



VAJIRAM & RAVI

Institute for IAS Examination

Current Affairs

Toolkit

for

Mains Answer Writing

Mains Batch Start
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UPSC MAINS SYLLABUS

- ❖ **PAPER-1: ESSAY**
- ❖ **PAPER-2: GENERAL STUDIES-1:** *Indian Heritage and Culture, History and Geography of the World and Society*
- ❖ **PAPER-3: GENERAL STUDIES-2:** *Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice, and international relations*
- ❖ **PAPER-4: GENERAL STUDIES-3:** *Technology, Economic Development, Biodiversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management*
- ❖ **PAPER-5: GENERAL STUDIES-4:** *Ethics, Integrity, and Aptitude*
- ❖ **PAPER-6: OPTIONAL PAPER-1**
- ❖ **PAPER-7: OPTIONAL PAPER-2**

GENERAL STUDIES-1:

Indian Heritage and Culture, History and Geography of the World and Society

- **Culture:**
 - Major aspects of the various Indian art forms, Architecture & literature of India, from ancient to modern India
- **Indian History**
 - Significant issues, events & personalities from the mid 18th century to the present
 - The Freedom Struggle — its various stages and important contributors/contributions from different parts of the country.
 - Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country
- **World History**
 - World events from the 18th century onwards and their effects on society & the world at large. (Industrial Revolution, World Wars, delineation of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization, effects of political philosophies like communism, capitalism, etc.)
- **Society**
 - Society of India, its diversity and important aspects
 - Role of women and women's organization
 - Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism
 - Population and issues related to it
 - Poverty, and development-related issues, urbanization, problems due to it and solutions, etc.
 - Globalization and its effects on Indian society
- **Geography**
 - Salient features of world's physical geography
 - Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian sub-continent)
 - Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India)
 - Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc., geographical features and their location-changes in critical geographical features (including water-bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes

GENERAL STUDIES-2:

Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations

■ **Polity and Indian Constitution**

- Historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure
- Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.
- Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.
- Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries.
- Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.
- Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.
- Salient features of the Representation of People’s Act.
- Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.
- Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.
- The development sector and its processes – the role of SHGs, NGOs, and other associations and groups, institutions, and other stakeholders.

■ **Social Justice**

- Welfare schemes issued by the Centre and states for vulnerable sections, the performance of these schemes; laws, mechanisms, bodies and institutions set up for the protection, and development of the vulnerable sections.
- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources
- Issues relating to poverty and hunger

■ **Governance**

- Governmental policies & interventions aimed at developing various sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation
- Key aspects of governance, e-governance- applications, successes, potential, accountability and transparency, models, limitations; citizen charters, and other measures.
- The role of Civil Services in a democracy.

■ **International Relations**

- India and its neighbourhood- relations.
- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.
- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests, Indian diaspora.
- Important International institutions, agencies and fora - their structure, mandate.

GENERAL STUDIES-3:

Technology, Economic Development, Bio diversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management

▪ **Economy**

- The economy of Indian and planning-related issues.
- Government budgeting
- Inclusive growth and issues/challenges associated with it.
- Liberalization and its effects on the economy (post-1991).
- Infrastructure – Ports, Airports, Roads, Energy, Railways, etc.
- Investment models like PPP, etc.

▪ **Agriculture**

- Predominant cropping patterns in various parts of the nation, various types of irrigation techniques and systems, storage, marketing, transportation of agricultural produce, and challenges/issues related to it
- Use of e-technology in the agricultural sector
- Rearing of animals and the economics related to it
- Industries related to food processing and its kind in India – significance and scope, upstream-downstream requirements, location, supply chain management.
- Problems related to indirect and direct farm subsidies and minimum support prices
- Objectives of Public Distribution System, functioning and its limitations, revamping; food security and buffer stock issues; technological missions
- Land reforms in India

▪ **Science & Technology**

- Recent technological developments and their effects
- Indians and their achievements in science & technology
- Indigenous technological innovation and the development of new tech
- General Awareness of Space, IT, Robotics, Computers, biotechnology, and nanotechnology
- Problems related to intellectual property rights

▪ **Environment**

- Conservation
- Pollution of the environment and its degradation
- EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment)

▪ **Disaster Management (Act, laws, etc.)**

▪ **Security**

- Challenges to internal security (non-state actors and external state)
- How extremism develops and spreads.
- Internal security challenges pertaining to the communication networks.
- Fundamentals of cyber security; money laundering and how to prevent it.
- Challenges to security and managing security in border areas; the connection between organized crime and terrorism.
- The names of the various security agencies and forces and their mandates

GENERAL STUDIES-4:

Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude

- **Human Interface & Ethics**
 - The essence of ethics, the determinants & consequences in human interaction.
 - Dimensions of Ethics
 - Ethics in public and private relationships
 - Human values: lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators
 - The role of one's family, society, and educational institutes in developing ethical and moral values in him/her
- **Attitude**
 - The content of attitude
 - The influence of attitude in behaviour and thought
 - The relation of attitude to behaviour and thought
 - Political and Moral attitudes
 - Social influence and persuasion
- **Aptitude**
 - The foundational values and aptitude of civil services
 - Integrity
 - Non-partisanship and impartiality
 - Objectivity
 - Dedication to serving the public
 - Compassion towards society's weaker sections
- **Emotional Intelligence**
 - The concept of emotional intelligence
 - The application and utility of emotional intelligence in administration and governance.
- **Contributions of Philosophers and Thinkers**
 - From the world and India
- **Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration:**
 - Status and problems
 - Ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions
 - Laws, rules, regulations and conscience as sources of ethical guidance
 - Accountability and ethical governance
 - Strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance
 - Ethical issues in international relations and funding
 - Corporate governance
- **Probity in Governance**
 - Concept of public service
 - Governance & probity and its philosophical basis
 - Transparency & information sharing in government
 - Right to Information
 - Codes of ethics
 - Codes of conduct
 - Citizen's charters
 - Work culture
 - Quality of service delivery
 - Utilization of public funds
 - Challenges of corruption

GENERAL STUDIES - I

Subject	Average
Indian History	4
Art and Culture	2
Post-Independence	1
World History	1
Geography	7 (2)
Indian Society	5 (3)

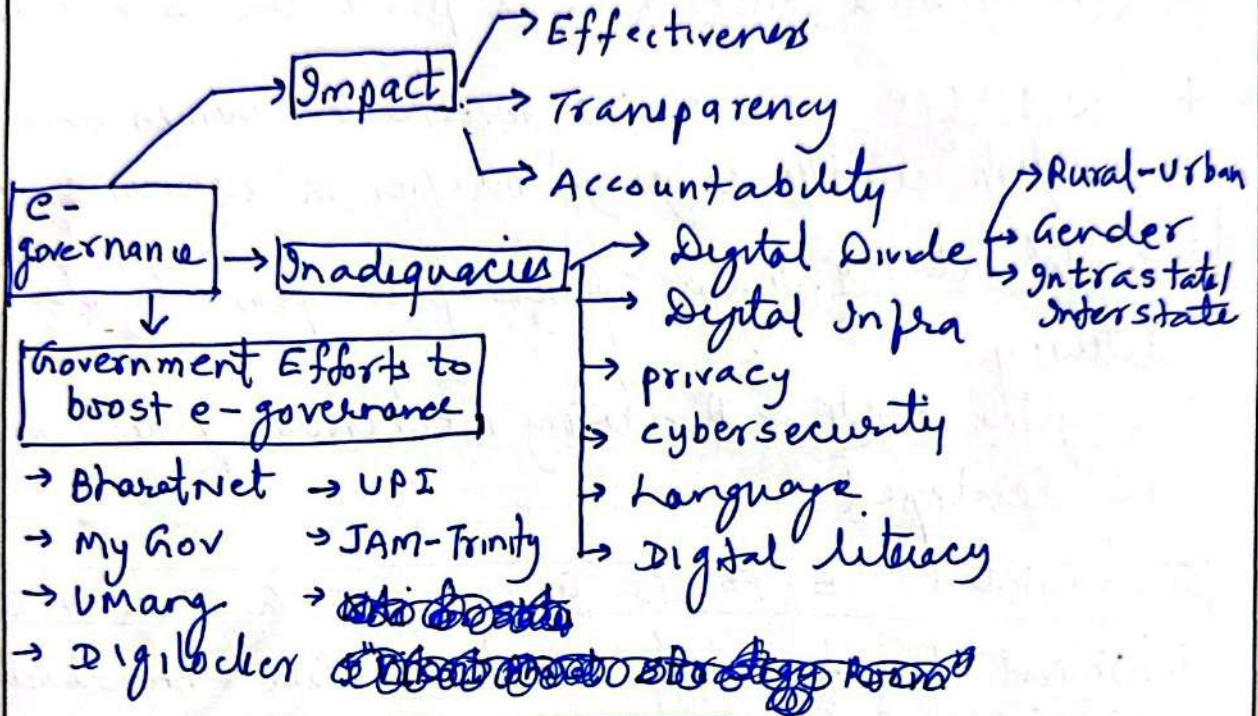
GS-II

Subject	Average
Polity	9 (1)
Governance	3 (2)
Social Justice	4 (2)
International Relations	4 (4)

GENERAL STUDIES - III

Subject	Average
Economy	6 (4)
Agriculture	3 (2)
Internal Security	4 (3)
Disaster Management	1 (1)
Environment & Ecology	3 (3)
Science & Technology	3 (4)

e-governance applies Information Communication & Technology (ICT) to improve delivery of government services and information to citizens.



IMPACT OF E-GOVERNANCE:

1. Improves effectiveness → by reducing paper work, automating tasks, streamlines process
2. Improves Transparency and reduces corruption by increasing access to information, public participation.
3. Improves accountability through monitoring, grievance redressal, traceability etc.

INADEQUACIES AFFECTING E-GOVERNANCE

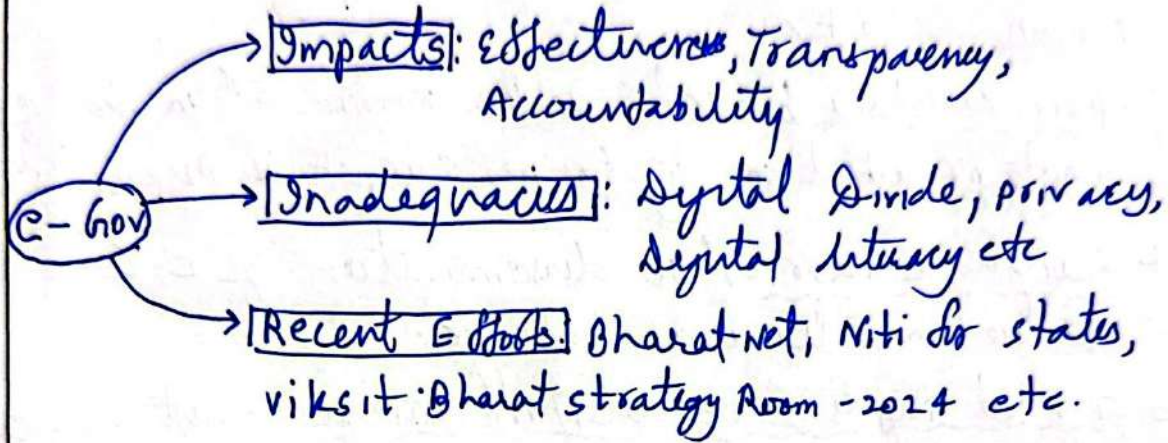
1. Digital Divide: Rural areas have low internet penetration compared to urban. Female use less internet compared to male. Some states have low internet access/usage compared to others.

2. Digital Infrastructure: Rural areas have low Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) compared to urban.
3. Privacy & Data concerns: Data protection is a threat.
4. Language barrier: e-governance services only in English creates language barrier in various regions.
5. Digital Literacy: India suffers from poor digital literacy.
6. Digital Rights & Regulatory mechanisms needs to be developed.

GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO BOOST E-GOVERNANCE

Government has launched initiatives like BharatNet, PMGDISHA, MyGov to boost e-governance. However, digital literacy, awareness, data protection and rural DPI needs to be improved further & public-private-partnership (PPP) model can prove to be a game changer by bringing international best practices at low cost.

e-governance (e-gov) applies Information Communication Technology (ICT) to improve delivery of government services & information to citizens.



IMPACT OF E-GOVERNANCE

1. Improves effectiveness → by automating task, streamlining processes e.g. Fastag, passport applications, linking PAN - Trinity to government schemes
2. Enhances transparency & reduces corruption by access to information, public participation. e.g. Viksit Bharat strategy Room - 2024 uses Artificial Intelligence to link Karmayogi & train district collectors & other government officials
3. Improves accountability through monitoring, grievance redressal etc. eg. MyGov platform.

INADEQUACIES AFFECTING E-GOVERNANCE

1. Digital Divide is observed in internet penetration as per NSO.

Rural = 24%	Female = 46%	Bihar = 30%	} interstate variation in internet access
Urban = 66%	Male = 54%	Goa = 70%	

 (access to internet)

2. Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in rural areas is low compared to urban. e.g.

Area	Digital Payment (%)
Rural	36%
Urban	64%

3. Privacy/data breach: India ranked 5th in list of most breached country (as per SurfStalk Research)

4. Language barrier in dissemination of e-Gov services in India is a challenge.

5. Digital Rights & regulatory mechanisms must be well defined.

GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO BOOST E-GOV

Government has launched initiatives to address various issues like BharatNet for rural internet, e-KRANTI for e-gov, PMK-DISHA for digital literacy, Niti for status-2024 for DPI for policy & governance along with Viksit Bharat Strategy Room at Niti Aayog.

Experiments like RBI's Regulatory sandbox to enable digital payment in offline mode esp in rural areas and use of public-private-partnership (PPP) can be a game-changer to boost e-gov in India.

- Q. "Development & welfare schemes for vulnerable, by its nature, are discriminatory in approach".
Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.
(2023, GS-II, 15 marks)

Ans: INTRODUCTION:

DEVELOPMENT & WELFARE SCHEMES (D&WS) FOR VULNERABLE - AS DISCRIMINATORY :

1. Targetted: They target vulnerable section & exclude others.
2. Affirmative Policies: they aim to correct historical injustice via policies like reservation which excludes other sections.
3. Non-universal: They use specific eligibility criteria like socio-economic.
4. ERROR OF EXCLUSION: They might exclude deserving.
5. ERROR OF INCLUSION: undeserving might be included.

6. Resource allocation to selected vulnerable group might antagonize others.

DESIRABILITY OF D&WS IN INDIA

1. Equity: Different groups have unique needs & require targeted approach.
2. Social Justice: Focus on gender parity, tribal groups etc
3. Efficiency: Targetted resource allocation improves efficiency & improves outcome.
4. Inclusive Growth: It helps to reduce inequality, poverty, promotes skill, health, education & social inclusion.

CONCLUSION:

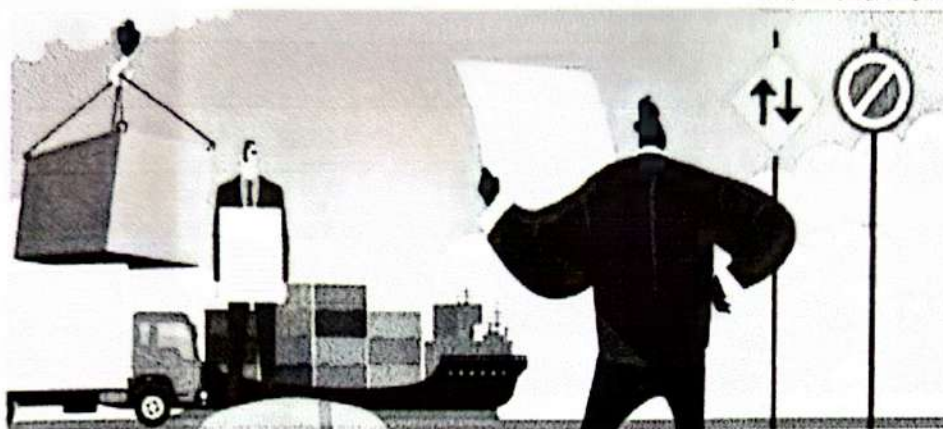
(D & HS → targetting → e-governance → ↑ access, ↑ transparency,
↓ errors → promote constitutional ethos)

Note: Committee, Report, Recent Data

A blueprint for boosting exports

Nine suggestions to revitalise trade and spur economic growth

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



India's foreign trade, valued at \$1.63 trillion in financial year 2023-24, constituted 41 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP), underscoring its vital role in the nation's economy and job creation. The sector faces significant internal and external challenges. Here are nine suggestions for the new government to boost trade and economic growth.

Revive labour-intensive exports: Exports in most labour-intensive sectors were lower in 2023 compared to 2015. Key product categories include garments, textiles, fabric, yarn, fibre, carpets, leather products, footwear, diamonds, and gold jewellery. These sectors generate more jobs per unit of investment compared to others.

Bangladesh and Vietnam, relying on imported fabric to make garments, have outpaced India through focused measures over the last two decades. The production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for textiles is a non-starter and might be better scrapped. Technology is not the issue. An honest appraisal of the sector, rather than consultant reports promising distant rosy futures, is needed. If the export slide does not stop, we will see imports in these sectors rise.

Diversify service exports: Three-fourths of India's service export earnings come from software & IT and business services. In these two sectors, India has a high 9.0 per cent global share. This category accounts for 36 per cent of global services exports. Services other than these two represent a large 64 per cent of world services exports, where our share is a low 1.9 per cent.

A few such services, along with India's global share in the category, are transport and travel (2.4 per cent), maintenance and repair (0.24 per cent), insurance and pension services (1.38 per cent), financial services (1.30 per cent), and charges for the use of intellectual property (0.23 per cent). India needs to work to enhance its share in these sectors to achieve a stable service export performance.

Cut critical dependence on China: It accounts for an average of 30 per cent of India's global imports

in industrial products. Here are a few products with China's share of India's imports. Telecom and smart-phone parts (44 per cent), laptops and PCs (77.7 per cent), digital monolithic integrated circuits (26.2 per cent), assembled photovoltaic cells (65.5 per cent), lithium-ion batteries (75 per cent), diammonium phosphate (40.9 per cent), radio transmission and television apparatus parts (68.5 per cent), antibiotics (88.4 per cent).

From 2019 to 2024, India's exports to China have stagnated at around \$16 billion annually. Meanwhile, imports from China have surged from \$70.3 billion in FY19 to over \$101 billion in FY24, resulting in a cumulative trade deficit exceeding \$387 billion over six years.

The US and EU are cutting imports from China by imposing higher tariffs. Australia is asking China-linked investors to divest shares in Australian rare earth mines as the sector becomes strategic for green energy and defence. In India, imports from China are set to increase with the entry of Chinese firms into India through joint ventures or stand-alone operations. India needs to do a strategic reassessment, work to diversify import sources, and enhance domestic production capabilities.

Ensure FTAs do not aggravate the inverted duty structure: An inverted duty structure occurs when import duties on finished goods are lower than on raw materials. For example, if copper scrap (raw material) and copper pipes (finished goods) have a 5 per cent tariff, and a free trade agreement (FTA) reduces the tariff on pipes to zero, local production of pipes becomes less competitive. This discourages local manufacturing as firms prefer cheaper imports.

Earlier, budgets were used to correct such anomalies. However, the increasing number of FTAs has complicated the issue by allowing zero-duty imports on most industrial products. Higher import duties on raw materials from non-FTA countries and duty-free finished goods from FTA partners incentivise imports over local purchases.



AJAY SRIVASTAVA

Publish data on FTA performance: India has 14 comprehensive FTAs and six smaller scope preferential trade agreements. The government should publish the data to see whether the FTAs have met expectations or if course correction is needed. The learnings will also aid ongoing trade negotiations.

Counter effects of European climate regulation: The EU's deforestation regulation, carbon border adjustment measures (CBAM) regulation, foreign subsidies regulation, and German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act will hurt and add uncertainty to India's exports. Unconfirmed reports from the EU say less than half of Indian exporters have filed data with the EU for CBAM compliance.

When fully implemented, CBAM will result in a 20-35 per cent import tax on Indian firms. A firm has to share all plant and production details with the EU. Also, firms may need to run two production lines to compete effectively: One, an expensive yet greener products for exports to EU countries, and another for standard products for the rest of the world. It is time to prepare a plan to counter EU regulations and hit imports from the EU in equal measures.

Improve quality systems: Recent concerns raised by Hong Kong, Singapore, and the United States about the quality of spices from top Indian brands highlight the need for urgent action. Indian food and agricultural exports often face rejection from the EU and the US due to exceeding maximum residue limits (MRLs) of pesticides and other quality issues.

India should align its quality standards with international norms to reduce rejections, expand farm-to-fork blockchain tracing for major exports such as vegetables, spices, and dairy products, issue quality control orders after consulting with industry, and sign mutual recognition agreements with key export partners to boost global acceptance of Indian products.

Enhance ease of doing business: We need to transform the government-business interface to be business-centric and not government-department centric. Currently, exporters have to deal with various government organisations separately. Creating a user-friendly online National Trade Network for all compliance processes would allow businesses to file all compliance in one place. This change could enable at least 100,000 small firms to start exporting within a year.

Other export promotion measures: Automate customs processes to reduce delays and costs, invest in modern ports, efficient logistics, and digital systems. Export high-value goods to existing markets, help small businesses boost their global presence, improve small firms' access to finance, promote e-commerce exports, and work to reduce non-tariff barriers in key markets.

Economists suggest that to boost export growth, a country should lower import tariffs, sign FTAs, and integrate into global value chains. However, these strategies will only be effective if the country first reduces costs and improves its business environment. Lowering tariffs without improving the ease of doing business could result in increased imports replacing local manufacturing and jobs.

The writer is the founder of Global Trade Research Initiative.

Q. "India must boost exports to achieve higher economic growth." Do you agree? Suggest some measures to boost our export. (15 marks)

Ans: **INTRODUCTION:**

BODY - 1

BODY-2

CONCLUSION

Steps: .

- New Foreign Trade Policy - 2023
- Interest Equalisation scheme
- T.I.E.S & MAI
- RoSCTL
- RoDTEP
- District as Export Hub
- Digital solutions for exports (suggestion)
- Link steps with domestic manufacturing & trade policies (suggestion)



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