Topic 1: Federalism & Regional Coalitions — The Southern Alliance

(Syllabus: GS Paper II – Functions & responsibilities of the Union and the States; issues and challenges of federal structure)

1. Context & Concept

Informal Grouping: Andhra Pradesh's Chief Minister proposed an informal **"southern alliance"** comprising Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala.

Objective: To leverage collective bargaining power to build a **$10 trillion-plus economic bloc by 2047** without creating any new statutory or legal body.

2. Economic Weight & Strengths

GDP & Population: The five southern states account for **less than a fifth (<20%)** of India's population but generate **over 31%** of national Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Industrial Output & FDI: They house **35%** of India's factories and receive **35%** of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) equity inflows.

GST Revenue: They contribute **26%** of total Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections.

Global Capability Centres (GCCs): Over **80%** of India's ~2,100 GCCs are located in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Chennai, employing nearly **24 million professionals**.

Air Connectivity: Major regional hubs (Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai) rank among the busiest airports in the country.

3. Issues & "Elephant in the Room" (Fiscal Strains & Demographics)

Ageing Demographic Profile: Median age in the South is **33–36 years**, compared to **30 years** all-India, and **23–26 years** in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Senior citizens (>60 years) constitute **19%** of Kerala's population and **16%** of Tamil Nadu's, against the national average of **11.4%**.

Migrant Dependence: Shrinking working-age populations make southern factories, offices, construction, and farms dependent on migrant labour from Northern and Eastern states.

Ballooning Debt Liabilities:

Tamil Nadu's outstanding liabilities stand at **₹10.4 lakh crore** (2025–26 Budget Estimate).

Andhra Pradesh and Kerala carry debt-to-GDP ratios of **35.4%–35.5%**, exceeding the all-state average of **29.2%**.

Power Sector Losses: Southern states account for **45%** of the total accumulated losses of state-owned electricity utilities in India.

Bargaining Agenda: The proposed alliance seeks to press the Centre on **fiscal devolution** and upcoming **delimitation** (redrawing legislative seats by population).

4. Comparison with Europe & Way Forward

European Parallel: Like European nations, southern states face rapid population ageing and high public debt; however, unlike Europe, the region is not facing economic stagnation.

Way Forward: Shift spending from cash transfers to long-term infrastructure, health, and education; implement power utility reforms;

adopt a shared debt target to enhance bargaining credibility with the Centre.

Topic 2: Fundamental Rights & Public Order — Right to Assembly & Section 163 BNSS

(Syllabus: GS Paper II – Fundamental Rights, Evolution of Constitution, Executive vs. Judiciary)

1. Constitutional Framework

Article 19(1)(b): Guarantees citizens the right to **assemble peaceably and without arms**. It functions alongside Article 19(1)(a) (freedom of speech and expression) as shared public expression.

Article 19(3) Restrictions: State can impose **reasonable restrictions** by law on grounds of **sovereignty and integrity of India** or **public order**.

2. Statutory Provisions & Executive Action

Section 163 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023: Replaced the former Section 144 CrPC, empowering executive authorities to issue orders to preserve public tranquillity.

Executive Excesses & Chilling Effect: Pre-emptive invocation of Section 163, long detentions, denial of access to counsel, and issuance of deportation notices to Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cardholders participating in protests create a "chilling effect" on free expression.

3. Landmark Judicial Precedents

Babulal Parate v. State of Maharashtra (1961): The Supreme Court held that statutory preventive powers to restrict assembly (Section 144 / Section 163) are **"attracted only in emergencies"**.

Himmat Lal v. Commissioner of Police (1972): The Supreme Court ruled that **reasonable regulation** of assemblies under 'time, place, and manner' rules differs from **arbitrary exclusion**; a complete state monopoly over public places invalidates the constitutional right.

Protest Site Denotification: The denotification of **Jantar Mantar** in Delhi deprived protesters of a central venue. The Supreme Court directed authorities to designate **"suitable alternative sites"** for peaceful protests.

Topic 3: Judicial Conduct, Restraint & Right to Vote

(Syllabus: GS Paper II – Separation of powers, Judiciary, Code of Conduct)

1. Code of Judicial Conduct & Ethics

Restatement of Values of Judicial Life (1997): Adopted by the Supreme Court Full Court on **May 7, 1997**, as a binding professional ethics charter for judges.

Clause 8 Restriction: Explicitly debars sitting judges from entering public debate or expressing views on political matters, or on **"matters that are pending or are likely to arise for judicial determination"**.

International Standards:

Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct: Principle 2.4 restrains comments affecting pending cases, while Principle 4.11 permits academic writing and teaching on law.

U.S. Supreme Court Code (2023): Permits public speaking but bars commenting on the merits of pending litigation.

2. Right to Vote & Voter Roll Deletions

Statutory Safeguards (RPA 1950 & Registration Rules 1960):

Section 22 of Representation of the People Act, 1950: Requires prior **notice and a hearing** before any voter's name is deleted from electoral rolls, except in cases of death.

Rule 21A of Registration of Electors Rules, 1960: Requires notice, inquiry, hearing, and a reasoned decision before deletion.

ADR v. Election Commission of India (2026): Supreme Court affirmed that the right to vote is a **constitutional right** under Articles 325 and 326 (though not absolute), requiring complete inclusion of eligible electors and exclusion of ineligible persons following due process.

Topic 4: Media Regulation, Accreditation & Freedom of Speech

(Syllabus: GS Paper II – Statutory, regulatory and quasi-judicial bodies, Fundamental Rights)

1. Media Freedom & Statutory Definitions

Article 19(1)(a) & Basic Structure: Press freedom is derived from Article 19(1)(a) subject to Article 19(2) restrictions. In **Indian Express Newspapers v. Union of India (1985)**, the Supreme Court held press freedom to be part of the **basic structure** of the Constitution.

Working Journalist Definition: The **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020** defines a working journalist as someone primarily employed in journalism across print, electronic, or digital media, while explicitly excluding **managerial or administrative staff**.

2. Accreditation Challenges & National Media Council Proposal

Current Accreditation System: Administered by the **Press Information Bureau (PIB)** for the Central government and **Directorate of Information and Publicity (DIP)** for state/UT governments. Eligibility is tied to rigid organizational quotas (circulation, broadcast licenses, unique visitors).

Proposed Statutory National Media Council: Journalist associations have proposed creating a statutory **National Media Council** (on the lines of the **Bar Council of India** or **ICAI**). It would independently register and license working journalists and freelancers based on professional qualifications rather than publisher circulation quotas.

Press Council of India (PCI): Established under the **Press Council of India Act, 1978**, PCI is a statutory quasi-judicial body that enforces media ethics; however, it only has powers to **censure** and lacks punitive authority.

Topic 5: Executive Powers of the Governor & Electoral Reforms

(Syllabus: GS Paper II – Executive powers, Governor, Electoral Reforms)

1. Ordinance-Making Power of the Governor

Article 213: Grants the Governor legislative powers to promulgate ordinances when the state legislature is not in session.

Judicial Limits on Re-promulgation: Re-promulgation of ordinances without placing them before the legislature violates constitutional propriety and has been declared unconstitutional by courts.

2. RPA & Electoral Reforms

One Nation, One Election: Proposals for simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies aim to curb election expenditure and administrative disruption, though concerns exist regarding potential reductions in executive accountability to voters.

EVM & ECI Reforms: Election Commission proposals focus on technological transparency, electoral funding reforms, and safeguarding voter roll integrity.

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15 UPSC-Style Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the proposed Southern Alliance of Indian states:

1. It is a legally constituted statutory regional body created to manage interstate trade.
2. The five southern states account for less than 20% of India's population but contribute over 31% to national GDP.
3. Southern states generate over 50% of India's total Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q2. With reference to the fiscal health of southern states in India, consider the following statements:

1. Debt-to-GDP ratios in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala exceed the national average debt-to-GDP ratio for all Indian states.
2. Southern states account for nearly 45% of the total accumulated losses of state-owned electricity utilities in India.

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. Regarding demographic trends across Indian states, consider the following statements:

The median age in southern states (33–36 years) is higher than the overall national median age.

Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have a higher proportion of elderly population (above 60 years) than Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

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

Q4. With reference to the "Restatement of Values of Judicial Life" (1997), consider the following statements:

It was adopted by the Full Court of the Supreme Court of India as a charter of professional ethics for judges.

Clause 8 explicitly debars sitting judges from expressing public views on political matters or pending judicial disputes.

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

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the statutory process for voter registration and roll maintenance in India:

Section 22 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 requires notice and a hearing before a voter's name is deleted, except upon death.

Rule 21A of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 mandates inquiry, hearing, and a reasoned decision before electoral roll deletion.

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

Q6. Regarding the Right to Assembly under the Constitution of India, consider the following statements:

Article 19(1)(b) guarantees all citizens the right to assemble peaceably, with or without arms.

Under Article 19(3), reasonable restrictions on assembly can be imposed on the grounds of public order or the sovereignty and integrity of India.

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

Q7. Which landmark Supreme Court judgment ruled that preventive executive powers restricting public assembly (under Section 144 CrPC / Section 163 BNSS) are "attracted only in emergencies"?

(a) Himmat Lal v. Commissioner of Police
(b) Babulal Parate v. State of Maharashtra
(c) Indian Express Newspapers v. Union of India
(d) Association for Democratic Reforms v. ECI

Q8. In Himmat Lal v. Commissioner of Police (1972), the Supreme Court established which of the following constitutional principles?

(a) The executive possesses absolute power to prohibit public meetings in urban areas.
(b) Reasonable 'time, place, and manner' regulations are permissible, but arbitrary exclusion of public assemblies is unconstitutional.
(c) Right to assembly is an absolute right exempt from any state regulation.
(d) Only journalists holding government accreditation possess the fundamental right to assemble.

Q9. Under the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, who among the following is included in the definition of a "working journalist"?

A person employed mainly in journalism in digital news media.

Managerial staff in a newspaper establishment.

Administrative personnel in an electronic media house.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q10. Consider the following statements regarding Freedom of the Press and the Press Council of India (PCI):

1. Freedom of the press is explicitly enumerated as a standalone Fundamental Right in Part III of the Constitution.
2. In Indian Express Newspapers v. Union of India (1985), the Supreme Court held press freedom to be part of the basic structure of the Constitution.
3. The Press Council of India is a statutory quasi-judicial body that can censure newspapers but lacks punitive powers.

Which of the statements given above are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q11. With reference to media accreditation and the proposed National Media Council, consider the following statements:

1. Media accreditation in the Delhi National Capital Region is granted by PIB for the Central government and DIP for the Delhi government.
2. Existing accreditation rules tie eligibility to organizational circulation quotas or website traffic numbers.
3. The proposed statutory National Media Council model is modeled on statutory professional self-regulatory bodies like the Bar Council of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q12. With reference to the proposal for "One Nation, One Election" (simultaneous elections), consider the following statements:

1. It entails holding elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies concurrently.
2. While it reduces election spending and administrative burden, critics contend it may reduce government accountability to voters.

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

Q13. Consider the following statements regarding the Governor's Ordinance-making power in India:

1. The Governor can promulgate ordinances under Article 213 only when the State Legislative Assembly (or both Houses in a bicameral legislature) is not in session.
2. Re-promulgation of ordinances without placing them before the legislature has been held by courts to be unconstitutional.

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

Q14. Regarding the economic infrastructure of the southern Indian states, consider the following statements:

Over 80% of India's ~2,100 Global Capability Centres (GCCs) are situated in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Chennai.

Southern states account for 35% of India's total factories and FDI equity inflows.

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

Q15. Regarding extrajudicial speech standards for judges, consider the following statements:

The Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct permit judges to lecture and teach on law while restricting comments on pending litigation.

Under the U.S. Supreme Court 2023 Code of Conduct, justices are strictly prohibited from writing or lecturing at academic institutions.

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

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Answer Key & Detailed Explanations

Answer Key

(b)
(c)
(a)
(c)
(c)
(b)
(b)
(b)
(a)
(b)
(d)
(c)
(c)
(c)
(a)

Explanations

Q1 Answer: (b)

Statement 1 is incorrect: The proposed southern alliance is an **informal grouping** without any legal or statutory structure.
Statement 2 is correct: The 5 southern states have less than 1/5th (<20%) of the population but generate over 31% of India's GDP.
Statement 3 is incorrect: They contribute **26%** of total GST collections, not over 50%.

Q2 Answer: (c)

Statement 1 is correct: Debt-to-GDP ratios for Andhra Pradesh and Kerala stand at **35.4%–35.5%**, well above the average state ratio of **29.2%**.

Statement 2 is correct: The southern states carry a **45%** share of total accumulated power utility losses in the country.

Q3 Answer: (a)

Statement 1 is correct: Southern states have a median age of **33–36 years**, higher than the national median of **30 years**.

Statement 2 is incorrect: Kerala (**19%**) and Tamil Nadu (**16%**) have significantly higher proportions of elderly population (>60 years) than Bihar and UP (**8.5%–9%**).

Q4 Answer: (c)

Statement 1 is correct: The **Restatement of Values of Judicial Life** was adopted by the Full Court of the Supreme Court on May 7, 1997.

Statement 2 is correct: Clause 8 explicitly forbids judges from expressing public views on political matters or issues pending judicial determination.

Q5 Answer: (c)

Statement 1 is correct: Section 22 of RPA 1950 requires notice and an opportunity of hearing prior to voter deletion, except in the case of death.

Statement 2 is correct: Rule 21A of the Registration of Electors Rules 1960 requires notice, inquiry, hearing, and a reasoned order before voter name removal.

Q6 Answer: (b)

Statement 1 is incorrect: Article 19(1)(b) guarantees the right to assemble **peaceably and without arms**.

Statement 2 is correct: Article 19(3) allows reasonable restrictions in the interests of **sovereignty and integrity of India** or **public order**.

Q7 Answer: (b)

In **Babulal Parate v. State of Maharashtra (1961)**, the Supreme Court held that Section 144 CrPC (now Section 163 BNSS) is a preventive power attracted **"only in emergencies"**.

Q8 Answer: (b)

In **Himmat Lal v. Commissioner of Police (1972)**, the SC ruled that reasonable 'time, place, and manner' regulations are valid, but arbitrary exclusion that creates a state monopoly over public venues is unconstitutional.

Q9 Answer: (a)

Under the **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020**, a working journalist is defined as someone employed in journalism across print, electronic, or digital media, but explicitly **excludes managerial or administrative staff**.

Q10 Answer: (b)

Statement 1 is incorrect: Press freedom is not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution; it is implied under Article 19(1)(a).

Statements 2 & 3 are correct: In **Indian Express Newspapers (1985)**, press freedom was declared part of the basic structure. The Press Council of India (Act of 1978) is a quasi-judicial body that can censure but has no punitive power.

Q11 Answer: (d)

Statement 1 is correct: PIB accredits for Central government access, and DIP for Delhi government.

Statement 2 is correct: Current accreditation relies on circulation/subscriber/unique-visitor metrics.

Statement 3 is correct: The proposed statutory National Media Council is modeled on self-regulatory professional bodies like the Bar Council of India or ICAI.

Q12 Answer: (c)

Both statements are correct: "One Nation, One Election" involves simultaneous polls to Lok Sabha and Assemblies, which reduces election costs but raises concerns over reduced executive accountability.

Q13 Answer: (c)

Both statements are correct: Under Article 213, ordinance power applies only when the legislature is not in session. Re-promulgation of ordinances without legislative submission has been held unconstitutional by courts.

Q14 Answer: (c)

Both statements are correct: Over 80% of India's ~2,100 GCCs are in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Chennai, and southern states represent 35% of factories and FDI equity inflows.

Q15 Answer: (a)

Statement 1 is correct: Principle 4.11 of the Bangalore Principles allows writing and teaching on law, while Principle 2.4 restricts comments on active cases.