

1. The coronation of Xi Jinping as China's de facto president for life and Putin's election in Russia brings a new form of authoritarian political order. Discuss the implications for India.

Answer:-

Global politics is evolving rapidly and great power politics is back with vengeance. The recent re-election of Vladimir Putin for the fourth time and the coronation of Xi Jinping as China's de facto president reflect the rise of authoritarian regime in world powers. History of power play, trade war did not end in 1991 as Francis Fukuyama would have liked us to believe. Instead, it seems to have been a lull in a never ending contest between major powers.

After the Ukraine crisis of 2014, Sino-Russian ties have become stronger. Both China and Russia are being challenged by the USA, politically, strategically and economically. While China has been able to sustain the competition, the growing friendship between Jinping and Putin has made Russia increasingly dependent on China for economic cooperation. China becomes a lucrative market for Russian military and other exports. However, the Chinese government still prefers rest of the Europe over Russia for investment and education of Chinese youth.

New Delhi has maintained that it needs strong relations with Moscow so that the Sino-Russian relationship could be dented. However, the Russian side remains skeptical



because of growing co-operation between India and the USA. On one hand, India is entering in joint military exercise with Japan and USA (Malabar), on the other China is participating in military exercises with the Russian armed forces. The exercise highlights the growing divide between China-Russia and the USA. India continues to have important stakes with all three powers. Where on the front of communication USA is an important partner, India depends on Russia for its nuclear programme and China continues to be the biggest foreign policy challenge for India.

Russia-China dynamic is also influencing Russia-Pakistan relationship where Russia has started reaching out to Pakistan and changing tone in favour of negotiations with Taliban in Afghanistan despite India's reservations.

Not just strategically & militarily, Russia has also openly supported China's Belt-Road Initiative and her Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov publicly called on to India to join the initiative, hoping that India would find a benefitting outcome from the mega-connectivity project.

Given the challenges China poses to India on multiple fronts, the growing Sino-Russian coalition should top the agenda of India's foreign policy.



2. Discuss the concerns about consumer rights in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.

Answer:-

Repealing the Presidency Towns Insolvency Act, 1909 and the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provision) Repeal Act, 2003, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 creates a single law for insolvency and bankruptcy. It creates a separate procedure for companies and partnerships/individuals. The policy sets up the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India including representatives from Ministry of Finance and Law and the Reserve Bank of India.

The initiative is pathbreaking in the whole reform process, however rights of a consumer in an insolvency process remains grey. The concern became highlighted in the case of homebuyers of Jaypee Infratech, customers of Sircel and Nathela Jewellery. The key issue that emerged in the court was the status of the advances paid by the consumers to be treated similar to that of debt owed by the company to banks and other vendors and the order of priority in which the repayment would be made. According to the IBC, the rights and reliefs available to the customer depend upon the nature of relationship with the corporate debtor.

However, in the Jaypee Infratech case, the Supreme Court intervened and directed that the dues owed to buyers should be paid off first despite buyers not falling under the definition of financial creditors. Based on the judgement, the Insolvency Law Committee has included home buyers as financial creditors. However, consumer rights of other goods remain unclear.



Regulation 9A created a new residuary category of creditors which enables them to file claims against a firm under insolvency by filing Form F with the Resolution Professional. However, it still remains unclear over the inclusion of customers with advance payment to the company. There is also an emerging argument which argues that it is not possible to lay down one general way of treating customers under the IBC considering the complexities of business models and dynamics of day to day transactions and can only be determined on a scheme to scheme basis.

With a recent Ordinance in July 2018, an amendment was done to the IBC, 2016 to improve the framework. The ordinance recognises home buyers as financial creditors. It remains to be seen whether similar protection will be sought by other consumer who pay small amounts but collectively form a major chunk of money owed by the company.



3. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is an excellent opportunity for India to secure its economic and security interests in the region. Explain.

Answer:-

It has been a long haul for India. India became an observer to SCO in its fifth summit in Astana, Kazakhstan in 2005. Since then India has subtly indicated its interest in joining and development of SCO. The joining of India was strongly supported by Russia and Kazakhstan. The SCO emerged from Shanghai Five (China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) which was founded in 1996 after the demarcation of China's border with four new nations that appeared after the collapse of former USSR in 1991. This was transformed into SCO by induction of Uzbekistan as a new member in 2001.

The geographical and strategic space which the SCO straddles is of critical importance to India. India's security, geopolitical, strategic and economic interests are closely intertwined with developments in the region. The ever present and expanding challenges of terrorism, radicalism and instability pose a grave threat to the sovereignty and integrity not only of India but also other countries bordering it.

The Central Asia is a mineral rich region. It is endowed with abundant natural gas and other petroleum among other minerals. The world is well aware of the energy deficiency in India and is looking for a stable partnership for its energy imports. India's demand have a high potential for being a market for these resources. The joining will also influence the long overdue TAPI gas pipeline project of India.

Being landlocked, the Central Asia's countries depend upon other nations for their trading needs.



With Pakistan's refusal to provide access through its territory, an opportunity for creation (development) of Chahbar Port in Iran is created for India. India has also prioritise the construction of the International North-South Transport Corridor. Joining SCO will provide a diplomatic push to India's ambitious infrastructure projects in the right direction.

India's membership in the SCO will provide a welcome opportunity to develop diplomatic links with Central Asia, China, Afghanistan. It would increase the dialogue between China-India and Pakistan-India and at the same time can create potential participation of India in the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

India has demonstrated its keen interest in strengthening multi faceted relations with Central Asia at various platforms and occasions. In future, India's development experience, particularly in promoting agriculture, small and medium enterprises, pharmaceuticals and information Technology can be of immense benefit to the Central Asian nations.



5. Israel's 'Nation State' law has the potential to spread havoc in the already volatile Middle East region. Critically evaluate by keeping in mind India's position on the issue.

Answer:- Amidst strong protest, the Israeli Parliament passed on a law stating that Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish people and they have an exclusive right to self determination. The law further recognises Hebrew as the national language and Jerusalem, whole and united as the capital of Israel. It vows to promote and preserve Jewish settlements, which it sees to be of national value.

The legislation which will become one of Israel's powerful Basic law, has constitutional status. It makes no mention of equality or democracy making Israeli Arabs who are descendants of Palestine, a minority. The Arabs constitute 17.5% of total population. The law can allow open discrimination against them and other minorities of Israel. The law strips Arabic, the first language of 1.8 million people, of its national language status and grants it a 'special' status.

The supporters of the law argue that the law will provide a boost to Israel's Jewish identity and will not discriminate against minorities. But the reality looks more complicated in Israel and other acquired territories. Israel has a history of anti-minority politics, making Arabs insecure and scared against the law. The Israeli's Jewish right to self determination, downgrades the status of the Arabs and other minorities and sends a clear message of discrimination.



The emphasis on Jerusalem and the promise to promote settlements pose a direct threat to any peace process with Palestinians. Jerusalem remains a disputed territory, with Palestine seeing its eastern part as their future capital. Israel's claim over the whole city remains a key point of the existing dispute between the two countries. If Israel promotes Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territory, it no longer commands confidence over the two-state solutions.

India maintains relations with both Israel and Palestine. While on one hand India has strong defence ties with Israel, it has simultaneously strengthened its ties with Palestine as well. In the scenario where Israel has spelled out open discriminatory policies against Arabs and laid claim over Palestinian territory, it makes India's position difficult between the two countries. India has supported the two state solution but the position comes in dilemma with Israel's current actions.



6. India's initiative in Sri Lanka to develop the loss making Mattala airport will end up being yet another white elephant project in the region. Discuss in the context of India's efforts in the IOR to out manoeuvre China.

Answer:-

The small fishing town of Hambantota, near the southern tip of Sri Lanka, has long been a matter of concern for the nation's interested in China's Belt and Road Initiative. China identified Hambantota as one of the pearls in its String of Pearls initiative in the Indian Ocean. About a decade ago Chinese companies were contracted to build a big new port (to serve as an alternate to Colombo), an international airport (Mattala Airport) and a cricket stadium: all connected by China-built highways. It was a part of the dream of Mahinda Rajapaksa to turn his own sleepy constituency into a global shipping hub. The new port located next to the busiest sea lanes across northern Indian Ocean made it a natural hub for transshipment and logistics.

The whole project turned out to be a white elephant. International shipping companies had no interest in using Hambantota, when there was an excellent opportunity at nearby Colombo. The Mattallata airport sits virtually unused with only one international flight a week (which was also recently discontinued). Now, the Port would be run by the state run China Merchants Ports Holdings and the airport would be run by the Airport Authority of India with 70% equity for the period of 40 years.

The Chinese takeover of Hambantota port only increases New Delhi's worries that it will become an Indian Ocean hub for the Chinese navy base. Its proximity to India would make it highly vulnerable



from the defense perspective. Hambantota would also make a fine logistic base for Chinese navy. Although, Colombo has repeatedly claimed that no Chinese naval facility will be permitted in Sri Lanka but New Delhi remains skeptical of growing Chinese influence in the Sri Lankan territory.

This is where occupying 'the world's emptiest airport' becomes strategically important for India. With no clear action plan, India has offered to acquire the airport. The main point of the deal is to discourage China from making the Port, a naval base. As a naval base would require maritime air surveillance capabilities and hence an airport. Control over Hambantota airport will give India considerable control over how the port is used.

The long and twisted saga of Hambantota is emblematic of growing strategic competition in the Indian Ocean region, much of it focussed on ownership and access to infrastructure.



7. Evaluate the need for lateral entry into civil services despite the fact that the generalist nature of Indian bureaucracy is designed to give scope for specialization.

Answer:-

A recent move by the Government of India seeking applications to fill in 10 posts of Joint Secretary has caused consternation. Despite the overwhelming response by the applicants, the bureaucracy remains concerned and a writ petition has been filed by a retired IAS officer, against the same.

Many serving ICS officers see this move as threatening their hegemony. Some retired officials consider it as the beginning of the end of 'neutral' and impartial' civil service with the likely induction of loyalists to the current dispensation. It has also been marked as the privatization of Civil Services. However, a significant portion of intellects and policy makers consider the move a fair decision that needs a fair trial.

The concept of a 'generalist' higher civil service can be contextualised against technical/specialised bodies on one side and the lay political executive on top. Higher bureaucracy in the secretariat often has to examine proposals received from specialised departments and in consultation with other ministries/departments prepare a cohesive note to facilitate the Ministry concerned to take a final decision. The key officials in the secretariat, from the Joint Secretary to the Secretary, are the personnels guiding the consultative process and advising the political executive to take a final call. To make an abstract idea practically implementable becomes the chief concern of these officials.

The question often remains in this process is whether the higher bureaucracy is equipped to comprehend



complex technical issues in order to properly aid and advise the Minister and decide on the fate of the policy. Concerted efforts should be made to help bureaucrats, after their first decade of service, acquire specialisation in broad sector like social, infrastructure and financial, based on their qualification, aptitude and preference.

Those inside the system feel threatened that their territory is under assault. One perceived fear is that the number of such lateral entrants may be increased with time and the political leadership by divide & rule mechanism use it to demoralise the steel frame of the governance structure. The second fear is of leaks in recruiting which could be overcome by inclusion of UPSC in the recruitment process.

The government must ensure that only candidates, the likes of whom are not available in the existing system, are appointed. If they turn out to be truly outstanding, there should be provisions to induct them permanently in the government, with the approval of UPSC and consider them for higher postings.



8. The Prime Minister has recently ~~launched~~ announced ISRO's ambitious manned space mission - 'Gaganyaan' - as India's next big venture in space exploration. Critically examine the challenges that lie ahead for ISRO and discuss the feasibility of the mission.

Answer:-

With the Prime Minister announcing on the Independence Day in 2018 that an Indian astronaut would go into space by 2022, the Indian Space Research Organisation has finally got a definitive timeline for a project it has been working on for the last 15 years. While preparations have been on from 2004, when the Planning Committee of ISRO endorsed the idea, the formal approval from the government is still pending.

A manned space mission is very different from all other missions that ISRO has so far completed. In terms of complexity, Gaganyaan surpasses Chandrayaan and Mangalyaan. For a manned mission, the key distinguishing capabilities that ISRO has had to develop include the ability to bring the spacecraft back to Earth after flight and to build a spacecraft in which astronauts can live in Earth-like conditions in space. Over the years, ISRO has successfully tested many of the technologies that are required, but many others are still to be developed and tested.

One of the most important requirements is the development of a launch vehicle that can carry heavy payloads into space. The spacecraft carrying human beings, called crew module, is likely to weigh in excess of 5 to 6 tonnes. ISRO's main launch vehicle Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) which carried Chandrayaan & Mangalyaan, can carry payloads that are barely upto 2 tonnes and that too in orbits at



about 600 km altitude from the Earth's surface. The development of GSLV Mk-III hence becomes important.

The satellites usually launched by ISRO, like those of communication or remote sensing, are meant to remain in space, even when their life is over. Any manned spacecraft, needs to come back. This involves mastering of the highly complicated and dangerous reentry and recovery ability. The spacecraft needs to bear high temperatures created due to friction. The spacecraft needs to reenter the atmosphere at a very precise speed and angle, even a slightest deviation may lead to a disaster. Despite the successful testing of Crew module Atmospheric Reentry Experiment in 2014, many more tests need to be done.

For the safety and security of the crew, ISRO further needs to work on Crew escape system where astronauts can escape in case of faulty launch. The Environment Control and Life Support system meant to secure crew's condition inside the module also needs to be worked on. It controls parameters like temperature, pressure, oxygen levels which are essential for survival. Lastly, one of the most essential steps is the training of astronauts which is yet to take off.