

Editorial of the Day – 19.03.2026

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1. The Opportunity in Cameroon to Rebalance The WTO (TH)

GS Paper II- INTERNATIONAL RELATION

SUB TOPIC- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Important International institutions, agencies and fora—their structure, mandate.

GS Paper III- ECONOMY

SUBTOPIC- Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

Topic- WTO Reforms and Global Trade Governance.

1. Introduction

As we approach MC14 (March 26–29, 2026), the global trade landscape has shifted from the optimistic "trade-for-peace" era of the 1990s to a cynical era of geoeconomic leverage. Yaoundé presents a rare opportunity for the 166 member nations to determine whether the WTO will remain a rule-maker or become a mere bystander in a world of "wrecking-ball politics." With the dispute settlement system paralyzed and rules designed for the 20th century, the stakes for developing nations like India have never been higher.

2. Trade as a Geopolitical Tool

1. **Weaponization of Trade-** Trade is no longer just about comparative advantage; it is a strategic instrument. Tariffs and economic pressure are increasingly used as political "tactics" rather than economic safeguards.
2. **Strategic Levers-** Countries are leveraging economic dependence to gain upper hands in territorial or security disputes, moving away from the "Doux Commerce" (gentle trade) philosophy.
3. **The Yaoundé Test-** MC14 will test if the WTO can pivot fast enough to regulate this power-driven environment or if "might will remain right."

3. The WTO Institutional Crisis

1. **Paralysis of the Appellate Body-** The dispute settlement system—once the WTO's "crown jewel"—remains broken due to stalled appointments. This has led to a lack of enforcement and a "law of the jungle" where powerful nations ignore rulings.
2. **Outdated Rulebook-** Existing rules fail to address 21st-century realities like the Digital Economy, Global Capability Centres (GCCs), and climate-aligned trade measures.
3. **Erosion of Trust-** Weak enforcement has decimated the credibility of multilateralism, pushing nations toward unilateral actions and bilateral deals.

4. Challenges in Decision-Making & Global Order

1. **Consensus vs. Progress-** The consensus-based system, while democratic, has become a "veto-trap," making reforms agonizingly slow.
2. **"Wrecking-ball Politics"-** As noted in the *Munich Security Report 2026*, nations now prefer short-term disruptive gains over the long-term stability of a rules-based system.

3. **Vulnerability of Developing Nations**– Without a strong WTO, smaller and developing economies lose the protection of collective rules and become prey to economic coercion by trade giants.

5. Changing Nature of Global Production

1. **Technological Leap**– Emerging economies are no longer just raw material exporters; they are hubs for advanced, tech-driven manufacturing.
2. **The Climate Nexus**– New trade measures linked to carbon footprints (like CBAM) are creating fresh friction between the Global North and South.
3. **Digital Networks**– The rapid expansion of digital production networks requires a new "digital trade architecture" that the current WTO framework lacks.

6. Rebalancing Predictability and Fairness

1. **The Justice Gap**– Developing nations argue that the WTO ensures the Rule of Law but often fails the Rule of Justice.
2. **Key Friction Points**–
 1. **Agricultural Subsidies**– Persistent disputes over the "Peace Clause" and public stockholding for food security.
 2. **Market Distortions**– Concerns over unequal trade openness and non-transparent subsidies.
3. **Reform Agenda**– MC14 must address "Special and Differential Treatment" (S&DT) to ensure it remains a tool for development, not a loophole.

7. Institutional Adaptability– The Way Forward

1. **Plurilateral Initiatives**– Smaller group negotiations (e.g., on e-commerce) are emerging as a workaround for the consensus deadlock. These must remain transparent and inclusive.
2. **Normative Rebirth**– WTO reform isn't just about technicalities; it's about reaffirming that shared rules protect sovereignty, especially for nations that cannot win a trade war.
3. **MC14 Choice**– The conference must decide– Strengthen the core or watch the fragmentation of the global market into exclusive trade blocs.

Conclusion

MC14 in Cameroon is not just another meeting; it is a battle for the soul of multilateralism. To survive, the WTO must restore its Dispute Settlement Body, modernize its rules for the digital and green age, and bridge the trust gap between developed and developing nations. Without these reforms, global trade risks descending into a chaotic "transactional" world where fairness is sacrificed at the altar of power.

Source– <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-opportunity-in-cameroon-to-rebalance-the-wto/article70759074.ece>

QUESTION

"The 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Yaoundé occurs against a backdrop of 'geoeconomic weaponization' and a paralyzed dispute settlement mechanism. Evaluate the economic implications of this crisis for developing nations, with specific reference to India's interests in food security and the digital economy." (250 Words, 15 Marks)

1. Introduction

The 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) in March 2026 is being held at a time when the World Trade Organization (WTO) faces an existential crisis. The shift toward "wrecking-ball politics," where trade is used as a tool for economic coercion rather than cooperation, threatens the stability of global markets. For developing nations like India, the erosion of multilateralism risks a return to a "transactional" trade order that favors capital-rich economies.

2. Economic Implications of the WTO Crisis

1. **Paralysis of Enforcement**– The stalled Appellate Body means that trade disputes remain in a legal vacuum. This allows powerful nations to impose unilateral tariffs or subsidies without fear of effective legal challenge, undermining the "predictability" essential for global supply chains.
2. **Rise of Protectionism**– As global production becomes more tech-driven and climate-aligned, developed nations are increasingly using "green" or "security" labels to justify trade barriers, disproportionately affecting exports from the Global South.
3. **Consensus Deadlock**– The inability to reach a consensus on 21st-century rules for digital services and investment means that global trade is governed by 20th-century frameworks, leading to a "Rule of Law" without "Rule of Justice."

3. India's Core Economic Interests at MC14

India's stance at Yaoundé is defined by two critical pillars–

1. **Food Security & Agricultural Subsidies**– India seeks a "permanent solution" for Public Stockholding (PSH) for food security. The current "Peace Clause" is legally precarious; India demands the right to provide Minimum Support Price (MSP) and buffer stocks for its 800 million+ citizens without being dragged into trade disputes by agricultural exporters.
2. **Digital Economy & E-commerce**– A major point of friction is the E-commerce Moratorium (the ban on customs duties on electronic transmissions). India argue that the moratorium leads to significant revenue loss and hinders the development of domestic digital public infrastructure (DPI). India seeks the policy space to regulate digital trade in a way that protects data sovereignty and local startups.

4. The Way Forward for Developing Nations

1. **Restoring the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB)**– Developing nations must collectively push for the restoration of a binding, two-tier dispute system to prevent "economic coercion."
2. **Reforming S&DT Provisions**– "Special and Differential Treatment" (S&DT) must be preserved as a fundamental right for developing nations to ensure that trade liberalization does not lead to domestic de-industrialization.

5. Conclusion

The outcome of MC14 will determine whether global trade returns to a "law of the jungle" or evolves into a more equitable, rules-based system. For India, the priority is to bridge the gap between "predictability" for global markets and "fairness" for its domestic agricultural and digital sectors. A "rebalanced" WTO is not just a diplomatic goal but an economic necessity for sustainable and inclusive growth.

Source– <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-opportunity-in-cameroon-to-rebalance-the-wto/article70759074.ece>

2. HC Raps ASI For Delay in Surveying Tughlakabad Fort Area to Free It from Encroachments (IE)

GS Paper I– History

Topic– Indian Culture – Salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature, and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

1. Introduction

In March 2026, the Delhi High Court expressed strong displeasure over the six-month delay by the ASI in initiating a court-ordered survey of encroachments around the 14th-century Tughlakabad Fort. The survey is intended to identify illegal jhuggi clusters, residential, and commercial structures that have mushroomed within protected zones. This case has become a focal point for discussing administrative accountability and the systemic failures in safeguarding India's medieval architectural heritage.

2. Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)– Mandate & Role

1. **Nodal Agency**– Functions under the Ministry of Culture; it is the premier organization for archaeological research and scientific protection of over 3,600 centrally protected monuments.
2. **Legal Power (AMASR Act, 1958)**– The *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act* empowers the ASI to regulate construction and prohibit any encroachment within a specified radius of a monument.
3. **Technical Breadth**– Beyond simple masonry repair, its roles include epigraphy (study of inscriptions), archaeological excavations, and managing site museums.
4. **Capacity Gap**– Despite its massive responsibility (including UNESCO sites), the ASI often struggles with a shortage of technical manpower and adequate financial resources.

3. Tughlakabad Fort– Historical & Cultural Significance

1. **Founder**– Built in the 14th century (c. 1321–1325) by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, the founder of the Tughlaq Dynasty.
2. **Architectural Style**– It is a masterpiece of Tughlaq architecture, known for its massive stone bastions, sloping walls (*talus*), and a "fortified city" layout that combined military defense with urban living.
3. **Urban Heritage**– The fort reflects early medieval urban planning and the strategic military mindset of the Delhi Sultanate.
4. **Legal Status**– As a Centrally Protected Monument, any construction within its prohibited zone is a criminal offense, yet it remains one of the most encroached sites in the capital.

4. The Issue of Encroachments– Causes and Impacts

1. **Urbanization Pressure**– Cities like Delhi face extreme land scarcity, leading to informal settlements and commercial hubs encroaching upon "vacant" heritage lands.
2. **Socio-Economic Complexity**– Many encroachers belong to economically weaker sections (EWS). This makes eviction a sensitive political and human rights issue, often leading to prolonged litigation.
3. **Heritage Degradation**– Illegal structures lead to structural instability, block the visual "breathing space" (aesthetic value) of the monument, and destroy potential archaeological layers buried underground.
4. **Systemic Precedent**– Similar challenges are observed at the Red Fort, Qutub Minar surroundings, and Purana Qila, suggesting that Tughlakabad is part of a larger, systemic failure.

5. Governance & Legal Framework

1. **The 2010 Amendment**– The AMASR (Amendment) Act, 2010 strictly defined zones–
 1. **Prohibited Area**– 100 meters around the monument (No construction allowed).
 2. **Regulated Area**– Further 200 meters (Construction allowed only with permission).
2. **National Monuments Authority (NMA)**– A statutory body created to manage these zones and grant permissions, attempting to balance modern development with conservation.
3. **Administrative Inertia**– The Delhi High Court highlighted that the delay in issuing "work orders" for a simple survey reflects a lack of accountability and bureaucratic "red-tapism" within the executive branch.
4. **Judicial Overreach?** The frequent intervention by courts indicates that the executive (ASI and Ministry) is failing to perform its statutory duties, forcing the judiciary to act as a "heritage guardian."

6. Broader Implications of Neglect

1. **Threat to Identity**– Allowing monuments to be swallowed by illegal colonies erodes India's historical continuity and cultural identity.
2. **Economic Consequences**– Poorly maintained and encroached sites discourage international and domestic tourism, leading to a loss of potential revenue and jobs.
3. **Weakening Rule of Law**– When illegal occupations persist for decades despite clear laws, it undermines the credibility of the entire governance system.

7. Way Forward

1. **Technology Integration**– Use of GIS mapping, LiDAR, and drones can provide a non-refutable, digital record of encroachments without the delays of manual surveys.
2. **Inter-Agency Coordination**– Establish a single-window task force comprising the ASI, Delhi Development Authority (DDA), Municipal Corporation, and Police for time-bound action.
3. **Community Stewardship**– Transition from "policing" to "participation" by involving local communities in heritage awareness.
4. **Rehabilitation Policy**– For EWS clusters, the government must provide clear rehabilitation plans to ensure that heritage protection doesn't lead to homelessness.

Conclusion

The Tughlakabad Fort case is a wake-up call for the ASI to modernize its administrative machinery. Preservation of the past cannot be seen as an obstacle to the present; rather, it must be integrated into the Master Plan of the city. Heritage conservation in 2026 requires a blend of legal rigor, technological efficiency, and social empathy.

Source– <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/hc-raps-asi-for-delay-in-surveying-tughlakabad-fort-area-to-free-it-from-encroachments-10589471/>

QUESTION

"The Tughlaq era architecture was characterized by a shift from 'delicacy' to 'durability,' reflecting the socio-political realities of the 14th century. In the light of the recent preservation challenges at Tughlakabad Fort, discuss the salient features of Tughlaq architecture and evaluate how urban encroachment threatens the civilizational continuity of such medieval sites." (250 Words, 15 Marks)

1. Introduction

The Tughlaq dynasty (1320–1414 AD) introduced a transformative phase in Indo-Islamic architecture. Unlike the preceding Khalji style, which was marked by the use of red sandstone and intricate carvings (e.g., Alai Darwaza), the Tughlaqs favored a more somber, massive, and "austere" aesthetic. Tughlakabad Fort, built by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, epitomizes this transition. However, as highlighted by recent judicial concerns, this heritage is currently under siege by rapid urban encroachment.

2. Salient Features of Tughlaq Architecture

1. **Sloping Walls (The 'Talus' effect)**– A defining feature was the "battered" or sloping wall, which gave the buildings an appearance of immense strength and durability. This was a departure from the vertical walls of earlier dynasties.
2. **Use of Local Material**– Due to economic constraints and the speed of construction, the Tughlaqs used cheap, locally available grey quartzite stone instead of expensive red sandstone, often covering it with thick layers of lime plaster.
3. **Functional and Military Focus**– The architecture was "puritanical" and defensive. Tughlakabad was designed as a fortified city with massive circular bastions, narrow loopholes for archers, and underground granaries.
4. **The Tomb-Fort Complex**– The tomb of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, connected to the fort by a causeway, introduced the concept of an enclosed, fortified funerary complex, reflecting the unstable political climate of the 14th century.

3. Impact of Urban Encroachment on Medieval Heritage

The encroachment issues at Tughlakabad Fort serve as a case study for the threats facing India's medieval sites–

1. **Loss of Archaeological Context**– A monument is not an isolated building; it is part of an integrated landscape. Encroachment destroys the "buffer zones" and unexcavated archaeological layers that hold clues to 14th-century urban life.

2. **Structural Damage**– Illegal residential constructions often use the fort's ancient stones as building material or lean modern structures against ancient walls, causing structural stress and chemical weathering.
3. **Aesthetic Degradation**– The "visual breathing space" of the monument is lost. When a 14th-century fort is surrounded by 21st-century concrete slums, its historical narrative is drowned out, affecting its value as a site of civilizational continuity.
4. **Administrative Paralysis**– As noted by the Delhi High Court, delays in surveying and clearing encroachments lead to "normalization" of illegal occupations, making eventual conservation nearly impossible.

4. Conclusion

Tughlaq architecture is a vital link in India's architectural evolution, representing a unique blend of military necessity and religious sobriety. The neglect and encroachment at Tughlakabad are not merely administrative failures but a loss of historical memory. Preservation must move beyond "protection" to "integration," where heritage sites are treated as lungs of the city and centers of cultural education, rather than obstacles to urban expansion.

Source– <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/hc-raps-asi-for-delay-in-surveying-tughlakabad-fort-area-to-free-it-from-encroachments-10589471/>

3. PPP– Reimagining National Resource Management (THE PIONEER)

General Studies Paper III – Environment & Economy

Topic– Conservation, environmental protection, and sustainable development

Sub-Topic– Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

Introduction

India's approach to development is increasingly recognising the importance of nature-based solutions (NBS) and community participation. Reimagining Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) as People-Public-Private Partnerships (PPP 2.0) can help integrate environmental sustainability with livelihood generation, ensuring inclusive and long-term development outcomes.

1. Concept of PPP 2.0

1. Moves beyond traditional PPP by placing people and communities at the centre.
2. Integrates government, private sector, and local communities as equal stakeholders.
3. Focuses on sustainable resource management and equitable benefit-sharing.

2. Role of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS)

1. Utilises ecosystem services such as afforestation, biodiversity conservation, and water management.
2. Provides solutions that address both climate change mitigation and adaptation.
3. Enhances resilience of vulnerable communities dependent on natural resources.

3. Benefits of PPP 2.0 Approach

Environmental Sustainability

1. Promotes conservation of forests, biodiversity, and natural ecosystems.

Livelihood Generation

2. Creates income opportunities through plantation, eco-restoration, and allied activities.

Inclusive Development

3. Ensures participation of local communities, especially marginalised groups.

Climate Action

4. Contributes to carbon sequestration and ecological balance.

4. Challenges in Implementation

Institutional Coordination–Aligning interests of government, private sector, and communities is complex.

Long Gestation Period–Environmental projects require sustained investment and time.

Monitoring and Accountability–Ensuring transparency and equitable benefit-sharing can be difficult.

Capacity Constraints–Local communities may lack technical and institutional capacity.

5. Policy Measures and Way Forward

Strengthening Community Participation–Empower local institutions for decision-making and implementation.

Clear Legal and Institutional Frameworks–Define roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders.

Financial Incentives–Use mechanisms like carbon credits and performance-based payments.

Capacity Building–Provide training and support for sustainable practices and resource management.

Conclusion

Reimagining PPP through a community-centric approach and integrating nature-based solutions can transform resource management in India. By aligning environmental sustainability with livelihood generation, PPP 2.0 offers a pathway for inclusive growth and long-term ecological resilience.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Discuss how People–Public–Private Partnerships (PPP 2.0) combined with nature-based solutions can address environmental challenges while promoting inclusive development in India. (250 words)

Introduction

Traditional Public–Private Partnerships (PPP) often focus on infrastructure and economic outcomes. The concept of PPP 2.0, which includes community participation, integrates nature-based solutions (NBS) to address environmental and socio-economic challenges.

Role of PPP 2.0 with NBS

1. Environmental Sustainability–Promotes conservation through ecosystem-based approaches.

2. Livelihood Generation–Creates employment opportunities in afforestation and resource management.

3. Inclusive Governance–Ensures participation of local communities in decision-making.

Challenges

1. Coordination Issues–Aligning multiple stakeholders is complex.

2. Long-Term Investment Needs–Environmental projects require sustained funding.

Conclusion

PPP 2.0 with nature-based solutions offers a holistic approach to sustainable development. By combining environmental conservation with community participation, it can ensure inclusive growth and ecological resilience.

4. Time For a Law on Passive Euthanasia (HINDUSTAN TIMES)

General Studies Paper IV– Ethics in public life, end-of-life decision-making

Topic– Health policy, governance, and legal frameworks

Sub-Topic– autonomy and dignity

Introduction

The issue of passive euthanasia lies at the intersection of law, ethics, and healthcare governance. While the Supreme Court has recognised the right to die with dignity under certain conditions, the absence of a comprehensive legal framework creates ambiguity. There is a growing need for a clear law

with safeguards, institutional mechanisms, and awareness to ensure ethical and consistent implementation.

1. Legal Status in India

1. The Supreme Court, through landmark judgments, has permitted passive euthanasia and recognised Advance Medical Directives (AMDs).
2. Individuals can refuse life-sustaining treatment under specific conditions.
3. However, implementation remains complex due to procedural safeguards and lack of clarity.

2. Ethical Dimensions

Autonomy—Individuals have the right to make decisions regarding their own medical treatment and end-of-life care.

Dignity—Ensuring a dignified death is linked to human rights and compassion in healthcare.

Beneficence vs Non-Maleficence—Balancing between relieving suffering and avoiding harm creates ethical dilemmas for doctors.

3. Challenges in Current Framework

Procedural Complexity—Legal processes for implementing AMDs are lengthy and difficult to operationalise.

Low Awareness—Limited awareness among patients and healthcare providers about end-of-life rights.

Weak Palliative Care Infrastructure—Inadequate access to palliative care services, especially in rural areas.

Medical Hesitation—Doctors may fear legal consequences, leading to reluctance in implementing decisions.

4. Need for a Comprehensive Law

1. A clear law can provide uniform guidelines and reduce ambiguity.
2. It can ensure standardised procedures across healthcare institutions.
3. Legal backing would enhance confidence among patients, families, and medical professionals.

5. Way Forward

Strengthening Palliative Care—Expand access to end-of-life care services and pain management.

Simplifying Procedures—Streamline processes related to Advance Medical Directives.

Capacity Building—Train healthcare professionals in ethical decision-making and end-of-life care.

Public Awareness—Promote awareness about patients' rights and legal provisions.

Conclusion

Passive euthanasia raises complex ethical and legal questions that require a balanced approach. A comprehensive legal framework, combined with improved palliative care and awareness, can ensure that end-of-life decisions uphold dignity, autonomy, and ethical responsibility in India's healthcare system.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Passive euthanasia in India operates within a judicial framework but lacks a comprehensive legislative backing. Examine the ethical and legal challenges involved and suggest measures for a balanced policy approach. (250 words)

Introduction

Passive euthanasia, involving the withdrawal or withholding of life-sustaining treatment, has been permitted by the Supreme Court under specific conditions. However, the absence of a comprehensive legal framework creates challenges in its implementation.

Ethical and Legal Challenges

- 1. Procedural Complexity**–Complex safeguards make implementation difficult.
- 2. Ethical Dilemmas**–Conflict between patient autonomy and medical responsibility.
- 3. Lack of Awareness**–Patients and doctors are often unaware of legal provisions and rights.

Measures

- 1. Enacting Comprehensive Legislation**–Provide clear and uniform guidelines.
- 2. Strengthening Palliative Care**–Ensure better end-of-life support.
- 3. Awareness and Training**–Educate stakeholders on ethical and legal aspects.

Conclusion

A balanced approach combining legal clarity, ethical safeguards, and improved healthcare infrastructure is essential to ensure that passive euthanasia is implemented with dignity and accountability.

