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

### 1. Beyond 'Beijing', unlocking a feminist future in India

**Context:** The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is one of the most comprehensive global blueprints for advancing women's rights. India's progress on gender equality stands as a testament to sustained policy efforts, grassroots movements, and the resilience of women and girls. The Beijing meeting, in 1995, brought together world leaders and 17,000 delegates from 189 countries to agree on a road map to accelerate women's equality through 12 critical "areas of concern". More than 200 Indian women were in attendance along with the Government of India.

#### Key points

- **Changes over the year:** *Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana* - The expansion of maternal health care under initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan and the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana has increased institutional deliveries to 95%.  
*Maternal Mortality Reduction* - Maternal mortality has dropped from 130 to 97 deaths per 1,00,000 births between 2014 and 2020 (Sample Registration System data).
- **Education and Gender Equality:** *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Initiative* - The 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' (BBBP) initiative has played a pivotal role in improving the child sex ratio and increasing school enrolments for girls.  
*National Education Policy 2020* - The National Education Policy 2020 has paved the way for higher retention rates and opportunities in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).
- **Women's Economic Empowerment:** *Central Role in Gender-Equality Agenda* - Women's economic empowerment has been central to India's gender-equality agenda.  
*Bridging the Digital Gender Divide* - Bridging the digital gender divide has helped women participate in the digital economy.
- **Issues that need concern:** *Persistent Challenge* - Gender-based violence remains a challenge despite the Beijing Declaration's call for ending violence against women.  
*One Stop Centres* - The establishment of 770 One Stop Centres has provided essential medical, legal, and psychological support to survivors of violence.  
*Gender-Responsive Policing* - Partnerships such as the one between the United Nations Population Fund and the Rajasthan Police Academy have enhanced gender-responsive policing, building survivor trust, and expanding access to justice.
- **Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI) Project:** The GATI project promotes women in STEM.
- **G20 TechEquity Platform:** The G20 TechEquity platform has trained thousands of young women in emerging technologies, showcasing their potential.
- **Role in India's Transformation:** *Key Role in Development* - Women have played a pivotal role in India's transformation, driving change in various fields.  
*Women's Reservation Bill* - The Women's Reservation Bill guarantees 33% legislative representation, building on local governance successes.
- **Conclusion:** With an unwavering commitment to women-led development, financial inclusion, and social transformation, India is setting a global benchmark for inclusive and sustainable growth — one that is needed in the world today, now more than ever.

**2. Widen the Frame**

**Context:** The delimitation debate has begun to make news and like most political controversies, it skirts the foundational issues. The debate revolves around the allocation of Lok Sabha seats to states based on population, which risks reducing southern states' representation due to their lower population growth compared to northern states. Southern states fear losing political power in Parliament if population becomes the sole criterion for delimitation. The Centre's push for Hindi and perceived the North Indian normative dominance exacerbates regional anxieties.

**Key points**

- **Flawed Approaches:** *Freezing Representation* - Tamil Nadu CM's proposal to freeze current Lok Sabha seat allocations avoids addressing the root issue i.e. unequal population-to-representative ratios (e.g. 1 MP per ~20 lakh people). Risks perpetuating systemic distortions in representation.  
*Population Criterion* - Mechanically linking seats to population ignores socio-economic progress (e.g. southern states' higher HDI and lower fertility rates).
- **Political Polarization:** *North vs. South Narrative* - Politicians framing the debate as a North-South conflict could harden positions, making compromise difficult. Risks alienating national parties (BJP, Congress), whose state units may adopt contradictory stances.  
*BJP's Ambiguity* - While BJP historically prioritizes northern cultural norms, its expansionist goals in the South limit overt opposition to southern demands (e.g. Home Minister's assurance of no seat loss).
- **Challenges for National Parties:** BJP and Congress risk internal fractures if state units take conflicting positions (e.g. BJP's southern vs. northern interests). They need to balance electoral pragmatism with ideological coherence.
- **Constitutional Flexibility:** *Rajya Sabha Reform* - Strengthening state representation in the Upper House could complement Lok Sabha reforms but requires broader consensus.  
*Amending Delimitation Norms* - Legally feasible but demands political will to redefine "democratic representation" beyond population.
- **Broader Implications:** *Avoiding Short-Term Fixes* - Freezing seats or delaying delimitation merely postpones resolving structural inequities.  
*Enriching Indian Democracy* - A federal-democratic model would recognize states as units of diversity, not just population blocs and mitigate regional grievances (e.g. Dravidian identity vs. Hindi hegemony).  
*Strategic Leadership* - Southern leaders (e.g. Tamil Nadu CM) could champion institutional reforms to embed federalism in governance.
- **Way ahead:** *Expanding Lok Sabha Size* - Add seats to populous states without reducing existing allocations to smaller states. Balances democratic principles (population-based representation) with federal equity.  
*Reimagining Democracy and Federalism* - The Constitution's delimitation mandate should incorporate federal principles, not just population metrics. Integrate statehood and diversity into representation norms to protect pluralism.

**3. Pashu aushadhi initiative for health of livestock**

**Context:** The government will launch "Pashu Aushadhi" stores nationwide to provide affordable generic veterinary medicines. This initiative is part of the revised Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme (LHDCP), approved by the Union Cabinet headed by PM Modi. The Pashu Aushadhi stores will be managed by cooperative societies and Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samridhi Kendras (PMKSK). The Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying will soon release operational guidelines for these stores.

**Key points**

- **Overview:** The Pashu Aushadhi initiative is modeled after the Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs), which offer affordable generic medicines to reduce healthcare costs for citizens.
- **Existing Janaushadhi Kendras:** Currently, over 10,300 PMBJKs operate across India under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers. The country will observe Janaushadhi Diwas on March 7.
- **Generic Medicines for Animals:** While PMBJKs provide generic medicines for humans, Pashu Aushadhi Kendras will offer non-branded, cost-effective veterinary medicines for animal healthcare.
- **Pashu Aushadhi & Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme:** The Union Cabinet, has approved the revision of the Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme (LHDCP) to enhance animal healthcare and disease prevention.
- **Components of LHDCP:** *National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP)* – Focuses on controlling major livestock diseases.  
*Pashu Aushadhi (New Component)* – Aims to improve access to affordable generic veterinary medicines through PM-Kisan Samridhi Kendras and Cooperative Societies.
- **Financial Allocation for LHDCP:** The LHDCP has a total outlay of ₹3,880 crore for 2024-25 and 2025-26.
- **Objectives and Benefits of LHDCP:** *Disease Prevention* – Controls Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Brucellosis, PPR, Classical Swine Fever, Lumpy Skin Disease, etc., through vaccination and immunization.  
*Livestock Healthcare* – Enhances disease surveillance and strengthens veterinary infrastructure.  
*Economic and Social Impact* – Boosts livestock productivity, prevents economic losses for farmers, generates rural employment, and promotes entrepreneurship in the veterinary sector.
- **Significance of Pashu Aushadhi:** As per the 20th Livestock Census (2019), India's livestock population stands at 535.78 million, including 302.79 million bovines (cattle, buffalo, mithun, and yak).
- **Impact of Livestock Diseases:** Various diseases like Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Brucellosis, Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), Cerebrospinal Fluid (CSF), and Lumpy Skin Disease significantly reduce livestock productivity.
- **Role of LHDCP in Disease Prevention:** The Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme (LHDCP) aims to reduce economic losses by preventing livestock diseases through immunization and improving access to affordable veterinary medicines.

**4. Is Artificial Intelligence affecting critical thinking skills?**

**Context:** Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are increasingly being used in classrooms around the world. Last month, British universities were warned to “stress-test” all assessments after new research revealed that “almost all” undergraduates are using generative AI (GenAI) in their studies. Last year, a study by TeamLease EdTech revealed that over 61% of educators in India are using AI tools. All this has given rise to fears that students will likely begin accepting information at face value rather than critically analysing it.

**Key points**

- **AI in College Classrooms:** AI tools are widely used in education globally, including by students and teachers. Despite concerns, AI cannot be completely banned as it is present in daily life and learning environments. The extent of AI usage should depend on the course type. For technical and coding courses, AI can assist students in evaluating and validating codes.
- **Need for Responsible AI Usage:** AI should be used ethically and responsibly in classrooms. Since government regulations are not yet in place, institutions should set their own AI policies. Policies should be clearly communicated to students at the beginning of the course. Teaching AI usage should focus on maintaining ethical standards and preventing misuse.
- **AI as a Critical Educational Infrastructure:** AI is expected to become a core part of educational institutions, businesses, and organizations. The Future of Jobs Report 2025 highlights analytical thinking, AI-related skills, and adaptability as top future skills. Programming skills are now considered less critical than AI evaluation and analytical abilities. AI integration requires proper security measures to protect personal and institutional data.
- **Concerns About AI Integration:** Some governments are promoting AI in schools without proper audits of AI tools. AI tools may have built-in biases and issues with training data. There should be clear disclosure requirements and safety assessments before AI adoption in education.
- **Regulated AI Adoption Over Prohibition:** AI's growing role makes regulation necessary instead of outright banning. Some countries hesitate to regulate AI to avoid slowing its development. Discussions on AI regulation should evolve alongside technological advancements. The European Union has taken significant steps toward AI regulation, while India is still developing policies.
- **Impact of AI on Critical Thinking:** There is concern that AI dependence may reduce students' ability to think critically. While AI can assist in learning, educational institutions should balance practical skills with critical thinking development. Over-dependence on AI-generated responses can be an issue for students and educators. Responsible AI usage should be taught, emphasizing both its benefits and limitations.

Q. Discuss the implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration in education. How can AI be regulated to balance technological advancement with critical thinking development? (শিক্ষাত কৃত্ৰিম বুদ্ধিমত্তাৰ (এআই) একত্ৰীকৰণৰ প্ৰভাৱসমূহ আলোচনা কৰক। সমালোচনামূলক চিন্তাধাৰাৰ বিকাশৰ সৈতে প্ৰযুক্তিগত অগ্ৰগতিৰ ভাৰসাম্য বজাই ৰাখিবলৈ এআইক কেনেদৰে নিয়ন্ত্ৰণ কৰিব পাৰি?)



**5. Harnessing gut microbiome to halt vitiligo**

**Context:** The current decade will probably be known as the decade of the gut, given the incredible number of significant biological connections we are making between the gut and human well-being. Vitiligo is a chronic auto immune disorder where the body's defence system begins to attack the pigment-producing cells and causes de-pigmented white patches on the skin. New research from Northwestern University from a pre-clinical trial in mice has shown that a natural compound derived from gut-friendly bacteria significantly slows down the progression of vitiligo and may restore pigmentation.

**Key points**

- **Overview:** The prevalence of vitiligo in India has been invariably reported between 0.25% and 4% of dermatology outpatients across studies from India, and up to 8.8% in Gujarat and Rajasthan, as per a paper in the Indian Dermatology Online Journal
- **Human Microbiome Project (HMP):** Aimed to generate the baseline microbiome data of Indians. It will enable tracing trillions of microbes found in Indians, particularly on their skin.  
Initiated by - This is a Union government-funded, ₹150 crore project which was initiated in 2019 by the Department of Biotechnology.
- **Human Microbiomes:** The human microbiome is a community of trillions of microorganisms (bacteria, fungi archaea, protists and viruses) that live in our body, especially in the digestive tract.
- **Importance of Human Microbiomes:** These microorganisms are dynamic and play a pivotal role in regulating human health and diseases including the way humans digest food, absorb nutrients, develop immunity, etc. Microbiotas stimulate the immune system, break down potentially toxic food compounds, and synthesize certain vitamins and amino acids, including the B vitamins and vitamin K.
  - *For example* - Autoimmune diseases such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, and fibromyalgia are associated with dysfunction in the microbiome.
- **Gut Microbes & Diseases:**
  - Cardiometabolic Traits* - Researchers identified a link between genetic variants in the ABO blood group and microbial genes involved in metabolizing N-acetylgalactosamine (an amino-sugar).
  - Colorectal Cancer* - Recently, researchers found that the development of colorectal cancer could be mediated by administering a molecule called trans-3-indoleacrylic acid (IDA) or implanting the microbe *Peptostreptococcus anaerobius*.
  - Neuronal Signalling* - Gut microbes produce vitamin B12, which could influence neuronal signalling by influencing the availability of free choline.
  - Jaundice* - The human microbiome could be involved in the metabolism of urobilinogen. A bacterial enzyme, bilirubin reductase (BirR), is responsible for reducing bilirubin to urobilinogen.