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CONTENT LIST

GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

1. A green signal for India to assert its health leadership

Context: The Union Budget 2025-26 lays a robust foundation for India to assert its leadership in global health care and innovation, with strategic announcements that bolster medical infrastructure, expand educational opportunities, and promote global collaboration. With a ₹90,958 crore health-care allocation, the addition of 75,000 medical seats over the next five years, and investments in daycare cancer centres, India is poised to enhance both accessibility and quality of care. The country will add 10,000 medical seats in FY26 alone, underscoring its commitment to health-care excellence.

Key points

- **Overview:** The Union Budget 2025-26 prioritizes health-care expansion, medical education, and global collaborations. It aims to establish as leader in affordable and innovative health services.

- **Growing burden of non-communicable diseases:** It is commendable that the growing burden of non-communicable diseases such as cancer has been acknowledged in this Budget.
- **200 day-care cancer centres:** The establishment of 200 day-care cancer centres in district hospitals, will bring specialised treatment closer to people, improving early diagnosis and better patient outcomes.
- **Customs duty exemption on 36 life-saving drugs:** The customs duty exemption on 36 life-saving drugs, including those for cancer, rare diseases, and chronic conditions will lower the cost of treatments, benefiting thousands of patients across the country.
- **Addition of 13 new patient assistance programmes:** The addition of 13 new patient assistance programmes would also improve access to critical medications for patients, particularly those with chronic conditions.
- **Emphasis on AI and digital health:** The emphasis on Artificial Intelligence and digital health marks a pivotal moment for the future of India's health care.
- **National Centres of Excellence:** The new National Centres of Excellence will spearhead innovation in diagnostics, treatment, and research, enabling India to develop cutting-edge solutions that enhance patient care.
- **Strengthened global health-care position:** The writer believes that the introduction of cutting-edge technologies to deliver quality health care has strengthened India's position as a global health-care player.
- **Private and public hospital contributions:** Both private and public hospitals have played an integral role in this progress.
- **Apollo's role:** Apollo was the first hospital to launch Proton therapy for advanced cancer care in this part of the world and continues to attract patients from countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom, to name a few.
- **Government's vision for health care:** This Budget clearly recognises the government's vision for — and demonstration of bold leadership in recognising — health care as a pillar of national growth and development.
- **Evolution in medical care:** From a country that once struggled to provide basic medical care, we have evolved into a nation offering world-class treatment to millions.
- **Synergy of initiatives:** Through the synergy of Heal in India, Heal by India, and innovation-driven care, we are shaping a future where India's health-care system sets new global benchmarks.
- **Conclusion:** It is our collective responsibility now to build on this momentum — by embracing technology, strengthening medical education, and ensuring that health care reaches every individual in need. India is not just healing its own people; it is healing the world.

India's health-care transformation

- **India's health-care progress:** The Budget highlights India's transformation from limited medical infrastructure in the 1980s to a global health-care leader today.
- **'Heal in India' initiative:** Focuses on streamlined visa processes, enhanced hospital infrastructure, and public-private partnerships to make India a top medical destination for international patients.
  Aim - Aims to train and deploy Indian doctors, nurses, and paramedics abroad, helping to address the global health-care workforce shortage.
- **Global impact:** These initiatives will strengthen international health-care systems while creating opportunities for skilled Indian professionals.

GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

2. Turning point, cutting edge

Context: India is embracing the idea of shifting public money into private universities and which are nurturing innovation. Gradually, we have started seeing the problem of innovation policy in a more comprehensive, all-of-society way. We require intellectual capabilities in people, in firms, and not just in government organisations. Intellectual power in Indian firms is a precondition for a high GDP. This is where comprehensive national power comes from. It is not enough to have engineers in ISRO who put a craft on the moon.

Key points

- **Current Challenges:** Intellectual capabilities are concentrated in government organizations like ISRO, limiting broader societal impact. Need for knowledge dissemination in private firms and universities to drive innovation and GDP growth.
- **Global Examples:** *France* - Defence research is conducted in private firms with government funding.
  USA - 80% of NASA's budget is contracted to private firms and universities (e.g., Jet Propulsion Laboratory at Caltech).
  China - Private sector innovation (e.g., DeepSeek) demonstrates the potential of private-led R&D.
- **Indian Context:** Pride in ISRO's achievements (e.g., lunar missions) should extend to private sector contributions. Greater societal gains when knowledge resides in private organizations and feeds into the economy.
- **Key Recommendations from Recent Research:** A December 2024 paper proposed shifting taxpayer resources to private firms and universities for R&D. Emphasized the importance of public-private partnerships and contracting-out models.
- **Developments in Indian Science Policy:** *Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)* - Aims to allocate Rs 2,800 crore annually for early-stage research in private organizations. Represents a shift towards funding private-led innovation.
  Budget Allocation for Private Sector R&D - Rs 20,000 crore allocated in the 2024 budget for private sector-driven research and innovation. Marks a significant milestone in India's science policy.
  ISRO's New Approach - Plans to purchase launch vehicles from private firms, fostering cutting-edge engineering and civilian applications.
  MEITY's GPU Initiative - Procured 18,693 GPUs for private IT infrastructure firms. Researchers in private organizations can access GPUs at $1 per hour, promoting AI knowledge and innovation.
- **Key Challenges:** Research funding is inherently risky, with no guaranteed outcomes. Unlike routine procurement, R&D contracts require flexible and innovative evaluation mechanisms.
- **Proposed Solutions:** *Legal Reforms* - Update legal frameworks to support contracting-out models.
  Strategic Public Finance - Align funding mechanisms with long-term R&D goals.
  Project Planning - Develop robust frameworks for monitoring and evaluating research outcomes.
- **Way Forward:** 2025 will shape up as an important turning point for Indian science policy. The Indian state is rising out of the concept of using public money to hire researchers who are civil servants, to the concept of delivering public money into private universities and firms where cutting-edge knowledge is produced. This is greater bang for the taxpayer's buck, as opposed to vertical government science organisations.

GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

3. A Budget that is mostly good but with one wrong move

Context: The Union Budget has got many things right. Its projection of nominal GDP growth for 2025-26, at 10.1%, is reasonable and acceptable. The Economic Survey 2024-25 had indicated a real GDP growth in the range of 6.3%-6.8% for 2025-26. This provides some buffer if growth picks up more. The increase in the capital expenditure of the government in 2025-26 over the revised estimates of 2024-25 is estimated at ₹1.03 lakh crore. But the capital expenditures in 2025-26, at ₹11.2 lakh crore, are nearly the same as was indicated in the Budget of 2024-25 at ₹11.1 lakh crore.

Key points

- **Overview:** The Union Budget 2025-26 aims to accelerate economic growth while ensuring fiscal prudence. It focuses on capital expenditure, tax revenue trends, and fiscal policy shifts, including changes in deficit targets.
- **Need for Higher Economic Growth:** The budget aims to accelerate growth and push India towards developed country status. A real GDP growth rate of 8% is considered necessary to achieve this goal. While several measures introduced in the budget are beneficial, some could have been implemented earlier. Income tax relief for the middle class is expected to boost demand, but its effect depends on household consumption behaviour.
- **Some recent trends in Indian Economy:** *Declining Revenue Growth* - The overall revenue growth has been slowing down over the past three years.
  Tax Buoyancy Reduction - The efficiency of tax collection in relation to economic growth has decreased.
  Shift Towards Direct Taxes - Direct taxes now form a larger share of total revenue compared to earlier years.
- **Government Expenditure and Fiscal Consolidation:** *Declining Government Expenditure* - The government's spending as a share of GDP is set to decrease due to efforts to manage the fiscal deficit.
  Slower Expenditure Growth - Government spending is growing at a slower pace than the overall economy.
  Improved Spending Quality - A greater portion of government funds is being directed toward long-term investments in infrastructure.
- **Concerns Over Fiscal Transparency:** *Shift in Fiscal Focus* - The budget moves away from using the fiscal deficit as the main measure of financial discipline.
  Previous Target - Earlier, there was a clear goal to reduce the fiscal deficit below 4.5% by 2025-26.
  New Approach - The focus is now on lowering the debt-to-GDP ratio instead of setting a specific fiscal deficit target.
- **Conclusion:** The Budget 2025-26 aims to sustain economic growth while maintaining fiscal discipline. Capital expenditure remains a priority, but AI infrastructure investment needs more focus.

Q. What are the reasons for introduction of Fiscal responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) act, 2003? Discuss critically its salient features and their effectiveness. (वित्तीय दायवद्धता आरू वाजेट व्यৱস্থাপনা (এফ. আৰ. বি. এম) আইন, 2003 প্ৰৱৰ্তনৰ কাৰণসমূহ কি কি? ইয়াৰ মুখ্য বৈশিষ্ট্যসমূহ আৰু সেইবোৰৰ কার্যকৰীতাৰ বিষয়ে সমালোচনামূলকভাৱে আলোচনা কৰক।)

GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

4. Story of NaVIC: crucial indigenous SatNav system, hurdles in development

Context: India's NVS-02 navigation satellite partially failed on February 2 due to engine non-firing, marking another setback for the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), or NavIC. Conceived after the 1999 Kargil War, NavIC aimed to establish a seven-satellite constellation by 2016 for defence and civilian use. However, only five of the 11 satellites launched since 2013 remain fully operational. Despite ISRO declaring the constellation complete in 2016, failures and replacements have plagued the ₹2,250 crore program.

Key points

- **Failures in IRNSS Satellites:** *Atomic Clock Malfunctions (2016 Onward)* - Failures reported in rubidium atomic clocks used in IRNSS and ESA's Galileo GNSS. Despite this, ISRO stated the navigation system's overall performance remained unaffected. Clocks in IRNSS-1C, 1D, 1E, and 1G also developed issues over time.
  Satellite Launch and Deployment Failures - IRNSS-1H, launched in 2017 to replace IRNSS-1A, failed as its heat shield did not detach. The latest satellite, IRNSS-1K (NVS-02), suffered an engine failure in 2025, leaving it in a sub-optimal orbit.
  Overall Impact - Out of 11 IRNSS satellites launched, six have faced failures, affecting India's indigenous navigation system.
- **Current Status of NavIC Satellites:** ISRO's 2023-24 annual report says that following the launch of NVS-01 on May 28, 2023, five NavIC satellites are operational – IRNSS-1B, 1C, 1F, and 1I, and NVS-01 (IRNSS-1J). However, according to some estimates, 1C is only partially operational due to the presence of the old series of atomic clocks that were reported to be malfunctioning.
  - *Satellite Generations and Clock Issues* - First-generation IRNSS satellites (1H and 1I) carried modified European clocks. Next-generation satellites (NVS-01 and NVS-02) use a mix of indigenous and foreign clocks. NVS-02 (IRNSS-1K) failed due to an engine malfunction.
- **Key Services Provided by NavIC:** Offers positioning accuracy better than 20 meters across India and up to 1,500 km around it, with dual-frequency capabilities in L5 and S band.
  - *Standard Positioning Service (SPS)* - For general and commercial use.
  - *Restricted Service (RS)* - For defence forces.
- **Importance of the NavIC System for India:** *Strategic Importance for Defence* - NavIC ensures reliable positioning data critical for defence applications, unlike global systems such as GPS, which have military-encrypted services primarily for US and allied forces. Global navigation systems (GPS, GLONASS, Galileo, Beidou, QZSS) are mainly developed for military use, and NavIC provides India with independent and secure navigation.
  Commercial and Consumer Adoption - For NavIC to become widespread, ISRO plans to partner with commercial service providers, including mobile phone and vehicle manufacturers. Qualcomm, a mobile chipmaker, agreed to incorporate NavIC support in some chipsets in December 2023.
- **Way ahead:** ISRO intends to launch three more second-generation satellites (NVS-03, 04, 05) to enhance the NavIC system and ensure continuity of services, despite setbacks like the NVS-02 engine failure.

GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

5. What is the SC directive on sacred groves?

Context: On December 18, 2024, the Supreme Court ordered Rajasthan's Forest Department to map all sacred groves using satellite and ground surveys based on their cultural and ecological importance, regardless of their size. After mapping, the court directed the department to classify them as 'forests' and notify them as 'community reserves' under the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) 1972. In Rajasthan, sacred groves, locally known as 'orans', are estimated to number around 25,000, covering approximately 6 lakh hectares across the state.

Key points

- **Implications of the issued order:** *Conflict with the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006* – The order contradicts the FRA, which was enacted to recognize and vest forest rights with gram sabhas. Instead, the decision shifts control from communities to the Forest Department.
  Potential Erosion of Traditional Governance Systems – The transfer of management could weaken customary laws and traditional conservation practices that have preserved these groves for generations.
  Impact on Livelihoods and Religious Practices – Communities that depend on sacred groves for religious, medicinal, and cultural purposes may face restrictions under the new classification as 'community reserves.
- **T.N. Godavarman v. Union of India:** *Broad Definition* - The Supreme Court established that 'forest land' includes not only areas understood as forests in the dictionary sense but also any area recorded as forest in government records, regardless of ownership.
  Expert Committees - The ruling directed state governments to form expert committees to identify areas that fit this definition of 'forest land'.
- **Some traditional conservation methods:** *Watershed & Ecological Functions* - Many sacred groves protect natural water sources, prevent soil erosion, and regulate local climate. Ex- Orans (Rajasthan) – These groves support perennial water streams and serve as critical grazing lands for livestock.
  Strict Protection through Customary Laws & Taboos - Communities impose strict prohibitions on tree felling, hunting, or resource extraction in sacred groves. Example: Sarpa Kavu (Kerala) – These groves are dedicated to serpent deities, and cutting trees is considered a bad omen.
  Community Governance & Management - Local elders, priests, or village councils oversee the maintenance and enforcement of protection norms. Ex- Jahera (Odisha, Chhattisgarh) – Tribal communities like the Gonds and Santhals manage these groves as sacred spaces.
- **Way forward:** *Harmonizing Legal Frameworks* – Amend policies to ensure the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, and Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA), 1972, work in tandem, recognizing gram sabhas' authority in managing sacred groves while ensuring ecological conservation.
  Community-Centric Conservation – Strengthen traditional governance systems by legally empowering local communities to manage sacred groves, integrating scientific conservation methods with cultural practices.

Q. Examine the status of forest resources in India and its resultant impact on climate change. (ভাৰতৰ বনজ সম্পদৰ অৱস্থা আৰু জলবায়ু পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ ওপৰত ইয়াৰ ফলত হোৱা প্ৰভাৱ পৰীক্ষা কৰক।)