



Sambodh IAS (Beta)

UPSC CSE Mains 2026

General Studies Paper II

Model answer booklet · 20 questions



Polity



Governance



International Relations



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Q01

10 marks · 150 words

Examine

Right to privacy relating to self-identity is very dear to every human being and well protected under Article 21 of the Constitution. In this context, examine the effect of the amendment in 2026, to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.

Introduction. Article 21, read with dignity and decisional autonomy, protects a person's self-defined gender identity. In *NALSA v. Union of India* (2014), the Supreme Court located this protection in Articles 14, 15, 16, 19(1)(a) and 21; *Puttaswamy* (2017) reinforced privacy.

Effect of the 2026 amendment

- Effective from 25 May 2026, it revises the definitions of "transgender person" and "appropriate Government", and introduces "authority". Thus, entitlement, certification and responsibility for enforcement will now turn on the amended statutory language.
- A clearer authority may improve accountability under the 2019 Act's anti-discrimination framework in education, employment, healthcare and access to public services.

Constitutional scrutiny

- Any narrowing of the definition, or administrative control over identity, can dilute *NALSA*'s recognition of self-identification and expose intimate personal data—an Article 21 concern.
- The Supreme Court's August 2026 observation that an amendment cannot take away rights already granted underscores non-retrogression and equality limits on legislative change.

Conclusion. The amendment is valid only if implemented as a rights-expanding clarification, not as a mechanism to withdraw recognised identities or benefits. Rules must preserve self-determination, confidentiality and effective remedies.

Sources: prsindia.org · scconline.com · thehindu.com · thehindu.com · en.wikipedia.org · ijllr.com · relegal.in · ijllr.com · insightsonindia.com · lawatease.in

Q02

10 marks · 150 words

Discuss

"Women as a class neither belong to a minority group nor are they regarded as forming a backward class." In the light of this statement, discuss the evolution of women's reservation from local bodies to Parliament.

Introduction. Women are not a religious/linguistic minority under Articles 29-30, nor a homogeneous "backward class" under Article 15(4). Yet pervasive gendered exclusion justified representation through Article 15(3).

From constitutional hesitation to grassroots quota

- Constituent Assembly members such as Hansa Mehta opposed separate women's seats, preferring equal citizenship.
- The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1992) inserted Articles 243D and 243T: at least one-third seats and chairperson posts in Panchayats and Municipalities, including within SC/ST quotas, were reserved for women.
- Several States subsequently raised this to 50%, creating a large cadre of elected women.

Transition to legislatures

- The Women's Reservation Bill, first introduced in 1996, repeatedly stalled over rotation and an OBC "quota within quota".
- The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023 inserted Articles 330A and 332A, reserving one-third Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats, including SC/ST reserved seats, for women.
- Article 334A makes implementation contingent on the first census after enactment and subsequent delimitation.

Conclusion. Thus, local-body reservation supplied the institutional precedent; timely census-delimitation and capacity support must convert the parliamentary guarantee into substantive voice.

Sources: epw.in · indianexpress.com · indianexpress.com · indianexpress.com · indianexpress.com · indiaspend.com · downtoearth.org.in · economictimes.indiatimes.com · orfonline.org

Q03

10 marks · 150 words

Examine

Examine whether the constitutional office of the Lok Sabha Speaker has become vulnerable to partisan politics under the current anti-defection regime. What institutional changes are required to ensure the neutrality of the Lok Sabha Speaker in managing a polarised House?

Introduction. The Speaker, elected under Article 93, must impartially protect deliberation. Yet Paragraph 6 of the Tenth Schedule makes this politically chosen office the adjudicator of defections affecting government survival.

Grounds of vulnerability

- Election by the ruling majority, continued party affiliation and removal under Article 94 by House majority create structural dependence.
- The Speaker decides disqualification petitions; selective delay can preserve a ministry or alter a floor test. The 2026 removal motion supported by 118 Opposition MPs reflects this trust deficit.
- In *Kihoto Hollohan* (1992), the Court retained the Speaker as tribunal, subject to post-decision judicial review; this cannot remedy strategically delayed decisions.

Countervailing safeguards and reforms

- *Keisham Meghachandra* (2020) urged Parliament to consider an independent tribunal and indicated three months for decisions.
- Transfer Tenth Schedule adjudication to the Election Commission, with presidential decision, as recommended by the Dinesh Goswami Committee and Law Commission (170th Report).
- Mandate time-bound, reasoned orders; bar adjudication while a removal notice is pending under *Nabam Rebia*; and require resignation from the party upon election.

Conclusion. Neutrality needs institutional insulation, not reliance on individual rectitude. An independent defection tribunal would let the Speaker concentrate on fair conduct of a polarised House.

Sources: thefederal.com · thehindu.com · lawfoyer.in · livelaw.in · ijllr.com · theprint.in · ujiyari.com

Q04

10 marks · 150 words

Discuss

Is the right to vote a fundamental right? Discuss the position of the Election Commission of India while undertaking the revision of electoral rolls. Can it also examine the question of citizenship of voters?

Introduction. Article 326 constitutionalises adult suffrage, but operational voting entitlement arises under the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1950.

Nature of the right

- The Supreme Court in *Jyoti Basu* (1982), *Kuldip Nayar* (2006) and its April 2026 reiteration holds that voting and contesting are statutory, not Fundamental Rights.

- Yet, the voter's freedom to make an informed choice is part of Article 19(1)(a) (*PUCL v. Union of India*, 2003).

ECI during roll revision

- Article 324 read with Sections 15, 21–23, RPA 1950 entrusts the ECI/ERO with preparing, revising and correcting electoral rolls.
- Under Sections 16 and 19, it must exclude non-citizens, persons below 18, and non-ordinary residents; deletion requires notice and hearing, protecting electoral inclusion.

Citizenship inquiry

- The ERO may seek material and form a prima facie satisfaction on citizenship for enrolment.
- However, it cannot conclusively adjudicate disputed nationality; that domain lies under the Citizenship Act, 1955 and, where applicable, Foreigners Tribunals. *Lal Babu Hussein* (1995) requires fair procedure against arbitrary deletion.

Conclusion. Thus, franchise is statutory but constitutionally anchored; roll revision must secure both electoral integrity and due process.

Sources: barandbench.com · scroll.in · indianexpress.com · lawandbeyond.in · theprint.in · indianexpress.com · newindianexpress.com · thehindu.com · thehindu.com · thehindu.com

Q05

10 marks · 150 words

Suggest

Do constitutional bodies like the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) possess adequate enforcement powers to secure substantive social equality? Suggest measures to enhance their institutional effectiveness.

Introduction. Articles 338 and 338A establish NCSC and NCST to investigate safeguards, inquire into complaints and report to the President. They advance Articles 15(4), 16(4) and 46, but remain principally supervisory.

Enforcement deficit

- Their civil-court powers aid investigation; recommendations are not executable.
- In 2026, the Supreme Court held that NCSC cannot adjudicate service disputes or issue binding directions.
- Delayed departmental action and weak field capacity leave reservation, land and atrocity-related grievances unresolved.

Institutional measures

- Amend Articles 338 and 338A, followed by an implementing law, to permit narrowly defined, time-bound binding remedial orders, subject to judicial review.
- Mandate Ministries and States to submit reasoned action-taken reports within 90 days; place persistent non-compliance before legislatures.

- Create district investigation cells with legal and social-audit staff, and public complaint-outcome dashboards.
- Ensure transparent appointments, protected tenure and charged budgets; integrate follow-up with SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act authorities.

Conclusion. Substantive equality needs timely correction, not merely reports. Calibrated enforceability and independent capacity can make both commissions effective constitutional guardians.

Sources: thelaw.institute · thehindu.com · scconline.com · barandbench.com · timesofindia.indiatimes.com · inclusiveias.com · testbook.com · linkedin.com · vajiramandravi.com · linkedin.com

Q06

10 marks · 150 words

Justify

Does India's tribal development policy reflect the aspirations for a socially grounded and equity-based governance? Justify your answer.

Introduction. Equity-based tribal governance means substantive equality through community control over land, culture and development. India's framework is rights-oriented, but outcomes remain uneven.

Constitutional and legal basis

- Articles 46 and 244(1), the Fifth Schedule and reservations recognise distinctive deprivation; the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act supplies legal protection.
- PESA, 1996 gives Gram Sabhas control over customary resources; the FRA, 2006 recognises individual and community forest rights—embedding livelihood, identity and self-rule.
- PM-JANMAN reaches Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups with basic services.

Implementation deficit

- Yet PESA implementation is uneven; consultation routinely replaces meaningful Gram Sabha consent.
- Mining, dams and conservation-related acquisition produce displacement and land alienation, defeating Fifth Schedule and FRA guarantees.
- Delayed community-forest-rights recognition, weak Tribal Advisory Councils and centralised schemes reduce Adivasis to welfare recipients.

Conclusion. Therefore, the policy justifiably reflects the aspiration in design, not adequately in practice. Enforcing PESA/FRA, harmonising extractive laws, and mandating Gram Sabha consent and benefit-sharing can realise equity-based governance.

Sources: link.springer.com · downtoearth.org.in · epw.in · downtoearth.org.in · link.springer.com · timesofindia.indiatimes.com · thehindu.com · m.thewire.in · thecsr universe.com

Q07

10 marks · 150 words

Discuss

Malnutrition in India is not merely a public health concern; it is also a challenge of social equity, human development and effective welfare governance. Discuss.

Introduction. Malnutrition—undernutrition, micronutrient deficiency and overweight—impairs survival and capability across the life cycle. India recorded child wasting of 18.7% and stunting of 35.5% during 2018–22, making it a cross-sectoral development failure.

Public health and human development

- Wasting raises mortality risk; stunting damages cognitive development, educational attainment and adult productivity, eroding the demographic dividend.
- Maternal undernutrition and anaemia cause low-birth-weight children, perpetuating an intergenerational cycle and undermining SDGs 2 and 3.

Social equity dimension

- SC/ST, poor, rural and remote children face higher deprivation due to food insecurity, poor sanitation, unequal healthcare and maternal nutrition; averages conceal district-level disparities.
- Early marriage, women's inadequate dietary access and unpaid care work make malnutrition a gender-justice issue, contrary to Articles 15 and 46.

Test of welfare governance

- POSHAN Abhiyaan requires convergence of ICDS, health, water-sanitation and livelihoods; PM POSHAN, NFSA-PDS and Anaemia Mukht Bharat address distinct life-cycle needs.
- Fragmented delivery, weak Anganwadi capacity, poor dietary diversity and input-focused monitoring reduce outcomes.

Conclusion. Nutrition-sensitive, decentralised targeting with real-time growth monitoring and women's agency must convert welfare entitlements into human capital.

Sources: link.springer.com · link.springer.com · downtoearth.org.in · link.springer.com · orfonline.org · nature.com · link.springer.com · worldbank.org · ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id · nepjol.info

Q08

10 marks · 150 words

Analyse

Analyse the advantages and limitations of the generalist structure of the Indian Civil Services in contemporary governance.

Introduction. Indian civil services recruit officers through a common examination and deploy them across departments and cadres; this generalist model privileges administrative judgement and mobility over initial domain expertise. In a digital, climate- and health-intensive state, its effects are mixed.

Administrative advantages

- Rotational postings create a whole-of-government perspective: a District Magistrate can align revenue, welfare, disaster relief and law-and-order responses.

- Broad training and the All India Services enable policy continuity, federal integration and rapid redeployment during elections, pandemics or disasters.
- Generalists provide impartial coordination between technical departments and elected executives, limiting capture by narrow professional interests.

Structural limitations

- Complex regulation of AI, public health, energy transition and financial markets needs sustained technical competence; frequent transfers prevent institutional memory.
- A hierarchical career system can place non-specialists above domain professionals, weakening evidence-based decisions and accountability.
- The Second ARC advocated domain specialisation; Mission Karmayogi's capacity-building cannot substitute for deep field experience.

Conclusion. India needs a "generalist coordinator, specialist-informed" model: transparent lateral entry, domain-based postings and longer tenures, while retaining the generalist's constitutional and integrative role.

Sources: pubadmin.institute · anantamias.com · iaspoint.com · leanprep.in · frontline.thehindu.com · timesofindia.indiatimes.com · dras.in · anantamias.com

Q09

10 marks · 150 words

Critically assess

"IPMDA (Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness) bridges the gap between India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision and the Quad's collective Indo-Pacific strategy." Make a critical assessment of the statement focusing on IPMDA.

Introduction. IPMDA, launched at the 2022 Tokyo Quad Summit, provides commercially sourced radio-frequency data to identify "dark" vessels. It operationalises SAGAR's cooperative-security ethos within the Quad's free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific agenda.

Bridge

- SAGAR (2015) centres capacity-building, HADR and maritime security for littorals; IPMDA makes maritime information a shared regional public good.
- Via hubs including India's IFC-IOR, Gurugram, it combines Quad technology with regional agencies to expose IUU fishing, trafficking and disaster risks.
- It shifts Quad strategy beyond naval deterrence, reinforcing UNCLOS, navigation freedom and agency for ASEAN and Pacific Island partners.

Qualifications

- RF data establish transmissions, not attribution; AIS manipulation, weak analysis and interoperability impede enforcement.
- A Quad-led architecture can be viewed as China-containment; IPMDA lacks enforcement powers and secure long-term funding.

Conclusion. IPMDA is thus a credible bridge, but not SAGAR's substitute. India must couple IFC-IOR training, safeguards and coastal-state-led prosecution with inclusive IORA/ASEAN participation.

Sources: idsa.in · thehindu.com · orfonline.org · thehindu.com · theweek.in · maritimeindia.org · lowyinstitute.org · insightsonindia.com

Q10

10 marks · 150 words

Explain

"BRICS acts as a powerful counterweight in global governance, actively amplifying the voice and influence of the Global South." Explain the role of BRICS in projecting itself as an alternative to other groupings.

Introduction. BRICS, enlarged beyond its original five, seeks multipolar governance where developing states gain agenda-setting power. It projects a Global South counterweight, not an anti-Western bloc.

Institutional alternatives

- The New Development Bank (2015; US\$100-billion authorised capital) funds infrastructure and sustainable development outside IMF–World Bank voting hierarchies.
- Its US\$100-billion CRA and local-currency settlement efforts reduce dollar dependence and sanctions vulnerability.

Voice and norm-setting

- It presses for UNSC reform and larger IMF quotas, echoing India's reformed multilateralism.
- BRICS Plus brings African, West Asian and energy-producer perspectives into G20-era debates.
- On climate finance, food and energy security, CBDR and sovereignty/non-interference, it contests G7 priority-setting.

Limits

- China–India rivalry, Russia–West tensions, diverse regimes and non-binding decisions constrain cohesion; NDB remains smaller than Bretton Woods institutions.

Conclusion. Hence, BRICS is a supplementary, reformist ecosystem rather than a replacement for the UN or G20. India should translate enlargement into bankable projects, equitable representation and deliverable South–South cooperation.

Sources: nature.com · saiia.org.za · unu.edu · internationalaffairs.org.au · bricspolicycenter.org · britannica.com · intechopen.com · foreignaffairs.com

Discuss the position of the Governor in the federal polity of India. What is the nature of his power while giving assent to a bill passed by the State Legislature? Is he bound by the aid and advice of his Council of Ministers in all his functions?

Introduction. The Governor, appointed by the President under Articles 155-156, is the constitutional head of a State (Article 154), not the Union's political agent. The office links Union and States, but its misuse can impair cooperative federalism.

Position in the federal scheme

- Executive authority is formally vested in him; he appoints the Chief Minister, summons/prorogues the House (Article 174), and may recommend President's Rule under Article 356.
- He is nevertheless ordinarily a parliamentary head: Article 163 read with *Shamsher Singh* (1974) requires action on ministerial advice.
- Discretion is narrow: choosing a CM in a hung Assembly, requiring a floor test, reserving Bills, and functions expressly assigned by the Constitution. *Nabam Rebia* (2016) barred him from advancing an Assembly session without advice.

Assent to State Bills: Article 200

- On presentation, he may assent, withhold assent, reserve the Bill for the President, or—if it is not a Money Bill—return it with a message for reconsideration.
- If the House repasses a returned Bill, with or without amendments, he "shall not withhold assent"; this makes return a suspensive, not absolute, veto.
- Reservation is mandatory where a Bill endangers the High Court's constitutional position; otherwise it is an exceptional constitutional safeguard, followed by Presidential decision under Article 201.
- In *State of Punjab v Principal Secretary to Governor* (2023), the Supreme Court held that the Governor cannot use a constitutional pocket veto: Article 200 requires action "as soon as possible". Thus, assent is not a personal political power to indefinitely frustrate an elected legislature.

Aid and advice: qualified rule

- Article 163(1) permits discretion only where the Constitution expressly or necessarily so requires; its finality clause does not immunise mala fide action from judicial review.
- Hence he is bound by advice in routine executive and legislative functions, including ordinary assent; he is not bound in constitutionally delimited discretionary fields.

Conclusion. A Governor must be an impartial constitutional sentinel, not a parallel executive. Reasoned, time-bound decisions and fidelity to Article 163 can reconcile legal scrutiny with State democratic autonomy.

What is meant by judicial legislation? In this context, discuss the verdicts of the apex court allowing "passive euthanasia" and a "living will".

Introduction. Judicial legislation denotes courts creating operative norms through constitutional interpretation, guidelines or directions where statutory law is absent. Though Article 141 makes Supreme Court law binding, such norm-making must remain incidental to adjudication, not substitute Parliament.

Euthanasia verdicts: evolution and content

- In *Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab* (1996), the Court rejected a general 'right to die', but recognised that Article 21 may include a dignified process of natural death.
- In *Aruna Ramachandra Shanbaug v. Union of India* (2011), faced with legislative vacuum, the Court distinguished active euthanasia (positive act to end life, impermissible) from passive euthanasia—withdrawal/withholding life support.
- It permitted the latter only in exceptional cases, through High Court approval, medical experts' opinion and the patient's best interests.
- In *Common Cause v. Union of India* (2018), a Constitution Bench held that dignity, autonomy and bodily integrity under Article 21 encompass refusing futile treatment. It legalised passive euthanasia and recognised an advance medical directive or 'living will' for a terminally ill person in a persistent vegetative state.

Why this is judicial legislation—and its justification

- The Court prescribed detailed execution, authentication, medical-board and judicial safeguards for living wills; these functioned as a regulatory code until legislation.
- It prevented involuntary killing, protected vulnerable patients from familial coercion, and reconciled sanctity of life with informed autonomy.
- The 2023 modification simplified the cumbersome 2018 procedure, replacing Magistrate certification with attestation before a notary or gazetted officer and rationalising medical-board requirements.

Constitutional concerns

- End-of-life regulation involves medical standards, criminal liability and institutional capacity—ordinarily matters for Parliament; extensive directions risk violating separation of powers.
- Yet, under Articles 21, 32 and 142, a rights vacuum cannot justify compelled, undignified prolongation of life.

Conclusion. The rulings are defensible as interim rights-protecting adjudication, not a licence for routine judicial policy-making. Parliament should enact a comprehensive end-of-life-care law, incorporating consent, palliative care, independent review and safeguards against abuse.

How far has the Indian federal framework been successful in accommodating regional and cultural diversities? Highlight the role of asymmetric federalism and suggest measures to make dispute resolution mechanisms more effective.

Introduction. India is a holding-together federation: Articles 1 and 2–3 combine Union unity with plural States. Its accommodation of diversity is substantial, but centralising practices and resource conflicts qualify success.

Accommodation: achievements and gaps

- States Reorganisation Act, 1956 institutionalised linguistic aspirations; the Eighth Schedule's 22 languages and Fifth and Sixth Schedules protect linguistic and tribal identities.
- Creation of Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, and North-East peace settlements, demonstrate territorial accommodation.
- Yet Article 356 misuse, curbed in *S.R. Bommai*, gubernatorial friction, perceived fiscal centralisation, Hindi anxieties and Cauvery-Krishna disputes sustain alienation.

Asymmetry as constitutional accommodation

- Asymmetric federalism gives differentiated autonomy where uniform rules suppress distinct histories. Article 371A protects Naga customary law and land; Articles 371G and 371J safeguard Mizoram and Hyderabad-Karnataka.
- Sixth Schedule Autonomous District Councils and Article 371C's Hill Areas Committee institutionalise tribal voice, converting separatist demands into participation.
- However, safeguards need consent-based implementation; erosion of Jammu and Kashmir's former special status shows how unilateral change impairs federal trust.

Making dispute resolution credible

- Operationalise Article 263 through a permanent, regularly meeting Inter-State Council with independent secretariat, published agendas and compliance review, as urged by Sarkaria and Punchhi Commissions.
- Strengthen Zonal Councils as pre-litigation mediators; require consultation on Bills affecting State interests.
- For Article 262 disputes, impose tribunal timelines, transparent hydrological data and enforceable awards through river-management authorities; reserve Article 131 litigation for failed mediation.
- Make GST Council and Finance Commission transfers predictable, formula-based and transparently reasoned.

Conclusion. India's differentiated compact has contained, not eliminated, diversity-based conflict. Cooperative forums, impartial Governors and fidelity to constitutional asymmetry can make unity compatible with self-government.

Examine how the separation of powers is practised in India compared to the rigid presidential model of the United States of America. In this context, compare the actual authority of the Indian Prime Minister with that of the President of the USA.

Introduction. Separation of powers prevents concentration by allocating law-making, execution and adjudication. India employs parliamentary fusion with functional checks; the US presidential Constitution institutionalises a more rigid separation.

Constitutional design

- India: executive is drawn from Parliament and collectively responsible to Lok Sabha (Articles 74–75); ministers participate in legislation. Articles 50, 121–122 and judicial review create functional, not watertight, boundaries.
- US: Article I Congress, Article II President and Article III courts have separate personnel, fixed mandates and no executive membership of Congress. Veto, impeachment, Senate confirmation and judicial review supply checks.

Actual executive authority

- Though Article 53 vests Union executive power in the President, Article 74 makes ministerial advice binding after reconsideration. A Prime Minister commanding Lok Sabha majority selects ministers, sets Cabinet agenda, allocates portfolios and drives Bills, Budget and ordinances (Article 123).
- The US President is independently elected, has fixed tenure, is Commander-in-Chief, appoints officials and judges subject to Senate consent, vetoes Bills and directs administration. He cannot dissolve Congress or command a legislative majority; appropriations and appointments require Congress/Senate.
- Thus, an Indian PM can be more decisive in law-making, but coalition dependence, no-confidence and cabinet responsibility constrain him; an American President has independent constitutional office but faces divided government, impeachment and judicial review.

Conclusion. India privileges accountable, coordinated government, whereas the US privileges institutional autonomy. Effective constitutionalism in either system depends on courts, legislatures and conventions enforcing checks.

To what extent do pressure groups, social movements and corporate lobbies deepen pluralistic democracy in India by representing excluded interests? Analyse whether the growing convergence of corporate wealth and political power poses a threat to the autonomy of formal democratic institutions.

Introduction. India's pluralist democracy is not confined to electoral parties: pressure groups aggregate interests, while social movements mobilise grievances outside formal institutions. Their democratic value depends on whether access and influence are reasonably equal.

Representation of excluded interests

- Article 19(1)(a), 19(1)(b) and 19(1)(c) protect expression, assembly and association, enabling workers, women, tribals, farmers and disability groups to articulate interests between elections.
- Mobilisation has translated dispersed claims into policy: the RTI movement preceded the RTI Act, 2005; women's groups helped secure the Vishaka guidelines; and the farmers' agitation contributed to repeal of the three farm laws in 2021.
- PILs under Articles 32 and 226, public hearings and campaigns make executive action contestable; they supplement, rather than replace, territorial representation in legislatures.

Why pluralism remains unequal

- Poor, migrant and informal workers lack funds, organisation and media access; hence vocal, organised interests can crowd out the most excluded.
- Identity-based mobilisation, misinformation and prolonged disruption may convert democratic voice into majoritarian pressure or an unelected veto over legislative deliberation.

Corporate wealth and institutional autonomy

- Corporate lobbying can supply technical inputs on taxation, regulation and investment. It becomes corrosive when political finance, procurement, regulatory discretion and media ownership reinforce one another, producing policy capture and a revolving door.
- In *Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India* (2024), the Supreme Court struck down the Electoral Bonds Scheme, recognising voters' Article 19(1)(a) right to information. Anonymous high-value funding had obscured possible quid pro quo arrangements.
- Such convergence can compromise Parliament's scrutiny, bureaucratic impartiality and regulators' independence. Mandatory real-time donation disclosure, an enforceable lobbying register, conflict-of-interest rules and independent audit of procurement are necessary safeguards.

Conclusion. Thus, non-party collective action substantially deepens representation, but not automatically. Democracy is pluralist only when constitutional freedoms are matched by transparency, equal access and institutions insulated from concentrated wealth.

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

Introduction. Transparency is the openness of information and reasons; accountability is answerability backed by sanctions and correction. They operationalise constitutional government under Articles 14, 19(1)(a) and 21, making citizens co-authors—not merely auditors—of public policy.

Why trust, not only corruption control

- The RTI Act, 2005 converts the Supreme Court's *State of U.P. v. Raj Narain* (1975) principle—people's right to know—into access to records, reasons and public expenditure. This enables informed consent and predictability in administration.
- Rule of Law requires laws to be public, non-arbitrary and equally applied. Reasoned orders, suo motu disclosure under RTI Section 4, e-procurement and audit trails reduce discretion; their deeper value is confidence that decisions are fair.
- Accountability through CAG audit, legislative committees, judicial review and the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 detects wrongdoing and imposes consequences. Thus, corruption control is an essential outcome, not the sole purpose.

Participatory governance creates policy legitimacy

- Article 243G and Gram Sabhas enable local preference aggregation. MGNREGA social audits in Andhra Pradesh exposed muster-roll irregularities while giving workers voice over works and wages.
- PESA, 1996 mandates Gram Sabha consultation in Scheduled Areas; environmental public hearings under the EIA process similarly recognise affected communities as stakeholders.
- Pre-legislative consultation, citizen charters, public dashboards and grievance portals make policy feedback continuous, improving design and compliance.

Limits and safeguards

- Token consultations, inaccessible digital data, RTI delays and opaque electoral finance can produce distrust rather than legitimacy. Participation without disclosure is uninformed; disclosure without redress is performative.
- Independent Information Commissions, time-bound appeals, proactive open data in local languages, social-audit units and published action-taken reports are necessary.

Conclusion. Transparency and accountability must therefore be viewed as a democratic compact: institutions explain and correct power, while citizens participate in shaping it. Effective anti-corruption enforcement follows from, but cannot substitute for, this rule-bound and participatory legitimacy.

Can the constitutional mandate of rights-based welfare be effectively realised in the context of non-integrated governance and minimal public investment? Examine.

Introduction. Rights-based welfare converts constitutional guarantees into enforceable entitlements: citizens are rights-holders, with duties, standards and remedies binding the State. Articles 21, 38, 39, 41, 45 and 47 provide its normative base; the RTE Act, NFSA 2013 and MGNREGA operationalise parts of it.

Why integration and investment are indispensable

- Rights are interdependent: malnutrition impairs schooling; ill-health reduces work capacity. Hence food, health, sanitation, education and livelihoods require convergence, not isolated departmental schemes.
- MGNREGA's legal work guarantee needs timely wage payments, social audits and linkages with water conservation and agriculture; mere budgeted employment without these cannot secure livelihood dignity under Article 21.
- NFSA's food entitlement requires adequate PDS allocations, local storage, nutrition and grievance redress. Cash transfers cannot substitute unavailable public health, schools or anganwadis.
- Minimal public spending produces staff vacancies, weak last-mile facilities and unequal State capacity. It also contradicts Article 38's mandate to minimise inequalities and Article 47's duty to improve nutrition and public health.

Consequences of fragmented delivery

- Siloed Union ministries, departmental portals and Centre-State fiscal asymmetry diffuse accountability: a denied claimant confronts authentication failure, database error and multiple offices rather than one duty-bearer.
- Digital, beneficiary-centric delivery may curb leakage and enable portability, but exclusion through authentication, connectivity and documentation converts an entitlement into a conditional benefit. The 2026 discussion on welfare warns of a shift from rights-holders towards cash-transfer "beneficiaries".
- Fragmentation also defeats statutory remedies: social audits under MGNREGA or grievance mechanisms under NFSA cannot correct failures whose causes lie across departments.

Qualified possibility

- Integration can improve outcomes through district-level convergence plans, interoperable but consent-based databases, offline access, common grievance portals and Panchayat-led social audits.
- Yet administrative coordination cannot compensate for inadequate fiscal outlays. Progressive realisation requires predictable Union transfers and State investment in frontline workers and universal public services.

Conclusion. Therefore, non-integrated governance and minimal investment make effective realisation structurally improbable, not merely inefficient. A rights framework must combine legal

enforceability with coordinated federal financing, human infrastructure and accessible accountability; technology should support, never condition, entitlement.

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Q18

15 marks · 250 words

Critically evaluate

Should education be treated primarily as a welfare obligation of the state or as a strategic investment for building a globally competitive, knowledge-driven nation? Critically evaluate.

Introduction. Education is both a constitutional entitlement and a productivity-enhancing capability. Article 21A and the RTE Act, 2009 make elementary education a state duty; NEP 2020 and Budget 2026–27 frame it as human capital for an AI-intensive economy.

Rights and equity test

- Welfare corrects unequal starting points created by caste, gender, disability and rural/tribal deprivation. Education cannot be conditional on a family's ability to pay.
- PM POSHAN and Samagra Shiksha address nutrition, access and retention; market-led provision would exclude the children who need public education most.
- However, enrolment alone is insufficient. ASER 2022 revealed serious foundational-learning deficits, showing the limits of judging expenditure merely as welfare spending.

Strategic-investment case and limits

- Education raises productivity, research capacity and innovation; STEM, AI and vocational capabilities determine whether the demographic dividend yields employability rather than joblessness.
- NEP 2020's foundational literacy and numeracy, multidisciplinary learning and Academic Bank of Credits support a knowledge economy. Budget 2026–27's emphasis on AI, creativity and innovation reflects this shift.
- Yet, returns are long-term and unequally realised. Narrow industry-designed curricula, fee escalation and rankings-driven universities can deepen the digital and social divide while starving primary schooling.

Reasoned policy balance

- The State must treat equitable school education, especially ages 3–18, as a non-negotiable welfare right; strategic gains rest on universal foundational learning.
- It should additionally fund public universities, teacher capacity, research and apprenticeships, with outcome monitoring through NAS and State learning assessments—not privatisation.

Conclusion. Thus, welfare is primary in normative order, while strategic investment is indispensable in design. A globally competitive nation cannot be built by sacrificing inclusion; inclusion itself is the broadest base of innovation and productivity.

Q19

15 marks · 250 words

Critically examine

"India's global diaspora acts as a living bridge, as a critical economic factor and knowledge network in transforming cultural heritage into geopolitical influence and strategic leverage worldwide." Critically examine this statement.

Introduction. India's approximately 32-million-strong diaspora—NRIs and Persons of Indian Origin—connects India's civilisational repertoire with markets, institutions and politics abroad. It is therefore a source of soft power, but not an automatically obedient instrument of state power.

Economic and knowledge leverage

- Remittances of about \$125 billion annually exceed FDI inflows, stabilise the balance of payments and finance household education, housing and entrepreneurship, especially in Kerala, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.
- Indian-origin entrepreneurs, physicians, scientists and technology executives transmit capital, managerial practices and research links. GIAN, VAJRA and Startup India can convert this "brain circulation" into domestic innovation.
- The Gulf workforce sustains labour markets, while high-skilled professionals in the US, UK and Canada expand India's access to digital, health and frontier-technology networks.

Cultural bridge to geopolitical influence

- Yoga, Ayurveda, Indian languages, cuisine and festivals create familiarity; International Day of Yoga gives this heritage a multilateral platform.
- Diaspora advocacy helped build constituencies for the India-US civil nuclear cooperation and can shape perceptions on trade, technology and security.
- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, OCI cards and missions' diaspora outreach institutionalise these links; diaspora philanthropy also mobilises disaster and development support.

Limits and contradictions

- Diaspora communities are internally divided by region, religion, caste, generation and host-country political interests; they cannot be treated as a homogeneous lobby.
- Cultural nationalism abroad may provoke host-state suspicion, racism or communal polarisation, weakening rather than enhancing India's credibility.
- Remittance dependence masks vulnerability of low-wage Gulf workers under restrictive labour regimes. Evacuations during the Kuwait crisis and Operation Ganga show that consular protection, not influence, is often the immediate need.
- Under Article 9 and the Citizenship Act, 1955, OCI is not dual citizenship; limited political rights constrain durable participation.

Conclusion. India should treat the diaspora as an autonomous partnership: protect workers through labour agreements, create transparent diaspora-investment and research platforms, and

deploy cultural diplomacy inclusively. It is a strategic multiplier for capable diplomacy, not a substitute for it.

Sources: ippjournal.org · thehind.com · southasianherald.com · hindustantimes.com · thehindu.com · doi.org · indiaspora.org · indiaspora.org · orfonline.org

Q20

15 marks · 250 words

Analyse

"China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has transformed South Asia from a regional space into a theatre of great power competition." Analyse the strategic implications of the BRI for India's security and regional influence in South Asia.

Introduction. Announced in 2013, the BRI combines overland corridors with Maritime Silk Road finance. In South Asia, CPEC and port-connectivity projects place China in India's immediate strategic periphery, shifting regional choices from India-centred bilateralism to competitive alignment.

Security implications

- CPEC traverses Gilgit-Baltistan, territory claimed by India; India therefore rejects BRI on sovereignty grounds, while China-Pakistan connectivity enhances Pakistan's strategic resilience.
- Gwadar and Hambantota (leased for 99 years in 2017) are commercial assets, yet could supply PLA Navy logistics and surveillance; alongside the Djibouti precedent, they complicate defence of Indian Ocean sea lanes and Andaman approaches.
- Digital Silk Road networks raise cyber, data and dual-use monitoring concerns.

Regional influence

- Chinese credit and rapid projects let Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka diversify away from India, reducing its presumed primacy and increasing leverage in bilateral crises.
- This is not automatic Chinese control: small states hedge, and Sri Lanka's debt crisis and local opposition reveal fiscal and political limits.
- Yet bilateral BRI arrangements, amid SAARC stagnation, regionalise Sino-Indian rivalry and draw US-led Indo-Pacific partners into South Asian choices.

India's strategic response

- Strengthen SAGAR-based maritime domain awareness, island/coastal-partner capacity and Andaman surveillance without treating every Chinese investment as a base.
- Make alternatives credible: timely Lines of Credit, BBIN connectivity, Chabahar and transparent project appraisal.
- Use BIMSTEC and neighbourhood-first delivery to make Indian partnership less rhetorical.

Conclusion. BRI has widened China's footprint, not erased South Asian agency. India's influence will rest on reliable public goods, sovereign-sensitive connectivity and maritime preparedness, rather than exclusionary bloc politics.

Sources: isdpeu.org · link.springer.com · sjdlyj.ecnu.edu.cn · issi.org.pk · isdpeu.org · doi.org · polsci.institute · meer.com · orfonline.org

