

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## August (Week-3&4)

### 1. UNIFIED PENSION SCHEME -

- The Union Cabinet approved the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS), which will provide government employees with assured pension after retirement.
- The scheme will be effective from 1st April, 2025 with central government employees shifting to UPS from the current National Pension System (NPS). State governments will also have the option to adopt the Unified Pension Scheme.



#### What are the Provisions of the Unified Pension Scheme-

- **Assured Pension-** This would amount to 50% of the employee's average basic pay drawn over the last 12 months before retirement for a minimum qualifying service of 25 years.
- **Assured Minimum Pension-** In the case of retirement after a minimum 10 years of service, the UPS provides for an assured minimum pension of Rs 10,000 per month.
- **Assured Family Pension-** Upon a retiree's death, their immediate family would be eligible for 60% of the pension last drawn by the retiree.
- **Inflation Indexation-** Dearness relief will be available on the above mentioned three kinds of pensions.
- The employees can still opt to remain under the NPS. However, an employee can only opt for once, once opted, the option can not be changed.

#### Differences between UPS, Old Pension Scheme (OPS) and National Pension Scheme (NPS)-

- **Pension Calculation Method-** In OPS, pension was fixed at 50% of the last base salary plus dearness allowance (DA). In UPS, pension is calculated as 50% of the average of the basic salary plus DA drawn in the last year before retirement. This adjustment means a slightly lower pension if an employee receives a promotion shortly before retiring.
- **Employee Contribution-** In OPS, no employee contribution was required. In UPS, the employee contribution amount is 10% of the basic pay, and the DA and the government will also contribute 18.5%. NPS required a 10% contribution from the central government employee's basic salary and 14% contribution from the government.

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## 2. INDIA'S PM VISIT TO UKRAINE -

- India's Prime Minister paid a visit to Ukraine at the invitation of Ukraine's President. It was the first Indian head of state to visit Ukraine since its independence in 1991. The visit focused on cooperation in defence as India operates a large inventory of military equipment of Ukrainian origin.

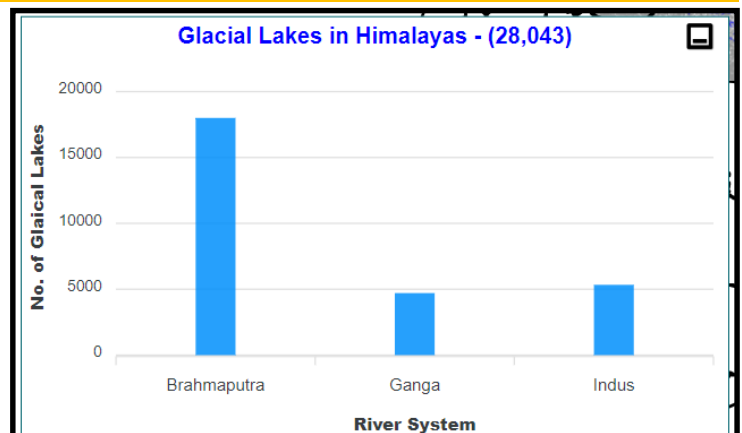


### Key Takeaways from India's PM Visit to Ukraine-

- Clarification of India's Stance on the Russia-Ukraine War-** India's PM emphasised that India has never been neutral in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and has always stood for peace.
- Formation of an Intergovernmental Commission-** An Intergovernmental Commission between India and Ukraine has been established to restore and deepen bilateral trade and economic relations to pre-conflict levels. Bilateral trade has reached USD 3.386 billion in 2021-22.
- Signing of Four Key Agreements-** Both signed four agreements covering areas such as agriculture, the food industry, medical product regulation, and cultural cooperation.
- Renewable Energy-** India and Africa are uniquely positioned to lead in renewable energy, particularly solar power. The vision of "One World, One Grid" aims to connect energy grids overland and underwater.
- Bhishm Cubes Gifted to Ukraine-** India gifted four **Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita & Maitri (BHISHMA) cubes to Ukraine**, designed to provide emergency medical care through mobile hospitals.
- These cubes are part of Project Aarogya Maitri, a program to offer crucial medical supplies and ensure rapid deployment of medical facilities in crisis situations.

## 3. NATIONAL GLACIAL LAKE OUTBURST FLOODS RISK MITIGATION PROGRAMME -

- The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has taken up expeditions to glaciers at an altitude of 4500m and above to map their vulnerability to Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF).
- Of the nearly 7,500 glacial lakes in the Indian Himalayas, NDMA has finalised 189 high-risk lakes that require mitigation measures.



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#### National Glacial Lake Outburst Floods Risk Mitigation Programme (NGRMP)-

- It is an initiative launched by the Government of India to address the risks posed by GLOFs. 16 teams went out for expedition out of which 15 teams completed their expedition. Another seven expeditions are underway.
- **Of the 15 expeditions completed, 6 were in Sikkim, 6 in Ladakh, 1 in Himachal Pradesh, and 2 in Jammu and Kashmir.**
- Teams on expeditions assess the structural stability and potential breach points of glacial lakes, gathering relevant hydrological and geological samples and data, measuring water quality and flow rates, identifying risk zones and making downstream communities aware.

#### 4. RECENTLY, UNITED STATES (US) GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE SENSITISING INDIAN COMPANIES AND EXPORTERS TO DETER THEM FROM SUPPLYING DUAL-USE TECHNOLOGY TO RUSSIA -

- Exporting chemicals, aeronautic parts, and components that can be used in defence equipment can attract Western sanctions.

#### What are Dual Use Goods/Technologies -

- **Dual-use goods are items that can be used both for civilian and military applications.** Examples of dual-use goods and technology include global positioning satellites, missiles, nuclear technology, chemical and biological tools, night vision technology, thermal imaging, drones etc.
- **Hypersonics-** Hypersonic systems fly at or above 5 times the speed of sound. They could be used for low-cost satellite launches and as a backup if satellites fail.
- **Integrated Network Systems-of-Systems-** It allows governments to better integrate many diverse mission systems and provide fully networked command, control, and communication that is capable, resilient, and secure.
- **Microelectronics-** Every military and commercial system relies on microelectronics for creation of personal computers, cell phones and defence equipment.
- Export Controls Provisions Related to Dual Use Goods/Technologies, Their trade and export are regulated by multilateral dual-use export control regimes-
- **Wassenaar Arrangement (WA)-** It aims to contribute to regional and international security and stability, by promoting transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies. India was inducted to the Wassenaar Arrangement in 2017 as the 42nd member.



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- **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)**- NSG is a group of nuclear fuel/technologies supplier countries that seeks to contribute to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. India is not a member of the NSG as India's non-signatory status to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Australia Group- It is an informal forum of countries which, through the harmonisation of export controls, seeks to ensure that exports do not contribute to the development of chemical or biological weapons. India joined the Australia Group in 2018.
- **Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)**- MTCR is an informal and voluntary partnership among 35 countries to prevent the proliferation of missile and unmanned aerial vehicle technology capable of carrying greater than 500 kg payload for more than 300 km.

## 5. BHARATMALA PARIYOJANA -

- **Nearly 50% of the Bharatmala Pariyojana Phase-I, a flagship road network expansion program, has been completed as of 31st March 2024** and is expected to be completed by 2027-28.
- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways' Vision 2047 aims to provide high-speed corridors within 100-150 km of all citizens and enhance passenger convenience by developing world-class amenities.
- This vision serves as the basis for the Master Plan for highways and related infrastructure in India.
- **The first-phase of Bharatmala was announced in 2017 and was to be completed by 2022, but it could not be completed due to slow implementation and financial constraints.**
- Bharatmala, Sagarmala, dry/land ports, and other infrastructure projects have been incorporated under PM Gati-Shakti Plan to enhance connectivity and logistics efficiency.



## 6. INDIA IS EXPERIENCING A SIGNIFICANT SHORTAGE OF NATURAL RUBBER (NR), WITH DOMESTIC PRODUCTION LAGGING BEHIND DEMAND BY APPROXIMATELY 5.5 LAKH TONNES -

- **Demand-Supply Gap**- Despite an increase in NR production from 8.39 lakh tonne in 2022-23 to 8.57 lakh tonne in 2023-24, consumption has surged from 13.5 lakh tonne to 14.16 lakh tonne.
- Currently, **about 70% of NR is consumed by the tyre industry.** The remaining 30% is utilised by non-tyre companies, predominantly small and micro enterprises, which are suffering the most.
- India has historically depended on NR imports due to insufficient domestic production. **India imports natural rubber to meet local demand from neighbouring countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia.**

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- NR imports face a 25% customs duty or Rs 30 per kg whichever is higher. Latex rubber used for making gloves and balloons has a total 75% duty.
- **The turmoil in Bangladesh has disrupted the smooth supply of NR to India.** The availability of NR is uncertain due to heavy monsoons reducing tapping activities. This situation particularly impacts industries that depend on NR.



## 7. RECENTLY, THE MINISTRY OF POWER HAS MODIFIED THE GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPORT/EXPORT (CROSS-BORDER) OF ELECTRICITY, 2018 -

- It allows power plants that export electricity to neighbouring countries to sell their output back in India.
- **It also allows sale of power to the local grid if there is a delay in payments from neighbouring countries.** Rules were amended in the wake of ongoing unrest in Bangladesh.
- Indian Electricity Suppliers to Bangladesh- Adani Power's 1600 MW Godda power plant in Jharkhand sells electricity exclusively to Bangladesh since 2023.
- An exclusive power purchase agreement between Adani Power and the Bangladesh Power **Development Board was signed in 2017.** National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC) also has an agreement to supply 500 MW of power to Bangladesh.



## 8. INDIA'S SECOND NUCLEAR-POWERED BALLISTIC MISSILE SUBMARINE SSBN (SHIP, SUBMERSIBLE, BALLISTIC, NUCLEAR) IS SCHEDULED TO BE COMMISSIONED AT VISAKHAPATNAM -

- **It is India's second indigenously built nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN).** India's first nuclear submarine, INS Arihant, commissioned in 2018.
- **It was constructed at the Indian Navy's Ship Building Centre (SBC) in Visakhapatnam.** It represents a critical component of India's nuclear triad, enabling the nation to launch nuclear missiles from land, air, and sea.

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- It is a 6,000-tonne submarine, powered by a pressurized water reactor. It can achieve a maximum speed of 12-15 knots (22-28 km/h) when on surface and 24 knots (44 km/h) when submerged.
- It can carry up to four nuclear-capable K-4 SLBMs (Submarine Launched ballistic Missile) with a range of over 3500 kilometers or twelve conventional warhead K-15 SLBMs with a range of about 750 kilometers. It also carries torpedoes and mines.
- Additional safety measures include two standby auxiliary engines and a retractable thruster for emergency power and mobility.



## 9. UNION HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH SAID THAT THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WILL CREATE FIVE NEW DISTRICTS IN THE UNION TERRITORY OF LADAKH -

- MHA has decided to create five new districts in the union territory: **The new districts would be Zaskar, Drass, Sham, Nubra and Changthang**
- MHA has asked the Ladakh administration to form a committee to assess various aspects related to the formation of new districts. **Such as headquarters, boundaries, structure, creation of posts, and any other aspect related to the formation of districts.**
- The Union Home ministry has asked the Ladakh administration to submit its report within three months. Ladakh will send the final proposal regarding the creation of new districts on the basis of this report to the Union Home Ministry for further action
- Creation of five new districts in Ladakh as a step towards better governance and prosperity.
- Ladakh is a very large Union territory in terms of area. At present, Ladakh has two districts –Leh and Kargil. It is one of the least populated areas of India.



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## 10. VOLUNTARY VEHICLE-FLEET MODERNIZATION PROGRAM -

- **Auto manufacturers have agreed to offer discounts on commercial and passenger vehicles against a scrappage certificate of an old vehicle for a limited period of time.** This scrappage discount will replace the discount customers were getting for exchanging their vehicles from car dealers.



- **Voluntary Vehicle-Fleet Modernization Program (V-VMP)-** The V-VMP aims to remove old and unfit vehicles from Indian roads by preventing their re-registration after they reach a certain age—20 years for cars and 15 years for commercial vehicles.
- **Incentives for Vehicle Replacement-** Automakers are offering discounts between 1.5% and 3%, or up to Rs 25,000, to encourage vehicle owners to scrap old vehicles and purchase new ones.
- **State Government Participation-** Various state governments are actively involved, offering up to 30% discounts on road tax for vehicles that are bought as replacements for scrapped ones.
- **Private vehicles require a fitness test after 15 years; if passed, registration can be renewed for another five years.** Commercial vehicles such as buses and trucks have different testing frequencies based on their age, with mandatory scrapping after 15 years of service.
- **Government vehicles over 15 years old are also mandated to be scrapped.** Vintage vehicles are exempt from this policy due to their infrequent use and maintenance status.

### Benefits of the V-VMP-

- **Environmental Impact-** Estimated to reduce pollution significantly by scrapping approximately one crore vehicles, leading to a 15-20% reduction in vehicular emissions.
- **Boost to Auto Industry-** Expected to increase demand for newer, safer, and technologically advanced vehicles.
- **Recycling and Economic Growth-** The policy is likely to energize the recycling industry, creating jobs and enhancing waste and recycling management research and development.
- **Safety and Efficiency Improvements-** Promotes road and passenger safety and enhances fuel efficiency, particularly noting a 25% reduction in NOx emissions from upgraded BS VI compliant petrol engines.

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## COMPLEX MCQ QUIZ

**Q1. Consider the following passage:**

Recently, this country announced to conduct a comprehensive population and housing census scheduled from October 1 to 15 to gather accurate population statistics. This country is located in Southeast Asia.

This country shares its borders with Laos to the east, Bangladesh and India to the northwest, China to the northeast, Thailand to the southeast, the Andaman Sea to the south and the Bay of Bengal to the southwest.

The above passage best describes about which of the following countries ?

- a) Myanmar
- b) Vietnam
- c) Cambodia
- d) Malaysia

**Q2. Consider the following statements about Vadhvan Port :**

1. It is located in Palghar district of Maharashtra, along the Arabian Sea.
2. This Port will be one of India's largest deep-water ports.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Q3. Consider the following statements:**

**Statement-I-** The Indian Naval Ship Arighaat is the second Arihant-Class submarine which strengthens India's nuclear triad.

**Statement-II-** INS Arihant is more advanced than its predecessor, due to the use of advanced design and manufacturing technology.

Which of the following is correct in respect of the above statements ?

- a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement -II is the correct explanation of Statement-I
- b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I

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- c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect
- d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct

**Q4. Consider the following statements about Paralympics:**

1. It is a major international multi-sport event.
2. First Paralympics was held in France.
3. Boccia is the only sport in the Paralympics without an Olympic counterpart.

How many of the statements given above are correct ?

- a) Only one
- b) Only Two
- c) All three
- d) None

**Q5. On 29th of August, nation remembered the Indian greatest field hockey player Major Dhyan Chand on the National Sports Day. He was known as the Wizard of Hockey and led India to win gold medals in field hockey at how many Olympic Games ?**

- a) One
- b) Two
- c) Three
- d) Four

**Q6. With reference to the Unified Lending Interface (ULI), consider the following statements:**

1. It is designed to revolutionize lending by enhancing efficiency, reducing costs, speeding up disbursements and improving scalability.
2. It was launched by the RBI with aiming to create a private tech platform for frictionless credit.
3. It reduces credit appraisal time, especially for smaller and rural borrowers.

How many of the statements given above are correct ?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

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**Q7. With reference to the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), consider the following statements:**

1. It is the largest crude oil and natural gas Company in India.
2. It was conferred with 'Miniratna' status in 2010.
3. It was established in 1956.

How many of the statements given above are correct ?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

**Q8. Consider the following about the polygraph test, recently seen in news:**

1. It is a procedure that measures a person's physiological responses to determine truthfulness.
2. It is often used for event-specific investigations.
3. The Indian Evidence Act of 1871 bars polygraph results as evidence.
4. Article 20(3) is violated by non-consensual polygraph or brain mapping tests.

How many of the above statements are correct ?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) Only three
- d) All four

**Q9. Consider the following statements:**

**Statement-I:** The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) is the head of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).

**Statement-II:** Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation is the Central Drug Authority which operates under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India.

Which of the following is correct in respect of the above statements ?

- a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement -II is the correct explanation of Statement-I
- b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
- c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect

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d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct

**Q10. Consider the following statements about the Standing Committees:**

1. They are permanent committees that examine bills, policies and the functioning of various ministries and departments.
2. These committees are constituted at the end of each session of Parliament.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer Key**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A	C	B	B	C	B	B	D	A	A

## MCQ QUIZ

**Q1. The Feroze Gandhi Unchahar Thermal Power Plant is located in which state ?**

- a) Odisha
- b) Uttar Pradesh
- c) Maharashtra
- d) Chattisgarh

**Q2. The National Sports Day is observed in India on \_\_\_\_ ?**

- a) August 29
- b) September 1
- c) July 30
- d) March 8

**Q3. The "National Geophysical Research Institute" (NGRI) is situated in \_\_\_\_ ?**

- a) Telangana

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- b) Maharashtra
- c) Gujarat
- d) Bihar

**Q4. Which country is known as the Island of pearls ?**

- a) Madagascar
- b) Australia
- c) Bahrain
- d) Maldives

**Q5. Recently, which country launched its first reusable hybrid rocket "RHUMI 1" ?**

- a) India
- b) Nepal
- c) Myanmar
- d) Pakistan

**Q6. Recently, which space organization has launched 'Tanager-1 Satellite' to track methane emissions ?**

- a) ISRO
- b) ESA
- c) CNSA
- d) NASA

**Q7. What is the theme of the first 'National Space Day' ?**

- a) A New Era of Space Exploration
- b) India's Journey to the Stars
- c) Touching Lives while Touching the Moon: India's Space Saga
- d) None of the Above

**Q8. 'Dumbur Dam', recently seen in the news, is located in which state ?**

- a) Assam
- b) Uttarakhand

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- c) Tripura
- d) Sikkim

**Q9. In 2022, India and Africa's bilateral trade surpassed \$100 billion. By which year is the \$200 billion target, as stated in Future Target, supposed to be achieved ?**

- a) 2028
- b) 2030
- c) 2032
- d) 2035

**Q10. Which elements are generally used in the 'Atomic clocks', recently seen in news ?**

- a) Caesium
- b) Sodium
- c) Barium
- d) Americium

**Q11. Where was the 'Under-17 World Wrestling Championship 2024' held ?**

- a) Tokyo, Japan
- b) Amman, Jordan
- c) Beijing, China
- d) New Delhi, India

**Q12. Recently, which state has reported an outbreak of bird flu or avian influenza ?**

- a) Odisha
- b) Bihar
- c) Uttar Pradesh
- d) Jharkhand

**Q13. Recently, which state government has launched the "Mukhya Mantri Sukh Shiksha Yojana" ?**

- a) Andhra Pradesh
- b) Gujarat

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- c) Himachal Pradesh
- d) Uttarakhand

**Q14. Recently, who has been appointed as the new Director General of the National Security Guard (NSG) ?**

- a) B Srinivasan
- b) RK Vishwakarma
- c) Ashok Kumar
- d) Arun Singh

**Q15. Which two states recently announced the development of religious circuit 'Krishna Gaman Path' ?**

- a) Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh
- b) Odisha and Jharkhand
- c) Uttar Pradesh and Bihar
- d) Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan

**Q16. In the Union Territory of Ladakh, how many new districts has the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) established ?**

- a) 4
- b) 3
- c) 5
- d) 2

**Q17. Which two of the following extreme locations are connected by East – West Corridor ?**

- a) Mumbai and Nagpur
- b) Mumbai and Kolkata
- c) Silchar and Porbandar
- d) Nagpur and Siligudi

**Q18. Which roads are called all seasons roads ?**

- a) Unmetalled roads

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- b) Metalled roads
- c) Rural roads
- d) Border roads

**Q19. Kakrapar Nuclear Power Plant is located at**

- a) Rajasthan
- b) Tamil Nadu
- c) Assam
- d) Gujarat

**Q20. Removing barriers or restrictions set by the government is called;**

- a) Liberalisation
- b) Investment
- c) Favorable trade
- d) Free trade

**Q21. When we produce a good by exploiting natural resources, it is an activity of the;**

- a) Secondary sector
- b) Tertiary sector
- c) Primary sector
- d) Organized sector

**Q22. The GST (Goods and Services Tax), is levied on which of the following products ?**

- a) Petroleum Crude
- b) Tobacco
- c) Natural Gas
- d) Aviation Turbine Fuel

**Q23. Which of the following is called GDP Deflator ?**

- a) Ratio of nominal to real GDP
- b) Ratio of nominal to real GNP

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- c) Ratio of nominal to real CPI  
d) Ratio of real to nominal GNP

Q24. "Forests" is listed in the \_\_\_\_\_ list given in the Seventh Schedule in the Constitution of India.

- a) Union  
b) State  
c) Global  
d) Concurrent

### Answer Key

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
B	A	A	C	A	D	C	C	B	A	B	A	C	A
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24				
D	C	C	B	D	A	B	C	A	D				

## ANSWER-WRITING

Q. The role of parliamentary committees has been declining in the functioning of Indian parliament. Do you agree? Justify your answer. (150 words)

**Why the question:**

Nearly three months since the Lok Sabha election, the standing committees have not yet been constituted as the government and Opposition can not agree on which panels each side will head.

**Key Demand of the Question:**

Evaluate the extent to which the role of parliamentary committees in India has declined, providing justification for the viewpoint.

**Structure of the Answer:**

**Introduction:**

Briefly introduce the importance of parliamentary committees in scrutinizing government policies and legislation.

**Body:**

- **First part:** Reasons for Decline in the Role of Parliamentary Committees:
- Reduced Number of Bills Referred to Committees, Infrequent Meetings and Low Attendance, Political Polarization, Delay in Constitution of Committees:

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- **Second part: Counterpoints Indicating Continued Relevance:**
  - **Government accountability, Forums for Expert Deliberation.**

**Conclusion:**

**Acknowledge the decline in committee functioning but emphasize the need for reforms to revitalize their critical role in parliamentary democracy.**