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7 PM COMPILATION

16th to 31st March, 2023

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[Kurukshetra March 2023 Summary] Development Directions in Budget – Explained, pointwise
Topic:- Economic development
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Legalising Same-sex marriages in India and associated challenges – Explained, pointwise
Topic:- Indian Constitution and Polity
Sub topic:- mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

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Controlling Fake News in India and associated challenges – Explained, pointwise
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[Kurukshetra March 2023 Summary] Inclusive Development in Education – Explained, pointwise
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Topic:- Social Justice
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Eliminating tuberculosis (TB) in India by 2025 – Explained, pointwise
Topic:- Social Justice
Sub topic:- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

Criminal defamation in India – Explained, pointwise
Topic:- Governance
Sub topic:- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

[Yojana March 2023 Summary] India's post-pandemic healthcare system – Explained, pointwise
Topic:- Social Justice
Sub topic:- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

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Disqualification of Legislators in India – Explained, pointwise

Topic:- Indian Constitution and Polity

Sub topic:- Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Execution of death penalty in India – Explained pointwise

Topic:- Social Justice

Sub topic:- mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

The Issue of Stray dogs in India – Explained, pointwise

Topic:- Governance

Sub topic:- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Institutions of Eminence (IOE) scheme and issues with higher education – Explained, pointwise

Topic:- Social Justice

Sub topic:- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education

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[Kurukshetra March 2023 Summary] Development Directions in Budget – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The Economic Survey 2022-23 gave a positive outlook for India's economic growth in FY 2023-24, citing the country's resilience in the post-COVID era. The survey emphasised the importance of agriculture and rural development for the growth of everyone.

Over the past six years, the agriculture sector has shown steady growth. In the Union Budget 2023-24, the Indian government has given top priority to a number of areas related to agriculture, rural jobs, and rural ways of making a living.

This article attempts to explain the inbuilt policy direction and socioeconomic intent of the Government by discussing a few agriculture and rural livelihood and employment-related focus areas as prioritised in the Budget 2023-24.

Development directions in Budget – Refocusing Priority Areas

S.No	Subject	BE	RE	Variation-RE over BE(in%)
1	Rural Employment	73,000	89,400	22.46
2	Crop Husbandry	1,22,137	1,40,651	15.15
3	Food storage and warehousing	2,15,643	2,89,329	34.17
4	Housing	12,072	20,990	73.89

Source: Kurukshetra

The Budget speech emphasised seven priority areas and underscored the Union Government's intentions to achieve goals linked to the prioritised domain. Ensuring complementarity, the Budget has outlined to achieve **(i)** inclusive development; **(ii)** connecting targeted clients and reaching the last mile; **(iii)** boosting infrastructure and investment; **(iv)** bringing in innovation, technology for unleashing the latent productive potential; **(v)** meeting climate change effects by developing and focusing green growth-led strategic action; **(vi)** identifying and consolidating the power of youth and enhancing their participation in the economic growth; and **(vii)** strengthening financial sector for effective financial inclusion.

The Budget announcements have emphasised on making agriculture future ready and inclusive while envisioning youth participation and encouraging rural employment and income growth.

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An overall review of Development Directions in Budget

Expenditure and Budget Allocation for Select Schemes

S.No	Schemes	Allocations in 2023-24 over 2022-23 (in %)
1	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)	-17.8
2	National Social Assistance Programme	-0.2
3	Blue revolution	7.1
4	Jal Jeevan Mission	16.7
5	National Health Mission	-1.0
6	National Livelihood Mission (NLM) - Ajeevika	-0.8
7	Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)	65.8
8	Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)	0.0
9	Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yoiana (PMKSY)	0.0
10	Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen)	117.4
11	Computerisation of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies	176.6
12	National Mission on Natural Farming	-

Source: Kurukshetra

A review of the Revised Estimates (RE) and Budget Expenditure (BE) of 2022-23 indicates that rural employment initiatives, crop husbandry, including farming and the raising of livestock, poultry and other activities, food storage and warehousing and housing got higher allocations.

These increased resource allocations aimed at stimulating economic growth along with job creation, income and wealth generation and enhancement of overall consumption demand in rural India.

Rural areas and the agriculture sector are seen as important for growth, with investments planned for job creation and development in these areas. Rural development saw a decrease in allocation. This suggests the potential to allocate resources to other emerging sectors.

The budget allocation for rural housing, fishery activities, and water and sanitation has increased in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23. A new sub-scheme of **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana** aims to improve value chain efficiencies in the fishery sector and expand its market.

Additionally, a new Scheme, National Mission on Natural Farming, with Rs. 459 crore budget allocation has been launched to promote natural and organic farming practices and reduce dependency on chemical-based fertilizers.

Development Directions in Budget – Rural Employment Programmes

• The Union Budget 2023-24 has allocated Rs. 60,000 crores to MGNREGA and Rs. 14,129 crores to National Rural Livelihood Mission (NLM) to generate wage and self-employment opportunities in rural areas. However, the allocation to both schemes has reduced from the previous year.

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- To make the implementation effective, the planning process at the Village Panchayat level needs to be reviewed and revived, and a professional cadre of quality experts needs to be raised at the community level to guide the outcome-based public works planning and monitoring.
- The focus on utilising MGNREGA funds for fodder production and implementing notified activities would help the livestock sector and enhance farm income.
- NLM has two important self-employment schematic interventions viz. **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushal Yojana (DDU-GKY)** and **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission** (DAY-NRLM).
- The Budget has announced the revamping of the credit guarantee scheme for Micro, Small, Medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- The village entrepreneurship development approach of DAY-NRLM is aimed at creating a catalytic local entrepreneurial ecosystem and improving rural livelihoods and income by converging rural development efforts with agri-infrastructure.
- The new and innovative rural enterprises scheduled to be established and facilitated under NLM during 23-24 will assure financial inclusion, increase household income, and facilitate farm logistics at the community level.

> **Read more: National Livestock Mission (NLM)**

Livelihoods and Employment through Agri- development

A number of measures have been suggested in the budget to increase production, productivity, farm and non-farm profits and farmers' income. In order to achieve the expected goals of the government, there is need to ensure active participatory actions towards **(a)** reducing water stress by comprehensive water planning; **(b)** promoting natural and organic farming practices **(c)** ensuring balanced use of fertilisers; **(d)** strengthening operation green initiatives though promotion and nurturing of **Farmer Producer Organisations** (FPOs), cooperatives and other rural collectives in agriculture, dairy and fisheries; **(e)** establishing and enhancing agri-logistic facilities like agri-warehousing, cold storage, reefer vans; **(f)** mapping and geo-tagging existing agri-logistics and ensuring viability funding for setting up such infrastructure at taluka level through public-private partnerships; **(g)** enhancing holding capacity and reducing logistic costs of farmers through construction and operation of community-led village storages; **(h)** connecting unconnected areas, building and sustaining a national cold supply chain; **(i)** integrating - negotiable warehousing receipts with e-NAM; **(j)** developing fodder farms through **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act** (MGNREGA); **(k)** developing, promoting and making profitable fisheries sector through collectivised effort; **(l)** doubling milk processing capacity by ensuring creation of primary dairy cooperatives in each panchayat/village; and **(m)** successfully utilising enhanced farm credit target of Rs. 20 lakh cr.

Development Directions in Budget – Digital Infrastructure Push

- The Budget 23-24 has prioritised building the digital infrastructure for agriculture as an open source and interoperable public good to improve access to relevant and timely information services for crop planning, crop health, and agri-development.
- This initiative aims to incentivize banks and financial institutions to roll out end-to-end digital solutions and attract educated and unemployed local youth to provide agri-services. Additionally, an agriculture accelerator fund will encourage agri start-ups and the provision of affordable and location-specific solutions to the problems faced by farmers.
- The cluster-based and value-chain approach through Public Private Partnership is planned to enhance the productivity of cotton crops and increase the income of cotton growers.
- The Aatma Nirbhar Horticulture Clean Plant Program aims to boost the availability of disease-free, quality planting material for high-value horticulture crops.

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Development Directions in Budget – Encouraging Nutri-Cereals

- The Budget 2023-24 focuses on promoting millets as a superfood, acknowledging their nutritional benefits and potential to improve the welfare of small and marginal farmers.
- The UN's announcement of 2023 as the **International Year of Millets** is also highlighted as an opportunity to drive this promotion.
- The Budget aims to make India a global hub for millets by supporting best practices, research, and technologies, and encouraging the integration of biodiversity, agroecology, nutrition, and health.
- To achieve this, the Budget proposes immediate actions to identify, preserve, and multiply quality millet seeds through community seed cooperatives, create specialized seed cooperatives at the village level, and set up small-scale seed processing and distribution units.

Development Directions in Budget – Reposing Faith in Cooperatives

- The Budget aims to create grain storage facilities in every panchayat through Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) to provide storage and warehouse services to farmers at an affordable cost, helping them avoid distress sales and realise better prices.
- It also aims to promote village-level community-led economic growth by facilitating the creation of multi-purpose cooperative societies, primary fisheries and dairy cooperatives in uncovered panchayats/villages in the next five years.
- The Ministry of Cooperation is taking various initiatives, such as computerisation of PACS, creating a national cooperative database and promoting multi-purpose cooperatives.
- The registration of new multi-state cooperatives in the areas of quality seed production, organic farming and exports is expected to address issues of availability of quality seeds and promote natural and organic farming practices.
- The government is promoting and nurturing new cooperatives in underdeveloped areas by offering special concessions and exemptions such as a lower tax rate for new manufacturing cooperatives and increasing applicable limits for tax deduction at source on annual cash withdrawals, amongst others.

Read more: What are Primary Agricultural Credit Societies?

Conclusion

The 7-point priority agenda of the Budget was the need of the hour to ensure a self-reliant, prosperous and US $5 trillion economy.

The Budget 23-24 aims to make agriculture smart, modern, future-ready, and inclusive by focusing on rural employment, agri-infrastructure, and community-led cooperative development. The government aims to increase employment and income in rural areas through wage employment and self-employment schemes and encourage rural entrepreneurship.

The initiatives aim to re-orient the rural economy by ensuring innovative and participatory investment opportunities through public, private, and community participation. The real challenge is to converge development efforts and create an enabling ecosystem for rural/farm enterprises and start-ups to ensure sustainable livelihoods and gainful employment avenues in rural areas.

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Legalising Same-sex marriages in India and associated challenges – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The Supreme Court received petitions to allow same-sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act. The court sent notices to the government and took over similar cases that were already in other high courts. In response to it, the government filed an affidavit expressing its view on the matter.

At the same time, the Supreme Court of India has referred the petitions seeking legal validation of same-sex marriages to a five-judge constitutional bench for adjudication. Same-sex marriage is a sensitive issue in India, with the potential to pose legal, socioeconomic, and ethical concerns.

What is same-sex marriage?

A same-sex marriage is a legal union between two people of the same gender. The government usually recognises it and grants them the same legal rights and protections as heterosexual couples. It is also known as homosexual marriage or gay marriage.

Note: *LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or sometimes questioning), and others. The "plus" represents other sexual identities including pansexual and Two-Spirit.*

What is the global acceptance of same-sex marriages?

It's a 21st century feeling

33 countries recognise same-sex marriage and civil unions

The **Netherlands** was the first, in **2001**

Momentum is growing — **2022** has seen **Chile, Slovenia, Switzerland** and **Mexico** join the club

In November, the US Senate passed a same-sex marriage protection bill with bipartisan support — **70% of Americans** now support same-sex marriage

Also in November, **Singapore's parliament** decriminalised sex between men. Its **Section 377A** grew especially untenable after Indian SC read down Section 377

Japan is the only G7 country that does not allow same-sex marriage. But recently a Tokyo district court underlined the infringement of the human rights of same-sex families

Taiwan is the only Asian country to have legalised same-sex marriage. Its parliament approved the landmark decision in 2019. Its constitutional court struck down the Civil Code's definition of marriage as being only between a man and a woman in 2017

Source: TOI

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As of 2023, marriage between same-sex couples is legally performed and recognised in 34 countries, with the most recent being Andorra. Most countries in North and South America and Europe have legalised same-sex marriage.

> **Read more:** [**The practice followed in other countries on rights of LGBTQ community**](#)

About the case and Centre's affidavit on legalising Same-sex marriages in India

> **Read here:** [**Same-sex marriages can rock societal values: Centre**](#)

What are the issues in the centre's affidavit on legalising same-sex marriages?

> **Read here:** [**About legalising same-sex marriages: Inaction and intervention: On the handling of social issues**](#)

What are the arguments in favour of legalising same-sex marriages?

Marital rights same-sex couples do not enjoy in India

BENEFITS
- Government pensions and medical benefits
- Claiming leave travel allowance for partner
- Right to property or inheritance
- Joint adoption
- In case of separation, there is no provision to seek maintenance by the economically weaker partner
- Right to take emergency medical decisions

Source: TOI

There are several arguments in favour of legalising same-sex marriages in India:

Providing Equality: Legalising same-sex marriages is crucial in promoting equality and non-discrimination. All individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, should have the right to marry and have their relationships recognised under the law.

This is supported by Articles 14 and 15 of the constitution, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. The Supreme Court has even interpreted "sex" to include "sexual orientation" in the Navtej Singh Johar (2018) case. Thus, denying same-sex couples the right to marry is a clear case of discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Ensure Right to privacy: The right to privacy encompasses the ability to make choices regarding one's body and intimate relationships. This applies to same-sex couples as well. The Supreme Court's Puttaswamy verdict in 2017 acknowledged this as part of the right to life and liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution. This right should be respected without any discrimination or persecution towards individuals.

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Enlarge Human Rights: Same-sex marriage is a human rights issue. The United Nations has recognised the importance of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) rights and has called for the protection of the human rights of LGBT individuals, including the right to marry.

Love and commitment: Same-sex couples are just as capable of loving and committing to each other as heterosexual couples. They deserve to have their love and commitment recognized and protected under the law.

Provide Legal protection: Legalising same-sex marriages would provide legal protection and recognition for same-sex couples, including access to benefits such as inheritance, joint ownership of property, and healthcare.

Promote Social acceptance: Legalising same-sex marriages would promote social acceptance of LGBT individuals and relationships, and help reduce discrimination and stigma.

What are the arguments against legalising same-sex marriages?

Some arguments against legalising same-sex marriages in India include:

Against religious and cultural beliefs: As different from many liberal democracies, in India, aspects of marriage, succession and adoption are governed by religious personal laws. As far as marriage is concerned, the Hindu, Christian and Shariat laws, in addition to customary law, govern religious marriages with heterosexual couples alone.

Against the definition of marriage: The traditional definition of marriage is between a man and a woman, and changing this definition could have negative consequences for society.

Marriage is a matter of policy: The Union government, in its affidavit to the Supreme Court, has argued that recognizing same-sex marriages could cause havoc in the system of personal laws. The government has also claimed that marriage is a matter of policy to be decided by Parliament and the executive alone.

Children's rights: Some argue that children are better off being raised by opposite-sex parents, and that legalising same-sex marriages would harm the welfare of children.

[**Has legal complications**](): Legalising same-sex marriages could lead to legal complications. For example, issues related to adoption and child custody still be there.

Create social unrest: Same-sex marriage is not widely accepted in Indian society and legalising it could create social unrest and have the potential to disrupt social norms and values.

What are the challenges in legalising same-sex marriages?

There are several challenges in legalising same-sex marriages in India, including:

Legal hurdles: The current legal framework in India does not recognise same-sex marriages, and amending the existing laws could be a lengthy and difficult process.

Absence of SC's direction in civil rights issues: In 2018, the Supreme Court ruled that being gay is no longer illegal, but they did not talk about civil rights issues. As a result, while same-sex partnerships are legal, civil rights like marriage, inheritance, and adoption are not guaranteed to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex populations.

Cultural and religious attitudes: India is a culturally and religiously diverse country, and many people still hold conservative beliefs about same-sex relationships, which could make legalising same-sex marriages a challenging task.

Lack of political will: Some politicians may be hesitant to support the legalisation of same-sex marriages due to fear of losing support from conservative voters.

Social stigma and discrimination: Despite efforts to promote LGBT rights, many LGBT individuals still face discrimination and stigma in Indian society. This could create barriers to legalising same-sex marriages.

Public opinion: While attitudes towards LGBT rights have been changing in India, many people still do not support same-sex marriages. This could make it difficult for politicians to pass legislation legalising same-sex marriages.

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What should be done?

Recognition by the government: The government needs to recognise that denying same-sex couples the right to marry is a violation of their constitutional rights to equality and privacy. The government needs to acknowledge that the right to marry is not just a policy matter but an important legal and social issue that requires attention and action.

Amendment in the Special Marriage Act: This will require changes in language to make it gender-neutral and remove references to the terms "husband" and "wife." The courts can either accept this reinterpretation of the Act or declare a right to same-sex marriage and direct the state to recognise them under the Act.

Expand the institution of marriage: The reform of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 to include self-respect marriages is a significant step towards dismantling caste-based practices within the institution of marriage. Likewise, it is crucial to recognise same-sex marriage and expand the institution of marriage to include all gender and sexual identities.

Address the concerns of opponents: The government needs to address the concerns raised by opponents of same-sex marriage. The argument that same-sex marriage disrupts the sanctity of marriage is a religious one and does not apply to secular laws like the Special Marriage Act. Similarly, the argument that same-sex marriage goes against prevailing social values is not a valid reason to deny constitutional rights to a minority group.

Education and awareness campaigns: There needs to be a shift in societal attitudes towards same-sex marriage. Education and awareness campaigns need to be launched to help people understand that same-sex relationships are natural and normal. The media can play an important role in promoting positive representations of LGBTQ+ individuals and couples.

Sources: **LiveMint**, **Business Standard**, **The Hindu** and **Indian Express**

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Justice: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

[Yojana March 2023 Summary] Banking: focus on new responsibilities and good governance – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

Banks have been traditionally known for accepting deposits and giving loans. However, the definition of a bank has expanded beyond just a physical building. Today, the banking system has evolved into a secure and robust medium that offers innovative deposit schemes, secure money storage, and quick loan transactions.

Banks are no longer just a conglomerate of traditional banks but have also incorporated new forms of banks such as payment banks, small finance banks, and even the general banking system of post offices and non-banking financial companies.

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Banking provisions in the budget

Source: PIB

Discussions about the banking provisions in budgets have broadened to include topics like tax concessions, capital provisions, and the role of these new forms of banks in the financial system. The General Budget 2023-24 for the banking sector can be analysed by dividing it into five parts:

- New savings schemes and changes in existing savings schemes
- Sources of Government Borrowing
- Campaign to promote digital transactions
- Loan for a specific sector
- Reforms in banking governance

Banking provisions in the budget: Deposit Schemes

The Budget 2023-24 includes measures to promote savings among women and secure the future of the elderly through savings.

Mahila Samman Savings Certificate: It is a new small savings scheme, which will be available until March 2025. This scheme will offer a deposit facility of up to Rs 2 lakh for women or girls for two years at a fixed interest rate of 7.5 percent with a partial withdrawal option. This is aimed at encouraging economic empowerment of half the population and providing them with a secure medium to save their money.

> **Read more: [Women get a one-time small savings scheme](#)**

Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana: It is a special scheme for girls launched in 2015, under the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' initiative. Its aim is to encourage families to invest in their education and save for marriage expenses. Parents of girls under 10 years can open up to two (three in case of first girl child twins) Sukanya Samriddhi accounts with a maximum deposit of Rs 1.5 lakh annually. The scheme is "EEE" (Exempt-Exempt Exempt, i.e. tax exemption at the time of investment, tax exemption on the increase in investment, and tax exemption at the time of withdrawing the entire amount of investment including interest).

Senior Citizen Savings Scheme: Under this, the maximum deposit limit for this scheme has been increased from Rs 15 lakh to Rs 30 lakh. The interest rates of the scheme are reviewed quarterly.

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Monthly Income Account Scheme: The maximum deposit limit for this scheme has been increased from Rs 4.5 lakh to Rs 9 lakh for a single account and from Rs 9 lakh to Rs 15 lakh for a joint account. The interest rates of the scheme are also reviewed quarterly.

Note: *While the announcement regarding the savings schemes in the budget is beneficial for the common people, it will also be helpful for the government. To bridge the fiscal deficit the government has kept a target of raising more than Rs 4.71 lakh core through small savings schemes.*

Banking provisions in the budget: Sources of government borrowing

The Union Budget 2023-24 estimates net market borrowing from dated securities at Rs 11.8 lakh crore against a fiscal deficit of Rs 17.87 lakh crore.

- Banks play a crucial role in fulfilling this estimate as they invest a large amount of money in these bonds, aiming to meet statutory requirements and take advantage of market conditions. To actively participate in this system, banks must have sound financial conditions.
- Currently, all 12 public sector banks and major private banks are profitable, and their deposits are continuously increasing, making it easier for them to participate in the government's borrowing.

> **Read more: [Union Budget 2023-24: Key Highlights – Explained, pointwise](#)**

Banking provisions in the budget: Promoting digital transactions

- Banks are competing to provide fast, secure, and accessible digital transaction services.
- **Incentive scheme**: After the success of last year's programme, which led to a 76% increase in digital transactions and a 91% increase in their value, the government has decided to keep offering incentives for the financial year 2023–2024.
- Under this scheme, approval has been granted for giving Rs 2600 crore to banks to promote Point-of-Sale (POS) and e-commerce transactions using RuPay Debit cards and low-value BHIM-UPI transactions.
- This provision will be beneficial for banks, which are striving to offer competitive digital payment solutions to their customers.

Banking provisions in the budget: Sector-specific loans

The banking sector keeps an eye on credit targets for different sectors. In fact, banks get some facilities with these targets such as the provision of a part of the interest rate by the government or the credit guarantee fund. It helps the banks to give their loans to a specific sector.

Agricultural sector:

- The budget focuses on the agriculture sector and provides a provision of Rs 23,000 crores for small farmers to continue benefiting from the **[Kisan Credit](#) Card**.
- The **agricultural loan target** has been increased to Rs 20 lakh crore, with a focus on animal husbandry, dairy, and fisheries.
- The government offers **short-term crop loans** up to Rs 3 lakh at a 4% effective interest rate if repaid on time, and for allied activities such as fisheries, animal husbandry, and dairy, loans up to Rs 2 lakh are available at the same interest rate.
- In addition, if the bank gives **agricultural loans** through its resources, then they get 2 percent assistance.

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME):

- The **Credit Guarantee Scheme** for MSMEs will be renewed with an additional Rs 9,000 crore, commencing from April 01, 2023. This will enable collateral-free loans of an additional Rs 2 lakh crore and bring down the cost of credit by about one percent.
- Due to the guarantee factor, banks will not have to worry much about the loss in case of loan default and it will be easier for small and medium businessmen to get loans.

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Banking provisions in the budget: Reforms in Banking Governance

- The budget has proposed amendments to the Banking Regulation Act, Banking Companies Act, and Reserve Bank of India Act to reform the governance of banks and increase investor protection.
- Although the details are not disclosed, new guidelines are expected to be drawn for the bank's board of directors, including eligibility, tenure, and reappointment. The aim is to improve the banking system, which has expanded in recent years.

Conclusion

Based on the changes in the banking system, the approach for analyzing the general budget for the banking sector has also evolved. The budgets for the financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24 do not include any provisions for the recapitalization of public sector banks. The main reason for this is that the financial health of public sector banks has improved a lot, bad loans have come down, and the situation is likely to remain the same in the future.

Source: Yojana

Syllabus: GS 3: Economic development – Government Budgeting.

Controlling Fake News in India and associated challenges – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The spread of fake news has become a major concern in today's digital age. Recently, a malicious disinformation campaign led to law-and-order issues in Tamil Nadu, where false claims about violence against migrant workers from Bihar were propagated through social media. Though the Tamil Nadu police responded quickly and countered these false claims with factual reports, the incident highlights the potential for fake news to destabilise democratic institutions.

What is fake News?

"Fake news" is "fabricated information that mimics news media content in form but not in organisational process or intent. Fake news outlets, in turn, lack the news media's editorial norms and processes for ensuring the accuracy and credibility of information. Fake news overlaps with other information disorders, such as misinformation (false or misleading information) and disinformation (false information that is purposely spread to deceive people)."

What are the causes of Fake News spread In India?

Social media: The rise of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp has made it easier for fake news to spread quickly and widely.

Political polarisation: India's political landscape is highly polarised, and this has contributed to the spread of fake news that reinforces people's preconceived beliefs and biases.

Lack of media literacy: Many people in India have limited media literacy skills, which makes them more susceptible to believing and sharing fake news. For example, according to the India Inequality Report 2022, among the poorest 20% of households, only 2.7% have access to a computer and 8.9% to internet facilities.

Sensationalism in the media: Some news outlets in India prioritize sensationalism over the accuracy, which can lead to the spread of false information.

Religious and communal tensions: India has a history of religious and communal tensions and fake news that fuels these tensions can quickly go viral.

Financial incentives: Some people and organizations spread fake news for financial gain. For example, Social media platforms pay content creators based on views, and divisive content can garner significant attention. Therefore, there will always be a possibility that content creators may attempt such mischief again.

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What are the effects of fake news?

Spread of misinformation: Fake news can spread false or misleading information that can be harmful to individuals, communities, or society as a whole. For example, in 2017, a fake news story claiming that the Indian government was planning to introduce microchips in new currency notes to track black money led to widespread panic and confusion.

Undermining trust and credibility in institutions: When fake news is spread by mainstream media or government sources, it can erode trust in these institutions and create confusion among the public. For example, the false claim that the COVID-19 vaccine causes infertility in women. This claim was circulated on social media and other platforms, despite being completely unfounded and not supported by any credible scientific evidence.

Fueling communal tensions: Fake news that targets specific communities or religions can exacerbate existing tensions and lead to violence or discrimination. For example, false information about a particular religious community's involvement in a terrorist attack or a criminal act can fuel hatred and anger towards that community. Similarly, fake news that spreads misinformation about a particular community's cultural practices or values can create negative perceptions and increase tensions between different communities.

Political polarisation: Fake news can contribute to political polarisation by reinforcing existing biases and promoting a narrow, one-sided view of events. For example, the extensive use of social media in influencing public opinion in the US Presidential election.

Economic impact: Fake news can have an economic impact, particularly on businesses or industries that are targeted by false information. For example, Chit fund schemes introduced the concept of online fraud through spam emails.

Health impact: During the COVID-19 pandemic, fake news about cures or treatments for the virus has led to people taking unsafe or ineffective remedies.

Societal impact: Fake news affects the spirit of common brotherhood and increases intolerance in the country. For example, a mass exodus of North-Easterners from Bangalore in 2012 was based on false online threats.

> **Must read: [Threat of Deepfakes in India](#)**

What are the challenges in controlling Fake News?

Scale: With a population of over 1.3 billion people, India has a vast and diverse media landscape, making it difficult to monitor and regulate all sources of information. For example, according to the National Crime Records Bureau, the number of cases filed under Section 505 of the Indian Criminal Code (IPC) against those 'circulating fake/false news/rumours' climbed by 214% in 2020.

Political pressures: India's political climate can make it challenging to enforce regulations on media and communication platforms without being seen as biased or suppressing free speech.

Limited resources: Regulators and law enforcement agencies in India do not have the necessary resources, technology, or expertise to effectively track and combat the spread of fake news.

Technological advancements: Advances in technology, such as deep fakes and other forms of synthetic media, make it increasingly difficult to distinguish between real and fake information.

Lack of trust: Many Indians have a general lack of trust in traditional media sources, which can make it easier for fake news to spread.

Cultural and linguistic diversity: India has a wide variety of cultures and languages, making it challenging to effectively communicate and enforce regulations across the country.

Limited media literacy: Many Indians may not have sufficient media literacy skills to distinguish between real and fake news, making them more vulnerable to believing and sharing false information.

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Regulatory issues: Internet users frequently communicate across international borders, thus regulating it raises its own legal concerns.

> **Read more:** [Are law and technology a solution to fake news?](#)

What are the Legal remedies available for controlling Fake News?

Legal remedies available for controlling Fake News in India are:

Defamation laws: Indian law (IPC Section 499,500 and 505) recognises the right to reputation and allows individuals or organizations to seek legal recourse against those who spread false information that damages their reputation.

IT Act: The Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 provides for penalties for publishing or transmitting obscene or defamatory material on the internet, including fake news.

The Disaster Management Act 2005 and the Epidemic Diseases Act 1897: They helped (especially during Covid-19) regulate the circulation of fake news or rumours that can cause panic among citizens.

IPC: (IPC Sections 153A and 295)The Indian Penal Code (IPC) has provisions that can be used to prosecute those who spread false information with the intention of causing harm or creating public unrest.

The Constitution Provision: Article 51A (h) of the Constitution, which states that "It shall be the duty of every citizen to develop the scientific temper, humanism, and spirit of inquiry and reform" offers a long-term solution.

Broadcasting Content Complaint Council (BCCC): It can receive complaints about problematic TV material or fake news.

Contempt of Court: Those who spread fake news that interferes with the administration of justice can be held in contempt of court, which is punishable under Indian law.

Cyber Crime Cells: Several Indian cities have established cyber crime cells that investigate cases related to fake news and other forms of cybercrime.

Press Council of India: The Press Council of India is a statutory body that regulates the print media and can take action against newspapers or journalists that violate ethical guidelines.

Fact-checking initiatives: Several fact-checking organizations have emerged in India that seek to verify the information and debunk fake news through independent journalism and research. For example, the PIB launched its fact-checking division in 2019.

> **Read more:** [The forecast after a fake news campaign in Tamil Nadu](#)

What are the global initiatives for controlling Fake News?

Several countries are taking steps to combat disinformation, like:

- The European Union (EU) has implemented a **Code of Practice on Disinformation**. This includes measures like transparency in political advertising, support for fact-checkers and researchers, tools to identify disinformation, and measures to reduce manipulative behaviour.
- The United Kingdom is considering an **Online Safety Bill**, which would require social media platforms to monitor problematic content.
- The Parliament of Turkey adopted the '**disinformation law**', the law has provision to jail terms of up to three years for social media users and journalists for spreading 'disinformation.

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What should be done to control Fake News?

Source: Cornell Library

Controlling fake news is a complex issue that requires a multi-faceted approach involving various stakeholders. Some steps that can be taken to control fake news are:

Strengthen media literacy: Media literacy programs should be promoted to help people distinguish between reliable and unreliable news sources. These programs should also teach critical thinking skills to help people evaluate the veracity of news stories.

Regulate social media: Social media platforms should take responsibility for preventing the spread of fake news on their platforms. This can be achieved by creating algorithms that detect and flag false information, and by removing fake news content from their platforms.

Strengthen journalism: Traditional media should maintain high standards of journalism and should be encouraged to fact-check their stories before publishing them.

Promote fact-checking websites: Fact-checking websites can be useful in verifying the accuracy of news stories. People should be encouraged to use these websites to verify the veracity of news stories they encounter.

Punish offenders: There should be penalties for those who deliberately spread fake news. This will act as a deterrent and discourage the spread of fake news.

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Encourage responsible sharing: People should be encouraged to share news stories responsibly. They should only share stories from reliable sources and should verify the accuracy of the information before sharing it.

> **Read more: Policy discussions involving the public as well as tech solutions, would help fight fake news.**

Sources: The Hindu (**Article 1** and **Article 2**), **The Hindu BusinessLine**, **The Print**, **The Quint**.
Syllabus: GS 3: Security Issues – The role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

[Kurukshetra March 2023 Summary] Inclusive Development in Education – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The new reality of the twenty-first century has altered the objectives and standards of education everywhere. Inclusive Development in Education now include Information technologies, especially digital skills and literacy, have become fundamental to daily life. The teacher of the twenty-first century must be adaptable and constructive, continually raising his or her bar, looking for answers, and resolving issues.

What is the Importance of Quality Education?

Education is not just about gaining knowledge, but also about developing critical thinking, collaboration, and resource management skills.
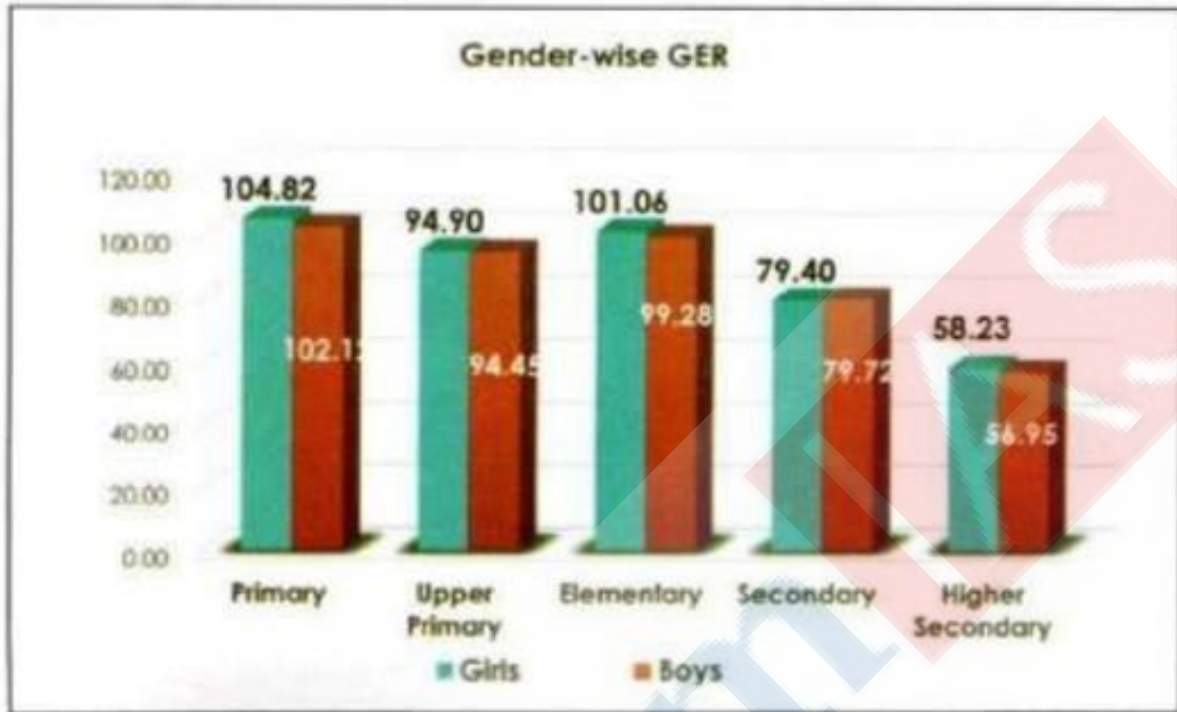
It is essential for improving employability, breaking the cycles of poverty and social exclusion, and promoting equality. The UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG-4) aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for everyone by 2030.

The **National Education Policy 2020** is a policy that aims to address the developmental needs of the country by promoting youth skill acquisition and all-around development in a welcoming, open, and multilingual environment.

About School Educational Scenario in India

Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and prolonged school closures, there have been positive trends in the education sector. For example, access to education is now recognized as a non-negotiable part of a child's right to education, which is enshrined in law and widely accepted in practice in India.

Consequently, in 2021-22 the Gross Access ratio (GAR) of schooling facilities at the primary level is 97.49% habitations, 97.01% at the upper primary level, and 95.48% at the secondary level.

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What are the UDISE+ findings on Inclusive Development in Education?

Source: Kurukshetra

The Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE+) and economic survey reported that **a)** 26.5 crore children were enrolled in schools, **b)** The enrolment of Children With Special Needs (CWSN) increased by 3.3% in the year 2021-22, **c)** The number of students dropping out of school has also decreased across all grade levels.

This achievement is attributed to programmes like Samagra Shiksha, RTE Act, improvements to school infrastructure, residential hostel buildings, teacher availability, regular training, free textbooks, uniforms, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, and the PM POSHAN Scheme.

Most government schools now have basic facilities, including toilets, drinking water, and hand-washing stations, thanks to the Swachh Bharat Mission and the Samagra Shiksha Scheme.

The government also provides funding for the construction of smart classrooms and ICT labs, as well as support for hardware, instructional software, and e-content for classrooms. The GER (Gross enrolment ratio) of girls is higher or equal in all stages of school education, ensuring equitable access to education.

None: Instructional Software (IS) programs include pictures, sounds, animations, and other various stimuli used to enhance the development of skills such as reading, writing and problem solving. IS programs provide individualised experiences used to enhance the general curriculum and mastery of skills through extra practice, simulations, and problem solving opportunities.

Must read: Ministry of Education released a detailed Report on Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) 2021-22

What are the various initiatives taken recently to ensure Inclusive Development in Education?

PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI)

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for Foundational Stage: The NCF aligns with the NEP 2020 and the 5+3+3+4 curricular structure, which includes early childhood care and

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education for children aged 3 to 8. It emphasises the importance of "play" in curriculum organization and the child's overall experience, with a focus on enhancing developmental outcomes through support from communities, parents, and teachers.

PRASHAST: It is a mobile app for disability screening. It covers 21 impairments, including the benchmark impairments listed in the 2016 Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act.

The National Credit Framework (NCrF): It incorporates the National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF), National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), and National School Education Qualification Framework. It is an umbrella framework for skilling, re-skilling, up-skilling, accreditation, and evaluation.

In addition to the above, other initiatives like toy-based pedagogy guidelines, starting Balvatikas in Kendriya Vidyalayas, Vidyanjali- an initiative for improving the quality of school education through community and various intervention under Samagra Shiksha were undertaken to improve the quality of school education sector.

Must read: Year End Review –Ministry of Education

How India's FY 2023-24 Budget made Inclusive Development in Education a Priority?

The budget for FY 2023-24 aims to boost education, skill development, entrepreneurship, R&D, digital infrastructure, green growth and job creation. It is critical for transforming India into a technology-driven knowledge-based economy and achieving Sustainable Development Goals. The budget focuses on promoting an equitable and inclusive education system and implementing the National Education Policy 2020. It allocates 13% more funds for education than the previous year. With a young population of 52.3 crores, the budget aims to provide education to all sections of society and transform India into a technology-driven society. Overall, the budget focuses on inclusive growth and development to create a prosperous and inclusive India.

The major announcements of the budget 2023-24 for the education sector are as below:

Inclusive Development in Education: School Education

Pandemic-related school closures have severely impacted India's school-going children, particularly in government schools and rural areas. The education sector is now focusing on learning recovery, with the budget providing priority areas to be emphasized, like:

Re-envisioning Teachers' Training: The NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of training teachers to improve primary education and ensure high-quality teacher preparation. District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) will play a crucial role in this by providing pre-service and in-service teacher training and becoming centers of excellence for research and dissemination of best practices. The budget has allocated more funds for teacher training, including new pedagogy, ongoing professional development, and the use of ICT.

National Digital Library for children and Adolescents: NEP emphasizes the importance of reading and the availability of diverse books for all students. To achieve this, a national digital library will be created with books by reputable Indian and international authors, including Braille and Braille translation tools. States will also be encouraged to establish physical libraries and provide access to the digital library's resources.

The National Book Trust and Children's Book Trust will donate non-curricular books to these libraries to foster a reading culture and compensate for pandemic-related learning loss. NGOs and financial organizations will also be involved in promoting literacy and financial literacy.

Aspirational Blocks Programme: The government has launched this Programme to provide public services, such as health, education, and infrastructure, in 500 blocks prioritizing tribal groups and disadvantaged pupils. This builds on the success of the Aspirational Districts Program.

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Eklavya Model Residential Schools: Over the next three years, the government will appoint 38,800 teachers and support personnel for the 740 Eklavya Model Residential Schools, which serve 3.5 lakh tribal students, to improve access to education for the last mile.

Inclusive Development in Education: Higher Education

This budget clearly reflects the Indian Prime Minister's vision of "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan, and Jai Anusandhan. "The government has laid emphasis on new age technologies, like:

Centres of Excellence for Artificial Intelligence: To achieve the goal of "Make Al in India" and "Make Al work for India," the government plans to establish three Artificial Intelligence Centres of Excellence in prestigious educational institutions. This will foster a robust AI ecosystem, promote multidisciplinary research, and address scalable issues in various sectors.

Lab Grown Diamonds (LGDs): A research and development grant for indigenous production is given in recognition of the ITs' pioneering role in the nation's research excellence. One of the lITs will get equipment and seeds from Lab Grown Diamonds (LGD) for a period of five years.

5G Services: The government plans to set up 100 labs in engineering schools across India to develop apps using 5G services in areas like healthcare, education, and transportation. This aims to revolutionize engineering education, boost employment, and encourage innovation and entrepreneurship among young engineers.

National Data Governance Policy: To unleash innovation and research by start-ups and academia, a National Data Governance Policy will be brought out. This will enable access to anonymised data.

In addition to the above announcements, Multidisciplinary courses in medical devices and programmes to promote research in pharmaceuticals, with both industry and government funding will further strengthen the 'Jai Anusandhan' motto.

Conclusion

India has made notable progress in ensuring access to primary education and is striving to achieve equitable, inclusive, and quality secondary education for all by 2030. The Union Budget 2023-24 aims to support these efforts and advance the objectives of NEP 2020 and SDG 4 by promoting infrastructure improvements, educational technology developments, and raising the standards of instruction and learning. This will create new opportunities for teachers, students, and researchers, and revolutionize K-12 (K stands for Kindergarten and 12 stands for 12th grade) and higher education in a positive way.

Source: Kurukshetra

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Justice: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.

IPCC Synthesis Report of the Sixth Assessment Cycle (AR6) – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its final report of the sixth assessment cycle, titled "AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023". It emphasises the dangers that climate change brings to human and planetary well-being. The report synthesises findings from multiple working groups and special reports and underscores the urgency of taking more ambitious action to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all.

What is an IPCC Synthesis Report?

The Synthesis Report (SYR) is the culmination of a cycle of reports (the Sixth Assessment) that have been published over the past five years.

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> **Must read: [Synthesis Report: IPCC meet in Switzerland: The significance, likely impact](#)**
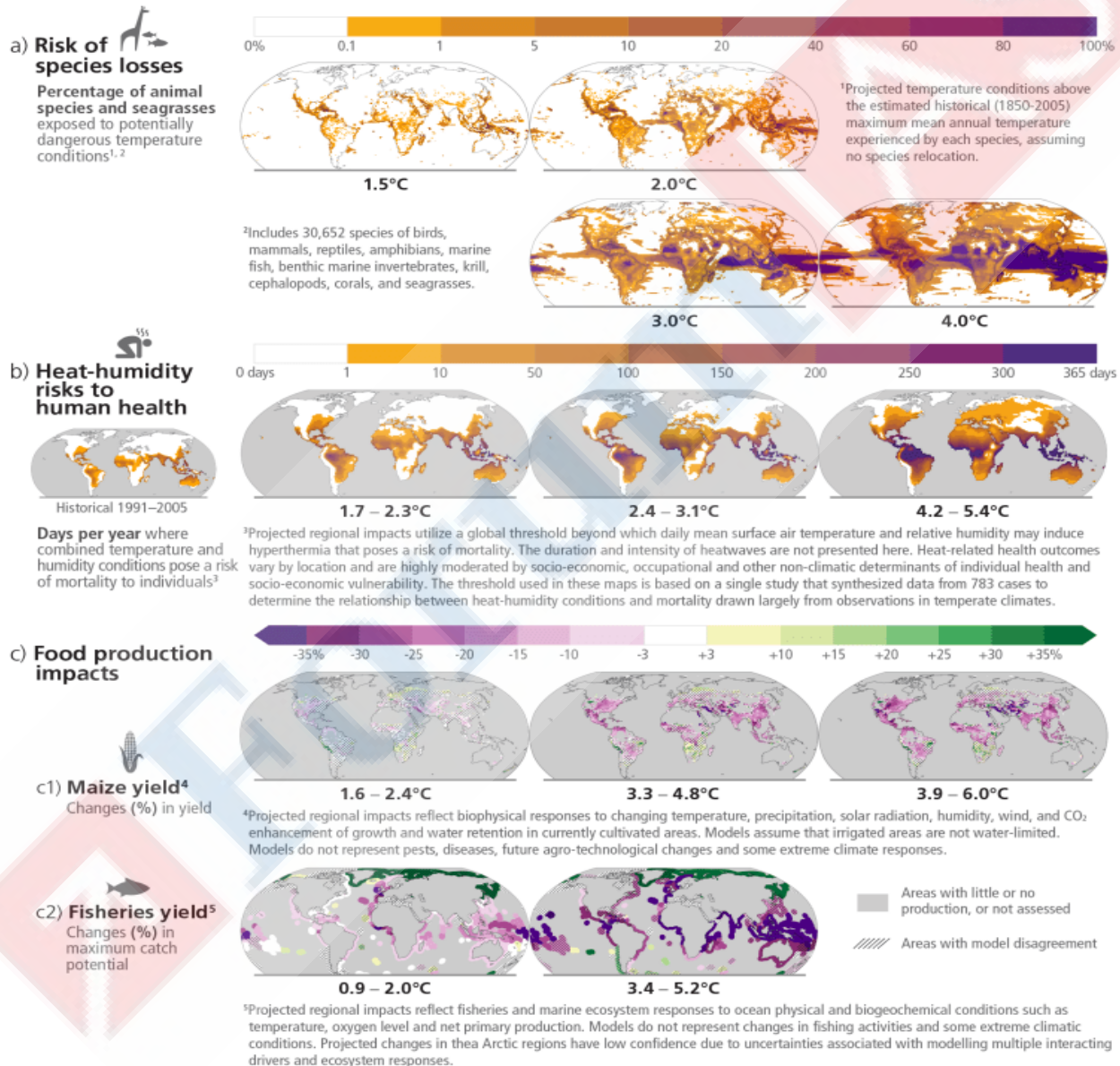
About the IPCC and their reports

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) produces assessment reports that are the most comprehensive scientific evaluations of the state of the earth's climate.

> **Must read: [About the IPCC and their reports](#)**

What are the key findings of the IPCC's Synthesis Report?

Future climate change is projected to increase the severity of impacts across natural and human systems and will increase regional differences

Examples of impacts without additional adaptation

a) Risk of species losses

Percentage of animal species and seagrasses exposed to potentially dangerous temperature conditions[1,2]

[2]Includes 30,652 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, marine fish, benthic marine invertebrates, krill, cephalopods, corals, and seagrasses.

[1]Projected temperature conditions above the estimated historical (1850-2005) maximum mean annual temperature experienced by each species, assuming no species relocation.

1.5°C   2.0°C   3.0°C   4.0°C

b) Heat-humidity risks to human health

Days per year where combined temperature and humidity conditions pose a risk of mortality to individuals[3]

Historical 1991–2005   1.7 – 2.3°C   2.4 – 3.1°C   4.2 – 5.4°C

[3]Projected regional impacts utilize a global threshold beyond which daily mean surface air temperature and relative humidity may induce hyperthermia that poses a risk of mortality. The duration and intensity of heatwaves are not presented here. Heat-related health outcomes vary by location and are highly moderated by socio-economic, occupational and other non-climatic determinants of individual health and socio-economic vulnerability. The threshold used in these maps is based on a single study that synthesized data from 783 cases to determine the relationship between heat-humidity conditions and mortality drawn largely from observations in temperate climates.

c) Food production impacts

c1) Maize yield[4]
Changes (%) in yield

1.6 – 2.4°C   3.3 – 4.8°C   3.9 – 6.0°C

[4]Projected regional impacts reflect biophysical responses to changing temperature, precipitation, solar radiation, humidity, wind, and CO_2 enhancement of growth and water retention in currently cultivated areas. Models assume that irrigated areas are not water-limited. Models do not represent pests, diseases, future agro-technological changes and some extreme climate responses.

c2) Fisheries yield[5]
Changes (%) in maximum catch potential

0.9 – 2.0°C   3.4 – 5.2°C

Areas with little or no production, or not assessed

Areas with model disagreement

[5]Projected regional impacts reflect fisheries and marine ecosystem responses to ocean physical and biogeochemical conditions such as temperature, oxygen level and net primary production. Models do not represent changes in fishing activities and some extreme climatic conditions. Projected changes in thea Arctic regions have low confidence due to uncertainties associated with modelling multiple interacting drivers and ecosystem responses.

Source: IPCC

The key findings of the IPCC's Synthesis Report of the Sixth Assessment Cycle (AR6) are

Carbon dioxide(CO2) emissions: **a)** Emissions reductions have been less than emissions increased from rising global activity levels in the industry, energy supply, transport, agriculture

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and buildings, **b)** Least developed countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have much lower per capita emissions (1.7 tCO2-eq and 4.6 tCO2-eq, respectively) than the global average (6.9 tCO2-eq), **c)** The 10% of households with the highest per capita emissions contribute 34–45% of global consumption-based household GHG emissions, while 9 the bottom 50% contribute 13–15%.

Impact of Human-induced climate change: a) Increasing weather and climate extreme events have caused millions of people to suffer from acute food insecurity and reduced water security, especially in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, LDCs, small islands, the Arctic, and globally for Indigenous Peoples, small-scale food producers, and low-income households, **b)** Human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. Global mean sea level increased by 0.20 [0.15–0.25] m between 1901 and 2018, **c)** Evidence of observed changes in extremes such as heat waves, heavy precipitation, droughts, and tropical cyclones, and, in particular, their attribution to human influence, has further strengthened since AR5.

Lowered agricultural productivity: Although overall agricultural productivity has increased, climate change has slowed this growth over the past 50 years globally, with related negative impacts mainly in mid- and low-latitude regions but positive impacts in some high-latitude regions.

Adverse impact on health: Climate-related food-borne, water-borne, and vector-borne diseases have increased. Some mental health challenges are associated with increasing temperatures, trauma from extreme events, and loss of livelihoods and culture.

Economic damages: It has been detected in climate-exposed sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, fishery, energy, and tourism. Individual livelihoods have been affected through, for example, destruction of homes and infrastructure, loss of property and income, human health and food security, with adverse effects on gender and social equity.
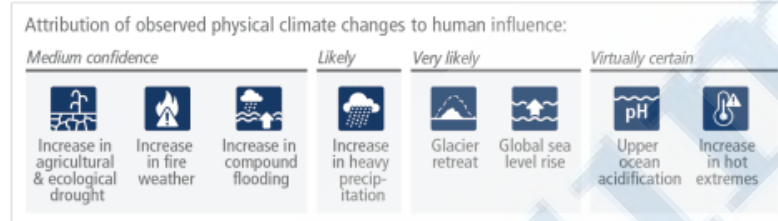
Impact on the urban ecosystem: Extreme and slow-onset catastrophes have damaged urban infrastructure, including transportation, water, sanitation, and energy systems, causing economic losses, service interruptions, and well-being issues. Urban poor are most affected.

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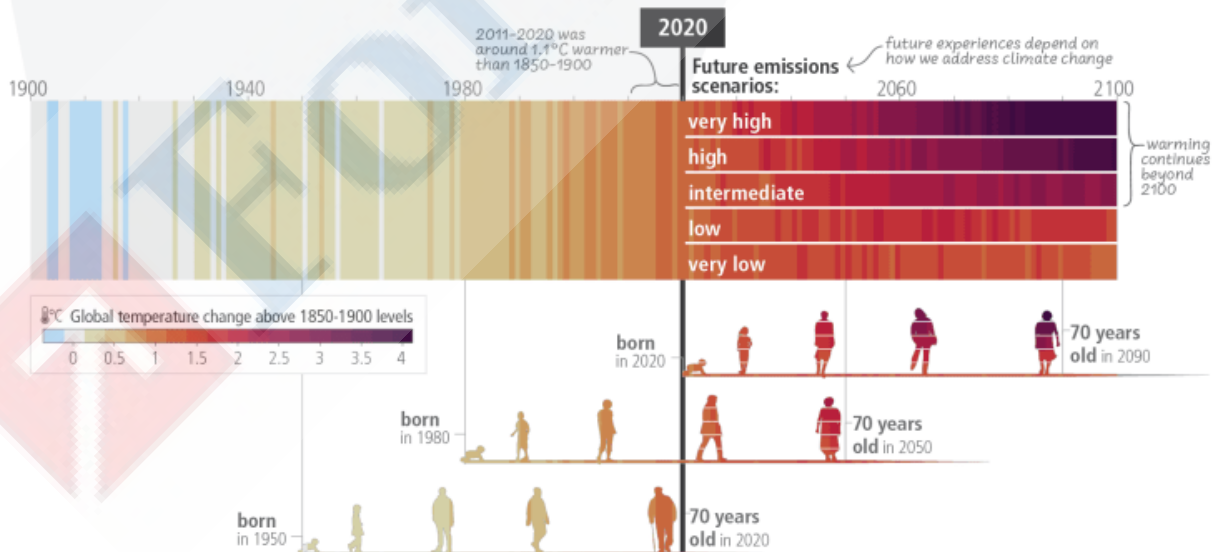## Adverse impacts from human-caused climate change will continue to intensify

a) Observed widespread and substantial impacts and related losses and damages attributed to climate change

Water availability and food production

- Physical water availability ••
- Agriculture/ crop production ••
- Animal and livestock health and productivity ••
- Fisheries yields and aquaculture production ••

Health and well-being

- Infectious diseases ••
- Heat, malnutrition and harm from wildfire •••
- Mental health •••
- Displacement •••

Key

Observed increase in climate impacts to human systems and ecosystems assessed at global level

- ⬤ Adverse impacts
- ◍ Adverse and positive impacts
- ⬤ Climate-driven changes observed, no global assessment of impact direction

Confidence in attribution to climate change
- ••• *High or very high confidence*
- •• *Medium confidence*
- • *Low confidence*

Cities, settlements and infrastructure

- Inland flooding and associated damages •••
- Flood/storm induced damages in coastal areas •••
- Damages to infra-structure ••
- Damages to key economic sectors ••

Biodiversity and ecosystems

- Terrestrial ecosystems •••
- Freshwater ecosystems •••
- Ocean ecosystems •••

Includes changes in ecosystem structure, species ranges and seasonal timing

b) Impacts are driven by changes in multiple physical climate conditions, which are increasingly attributed to human influence

Attribution of observed physical climate changes to human influence:

| *Medium confidence* | | | *Likely* | *Very likely* | | *Virtually certain* | |

- Increase in agricultural & ecological drought
- Increase in fire weather
- Increase in compound flooding
- Increase in heavy precip-itation
- Glacier retreat
- Global sea level rise
- Upper ocean acidification (pH)
- Increase in hot extremes

c) The extent to which current and future generations will experience a hotter and different world depends on choices now and in the near-term

2011-2020 was around 1.1°C warmer than 1850-1900

2020

1900   1940   1980

future experiences depend on how we address climate change

Future emissions scenarios: 2060   2100

- very high
- high
- intermediate
- low
- very low

warming continues beyond 2100

°C Global temperature change above 1850-1900 levels
0   0.5   1   1.5   2   2.5   3   3.5   4

born in 2020 — 70 years old in 2090
born in 1980 — 70 years old in 2050
born in 1950 — 70 years old in 2020

Source: IPCC

Current progress in Adaptation: **a)** Progress in adaptation planning and implementation has been observed across all sectors and regions, generating multiple benefits, **b)** Ecosystem-based adaptation measures such as urban greening, restoration of wetlands, and upstream forest

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ecosystems have been helpful in decreasing flood hazards and urban heat, **c)** Combinations of non-structural measures like early warning systems and structural measures like levees have reduced the loss of life in cases of inland flooding, **d)** Key barriers to adaptation are limited resources, lack of private sector and citizen engagement, insufficient mobilisation of finance, low climate literacy, lack of political commitment, limited research and/or slow and low uptake of adaptation science, and low sense of urgency.

Climate finance: a) The majority of global climate financing went to mitigation, while a small part went to adaptation, **b)** Although global monitored climate finance has increased since AR5, current global financial flows for adaptation, including public and private sources, are insufficient and limit adaptation alternatives, especially in developing countries, **c)** Public and private finance flows for fossil fuels are still greater than those for climate adaptation and mitigation

Current Mitigation Progress: Several mitigation options are becoming increasingly cost-effective and are generally supported by the public. For example, from 2010–2019, there have been sustained decreases in the unit costs of solar energy (85%), wind energy (55%), and lithium-ion batteries (85%) and large increases in their deployment, e.g., >10x for solar and >100x for electric vehicles (EVs), varying widely across regions.

Read more: **IPCC AR 6 Synthesis Report**

What are the key findings of the IPCC's Synthesis Report on India?

Key finding of the IPCC Synthesis Report on India are : **a)** India faces the highest risk from the impact of climate change, despite contributing less than 5% of historical greenhouse gas emissions, **b)**The impacts of climate change are already being felt in melting glaciers, heat waves, and cyclones, which have affected wheat output and led to milk shortages, **c)** India is the world's third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, primarily from coal, and its per capita emissions have increased by 36% since 2011, **d)** While India is taking action to invest in green hydrogen and renewable energy, policy flip-flops and fluctuating gas prices have slowed progress, **e)** RE sources account for only about 11 per cent of power generation, though they are a little over 40 per cent of the installed capacity, and **f)** **India's net-zero commitment by 2070** remains uncertain.

What are the suggestions provided by the IPCC's Synthesis Report?

General Suggestions of the IPCC's Synthesis Report are,

Follow the principles of climate justice: Urgent and rapid climate actions are needed by developed countries based on the principles of climate justice and equity, both in terms of emissions reduction and the mobilization of finance and technology to developing countries.

Requires deep and rapid reductions CO2: CO2 is the primary greenhouse gas and needs to be drastically reduced. Reaching net zero CO2 or GHG emissions requires deep and rapid reductions in gross emissions of CO2, as well as substantial reductions of non-CO2 GHG emissions.

Need International cooperation: It is a critical enabler for achieving ambitious climate change mitigation, adaptation, and climate-resilient development. Climate-resilient development is enabled by increased international cooperation, including mobilizing and enhancing access to finance, particularly for developing countries, vulnerable regions, sectors, and groups, and aligning finance flows for climate action to be consistent with ambition levels and funding needs.

Need, effective, and equitable mitigation and adaptation actions: Climate change increasingly threatens ecosystems, biodiversity, and the health and wellbeing of current and future generations. Accelerated mitigation and implementation of adaptation actions in the near term would reduce projected losses and damages for humans and ecosystems.

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Find other avenue of finance: Apart from public finance (includes the promised but never received $100 billion), other avenues including private finance, local finance, national and international, bilateral, and multilateral finance need to be explored.

Diversified knowledge: The strategies to counter climate change needed to be rooted in diverse values, including scientific knowledge, indigenous knowledge and local knowledge.

What are the suggestions provided by the IPCC's Synthesis Report for India?

Incentivize investment: India needs to incentivize investment in green hydrogen, renewable energy, and natural gas to reduce emissions.

Strengthen its policy framework: Because its policy flip-flops have sharply curtailed renewable energy potential.

Relax import duties: The government needs to relax import duties on solar equipment imports and expand the Approved List of Modules and Manufacturers to accelerate the addition of solar capacity.

Minimise the coal use: India needs to address its reliance on coal and work towards transitioning to cleaner energy sources.

Conclusion

IPCC Synthesis Report highlights the urgent need for rapid climate actions based on the principles of climate justice and equity. The report reiterates India's stance that development is the first line of defense against climate change. It emphasises that the developed countries must take the lead in reducing emissions and mobilizing finance and technology for developing nations. The report recognizes the interdependence of climate, ecosystems, biodiversity, and human societies and emphasizes the importance of international cooperation to achieve ambitious climate change mitigation and adaptation. The report also supports the idea of promoting environmentally friendly lifestyles to protect and preserve the environment.

Sources: **IPCC Report**, **IPCC**, PIB, **The Hindu**, Business Standard(**Article 1** and **Article 2**) and **Times of India**.

Syllabus: GS 3: Environment and Bio-diversity – Conservation.

The UN High Seas Treaty: challenges and significance – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The UN High Seas Treaty was agreed upon after more than ten years of negotiations during the Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity of **Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ)** held in New York. The treaty, once formally adopted and ratified, will be legally binding and will ensure the sustainable use of the world's oceans outside national boundaries.

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What is the UN High Seas Treaty?
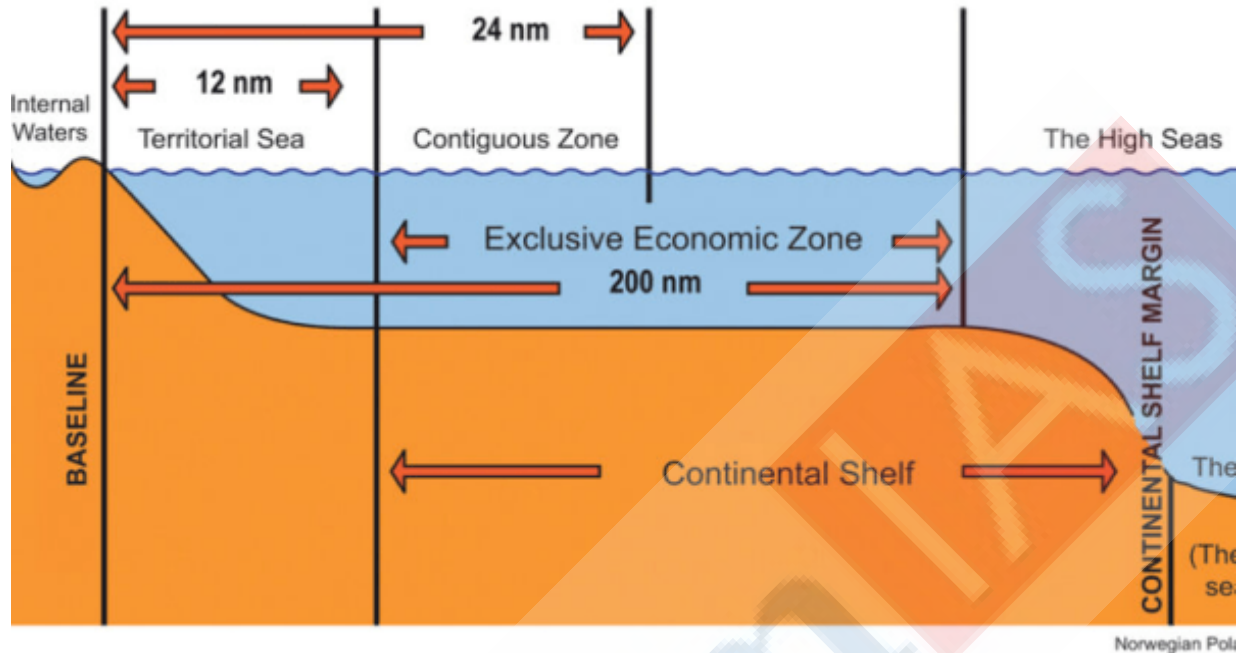
Source: ILSS

The High Seas Treaty is a new global treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources on the high seas. The high seas are open ocean areas that are outside the jurisdiction of any country. The treaty is also known as the agreement on "biodiversity beyond national jurisdictions" or BBNJ.

The treaty has four main objectives. Such as **a)** demarcation of marine protected areas (MPAs), **b)** sustainable use of marine genetic resources and equitable sharing of benefits arising from them, **c)** initiation of the practice of environmental impact assessments for all major activities in the oceans, and **d)** capacity building and technology transfer.

The High Seas Treaty will work as an implementation agreement under the UNCLOS, much like the Paris Agreement works under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

What is the need for the High Seas Treaty?

Read here: The UN High Seas Treaty – Explained, pointwise

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What are the significant provisions of the High Seas Treaty?

ENVIRONMENT
Ocean treaty: Historic agreement reached

UN member states have agreed on a legal framework to protect the world's oceans. The High Seas Treaty places 30 percent of the seas into protected areas by 2030, aiming to safeguard and recuperate marine nature.

Arctic Ocean

Pacific
Ocean

Atlantic
Ocean

Indian
Ocean

High Seas
Exclusive Economic Zones

Southern Ocean
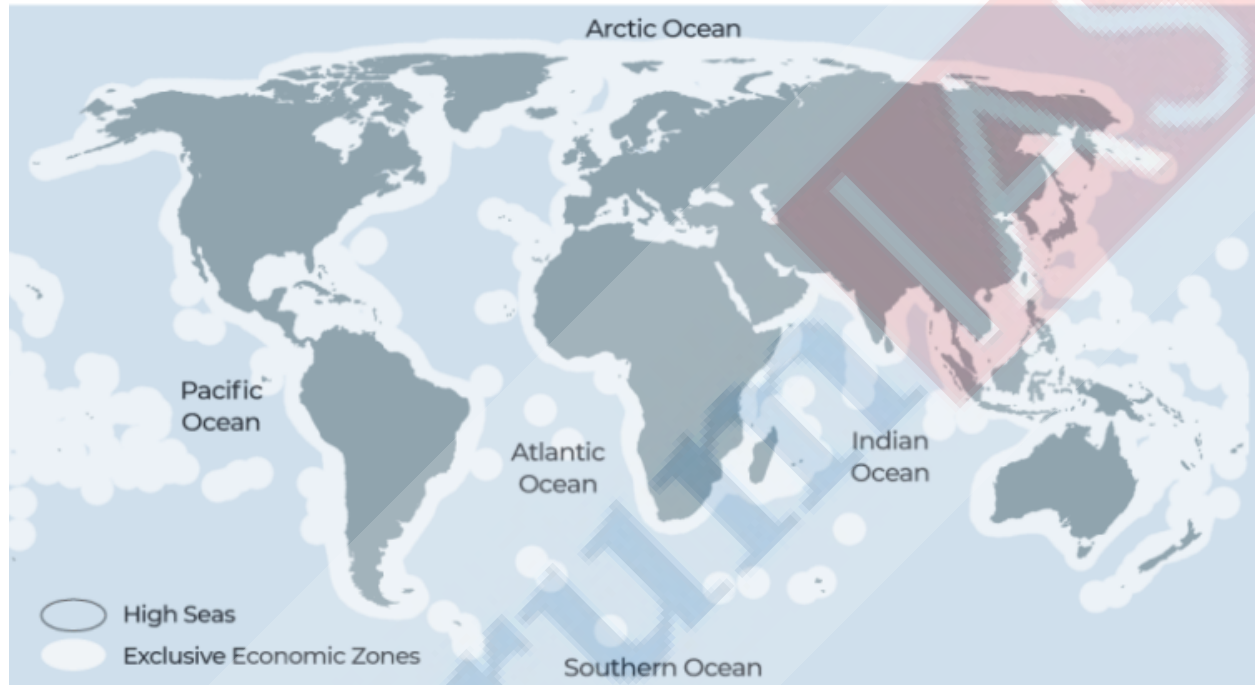
Oceans cover more than
70 percent
of our planet's surface

The ocean has absorbed
90 percent
of the world's excess heat

Every year at least
8 million
tonnes of plastic waste end up in the world's oceans

Source: IUCN.org | March 5, 2023   @AJLabs ALJAZEERA

Source: Aljazeera

Regulation of Human Activities: The treaty seeks to regulate all human activities in the high seas to ensure that ocean resources, including biodiversity, are utilized in a sustainable manner and their benefits are shared equitably among countries.

Protection of Biodiversity: The treaty seeks to protect the biodiversity of the high seas, which is home to about 2.2 million marine species and up to a trillion different kinds of microorganisms. The creation of marine protected areas (MPAs) will ensure that ocean systems, including biodiversity, are under stress, either due to human activities or climate change.

Achieving global targets: The UN High Seas Treaty is very important for reaching the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework that have to do with the ocean. The treaty will make it possible to carry out the major decision made at the 15th Conference of Parties to the Biodiversity Convention in

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2022. At that meeting, it was decided that marine protected zones should cover 30% (currently only 1.4%) of the ocean space on Earth by 2030.

Sustainable Use of Marine Genetic Resources: Oceans host diverse life forms, many of which can be useful for human beings in areas like drug development. The treaty seeks to ensure that any benefits arising out of the use of marine genetic resources, including monetary gains, are equitably shared amongst all.

Environmental Impact Assessments: The treaty requires commercial or other activities that can have significant impacts on the marine ecosystem or can cause large-scale pollution in the oceans to undergo an environmental impact assessment to be done, and the results of this exercise have to be shared with the international community.

Capacity Building and Technology Transfer: The treaty lays emphasis on capacity building and technology transfer, especially for small island states and landlocked nations, to meaningfully participate in the conservation efforts, or to take benefits from the useful exploitation of marine resources.

Access- and benefit-sharing committee: It will be formed to frame guidelines for developing countries' access to benefits from the commercialisation of resources extracted from the ocean.

Rights of Indigenous people and local communities: marine resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction can only be accessed with their free, prior and informed consent or approval and involvement.

What are the advantages of the High Seas Treaty?

Promotes cooperation: The High Seas Treaty promotes cooperation among nations in the use and management of the oceans and seas. It provides a legal framework that allows nations to work together to address common challenges and ensure the sustainable use of marine resources.

Protects the marine environment: The treaty includes provisions that require nations to protect the marine environment from pollution and other harmful activities. This helps to ensure that the ocean remains a healthy and productive ecosystem.

Provides legal certainty: The High Seas Treaty provides a clear and comprehensive legal framework for the use and management of the oceans and seas. It clarifies the rights and obligations of coastal states, flag states, and other actors in the marine environment, promoting legal certainty and reducing the likelihood of conflicts.

Promotes economic development: The High Seas Treaty promotes economic development by establishing rules and principles for the sustainable use of marine resources. It provides a legal framework for the exploration and exploitation of mineral resources in the international seabed area and the conservation and management of living resources such as fish stocks.

Resolves disputes: The treaty provides a mechanism for resolving disputes between nations over the use of the ocean and its resources. This helps to prevent conflicts between nations and promotes peaceful cooperation in the management of the ocean.

Facilitates scientific research: The treaty recognizes the importance of scientific research in the management of the ocean and facilitates international cooperation in this area. It allows for the free exchange of scientific information and promotes the development of marine science and technology.

What are the challenges in implementing the High Seas Treaty?

Fishing and industrial expansion: The treaty does not adequately address threats to ocean biodiversity posed by fishing and deep-sea mining.

Social inclusivity: The treaty focuses on the fair and equitable sharing of genetic resources, but does not address the sharing of other resources.

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Enforcement: There is no identified international enforcement agency to monitor and enforce the treaty's regulations, and no financial commitment has been negotiated.

Negotiations: The treaty is the result of 20 years of negotiations, and the details of major provisions, including environmental impact assessments and mobilization of conservation funds, are still to be worked out.

Unaddressed issues: The mechanisms for policing protected areas, the fate of heavily polluting projects, and dispute resolution remain unaddressed.

Ratification: The process of ratifying the treaty is expected to be difficult and time-consuming, as seen with UNCLOS and the Kyoto Protocol.

Conflicting interests: Conflicting interests among coastal states, flag states, and other actors can impede the effective implementation of the treaty's provisions.

What are the implications of the High Seas treaty for India?

Territorial waters: The treaty establishes a framework for the delineation of maritime boundaries and the extent of territorial waters. This has an effect on India's territorial waters, especially when it comes to maritime disputes with Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

Political stability: By implementing vessel-monitoring systems throughout international fishing operations, the High Seas treaty could help secure fisheries and promote political stability.

Marine resources: The treaty sets rules for the conservation and management of marine resources, such as fisheries and minerals. This has implications for India's coastal and offshore fisheries and its exploration and exploitation of mineral resources in the international seabed area.

Sustainable "Blue Economy": By regulating national and international fishing efforts within and outside Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), the High Seas Treaty could help secure sustainable fisheries and a "Blue Economy".

Pollution in the ocean: The treaty has rules to stop, reduce, and control pollution in the ocean. This has an effect on India's efforts to clean up pollution in the ocean, such as oil spills and dumping trash in the Indian Ocean.

Security at sea: The treaty has rules about security at sea, including ways to stop piracy and other illegal activities at sea. This could affect India's efforts to keep the seas in the Indian Ocean safe, like when it takes part in international naval operations.

Scientific research: The treaty encourages scientific research in the marine environment and makes it legal for scientists to share information freely. This affects India's marine science research and its ability to take part in international research projects.

What should be done?

The treaty needs to be officially adopted and become effective once it is legally passed in at least 60 countries.

To protect ocean life and ourselves, everyone across all sectors must work together to celebrate, implement and monitor the effectiveness of the new High Seas Treaty.

Developed countries will be required to give yearly contributions to the special and voluntary funds created to assist developing countries in implementing the treaty.

Although the agreement is a positive step forward, states and existing organizations need to take additional actions to ensure its success.

Sources: Indian Express (**Article 1** and **Article 2**), **The Hindu**, **Tribune**, **DTE** and **NPR**

Syllabus: GS 2: International Relations – Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

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Eliminating tuberculosis (TB) in India by 2025 – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

India has set an ambitious target to eliminate tuberculosis (TB) by 2025, five years ahead of the global target. The government, scientists, entrepreneurs and the community at large are working towards achieving this goal. Despite being the largest contributor to global TB cases, India has seen a decline in the number of cases in 2021, with improvements in reporting and a reduction in drug-resistant TB cases.

What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious airborne bacterial disease caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis. It most commonly affects the lungs but can also damage other parts of the body.

  Read here: What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

What is the current status of TB?
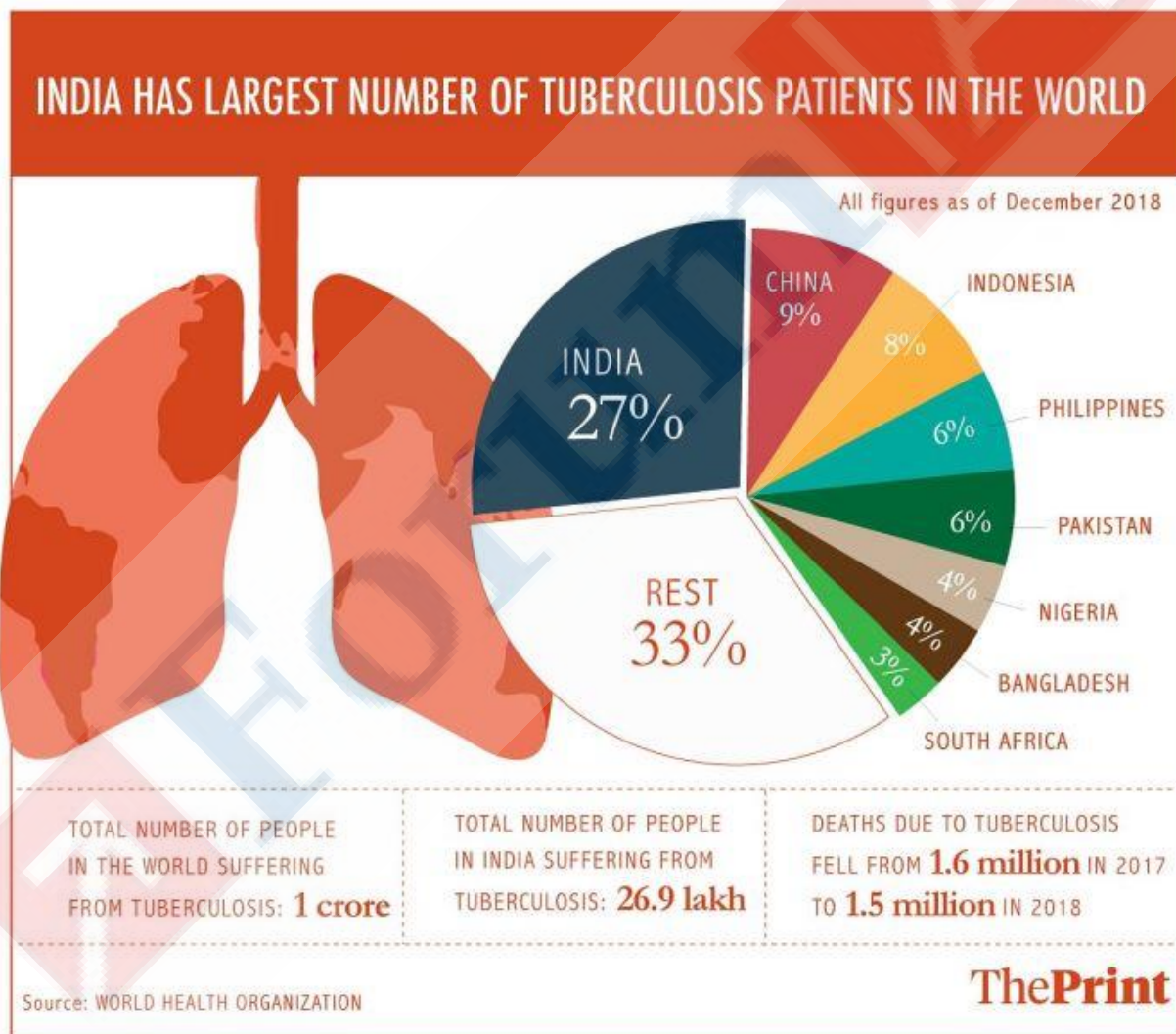
Source: The Print

In the decade between 2010-20, 1.5-2 million individuals died every year because of tuberculosis. TB disproportionately affects people in low-income nations, the poor and the vulnerable. According to WHO's Global TB report 2021, with 25.9 lakh TB cases, India is home to 25% of the

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global tuberculosis cases. India has reported more than 20% decline in case notifications. The country reported 18 lakh tuberculosis cases in 2020 as compared to 24 lahks in 2019.

Read more: India's Tuberculosis fight may get a shot in the arm

What is the need for Eliminating TB earlier in India?

Eliminating TB earlier in India is crucial for a number of reasons, including:

Health: TB is a major cause of illness and death in India, and eliminating the disease would significantly improve the health and well-being of the population.

Economic impact: TB has a significant economic impact, as it can lead to loss of income and productivity for individuals and families. Eliminating TB would reduce this impact and help to boost the economy.

Poverty reduction: TB disproportionately affects people living in poverty, and eliminating the disease would help to reduce poverty and promote economic development.

Global health: TB is a global health concern, and eliminating the disease in India would contribute to the global effort to control and eventually eliminate TB.

Sustainable Development Goals: Eliminating TB is an important target under the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and achieving this goal in India would contribute to overall progress towards the SDGs.

Social justice: Eliminating TB would help to promote social justice by reducing the burden of the disease on vulnerable and marginalized populations, such as those living in poverty or with limited access to healthcare.

What are the global efforts taken to reduce the incidence of TB?

Read here: The road to ending tuberculosis

What are the government's steps for Eliminating TB in India?

Source: MyGovIndia

India has implemented a number of steps to eliminate tuberculosis (TB) as a public health problem in the country. Some of the key measures are:

Strengthening the healthcare system: The government has increased healthcare facilities, employees, and TB diagnosis instruments. The government has increased access to more accurate molecular **diagnostic tests like CB-NAAT and TureNat**. The government has also implemented a **universal drug susceptibility test**, meaning that antibiotic susceptibility of the mycobacterium is determined for all newly diagnosed cases.

Improvements in treatment protocols: Injectable kanamycin, which caused kidney failure and deafness, has been replaced by Bedaquiline and Delamanid. These new pharmaceuticals have also been included in the new National List of Essential Medicines, giving the government the authority to control their market pricing.

Recently, the government also rejected U.S. pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson's (J&J) attempt to extend its monopoly on the manufacturing of the anti-tuberculosis drug Bedaquiline in India beyond July 2023.

Implementing the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program (RNTCP): The RNTCP is a national program that provides free diagnosis and treatment for TB patients. The program has been expanded to cover the entire country.

Use of GeneXpert technology: The government has introduced the use of GeneXpert technology, which allows for rapid diagnosis of TB and drug-resistant TB.

Engaging with private healthcare providers: The government has engaged with private healthcare providers to improve the quality of TB care and ensure that TB patients receive appropriate treatment.

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Source: PIB

Targeting high-risk populations: The government has targeted high-risk populations, such as people living with HIV/AIDS, migrants, and those living in poverty, to improve TB diagnosis and treatment. An online Ni-kshay portal has been set up to track the notified TB cases.

Target setting: The national strategic plan 2017-2025 sets the target of India reporting no more than 44 new TB cases or 65 total cases per lakh population by 2025. It also aims to reduce the mortality to 3 deaths per lakh population by 2025. The plan also aims to reduce catastrophic costs for the affected family to zero.

Promoting TB awareness: The government has launched public awareness campaigns to promote the importance of TB prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.

Adopting a patient-centric approach: The government has adopted a patient-centric approach to TB care, with a focus on providing patient-friendly services and improving patient outcomes.

Community engagement programme: The government launched the community engagement programme where Ni-kshay mitras can adopt TB patients and provide them monthly nutritional support.

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What are the challenges in Eliminating TB in India?

High burden of TB cases: India accounts for 28% of all TB cases in the world, according to the Global TB Report 2022. This makes it difficult to identify and treat all cases in a timely manner.

Drug-resistant TB: India has a high burden of drug-resistant TB, which is more difficult and costly to treat than regular TB. Inadequate use of antibiotics and poor adherence to treatment regimens have contributed to the emergence of drug-resistant strains.

Limited access to healthcare: Many people in India, particularly in rural areas, do not have access to quality healthcare facilities or cannot afford to seek medical care. This can result in delays in diagnosis and treatment, and may also lead to the spread of TB.

Stigma and discrimination: TB is still stigmatized in India, and many people are reluctant to disclose their illness or seek treatment due to fear of discrimination or social isolation.

Poor living conditions: Overcrowded living conditions, poor sanitation, and lack of access to clean water can increase the risk of TB transmission.

Limited awareness: Many people in India are not aware of the signs and symptoms of TB or the importance of completing the full course of treatment. This can lead to delays in diagnosis and treatment and contribute to the spread of TB.

Insufficient funding: Despite being a major health problem in India, TB often receives insufficient funding and attention from policymakers and healthcare providers.

What should be done for eliminating TB in India?

Implement a comprehensive TB control program: The Indian government should develop and implement a comprehensive TB control program that includes early diagnosis, effective treatment, and follow-up care.

Expand access to healthcare: Efforts should be made to expand access to healthcare facilities, particularly in rural areas where access is limited.

Increase funding: TB prevention and treatment should be a priority for the government and policymakers, and funding should be increased to support research, prevention programs, and treatment efforts.

Targeted prevention programs: Programs aimed at preventing TB in high-risk populations, such as healthcare workers, people with HIV, and people who are homeless, can help to reduce the overall burden of the disease.

Increase public awareness: Public awareness campaigns can help to increase knowledge of TB symptoms, transmission, and prevention. This can be done through mass media, community outreach, and social media.

Reduce stigma and discrimination: Efforts should be made to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with TB. This can involve working with community leaders, healthcare workers, and affected individuals to promote acceptance and understanding.

Improve living conditions: Efforts should be made to improve living conditions, particularly in overcrowded and impoverished areas, to reduce the risk of TB transmission.

Invest in research and development: Investment in research and development can help to identify new diagnostic tools and more effective treatments for TB. For example, The recent development of artificial intelligence software for detecting hot spots in the lungs from digital chest X-rays is a promising tool for mass active case finding of TB in the community.

Collaborate with other countries and organizations: Collaboration with other countries and international organizations can help to share best practices, knowledge, and resources for TB control.

Read more: The way to control tuberculosis

Sources: **Indian Express**, **Business News**, **CNBC**

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Syllabus: GS 2: Social Justice – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

Criminal defamation in India – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The Surat court has sentenced the Congress leader and a Member of Parliament was sentenced with two years jail term in a 2019 defamation case. The court also granted him bail and suspended his sentence for 30 days to allow him to appeal. The conviction has led to questions over his status as a Member of Parliament, but there are wider concerns about the laws regarding criminal defamation in India and its impact on free speech.

What is Criminal defamation?

Criminal defamation is a type of crime where a person makes a false statement about someone else that harms their reputation and does so intentionally or with reckless disregard for the truth. This false statement must be communicated to others, either in writing or verbally.

> **Read more: [What is Criminal Defamation](#)**

What is the need for Criminal defamation in India?

There are several reasons why Criminal defamation is considered necessary in India. Here are some of them:

Protecting Reputation: Defamation laws, including criminal defamation, exist to protect the reputation of individuals from false and baseless attacks that can cause significant harm to their personal and professional life.

Deterrence against false news: Criminalising defamation serves as a deterrent against people who might want to spread false information and rumours with malicious intent.

Preventing public disorder: Defamation laws can prevent public disorder by ensuring that false information doesn't incite violence or cause unrest.
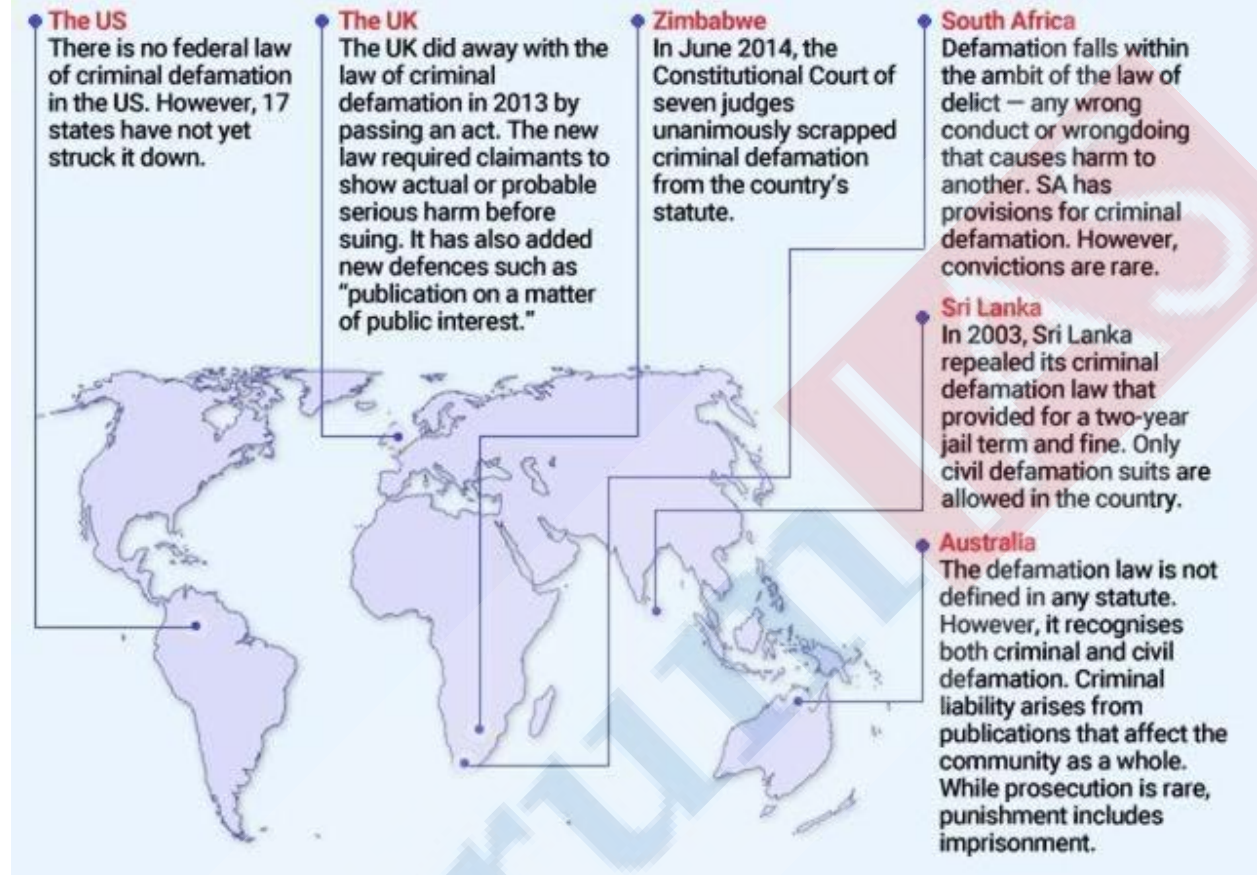
Fairness: Defamation laws provide a legal remedy for individuals who have been defamed, allowing them to seek justice and clear their name.

Promoting social cohesion: Defamation laws promote social cohesion by maintaining social norms and moral values that support the peaceful coexistence of different groups in society.

> **Read more: [How can an MP be disqualified and How does an appeal against the conviction impact disqualification?](#)**

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What are the laws regulating Criminal defamation in India?

LEGAL POSITION IN OTHER COUNTRIES

The US
There is no federal law of criminal defamation in the US. However, 17 states have not yet struck it down.

The UK
The UK did away with the law of criminal defamation in 2013 by passing an act. The new law required claimants to show actual or probable serious harm before suing. It has also added new defences such as "publication on a matter of public interest."

Zimbabwe
In June 2014, the Constitutional Court of seven judges unanimously scrapped criminal defamation from the country's statute.

South Africa
Defamation falls within the ambit of the law of delict — any wrong conduct or wrongdoing that causes harm to another. SA has provisions for criminal defamation. However, convictions are rare.

Sri Lanka
In 2003, Sri Lanka repealed its criminal defamation law that provided for a two-year jail term and fine. Only civil defamation suits are allowed in the country.

Australia
The defamation law is not defined in any statute. However, it recognises both criminal and civil defamation. Criminal liability arises from publications that affect the community as a whole. While prosecution is rare, punishment includes imprisonment.

Source: Hindustan Times

In India, Criminal defamation is regulated by the following laws:

Indian Penal Code (IPC): Sections 499 and 500 of the IPC define defamation as a criminal offence.

Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC): This law outlines the procedure for prosecuting criminal offences, including criminal defamation.

Indian Evidence Act: This act outlines the rules for presenting evidence in court, including in cases of criminal defamation.

Information Technology Act (IT Act): This act includes provisions related to online defamation and cybercrime, which can be used to prosecute cases of criminal defamation that occur on the internet.

Right to Information Act (RTI Act): This law allows citizens to access government records and information, which can be used to gather evidence in cases of criminal defamation.

These laws work together to provide a legal framework for prosecuting cases of criminal defamation in India. Individuals who have been defamed can seek legal remedy through either civil or criminal defamation, or both, depending on the circumstances of the case.

Must read: Criminalisation of government criticisms: Laws and issues

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What are the judicial interventions on Criminal defamation in India?

Constitutionality: In the Subramanian Swamy v. Union of India case, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of criminal defamation laws in India, stating that they are necessary to protect the reputation of individuals.

Right to free speech: The Supreme Court has also recognized that the right to free speech and expression is important, but it is not absolute and must be balanced with the right to reputation.

Interpretation of provisions: The courts have interpreted the provisions of criminal defamation laws, such as what constitutes a "public setting" and the scope of the defences available to the accused.

Remedies: The courts have provided remedies for those who have been defamed, including compensation and punishment for the offender. For example, In Arun Jaitley v. Arvind Kejriwal case, the Delhi High Court held that the statements made by Arvind Kejriwal against Arun Jaitley were defamatory and ordered him to pay damages.

Fair criticism: In the Ram Jethmalani v. Subramanian Swamy case, the Supreme Court held that there is a difference between fair criticism and defamation, and that criticism is not defamation unless it is made with the intent to harm the reputation of the person.

Social media: The courts have also addressed cases of criminal defamation on social media and the internet, including the responsibility of intermediaries like social media companies.

Overall, the judicial interventions on criminal defamation in India have been aimed at balancing the right to free speech with the need to protect an individual's reputation. The courts have also addressed the evolving nature of defamation in the digital age and provided guidance on how to handle cases of online defamation.

> **Read more: Sedition law in India: Arguments for and against- Explained, pointwise**

What are the challenges associated with Criminal defamation in India?

Effect on free speech: The use of criminal defamation laws can have a chilling effect on free speech, as individuals may be hesitant to express their opinions or criticisms for fear of being accused of defamation.
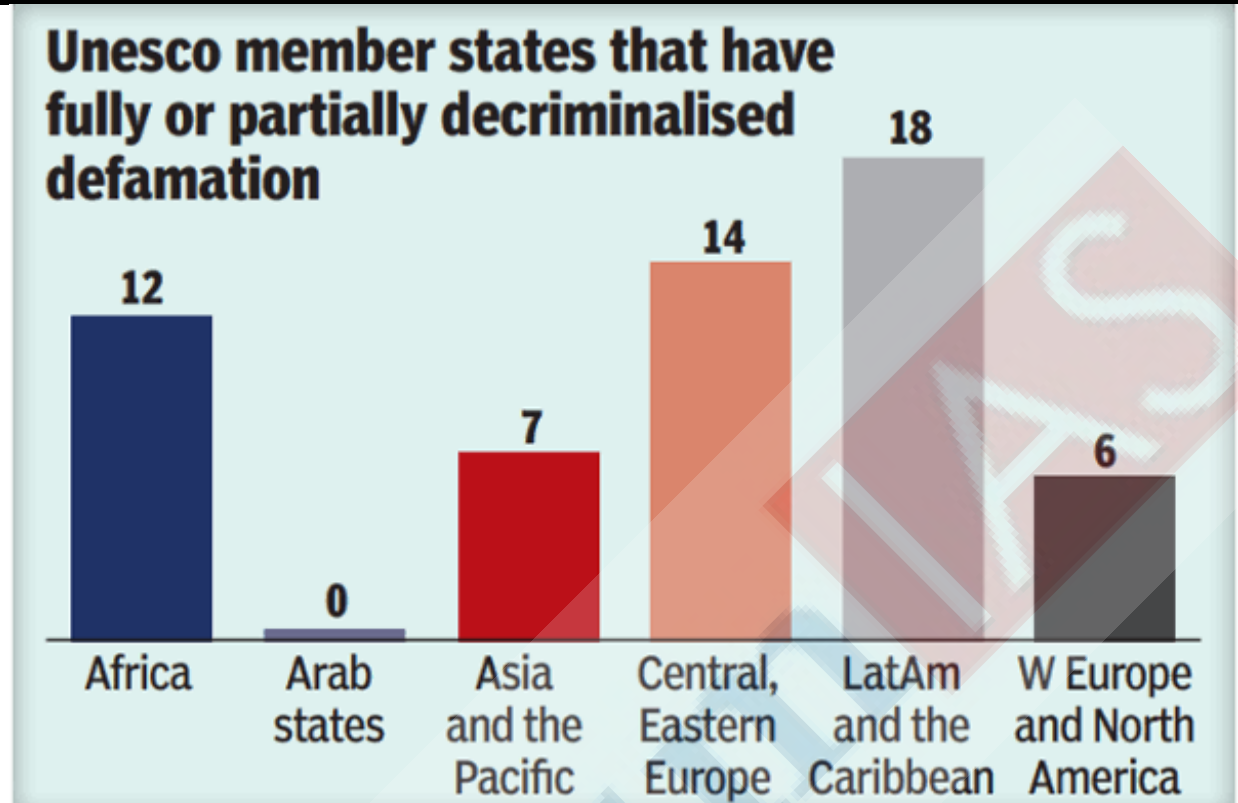
Misuse of laws: Criminal defamation laws can also be misused by powerful individuals or institutions to silence their critics and suppress dissent.

Delayed justice: Criminal defamation cases can take a long time to resolve in India's overburdened court system. This can lead to delayed justice and harm to the reputations of those involved.

The burden of proof: The burden of proof in criminal defamation cases lies with the accused, which can make it difficult to defend oneself against false allegations.

Vagueness of laws: The provisions of criminal defamation laws in India, including what constitutes a "public setting" and the scope of the defences available to the accused, can be vague and open to interpretation.

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What should be done?

Unesco member states that have fully or partially decriminalised defamation

Region	Count
Africa	12
Arab states	0
Asia and the Pacific	7
Central, Eastern Europe	14
LatAm and the Caribbean	18
W Europe and North America	6

Source: TOI

Repealing or amending criminal defamation laws: Repeal or significantly amend Sections 499 and 500 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which currently criminalise defamation and provide for imprisonment and fines as punishment. This could include redefining what constitutes defamation or limiting the scope of criminal penalties.

Promoting alternative dispute resolution: Encouraging parties to resolve defamation disputes through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as mediation or arbitration, could help reduce the burden on the court system and provide a quicker resolution for all parties involved.

Providing clearer guidance on interpretation: Providing clearer guidance on the interpretation of criminal defamation laws could help to reduce the vagueness of the provisions and ensure a more consistent application of the laws.

Increasing awareness and education: Increasing awareness and education on the consequences of defamation, both for the accused and the victim, could help to reduce the incidence of defamation and promote more responsible speech.

Improving the legal process: Improving the legal process for criminal defamation cases, such as by reducing delays and ensuring a fair trial, could help to promote justice and protect the rights of all parties involved.

Promote media literacy and ethical journalism practices: It will help to reduce the incidence of false or defamatory reporting.

Engage in dialogue: Engage in dialogue with civil society groups, legal experts, and media professionals to ensure that any reforms to defamation law reflect the interests and values of the Indian people.

Read more: Shooting messengers: Criminal defamation must go from IPC. Effective civil libel law is enough for protecting reputations

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Sources: The Hindu (**Article 1** and **Article 2**), Indian Express (**Article 1** and **Article 2**), Times of India (**Article 1** and **Article 2**) and **Hindustan Times**

Syllabus: GS 2: Indian Constitution and Polity – Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges.

[Yojana March 2023 Summary] India's post-pandemic healthcare system – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has made healthcare very important in India. The government wants to use money and resources to enhance India's post-pandemic healthcare system. The budget for 2023–24 has some ideas to make things better. But it might not be enough.

What is the Budget proposal for India's post-pandemic healthcare system?

Budget Proposal for Post-Pandemic healthcare system in India are:

Mission to Eliminate Sickle Cell Disease by 2047: The government has announced a new mission to eradicate Sickle Cell Disease, a genetic condition that is prevalent in tribal populations in India. The mission aims to identify and treat the disease early to improve the health of affected individuals.

Opening of New Nursing Colleges and Multidisciplinary Courses for Medical Devices: To address the shortage of healthcare professionals, the budget has proposed opening 157 new nursing colleges in districts where medical colleges have been recently established. Additionally, dedicated multidisciplinary courses for medical devices will be introduced.

Emphasis on Health Research: The government aims to promote health research by opening up ICMR labs for research by public and private medical college faculty. The private sector is also encouraged to collaborate with the government for research and innovation in the pharmaceutical industry.

Other Proposals: **a)** The budget also proposes the establishment of centers of excellence in Artificial Intelligence (AI) with health as one of the core sub-themes, **b)** The Aspirational Blocks Programme will cover 500 blocks for the saturation of essential government services, including health sub-components and **c)** The National Calamity Contingency duty (NCCD) on cigarettes has been increased by 16% to discourage smoking.

Financial Allocation: The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has received a nominal increase of around 3.5% in financial allocation from BE 2022-23. The allocation for the National Health Mission has remained nearly unchanged at around Rs 29,000 Cr. The allocation for **Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana** has increased by 13% to reach around Rs 7,200 Cr.

What are the challenges faced by the post-pandemic healthcare system in India?

These include,

-The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that disinformation is a health sector issue. Misinformation has caused vaccine reluctance and rejection and decreased immunisation coverage in various populations.

-COVID-19 reminded that immunisation is important not only for children but also for adolescents and adults.

-In India, health is a state matter, although there are several government programmes and schemes that address various aspects of public health. After seventy-five years of independence, it is time to reconsider the role of federalism in health policy.

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-The total number of doctors might be enough, but 90% work in the private sector and only 10% work in the public sector. These things affect the government sector's ability to provide health services. It is not enough to have skilled doctors.

What should be the priorities of the government for India's post-pandemic healthcare system?

India's post-pandemic healthcare should focus on the following,

Effective, timely and science-based communication is integral to health services: Government health initiatives must include timely, evidence-based, and reliable communication. Provide real-time mechanisms to debunk health misconceptions. Continuous interventions would assure great coverage.

Vaccination is not only for children: Other vaccines, such as hepatitis-B, meningococcal, and pneumococcal, can prevent adult illnesses. For vulnerable adult populations, these are useful. The government prioritises and vaccinates at-risk adults in 2023.

India has developed a low-cost **HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) vaccination** to prevent adolescents against **cervical cancer** and other diseases. It's time for India to offer this vaccine through a government plan and cover all eligible populations.

Importance of Well-functioning primary health care services (PHC): Covid-19 has emphasised the importance of stronger health services and well-functioning primary health care services (PHC). The PHC services should be built around the people, where it is not just the treatment of disease but attention is on preventive and promotive services as well.

Considered 'neglected tropical diseases': India has 11 "neglected tropical diseases" such as filariasis, kala-azar, snake bites, and others that need policy and programmatic attention. Programmatic interventions, vaccinations, and medicinal research focused on public health interventions are needed to combat these diseases.

Improve the health data quality and availability: Covid-19 pandemic has also taught us the importance of timely, granular and accurate health data. Such data is useful for health decision-making and for dispelling myths and rumours.

Bring health issues to the fore globally: India has been elected to the G20 chairmanship for the year 2023. The G20 presidency provides a chance for India to bring global health issues to the forefront. In particular, the country must take the lead in drawing attention to and maintaining it on the challenge of "antimicrobial resistance," the coordinated global response to epidemics and pandemics, neglected tropical diseases, and a focus on "one health" (the health of humans, animals, and the environment are all interconnected). The G20 nations should adopt such coordinated actions to avoid future vaccine disparities, as seen in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Move towards stronger health systems: It is time to move towards stronger health systems, building upon the Ayushman Bharat Programme, and health and wellness centers initiative. These platforms should be used to strengthen school health services, augment the provision of post and long Covid services and enhance community engagement in health.

Strengthen Cooperative federalism in the matter of public health: It is time to consider how cooperative federalism might be reinforced in the field of public health. The recently established public health management cadre must also be implemented in all Indian states.

Ensure equitable distribution of the health workforce: In the time after a pandemic, the availability and fair distribution of health workers must be a top priority. Incentive-based systems should be investigated to promote equal distribution of the health workforce.

Strengthen India's disease surveillance system and public health testing capacity: Disease surveillance systems and public health initiatives must be maintained. After the COVID-19 pandemic, India has taken some real steps to improve its disease surveillance system and its ability to test for public health problems. Because of some of these efforts, many new viruses,

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like monkeypox, were found early on in Indian states. But it is still hard for the government to collect, analyse, share, and use data about diseases. This needs to change quickly.

Tackle anaemia and bridge the gaps in other nutrition policies: Malnutrition and anemia in women and children continue to be challenging. The National Family Health Survey -5 (NFHS-5) shows that despite decades of implementation of a range of schemes for women and children, malnutrition and anemia rates remain high, and the rate of improvement is very low. It demands urgent interventions to revive the efforts to tackle anemia and bridge the gaps in other nutrition policies.

Improve mental health services: Two urgent health problems that need to be fixed right away after a pandemic are mental health and long-term effects of Covid. Even before the pandemic, it was hard to take care of mental health. Mental health and long-term Covid must be addressed post pandemic. Pre-pandemic mental health was difficult.

The National Mental Health Survey 2015– 16 found that one in eight Indians needed mental health services. Due of stigma, the issue was ignored. Post-pandemic mental health issues have increased. Luckily, mental health stigma has decreased during COVID-19, making people more likely to seek assistance. At the same time, mental health services are rapidly expanding. The government should invest in post- and long-term care, especially primary care.

Investment in research and development on vaccines and therapeutics: India, which is a pharmacy for the whole world, needs to take responsibility and invest more in the research and development of vaccines and medicines. This is especially critical for emerging and reemerging diseases, as well as numerous neglected tropical diseases that impact low- and middle-income nations.

Read more: [Neglecting the health sector has consequences](#)

Conclusion

As India emerges from the pandemic, its health sector is grappling with complex challenges, including workforce shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and financial constraints. Nevertheless, there is a silver lining as the crisis has catalysed significant reforms in the sector. Increased investment in digital health technologies and stronger public-private partnerships can accelerate the progress towards equitable access to quality healthcare for all.

Source: Yojana

Syllabus: GS 2: Social Justice – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Disqualification of Legislators in India – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

Recently, the disqualification of legislators has been widely discussed due to two events. The first is the disqualification of a Member of Parliament after being sentenced to a two-year jail term by a Surat court in a 2019 defamation case. The second is an ongoing hearing by the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court of India on a petition filed during the political crisis in Maharashtra last year (2022).

The Supreme Court has observed that any member of the Legislative Assembly who goes against the party's in-house may face disqualification. These events have brought the debate on the disqualification of legislators to the forefront of public discussion.

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What are the constitutional provisions for the disqualification of legislators?

Articles 102 & 191: The basic disqualification criteria for an MP are outlined in Article 102 of the Constitution, while those for an MLA are outlined in Article 191. Article 102 empowers the Parliament to enact legislation governing the conditions of disqualification.

Grounds for disqualification under the Constitution: These include conditions such as holding a profit-making position in the Government of India or a state government, Being of unsound mind, being an unpaid insolvent, not being an Indian citizen, or acquiring citizenship of another country.

> **Read more: [Anti-defection Law: What can disqualify a legislator](#)**

Tenth Schedule: A person is ineligible to serve as a member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) or the Legislative Council (MLC) if: **a)** An elected official voluntarily withdraws from a political party, **b)** An elected member votes or abstains from voting in such House in defiance of any direction issued by his political party or anyone authorised to do so.

Note: The power to decide on the disqualification of legislators under the tenth schedule rests with the Speaker of the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament) and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly concerned. However, the decision of the Speaker can be challenged in a court of law.

> **Read more: [Criteria for Disqualification of MLAs in India](#)**

Is there legal protection available against the disqualification of legislators?

The legal protection available against the disqualification of legislators in India:

Judicial Review: If a legislator is disqualified by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha or the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the decision can be challenged in a court of law through the remedy of judicial review.

High Court and Supreme Court: If a legislator feels that he/she has been wrongly disqualified or that the decision to disqualify him/her is arbitrary or mala fide, he/she can file a petition in the High Court or the Supreme Court challenging the decision of the Speaker. For example, The Kerala High Court's order suspending the disqualification of the Lakshadweep MP was notified by the Lok Sabha Secretariat

Examination of facts: The court can examine the facts of the case and the legality of the decision and can set aside the decision if it is found to be illegal or unconstitutional.

Protection against arbitrary or illegal disqualification: While the power to disqualify legislators rests with the Speaker of the Lok Sabha or the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly concerned, the courts act as a check on the exercise of this power and provide legal protection to legislators against arbitrary or illegal disqualification.

What are the Important Supreme Court Judgements regarding the disqualification of legislators?

There have been several important Supreme Court judgments regarding the disqualification of legislators in India. Some of the notable ones are:

Kihoto Hollohan vs. Zachillhu and Others (1992): In this case, the Supreme Court upheld the validity of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution. The court ruled that the decision of the Speaker on the question of disqualification of a member is subject to judicial review, but the courts should not interfere unless the decision is mala fide, arbitrary or violative of the Constitution.

Jaya Bachchan vs. Union of India and Others (2006): In this case, the Supreme Court held that the appointment of Jaya Bachchan as a member of the Rajya Sabha (Upper House of Parliament) was invalid as she was holding an office of profit at the time of her appointment. The court observed that the disqualification of a legislator on the ground of holding an office of profit

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is not limited to offices which involve the receipt of a salary or a fee, but includes any office which carries with it the right to remuneration or profit.

Ravi S. Naik vs. Union of India and Others (1994): In this case, the Supreme Court held that the power of the Speaker to disqualify a member under the Tenth Schedule is a quasi-judicial power and that the Speaker must give the affected member an opportunity to be heard before passing an order of disqualification.

Rajendra Singh Rana vs. Swami Prasad Maurya and Others (2007): In this case, the Supreme Court held that a legislator can be disqualified under the anti-defection law even if he/she abstains from voting in the House. The court observed that abstention from voting on a motion of confidence or no confidence is not a neutral act, but is a conduct which facilitates the success of one side or the other.

In Lily Thomas v. Union of India (2013): The SC held that Section 8(4) of The Representation of the People Act, 1951 is unconstitutional which allows MPs and MLAs who are convicted to continue in office till an appeal against such conviction is disposed of. The court held that MP/MLA convicted for two years or above would be disqualified immediately.

Krishnamurthy v. Sivakumar & Ors (2015): The SC held that disclosure of criminal antecedents (especially heinous crimes) of a candidate at the time of filing of nomination paper as mandated by law was a categorically imperative.

Lok Prahari v Union of India (2018): In this case SC clarified that a disqualification triggered by a conviction will be reversed if the conviction is stayed by a court. Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay vs. Union of India and Others (2021): In this case, the Supreme Court directed the central government to expedite the process of setting up special courts to try cases against MPs and MLAs, including cases related to the disqualification of legislators.

Sachin Choudhary vs. Rajiv Singh and Others (2021): In this case, the Supreme Court held that a legislator cannot be disqualified on the ground of non-disclosure of criminal cases pending against him/her at the time of filing the nomination papers, as the law requires disclosure only of convictions and not pending cases.

> **Read more: [The curious case of the disqualification of a politician](#)**

What are the provisions available for the removal of disqualification?

Provisions available for the removal or disqualification of Indian legislators are as follows:

Application to the President/Governor: A disqualified legislator can make an application to the President or the Governor, as the case may be, for the removal of disqualification. For example, in 2018, the Karnataka Governor received an application from a disqualified MLA seeking the removal of disqualification. The Governor referred the matter to the Election Commission for its opinion.

Election petition: A disqualified legislator can also file an election petition in the appropriate court challenging the election of the winning candidate. If the election petition is successful, the disqualification is automatically removed.

For example, in 2019, an MLA was disqualified from the Karnataka Assembly on charges of anti-party activities. He filed an election petition challenging the election of the winning candidate, and the Karnataka High Court set aside his disqualification.

Legislative pardon: The legislature can pardon a disqualified legislator by passing a resolution with a two-thirds majority. The resolution must be passed in both Houses of Parliament or the State Legislature.

For example, in 2019, the Maharashtra Legislative Council passed a resolution pardoning an MLA, who was disqualified for submitting a false affidavit.

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Court order: A disqualified legislator can approach a court of law challenging the disqualification. If the court finds that the disqualification was illegal, the disqualification is removed.

SC in its ruling in Lok Prahari v Election Commission of India & Ors (2018), clarified that a disqualification triggered by a conviction will be reversed if the conviction is stayed by a court.

What are the challenges associated with the disqualification of legislators?

Legal challenges: Disqualifications can be challenged in courts of law, which can lead to a prolonged legal process. For example, in 2017, the Delhi High Court set aside the disqualification of 20 Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLAs, who had been disqualified on charges of holding offices of profit. The case went on for several months before the court finally gave its decision.

Political challenges: Disqualifications can have political implications, and can lead to accusations of political vendetta.

Enforcement challenges: Enforcing disqualifications can be a challenge, especially if the disqualified legislator refuses to vacate their seat. For example, in 2017, the Election Commission of India disqualified a political leader from Tamil Nadu Assembly but refused to vacate his seat, leading to a legal tussle.

Impact on voters: Disqualifications can impact the voters who elected the disqualified legislator, who may feel that their mandate has been nullified. For example, in 2019, the disqualification of 17 MLAs in Karnataka led to a sense of disillusionment among their voters, who felt that their elected representatives had been unfairly targeted.

What should be done?

Clear guidelines: There should be clear and unambiguous guidelines outlining the grounds for the disqualification of legislators, to ensure that the process is fair and transparent.

Time-bound process: The process for disqualification of legislators should be time-bound, to ensure that it does not drag on indefinitely. For example, in 2018, the Delhi High Court directed the Election Commission of India to conclude the disqualification proceedings against AAP MLAs within three months.

Strengthening the legal framework: The legal framework for the disqualification of legislators needs to be strengthened to ensure that it is clear, consistent and in line with democratic principles. This could include ensuring that the disqualification process is independent, impartial and non-partisan and that it provides for a fair hearing to the legislator concerned. For example, the Supreme Court of India has recommended that the disqualification process should be carried out by an independent authority, such as an ombudsman.

Political neutrality: The disqualification process should be free from political interference, and should not be used as a tool for settling political scores. The process should be based on objective criteria, and should not be influenced by political considerations. For example, the Supreme Court of India has emphasised that disqualification should not be used as a means of political vendetta.

Transparency: The process for disqualification of legislators should be transparent, and the public should be informed about the reasons for disqualification.

Strict enforcement: Once a legislator is disqualified, strict enforcement measures should be put in place to ensure that the disqualification is enforced in a timely and effective manner. This would help to prevent disqualified legislators from continuing to hold office and to ensure that the will of the people is respected.

By taking these steps, it is possible to ensure that the process for disqualification of legislators is fair and transparent and that it upholds the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

Sources: Indian Express (**Article 1**, **Article 2**, **Article 3** and **Article 4**), The Hindu (**Article 1** and **Article 2**) and **Hindustan Times**

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Syllabus: GS 2: Indian Constitution and Polity – Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Execution of death penalty in India – Explained pointwise
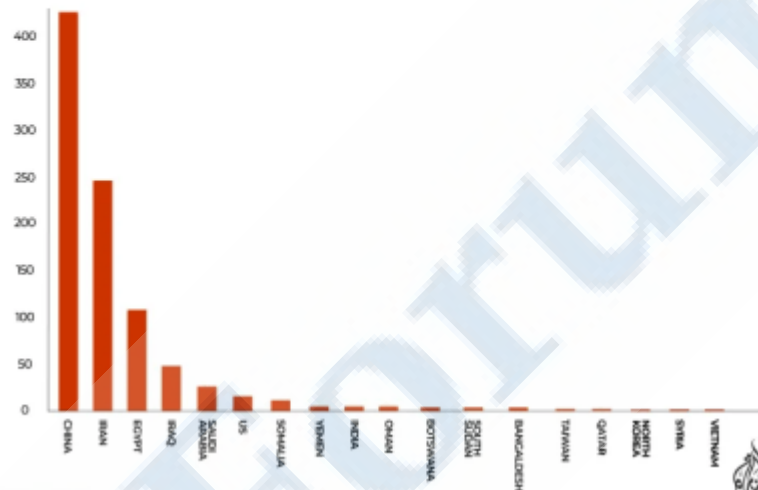
Introduction

The constitutionality of death by hanging as a mode of execution has been challenged in India's Supreme Court. The petitioner has claimed that hanging is "cruel and barbarous" and there is a need for a more "humane, quick, and decent alternative." The court has asked the government to provide data on less painful and socially acceptable methods of execution of death penalty.

What is the present mode of execution of death penalty in India?

Source: Aljazeera

The present mode of execution of death penalty in India is hanging by the neck until the person is dead. This is carried out in jail by an executioner appointed by the government. The method used is the same as it was during British colonial rule, and there have been no changes to the mode of execution since then.

Indian courts in 2022 awarded a record 165 death sentences, the highest in over two decades, according to the Annual Death Penalty Report published by Project 39A, an advocacy group with the National Law University, New Delhi.

Note: *The Supreme Court last addressed and upheld the constitutionality of hanging in September 1983, over four decades ago (Deena v. Union of India). The Law Commission of India recognised the constitutional impossibility of hanging death in its 2003 report (the 187th Report) and urged that India should consider utilising lethal injections instead.*

Read more: SC Bench seeks data on alternatives to hanging

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What are the challenges in changing the mode of execution in death penalty cases?

Must Read: [The Supreme Court puts the spotlight on the mode of execution in death penalty cases](#)

What are observations made by the Supreme Court of India on the execution of death penalty?

Death sentence should be awarded only in the rarest of rare cases where the crime is brutal, heinous, and barbaric: For example, in the case of Nirbhaya gangrape and murder, the Supreme Court upheld the death penalty for the four convicts, stating that it was a "rarest of rare" case.

The right to life is a fundamental right, and the courts should interpret the law in a manner that protects this right: In the case of Mohd. Arif Ashfaq v. The Registrar, Supreme Court of India, the Supreme Court commuted the death sentence of a man convicted of involvement in the 2000 Red Fort attack, stating that there was no direct evidence linking him to the crime and that his right to a fair trial had been violated.

The courts should take into account mitigating factors such as age, mental illness, and socioeconomic background while deciding whether to award the death penalty: In the case of Santosh Kumar Satishbhushan Bariyar v. State of Maharashtra, the Supreme Court commuted the death sentence of a man convicted of murdering six members of a family, citing his young age and lack of criminal history.

The execution of death sentences should be carried out in a humane manner, in accordance with established protocols and guidelines: In the case of Shatrughan Chauhan v. Union of India, the Supreme Court laid down guidelines for carrying out executions, including the requirement for a "dignified" and "professional" approach, and the provision of adequate medical facilities to the condemned prisoner.

Importance of fair trial: In the case of M.A. Antony vs. State of Kerala (2001), the Court noted that a death sentence cannot be awarded on the basis of vague or general allegations and that the prosecution must prove the case beyond reasonable doubt.

Need for judicial review: In the case of Bachan Singh vs. State of Punjab (1980), the Court held that the imposition of the death penalty must be subject to a rigorous process of judicial review, and that the courts must consider both the aggravating and mitigating circumstances of the case.

Read more: [Approach to death penalty: Why Supreme Court has decided to settle differences among judgments](#)

What are the arguments in favour of execution of Death Penalty?

Deterrent effect: The death penalty acts as a strong deterrent to would-be offenders by instilling fear of capital punishment in their minds.

Retribution: Death penalty provides a sense of closure and retribution for the victim's family and friends.

Cost-effective: Death penalty is more cost-effective than life imprisonment because it eliminates the need for long-term incarceration.

Justice: The death penalty is seen as a just punishment for heinous crimes such as murder, terrorism, and treason.

Prevention of Recidivism: Executing convicted criminals ensures that they will never have the opportunity to commit more crimes in the future.

Public Safety: Death penalty helps to maintain public safety by removing dangerous criminals from society.

Respect for Law: The death penalty reinforces respect for the rule of law by demonstrating that serious crimes will not go unpunished.

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What are the arguments against the execution of Death Penalty?

The risk of executing innocent people: There is always a risk of executing an innocent person, and this is an irreversible mistake. With the flaws in the justice system, wrongful convictions can happen, and innocent people can be sentenced to death.

Does not deter crime: There is no conclusive evidence that the death penalty deters crime more effectively than long prison sentences. In fact, some studies have suggested that the death penalty may actually increase crime rates by brutalizing society.

Discriminatory applications: The death penalty is applied disproportionately to people who are poor, mentally ill, or members of racial and ethnic minorities. This raises serious concerns about fairness and equal treatment under the law.

Studies have shown that the death penalty is more likely to be awarded to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and marginalized communities.

Arbitrary application: There is a lack of consistency in the application of the death penalty, with some convicts being sentenced to death for similar crimes while others receive lesser punishments.

Expensive in India: The cost of a death penalty trial and subsequent appeals is much higher than the cost of keeping someone in prison for life. This is because of the complex legal procedures and the need for specialized lawyers and experts.

Violates human rights: The death penalty is a violation of the right to life, as recognized by many international human rights treaties. It is also considered to be a cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishment.

The possibility of rehabilitation: Some offenders, especially those who commit crimes when they are young, may be able to reform and lead productive lives. The death penalty denies these individuals the opportunity for rehabilitation and a second chance.

The death penalty does not promote healing or closure: Some argue that the death penalty provides closure and healing for victims' families, but studies have shown that it often does not. Instead, it can prolong the grieving process by keeping the case in the public eye for years, if not decades.

The death penalty undermines the moral authority of the state: By taking a life, the state is sending a message that killing is an acceptable way to solve problems. This undermines the state's moral authority and can contribute to a culture of violence.

Effective alternatives exist: There are several alternatives to the death penalty, including life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, which are seen as more humane, cost-effective, and less prone to error.

Overall, the arguments against the death penalty suggest that it is a flawed and ineffective system that should be abolished in favor of alternative forms of punishment that are more humane, equitable, and effective in reducing crime.

> **Read more: [The death penalty and humanising criminal justice](#)**

What should be done?

Review the death penalty laws: India should consider reviewing its death penalty laws to ensure that they are in line with international human rights standards. For example, the law should provide for fair trial rights, prohibit the use of the death penalty against juvenile offenders and people with mental disabilities.

Improve legal aid services: Legal aid services should be improved to ensure that people facing the death penalty have access to competent and effective legal representation. For example, legal aid lawyers should receive proper training and resources to represent their clients effectively.

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Address issues with the criminal justice system: India should take steps to address the systemic issues with its criminal justice system that contribute to wrongful convictions and unfair trials. For example, the police should be held accountable for fabricating evidence, and judges should be trained to identify and reject coerced confessions.

Increase transparency: The government should increase transparency around the use of the death penalty. For example, the government should publish statistics on the use of the death penalty, including the number of people on death row and the number of executions carried out.

Conduct a public debate: The Indian government should conduct a public debate on the use of the death penalty in the country. This would allow for a constructive dialogue on the issue, and could lead to the development of more effective and humane policies.

> **Read more: [Abolition is the way: On the higher judiciary's move on the death penalty](#)**

Sources: [Indian Express](#), [Times of India](#), and [Death penalty India report](#)

Syllabus: GS 2: Social Justice – mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

The Issue of Stray dogs in India – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

Lately, Stray dogs have been in news, due to their attacks on children and men, in multiple incidents. In Telangana's Khammam district, a five-year-old boy died after being attacked by a stray dog while playing outside. This is the second dog attack incident in less than a month. A few incidents involved the death of the victim. These incidents have ignited the debate among the people raising concerns against the rising population of dogs and the dog lovers. Therefore, it becomes important to know about the reasons behind rising dog attacks in India and the policy steps that can be taken to handle this situation.

Some facts regarding the stray dog population in India

In 2019, it was stated in Lok Sabha that the stray dog population went down by 18 lakhs in 7 years from 1.71 crores to 1.53 crores. Some independent studies suggest the population is much higher as many go unaccounted for.

Globally, dog-mediated rabies causes an estimated 59,000 human deaths annually. **According to WHO, India accounts for 36% of the global deaths due to rabies**. India also accounts for 65% of the deaths due to rabies in the South-East Asia region. The National Rabies Control Program reported 6644 clinically suspected cases and deaths of human rabies between 2012 and 2022.

According to the National Institute of Communicable Diseases, **almost 96% of rabies cases in India are caused by stray dogs – and so India leads the world in rabies deaths.**

What are the reasons for the increasing stray dog crisis in India?

Lack of proper animal birth control programs: There are not enough animal birth control programs in place to control the population of stray dogs. For example, in some areas, dogs are often left unsterilised, which leads to more puppies and an increasing population of stray dogs.

Irresponsible ownership: Many people in India often abandon their pets on the streets when they are no longer wanted, or they let their dogs roam free without proper supervision. This leads to an increase in the stray dog population.

Poor waste management: Stray dogs often scavenge for food in garbage dumps, which are not properly managed in many areas of India. This leads to an increase in the number of stray dogs in these areas.

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Lack of awareness: Many people in India are not aware of the importance of responsible pet ownership or the dangers of abandoning their pets. This lack of awareness contributes to the increasing stray dog crisis.

Religious beliefs: Some communities in India believe that killing or sterilizing dogs is against their religious beliefs. This can make it difficult to implement effective animal birth control programs and control the population of stray dogs.

Inadequate animal welfare laws: The current animal welfare laws in India are not strong enough to protect animals from abuse and neglect. This leads to an increase in the number of stray dogs, as there are no penalties for irresponsible ownership or abandonment.

Read more: **Understanding the street dogs-human conflict**

What are steps taken by the government to address the stray dog crisis?

Animal Birth Control (ABC) program: The ABC programme wherein dogs are sterilised, vaccinated and replaced in their original areas is the only effective method to reduce street dog population, end biting and eliminate rabies. For example, in 2019, the government of Kerala sterilized over 87,000 stray dogs under this program.

Vaccination drives: The government conducts vaccination drives to protect stray dogs against diseases such as rabies. For example, in 2020, the government of Tamil Nadu conducted a vaccination drive for stray dogs in the city of Chennai.

Awareness campaigns: The government conducts awareness campaigns to educate people on responsible pet ownership and the importance of controlling the stray dog population. For example, the Delhi government launched a campaign called "Be a Human, Save a Life" to encourage people to adopt stray dogs and help control their population.

Legal framework: The government has enacted laws to protect animals from cruelty and abuse, and to regulate the management of stray dogs. For example, In India, stray-dog management comes under the purview of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960 and State Municipal Acts. The Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2001, provide guidelines for the management of stray dogs.

Collaboration with NGOs: The government collaborates with NGOs and animal welfare organizations to implement programs for the management of stray dogs. For example, the government of Maharashtra has partnered with animal welfare organization, the Blue Cross Society, to conduct sterilization and vaccination drives for stray dogs.

Read more: **Is India in the grip of a 'stray dog' crisis?**

What are the arguments in favour of confining stray dogs?

Public safety: Stray dogs can pose a risk to public safety by attacking people or other animals. Confined facilities or culling of stray dogs can reduce the risk of such incidents.

Control of diseases: Stray dogs can carry diseases that can be transmitted to humans, such as rabies. Confined facilities stray dogs can help to control the spread of such diseases.

Nuisance: Stray dogs can cause a nuisance by barking loudly, damaging property, and creating a mess. Confined facilities or killing stray dogs can help to reduce such problems.

Population control: It can help to control the population of stray dogs, which can become a problem when their numbers are too high.

What are arguments against the confining stray dogs in facilities?

Cruelty: Confining or culling of stray dogs is often viewed as cruel, especially if the dogs are healthy and have not caused any harm.

Ethical concerns: Many people believe that all animals have a right to life and that killing or confining them goes against this principle.

Ineffectiveness: It is often seen as an ineffective solution to the problem, as it does not address the root causes of the issue. As per the WHO's Expert Committee on Rabies, there is no evidence

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that the removal of dogs has a significant impact on dog population densities and the spread of rabies.

Lack of resources: In many areas, there are not enough resources or facilities available to confine or euthanize all stray dogs, making it an impractical solution.

Alternatives: There are alternative solutions, such as animal birth control programs and responsible pet ownership, which are often seen as more humane and effective.

Legal issues: In some countries, killing or confining stray dogs is illegal, and proponents of animal rights argue that enforcing these laws is important for protecting animal welfare.

Read more: [**Sterilisation is the best way to address stray dog problem**](#)

What should be done to address the stray dog crisis?

The effective strategy would be the implementation **of the ABC (Animal Birth Control) Programme by municipal bodies** in accordance with the new ABC Rules of 2023.

A proactive approach would be to **encourage the adoption of Indian dogs**. If one person out of every 100 people adopts a dog from the street, there would be no dogs on the roads.

The native breeds of dogs should be promoted. Native dogs have better immune systems and make great pets.

Promoting responsible pet ownership: Encouraging pet owners to keep their pets on leashes, spay or neuter them, and provide them with adequate food and shelter can help prevent dogs from becoming strays.

Reports of dog attacks must be tested on the benchmark of proof. Recently, it was reported that two children had been killed by dogs in Vasant Kunj in New Delhi. Still, it has not been proven.

Begin sheltering or euthanizing unowned dogs while encouraging dog-owners to sterilize their pets to protect people, livestock, wildlife, and dogs themselves from suffering and homelessness.

Publicly feeding stray dogs should be prohibited and penalized as it encourages them to congregate and threatens public spaces, and it is against WHO guidelines and ecological science.

Education and awareness: Educating people on the importance of animal welfare and responsible pet ownership can help reduce the number of strays.

Sources: [**Blog 1**](#) | [**The Hindu**](#) | [**Indian Express**](#) | [**Deccan**](#) | [**The Hindu**](#) | [**Indian Express**](#) | [**Indian Today**](#)

Institutions of Eminence (IOE) scheme and issues with higher education – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The Parliamentary standing committee submitted a report outlining the shortcomings of the current IOE (Institutions of Eminence) scheme and higher education institutions. They recommended several measures to improve the status of these institutions and enhance the IOE scheme.

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About Institutions of Eminence (IOE) Scheme

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

➤ The objective of the 'institution of eminence' (IOE) scheme is to enable institutions to emerge as centres of world-class teaching and research

➤ About **114** institutions applied for the IoE tag

➤ Initially, the UGC had decided on selecting **10** public and **10** private institutions for the tag

➤ However, on the recommendation of the expert committee, a list of **30** institutes— **15** public and **15** private was put out

➤ The selected public institutions will get **₹1,000 crore** over a period of five years

➤ IIT-Bombay, IISc-Bangalore and IIT-Delhi were selected under the public institution category

➤ Jio Institute, Bits Pilani and Manipal Academy of Higher Education were selected under the private institute category

Source: TOI

The Institution of Eminence scheme is a scheme of Ministry of Human Resource Development pertaining to higher education institutions (HES) in India.

Under this scheme, selected universities are granted greater autonomy and funding to pursue academic and research goals. The scheme aims to put these institutions on par with the best in the world and encourage them to become centers of excellence in research and teaching.

IOEs are expected to attract the best talent from around the world, foster collaborations with other leading institutions, and contribute to the country's economic and social development.

Read more: Institution of Eminence

What is the need for IOE Scheme?

To enhance global ranking: The IOE plan will support and build top universities that can compete on a global scale and rank among the top 500 schools in the world.

To encourage research: It will help universities do research by giving them the money, infrastructure, and freedom they need.

Attracting foreign students: IOE universities will bring in students from other countries, which will boost India's soft power and give students from other countries a chance to study in India.

Fostering innovation: IOE universities will work to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in many different fields. This will help India's economy grow and develop.

Improving the quality of education: The scheme will improve the quality of education in Indian universities by providing them with the necessary resources and infrastructure to ensure that they offer world-class education.

About the analysis of the IOE scheme

Thus far, 12 institutions have been granted IoE status (8 public and 4 private). So far, Rs 3,428 crore has been allocated to eight public institutes, with IISc Bangalore receiving the largest part (Rs 620.59 crore). It has helped eight public universities speed up their ambitious reforms and growth by giving each one a financial boost.

Unfortunately, many of the selected private campuses have yet to reap the scheme's promised benefits. The government is delaying the recognition of two public and five private HEIs as IoEs. The lack of an EEC is impeding the process.

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What are the challenges faced by the IOE scheme?

Criticism of elitism: The IOE scheme has faced criticism for being elitist and favoring already established institutions while ignoring the needs of smaller universities.

Funding constraints: While the selected institutions receive special funding from the government, it may not be enough to fully achieve the program's goals, and budget constraints may limit the impact of the scheme.

For example, under the scheme, the government institutions, in addition to more autonomy from regulatory control, are entitled to financial assistance up to Rs 1,000 crore, over and above the regular annual budgetary grants. The private IoEs are promised autonomy, not funds.

Implementation challenges: The implementation of the IOE scheme may be challenging due to bureaucratic hurdles and resistance from stakeholders who are resistant to change. For example, only four of the 10 private higher education institutions selected for the IOE status have received official recognition to date (March 2023).

Capacity building: Some of the selected institutions may lack the necessary capacity and resources to fully realize the potential of the IOE scheme, requiring additional investments and support.

Measuring impact: It may be difficult to measure the impact of the IOE scheme on the Indian higher education system, and whether it has truly improved the quality of education and made Indian universities more competitive globally.

Inadequate representation: There has been criticism that certain regions or types of institutions have been underrepresented in the selection of IOEs, leading to concerns of bias and uneven development.

Maintaining autonomy: While IOEs enjoy greater autonomy under the scheme, it remains to be seen how much of this freedom will be protected and whether institutions will be able to truly chart their own path without undue influence from external factors. For instance, While the IOEs university can start new programmes and schools with just an intimation to UGC, it has to comply with the Bar Council of India's regulations for law programmes.

Must read: [Institutions of Eminence, mired in red tape](#)

What are the issues with higher education?

Lack of access: Access to higher education is limited, particularly for students from marginalized communities and those living in rural areas.

Low quality of education: The quality of higher education in India is often criticized, with concerns about outdated curricula, inadequate teaching standards, and a lack of focus on research.

Brain drain: India faces a challenge with 'brain drain', where many talented students and scholars migrate to other countries for higher education and career opportunities.

Affordability: Higher education can be expensive, especially for students from lower-income families, who may struggle to afford tuition fees and living expenses.

Gender disparity: There is a significant gender disparity in higher education, with a lower percentage of female students and a lack of adequate support and facilities for women on campuses.

Infrastructure: Many higher education institutions lack adequate infrastructure and resources, such as modern labs, libraries, and IT facilities.

Governance and regulation: There are concerns about the governance and regulation of higher education in India, with criticisms of a lack of accountability, politicization, and corruption in the sector.

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Industry linkages: The linkages between higher education institutions and industry are often weak, leading to a mismatch between the skills and knowledge of graduates and the needs of the job market.

What should be done to reform IOE scheme and improve higher education in India?

Accelerate the process of granting status: The parliamentary standing committee report recommended the ministry to accelerate the process of granting status in the case of the identified eligible institutions.

Introduce courses on Indian heritage and culture: To attract more foreign students to Indian universities, there is a need for the introduction of courses on Indian heritage and culture, such as Vedic mathematics, Yoga, and Ayurveda.

Revision of the Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA): Accelerate the reform of the HEFA scheme and notify it as soon as possible to broaden the scope of financing available under it. Make serious efforts to approve more loans under the HEFA plan, ensure prompt disbursement of sanctioned loans, and meet targets on time during 2023-24.

Fill up the vacancies: Take a proactive approach towards filling up over 34,000 teaching and non-teaching posts that are vacant in central universities, IITs, IIMs, NITs, and other institutions. Conduct special recruitment campaigns to fill up the vacancies as far as possible with permanent faculties by the end of 2023.

The **formation of a higher education umbrella body**, as well as **simplified visa requirements for foreign faculty in these institutes**, will aid in the faster realisation of the IOE scheme's objectives.

India can bring **the IOE programme in line with the National Education Policy, 2020**.

Sources: Indian Express (**Article 1** and **Article 2**), **Hindustan Times**, **The Week**, **Financial Express** and **EPW**.

Syllabus: GS 2: Social Justice – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.

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