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3rd May 2025

Mains Manthan

- Strengthening parliamentary oversight in India (Page No – 6)
- A profound shift in global order (Page No – 6)

Prelims Saarthi

- Mt. Makalu
- India's first transshipment port

Strengthening parliamentary oversight in India

Why in News?

- Tools, mechanism to strengthen parliamentary oversight in India

Syllabus

- GS Paper 2 – Indian Polity & Governance

Strengthening parliamentary oversight in India

A historical fact is that over nearly three years, the Constituent Assembly met for 167 days to frame the Constitution of India. Among the many crucial debates that occurred was the question of what form of government India should adopt. Defending the choice of a parliamentary system, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar argued that it offered more responsibility and less stability which is a necessary trade-off for a functioning democracy. He emphasised the point that such a system allows for the daily accountability of the executive through questions, motions and debates in Parliament, and periodic accountability through elections.

A diminishing of oversight

While the Constitution enshrines checks and balances, legislative oversight has often been diminished. Efficiency in governance is important, but not at the cost of transparency. Strengthening the role of Parliament in scrutinising executive action is essential in not just making laws but also ensuring their effective implementation and accountability. If India seeks 'Maximum Governance', it must also commit to 'Maximum Accountability', starting with an empowered and effective Parliament.

Over decades, Parliament has developed an array of mechanisms to fulfil this mandate – some formal, some by convention. From the daily scrutiny of Question Hour and the spontaneity of Zero Hour, to the behind-the-scenes workings of Standing Committees, these tools form the framework of accountability. In theory, they empower Members of Parliament (MP) to ask probing questions, seek detailed information, and even move a no-confidence motion if necessary.

Despite its strong framework, parliamentary oversight often falls short. Question Hour, intended as a daily spotlight on government accountability, is frequently disrupted by noisy protests, leading to adjournments where important issues remain unaddressed. During the 17th Lok Sabha (2019-24), Question Hour functioned for 60% of its scheduled time in the Lok Sabha and 52% in Rajya Sabha, significantly reducing its effectiveness. Even when it operates, individual MPs tend to focus on isolated queries



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Along with 'maximum governance, there needs to be 'maximum accountability', which must start with an empowered and effective Parliament

rather than a systematic scrutiny of complex, cross-ministerial problems.

Parliamentary committees, including the Department-related Standing Committees (DRSC), meet regularly and generate detailed reports, though these are often not taken up for discussion on the floor. Consequently, despite their detailed evaluations of policies and schemes, committee findings have had limited influence on legislation or executive action. Despite their mandate for detailed scrutiny, committee consultations tend to engage a relatively small group of stakeholders, raising concerns about diversity and the breadth of input. Moreover, their inherently temporary structure limits the ability of members to develop both expertise and institutional standing.

Some successes

Even with its inconsistencies, Indian legislative oversight has had notable successes. The Standing Committee on Railways recommended waiving dividend payments by Indian Railways in 2015 to improve its financial health, which was implemented in 2016. The Standing Committee on Transport influenced the Motor Vehicles Bill amendments in 2017, removing caps on third-party insurance and establishing a National Road Safety Board.

Other significant interventions include the Committee on Public Undertakings addressing delays in National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)-managed highway projects, recommending that projects commence only after acquiring 80% of land and necessary clearances. Similarly, the Estimates Committee advised increasing domestic uranium production by opening new mines, reducing dependency on imports. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) exposed critical delays, opaque appointments, and corrupt practices during the Commonwealth Games in 2010. On average, the PAC has made 180 recommendations every year in the past eight years, out of which 80% were accepted by the government.

To make oversight truly effective, Parliament must adopt targeted reforms, beginning with robust post-legislative scrutiny. Laws do not end with their passage; they begin there. Yet, India lacks a formal process to track whether laws are

achieving their intended impact. This gap can be addressed by creating subcommittees under each Standing Committee or a specialised body to review implementation. The United Kingdom offers a useful model: government departments submit reviews of major laws within three to five years, which are then examined by parliamentary committees – enabling timely course correction and ensuring that laws deliver on their promises.

Strengthening and institutionalising committee work must also be a priority. One way to do this is by making oversight findings more accessible; through translations in local languages, visual explainers, or short videos. At the same time, select DRSC reports should be brought to the floor for debate, followed by a mandatory response from the Minister concerned. This would ensure that committee work informs parliamentary discourse and enhances executive accountability. Committees must also be strengthened with dedicated research and technical support, thus moving beyond mere administrative assistance.

Adopt technology

Technology offers a powerful opportunity to modernise and strengthen parliamentary oversight. MPs in India often operate without specialised staff or professional research support, making it harder to scrutinise complex policies or spending data. Faced with massive volumes of budget documents, audit reports, and policy reviews, they are at a disadvantage. By leveraging Artificial Intelligence and data analytics, Parliament can help members swiftly flag irregularities, track policy trends, and frame sharper, evidence-based questions.

While delivering the inaugural address held to formally inaugurate the new Standing Committees in 1993, the then Vice-President K.R. Narayanan said that the main purpose of the system was not to weaken or criticise the administration but to strengthen it by investing it with more meaningful parliamentary support. Strengthening legislative oversight means honouring the mandate citizens have given their representatives; to make sure the machinery of government stays transparent, accountable, and truly "of the people, by the people, and for the people."



Key Takeaways from the Article

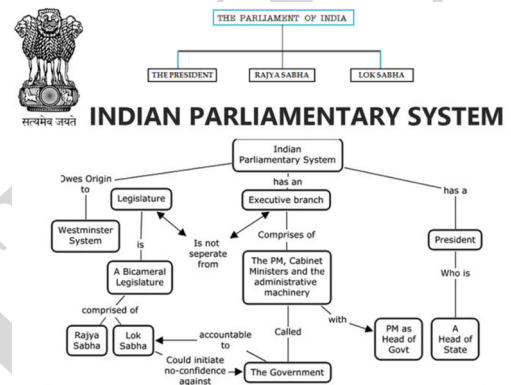
• Historical Context:

- ◆ The Constituent Assembly's debates on India's form of government led to the **adoption of a parliamentary system**.
- ◆ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar emphasized that a parliamentary system ensures **responsibility through daily accountability and periodic elections**.



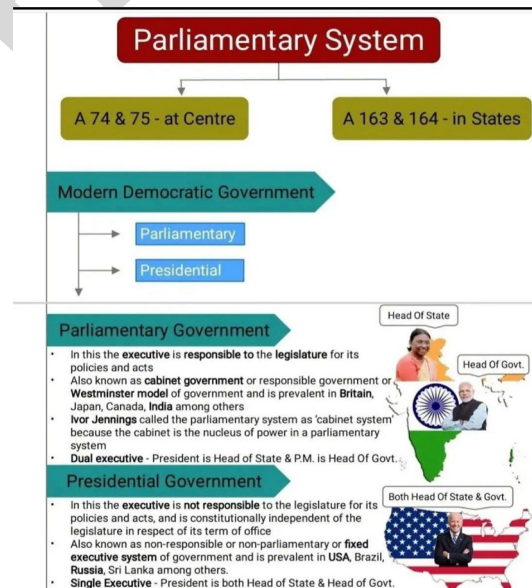
• Parliamentary Oversight:

- ◆ Despite having a robust system with mechanisms like **Question Hour, Zero Hour, and Standing Committees**, parliamentary oversight is often hindered by:
- ◆ **disruptions,**
- ◆ **underutilisation of tools, and**
- ◆ **ineffective committee work.**



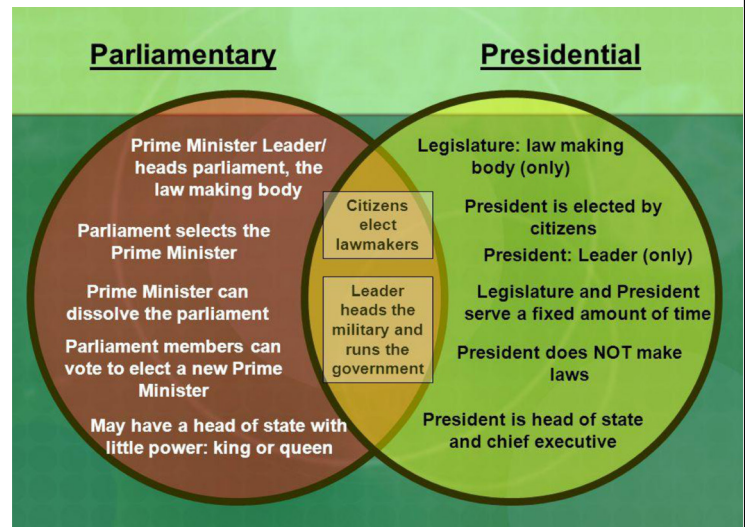
• Successes of Oversight

- ◆ Some parliamentary committees have had notable successes, like the **Standing Committee on Railways** waiving Indian Railways' dividend payments and the **Public Accounts Committee or Joint Parliamentary Committee** exposing corruption during the Commonwealth Games in 2010.
- ◆ Committees such as the **Committee on Public Undertakings** and the **Estimates Committee** have influenced major policy changes in infrastructure and energy production.



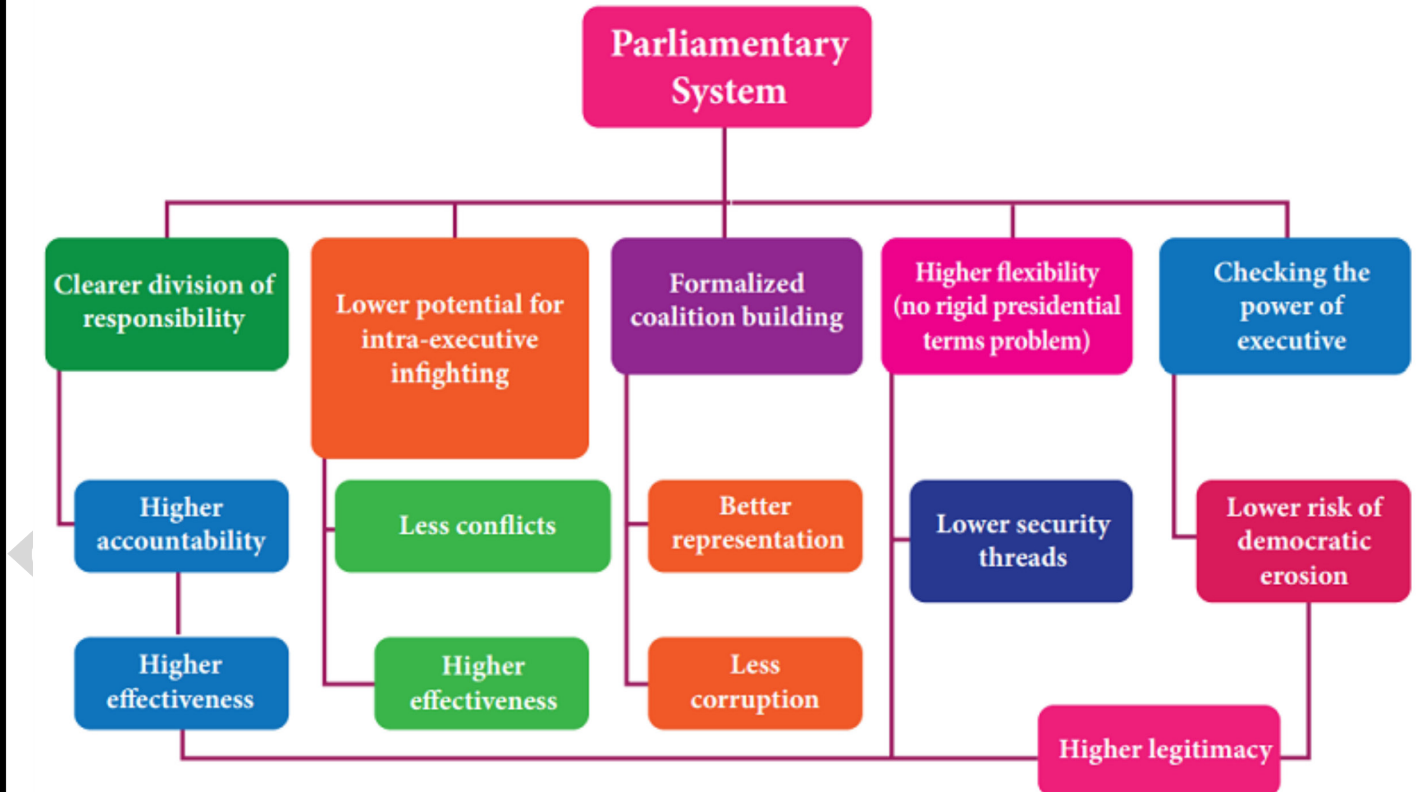
- **Challenges in Parliamentary Oversight:**

- ◆ The current parliamentary structure is plagued by **limited stakeholder engagement, lack of institutional expertise, and temporary committee structures.**
- ◆ Committees often focus on **isolated issues** rather than cross-cutting, systemic problems.
- ◆ India **lacks a formal process** to track whether laws are achieving their intended impact.



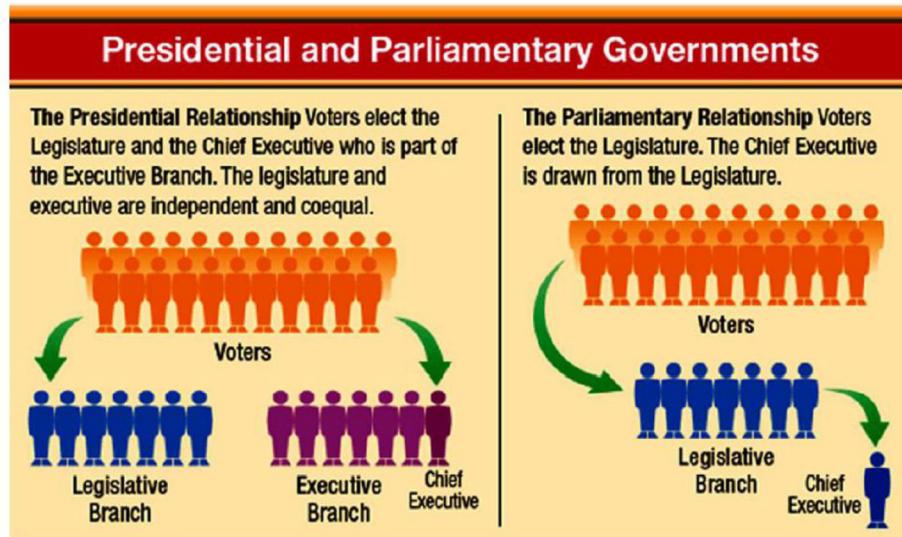
- **Proposed Reforms:**

- ◆ **Post-Legislative Scrutiny:** Establish a formal process to track the effectiveness of laws and ensure timely course corrections. **UK model?**
- ◆ **Strengthening Committees:** Ensure that committee reports are debated on the floor of Parliament, followed by mandatory responses from relevant ministers.



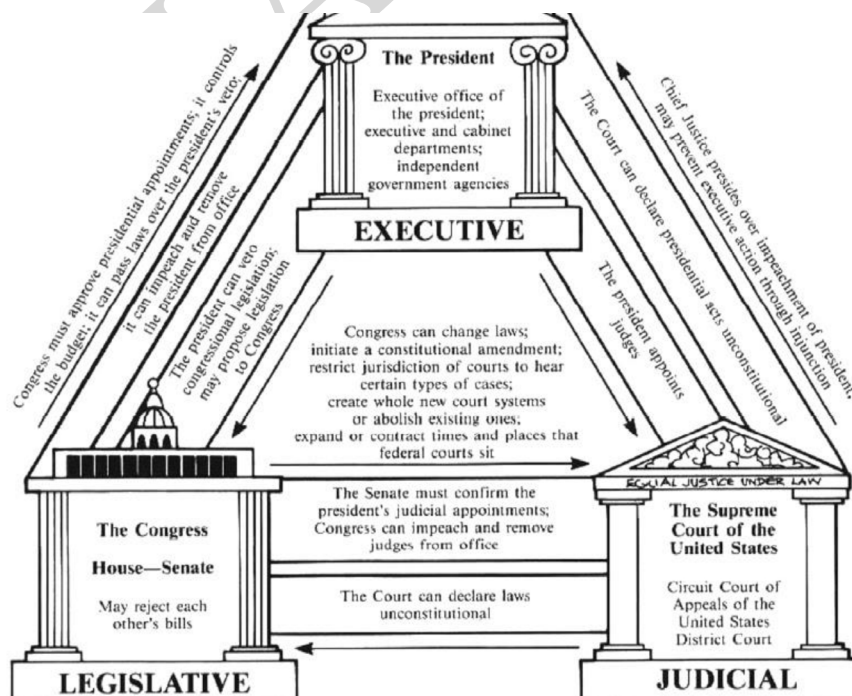
● **Proposed Reforms:**

- ◆ **Technology Integration:** Leverage **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and **data analytics** to help MPs identify policy irregularities, track trends, and ask evidence-based questions.
- ◆ This would modernize parliamentary processes and improve oversight.



● **Need for Parliamentary Empowerment:**

- ◆ The editorial stresses that for India to achieve “Maximum Governance,” it must also commit to “**Maximum Accountability**” by empowering Parliament with the tools and institutional support to effectively perform its oversight role.
- ◆ Technology can play a pivotal role in **enhancing efficiency and transparency**, enabling MPs to scrutinize complex policies and spending data effectively.





Prelims Practice Question

Q. Consider the following statements regarding Parliamentary Committees in India:

1. The recommendations of parliamentary committees are binding on the government.
 2. Departmentally Related Standing Committees scrutinise demands for grants of ministries.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Prelims Practice Question

Q. Which one of the following committees is not a Parliamentary Committee?

- (a) Estimates Committee (b) Public Accounts Committee
(c) Delimitation Commission (d) Committee on Petitions

Prelims Practice Question

Tool	Purpose
1. Question Hour	Ministers answer pre-notified questions
2. Zero Hour	Members raise urgent matters without notice
3. Motion of Thanks	Scrutinizes demands for grants

Choose the correct code:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All three

A profound shift in global order

Why in News?

- ♦ India's role in geopolitical dynamics

Syllabus

- ♦ GS Paper 2 – International Relations
- ♦ GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy

A profound shift in the global order

India is at another inflection point, reminiscent of Vasco De Gama sailing into Kozhikode in 1498 and of a complacent Zamorin lacking strategic intention. Instead of trade routes, global value chains are being reshaped by force. The stakes are high for India which is in line to be the third largest economy.

The 75-year-old post-colonial order, labelled as globalisation, characterised multilateralism imposing rule-based restrictions on all for the common good. Its conceptual foundation of a world divided between 'donors' and 'recipients' became obsolete with China overtaking the United States as the largest donor, and in the share of manufacturing and global trade. The World Trade Organization and the United Nations and Treaties lost their utility to the proponents, leading to U.S. withdrawals. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the G7 scrambling to corner medicines, oblivious of the plight of others. Now, the G7 is splitting leaving a vacuum and global institutions such as BRICS will soon have more requests for membership.

U.S. President Donald Trump is not whimsical. He is responding to a more equal world moving out of the colonial frame that is attempting to hold on to fading benefits. Bilateral deals are forcing countries to subordinate their interests and the way tariffs have been described and defined arbitrarily based on trade imbalance intrudes into how national laws should be changed. Least Developed Countries no longer have privileges. The U.S. is restructuring its approach to prosperity and power and so should the others.

A post-WTO frame
The backdrop of the G7 and G20 now leaves global agenda-setting open. Since 2020, the U.S., China, the European Union and India have together contributed nearly three-quarters of all growth, with the U.S. and China accounting for almost half. There is also a decline in the relative power of the U.S. Russia has become an Asian power, increasing energy links with China and India.

Asia will soon again have two-thirds of global wealth and power (as had been the case throughout civilisation except for the age of colonialism). Geopolitics has returned to its



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natural state of co-existence sharing prosperity. India has to be strategic to grasp new opportunities with the 'dismantling' of the WTO just as China used its entry into the WTO for its rise. The U.S. and China are pretty much evenly balanced in terms of influence, trade, technology, defense military capacity and playing it for fat on tariff levels. The challenge is to manage trade relations with the U.S. pushing its agricultural and energy surplus and to build on the rapprochement with China.

The future direction has been set in the recent statement of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that this is the Asian Century. The turmoil within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an opportunity to jointly work towards an Asian common market, with bilateral concessions to share prosperity. As the WTO's 'most favoured nation' clause of non-discrimination withers away, it is in India's longer term interest to propose a new cooperative architecture to ASEAN and the African Union, as their potential consumption will exceed current consumption in the U.S. and Europe.

India's world class diplomats should be given the task of coming up with a new type of principles of global governance for a more equal world. Gaining from global value chains that are dependent more on technology than on tariffs requires laying out a new type of rules that reduce non-tariff barriers and treat linkages between goods, services, investment and infrastructure as part of composite agreements, with a review of national impacts annually.

Trade and innovation neglected
Emerging from colonialism, India framed foreign policy in terms of a balancing between the great powers, relying on tactics that on strategy. The first challenge to the post-colonial world was the Bandung Conference of newly independent Asian and African countries in 1955. Jawaharlal Nehru moved to the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, shying from economic development to peace in a divided world, becoming a darling of the West while India remained poor. The best diplomats are still sent to negotiate resolutions in the United Nations, ignoring rights and opportunities through trade. India also ignored what other leading powers were doing – technological innovation in partnership with academia and

industry, which is the other side of the coin of trade.

Now is the time for hard decisions to be taken to develop a national consensus between political parties and States on how to nurture talent and focus on skills and employment in order to regain our technological edge, wealth and global status. The West developed on the foundation of colonialism unlike the East. New policy groups need to engage and seek complementarity with China, ASEAN and Africa as value chains get restructured. There will no longer be global goods and treaties to which others can subscribe; the smaller countries that have been hit hardest by the new order are looking for an alternative to choosing sides.

India has the endogenous capacity to aim for global technological leadership by developing open source software that will shape future multilateralism and international cooperation. Huawei, which was sanctioned by the U.S. for spreading telecommunications networks worldwide, is manufacturing 7-nanometer (7nm) chips just behind global technology leaders. The Deepseek open source AI model is cheaper than and as good as the best in the U.S. Fifteen years ago, a World Bank study noted that China has reaped the best global scale in the hardware industry but not in software. India had achieved the reverse, then faltered.

Lesson from China
The most important lesson in China's re-emergence is national consensus on endogenous pathways to achieve prosperity, and not looking at socio-economic growth through the modelling prism of the West. Patents are a better indicator of future prosperity than GDP. Reducing the price of assured electricity is the most effective incentive for a restructuring of the economy, and prosperity is the optimum adaptation to adverse effects of climate change.

India needs to formulate grand challenges with academia and industry to leverage its world-class human talent, vast data and proven digital stack to build the best large language models in the world, which would make India a formidable cyber power. In the digital world, the foundation of wealth and influence is AI, which is reminiscent of India clothing the world for millennia relying on skill and not monopoly.



Key Takeaways from the Article

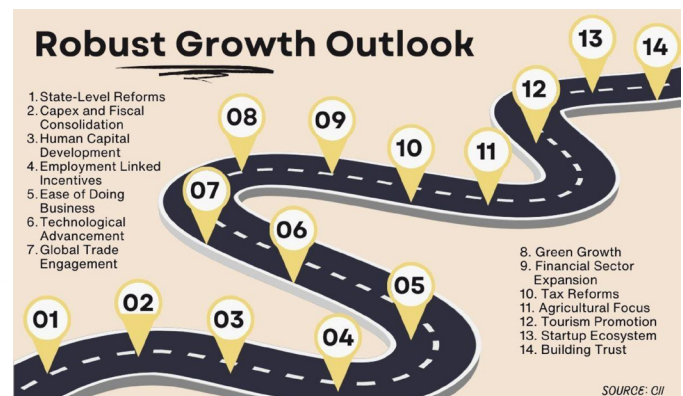
● India's Strategic Position:

- ◆ India stands at a significant crossroads, reminiscent of **historical moments, with opportunities and challenges in reshaping its role** in global trade and power structures.
- ◆ The **U.S., China, the EU, and India** have contributed significantly to global growth, with Asia, particularly China and India, regaining dominance in wealth and power.



● Shift from Globalization to Bilateralism:

- ◆ The editorial discusses how the traditional rulebased global order, symbolized by **multilateralism and organizations like the WTO**, is being disrupted by bilateral deals and a shift in the global balance of power.
- ◆ The collapse of the **G-7 and G-20** and the rise of new coalitions (**BRICS**) signal the decline of the U.S.-centric global order.





- **Technological and Economic Independence:**

- ◆ India must focus on developing **technological leadership, particularly in AI and software**, rather than merely relying on manufacturing.
- ◆ Drawing lessons from China, India should aim for **national consensus on achieving prosperity and technological advancement** without following the West's economic model.

- **Proposed Global Governance Structure:**

- ◆ India is urged to propose a new **cooperative framework with ASEAN and the African Union** to tap into emerging markets as global consumption shifts away from the U.S. and Europe.
- ◆ India's **world-class diplomats** are called upon to help craft a new set of principles for **global governance** that reflects a more equitable world.

- **Challenges and Opportunities in Technological Innovation:**

- ◆ India should leverage its **vast human talent, data, and digital infrastructure to build the best AI and large language models**, thus enhancing its cyber power and influence on the global stage.
- ◆ India should focus on **renewable energy and creating a competitive digital economy** to boost its technological capabilities.

- **Role of Patents in Prosperity:**

- ◆ The editorial highlights the importance of patents as an **indicator of future prosperity and suggests that India needs to prioritise technology and innovation** to lead in global markets.



RETAILNOMICS OF THIS DECADE

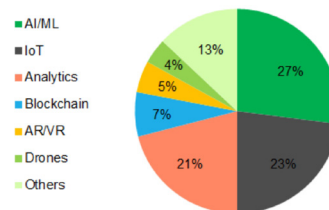
	Offline retail market	Online retail market
2023	\$1.1tn	\$65bn
2030	\$2tn	\$150bn-\$200bn

> India retail is poised to be a \$2.2tn market by 2030
 > 90% of the market will be delivered offline
 > But a significant portion of purchases are expected to be influenced online

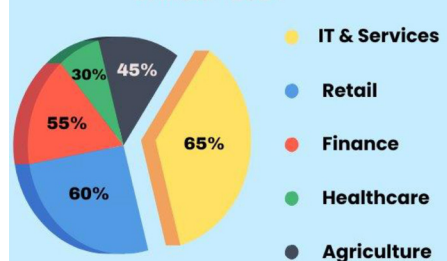
Indians conducted approximately 24bn online searches in different categories annually to learn more about a product before purchase

Sources: Redseer analysis, Accel, Fireside

Percentage share of Indian start-ups according to technology used by them



AI Adoption Rates Across Industries in India - 2024



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Prelims Practice Question

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. BRICS membership expanded in 2024 to include countries like Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia.
2. BRICS functions as a military alliance among emerging powers.

Which of the above is/are correct?

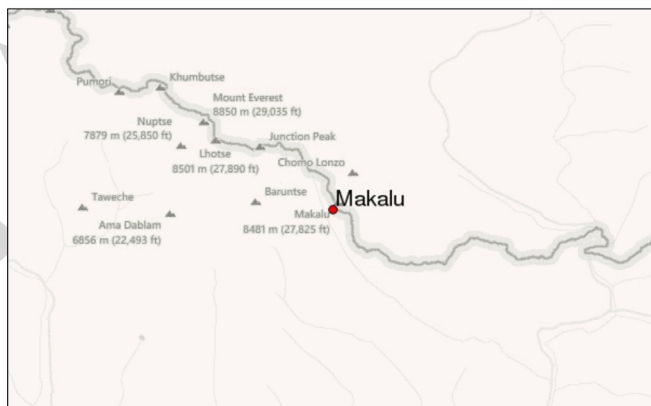
- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q. What is the significance of the International Solar Alliance (ISA)?

- (a) It is a climate-financing platform under the IMF.
- (b) It aims to promote nuclear energy in developing countries.
- (c) It promotes solar energy deployment in tropical countries.
- (d) It is a trade bloc of countries with abundant oil reserves.

Mt. Makalu (5th highest peak)

- ♦ Mt. Makalu is the **fourth tallest in Nepal and fifth highest peak** on the Earth with its height 8,463m.
- ♦ Mt. Makalu resides in the eastern Himalayas range just 19km southeast of the giant **Mt. Everest** **in the border of Nepal and China.**
- ♦ At the base of Mt. Makalu, there lies a **Barun Valley.**



ITBP team scales Mt. Makalu, fifth highest peak in the world

The Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has successfully scaled Mt. Makalu – the world's fifth highest peak, at an altitude of 8,485 metres above sea level – the China-border guarding force said on Friday. The ascent to the Himalayan peak in Nepal was made on April 19, it said. The International Mountaineering Expedition to Mt. Makalu and Mt. Annapurna (8,091 m) was flagged off from Delhi on March 21. "It was a historic twin summit attempt – the first of its kind in ITBP history. Both peaks were being attempted for the first time by the force, adding to the challenge and legacy of this mission. Both peaks are in Nepal," the ITBP said. Led by Deputy Commandant Anoop Kumar Negi and Nihas Suresh as deputy leader, the 12-member team was divided into two groups of six climbers each.



India's first dedicated container transshipment port

♦ Vizhinjam International Deepwater Multipurpose Seaport in Kerala.

Port economy will drive India's growth, says PM

Modi commissions the ₹8,800-crore Vizhinjam International Deepwater Multipurpose Seaport, India's first dedicated container transshipment port, in Kerala; project developed by Adani Group

Dhinesh Kallungal
 THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Coastal States and port cities will become key growth centres for a developed India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday, speaking after commissioning the ₹8,800-crore Vizhinjam International Deepwater Multipurpose Seaport in Kerala's capital. The Centre is committed to strengthening this channel of economic power to take the maritime sector to new heights, he said.

The port economy reaches its full potential when infrastructure and the ease of doing business are promoted together, Mr. Modi said, noting that this has been the blueprint of the Centre's port and waterways policy over the last



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, and Gautam Adani after the inauguration on Friday. PTI

decade. Underscoring the critical role of the private sector, he said that thousands of crores have been invested through public-private partnerships (PPP) over the past 10 years, to upgrade India's ports to global standards and make them future-ready.

With a natural deep

draft of nearly 20 metres and located near one of the world's busiest sea trade routes, the new Vizhinjam port is expected to strengthen India's position in global trade, enhancing logistics efficiency, and reducing reliance on foreign ports for cargo transshipment. The Vizhinjam

PM launches new projects, backs Amaravati plans

AMARAVATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated about ₹58,000 crore worth of works in Andhra Pradesh on Friday. He virtually re-started the unfinished works at Amaravati, and said the Centre would extend full support to the State to realise its vision. » **Page 4**

facility is the country's first dedicated container transshipment port, and was developed by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd, through a public-private partnership with the Kerala government.

CONTINUED ON
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