

GS II

SYLLABUS: GOVERNMENT POLICIES & ISSUES ARISING OUT OF THEIR DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION.

SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 1.

News: "Simultaneous elections will prevent policy paralysis, says Murmu in address to nation."

Simultaneous Elections:

- Idea to **synchronise elections** to Lok Sabha, State legislative assembly, Municipalities & Panchayats **on the same day**.
- This practice continued till 1967** or 4th General election.
- Currently, **Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, Sikkim, Telangana** elections to Lok Sabha and Assemblies held together.

Need: Based on Ram Nath Kovind Committee 2023

- Frequent elections **create an atmosphere of uncertainty**.
- Minimising disruptions & policy paralysis:** by ensuring stability and predictability.
- Helps in **reduction of election costs** and increase in **voter participation**. Eg. In 2019, the **General Election (Lok Sabha)** costed **Rs.4500 crore**. If State elections added to this, expenses further multiply.
- Simultaneous elections lead to** increase in economic growth, a lower inflation, increased investments, and improved quality of government expenditure.
- Political parties behaviour:** keeps **politicians always in campaign mode** due to elections at different times (Local, State, National) rather than their work towards policy making.

Implementation:

- Requirement of Constitutional amendments:**
 - In relation to terms of Parliament and State assemblies and local bodies (**Art. 83, 172**)
 - For adoption of single electoral roll.
- Dissolution of Lok Sabha and all State Assemblies at once**, irrespective of their remaining term as a onetime measure.
- Municipal and Panchayat polls within 100 days of general election.**
- Single electoral roll:** Currently some State laws allow State Election Commission to prepare separate electoral rolls. Committee recommended that **empowering Election Commission of India to prepare single electoral roll** in consultation with SECs.
- Logistics requirement:** ECI & SECs to plan and estimate logistical requirements ahead of the rollout.

Note:

- Constitutional Amendment nature for above:**
 - In case of amending 'term' of Parliament and **State Assemblies, there is no requirement of ratification by States**.
 - However, ratification by States becomes **necessary in case of amending 'local bodies term'**.

Challenges:

- Premature dissolution of some State's Assemblies or Lok Sabha:** can undermine the federal spirit & concerns of delay in conducting new election.
- Case Hung Assembly:** if no party secures majority to form govt., a fresh election to the remaining period of 5 year cycle should be conducted—**Ram Nath Kovind Committee 2023**.

P.T.O

- Case of No-confidence Motion:** if passed, it may curtail the term of Lok Sabha/ State Assembly. **Law commission recommended** replacement of no-confidence motion with 'constructive vote of no-confidence (govt. will only be removed if there is confidence in an alternate govt.).
- Cases of bye-elections:** due to Death, resignation or disqualification of members can be clubbed together and conducted once in a year—**Standing Committee 2015**.
- India is a Multiparty system** where coalition and collapses are common, new system will be a challenge.
- Logistics challenges:** in 2019 general elections about **4 million EVMs and 2 million VVPATs were used**. Simultaneous election can double the demand.
- Local issues may get overshadowed by National needs:** ultimately diminishing democratic representation at grassroot-level—**NITI Aayog report 2017**.

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PYQs

GS II 2017: '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.

P.T.O

GS II

SYLLABUS: REGIONAL AND GLOBAL GROUPINGS INVOLVING INDIA.

INDIA-ASEAN

THE HINDU, Pg.NO: 1.

News: "India, Indonesia stress peace in ASEAN region."

It is a **political and economic union of 10 states in Southeast Asia** with the motto of "one vision, one identity, one community", they include some of the fastest-growing economies in the world.

Objectives of ASEAN:

- Accelerate economic growth and social progress.
- Promote regional peace and adherence to principles of UN charter.
- Efficient utilisation of agriculture & Industries.
- Maintain close and beneficial cooperation with intl. organisations.
- Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another.

Relevance of ASEAN:

- 9% of world population; 3rd largest labor force; fastest-growing consumer market; currently 7th will be 4th by 2050;

Outcomes of ASEAN Summit 2024:

- **Digital Transformation:** India will **share** its knowledge and experience in using **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** such as Aadhaar and Unified Payments Interface (UPI) with the ASEAN nations.
- **Strengthening Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** for Peace, Stability, and prosperity in the region.
- **Explore collaboration** to address diverse challenges in education, healthcare, agriculture and climate change.

India and ASEAN:

- **Economic significance:**
 - **Trade:** India's 3rd largest trading partner — **MoC&I annual report 2023**.
 - **FDI inflow:** from April 2000 to March 2023 stood at ~USD 110 billion, accounting for about 22% of India's total FDI inflows — **DPIIT**.
 - **ASEAN-India Free Trade Area (AIFTA)** has expanded market access for Indian exporters.
- **Strategic security:**
 - Critical for India's maritime trade routes **Eg. Strait of Malacca**.
 - India's participation in East Asia Summit and ASEAN regional forum enhances its **role in regional stability** and helps India to maintain balance of power in the region, in context of **China's growing influence**.
 - Countering Insurgency in Northeast; Combat Terrorism; Tax Evasion etc.
- **Central to Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision:**
 - Which aims to enhance economic and strategic relations with countries in Asia-Pacific region.
- **Socio-cultural cooperation:** boosting people-to-people ties.
- **Funds to ASEAN countries:** ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund, ASEAN-India Green Fund.
- **Connectivity Projects:** **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral highway**, **Kaladan multimodal project**.
- **Defence cooperation:** Eg. Joint Naval and Military exercises.

Initiatives by India for ASEAN:

- **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2022):** focuses on cooperation in trade, security, and connectivity marked 30 years of dialogue relations — **ASEAN summit 2022**.
- **Connectivity Projects:**
 - **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway:** connect India's Northeast with Southeast Asia, with plans to extend to Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

- **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project:** Enhances connectivity between India's eastern seaports and Myanmar's Sittwe port.
- **Mekong-India Economic Corridor:** integrates four countries Myanmar-Thailand-Cambodia-Vietnam.
- **ASEAN-India Digital Work Plan 2023:** Focuses on cooperation in areas like cybersecurity, digital connectivity, and emerging technologies.
- **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI):** Launched by India in 2019, it emphasises maritime security, ecology, and resources, with ASEAN countries as key partners.

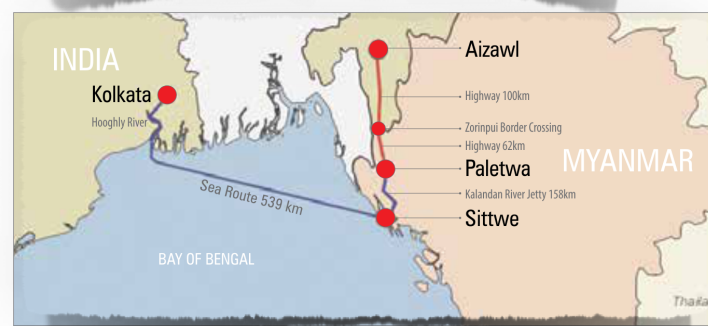
Challenges:

- India has been experiencing a **trade deficit with ASEAN** countries, which stood at USD 40 billion in 2022-23 — **MoC&I annual report 2023**.
- **Connectivity challenges:** Delays in projects like the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway due to logistical and security issues.
- **Competition with China:** China's deep economic ties with ASEAN countries present competition for India in Trade, Investment and strategic influence.
- **India's withdrawal from RCEP & opposition to BRI:** limited its trade engagement scope with ASEAN countries.
- **Divergent priorities** of within ASEAN members.

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Map 1: MIEC Corridor Region



AGRICULTURE

PRE-CONTEXT

NANO UREA

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 8.

News: "Nano-urea reduced grain yield: study."

About Nano Urea:

- **Traditional urea suffers from low nitrogen use efficiency** due to factors like **volatilization, leaching, and runoff**.
- **Nano Urea addresses these limitations** by manipulating urea particles at the nanoscale, typically ranging from 1 to 100 nanometers, to improve nutrient uptake by plants.
- It is promoted by the fertiliser company IFFCO and the government's **Department of Fertilisers**.
- **A single spray of a 500-ml solution of nano-urea can replace over 52 kg of commercial urea** in various crops, regardless of soil and climate conditions—IFFCO.

Recent findings:

- Nano-urea on crop yields has concluded that its continued use could **reduce yields of paddy and wheat**, which collectively constitutes about 70% of India's annual food grain output.

India & Urea:

- **Urea, a solidified nitrogen fertilizer**, is critical to India's agricultural economy.
- India needs about 350 lakh tonnes of it annually with 40 lakh tonnes imported.
- **Urea in India is heavily subsidised** with a 45-kg bag that cost around ₹3,000 sold at ₹242 to farmers.
- In 2023-24, the govt spent **₹1.3 lakh crore on urea**.
- A bag of urea provides about 20kg of nitrogen in a form usable by plants.

Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) 2010

- **Central Sector Scheme**.
- Implemented by **Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers**.
- Subsidy under this scheme covered **Phosphate, Potash and Sulphur**.
- It **doesn't include Urea based fertilisers**.
- **Ideal** Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium ratio for Indian soils should be **4:2:1** but in Punjab 61:19:1 it is **overused**.

Nitrogen Component under NBS:

- Urea is a **Nitrogen rich compound**.
- Urea is primarily produced from **natural gas** in a **two-step process** involving **ammonia** production and subsequent reaction with **carbon dioxide**. This process is known as **Haber-Bosch process**.
- Therefore, for Urea production **India has to import natural gas**.
- **Ministry of Chemicals and Fertiliser's statutorily fix the price of Urea** under Essential Commodities Act, 1955.
- Urea subsidy is a **Central Sector Scheme**.

Production of Nitrides

Natural:

- Among natural things, **only lightning** has enough energy to destroy the N₂ triple bond (molecular form).
- Apart from lightning, **Azotobacter bacteria** (via metabolism).
- **Rhizobia in symbiotic relationships with legume plants** (**clover, peas, beans, alfaalfa, acacia**) provide reactive nitrogen in exchange for nutrition.

- **Azolla, a species of aquatic fern** with symbiotic association with the cyanobacterium, can absorb and convert nitrogen from the air to reactive nitrogen, so dried and decaying Azolla is an effective fertiliser for farmland.

Artificial:

• Haber-Bosch process.

- Urea (fertiliser) is primarily produced from **natural gas** in a **two-step process** involving **ammonia** production and subsequent reaction with **carbon dioxide**. This process is known as **Haber-Bosch process**.
- **A hundred million tonnes of nitrogen are now removed from the atmosphere and converted into fertiliser** through Haber-Bosch process.
- Without the industrial synthesis of ammonia from nitrogen and hydrogen, it is **almost impossible to meet world's expanding demand for food**.

Nitrogen cycle:

- **Plants** usually **get their reactive nitrogen from the soil** (after breakdown of molecular nitrogen by natural factors), where they absorb minerals dissolved in water such as ammonium (NH₄⁺) and nitrate (NO₃⁻).
- The **nitrogen ingested by 'plants and animals' returns to the soil** through excreta and the decomposition of dead bodies.
- **But the cycle is incomplete:**
 - Some nitrogen is released back into the environment in molecular form.
 - Nitrogen from human waste is also rarely returned to the fields.

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GS II

SYLLABUS: ISSUES RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH SECTOR.

PM-JAY

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 10.

News: "How to achieve universal health coverage across India."

"India is one of the top countries with highest Out-Pocket-Expenditure in the world (60% of total health expenditure), higher than global average of 20%". — WHO Report 2021.

PM-Jan Arogya Yojana component:

- One of the four components of **Ayushman Bharat**.
- Deals with **Secondary and Tertiary healthcare**.
- World's largest Government funded health assurance scheme.
- Provides health assurance of up to **Rs. 5 Lakh per family per year** for secondary and tertiary healthcare hospitalisation to approximately **60 crore beneficiaries**.
- Completely cashless and paperless scheme.
- **30 crore Ayushman cards** are created under PM-JAY.

Facts:

- Centrally **Sponsored** Scheme.
- Implemented by **National Health Authority**.
- Benefits under PM-JAY are portable across the country.
- Beneficiaries are **identified** from **Social Economic Caste Census of 2011** on the **basis of Deprivation, Occupational criteria**.
 - There is **no cap on family size, age or gender**.
 - **All senior citizens of age 70 years and above, irrespective of income**, are covered.
- It is not mandatory for private hospitals to join PM-JAY. PM-JAY is **voluntary for private hospitals**.

Issues:

- **Limited to** Secondary and Tertiary hospitalisation.
- **Out-patient care, diagnostics, medicines** are **not covered**.
- Most of the **expenditure (40-80%) by elderly is on outpatient care** due to burden of chronic diseases among elderly, thus making outpatient care critical.
- **Still limited reach** in smaller cities and towns despite its launch in 2018.
- **Political interests:** Eg. **Delhi and West Bengal expressed concerns over joining** the scheme.
- **Profits to private sector:** about **two-thirds of money spent on PM-JAY goes to private hospitals**. This highlights the weak public sector health infrastructure.
- **Demand for inclusion of persons with disabilities without any income or age criteria** to bridge the health equity gap.

Suggestions:

Thailand Approach: Achieved universal health coverage.

- Funds were **redirected from urban hospitals to build rural health centres**. This made healthcare system accessible and affordable to entire population.

USA Model: Insurance Model.

- The U.S. system's **heavy reliance on insurance-based schemes** has driven up healthcare costs and inequalities, raising concerns that **India's focus on schemes like PM-JAY** could lead to similar outcomes.

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Thank you!