation of Political Parties:** The reforms aim to enforce stricter norms for party registration, internal democracy and financial transparency. This can enhance the credibility of political parties and strengthen democratic institutions.

3. **Decriminalization of Politics:** The proposal suggests disqualifying candidates facing serious criminal charges. This step can improve the integrity of elections and promote candidates with clean backgrounds, enhancing public trust in the political system.

4. **Use of Technology:** The reforms focus on leveraging technology in the electoral process, including the use of electronic voting machines (EVMs) and exploring options for remote voting. This can make the process more efficient, secure and accessible, encouraging greater participation and strengthening democracy.

The proposed electoral reforms have the potential to improve the quality of democracy in India by addressing critical issues and enhancing the electoral system. Successful implementation and the commitment of all stakeholders, including political parties, legislators and the public, are essential for realizing the full benefits of these reforms. Continuous evaluation and improvement of the electoral system will help maintain the integrity of democratic processes and promote a vibrant and participatory democracy in India.

Q15. **Is the National Commission for Women able to strategize and tackle the problems that woman face at both public and private spheres? Give reasons in support of your answer.** **(250 words) [15]**

Approach to question:

1. **Legal Mandate:** The NCW is a statutory body established under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990.

2. **Policy Formulation:** The NCW formulates policies and recommends legislative and administrative measures to safeguard women's rights.

Answer:

The National Commission for Women (NCW) in India plays a vital role in addressing and resolving issues faced by women. It is empowered to investigate complaints, recommend measures for women's protection and advocate for gender equality. Despite its efforts, the NCW faces challenges that impact its effectiveness in addressing women's issues.

Factors Supporting NCW's Ability:

1. **Legal Mandate and Authority:** The NCW is established under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990, giving it the mandate and authority to strategize and address women's rights violations.

2. **Policy Formulation and Recommendations:** The NCW formulates policies and recommends legislative measures, influencing gender-sensitive policies and laws.

3. **Grievance Redressal:** The NCW provides a platform for women to seek redressal for violence and harassment, ensuring justice.

4. **Awareness and Advocacy:** The NCW raises awareness and advocates for gender equality and empowerment through campaigns and workshops.

5. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** The NCW collaborates with various stakeholders, strengthening its ability to address issues at multiple levels.

Challenges Impacting Effectiveness:

1. **Limited Enforcement Powers:** The NCW lacks enforcement authority, hindering the implementation of its recommendations.

2. **Resource Constraints:** Limited financial resources can impact research and outreach efforts.

3. **Accessibility and Outreach:** Reaching women in remote areas and underserved populations remains a challenge.

4. **Institutional Independence:** Concerns regarding autonomy and independence may affect impartiality.

Addressing the challenges faced by the NCW, such as improving enforcement powers, increasing financial resources, enhancing accessibility and ensuring institutional independence, is essential to strengthen its ability to effectively address women's issues and promote gender equality in India.

Q16. **"The emergence of the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in contemporary times points to the slow but steady withdrawal of the State from developmental activities". Examine the role of the SHGs in developmental activities and the measures taken by the Government of India to promote the SHGs.**

(250 words) [15]

Approach to question:

1. **Empowerment and Social Change:** SHGs empower women by providing them with a platform to collectively address their socio-economic challenges.

2. **Economic Development:** SHGs foster entrepreneurship and economic self-reliance among marginalized communities. They provide access to credit, savings and income-generating activities, leading to poverty alleviation, employment generation and improved living standards.

Answer:

The emergence of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in contemporary times has not resulted in the State's withdrawal from developmental activities. Instead, SHGs have played a significant role in promoting development at the grassroots level. They have empowered women, fostered economic development, promoted financial inclusion and facilitated skill development and capacity building.

Role of SHGs in Developmental Activities:

1. **Empowerment and Social Change:** SHGs empower women by providing a platform for collective action, leading to social cohesion, increased decision-making capabilities and gender equality.

2. **Economic Development:** SHGs promote entrepreneurship and economic self-reliance among marginalized communities, generating employment and improving living standards.

3. **Financial Inclusion:** SHGs facilitate access to formal financial services, promoting savings and financial discipline among members.

4. **Skill Development and Capacity Building:** SHGs focus on capacity building, enhancing members' capabilities in financial management and livelihood activities.

Government Measures to Promote SHGs:

1. **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM):** NRLM supports SHGs through financial assistance, capacity building and livelihood opportunities in rural areas.

2. **National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM):** NULM focuses on urban poverty reduction through SHGs, promoting income-generating activities and skill development for urban poor women.

3. **Credit and Financial Inclusion:** NABARD and SIDBI provide financial support to banks for lending to SHGs and the government encourages banks to prioritize lending to SHGs.

4. **Capacity Building and Training:** The government emphasizes training and capacity building of SHG members to enhance their entrepreneurial skills.

SHGs' role in grassroots development is complemented by the government's support through initiatives like NRLM, NULM, credit and financial inclusion, capacity building and market linkages. This collaboration between the State and SHGs ensures inclusive and sustainable development, promoting the active participation of marginalized communities in India's progress.

Q17. **"Poverty alleviation programmes in India remain mere showpieces until and unless they are backed up by political will". Discuss with reference to the performance of the major poverty alleviation programmes in India.** **(250 words) [15]**

Approach to question:

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA): MGNREGA provides guaranteed employment opportunities to rural households. While it has had a positive impact in providing livelihood security and reducing poverty, its effectiveness is often hampered by delays in wage payments, corruption and limited job availability.

Answer:

The effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in India hinges on strong political will and commitment. The performance of major poverty alleviation programs underscores the significance of political determination in ensuring their success. Here are the key points to consider:

Key Poverty Alleviation Programs and Challenges:

1. **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):** Successful in providing wage employment but plagued by issues like delayed payments and corruption. Political will is crucial for proper implementation and monitoring.

2. **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY):** Increased bank accounts but challenges in utilizing them effectively for poverty alleviation. Political will needed for credit facilities, insurance coverage and financial literacy.

3. **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY):** Progress in housing construction, but challenges in timely completion and amenities. Political will required for addressing implementation gaps and monitoring.

4. **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM):** Formation of SHGs and improved livelihoods but concerns about sustainability. Political will essential for long-term support and resources.

5. **Public Distribution System (PDS):** Challenges in leakages, corruption and beneficiary identification. Political will needed for streamlining distribution and ensuring benefits reach the intended.

6. **Importance of Political Will:** Political will is crucial for policy reforms, resource allocation and addressing systemic issues. It establishes accountability and enhances coordination between government departments. Strong commitment from political leaders is essential to prioritize poverty eradication as a national agenda, with continuous monitoring and attention.

The success of poverty alleviation programs in India depends on strong political will. Leaders must demonstrate genuine commitment, engage stakeholders and ensure effective implementation. Only through political determination can these programs bring about significant and sustainable improvements in the lives of the impoverished sections of society.

Q18. **Initially Civil Services in India were designed to achieve the goals of neutrality and effectiveness, which seems to be lacking in the present context. Do you agree with the view that drastic reforms are required in Civil Services? Comment.** **(250 words) [15]**

Approach to question:

1. **Accountability:** There is a need to enhance accountability mechanisms within the civil services. Introducing performance-based evaluations, transparent promotions and disciplinary actions for misconduct can promote efficiency and discourage complacency.

2. **Skill enhancement:** The changing socio-economic landscape demands civil servants to possess a diverse skill set. Reforms should focus on providing comprehensive training and continuous professional development opportunities to enhance their capacity to address complex challenges effectively.

Answer:

The need for drastic reforms in the Indian Civil Services has become evident to restore their goals of neutrality and effectiveness. Originally designed to create a professional and efficient bureaucracy, certain factors have led to a deviation from these objectives, requiring significant changes.

Key Points for Drastic Reforms:

1. **Politicization:** Increasing politicization erodes the neutrality of civil services. Reforms should strengthen civil servants' autonomy and insulate them from political pressures to ensure impartiality and independence.

2. **Accountability:** Introduce performance-based evaluations, transparent promotion criteria and disciplinary mechanisms to enhance civil servants' accountability and efficiency.

3. **Skill Enhancement:** Focus on comprehensive training and continuous professional development to equip civil servants with diverse skills to address complex challenges effectively.

4. **Technological Integration:** Embrace technology, digital tools and data analytics to streamline processes, minimize corruption and improve governance.

5. **Diversity and Inclusivity:** Ensure fair representation and equal opportunities for marginalized communities in civil services to foster inclusivity and diverse perspectives.

To serve as a professional, efficient and neutral bureaucracy, the civil services require drastic reforms. Addressing issues of politicization, enhancing accountability, promoting skill development, embracing technology and fostering diversity are essential steps towards achieving the original goals of civil services. These reforms will enable civil servants to effectively meet the nation's evolving needs, deliver transparent and impartial public services and restore the faith of citizens in the governance system.

Q19. **The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyze India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian countries.** **(250 words) [15]**

Approach to question:

1. **Oil Imports:** India heavily relies on West Asian countries for oil imports. Cooperation with countries like Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran ensures a steady supply of crude oil, meeting India's energy demands.

2. **Natural Gas:** West Asian nations possess abundant natural gas reserves. India's energy policy aims to enhance cooperation in natural gas exploration, production and imports from countries like Qatar and Iran to diversify its energy mix and reduce reliance on coal.

Answer:

India's energy security is crucial for its economic progress and its energy policy cooperation with West Asian countries has played a significant role in ensuring a stable and reliable energy supply. By collaborating with these nations, India aims to diversify its energy sources and strengthen bilateral ties.

Analysis of India's Energy Policy Cooperation with West Asian Countries:

1. **Oil Imports:** India heavily relies on West Asian countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and the UAE, for its oil imports, ensuring a consistent supply of crude oil for its growing energy demands and economic development.

2. **Natural Gas Cooperation:** India seeks to enhance cooperation with nations like Qatar, Iran and the UAE in natural gas exploration and production to diversify its energy mix and reduce dependence on coal.

3. **Infrastructure Investments:** India's investments in West Asian countries' energy infrastructure projects strengthen bilateral ties and provide access to energy resources, ensuring energy security and economic cooperation.

4. **Renewable Energy Partnerships:** India collaborates with West Asian countries in the renewable energy sector, leveraging its expertise in solar energy to promote sustainable development and reduce carbon emissions.

5. **Strategic Relationships:** Strategic partnerships with West Asian countries ensure long-term energy supply and stability, exemplified by agreements like the India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

6. **Energy Diplomacy:** India's energy policy includes energy diplomacy to navigate geopolitical challenges, foster regional stability and ensure a smooth functioning of energy supply chains.

India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian countries is vital for ensuring energy security, diversifying energy sources and promoting sustainable development. By engaging in oil imports, natural gas cooperation, infrastructure investments, renewable energy partnerships, strategic relationships and energy diplomacy, India strengthens its energy security, ensuring a stable and reliable energy supply for its economic progress.

Q20. Indian diaspora has an important role to play in South-East Asian countries' economy and society. Appraise the role of Indian diaspora in South-East Asia in this context.

(250 words) [15]

Approach to question:

Economic Contributions: The Indian diaspora has made substantial economic contributions in various sectors such as trade, business, finance and entrepreneurship. They have established successful businesses, created employment opportunities and facilitated economic growth in South-East Asian countries.

Answer:

The Indian diaspora in South-East Asia has played a vital role in the region's economic and societal development. Their contributions in various fields have had a positive impact on the growth and progress of South-East Asian countries.

Appraisal of the Role of the Indian Diaspora in South-East Asia:

1. **Economic Growth:** The Indian diaspora has contributed to economic growth by engaging in trade, business and entrepreneurship, establishing successful ventures and creating employment opportunities.

2. **Skilled Workforce:** Many diaspora members bring valuable skills and expertise to South-East Asian countries, filling critical skill gaps and contributing to the development of key sectors.

3. **Cultural Enrichment:** The Indian diaspora has enriched South-East Asian societies by promoting Indian traditions, arts and cuisine, fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

4. **Philanthropy and Social Initiatives:** The diaspora actively engages in philanthropic activities, supporting charitable organizations and community development projects.

5. **Networking and Business Links:** The diaspora serves as a bridge for business and trade between South-East Asian countries and India, facilitating collaborations and investment opportunities.

6. **Cultural Integration:** Diaspora members actively engage in local community activities, contributing to cultural integration and a sense of inclusivity.

7. **Diplomatic Relations:** The diaspora strengthens diplomatic relations by enhancing people-to-people ties and fostering goodwill between South-East Asian countries and India.

The Indian diaspora in South-East Asia has been a significant asset, contributing to economic growth, cultural enrichment, philanthropy and diplomatic relations in the region. Their continued engagement fosters greater ties between South-East Asia and India and contributes to the overall development and prosperity of the region. The Indian diaspora continues to play a crucial role in shaping the progress and future of South-East Asian countries.