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

1. The problematic globalization of medical education

Context: Strange things are going on worldwide in medical education. On the one hand, there appears to be a shortage of medical doctors, while at the same time governments, and in many cases also medical doctors themselves, oppose increased access to the study of medicine. As a result, there has been an increase in international mobility of medical students from high-, mid- and low-income countries. While once medical education was international, now it is nationally regulated, but at the same time becoming internationalised. Because of national and global health needs, it is worth examining this global medical environment.

Key points

- **Overview:** The phenomenon of foreign medical education is widespread, almost completely unknown, and unregulated. Ukraine, before the Russian invasion, had 24,000 medical students from abroad, mainly, but not exclusively, from India.

- **Crisis in India:** The country has a severe shortage of doctors. The demand for places in medical colleges is considerable, and as a result, competition for places is intense. Annually, approximately 2.3 million students sit for the national medical school entry examination. Only one in around 22 successful candidates can enter the country's 700-plus medical colleges.
- **Growing Trend of Studying Medicine Abroad:** The fierce competition for medical seats in India has compelled many students to explore opportunities abroad. It is estimated that more than 20,000 Indian medical students go abroad to study. Countries such as Russia, pre-war Ukraine, Kazakhstan, the Philippines, China, Mauritius, and Nepal have become attractive destinations.
- **Indian-Controlled Medical Institutions Abroad:** Interestingly, some of the institutions in foreign countries are controlled by Indians. One such institution is the Manipal College of Medical Sciences in Nepal. It is the country's first private medical college, which was established in 1994.
- **Challenges of Studying Medicine Abroad:** Indian students who complete their programmes from foreign institutions must clear the national licensing examination to qualify for medical practice in India. They are also required to complete a medical internship upon their return. Similarly, Indians wishing to practise medicine abroad must satisfy licensing and other requirements of those countries.
- **Government Initiatives in Medical Education:** In a significant announcement during the Union Budget speech in February 2025, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighted the government's achievements in medical education. She stated that the government had successfully added nearly 1.1 lakh undergraduate and postgraduate medical education seats over the past decade, an increase of 130%. She also revealed plans for further expansion in the medical education sector by announcing that an additional 10,000 seats would be introduced in medical colleges and hospitals in 2026.
- **Unregulated Growth of Foreign Medical Education:** The phenomenon of foreign medical education is widespread, yet almost completely unknown and unregulated. Entire medical schools devoted to international enrolments are almost exclusively for-profit institutions. Medical schools established in non-English speaking countries, such as Poland and Ukraine, offer English-medium medical curricula to attract high-fee-paying international students.
- **Conclusion:** As the recent Budget speech shows, the government is starting to see the problem, but solutions are expensive and meet opposition from inside the medical establishment, which fears a deterioration of their privileges and elite status. Yet, with an aging population, the need for quality medical doctors will only increase. The growing number of students looking for medical education abroad illustrates a potential, but there is an overall lack of quality control. More attention is needed on this key challenge.

Q. Discuss the challenges and implications of Indian students pursuing medical education abroad. Suggest policy measures to enhance domestic medical education capacity and quality. (বিদেশত চিকিৎসা শিক্ষা গ্ৰহণ কৰা ভাৰতীয় শিক্ষার্থীসকলৰ প্ৰত্যাহ্বান আৰু প্ৰভাৱসমূহ আলোচনা কৰক। ঘৰুৱা চিকিৎসা শিক্ষাৰ ক্ষমতা আৰু মানদণ্ড বৃদ্ধিৰ বাবে নীতিগত ব্যৱস্থাৰ পৰামৰ্শ দিয়া।)

2. China's dam project opens the floodgates of concern

Context: China is planning to build a massive hydroelectric dam on the lower section of the upper stream of the Yarlung Zangbo river in Tibet. The river, known as the Brahmaputra in India, is vital for millions of people in northeastern India and Bangladesh. This project is part of China's strategy to shift from coal to renewable energy under its 14th Five-Year Plan (2021–2025). While China's transition to clean energy is positive, the dam raises concerns for India regarding environmental impact, water flow, and bilateral relations.

Key points

- **Overview:** While the project aligns with China's ambitious energy transition goals, it has serious implications for India, which cannot be understated.
- **Legal Dimensions and International Water Laws:** The construction of the dam brings into focus critical legal issues under international water law. The UN Watercourses Convention (1997) emphasises equitable and reasonable utilisation of water resources, the obligation to prevent significant harm, and the duty to cooperate among riparian states. However, neither China nor India is a signatory to this convention, which complicates the resolution of disputes over transboundary rivers.
- **Environmental Risks and Ecological Impact:**
 - Seismic Risks and Structural Vulnerability* - One of the most significant environmental concerns is the high seismic activity of the Tibetan Plateau, where the dam is being built. The Himalayas and the Tibetan Plateau are part of the Indo-Eurasian tectonic plate collision zone, making them one of the most earthquake-prone areas in the world.
 - Disruption of River Ecosystems* - The Brahmaputra River system supports a delicate ecological balance, which is essential for both aquatic and terrestrial species. The construction of a massive dam disrupts the natural flow of the river, leading to major ecological changes.
 - Threats to Biodiversity and Wildlife* - The Yarlung Zangbo and Brahmaputra River basins are home to diverse species, including endangered aquatic animals like the Gangetic River dolphin and various migratory birds. The construction of the dam could lead to habitat destruction and loss of biodiversity.
- **Challenges and the Need for cooperation:** The water dispute between China and India cannot be viewed in isolation from broader geopolitical tensions. Water-related activities in Tibet affect not just India and Bangladesh but also Nepal, Bhutan, and Pakistan, all of which are lower riparian states.
- **Way Forward:** To mitigate risks and build trust, renewed diplomatic engagements and enhanced information-sharing through mechanisms like the Expert Level Mechanism (ELM) are crucial. A more structured regional approach to water governance could also help South Asian nations collectively address their shared concerns. However, achieving this will require overcoming political divisions and creating stronger bilateral and multilateral cooperation.
- **Conclusion:** China's proposed hydroelectric dam on the Yarlung Zangbo presents a complex challenge for India and other lower riparian states. While China maintains that the dam will not significantly impact downstream water flow, India remains concerned about its environmental, legal, and geopolitical implications. The absence of binding international agreements on transboundary rivers further complicates the situation.

3. Presidents' rule clamped in Manipur

Context: President's rule was imposed in Manipur on Thursday, four days after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned from his position. The Assembly has also been put under suspended animation. Prior to imposition of the President's rule in Manipur, several rounds of discussions between BJP's northeast in-charge Sambit Patra and party legislators in Imphal were deadlocked with some lawmakers suggesting that the final decision may rest with the Centre.

Key points

- **Overview:** Recently, large scale violence has erupted again in Manipur.
- **President's Rule:** It is a provision under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution that allows the central government to assume direct control over a state's governance.
- **Need of president rule:** *Protect unity and integrity of the nation* - Parliamentary democracy is vulnerable to diverse and complex society of India.
Address governance breakdown - Union intervention might be needed to ensure that states adhere to constitutional norms and maintain law and order when required.
Strengthen federalism - To prevent federal units of the union resisting the central government and ensure cooperation among the states.
Protect individual's liberty - when a state's machinery fails, depriving citizens of basic liberties, Union intervention becomes essential to safeguard their rights and restore peace.
Uphold constitution - To ensure values and principle of the constitution is respected and obeyed by the states.
Protect states - To protect states against external aggression and internal disturbance.
- **Necessities of president rule in Manipur:** *Breakdown of constitutional machinery* - The government has failed to protect its citizen's basic liberties and maintain law and order.
Deprivation of fundamental rights - 3 million people of Manipur are deprived of fundamental rights and their lives, liberty, dignity, and peace.
Judiciary failure - In spite of Various judicial orders and directives the violence have not been controlled depriving.
Failure of governance - Inability of the state government to control the violence in the state.
Internal disturbance - The violence caused killing of more than 250 people and displacement of over a lakh of people.
- **Manipur Issue:** *Sectarian violence* - Conflict between the dominant Meitei and Kuki communities is majorly due to the imbalance in development across and protecting the ethnic rights of their community on the state.
Meitei demands - They demand for ST status to preserve their ancestral land, tradition, culture, and language.
Kuki's objection - As Meitei account for half of Manipur's population and extending ST status to them would mean they would get a share of education and government jobs reserved for Kukis and Nagas.
- **Way ahead:** Restore governance and protect citizens' rights in the state by curbing the violence. The government should act decisively to bring back peace, harmony, justice, relief and rehabilitation. Engage both parties to peace talks to stop the violence.

4. The Heat of the Moment

Context: Climate change has enhanced the frequency of disasters, and, among them, a silent killer is the heatwave. India is experiencing more frequent, prolonged and severe heatwaves. These extreme temperatures pose significant risk to public health, infrastructure, and livelihoods, especially in vulnerable regions. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), which manages public policy on disasters, has classified heatwaves as a serious hazard and taken it upon itself to enhance public awareness.

Key points

- **Heatwave Crisis in India:** *Climate Change Impact* - Increased frequency, duration, and severity of heatwaves due to climate change. Global temperature rise (1.5°C threshold breached in 18 of 19 months until January 2025) makes heatwaves a silent killer.
Public Perception Gap - Disasters are perceived as risks for 'others', leading to low preparedness. Limited public awareness about heatwave risks despite their growing threat.
- **Impacts of Heatwaves:** *Public Health* - 90% of Indians are vulnerable to heat-related illnesses. Overburdened healthcare systems, especially in rural areas.
Economic Stability - Productivity losses due to outdoor workforce vulnerability. World Bank estimates 34 million job losses by 2030.
Water Resources - 54% of India's land faces high-to-extreme water stress (WRI). Groundwater depletion and rising demand strain water security.
Energy Sector - Surge in power demand for cooling systems strains supply. 70% of power from thermal plants (water-dependent) face efficiency losses during heatwaves.
Agriculture - Crop failures, reduced yields, and higher irrigation demands threaten food security.
- **NDMA's Strategic Initiatives:** *Heat Action Plans (HAPs)* - Decentralized approach: 250+ HAPs developed for states, districts, and cities. Guidelines for preparedness, including early warnings and localized vulnerability assessments.
National Framework for Heatwave Mitigation (2024) - Shift from short-term response to long-term mitigation. Community participation and multi-sectoral collaboration. Institutional capacity-building and financing mechanisms.
Coordination Efforts - Designated officers for heatwave management. Encouraging states to declare heat as a disaster for better resource allocation. Strengthened IMD-NDMA coordination for localized alerts via Common Alerting Protocol (CAP).
- **Implementation Challenges:** *Scaling and Local Ownership* - Limited success in translating HAPs into actionable outcomes. Need for community-driven solutions and dynamic HAP updates.
Inter-Departmental Coordination - Fragmented efforts across urban planning, healthcare, labour, and energy sectors.
Resource Allocation - Financing gaps for sustainable infrastructure (e.g. green cooling solutions).
- **Way Forward:** *Early Warning Systems* - CAP-enabled alerts for timely public communication.
Workforce Protection - Revised working hours and cooling vests for outdoor labourers.
Water Security - Promotion of rooftop rainwater harvesting and efficient irrigation.
- **Conclusion:** India's heatwave crisis demands urgent, multi-sectoral collaboration. NDMA's framework and HAPs provide a roadmap, but success hinges on local ownership of mitigation strategies, innovations and continuous data-driven updates to policies.