Editorial of the Day – 05.03.2026

Index

1. Climate risks must prompt international legal reforms (TH)

General Studies Paper- GS II (International Relations)

Topic- Bilateral, Regional, and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Sub-Topic- International Treaties (UNCLOS, Montevideo Convention, Refugee Convention), Sovereignty, and Environmental Governance.

1. Introduction

Climate change has moved beyond a mere environmental issue to become a structural challenge that threatens the core foundations of international law. It necessitates a reconsideration of long-standing legal doctrines—from statehood and sovereignty to maritime entitlements and refugee protection. Within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), states must now navigate the urgent task of legal renegotiation to maintain stability amidst unprecedented climate-induced risks.

2. Recalibrating Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources (PSNR)

The Foundation of PSNR

1. Emerging from the decolonization era, PSNR affirms a state's right to control and exploit its natural wealth, including fossil fuels.
2. It serves as a cornerstone of sovereign equality, self-determination, and national development policies.

The 1.5°C Tension

1. The global goal to limit warming to 1.5°C has created friction between national resource rights and the "common concern of humankind".
2. Proposals like a Fossil-Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty advocate for leaving vast reserves unexploited, challenging traditional PSNR.

Equity and Sovereignty

1. Developing states may accept extraction restrictions only if they do not permanently derail development prospects.
2. Equity demands that developed nations provide climate finance, technology transfer, and carbon-neutral technologies in exchange for these sovereign concessions.

3. The Territorial Requirement for Statehood

Montevideo Criteria Under Threat

1. The Montevideo Convention defines statehood through four criteria- a defined territory, a permanent population, a government, and the capacity for international relations.
2. Sea-level rise (SLR) creates an existential crisis for small island nations whose physical territory may vanish.

Legal Continuity vs. Geopolitical Reality

State Continuity- International law generally presumes the continuity of a state; the ICJ suggests that losing one element (like territory) does not automatically extinguish statehood.

Pacific Islands Forum (2023)- Affirmed that international law does not currently contemplate the demise of states due to climate-related SLR.
Ambiguity- While there is no "minimum territorial threshold" for statehood, the loss of land renders governance and citizenship rights increasingly precarious.

4. Addressing the "Climate Refugee" Gap

Limitations of the 1951 Refugee Convention

1. Current refugee law only protects those fleeing persecution based on race, religion, nationality, or political opinion.
2. Individuals displaced by environmental degradation or rising seas do not meet this definition, leaving them without international protection or clear nationality rights.

The Shift to Collective Responsibility

1. There is an urgent need for a new legal regime, potentially a protocol under the UNFCCC, to recognize and resettle climate-displaced persons.
2. This represents a move toward "human security," acknowledging that environmental harm generates cross-border consequences that traditional law cannot handle.

5. The Unsettling of Maritime Zones

Baselines and UNCLOS

1. Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), maritime zones (Territorial Sea, EEZ, Continental Shelf) are measured from coastal baselines.
2. Rising sea levels shift these baselines, potentially shrinking a nation's maritime entitlements and access to resources.

Permanent vs. Ambulatory Baselines

1. Ambulatory (Traditional)- Baselines move naturally with coastal shifts.
2. Permanent (Proposed)- Small island states advocate for "freezing" maritime claims despite physical changes to the coast to ensure economic and jurisdictional security.
3. This conflict highlights the strain between static legal doctrines and a dynamic, changing environment.

6. Conclusion

Climate change is a transformative moment for international law, straining the concepts of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and maritime jurisdiction. The UNFCCC and its Conference of the Parties (COP) remain the essential forums for advancing legal innovation. Responding to this planetary crisis requires more than incremental changes; it demands global solidarity and a redefined understanding of rights and responsibilities in a warming world.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/climate-risks-must-prompt-international-legal-reforms/article70704340.ece

"Anthropogenic climate change is not merely an environmental crisis but an existential threat to the core doctrines of international law. Elaborate on the legal challenges posed by climate change to the traditional concepts of statehood, maritime zones, and refugee protection." (250 Words, 15 Marks)

1. Introduction

Climate change has evolved from an environmental concern into a structural challenge to the foundations of international law. As physical changes like sea-level rise (SLR) and resource scarcity intensify, they unsettle core legal doctrines such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, and human rights frameworks.

2. Erosion of the Montevideo Criteria for Statehood

The Montevideo Convention requires a defined territory and a permanent population for statehood.
Existential Threat- SLR threatens the physical existence of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), raising questions about whether a state can exist without territory.

Legal Ambiguity- While customary law presumes state continuity, the erosion of land renders governance and citizenship rights increasingly precarious.

Institutional Position- In 2023, the Pacific Islands Forum affirmed that international law must adapt to ensure statehood remains despite physical land loss.

3. Vulnerability of Maritime Entitlements

Under UNCLOS, maritime zones (EEZ, Territorial Sea) are measured from coastal baselines.

Ambulatory vs. Permanent Baselines- Traditionally, baselines shift with the coastline (ambulatory). However, climate change creates a conflict where states advocate for "permanent baselines" to freeze their maritime claims despite land loss.

Resource Insecurity- Shifting baselines could strip nations of their rights to offshore resources, leading to jurisdictional instability.

4. The Protection Gap in Refugee Law

The 1951 Refugee Convention provides protection based on "persecution" (race, religion, politics), a definition that excludes those displaced by climate change.

Legal Invisibility- Climate migrants risk losing international protection and the benefits attached to nationality.

Need for Reform- There is an urgent call for a dedicated legal mechanism, potentially a protocol under the UNFCCC, to address resettlement and human security for the environmentally displaced.

5. Recalibrating Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources (PSNR)

1. The doctrine of PSNR, allowing states to exploit their fossil fuels, now clashes with the global imperative to limit warming to 1.5°C.
2. Equity and Finance- Legal reform requires developed states to provide climate finance and technology transfer to developing nations in exchange for restricting their resource rights.

6. Conclusion

Climate change represents a transformative moment that demands more than incremental adaptation; it requires principled legal innovation. To maintain global stability, the UNFCCC framework must lead the way in redefining international rights and responsibilities in a way that balances national sovereignty with collective environmental responsibility.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/climate-risks-must-prompt-international-legal-reforms/article70704340.ece

2. We speak in many tongues. That is not something that should scare us (IE)

General Studies Paper- GS I (Society) & GS II (Governance)

Topic- Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India; Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.

Sub-Topic- Caste Census, Denotified Tribes (DNTs), Linguistic Diversity, and Enumeration Challenges.

1. Introduction

India's social and cultural landscape is defined by extraordinary diversity across caste, nomadic tribes, and languages. However, a persistent paradox exists- the country lacks precise data on these very categories due to historical colonial classifications and post-Independence administrative choices. With the Census (originally 2021) now expected to conclude by 2027, the enumeration of Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Denotified and Nomadic Tribes (DNTs), and languages remains a highly contentious issue.

2. Mapping India's Caste Communities

Evolution and Uncertainty

Origins- No consensus exists on the exact number or origin of caste communities. Theories attribute their emergence to occupational specialization, ritual hierarchy, tribal integration, or regional socio-economic shifts.
OBC Count- There is no precise updated count of OBC communities. While the Mandal Commission (1980) identified thousands of groups, the absence of a modern caste-based Census limits the assessment of their demographic and socio-economic status.

Denotified and Nomadic Tribes (DNTs)

Colonial Legacy- Many were branded "Criminal Tribes" under the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA), 1871, subjected to systemic surveillance.
Post-Independence- The CTA was repealed in 1952, "denotifying" these groups. They were subsequently categorized under SC, ST, OBC, or General categories based on regional classifications.
Data Deficit- India lacks an official national count of DNT communities, representing a major gap in formulating policies for these historically marginalized groups.

3. Linguistic Diversity and Enumeration Gaps

Linguistic Surveys- Then vs. Now

Grierson's Survey (1886)- The first comprehensive map documented 179 languages and 544 dialects.
Modern Gaps- No independent linguistic survey has been conducted since Independence; data is derived solely from the Census.
Declining Figures- The 1961 Census recorded 1,652 mother tongues, whereas the 2011 Census recorded only 1,369. This "disappearance" of 283 mother tongues raises questions about data processing and classification methods.

Methodological Flaws in Census

The 10,000 Threshold- The Census often excludes languages spoken by fewer than 10,000 people—a criterion that linguists argue lacks scientific basis.
Language vs. Mother Tongue- The distinction made between these two terms is often criticized for being methodologically inconsistent and risking the undermining of linguistic diversity.
The "Bharat Bhasha Parivar" Debate- A proposal suggests all Indian languages stem from a single family with Sanskrit at the source. However, linguists argue this lacks comparative scientific evidence and is more ideological than scholarly.

4. Key Challenges & Way Forward

Challenge	Proposed Way Forward
Incomplete Social Data	Conduct a comprehensive caste and community-based census, specifically including OBCs and DNTs.
Linguistic Information Gap	Revive the Linguistic Survey of India using modern digital and field-based methodologies.
Methodological Flaws	Remove arbitrary population thresholds (like the 10,000 rule) and adopt international linguistic standards.
Marginalization of DNTs	Create an official registry and conduct a dedicated socio-economic survey for DNTs.
Politicization of History	Encourage independent academic research free from ideological influence to protect linguistic scholarship.

5. Conclusion

Understanding the true contours of Indian society requires a scientific, transparent, and inclusive approach to data collection. Without an accurate mapping of caste groups, DNTs, and languages, policymaking remains detached from ground realities. Strengthening democratic governance and social justice necessitates bridging these data gaps through a modern Census and a revived Linguistic Survey.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/speak-tongues-scare-us-10563718/

"The absence of precise enumeration for Denotified and Nomadic Tribes (DNTs) and the exclusion of languages spoken by fewer than 10,000 people in the Census create significant gaps in India's social justice framework. Critically analyse how these data deficits impact evidence-based policymaking and suggest measures for a more inclusive survey methodology." (250 Words, 15 Marks)

1. Introduction

India's socio-linguistic landscape is characterized by deep complexity, yet the tools used to map this diversity often suffer from historical and methodological limitations. The delay of the 2021 Census until 2027 and the lack of a modern linguistic survey have highlighted a persistent "data deficit" regarding Denotified and Nomadic Tribes (DNTs) and minority languages, which directly undermines the effectiveness of constitutional safeguards.

2. Impact of Data Deficits on Policymaking

Historical Marginalization of DNTs- Since the repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act in 1952, DNTs have lacked an official national registry. Without accurate population counts, welfare schemes and targeted developmental interventions remain "shots in the dark," failing to reach the intended beneficiaries.

Linguistic Invisibility- The arbitrary 10,000-speaker threshold for language recognition leads to the official "disappearance" of hundreds of mother tongues. Between 1961 and 2011, approximately 283 mother tongues were lost from the Census records, rendering small linguistic communities ineligible for state-sponsored preservation efforts.

Sub-optimal Resource Allocation- Inadequate data on Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and DNTs prevents the state from accurately assessing their socio-economic status, leading to disputes over the proportionality of reservations and social benefits.

3. Methodological Flaws in Enumeration (Critique)

Arbitrary Thresholds- The 10,000-person rule is not linguistically sound; language identity is an inherent right, not a demographic privilege.

Conceptual Confusion- The inconsistent distinction between "mother tongue" and "language" in Census data creates a blurred picture of actual linguistic usage.

Delayed Implementation- A decade-long gap in Census data (2011–2027) leads to the use of outdated projections, which is particularly harmful in a rapidly urbanizing and changing society.

4. Measures for an Inclusive Survey Methodology

Revival of the Linguistic Survey of India- A modern, digital, and field-based survey should be conducted independently of the Census to capture the true depth of dialects.

Scientific Inclusion- Remove the 10,000-speaker threshold to recognize the rights of minority linguistic groups.

Dedicated DNT Registry- Create an official national registry for DNT communities through a specific socio-economic survey to address historical surveillance and neglect.

Evidence-based Research- Decouple linguistic and social research from ideological narratives to ensure that data remains a tool for scholarly and administrative accuracy.

5. Conclusion

A scientific and transparent Census is not merely a statistical exercise but a democratic necessity. To ensure that social justice is truly inclusive, India must bridge the gap between its diverse ground reality and its administrative data. Transforming the Census into an inclusive mapping tool will ensure that no community, however small or nomadic, remains invisible to the state.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/speak-tongues-scare-us-10563718/

3. Red Flags in Corporate Tax Revenue (BL)

General Studies Paper- General Studies Paper III – Indian Economy

Topic- Government budgeting and taxation.

Sub-Topic- Corporate sector performance and taxation reforms.

Introduction

Corporate taxation is a major source of revenue for the government and an important instrument of fiscal policy. India reduced corporate tax rates significantly in 2019 to encourage investment and economic growth. However, recent trends indicate a slowdown in corporate tax revenue growth, raising concerns about the effectiveness of tax reforms and the structure of corporate taxation.

1. Corporate Tax Reform of 2019

1. In 2019, India reduced the corporate tax rate from around 30–35% to about 22–25% for existing companies.
2. The objective was to boost investment, improve competitiveness, and attract global manufacturing.
3. Firms opting for the lower tax regime were required to forgo various exemptions and incentives.

2. Slowdown in Corporate Tax Collections

1. Despite improved corporate profitability in some sectors, corporate tax collections have slowed in recent years.
2. Many companies continue to remain in the old tax regime to utilise exemptions and tax credits.
3. This reduces the expected increase in revenue under the new simplified tax structure.

3. Role of Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT)

1. Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) ensures that companies with significant profits pay a minimum level of tax even after claiming deductions.
2. MAT credits accumulated during earlier years can be carried forward and used to offset future tax liabilities.
3. As companies adjust their MAT credits, the actual tax payments may temporarily decline.

4. Structural Issues Affecting Corporate Tax Revenue

1. Large corporations often benefit from multiple tax exemptions and incentives that reduce effective tax rates.
2. The gap between statutory tax rates and effective tax rates remains significant.
3. Economic uncertainties and pandemic-related disruptions have also influenced investment decisions and tax contributions.

5. Fiscal Implications

1. Slower growth in corporate tax collections can affect government revenue mobilisation and fiscal deficit management.
2. Corporate taxes form an important component of direct tax revenue alongside personal income taxes.
3. Weak tax growth may limit the government’s capacity to fund public expenditure and welfare programmes.

6. Policy Measures and Way Forward

1. Simplifying the corporate tax system by reducing exemptions and improving compliance mechanisms.
2. Encouraging companies to shift to the new tax regime with lower rates but fewer deductions.
3. Strengthening tax administration and data analytics to improve compliance and transparency.
4. Promoting investment and economic growth, which ultimately expands the corporate tax base.

Conclusion

Corporate tax reforms aim to create a competitive and investment-friendly business environment while ensuring stable revenue for the government. Addressing structural issues such as excessive exemptions and improving compliance will be essential to sustain corporate tax collections and maintain fiscal stability.

Source- https-//www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/red-flags-in-corporate-tax-revenue/article70704415.ece

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Corporate tax reforms in India aimed to stimulate investment and improve competitiveness, but recent trends show slower growth in corporate tax revenues. Examine the reasons for this slowdown and discuss its fiscal implications. (250 words)

Model Answer

Introduction

Corporate tax constitutes a significant portion of direct tax revenue in India and plays an important role in fiscal policy. The government reduced corporate tax rates in 2019 to promote investment and economic growth. However, recent data indicate slowing growth in corporate tax collections, raising questions about the effectiveness of these reforms.

Reasons for Slow Corporate Tax Growth

1. Continued Use of Old Tax Regime

1. Many firms remain in the old tax regime to retain exemptions and deductions, reducing expected revenue gains.

2. Use of Minimum Alternate Tax Credits

1. Companies utilise MAT credits accumulated from previous years, lowering their current tax liabilities.

3. Lower Effective Tax Rates

1. Tax incentives and deductions reduce the effective tax rate paid by companies, especially large firms.

4. Economic and Investment Trends

1. Economic uncertainties and slower investment expansion can limit profit growth and tax contributions.

Fiscal Implications

1. Pressure on Government Revenues

1. Slower corporate tax growth can constrain public spending and fiscal consolidation efforts.

2. Shift in Tax Composition

1. The government may rely more on personal income tax and indirect taxes to maintain revenue stability.

Conclusion

Corporate tax reforms remain important for improving India's investment climate. However, ensuring stable tax revenues requires simplifying the tax structure, reducing exemptions, and strengthening compliance mechanisms, while supporting sustained economic growth.

Source- https-//www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/red-flags-in-corporate-tax-revenue/article70704415.ece

4. The 'Orange Economy' Offers A Path to Inclusive Growth (MT)

General Studies Paper- General Studies Paper III – Indian Economy

Topic- Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Sub-Topic- Women empowerment and gender equality in economic development.

Introduction

The orange economy, also known as the creative economy, refers to economic activities based on creativity, culture, intellectual property, and knowledge. It includes sectors such as media, design, digital content, music, gaming, and performing arts. As economies increasingly move toward knowledge-based production, the creative sector offers new opportunities for employment generation, innovation, and inclusive growth.

1. Understanding the Orange Economy

1. The orange economy includes industries driven by creativity, cultural expression, and intellectual property rights.
2. Key sectors include animation, gaming, visual effects (AVGC), design, music, film, digital media, crafts, and fashion.
3. These industries rely more on human talent and creativity rather than physical capital, making them accessible to a wider section of society.

2. Contribution to Economic Growth

1. Creative industries contribute significantly to global GDP and employment generation.
2. As digital platforms expand, creative products and services gain greater global market access.
3. The growth of digital technologies allows creators from smaller towns and rural areas to participate in the global creative marketplace.

3. Role in Social Inclusion

1. The creative economy has strong potential to promote gender equality and social empowerment.
2. Women form a large share of the workforce in creative industries such as design, crafts, and cultural production.
3. Creative sectors provide opportunities for marginalised communities to express cultural identity and access economic opportunities.

4. Policy Initiatives Supporting Creative Industries

1. India has begun emphasising sectors such as Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC) to strengthen the creative economy.
2. Government initiatives aim to build digital infrastructure, skill development programs, and innovation ecosystems for creative sectors.
3. Policy support can help transform India's cultural heritage and creative talent into economic assets.

5. Challenges in Developing the Orange Economy

1. Limited access to finance and formalisation for creative professionals and small enterprises.
2. Weak intellectual property protection and awareness among creators.
3. Digital divide and inadequate infrastructure in rural areas restrict equal participation in digital creative markets.

6. Policy Measures for Strengthening the Orange Economy

1. Expand skill development and creative education programs to build talent in creative industries.
2. Improve intellectual property rights protection and awareness among artists and entrepreneurs.
3. Increase investment in digital infrastructure and innovation hubs.
4. Encourage formalisation of creative enterprises and provide financial support through startup ecosystems.

Conclusion

The orange economy offers significant potential for inclusive economic growth by combining creativity, technology, and cultural capital. By supporting creative industries through policy reforms, infrastructure development, and skill building, India can harness its rich cultural heritage to generate employment, promote gender equality, and strengthen the knowledge-based economy.

Source- https-//www.livemint.com/opinion/online-views/india-creative-economy-gender-parity-creator-empower-marginalized-workforce-11772466608563.html

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. The "orange economy" or creative economy has emerged as an important driver of inclusive growth and employment generation. Examine its potential in India and discuss the challenges in harnessing it effectively. (250 words)

Model Answer

Introduction

The orange economy, also known as the creative economy, comprises economic activities based on creativity, cultural expression, and intellectual property. With the growing importance of knowledge-based industries, the creative economy has emerged as a significant driver of innovation, employment generation, and inclusive growth.

Potential of the Orange Economy in India

1. Employment Generation

1. Creative industries rely on human talent and skills, enabling large-scale employment opportunities.

2. Gender Empowerment

1. Women constitute a significant proportion of the workforce in creative and cultural sectors, promoting gender inclusion.

3. Cultural and Economic Value

1. India's rich cultural heritage, arts, crafts, and digital content industries provide strong foundations for the creative economy.

4. Digital Market Expansion

1. Digital platforms allow creators to access global markets and new sources of income.

Challenges

1. Limited Access to Finance

1. Many creative professionals operate in the informal sector with limited financial support.

2. Weak Intellectual Property Awareness

1. Inadequate understanding of copyright and intellectual property laws affects creators' earnings.

3. Infrastructure and Digital Divide

1. Limited internet connectivity and digital infrastructure restrict participation from rural areas.

Conclusion

The orange economy has the potential to combine economic growth with cultural preservation and social inclusion. Strengthening policy support, digital infrastructure, and intellectual property protection will be essential to unlock its full potential in India.

Source- https-//www.livemint.com/opinion/online-views/india-creative-economy-gender-parity-creator-empower-marginalized-workforce-11772466608563.html