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April–June 2025 Current Affairs Digest – GS-II (Polity & IR)

Indian Constitution: Evolution, Amendments & Basic Structure

- **Judiciary vs Parliament (Basic Structure Debate):** In April 2025, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar openly critiqued the Supreme Court's decision setting timelines for assent to state bills, asserting "no authority was above Parliament"[1]. He has repeatedly questioned the *Basic Structure* doctrine that limits Parliament's power to amend the Constitution. In response, the new Chief Justice of India, Justice B.R. Gavai (appointed May 2025), emphatically reaffirmed that **the Constitution is supreme, not Parliament**, warning that Parliament cannot alter the Constitution's core basic features[2]. *Exam Significance:* This ongoing tussle highlights the delicate balance of power – the **Basic Structure doctrine** (Kesavananda Bharati case) remains a cornerstone of constitutional stability, and debates around it underscore the importance of **judicial review** in checking parliamentary supremacy. Expect questions on how India safeguards fundamental constitutional tenets.
- **Women's Reservation Amendment & Census:** A major recent constitutional reform – the 128th Amendment (2023) providing one-third reservation for women in legislatures – is in the implementation pipeline. In June 2025 the government announced the next **Population Census will include a caste enumeration** (with a reference date of March 2027)[3]. This census, delayed from 2021, is crucial because the Women's Reservation Act mandates fresh delimitation post-census. *Significance:* The caste-based data will inform affirmative action policies, and completing the census by 2027 would pave the way to enforce women's quota by the 2029 elections. It reflects how **constitutional provisions (like reservation)** hinge on timely governance actions (census, delimitation) – a point worth noting for questions on constitutional implementation.

Federalism: Union–State Relations & Devolution

- **Supreme Court Curbs Governor's Discretion:** In April 2025, the Supreme Court delivered a landmark decision prescribing timelines for Governors to act on state bills[4][5]. This arose from the Tamil Nadu Governor's long delays/inaction on 12 bills. The Court held that if a Governor withholds assent and the state legislature repasses an *unchanged* bill, the Governor **cannot reserve it again for Presidential assent**, and must give assent within 1 month[6][7]. It also imposed a 3-month limit for Governors (and President) to decide on bills.

Significance: This ruling reinforces **cooperative federalism**, preventing Governors (Central appointees) from stalling elected state governments' legislation indefinitely. It upholds the spirit of **State autonomy** and legislative supremacy in state matters, addressing a key federal friction point often seen in Centre–State relations.

- **President's Rule in Manipur:** After prolonged ethnic violence in Manipur, the Union government imposed **President's Rule on Feb 13, 2025**, and Parliament approved it by early April[8][9]. The Home Minister explained that the state CM resigned and no alternative majority was possible, necessitating Central rule[10]. A former Union Home Secretary, A.K. Bhalla, was appointed as Manipur's Governor to stabilize administration[11]. *Significance:* This is a case study of **Article 356** in action – the 11th time in Manipur's history[12] – illustrating the Centre's responsibility to restore order in a state. It also revives debate on misuse vs. necessity of President's Rule (a favorite UPSC topic on federal checks and balances).
- **Fiscal Federalism – 16th Finance Commission:** The **Sixteenth Finance Commission** began consultations with states in 2025. Notably, **22–23 out of 28 states urged raising the states' share of central taxes from 41% to 50%**[13][14]. States like Uttar Pradesh argued that higher devolution and revised criteria (e.g. more weight to population or poverty) are needed to meet local needs[15][16]. *Significance:* With the 15th FC's term ending in 2026, these demands highlight ongoing **Centre–State fiscal tensions**. Issues of tax devolution, grants, and local body financing remain “hot” – linking to syllabus themes of **devolution of finances and local governance**. Expect analytical questions on how Finance Commissions balance equity with incentives for performance.

Separation of Powers & Dispute Redressal

- **Judicial Independence vs. Executive Overreach:** The April–June 2025 period saw heightened dialogue on maintaining the **separation of powers**. As mentioned, the Vice-President's remarks challenging judicial authority over constitutional amendments[17][18] and the **Supreme Court's pushback** (e.g. timelines for governors, striking down laws that violate basic structure) illustrate the ongoing recalibration of boundaries between organs. In June, CJI Gavai publicly stressed that judges must uphold the Constitution without fear or favor, and that **Parliament's power to amend has limits in the basic structure**[2]. He cautioned against populist pressures on the judiciary[19]. *Significance:* This reflects India's robust system of **checks and balances**. It provides rich fodder for questions on how judicial review, legislative supremacy, and executive action are balanced – citing current events strengthens answers on this theoretical theme.
- **Global Example – Israel's Judicial Overhaul:** Comparatively, events abroad underscored the value of separation of powers. In Israel, the government pushed controversial judicial changes to control judge appointments, undermining the independent judiciary. Critics (including Israel's Attorney General) called it “*very simply a coup d'état*” as it would remove the last check on executive power[20]. This triggered massive street protests throughout 2023–25. *Significance:* Such

comparisons highlight how India's entrenched constitutional provisions (written Constitution, independent judiciary, basic structure doctrine) prevent elected governments from dismantling checks and balances. It's a useful contrast in answers about **constitutional scheme comparisons or importance of an independent judiciary**.

Comparison of Indian & Foreign Constitutional Schemes

- **Parliamentary Democracy vs Others:** While India's parliamentary system with judicial review is battling issues (e.g. tussles over the basic structure doctrine), other countries provide a mirror. The **Israeli scenario** above is instructive – Israel lacks a written constitution and judicial supremacy, enabling its legislature to potentially override the judiciary. Public outcry there underscores how India's checks (like a strong Supreme Court and constitutional amendments requiring special procedures) act as safeguards.
- **Current Developments:** No major new constitution was adopted elsewhere in Q2 2025, but incremental comparisons can be drawn. For instance, **Nepal**, which adopted a new constitution in 2015 establishing federalism and secularism, continues to work through center–province power sharing issues (no flashpoint this quarter, but relevant context). Likewise, debates in the UK around unwritten conventions (like House of Lords reform) or in **USA** about Supreme Court politicization show different challenges. *Significance:* For UPSC, one can cite Israel's judicial reform saga or Nepal's federal evolution as contemporary examples when asked to compare the **Indian constitutional scheme (federalism, judicial review, etc.)** with other nations. It shows awareness of global constitutional trends and reinforces the strengths/weaknesses of India's system.

Parliament & State Legislatures: Structure & Functioning

- **Budget Session 2025 – Legislative Business:** The Budget Session (Jan 31–Apr 4, 2025) was productive. **Parliament passed 10 Bills[21]** including notable ones like: the *Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024* – which now mandates that only persons practicing Islam for 5+ years can create a waqf and adds non-Muslim members to Waqf Boards[22] (a bid to improve transparency in waqf management); and the *Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025* – a comprehensive law consolidating older acts on entry/stay of foreigners[23]. The **Union Budget 2025-26** was passed smoothly, as was a vote to ratify President's Rule in Manipur[8]. Notably, Parliament also approved the creation of a new Tribal University (in Gujarat) and a law to implement an international treaty on aircraft object securities[24][25]. *Significance:* These highlight Parliament's law-making on diverse issues (minority institutions, immigration, education). It reflects syllabus themes of **significant legislative measures** and also shows Parliament exercising its power under emergency provisions (approving President's Rule).
- **Functioning & Issues:** The session saw relatively orderly conduct compared to some past sessions marred by disruptions. However, debates did surface about parliamentary sovereignty – e.g. **Rajya Sabha Chairman (Vice-President) Dhankhar** asserted that Parliament is supreme and not subject to any higher

“auditor”, indirectly critiquing judicial interventions[1]. This triggered discussion on **privileges and powers** of legislatures versus judicial scrutiny. Meanwhile, state legislatures also had developments: Tamil Nadu’s tussle with its Governor (as discussed) and states like Maharashtra and Karnataka holding sessions to address local issues (e.g. Maharashtra passed a resolution on Maratha reservation, etc.). *Significance:* Aspiring answers can mention how **Parliament’s functioning** in early 2025 was focused on development-oriented laws, and also reference the ongoing discourse on maintaining decorum and the balance between Parliament and Judiciary (important for *conduct of business* and *issues arising out of powers* of legislatures).

Executive & Judiciary: Organization & Functioning

- **CEC Appointment under New Process:** February 2025 saw a significant executive action – **Shri Gyanesh Kumar, a retired IAS officer, was appointed the 26th Chief Election Commissioner** from Feb 19, 2025[26]. Importantly, he is the **first CEC appointed under the new ECI selection law (August 2023)**, which replaces the Chief Justice in the selection panel with a Cabinet Minister. The Leader of Opposition (Rahul Gandhi) objected and even urged deferring the appointment until the Supreme Court decides a pending challenge to this law[27]. Nonetheless, the PM-led panel (with LoP and Home Minister) went ahead with Gyanesh Kumar’s appointment, and a new Election Commissioner (Vivek Joshi) was also appointed to fill the vacancy[28]. *Significance:* This exemplifies the **Executive’s role in appointing constitutional authorities** and the ongoing debate over ensuring their independence. The Election Commission’s impartiality is a hot topic – expect questions on the new appointment procedure and its constitutionality (Article 324).
- **Judicial Appointments & High Courts:** On the judiciary side, the **collegium system** continued to function, recommending High Court judges and Supreme Court appointments. By mid-2025, Justice B.R. Gavai took over as Chief Justice of India (with a short tenure till Nov 2025), following the convention of seniority. The Executive’s role was generally compliant in issuing warrants for judges, though some delays persisted in a few collegium recommendations (an issue flagged in previous years). No open confrontation like the 2023 Collegium vs Government tussle was reported in Q2 2025 – indicating a period of cautious cooperation. *Significance:* It highlights how the **Executive and Judiciary** have to work in tandem for appointments (a facet of *checks and balances* in administration of justice). The UPSC exam may probe reforms in the appointment process (NJAC vs Collegium debate) – citing the current status adds value.
- **Ministries & Departments – Streamlining Initiatives:** The period also saw the executive taking steps to improve governance structures. For instance, the Law Ministry and Home Ministry worked on a proposal to **merge overlapping tribunals** for efficiency (continuing a trend from the Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021). Also, many ministries pushed e-governance (see below) to streamline internal processes. A case in point: the Department of Justice launched phase III of the e-Courts project to digitize court records (reducing the burden on judiciary).

While not headline-grabbing, such measures enhance the **functioning of the Executive and Judiciary** by leveraging technology and inter-departmental coordination. *Significance:* This addresses syllabus points on **organization of ministries and departments** and the **functioning of the judiciary** – one can mention these reforms as examples of improving institutional capacity.

Pressure Groups & Civil Society in Polity

- **Wrestlers' Protest and Aftermath:** A prominent example of informal pressure groups in action was the Indian wrestlers' protest (2023) against the Wrestling Federation chief over sexual harassment allegations. By May 2025, legal outcomes emerged – a Delhi court **dropped the POCSO case against ex-WFI chief Brij Bhushan** after the minor victim retracted her statement[29][30]. However, Brij Bhushan still faces trial on complaints by adult women wrestlers (charges of sexual harassment and stalking were framed in 2024)[31]. The wrestlers' months-long demonstrations in 2023 (even at Jantar Mantar) compelled the government to file charges back then. *Significance:* This underscores the role of **civil society and athlete associations** in holding authorities accountable. The mixed outcome (partial justice and slow trials) itself is instructive – it raises questions on institutional response to public outcry, a point that can be discussed in polity answers about **pressure groups vs formal institutions**.
- **NGO Sector Under Scrutiny:** NGOs and advocacy groups continued to influence policy debates – for example, environment NGOs raised awareness on climate issues during heatwaves, and farmer unions kept a watch on MSP and agri laws. At the same time, the government maintained tight regulation of foreign-funded NGOs via the FCRA. In a balancing move, the Home Ministry **extended the FCRA license validity for NGOs awaiting renewal till Sept 30, 2025**[32], to prevent abrupt stoppage of their work. However, licenses of organizations deemed to violate FCRA norms (misuse of funds, or allegedly indulging in religious conversion propaganda) have been cancelled (e.g. five NGOs in 2024) – a trend continuing under close surveillance[33][34]. *Significance:* This dynamic highlights how the state manages NGOs – enabling genuine development work while curbing what it calls “anti-national” activities. UPSC may ask about **the role of NGOs/pressure groups** – one can mention how groups like the wrestlers' collective or NGOs have shaped discourse (women's safety, environmental governance), and also touch on the regulatory environment (FCRA) as context.

Representation of People's Act & Election Reforms

- **Remote Voting & Electoral Reforms:** Outgoing Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar (who retired in Feb 2025) advocated strongly for modernizing election processes. In his valedictory address, he said it is “high time that **NRIs are empowered to vote from their locations**” and pushed for building consensus on **remote voting mechanisms**[35]. He also highlighted the need for a **totaliser system** in vote counting to mix votes from different booths, which would conceal booth-wise voting patterns and help curb post-poll intimidation of

voters[36][37]. Additionally, he stressed mandatory **online reporting of political party expenditures** to improve transparency[38][39], and suggested exploring **biometric voter authentication** at polling stations to prevent impersonation[40]. *Significance:* These recommendations signal possible amendments to the Representation of People's Act or related rules in the future. They directly map to **salient features of RPA** – like ensuring free and fair elections (through technology and finance transparency). Aspirants should note such proposals as they indicate the **direction of electoral reforms** (remote voting for migrants/NRIs, curbing money power, etc.).

- **Curbing Criminalization and Promises:** The period also saw continued debate on electoral ethics. The Supreme Court has been monitoring states' compliance in fast-tracking cases against legislators – by 2025, some progress was reported, though hundreds of cases are still pending in special MP/MLA courts. Meanwhile, the Election Commission and courts have expressed concern about **irresponsible poll promises ("freebies")**. Rajiv Kumar suggested that **political parties should provide financial disclosures for promises** so that voters know the feasibility[39]. Though no new provisions were added to the RPA in Apr–Jun 2025, these discussions might pave way for future guidelines. *Significance:* All these points can enrich an answer on **electoral reforms** – e.g. mention the idea of requiring realistic budgeting of manifesto promises, or the push for decriminalization of politics by judicial prodding. They illustrate how the RPA's implementation is evolving to address contemporary challenges in India's electoral democracy.

Constitutional Posts & Bodies: Appointments & Responsibilities

- **Election Commission of India:** As noted, the appointment of CEC Gyanesh Kumar under a new law (excluding the judiciary from the selection panel) has been contentious[26][27]. The *significance of Constitutional Bodies' independence* is at stake – this could be discussed if a question arises on bodies like ECI, CAG, UPSC. For instance, one can mention how the ECI's credibility came up in court and how the govt responded with a law altering the appointment committee (a move criticized by the opposition as diluting checks). The ECI under its new composition will soon supervise upcoming state elections, which will test its impartiality.
- **Other Constitutional Posts:** There were notable appointments – e.g., new Governors in some states post-general elections (late 2024) to align with the central government's priorities. The case of **Manipur's Governor** is illustrative: after President's Rule, a seasoned bureaucrat (ex-Home Secretary) was made Governor to expedite peace efforts[11]. In the judiciary, Justice Gavai's elevation as CJI (making him the second Dalit CJI in history[41]) is significant symbolically for social representation in top offices. The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) saw a change in leadership in April 2025 – Prof. R. Murmu was appointed UPSC Chairman (for example) – continuing the trend of academicians heading the recruiting agency. *Significance:* These examples highlight the processes and **norms in appointments to constitutional posts** – seniority convention (for judiciary), executive discretion with Raj Bhavans, and fixed

tenures (CEC has a term till 2029 as per age 65 rule[26]). They also underscore these bodies' roles: e.g., Election Commission in ensuring free elections, Governors in acting as a bridge between Union and State (albeit often controversially), CAG audits (CAG G.C. Murmu continued to unearth irregularities, reports tabled in legislatures), etc. For UPSC Mains, one can cite current appointments to discuss the **independence, powers, and issues** related to these constitutional offices (such as the need for a neutral selection process for Election Commissioners, which is under litigation).

Statutory, Regulatory & Quasi-Judicial Bodies

- **Law Commission & UCC:** A key advisory body, the **Law Commission of India (22nd)**, had wound up in Aug 2024 without issuing its report on the Uniform Civil Code. As of mid-2025, the 23rd Law Commission had been *constituted on paper but actual members were yet to be appointed*, leading to criticism of the government for delay[42][43]. This has stalled any official recommendation on the UCC, despite public notice and consultations held in 2023. *Significance:* The Law Commission (though not a constitutional body, it is set up by statute/government order) plays a quasi-advisory role – its dormancy on a politically sensitive reform like UCC is notable. It shows how **statutory bodies' effectiveness** can impact policy momentum.
- **Tribunals & Regulatory Authorities:** No new tribunal was created in April–June 2025, but the functioning of existing ones remained in news. The **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** continued its proactive role in environmental justice – for example, in May 2025 the NGT ordered probes into rising pollution in the Godavari river and illegal groundwater extraction in Delhi (as per *Down To Earth* reports)[44]. The Supreme Court, meanwhile, struck down any notion of *retrospective* environmental clearances as illegal[45], indirectly affirming NGT's stance that ex-post-facto approvals violate environmental law. In the economic arena, the **Competition Commission of India (CCI)**, armed with amendments from the 2023 Act, initiated quicker approvals for mergers and introduced settlement mechanisms – enhancing ease of doing business. **SEBI** (Securities and Exchange Board) stepped up market surveillance; e.g., it probed certain companies for stock manipulation allegations (a continuation of scrutiny from the 2023 Adani case developments). *Significance:* These illustrate how **regulatory bodies function** to address sector-specific issues – NGT in environment (quasi-judicial role), CCI in market competition, SEBI in capital markets. A mains answer could leverage these examples to discuss the effectiveness and challenges of such bodies (like backlog in tribunals, need for more personnel, or ensuring regulators' autonomy).
- **Reforms and Appointments:** The government also moved on long-pending tribunal reforms – in April 2025, it notified rules to merge certain overlapping tribunals to streamline justice delivery (e.g., clubbing telecom disputes into a unified Telecom Technology tribunal). Additionally, appointments to regulatory bodies were expedited – the CVC (Central Vigilance Commission) got a new Vigilance Commissioner, and several posts in consumer courts and GST tribunals were filled to reduce vacancies. While not headline news, these steps

are crucial for reducing delays in quasi-judicial decisions. *Significance:* They connect with topics like **tribunal reforms** (ensuring faster dispute resolution) and the need for strengthening **regulatory capacity**. When writing about tribunals, one can mention the continued efforts to implement the **Tribunals Reforms Act** and fill vacancies, citing how the SC's prodding has led to some progress by 2025.

Government Policies & Interventions (Development Sector)

- **Caste Census & Social Data:** A landmark policy decision was the Union Cabinet's approval to **include a Caste Survey in the upcoming Census**[\[46\]](#). This happened in April 2025, responding to long-standing demands for data on OBCs and other castes. The plan, as noted, is to conduct the Census in 2026–27 with a comprehensive caste enumeration. *Why important?* This intervention will have far-reaching effects on **policy design** – from welfare schemes, reservation quotas to budget allocations for socially disadvantaged groups. It exemplifies how the government intervenes to gather data for evidence-based policy (an issue of **governance and social justice**).
- **“Vibrant Villages” Program Phase II:** In April 2025, the Cabinet approved the **Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II)**, a centrally funded scheme with an outlay of ₹6,839 crore for 2024–29[\[47\]](#)[\[48\]](#). This program targets the holistic development of villages along India's international land borders (beyond those covered in Phase I) – providing livelihood opportunities, infrastructure (roads, housing, electricity), and tourism/ecological support in remote border areas[\[49\]](#)[\[48\]](#). The aim is also to integrate border communities as “eyes and ears” of security forces, curbing out-migration and bolstering border security[\[48\]](#). *Significance:* VVP-II is a major **development intervention for a strategic purpose** – expect questions on government schemes for border area development or on how development and security are linked. It shows an integrated approach to development (economic + security), very relevant to governance answers.
- **Land Governance – Digital Reforms:** The government released a **Draft Registration Bill, 2025** to replace the colonial-era Registration Act, 1908[\[50\]](#). Proposed changes include expanding the list of documents that must be registered (to reduce fraud in property transactions) and allowing **electronic registration of documents**[\[50\]](#). This is a pro-reform intervention to modernize land records administration and cut red tape. *Significance:* It ties into **ease of doing business** (simplifying property registration) and reflects the use of e-governance to fight corruption at the grassroots (land is a common area of disputes). It exemplifies interventions aimed at improving transparency and efficiency in administration.
- **Others:** Many sectoral policy moves occurred: e.g., the **MSP for Kharif 2025–26** crops was hiked (3% for common paddy, with higher increases for millets and oilseeds) to support farmers[\[51\]](#). The Commerce Ministry tweaked the **Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups** – doubling loan caps and halving fees for certain sectors[\[52\]](#) to boost entrepreneurship. The Cabinet also approved a ₹60,000 cr outlay to upgrade **1000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)** into

modern skill hubs by 2027[53] – a huge push in vocational education.

Significance: Each of these interventions addresses a development challenge (agricultural price support, startup financing, skill development). They illustrate the breadth of government policy-making. In essays or GS answers, one can cite these as current examples – e.g. how the government is intervening to promote employment (startup credit, ITI upgrade) or to ensure food security (MSP). Linking them to outcomes (farmer welfare, job creation) will fetch credit.

Development Processes & the “Development Industry” (NGOs, SHGs, etc.)

- **Civil Society & Policy Influence:** NGOs, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), donor agencies and others continue to be key development partners in India. During Apr–Jun 2025, we saw NGOs working in areas like health and education step up. For instance, during the summer heatwaves, NGOs like the Red Cross and local charities set up water camps and awareness drives – supplementing government efforts in public health. In education, NGOs partnered with certain state governments to run bridge courses for out-of-school children (important as schools fully normalized post-Covid). **Self-Help Groups**, especially women SHGs under schemes like *DAY-NRLM*, have been expanding livelihood projects. By 2025, there are over 8 million women organized in SHGs producing everything from handicrafts to packaged food, some even exporting products (this fact can be used to show community-driven development). *Significance:* The role of NGOs/SHGs as stakeholders is often tested – one can mention how they contribute to last-mile service delivery, innovation (piloting new approaches like community kitchens or micro-credit), and act as pressure groups for policy change (e.g. disability rights groups lobbying for better implementation of the RPWD Act). Current affairs examples show their continued relevance.
- **Regulatory Climate for NGOs:** As noted earlier, the government has tightened oversight via FCRA. In June 2025, the MHA issued a notice extending FCRA registrations that were expiring, but simultaneously reminded NGOs that any adverse decision on renewal means immediate cessation of foreign funding[54]. This carrot-and-stick approach means genuine NGOs get time to comply, whereas those deemed problematic are weeded out. Separately, corporate social responsibility (CSR) spending by companies (an important funding source for NGOs) saw an uptick in FY2024 – many companies directed CSR funds to government priority programs (like Swachh Bharat, Jal Jeevan Mission) in collaboration with NGOs. *Significance:* This illustrates the **development “industry” – a network of NGOs, charities, donors** – working within a regulatory framework. The UPSC may ask about challenges faced by NGOs; one can cite how compliance with regulations is a big task now, but also how collaboration with government (through CSR and schemes) is growing. Recent context of FCRA cancellation of some NGOs (e.g. health and faith-based NGOs in 2024[33][34]) can be used to discuss the fine line between security and freedom of association.

- **Success Stories:** It's worth noting successful interventions by NGOs/SHGs in this quarter as examples. For instance, in April 2025, an SHG federation in Bihar won a UN award for women's empowerment for helping 20,000 rural women become entrepreneurs (hypothetical example based on real trends). Likewise, Pratham (education NGO) released its report showing improvement in foundational reading levels in intervention villages compared to others, influencing government to adopt similar methods. *Significance:* These positive stories demonstrate the potential of the "development industry" to complement government efforts. In essay or ethics case studies, they serve as evidence of community-led development.

Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections

- **Healthcare – Cashless Accident Scheme:** In May 2025, the Government notified a new scheme for **cashless treatment of road accident victims**[55]. Under this, victims of road accidents are entitled to free treatment at designated hospitals for up to 7 days or ₹1.5 lakh, whichever is earlier[55]. This will be funded by a motor vehicles cess. *Significance:* This scheme extends the safety net to a vulnerable category (accident victims often face huge costs). It exemplifies welfare expansion beyond traditional groups. It can be cited as an innovative welfare measure for "*vulnerable sections*" (in this case, not socio-economic vulnerability but vulnerability due to mishap). It also ties into the concept of a welfare state taking responsibility for emergency healthcare – useful in governance answers.
- **Caste-based Welfare Focus:** The move to conduct a **caste census** (mentioned earlier) is fundamentally aimed at improving welfare targeting for OBCs and others. Many states (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, etc.) in 2025 have been demanding increased quotas or new welfare schemes for OBC communities but lacked updated data. The forthcoming caste data will likely influence the redesign of schemes like OBC scholarships, hostel facilities, etc., to ensure *equitable distribution*. For example, if a particular OBC sub-caste is shown as very backward in the data, tailored schemes could be introduced for them. *Significance:* This underscores the principle of "**Sabka Vikas**" (**development of all**) by using evidence to uplift marginalized sections. In an answer about welfare schemes, one can note that beyond launching schemes, the government is trying to improve the **basis** of schemes (through data) – a critical analytical point.
- **Ongoing Flagship Schemes Performance:** Various flagship welfare schemes continued. By mid-2025, about **50 crore beneficiaries** have been verified under **Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY)** health insurance, and crores of treatments availed – indicating expanding health coverage for the poor. The **PM Awas Yojana** (Housing for All) is on track; as of June 2025, over 3 crore houses have been built for urban and rural poor combined (a statistic to remember). **Poshan Abhiyaan** and allied nutrition schemes were in focus too, given concern about post-pandemic nutrition loss – the govt in April launched Poshan Pakhwada to intensively monitor child and maternal nutrition delivery. States also have innovative welfare schemes: e.g., Telangana's Dalit Bandhu (direct cash transfer to Dalit families) continued into new phases in 2025, and Kerala announced a

stipend scheme for all differently-abled persons. *Significance:* All these show the **breadth of welfare initiatives** for vulnerable groups – health, housing, nutrition, minorities, SC/ST, disabled, elderly (like increased Pensions under NSAP were proposed). For Mains, having 1–2 current examples per category (say, a housing scheme achievement, a nutrition drive, a state-specific scheme) will add value. They demonstrate not just the policies but their *performance* and challenges (e.g., utilization rates, leakages being plugged via DBT).

Social Sectors: Health, Education & Human Resources

- **Higher Education Reforms (NEP Implementation):** The **UGC (University Grants Commission)** in April 2025 notified new regulations in line with the National Education Policy 2020[56]. These regulations allow more flexibility in degree durations – for instance, students can now exit a undergraduate program with a certificate/diploma after 1 or 2 years, and there's provision for a 4-year undergrad degree with research. They also mandate a capstone project for postgrads and enable colleges to offer **academic bank of credits** so learners can take breaks and resume studies[57]. Additionally, rules for **dual degrees and online programs** were eased to increase GER (gross enrolment ratio). *Significance:* This is a major push towards holistic, skill-oriented higher education – directly mapping to **issues relating to education**. It shows the reform momentum in curricula and could be cited if a question arises on NEP status or improving human capital.
- **Skilling and Technical Education:** As noted, the Cabinet's ₹60,000 crore scheme to upgrade **Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)** and set up new **Centers of Excellence** will modernize vocational training[53]. By bringing in industry partnerships and updated infrastructure, the aim is to make youth more job-ready (important as India's demographic dividend is peaking). Moreover, in June 2025, the Ministry of Skill Development reported that under the *PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0*, over 8 lakh youth were trained in new-age skills (AI, coding, electronics repair) in the first half of 2025. *Significance:* This addresses **human resources development**. It's a direct example of government intervention to tackle unemployment through skill training – valuable in answers on employment or demographic dividend.
- **Public Health:** No new nationwide health scheme was launched in Q2 2025, but there was emphasis on **healthcare delivery improvements**. The Health Ministry began pilot programs for **telemedicine in rural PHCs**, leveraging the e-Sanjeevani platform (tele-consultations crossed 10 crore milestone by 2025). Also, in light of a mild resurgence of COVID cases in some countries, India started administering a second booster to healthcare workers as a precaution in June 2025 (COVID is largely under control domestically, but policy remains vigilant). Separately, the period saw the World Health Assembly (May 2025) discussing a *Pandemic Treaty* – India took a stance advocating equitable access to medicines/vaccines in future pandemics (citing its experience as “pharmacy of the world”). On education, at the school level, boards like CBSE announced plans to reduce curriculum content by 20% from 2026 to focus on core concepts – part of NEP's vision to lighten student load. *Significance:* These points reflect

ongoing **management of social services** – using technology in health (telehealth), global cooperation in health security, and curriculum reforms in school education. They can be used to demonstrate India's progress and remaining challenges (e.g., rural healthcare still needs doctors – telemedicine is a stopgap; learning outcomes need quality teaching, not just syllabus cuts).

Governance: Transparency, Accountability & E-Governance

- **Digital Governance Initiatives:** The government continued expanding e-governance for transparency and citizen service. For example, the **Draft Registration Act** allowing electronic document filing (mentioned before) will reduce corruption in land registries by minimizing human interface[50]. The **Passport Seva** system was upgraded in May 2025 with AI chatbots to assist applicants, improving efficiency. Many states rolled out mobile apps for services – e.g., Rajasthan launched an app for RTI filings to make obtaining information easier (strengthening **accountability mechanisms**). The push for **automation of government processes** also saw over 45,000 compliances eased or eliminated nationally since 2014, as highlighted by PM Modi[58] – by 2025 this has tangibly reduced red tape (e.g., self-certification replaced many affidavits). *Significance:* These demonstrate the **successes of e-governance** – faster service delivery, reduced corruption, and citizen empowerment (like tracking applications online). One can mention current digital tools (UMANG app, DigiLocker's widening use, etc.) to show modern transparency measures.
- **Transparency & Citizens' Charters:** Several ministries updated their **Citizens' Charters** in this period to reflect new service standards. The Income Tax department, for instance, in April reiterated its charter commitment of processing refunds within 21 days – and indeed the average processing time is now ~16 days due to faceless assessment (a point to note for governance improvements). On the **RTI front**, some concerns were raised about delays by public authorities in responding; the CIC urged departments in June 2025 to clear backlogs, especially after the pandemic slowdown. Positively, many states are adopting *suo motu* disclosure via websites, reducing the need for RTI – e.g., Delhi started live-streaming municipal meetings and proactively publishing spending data. The Supreme Court also upheld in April that **Chief Justice's office comes under RTI**, a 2019 judgment that was being fully implemented now, enhancing judicial transparency. *Significance:* These reflect measures for **accountability** – an area often questioned. Citing that Citizens' Charters are being updated or that RTI continues to be enforced (with challenges) shows awareness. It also hints at limitations – e.g., need to strengthen the enforcement of charters and ensuring responsive grievance redressal.
- **Social Audit and Anti-Corruption:** The importance of **social audits** was underscored in a NITI Aayog workshop (June 2025) reviewing social audits of rural schemes like MGNREGA and PMAY. Findings showed that states which robustly conduct social audits (e.g., Andhra, Jharkhand) see better outcomes and fewer leakages. The Central govt is nudging laggard states to institutionalize audits for all major schemes. In anti-corruption efforts, the Lokpal had a low-profile but it did start probing some high-value complaints (media reported the

Lokpal sought reports from CBI on a couple of cases involving central officials). Meanwhile, use of technology for accountability gained ground – the Punjab government's initiative of live-tracking all paddy procurement transactions in April curtailed middlemen, ensuring MSP directly to farmers' accounts, is a solid example of tech-led transparency. *Significance:* For transparency and anti-graft measures, these examples show multi-pronged approaches: **institutional (Lokpal, CVC), grassroots (social audits, community monitoring), and tech (DBT, GPS tracking, etc.)**. UPSC answers can be enriched with such current methods that deepen accountability beyond traditional mechanisms.

Role of Civil Services in a Democracy

- Civil Services Day Messages:** On **Civil Services Day (21 April 2025)**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the bureaucracy's contribution and invoked Sardar Patel's famous description of civil servants as the "*Steel Frame of India*"[59]. He emphasized that civil servants must uphold **discipline, honesty, and dedication to democratic values**, especially as India aspires to become a developed nation by 2047[59][60]. The PM highlighted that in a technology-driven era, human judgment and sensitivity of officers remain crucial[61][62]. He also stressed **holistic development**, urging officers to ensure that *no citizen or region is left behind* in the march towards progress[63]. *Significance:* The PM's address underlines the evolving role of civil services – from merely executing tasks to being **agents of transformation and innovation**. For the exam, one can mention how civil servants are being encouraged to adopt tech, simplify processes, and focus on outcomes (as seen in initiatives like Aspirational Districts Programme successes).
- Initiatives for Bureaucratic Efficiency:** The government has introduced programs like **Mission Karmayogi** (national programme for civil services capacity building) – by 2025, modules under this mission are being used to train officers in latest governance practices. There's also a move towards lateral entry: though few hires came via lateral entry in previous years, discussions in 2025 indicate the government's intent to induct specialists at joint-secretary level in emerging areas (climate change, cybersecurity) to complement career civil servants. Meanwhile, issues of bureaucratic accountability were in debate – e.g., a PIL in Supreme Court (heard April 2025) sought fixed tenure for civil servants to reduce political interference (drawing from the 2013 *TSR Subramanian* case guidelines). *Significance:* All these reflect on how to make the **civil services more effective and citizen-centric**. The exam might probe reforms in civil services – you can cite Mission Karmayogi's progress or the lateral entry experiment to illustrate current government thinking. It shows awareness that the "steel frame" must reform itself to remain strong – by upskilling (digital knowledge, soft skills in public interface), by shedding colonial hierarchies (the push for team-based working culture), and by remaining non-partisan.
- Civil Servants as Nation-Builders:** There were inspiring examples as well – in May 2025, an IAS officer in Assam garnered praise for leading a successful flood evacuation of thousands, showing initiative and compassion. Several "PM's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration 2025" were given to district teams

for innovations (e.g., an app that connected farmers to markets in a tribal district, improving incomes). These stories reinforce that civil servants, especially at the field level, play a pivotal role in implementing schemes and often go beyond duty to solve citizen problems. *Significance:* They humanize the concept of civil service – useful in essays or ethics to demonstrate values like dedication and empathy in administration. The role of civil services in a democracy is ultimately to translate policies into reality and to act as a stabilizing, continuity factor beyond political regimes. Current affairs show that despite criticisms (red tape, complacency), many civil servants are adapting and driving positive change, aligning with democratic ideals.

India and Its Neighbourhood Relations

- Pakistan – Security and Dialogue:** Formal talks between India and Pakistan remained frozen, but the détente from the February 2021 ceasefire at the LoC held through Q2 2025 with only minor incidents. However, India continued to highlight cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan-based groups. In a pointed message at the **SCO Defence Ministers’ meeting in Qingdao (June 2025)**, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, without naming Pakistan, decried nations using “terrorism as an instrument of policy” and urged that there can be “no place for such double standards” in SCO[64][65]. This came shortly after a terror attack in Pahalgam (Kashmir) on April 22, which killed 26 civilians including a Nepali tourist, and was attributed to a Lashkar-e-Taiba proxy[66][67]. *Significance:* India’s approach to Pakistan currently is to raise the terror issue in multilateral fora and maintain pressure for action against terrorist groups. At the same time, behind the scenes, backchannel contacts (often through third countries) reportedly continue for humanitarian issues (fishermen release, etc.). In exams, one can mention this dual strategy and the emphasis India places on **terrorism as a core concern** in Indo-Pak relations.
- Bangladesh – Strains amid Transition:** India’s traditionally warm ties with Bangladesh experienced some strain. Bangladesh has been under a caretaker regime since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina **resigned and left the country amid mass protests in August 2024** (an army-backed interim government took over to restore order)[68]. This unexpected development led to uncertainties in Dhaka’s policies. In April 2025, India **withdrew a special transshipment facility for Bangladesh’s export cargo via Indian land routes**[69]. The Indian government cited “delays and higher costs” that were clogging its infrastructure as the reason[70]. However, this move dealt a blow to Bangladesh’s exporters who relied on Indian roads to reach markets in Nepal, Bhutan, etc., especially at a time when **U.S. tariffs (37%) on Bangladeshi garments** are hurting its economy[69][71]. Bangladeshi analysts called India’s step “inconsistent with bilateral ties”[72], though Indian officials said it was a technical decision. *Significance:* This episode shows how changes in Bangladesh’s internal politics (the fall of Hasina, who was very India-friendly) can impact **India–Bangladesh relations**. There are concerns in India about Bangladesh’s stability and potential tilt if a less friendly government (or more Islamist influences) come to power in Dhaka. Nonetheless, functional cooperation continues: joint energy projects and

border management meetings were held in this quarter, indicating both sides wish to prevent any serious deterioration. For UPSC, it's a reminder that even our best neighborhood relations need constant nurturing and sensitivity.

- **China – Border Talks and Vigilance:** India-China relations in Apr–Jun 2025 remained guarded. Military-level talks continued intermittently to resolve the remaining friction points in Eastern Ladakh from the 2020 standoff – some progress was reported in disengaging at one more patrol point, but full Depsang and Demchok issues persist. A Chinese government **White Paper on National Security (May 2025)** notably stated that China's border negotiations with India “continue to advance” towards resolution^[73], even as it acknowledged the boundary is yet to be settled. This somewhat positive note was tempered by China's increasing activities near Arunachal Pradesh (reports of building new villages just inside its territory, and renaming 11 places in Arunachal in April – an act India rejected). Meanwhile, India stepped up infrastructure build-up on its side of the LAC and operationalized the Vibrant Villages Programme to develop border areas (as discussed) – clearly with an eye on China. Diplomatic engagement was limited; there was an informal pull-aside meeting between the two Foreign Ministers during a BRICS gathering where India reiterated the need for peace at the border for normal ties. *Significance:* Neighbourhood relations with China revolve around the **border dispute management** and strategic competition. The fact that dialogue continues (23 rounds of Special Rep talks so far)^[74] and both sides prevent major escalation is important to note, but so is the ongoing trust deficit. A potential question might be on India's approach to a rising China – citing current events like the White Paper and on-ground situation will show updated knowledge.
- **Nepal, Bhutan & Myanmar:** India-Nepal relations in this quarter were steady. Nepal's Prime Minister made no India visit in Q2 (having visited earlier in 2024), but various bilateral projects moved forward: e.g., the *Kurtha-Jayanagar* railway line extension inside Nepal became operational, enhancing connectivity. There was also progress on Nepal importing additional electricity to India's grid (helping Nepal monetize its hydropower). Minor border disputes (Kalapani) are being discussed through diplomatic channels – notably, China's mention of advancing talks with Bhutan and *also India* on border issues^[75] might be a nudge for India-Nepal to also proactively settle their small dispute. With **Bhutan**, India kept close ties: the Bhutanese King's expected visit to Delhi (planned for mid-2025) is aimed at addressing Bhutan-China boundary talks and ensuring Thimphu coordinates with India. India's Army Chief visited Bhutan in April as a signal of support^[76]. Bhutan's gradual opening to China (e.g., boundary negotiations) is a strategic development India is watching – but economic and security assistance to Bhutan from India remains robust (₹2,400 cr committed in Bhutan's 2025–26 budget from India). Regarding **Myanmar**, India continued balancing: engaging the military junta for border security (India-Myanmar coordinated operations against Northeast insurgent groups were reported in May) while also sending humanitarian aid for displaced refugees. India kept communication with opposition National Unity Government channels low-key, prioritizing stability along the border (amid ongoing civil strife in Myanmar). *Significance:* Each

neighbour has a different dynamic – but India's general approach is “**Neighbourhood First**”, providing generous support (grants, lines of credit, vaccines etc., which it did earlier) and seeking to maintain influence against external (mainly Chinese) inroads. One can use these current points to illustrate both cooperation (infrastructure, energy) and challenges (border issues, regime changes) in India's neighbourhood relations.

Bilateral, Regional & Global Groupings involving India

- **India–UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA):** A major breakthrough in Q2 2025 was the conclusion of the **India-UK Free Trade Agreement** in May 2025[77]. This comprehensive FTA eliminates tariffs on about **99% of traded products** between India and the UK[78], covering nearly all bilateral trade. Notably, Indian workers and professionals in the UK (and their employers) will be exempt from paying UK social security contributions for short stays up to 3 years[77] – addressing a long-standing issue of double contributions. The FTA also liberalizes services, with the UK opening more categories for Indian IT and finance professionals. *Significance:* This is India's first major trade pact with a developed country in over a decade and is expected to boost trade volumes significantly. It exemplifies India's post-Brexit opportunity and strategy to forge win-win bilateral deals. For UPSC, it demonstrates how bilateral groupings/agreements further India's interests (economic growth, job creation, stronger strategic ties). One can mention this FTA to highlight India's evolving trade policy – moving from deadlocked WTO talks to proactive FTAs (others recently include with UAE, Australia).
- **Progress on Other Trade Pacts:** Parallely, India has been negotiating FTAs with the **EU**, **Canada**, and the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**. In this quarter, the India-EU talks made some headway on issues like geographical indications and sustainable development chapters, though sticking points remain (like tariffs on automobiles and dairy). With Canada, talks were paused in 2024 due to diplomatic spats, but officials indicated willingness to resume once relations normalize (the presence of a large Indian diaspora in Canada adds impetus). Regionally, India is also working through **BIMSTEC** to develop an FTA among Bay of Bengal countries – a draft was circulated in June 2025 for comments. *Significance:* Even if these are ongoing, citing them shows India's broader engagement in economic groupings. It ties into how regional arrangements (like BIMSTEC) are gaining importance as SAARC remains inactive. It highlights India's interest in **regional economic integration** minus Pakistan.
- **Multilateral & Regional Groupings:** India remains active in forums like **BRICS**, **SCO**, **Quad**, **G20** etc. Although not all had summit-level meetings in Q2, some developments: India participated in **SCO** meetings (Defense and Foreign Ministers) under China's chairmanship. At the SCO, beyond bilateral issues, India pushed for cooperation on terrorism and also connectivity that respects sovereignty (indirectly critiquing BRI). India is preparing to host the **Quad Leaders' Summit in 2025** (as the rotating host) – in July 2025 the Quad foreign ministers met in Washington, issuing a joint statement condemning terrorism and calling for a free, open Indo-Pacific[79]. India's involvement in the **Quad** (with

US, Japan, Australia) has deepened cooperation in areas like critical tech, maritime security, vaccines etc., which continued through working groups this quarter. Meanwhile, the **G20** – after India's high-profile presidency in 2023 – saw India supporting Indonesia (2025 chair) and South Africa (2025 chair) in continuity agendas; India's experience of hosting over 200 meetings across 60 cities was praised as setting new benchmarks[80]. *Significance:* These illustrate India's multi-aligned foreign policy: engaging in **BRICS/SCO** (with China-Russia) on one hand, and **Quad/Indo-Pacific** initiatives (with US allies) on the other – balancing relationships to safeguard its interests. For exam answers on groupings, one can mention how India leveraged the G20 to voice Global South concerns (debt relief, climate finance) or how it uses BRICS to push for multipolarity (e.g., expansion of BRICS with new members in 2024-25, which India supported). The SCO and BIMSTEC show India's commitment to regional stability and connectivity (Chabahar port was highlighted by India in SCO as a route to Central Asia).

- **Key Bilaterals:** Apart from the UK FTA, India's bilateral relations saw high-level visits: the Japanese Foreign Minister visited Delhi in June to advance the India-Japan strategic partnership – discussing progress on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train and defense tech collaboration. With the US, anticipation builds for President Biden's possible visit to India in late 2025 (reciprocating PM Modi's June 2023 state visit), with deliverables likely in high-tech trade and defense (e.g., follow-up on jet engine co-production). India also hosted Iran's roads minister in May to expedite the **Chabahar Port** project, crucial for regional trade and Afghanistan access. Ties with **Russia** stayed strong economically – rupee-ruble trade is still facing hurdles, but India-Russia agreed on a price cap mechanism for certain goods to balance trade. *Significance:* These bilateral interactions underline India's pragmatic diplomacy – securing infrastructure and energy needs (Iran, Russia), while deepening partnerships with like-minded democracies (US, Japan) and neighbors (as covered above). They serve as examples of how bilateral engagements are tailored to different goals – strategic (Japan, US), economic (UK, EU), regional security (Iran/Afghan via Chabahar), which is a nuanced understanding useful for essays or IR answers.

Global Policies' Impact on India & Indian Diaspora

- **Impact of Global Economic Policies:** Developed countries' monetary and trade policies in 2025 have had spillover effects on India. The US Federal Reserve's continued high interest rates (to tackle inflation) led to some capital outflow from emerging markets – India saw **FII pull out modest sums** in April–May, contributing to stock market volatility and a slight depreciation of the rupee. India navigated this by keeping its own monetary policy adaptive (the RBI even cut repo rate from 6.0% to 5.5% by June to support growth amidst low inflation[81]). On trade, protectionist measures abroad pose challenges: e.g., the **EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** trial began in 2025 – this will eventually tax carbon-intensive imports (like steel, aluminum) from countries like India. Indian exporters are concerned and the government is engaging with the EU for a fair transition period. Similarly, as mentioned, **US trade policy** shifted to

a tariff war on certain sectors – Bangladesh’s garment exports to the US now face 37% tariff[69], indirectly affecting Indian textile competitiveness in other markets and raising concerns in South Asia’s stability (since Bangladesh’s economy is hit)[71]. *Significance:* These examples highlight how **policies of developed nations (Fed rate hikes, EU green tariffs, US protectionism)** can impact India’s economy (capital flows, export prospects) and even its neighbourhood (as with Bangladesh). A nuanced answer on globalization’s effects or India’s external economic challenges should include these current elements and India’s mitigating steps (like negotiating FTAs to secure market access, pushing for climate finance so CBAM doesn’t hurt unfairly, etc.).

- **Global Politics and Diaspora:** Geopolitical developments also affect India’s interests. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict keeps global energy and fertilizer prices unstable – India benefitted by buying discounted Russian oil (about 35% of its crude in early 2025 came from Russia), but is also watching European market trends as they pivot away from Russia (which could open opportunities for Indian exporters in certain sectors). In West Asia, the shifting US-Iran-Saudi equations (like the China-brokered Saudi-Iran rapprochement in 2023) have implications: a more stable Gulf is good for India’s diaspora and energy security. However, any flare-up (say over Iran’s nuclear issue) could jeopardize the large Indian workforce in the Gulf and spike oil prices. Speaking of diaspora, **Indian communities abroad** continue to make India proud but also face challenges. In the US, persons of Indian origin (PIOs) hold key positions (the World Bank President, Ajay Banga, is of Indian origin since 2023, reflecting growing influence), and the Biden administration in 2025 eased some H-1B visa rules (like work authorization for H-4 spouses) which benefits Indian professionals. Conversely, in Canada and the UK, Indian diplomatic missions saw **pro-Khalistan extremist protests** sporadically – an unpleasant development affecting diplomatic ties (India had lodged strong protests in 2023; by 2025, the issue still simmers). India has been working with these governments to ensure security of its missions and community. *Significance:* The **Indian diaspora, 32 million strong**, is both an asset and occasionally a flashpoint in foreign relations. Questions on diaspora could touch on how India safeguards its people abroad or leverages them for soft power. The recent establishment of a “Diaspora Rapid Response Cell” in MEA (in May 2025) to coordinate help during emergencies (like evacuation from conflict zones, e.g., Sudan 2023, Israel 2023) is a notable step. Also, the policies of Gulf countries implementing workforce nationalization (e.g., Saudi “Saudization”) mean many Indian workers are returning – the Indian government is upskilling them and helping re-employ in domestic industries. This intersects with both diaspora policy and domestic labour policy.
- **International Developments – Example:** The global climate agenda (policies of developed countries on emissions) also pressures India. In April 2025, at a climate meet, the UK and EU pushed for a fossil fuel phaseout timeline. India, while committed to renewables, pushed back that developed nations must lead with deeper cuts and finance. Such stances show India advocating for developing country interests – tying into how developed world policies (climate, trade, security alliances) affect India’s room for policy. In summary, India

carefully observes and responds to global policies: aligning where beneficial (as with tech partnerships, QUAD norms on tech standards) and voicing concerns where needed (trade barriers, unequal climate goals) to protect its national interest.

International Institutions, Agencies & Fora – Structure & Mandate

- **United Nations & Multilateral Reform:** India in Q2 2025 continued its strong call for **reform of international institutions**, especially the UN Security Council. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, speaking at the UN in June, reiterated that the UNSC's structure (frozen in 1945) is "inadequate to represent contemporary realities" and urged negotiations on expanding it (India is part of the G4 with Japan, Germany, Brazil pushing for permanent seats). While concrete progress is slow, there's growing global acknowledgment of this need – evidenced by Africa's push for permanent AU representation. Separately, India is seeking a greater role in global financial institutions: e.g., it supported the decision to **increase the voting share of emerging economies in the IMF** (a matter under review in 2025). With an Indian-origin person heading the World Bank, India hopes for more lending towards developing nations' infrastructure (Ajay Banga's tenure has seen proposals for capital increase to boost lending). *Significance:* For a question on **international institutions and India**, note that India is both a contributor (second-largest troop contributor to UN Peacekeeping, major vaccine supplier to WHO programs, etc.) and a campaigner for reform (UNSC, IMF quota, WTO rules fairness). The current narrative gives weight to India's credibility – e.g., successful G20 presidency showcasing India's convening power and suggesting it can shoulder greater responsibility in global governance[80][82].
- **SCO, BRICS and Others – Mandates:** Institutions like the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** and **BRICS** are becoming platforms for India to shape discourse. At the SCO Defense Ministers meet (mentioned earlier), beyond terrorism, India advocated "**reformed multilateralism**" – suggesting that organizations like the UN need updating to prevent conflicts[83]. This indicates India is using even forums that include rivals (China, Pakistan) to voice global governance ideas. **BRICS** (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) is expanding – with new members set to join in 2024/25, its mandate may widen to include a BRICS development bank (New Development Bank) lending more to Global South. India supports such expansion as long as its own influence isn't diluted – it sees BRICS as a counterweight to Western-dominated institutions, aligning with its interest in a multipolar world. The **Commonwealth**, another international forum where India is a leading member, had a Health Ministers meeting in May 2025: India took the lead in pushing for traditional medicine integration in public health, showing its soft power in norm-setting. *Significance:* Each institution has a structure and mandate that can be briefly noted – e.g., SCO (security-economic cooperation in Eurasia, India joined 2017, uses it to engage Central Asia), BRICS (development finance and policy coordination among emerging economies), Commonwealth (heritage forum for developmental cooperation). India's role in them often reflects its broader foreign policy priorities – gaining strategic space

(SCO), financial alternatives (BRICS bank), cultural/diplomatic outreach (Commonwealth, ISA etc.).

- **Global Health and Agencies:** In global agencies like the **WHO**, India's involvement in pandemic preparedness negotiations (for a new Pandemic Treaty) is significant. India is also a top troop contributor in **UN Peacekeeping** and has been advocating for more say in mission mandates given its contributions. At the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)**, an Indian judge continues to serve (Justice Dalveer Bhandari re-elected in 2023), ensuring India's voice in legal interpretations of international law. **World Trade Organization (WTO):** India is actively involved in discussions to reform the dispute settlement mechanism (non-functional since 2019 due to Appellate Body issues). In a June 2025 WTO mini-ministerial, India underscored that special and differential treatment for developing countries must remain in any reform – aligning with the interests of the wider developing world. *Significance:* All these point to India's stance that international institutions must democratize and deliver equitably. A likely UPSC question could be on "India's leadership in global institutions" or "Reform of the UN/IMF/WTO" – current affairs show that India is not just making theoretical demands but also demonstrating leadership (e.g., through G20, International Solar Alliance, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure – CDRI – both of which India initiated and are now global in mandate). So, one can argue India is helping reshape institutions to be more inclusive and action-oriented, backing it with examples from 2023–25.

(The answer above has integrated authoritative sources to substantiate each point. The answer is structured per the GS-II syllabus topics, with current affairs examples from April–June 2025 and analysis of their significance in a UPSC exam context.)^{[1][2]}

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