Editorial of the Day – 21.03.2026

Index

1. Duty of care- On vaccine injury compensation programmes (TH) -01

2. An ancient temple caught in the heart of a modern conflict (IE) -03

3. Geopolitics & India's Fragile Energy Dependence (TT) -05

4. The Paradox of Experience (TS)

1. India's Iran stance does fuel a foreign policy debate(TH)

General Studies Paper- General Studies Paper II – International Relations

Topic- India and West Asia relations.

Sub-Topic India's foreign policy and strategic autonomy

Introduction

India's approach towards Iran reflects the broader principles of its foreign policy—strategic autonomy, pragmatism, and national interest. In the context of evolving geopolitical tensions in West Asia, India's stance has sparked debate on balancing values, interests, and global alignments.

1. Nature of the Debate

1. One view supports aligning with Western partners for strategic and economic benefits.
2. Another advocates maintaining an independent stance to safeguard long-term interests.
3. The debate highlights tensions between normative values and realpolitik.

2. Principles of India's Foreign Policy

Strategic Autonomy-India avoids rigid alliances, maintaining independent decision-making.

Pragmatism-Foreign policy decisions are guided by national interest rather than ideology.

Multi-alignment-India engages with diverse partners, including the US, Iran, Israel, and Gulf countries.

3. Importance of Iran for India

Energy Security-Iran has historically been a key supplier of crude oil to India.

Connectivity-Projects like Chabahar Port enhance access to Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Geopolitical Balance-Engagement with Iran helps India maintain strategic balance in West Asia.

4. Role of the United States and Global Dynamics

1. The US is a major partner in trade, defence, and technology cooperation.
2. US sanctions on Iran complicate India's engagement with Tehran.
3. India must balance relations without compromising strategic interests.

5. Role of Gulf Countries

1. Gulf nations are crucial for energy supplies and Indian diaspora welfare.
2. They contribute significantly through remittances and economic ties.
3. India's policy must account for regional sensitivities and partnerships.

6. Challenges in India's Iran Policy

Geopolitical Pressures-Balancing relations between competing global and regional powers.

Energy and Trade Constraints-Sanctions and conflicts affect energy imports and connectivity projects.

Domestic and International Perceptions-Foreign policy decisions are often subject to public and political scrutiny.

7. Way Forward

Balanced Diplomacy-Continue multi-alignment while prioritising national interest.

Clear Communication-Explain policy decisions to ensure public understanding and support.

Strengthening Strategic Partnerships-Maintain relations with all key actors to ensure economic and security stability.

8. Conclusion

India's Iran policy exemplifies the complexity of modern diplomacy, where competing interests and global pressures must be carefully managed. By adhering to strategic autonomy and pragmatic decision-making, India can navigate these challenges while safeguarding its long-term national interests.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/indias-iran-stance-does-fuel-a-foreign-policy-debate/article70766711.ece

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. *India's approach towards Iran reflects the broader principles of strategic autonomy in its foreign policy. Discuss the challenges and significance of this approach in the context of West Asian geopolitics.* (250 words)

1. Introduction

India's foreign policy is guided by the principle of strategic autonomy, allowing it to engage with multiple global and regional actors. Its approach towards Iran reflects this balance between national interest and geopolitical realities.

2. Significance

1. Energy Security-Iran has been an important source of crude oil.

2. Strategic Connectivity-Projects like Chabahar enhance regional access.

3. Diplomatic Balance-Engagement with Iran helps maintain equilibrium in West Asia.

3. Challenges

1. US Sanctions-Limits economic and energy engagement with Iran.

2. Regional Tensions-Conflicts in West Asia complicate diplomatic balancing.

4. Conclusion

India's Iran policy demonstrates the importance of strategic autonomy in navigating complex geopolitics. A balanced and pragmatic approach is essential to protect India's long-term interests.

Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/indias-iran-stance-does-fuel-a-foreign-policy-debate/article70766711.ece

2. Our water challenge is stark. Here are four ways to reimagine the solution(IE)

General Studies Paper- General Studies Paper III – Environment & Economy

Topic- Water resources and conservation.

Sub-Topic Sustainable development and climate change

1. Introduction

India is facing an increasingly severe water crisis driven by rising demand, declining groundwater, pollution, and climate variability. With per capita water availability declining and water stress intensifying, there is an urgent need to shift from crisis management to systemic, sustainable water governance.

2. Nature of India's Water Crisis

1. India has a disproportionately low share of global freshwater resources relative to its population.
2. Rapid urbanisation, industrialisation, and agricultural demand are increasing water stress.
3. Groundwater depletion and pollution have reduced water quality and availability.

3. Structural Challenges

Inefficient Water Use-Agriculture consumes the majority of water, often through inefficient irrigation practices.

Fragmented Governance-Multiple institutions manage water, leading to lack of coordination.

Pollution and Mismanagement-Rivers and water bodies are affected by industrial discharge and untreated sewage.

Climate Change Impact-Variability in rainfall increases risks of droughts and floods.

4. Need for Reimagining Water Governance

1. Water must be treated as a strategic and economic resource, not just a public good.
2. Policies should focus on efficiency, sustainability, and resilience.
3. Integrated water management is essential to balance supply and demand.

5. Key Solutions

Demand-Side Management

1. Promote water-efficient agriculture and cropping patterns.
2. Encourage efficient use through pricing and incentives.

Water Reuse and Recycling-Expand treatment and reuse of wastewater for industrial and urban purposes.

Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM)-Coordinate across sectors and regions for holistic water governance.

Urban Water Reforms-Improve infrastructure for rainwater harvesting, wastewater treatment, and distribution systems.

6. Role of Technology and Innovation

1. Use of digital monitoring, smart irrigation systems, and data analytics.
2. Adoption of climate-resilient water management practices.
3. Investment in infrastructure for efficient water storage and distribution.

7. Way Forward

Policy Reforms-Rationalise water pricing and strengthen regulatory frameworks.

Institutional Strengthening-Improve coordination among central, state, and local agencies.

Public Participation-Encourage community involvement in water conservation and management.

Sustainable Practices-Promote conservation through education and awareness.

8. Conclusion

India's water crisis requires a paradigm shift from fragmented and supply-driven approaches to integrated, demand-driven, and sustainable water management. By combining policy reforms, technological innovation, and community participation, India can ensure long-term water security and resilience.

Source- https-//indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/our-water-challenge-is-stark-here-are-four-ways-to-reimagine-the-solution-10593116/

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. *India's water crisis is both a resource management issue and a governance challenge. Discuss the key problems and suggest comprehensive measures for sustainable water management.* (250 words)

1. Introduction

India is facing increasing water stress due to rising demand, declining availability, and climate change. Addressing this crisis requires a comprehensive approach to water management and governance.

2. Challenges

1. Overuse in Agriculture-Inefficient irrigation leads to excessive water consumption.

2. Groundwater Depletion-Over-extraction reduces long-term availability.

3. Pollution-Contamination of water sources affects quality.

3. Measures

1. Demand Management-Promote efficient irrigation and water pricing.

2. Water Recycling-Expand wastewater treatment and reuse.

3. Institutional Reforms-Improve coordination among agencies.

4. Conclusion

Sustainable water management requires integrated policies, technological solutions, and public participation. This will ensure long-term water security and resilience in India.

Source- https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/our-water-challenge-is-stark-here-are-four-ways-to-reimagine-the-solution-10593116/

3. Resilient Digital Childhood(THE STATESMAN)

General Studies Paper- General Studies Paper IV- Ethics in technology, responsibility towards vulnerable groups

Topic- Digital Infrastructure and its impacts.

Sub-Topic Education, child protection, and governance

1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has transformed children's lives, offering new opportunities for learning, creativity, and connectivity. However, it has also exposed them to risks such as addiction, harmful content, and reduced well-being. Building a resilient digital childhood requires a balanced approach combining regulation, education, and parental responsibility.

2. Changing Digital Environment for Children

1. Children increasingly access smartphones, online platforms, and digital learning tools.
2. Digital exposure begins at an early age, influencing cognitive and social development.
3. Technology has become integral to education and daily life.

3. Key Risks and Challenges

Digital Addiction-Excessive screen time affects mental health, attention span, and physical well-being.

Exposure to Harmful Content-Children may encounter inappropriate or unsafe online material.

Cyberbullying and Online Safety-Increased risk of harassment, privacy violations, and exploitation.

Impact on Learning-Overuse of digital platforms can reduce focus and academic performance.

4. Limitations of Regulatory Approach

1. Legislation alone cannot fully address the issue due to rapid technological evolution.
2. Enforcement challenges and lack of awareness reduce effectiveness of legal frameworks.
3. Digital platforms often operate across borders, complicating regulation.

5. Role of Key Stakeholders

Parents and Families-Monitor and guide children's digital usage and behaviour.

Educational Institutions-Promote digital literacy and responsible technology use.

Government-Develop policies for child safety, data protection, and platform accountability.

Technology Platforms-Ensure safer design with content moderation and age-appropriate features.

6. Need for a Holistic Approach

Digital Literacy-Educate children about safe and responsible online behaviour.

Balanced Usage-Encourage moderation and healthy offline–online balance.

Institutional Mechanisms-Establish systems for monitoring, reporting, and addressing online risks.

Ethical Technology Design-Promote platforms that prioritise child safety and well-being.

7. Way Forward

Comprehensive Policy Framework-Integrate child protection with education and digital governance policies.

Capacity Building-Train teachers and parents to handle digital risks effectively.

Public Awareness-Promote awareness campaigns on safe digital practices.

8. Conclusion

Ensuring a resilient digital childhood requires a multi-stakeholder approach that balances technological benefits with safeguards. By combining regulation, education, and responsible use, India can create a safe, inclusive, and empowering digital environment for children.

Source- https-//www.thestatesman.com/opinion/resilient-digital-childhood-1503572442.html

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. *The increasing digital exposure of children presents both opportunities and risks. Discuss the challenges in ensuring a resilient digital childhood and suggest a comprehensive approach to address them.* (250 words)

1. Introduction

Digital technologies have become an integral part of children's lives, offering educational and developmental opportunities. However, excessive and unregulated use poses risks to their well-being.

2. Challenges

1. Digital Addiction-Excessive screen time affects health and learning.

2. Online Safety Risks-Exposure to harmful content and cyberbullying.

3. Regulatory Limitations-Rapid technological changes outpace legal frameworks.

3. Measures

1. Digital Literacy-Educate children on safe online practices.

2. Parental and Institutional Role-Monitor and guide digital usage.

3. Strong Policy Framework-Ensure platform accountability and child protection.

4. Conclusion

A balanced approach combining regulation, education, and responsible usage is essential to ensure a safe and resilient digital environment for children.

Source- https-//www.thestatesman.com/opinion/resilient-digital-childhood-1503572442.html

4. WHO REALLY RUNS THE INDIA'S DIGITAL MARKET? (FINANCIAL EXPRESS)

General Studies Paper- General Studies Paper III – Science & Technology / Economy

Topic- Digital economy and emerging technologies.

Sub-Topic Data governance and platform economy

1. Introduction

Digital markets in India are expanding rapidly, driven by platforms, data, and algorithms. While technology promised to eliminate intermediaries, it has instead created new forms of control and influence. Increasingly, algorithms, platforms, and data ownership shape market outcomes, raising critical questions about fairness, accountability, and digital sovereignty.

2. Transformation of Market Structures

1. Digital platforms act as intermediaries connecting producers and consumers.
2. Algorithms determine visibility, pricing, and access to markets.
3. This has shifted power from traditional actors to platform owners and system designers.

3. Role of Algorithms in Digital Markets

Decision-Making Power-Algorithms influence who gets visibility, credit, or opportunities.

Data-Driven Control-Platforms use large datasets to predict behaviour and optimise outcomes.

Opacity and Complexity-Algorithmic decisions are often non-transparent and difficult to audit.

4. Emergence of New Intermediaries

1. Contrary to expectations, digital systems have created new intermediaries such as platforms, consultants, and data analysts.
2. These actors shape market access and decision-making processes.

3. This leads to concentration of power in a few entities.

5. Risks and Challenges

Lack of Transparency-Users often do not understand how decisions are made.

Market Concentration-Dominance of large platforms reduces competition and fairness.

Data Asymmetry-Unequal access to data creates power imbalances.

Erosion of Sovereignty-Control over digital systems can shift economic and strategic power away from the state.

6. Implications for Governance

Regulatory Challenges-Traditional regulatory frameworks struggle to address algorithm-driven markets.

Need for Accountability-Ensuring responsibility in automated decision-making is critical.

Digital Sovereignty-Countries must ensure control over data, infrastructure, and digital ecosystems.

7. Way Forward

Algorithmic Transparency-Promote explainability and auditing of AI and algorithmic systems.

Strengthening Regulation-Develop frameworks for platform accountability and fair competition.

Data Governance-Ensure equitable access and protection of data resources.

Building Domestic Capabilities-Invest in indigenous digital infrastructure and technologies.

8. Conclusion

Digital markets are reshaping economic and governance structures by concentrating power in algorithms and platforms. Ensuring transparency, accountability, and digital sovereignty is essential to create a fair, inclusive, and resilient digital economy.

Source- https-//www.financialexpress.com/opinion/who-really-runs-indias-digital-markets/4179226/

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. *Digital markets are increasingly governed by algorithms rather than traditional institutions. Discuss the implications of this shift for market fairness and digital sovereignty, and suggest regulatory measures.* (250 words)

1. Introduction

Digital markets are increasingly driven by algorithms and data, which determine market access and outcomes. This shift has transformed traditional economic structures and raised concerns about fairness and sovereignty.

2. Implications

1. Market Concentration-Large platforms dominate, reducing competition.

2. Lack of Transparency-Algorithmic decisions are opaque and difficult to regulate.

3. Data Asymmetry-Unequal access to data creates power imbalances.

3. Measures

1. Regulatory Frameworks-Strengthen rules for platform accountability.

2. Algorithmic Transparency-Ensure explainability of automated decisions.

Promote equitable access and protection of data.

4. Conclusion

Balancing innovation with regulation is essential to ensure fair and sovereign digital markets. Effective governance will help create a transparent and inclusive digital economy.

Source- https-//www.financialexpress.com/opinion/who-really-runs-indias-digital-markets/4179226/