

GS II

SYLLABUS: ROLE OF CIVIL SERVICES IN A DEMOCRACY.

BUREAUCRACY CHALLENGES

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 8.

News: "India's 'steel frame' does need a check."

Context:

- U.S.'s proposed **Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)**, under U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, offers an intriguing model for reforming India's administrative apparatus.
- DOGE **aims to streamline govt. operations, reduce inefficiency, and eliminate redundant agencies.**
- DOGE's focus on cutting wasteful expenditures and introducing accountability mechanisms resonates with the challenges faced by the Indian bureaucracy.
- **A similar advisory body in India could help identify inefficiencies** within the civil service, promote data-driven decision-making, and develop metrics to assess bureaucratic performance.

Challenges faced by in Bureaucracy:

- **Politicisation of IAS:**
 - Frequent transfers, suspensions, promotions influenced by political loyalty rather than merit.
 - This leads to short tenure and undermines continuity, domain expertise and accountability.
- **Corruption and inefficiency:** mismanagement of development funds and corruption erode trust in government institutions — **Corruption Perception Index.**
- **Characterised by centralised decision-making:** it often sidelines bureaucrats' insights and expertise, reducing their ability to act as effective policy executors.
- **Deep institutionalisation** of seniority based progression and generalist approaches.
- **Lateral entry approaches** could undermine the morale of incumbent employees and distort promotion incentives as opined by critics including retired civil servants.
- **Proposals such as the Civil Services Standards, Performance, and Accountability Bill (2010):** which sought to protect bureaucrats from arbitrary transfers remain pending in Parliament.
- **Supreme Court of India's directive to establish civil services boards in 2013:** have had limited impact due to lack of enforcement.

Reforms and their implementation to modernise Bureaucracy:

- **1st ARC 1966:**
 - Establishment of Lokpal/Lokayuktas institutions to tackle corruption.
 - Consistently emphasised the need for specialisation, accountability, and merit-based promotions within the bureaucracy.
- **Khotari Committee 1966:** continuous training to adapt to changing administrative challenges.
- **Sarkaria Commission 1988:**
 - Establish Civil Service Board—to insulate Bureaucracy from politics.
- **Hota committee 2004:**
 - **For Efficiency:** use of ICT and promote e- governance.
 - **For Accountability:** Amend CrPC to protect Honest officers; Performance appraisal based on objective assessment: Model code of governance and code of Ethics.
- **2nd ARC 2005:** Introduction of Lateral services, performance based promotions, mid carrier training etc.

Implementation:

- **Performance management and accountability measures:** 360-degree appraisal, outcome based evaluations, fixed tenures.
- **Streamlining procedures (reducing red tapism):** process simplification, digitisation, single window clearance.
- **Strengthening ethics and reducing corruption:** establishment of Lokpal/Lokayukta, Asset disclosure, code of ethics & conduct, RTI.
- **Human resource development and lateral entry:** mid-career training, specialisation in specific domains, lateral entry.
- **Citizen-centric administration:** Citizen charters, Right to public service legislation.
- **Lateral entry shifted the IAS's traditional dominance:** with only 33% of Joint Secretaries at the Centre now belonging to the IAS, compared to near-total dominance a decade ago.

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PYQs

GS IV 2022: The Rules and Regulations provided to all the civil servants are same, yet there is difference in the performance. Positive minded officers are able to interpret the Rules and Regulations in favour of the case and achieve success, whereas negative minded officers are unable to achieve goals by interpreting the same Rules and Regulations against the case. Discuss with illustrations.

SECURITY

PRE-CONTEXT

PROTECTED AREA REGIME

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 8.

News: "Why has the MHA reimposed restrictions in three NE States?"

About Protected Area Regime (PAR):

- Imposed by **Union Home Ministry** under **Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order 1958.**
- Foreigners visiting protected areas/ States would have to seek **prior approval from Union Home Ministry.**
- A foreigner is not encouraged to visit protected areas unless there are "**extraordinary reasons to justify a visit**".
- **Areas covered:**
 - All areas **falling between the inner line and the international border of the State** have been declared as a protected area.
 - **Currently protected areas are located in following states:**
 - Whole of Arunachal Pradesh..
 - Whole of Manipur.
 - Whole of Mizoram.
 - Whole of Nagaland.
 - Parts of Sikkim.
 - Parts of Rajasthan.
 - Parts of Uttarakhand.
 - Parts of Himachal Pradesh.
 - Parts of Jammu & Kashmir.
 - Earlier in 2010, PAR relaxation was given to Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland **earlier to promote tourism.**
 - The **relaxation has been withdrawn** after a gap of 14 years.

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SYLLABUS: IMPORTANT INTL INSTITUTIONS, AGENCIES AND FORA- THEIR STRUCTURE, MANDATE.

WTO

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 6.

News: "The GATT-ification of the World Trade Organization."

The establishment of the WTO in 1995 marked a milestone in international law:

- The *rise of neoliberal ideology in the 1990s* played a critical role in this development.
- The WTO **established a comprehensive system of rules** governing trade in:
 - Goods, services, and intellectual property, along with a **binding** two-tier dispute settlement system, and effective retaliation for non-compliance.

Transition from GATT era that held sway from 1948 to 1994 to the WTO, it marked a *shift from diplomacy based trade multilateralism to a rule-based system.* But such system has not only paused during 1995-2019 but being **reversed back to era of GATT diplomacy.**

Challenges faced by developing Nations at WTO:

- **Information Asymmetry:** eg. understanding **TRIPS** implications in Uruguay rounds was struggled by developing countries.
- **Dominance of USA:** second tier of the **WTO's two-tier dispute settlement system**, has been non-operational due to the persistent blocking, by the United States.
- **Limited Bargaining power:** Eg. EU, USA have significant influence over developing countries.
- **Capacity constraints:** Eg. **LDCs** lack capacity to meet sanitary and phytosanitary measures.
- **Inflexible Agreements:** Eg. Agreement on Agriculture **subsidies** issue between developing and developed nations.
- **Regional Integration challenges:** Eg. Dumping, unfair practices.

Addressing Challenge's:

- **Information asymmetry:** providing technical assistance; training technical officials in trade related matters.
- **Bargaining power:** Coalition building Eg. African group or **G77**.
- **Inflexibility:** push for Special and differentiated treatment, Exemption requests.
- **Agricultural subsidies:** reduction in developed countries agricultural subsidies; develop targeted support programmes.
- **Market access barriers:** reforms in export regimes; removal of trade barriers by developed nations.

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GS II 2018: What are the key areas of reform if the WTO has to survive in the present context of 'Trade War', especially keeping in mind the interest of India.

GEOGRAPHY

PRE-CONTEXT

CRITICAL MINERALS INITIATIVES

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 8.

News: "India's reliance on China for critical minerals."

- When it comes to critical minerals, **China is not only a stakeholder but also a leader.**
- **China enjoys a near-monopoly status**, controlling 60% of rare-earth production, **60% of critical mineral production and 80% of the processing worldwide.**
- In August 2024, **China announced decision to restrict exports of critical minerals.**
- India is heavily dependent on imports of critical minerals such as **Lithium, Nickel, Cobalt etc** resulted an import cost of **Rs.35,000 crore in FY 2023.**
- Hence, this announcement by China must act as a **wakeup call for India.**

India reliance on China for following critical minerals:

- **Lithium:** Core component of **lithium-ion batteries.**
- **Silicon:** vital for **semiconductors** and solar panels.
- **Titanium:** essential for **aerospace** and **defence** applications.
- **Tellurium:** important for **solar** power and thermoelectric devices.
- **Graphite:** indispensable for **EV batteries** and **steel** production.

Centre of Excellence on Critical Minerals:

- **Periodically update** the list of critical minerals for India (for every three years).
- Notify **critical mineral strategy** from time to time.
- It recommended 30 minerals are critical for the country, out of which 24 minerals are included in the list of critical and strategic minerals in Schedule 1 of the **MMDR Act 1957.**

India, a major critical mineral importer, still depends on other countries, primarily China, for its mineral security, which has become a cause of strategic concern.

Initiatives by India:

- **Developing International Engagement with mineral developing countries:**
 - **India established Khanij Bidesh India Ltd.(KABIL):**
 - A joint venture company aimed to ensure a consistent supply of critical and strategic minerals to the Indian domestic market.
 - It sought mineral security through agreements and acquisitions via govt-to-govt, govt-to-business, and business-to-business routes.
 - **KABIL signed a MoU with Australia** for a critical mineral (**cobalt and Lithium**) investment partnership.
 - **KABIL signed pacts** with Latin America's **Lithium Triangle (Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia).**
 - **India and Kazakhstan** formed a joint venture, to produce **titanium slag** in India.
- **Mineral Diplomacy:**
 - An intl. engagement **forging and strengthening partnerships** with minor and major initiatives related to mineral security such as:



- **QUAD**, Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (**IPEF**), Mineral Security Partnership (**MSP**) and the **G-7**, for cooperation in the critical mineral supply chain.
- **Ministry of Mines signed a MoU** with the **International Energy Agency** to strengthen cooperation on critical minerals.

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GS I 2021: Discuss the multidimensional implications of uneven distribution of mineral oil in the world.

ECONOMY

PRE-CONTEXT

MFN STATUS

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 13.

News: "MFN not to hit India-EFTA pact."

About Most Favoured Nation:

- One of the **WTO Instruments** for **fair trade**.
- MFN status means **a country promises to treat another country as favourably as it treats its most favoured trading partner**.
- This means extending any special privileges, like reduced tariffs or quotas, to all MFN countries.
- **Exemptions to MFN:**
 - **Regional group agreements** (FTA, PTA, GSP etc) are exempted.
 - Above can offer preferential treatment to each other, which may not be extended to non-member countries.

Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement:

- A **bilateral agreement between two countries** designed to **prevent individuals and businesses from being taxed twice** on the same income.
- Switzerland had **granted India MFN status under the DTAA**, which allowed Indian companies operating in Switzerland to benefit from reduced withholding tax rates on dividends, interest, and royalties.
- **Switzerland decided to withdraw the MFN status for India**, citing a lack of reciprocity and the Supreme Court ruling.

European Free Trade Association (EFTA):

- India's Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (**TEPA**) signed with the four-nation EFTA nations, that include **Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway**.
- EFTA is unique for its inclusion of a **binding \$100 billion investment commitment by companies in those countries into India over the next 15 years**, with one million direct jobs to be created.

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ENVIRONMENT

PRE-CONTEXT

FOREST COVER REPORT

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 6.

News: "Canary in the canopy."

About Forest cover in India 2024:

- According to **India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023** **India's forest and tree cover has reached a 25% of the country's total geographical area**.
- The increase of 25% breaks down to 22% of forest cover (7.15 lakh sq.km) and 3% of tree cover (1,289 sq. km).
- **Bamboo cover** is also included in the tree cover.
- **"Very dense" forests** expanded, **'Moderately dense'** and 'open' forests have shrunk.
- **Largest 'area' under forest and tree cover** recorded in **Madhya Pradesh** (85,724 sq. km).
- **Largest 'increase' in forest and tree cover** was recorded in **Chhattisgarh** (684 sq. km).
- **Losses have been recorded** in the Western Ghats and Eastern States Area and the Northeast.
- Forest Survey of India (FSI) defines **"forest cover"** as **land with tree canopy density exceeding 10% and covering at least one hectare**.
- India has augmented its **carbon sink by 2.29 billion tonnes** over 2005 levels.
- India's **Nationally Determined Contributions** towards the **Paris Agreement's targets** require it to create an additional carbon sink of at least 2.5 billion tonnes by 2030.

About IFSR reports:

- A **biennial publication** by the **Forest Survey of India (FSI)** that assesses the country's forest resources.
- Released by **MoF&CC**.
- The current report **estimated green cover using Resourcesat series** of satellites operated by the ISRO.

CAMPA Act 2016

- **Rationale:** Forest conservation Act 1980 not endorsed compensatory afforestation, so **SC ordered to form CAMPA**.
- CAMPA is a **statutory body** under CAMPA Act 2016.
- CAMPA operates under the **MoEF&CC**.
- **Provisions:**
 - Act establishes **National Compensatory Afforestation Fund (NCAF)** under **"Public Account of India"**.
 - State Compensatory Afforestation Funds under state public account.
- Creation of NCAF& SCAF Management and Planning Authorities to manage the funds.

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GS I 2021: Examine the status of forest resources of India and its resultant impact on climate change.

Thank you!