Mains Topics

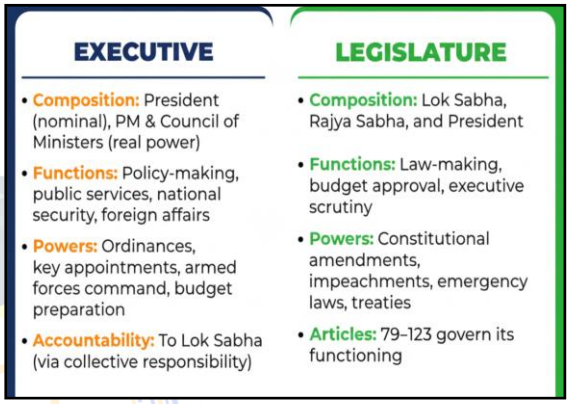
Declining Parliamentary Health in India

Context

The foundation of India's parliamentary democracy, the Westminster model of executive accountability to the legislature, has been fundamentally undermined and replaced by executive dominance.

Mechanisms Through Which Legislature Ensures Accountability

- **Question Hour**: Ministers answer queries on policies, actions, and administrative lapses.
- **Zero Hour**: MPs raise urgent matters requiring immediate government response.
- **Parliamentary Committees**: Standing Committees, PAC, Estimates Committee, and others scrutinise bills, budgets, and administrative performance.
- **Motions**: Censure motions, no-confidence motions, adjournment motions, and calling-attention motions compel the government to justify its actions.
- **Budgetary Control**: Legislature approves expenditure; cut motions and examination of demands for grants enforce financial accountability.



- **Debates and Discussions**: Policy debates during bills, budget sessions, and special discussions place government decisions under scrutiny.
- **Delegated Legislation Oversight**: Committee on Subordinate Legislation reviews rules and regulations made by the executive.
- **Audits and Reports**: CAG findings reviewed by PAC to examine misuse or inefficiency in public spending.

What is the Current Status of the Indian Parliament Functioning?

- **Declining Sitting Days**: Parliament convened for an average of only 70 days annually in the past decade, far below the 120–140 days in the 1950s.
- **Falling Parliamentary Productivity**: 17th Lok Sabha (2019–2024) functioned at just **47% efficiency**.
- **Shrinking Space for Debate**: The 2023 Budget Session recorded **only 12 hours of debate**, a steep fall from 123 hours in 1990.
- **Opposition Marginalisation**: A record **146 Opposition MPs were suspended in a single session in 2023** for demanding a discussion on the security breach in Parliament.
- **Rising Reliance on Ordinances**: More than 750 ordinances have been issued since 1950, with **76 promulgated between 2014 and 2023.**
    - **E.g.,** The 2020 Farm Ordinances were introduced without pre-legislative scrutiny.

- **Weakening Budget Oversight**: In 2023, over **75% of Demands for Grants were approved without any debate**, and only about 11% of total expenditure received detailed examination.

Key Factors Behind the Decline of Parliamentary Functioning in India

- **Institutionalisation of Disruptions:** Frequent adjournments, walkouts, and slogan-shouting have eroded Parliament's functioning time.
  - **E.g.,** Sessions routinely lose 40–60% of working hours.
- **Increasing Polarisation:** Deep political polarisation has reduced consensus-building.
  - Confrontational politics increasingly replaces substantive debate.
- **Erosion of the Parliamentary Committee System:** Committee scrutiny has dropped drastically, with only about one-fourth of Bills referred today compared to 60–70% in the 1990s.
- **Executive Overreach:** Expansion of executive power—through ordinances, strategic use of the Money Bill route, partisan conduct of presiding officers, and weak enforcement of the anti-defection law—has reduced Parliament to a formal ratifying body.
  - **E.g.,** Judicial observations in cases like **Roger Mathew and Keisham Meghachandra** underscore these distortions.

Impacts of the Decline of the Indian Parliament

- **Weakening of Democratic Checks and Balances:** Reduced parliamentary scrutiny allows the executive to dominate policymaking.
  - This accelerates democratic backsliding, as critical decisions—such as the creation of funds like PM-CARES—escape legislative oversight.
- **Poor-Quality and Hastily Enacted Legislation:** Laws passed without adequate debate or committee review often suffer from design flaws, ambiguity, and implementation issues.
  - **E.g.,** Income Tax Bill (replacing the 1961 Act) and the Online Gaming Bill.
- **Erosion of Public Trust in Democratic Institutions:** Surveys (Lokniti-CSDS, ADR) show only about **one-fourth of citizens expressing full trust in Parliament**..
- **Judicial Overreach:** As Parliament becomes less effective, the judiciary increasingly steps in to set policy directions.
  - **E.g.,** Electoral Bonds verdict (2024), the Governor and President Assent judgment (2025), etc.

Way Forward

- **Increase Sitting Days:** Adopt the Venkatachaliah Committee 2002 and Rajya Sabha Committee (2008) recommendation of a minimum 100 sittings annually with a pre-declared calendar.
- **Limit the Anti-Defection Law:** Limit the 10th Schedule to **confidence and money bills** (**Law Commission's 170th Report**.)
- **Mandatory Committees Scrutiny:** Make committee scrutiny compulsory for **all non-emergency bills and provide them with research support.**
  - **Example:** The **UK Select Committees** and **US Congressional Committees.**

- **Establish an Independent Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO):** On the lines of the **U.S. Congressional Budget Office (CBO)** to give MPs **independent analyses** of fiscal proposals, budget assumptions, and long-term expenditure commitments.

UPSC PYQ

Q. ***To what extent, in your view, the Parliament is able to ensure accountability of the executive in India?*** (2021)

Source: **Indian Express**

Reforms needed in energy Policy in era of AI & Climate Change

Context

India's energy landscape is undergoing a major structural shift due to two transformative forces, the global climate crisis and the exponential rise of energy-intensive AI data centres. While India has historically succeeded in ensuring access, affordability, and energy security, the emerging scenario demands a governance architecture capable of balancing economic growth, environmental sustainability, and geopolitical risks.

Emerging Trade-Offs in India's Energy Landscape

- **Green Transition vs Social–Political Realities:** Coal India employs ~3.5 lakh directly, millions indirectly.
  - Phasing down coal risks job losses and electoral backlash.
  - But India hosts **6 of the 10 most polluted cities (2024)** ⟶ urgent need to decarbonise.
- **Dependence on China for Green Energy Supply Chains:** 80% global solar panels, 95% polysilicon wafers, 80% lithium-ion processing dominated by China.
  - Importing from China accelerates renewable deployment at the lowest cost, but increases India's strategic vulnerability.
- **Power Demand Surge from AI Data Centres:** Tech giants (Google, Reliance, Amazon) planning gigawatt-scale centres.
  - These require vast quantities of reliable renewable energy + battery storage.
  - But rising AI-driven demand may push India to extend the life of **thermal power plants**, creating a tension between **growth and decarbonisation**.
- **Fragmented Energy Governance Structure:** Multiple ministries (Power, Coal, Petroleum, MNRE) and states ⟶ slow decision-making.
  - No integrated institution to manage climate, AI, supply chains, private investment, and geopolitics collectively.
- **Private Sector Constraints:** Regulatory uncertainty, land clearances, grid bottlenecks, lack of long-term policy visibility.
  - Difficulty navigating geopolitical risks and domestic compliance hurdles.

Implications For India

- **Renewed Energy Insecurity:** Continued dependence on imported solar, battery and critical mineral supply chains could expose India to fresh vulnerabilities in its renewable energy system.
- **Pressure to Increase Fossil Use:** The sharp rise in AI-related electricity demand may compel states to rely more on coal and gas, potentially jeopardising India's Paris Agreement commitments and NDC targets.
- **Reduced Competitiveness for High-Tech Industries:** Inadequate progress in grid modernisation and energy storage could deter investments in AI, semiconductors, EV manufacturing and aerospace sectors.
- **Socio-Economic Risks from Coal Transition:** A poorly planned coal phase-down may lead to job losses, fiscal instability in coal-dependent states, and significant political resistance.

- **Governance Bottlenecks Slowing Strategic Ambitions:** Fragmented energy decision-making could impede India's goal of becoming a leading global hub for aviation, AI and advanced technologies, as reliable clean energy becomes a critical constraint.

Way Forward

- **Establish a National Energy Commission:** Integrated body like the US Dept. of Energy; harmonises ministries, states, and industry.
- **Implement a Just Transition Framework:** Social protection, reskilling programmes for coal regions (South Africa's Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) as model).
- **Develop Domestic Green Manufacturing:** Strengthen PLI schemes; secure critical minerals through Australia–Africa partnerships.
- **Modernise Grid & Storage Infrastructure:** Expand Green Energy Corridors; invest in battery storage and pumped hydro.
- **Enable Private Sector Participation:** Stable regulations, green bonds, PPPs for data centre power needs and renewable expansion.

Source: Indian Express

Today's Prelims Topics

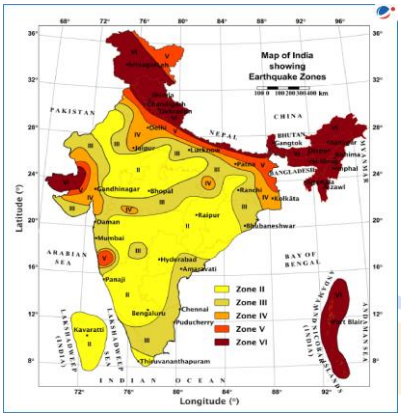
Revised Earthquake Design Code - 2025

Context

India has released an updated seismic zonation map under the revised Earthquake Design Code (2025)

Details of the New Zonation

- **Revised Zone Classification:** India's earlier four-zone system (Zones II, III, IV and V) has been restructured, introducing a new **highest-risk Zone VI**.



- **Himalayan Arc Upgraded:** The entire Himalayan belt is now placed in **Zone VI**, instead of being split between Zones IV and V as before.
- **Boundary Settlements Elevated:** Towns and regions lying on zone boundaries are now automatically classified under the **higher-risk zone**.
- **Geology-Based Mapping:** Hazard assessment now prioritises **geological and geophysical features** rather than state or district administrative boundaries.
- **India's Earthquake Vulnerability:** About **61% of India's landmass** falls in moderate to high-risk seismic zones (earlier 59%).
    - **Population Exposure:** Nearly **75% of India's population** now resides in seismically active areas.

Source: Economic Times

PM 2.5 and Rheumatoid Arthritis

Context

AIIMS researchers highlighted that PM 2.5 can lead to Rheumatoid Arthritis.

What is PM2.5?

- **PM2.5 (Particulate Matter ≤ 2.5 micrometers)** refers to extremely tiny airborne particles—about **1/30th the width of a human hair**.
- **Key features:**
    - Can **penetrate deep into the lungs** and enter the bloodstream.
    - **Contains toxic substances:** heavy metals, sulphates, nitrates, carbon compounds.
    - **Sources include**: vehicle exhaust, biomass burning, industrial emissions, construction dust, and winter smog.
- **Why it is dangerous:**
    - Causes **systemic inflammation**, oxidative stress, lung damage, and immune disturbances.
    - Linked to heart disease, asthma, cancers, and now, autoimmune disorders like rheumatoid arthritis.

What is Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)?

- It is a **chronic autoimmune disease** where the immune system mistakenly attacks the body's own **joints**, especially the synovium (lining of the joints).
- **Key Features:**

- Joint pain, swelling, morning stiffness, disability.
- Triggered by a mix of **genetic + environmental factors** (pollution, smoking, infections).

Source: Indian Express

INS Taragiri

Context

INS 'Taragiri', has been delivered to the Indian Navy as part of Project 17A.

More in News

- Earlier INS Nilgiri, INS Udaygiri and INS Himgiri were received by the Indian Navy under Project 17A.

About INS Taragiri

- Built under Project 17A by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) and Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE).
- Named after the erstwhile INS Taragiri (Leander-class), which served 1980–2013.
- **Key Features:**
  - The ships carry Long Range Surface to Air Missiles (LRSAM), BrahMos missiles, Barak-8, lightweight Anti-Submarine Torpedo, Indigenous Rocket Launcher (IRL).
    - They carry advanced sensors such as multi-mission radar, the Shakti Electronic Warfare Suite, airborne early-warning radar, surface-surveillance radar, and Humsa-NG sonar.

Key Features of Project 17A Frigates

- Hull design is **4.54% larger** than the Shivalik-class (P-17).
- Enhanced **stealth and sleekness**, with advanced weapon and sensor suites.
- Uses **Combined Diesel or Gas (CODOG)** propulsion, including:
  - Diesel engine + Gas turbine.
  - Controllable Pitch Propeller (CPP).
  - **Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS)** for automation and efficiency.

Source: PIB

SIM Binding

Context

The government has mandated SIM binding for messaging apps to curb cyber fraud.

What is Meant by SIM Binding?

- SIM binding means linking a user's messaging app account to the specific SIM card used during registration, **allowing access only when that SIM is physically present in the device**.
- **Need for SIM Binding:**
  - **Surge in Cyber-Frauds:** SIM binding aims to curb frauds conducted using Indian numbers from abroad. In 2024 alone, India recorded over **1.1 lakh cyber-fraud cases**, with nearly **70% linked to messaging apps**.
  - **Proliferation of Fake KYC SIM Cards:** Large numbers of SIMs issued using forged or mule identities are enabling account misuse. DoT's Sanchar Saathi flagged **6.3 lakh fraudulent SIMs** in 2023–24.
  - **Apps Working Even After SIM Removal:** Many apps function even when the original SIM is removed, allowing misuse. A DoT

audit found **45% of scam-related accounts** operated without the registered SIM present.

- **Rise of Cross-Border Fraud Networks:** Investigations show major cyber-crime modules functioning from outside India using unverified accounts. Karnataka Cyber Police traced frauds worth **₹850+ crore (2023–25)** to such overseas handlers.
- **Weakness in TIUE Systems:** Platforms using mobile numbers as user identifiers remain exposed without SIM–device pairing. A TIUE audit revealed **12+ major messaging apps** lacked SIM verification protocols.

Source: TOI

Species in News

Short Neck Clam

News? The short-neck clam population in Ashtamudi Lake is showing early signs of recovery.

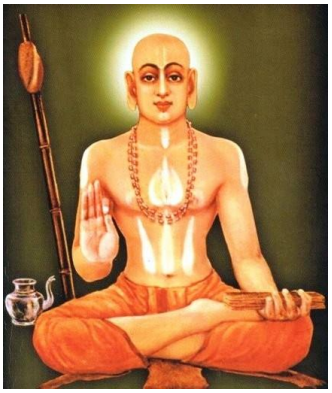
About Short Neck Clam

- **Distribution:** It is bivalve mollusc **native to the Indo-Pacific region**.
  - The range spans from the Gulf of Oman to Japan, including India, China, Sumatra, and the Philippines.
- **Key Features:**
  - **Appearance**: It has a triangular-to-oval glossy outer shell with a variable yellowish-brown colour often marked by darker radial bands.
  - **Habitat**: It inhabits shallow marine and estuarine sandy–mud flats at depths reaching four metres.
  - Act as a **bioindicator of heavy-metal and petroleum–hydrocarbon pollution** due to high accumulation and low detoxification.
  - It is harvested for **food** and to **manufacture cement**, **calcium carbide**, and **sand-lime bricks**.
- **Major threats:** Pollution, invasive Charru mussels, over-exploitation, and shifts in salinity or temperature.

Source: The Hindu

Personality In News

Jagadguru Madhvacharya



News? Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Sri Krishna Matha (founded by Jagadguru Madhvacharya) in Udupi, Karnataka.

About Jagadguru Madhvacharya

- Founder of **Dvaita Vedanta** (Dualism), born in **Pajaka, Udupi (Karnataka)**.
- Taught that **God (Vishnu)**, the **individual soul**, and **matter** are **eternally distinct**.
- Central doctrine: **Panchabheda (Five Eternal Differences)**—between God, soul, matter, and among souls and objects.
- Emphasised **bhakti (devotion)** and God's grace as the path to liberation.
- Wrote **37 works**, including ***Brahma Sutra Bhashya*, *Gita Tatparya Nirnaya*, and *Mahabharata Tatparya*.**
- Established the **Udupi Krishna Temple** and the **Ashta Matha system**, institutionalising the Paryaya rotation of temple administration.
- Major figure of Vedanta along with **Shankara (Advaita)** and **Ramanuja (Vishishtadvaita)**.
- Influenced the **Haridasa and Bhakti movements** and later Dvaita scholars like **Jayatirtha** and **Vyasaraja**.

Source: DD News