

Forum IAS

7 PM COMPILATION

16th to 31st October, 2023

Features of 7 PM compilation

- ❖ Comprehensive coverage of a given current topic
- ❖ Provide you all the information you need to frame a good answer
- ❖ Critical analysis, comparative analysis, legal/constitutional provisions, current issues and challenges and best practices around the world
- ❖ Written in lucid language and point format
- ❖ Wide use of charts, diagrams and info graphics
- ❖ Best-in class coverage, critically acclaimed by aspirants
- ❖ Out of the box thinking for value edition
- ❖ Best cost-benefit ratio according to successful aspirants

[Yojana October 2023 Summary] Road Infrastructure In India- Explained Pointwise

Abortion Laws In India- Explained Pointwise

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[Yojana October 2023 Summary] Road Infrastructure In India- Explained Pointwise

Context

Road infrastructure in India has been an important driver of economic development and social inclusion. In the recent three decades, the emphasis of various governments has been on improving the road infrastructure in India. Increase of total **road-length** and improvement of **road-quality** are the two pillars of improved road infrastructure. Adoption of various organisational and technological innovations have helped India in improving the road infrastructure. India now has the **second-longest road length** in the world after USA.

What is the progress of India in improvement of road Infrastructure over decades?

India has tremendously improved its road infrastructure over decades. Since, India now has the second largest road length in the world, it is pertinent to look at the **progress over decades**.

Year	Road Length	Observation
1951	4 lakh Km	In the 40 Years between 1991 and 1951, India added 19 lakh km of roads.
1991	23 lakh Km	
2019	63 lakh Km	However between 1991 and 2019, India added 40 lakh Km of road. India has made rapid progress during this period in road infrastructure.

Also, the table mentioned below shows the **present six fold classification of Indian roads** and their compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) in percentage terms since 1991.

National Highways (NH)	State Highways (SH)	District Roads	Rural Roads	Urban Roads	Project Roads	Total
1,32,499	1,79,535	6,12,778	45,22,228	5,41,544	3,43,163	63,31,757
5.02	1.24	0.66	4.67	3.87	1.77	3.64

Source-Yojana

Observations on Present Road Infrastructure in India

- *Rural roads constitute over 70% of the road infrastructure in India
- *The CAGR of NH has been the highest since 1991 followed by rural roads.
- *Many SH have been reclassified as NH for upgradation.

What are the various steps undertaken for improvement of Road Infrastructure in India?

Improvement of Road Infrastructure has been achieved by the following organisational and technological innovations, which have been taken over decades-

Organisational Innovations

Delinking Road Development and Direct Employment- Until 1991 (liberalisation), the road development was connected with direct labour employment. The **Nagpur Plan** (1943-1963), **Bombay Plan** (1961-1981) and the **Lucknow Plan** (1981-2001), focused on using the road development projects as a means of direct employment generation. However **post liberalisation**,

there has been increase in the use of capital-intensive high-tech road making equipments. This led to increase in both quantity and quality of roads in India.

Creation of National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)- In February 1995, NHAI became operational to directly drive the development of National Highways (NH). Prior to the formation of NHAI, the NH development and maintenance was the responsibility of the states with funding from the centre. There was lowing carrying capacity of NHs (2% of NHs carried 40% of the traffic). However after NHAI formation, NH length have registered the largest compounded annual growth Rate (CAGR) since 1991.

Creation of State-level Road Development Corporations- With the creation of NHAI, many states also brought changes in their organisational structure for road development. They de linked the state expressway projects from their Public Works Department (PWD). Maharashtra was the first state to set up the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation Limited (MSRDCL). Uttar Pradesh (UP) is developing its expressways through these corporations.

National Highways Development Project (NHDP)- NHDP was started in 1998. NHDP consequently grew to seven phases involving a total length of 49,260 km. In 2018, most of the NHDP has been completed and the remaining works were subsumed under the larger Bharatmala Pariyojana.

New Focussed organisations apart from NHAI- Apart from NHAI, new organisations have been created for better focus on road development. National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) was incorporated in 2014, to carry out road development projects in the border areas. National Highways Logistics Management Limited (NHLML) was set up in 2020 for the first/last mile port connectivity projects.

Focus on Rural Roads through Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)- PMGSY has been one of the most successful projects in India. The success of PMGSY has also encouraged projects like the Mukhya Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (MMGSY) in many states. The reasons for success of PMGSY are– selection of Villages on objective criteria, independent agencies like World Bank doing the over sight and housing the project under Ministry of Rural Development (demand side) rather than MoRTH (supply side). Because of interventions like PMGSY, rural roads today constitute over 70% of the road infrastructure of the country.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and Viability Gap Funding (VGF)- PPP investments were increased through the introduction of financial/project models like the Viability Gap Funding (VGF). These models were introduced to reduce the financial risks of private players in road development.

Evolution of the Model Concession Agreement (MCA)- The first MCA for the road sector was brought in 2000. It has evolved over time for better allocation of risk between the PPP player and the development authorities.

New Contracting models and Asset Monetisation- Apart from the Classical tendering through the Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) or the Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT), several new contracting models have emerged. Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) and Toll, Operate and Transfer (TOT) are being used extensively for road development. The Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InVITs) have been operationalised to enable asset monetisation of built roads.

Technological Innovations

Introduction of new Road Making Technologies- With the roll out of the NHDP, the import of the road-making equipment was brought under the **open general licence** to ease their procurement process. Further, steps have been taken for **enhanced Technology Transfer** in the road making equipments. New and environmentally sustainable materials like **fly ash, steel slag** etc. are being used in road development.

Introduction of Electronic Toll Collection (ETC)- Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) has been introduced to **reduce the toll collection time** and traffic congestions at the toll Plazas.

Read More- [Forum IAS](#)

What are the advantages of developed road infrastructure in India?

Listed below are the major advantages of developed road infrastructure-

Transportation of people and goods- Roads are the primary mode of transportation in India. **90% of the passenger traffic** and **60% of the freight traffic** are carried by roads.

Promotes the development of trade and commerce- Properly developed roads promote the development of trade and commerce by **facilitating the movement of goods** and services across the country.

Increase in employment opportunities- The construction and maintenance of roads provide **employment to millions of people** in India. According to NHAI report, the construction of highways and expressways has created around **55,000 direct jobs** and **1,00,000 indirect jobs** per 1,000 kms of road construction.

Facilitation of socio-economic development- The development of roads in rural and remote areas is crucial for promoting overall socio-economic development. According to the Ministry of Rural Development, around **91% of rural areas in India are connected by roads** which enables them to access essential services like healthcare, education and markets.

What are the Challenges with the Road Infrastructure in India?

Lack of Focus on Safety Standards- Unsafe road designs and construction practices are the biggest causes of India's unsafe roads. **Lack of buffer lanes, low number of crash barriers, lack of scientific signage** are some of the examples of these unsafe practices. India's unsafe roads kill the maximum number of people in any country.

Challenges with Land Acquisition for road projects- In a **study conducted by NHAI** on 106 projects, worth over ₹1.5 billion, facing implementation delays, **issues pertaining to land acquisition were identified as one of the important causes for the delay** in almost 50 percent of the projects. Also, the **government's burden to acquire land** has risen after the passage of the **Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013**, that mandates it to pay four times the market value of acquired land in rural areas and two times in urban areas.

Issues with India's Urban Roads- India's urban roads have not been getting enough attention as the rural roads have got in recent times. There are **coordination issues with urban Public Transport, lack of parking spaces and heavy traffic congestions**. India's urban roads lead to wastage of time, poor last mile connectivity and poor urban goods movement.

Disputes with the PPP Players- **Contractual disputes** between the development authority and the PPP Player also considerably slows down the road development projects. **Untimely release of funds** financially hurt the PPP players to execute the road development projects.

Lack of use of Origin to Destination (OD) Data- There is lack of use of **Origin to Destination (OD) traffic flow data** while planning the road development projects. The OD data must be integrated with the Electronic Toll Collection (ETC).

What should be the way forward ?

Although India has made substantial progress in the road infrastructure sector, **we are still way behind in achieving a fully developed road infrastructure** in India. The following measures need to be undertaken to ensure further development of road infrastructure in India.

Improvement of land Acquisition process- **Streamlining the land acquisition process**, ensuring transparency and **providing adequate compensation to landowners** will help in expediting the road development projects and reducing their costs.

Ensuring safe road designs- There is need to ensure that the road designs are compatible with the **Indian Roads Congress Standards**. Also the material testing facilities must be enhanced at the construction site. Proper construction of the roads must be improved.

Use of Technology- Use of technologies like **sensors to monitor traffic flows**, **intelligent transport systems** and smart road infrastructure will improve the road safety and efficiency.

Focus on Road Maintenance- The government needs to prioritise regular maintenance of roads like **resurfacing, pothole filling and drainage system** maintenance.

Increase investment- The government must explore options like **road bonds, green bonds for highway development**. The sector should be made financially lucrative to draw maximum FDI inflows.

Incorporation of lane capacity measurement while measuring road capacity- As more and more multiple-lane roads get constructed, it is important to focus on the **measurement of lane Kilometers rather than road kilometres**. This will provide a true picture of India's road capacity.

UPSC Syllabus- Infrastructure energy, ports, roads, airports, railways etc.

Main Source- Yojana October 2023

Read more- **Indian Express**

Abortion Laws In India- Explained Pointwise

News and Context

Abortion laws in India are in focus once again, after the **Supreme Court declined a married woman's plea to abort (medically terminate) her 26-week pregnancy**. The woman had approached the Supreme Court, seeking abortion, as she was already a mother of two and was **suffering from post-partum depression** after the birth of her second child. The woman had submitted that she was physically, emotionally, mentally, financially and medically unable to carry, deliver or raise another child.

What is abortion and what is the debate around it?

Abortion- An abortion is a medical procedure to terminate a pregnancy. It uses medication or a surgical procedure to end the pregnancy. However, this medical procedure has a 'Pro-Choice' vs 'Pro-Life' surrounding it.

Debate surrounding Abortion	
Pro-Choice- Support abortion rights of women. Right of women to 'bodily autonomy' is paramount.	Pro-Life- Oppose abortion rights of women. 'Right to life' of the foetus is paramount.

What is the Current status of legislation on abortion in India and around the globe?

India has taken the Pro-Choice approach to abortion and has legalised it. India took the first step to legalise abortion by enacting **The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 (MTP Act 1971)** on the recommendations of **Shantilal Committee**. The MTP Act has been improved through subsequent amendments latest being in 2021 (**MTP Amendment Act 2021**). It has been brought in line with modern progressive ideas regarding women's reproductive rights and bodily autonomy.

However **while India has progressed** in the abortion rights domain, **US has regressed** in the abortion rights domain. US SC pioneered the abortion rights movement by giving the **Roe vs Wade Judgement (1973)**. This judgement gave **women** in America **the constitutional right to have an abortion** before the foetus is viable outside the womb or before the 24-28 week mark. However, the US supreme has **recently overturned the judgement** and removed abortion from the constitutional right. US supreme court has **left it to the individual US states to frame their own abortion laws**.

Map depicting the status of abortion in all the countries of the World



Source- Centre for Reproductive rights

India has tried to address the lacunae in the MTP Act 1971 and brought amendments to the Act in 2021.

What are the differences between the MTP Act 1971 and the MTP Amendment Act 2021?

Listed below in the tabular format is the difference between the MTP Act 1971 and its amended Act of 2021.

Criterion	The MTP Act 1971	The MTP Amendment Act 2021
Contraceptive Failure	Only applied to married Woman	Unmarried Women are also covered
Gestational limit for termination	20 Weeks.	Increased from 20 Weeks to 24 weeks but only for rape survivors, minors, physically disabled, marital status change, mental retardation, disaster stricken, fetal abnormality. Beyond 24 weeks, only for 'substantial fetal abnormalities'.

Registered Medical Practitioners (RMP) approval	Till 12 Weeks- 1 RMP 12-20 Weeks- 2 RMP	Till 20 Weeks- 1 RMP 20-24 weeks- 2 RMP Beyond 24 weeks- State-Level Medical Board
Privacy	Not Mentioned	Protects the confidentiality of data related to termination. Any violation would attract jail term.

Read More- [Forum IAS](#)

What is the significance of the amended MTP Act 2021?

‘Bodily Autonomy’ to Vulnerable pregnant Women- The amended Act has enhanced the upper gestation limit from 20 to 24 weeks for special categories of Vulnerable pregnant women including **rape survivors**. This will help in preventing the socio-economic and psychological impact of **unwanted pregnancies**. Vulnerable pregnant women have been granted more ‘bodily autonomy’ to decide on their pregnancy.

Ease in process of termination of pregnancy- The Amended Act has eased the process of termination of pregnancy. Now for the termination of pregnancy **up to 20 weeks**, the opinion of **only 1 registered Medical Practitioner** is required.

Lowering the burden on courts- The Act has **removed the limit of 24 weeks** for termination of pregnancy in case of **substantial fetal abnormalities**. Now the substantial fetal abnormalities abortion can be allowed by the newly established **State level Medical Board** even after 24 weeks. Thus, it may ease the burden of writ petition on courts, for seeking abortion beyond the permitted period.

Privacy and confidentiality- According to the Act, **names of women** whose pregnancy has been terminated will be kept **confidential**. This will ensure dignity, privacy and confidentiality of women.

De-stigmatisation of relations outside marriage- The Act allows for termination of pregnancy due to **contraceptive-failure condition for unmarried woman**. Hence, it de-stigmatises pregnancies outside marriage.

Reduction in Maternal Deaths and morbidities- The simplification of process of abortion will reduce the maternal deaths due to unsafe abortions. India, currently registers around **80,000 deaths due to illegal abortions**.

What are the challenges associated with MTP Act 2021 to achieve safe abortion in India?

Does not provide right for “at-will abortion”- The MTP Act does not provide for ‘at-will abortion’. SC in the landmark case of **X vs Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of NCT**, has acknowledged that the MTP Act is a **provider-centric legislation**, where the opinion of the Registered Medical Practitioner (RMP) becomes **“decisive and final”**.

No recourse for rape victims and other vulnerable pregnant women after 24 Weeks- According to the act, **rape victims and other vulnerable pregnant women (mental illness, minors etc.) cannot approach the Medical Board** for the termination of pregnancies beyond 24 weeks.

Medical board can be approached in case of 'substantial foetal abnormalities' only. Thus writ petitions become the only option for these women.

No provision of time frame for the medical board decision- The act does not provide for the time frame within which the **Medical board must make its decision**. Delays by the medical board lead to further complications for women.

'Special categories of women given relaxation' not fully representative- Special categories of women whose gestation limit has been increased from 20 to 24 weeks is not fully representative. It **does not include** women suffering from **financial crisis** or women suffering from **lactational amenorrhea or menopause**.

Fear of persecution- Fear of criminal persecution still exists among the registered medical practitioners, which drive women either to unsafe abortions or to courts.

Low number of registered medical practitioners- According to the act only Registered medical practitioners having **experience or training in gynaecology or obstetrics** can perform the abortion. But according to NH&FS (2015-16) data, **only 53% of abortions are performed by a registered medical doctor**, the rest are conducted by a nurse, midwives, family members. Also there is 75% shortage of such doctors in community health centres in rural areas. This results in more unsafe abortions.

What should be the way forward for abortion laws in India?

Filing of cases for abortion rights in the Indian courts is still a regular feature. India must adopt the following recommendations to achieve safe abortion conditions.

Follow the WHO guidelines for abortion- WHO has recommended that **States should fully decriminalise abortion**, remove **grounds-based regulation and gestational limits to abortion**. This will ensure non-discriminatory and equal abortion care to all.

Shift the power of abortion from the doctor to the woman seeking an abortion- SC in **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) vs. the Union Of India And Others (2017)**, recognized the right of women to make reproductive choices, as **a fundamental right under Article 21** of the Indian Constitution. Hence the conditionalities in the act must be removed to ensure women are able to exercise their reproductive choices right.

Increasing the ambit of the MTP Act- The ambit of the act must be increased by including transgenders and other vulnerable women like those suffering from **financial constraints, lactational amenorrhea or menopause**.

Creation of cadre of certified medical practitioners- India needs to create a cadre of certified medical practitioners including **ASHA, ANM workers** in its health system who can carry out institutional abortions. This will reduce the problem of unsafe abortions in India.

Women and girls should have access to abortion care that is safe, respectful and non-discriminatory in nature. **Access to abortion care is fundamental** in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relating to good health and well-being (SDG3) and gender equality (SDG5).

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus-

Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of

these Vulnerable Sections.
Issues related to Women

Same Sex Marriage Verdict- Implications- Explained Pointwise

Introduction

The five-judge Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud has **refused to grant legal status to same-sex marriage in India**. There were two views in the judgement on some of the key questions in the case. The judgement given by Justices S Ravindra Bhat, Hima Kohli, and P S Narasimha formed the majority. The judgement of CJI Chandrachud and Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul formed the minority.

Highlights of the Judgement

- 1.Right to marriage is not a fundamental right.
- 2.Rejection of the demands of the petitioners for the re-interpretation of Special Marriage Act (SMA) 1954 to include the word “spouses” in place of “man and woman”.
- 3.CARA provisions which prohibit queer couples from adoption are discriminatory. But these provisions cannot be struck down by the judiciary. Legislature and executive to take the necessary steps.
- 4.Committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary should be constituted to set out the rights which would be available to queer couples in civil unions.

What is the detailed SC judgement on same-sex marriage?

In the same-sex marriage case, four (4) key questions were framed. While the majority and minority judgements agreed in their verdict on some questions, there were disagreements on other questions.

Key Question	Majority view (3 Judges)
<p>The fundamental right to marry</p> <p>The petitioners wanted the SC to declare marriage as a fundamental right as the SC declared Privacy as a fundamental right in 2017.</p>	
<p>Re-Interpretation of Special Marriage Act (SMA) 1954</p> <p>The petitioners had asked the SC to interpret the word ‘marriage’ in SMA. They wanted marriage to be defined as between “spouses” instead of “man and woman”. The petitioners had also asked for striking down provisions of the SMA that are gender-restrictive.</p>	
<p>Queer couples’ right to adopt a child</p>	<p>Majority view- Agreed with the minority view that CARA</p>

<p>The petitioners had argued that the guidelines of the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), which does not allow unmarried couples to jointly adopt children, is discriminatory against queer couples as they cannot legally marry.</p>	<p>provisions are discriminatory. But these provisions cannot be struck down by the judiciary.</p> <p>Rationale for not striking down by the judicial pen- The legislature and executive only should remove these discriminatory provisions.</p>
<p>Civil unions for queer couples</p> <p>Civil Union was considered as the halfway approach before granting complete marriage rights. US Supreme Court had adopted the same approach of recognising civil unions first before granting complete marriage rights.</p> <p>However the petitioners argued that civil unions are not an equal alternative to the legal and social institution of marriage. The petitioners argued that relegating non-heterosexual relationships to civil unions would send the queer community a message that their relationships are inferior to those of heterosexual couples</p>	<p>Majority View- Agreed with the minority view. But judiciary should not prescribe civil unions as a 'choice' to queer couples.</p> <p>The majority opinion said that the state (legislature, executive) should facilitate this choice and that too, only for those who wish to exercise it.</p>

What arguments were put in favour of legalisation of same sex marriage in India?

Mentioned below are the arguments that were put in favour of legalisation of Same Sex Marriage in India-

Provides Equality to Homosexuals- Legalisation of same-sex marriages is crucial in promoting equality and non-discrimination. Articles 14 and 15 of the constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. The Supreme Court in the Navtej Singh Johar case (2018), interpreted "sex" to include "sexual orientation". Denial of the right to marriage to the same-sex couples, is discrimination against them based on their sexual orientation.

Ensures Right to privacy- The Supreme Court in the K.S. Puttaswamy case (2017), held the right to privacy as a fundamental right (Under Art 21). The right to privacy encompasses the ability to make choices regarding one's body and intimate relationships. Legalisation of same sex marriage would ensure the homosexual couple's right to privacy.

Provides Legal protection- Legalisation of same sex marriage will provide legal protection to homosexual couples under laws that guarantee rights such as wages, gratuities, adoption, surrogacy, inheritance, joint ownership of property, and healthcare.

Enlargement of 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 their right to marry.

Significance to the Homosexual Relationship- The legalisation of same-sex marriage will provide the same-sex relationships a sense of significance, **direction, and identity**.

Promotes Social acceptance- Legalisation of same-sex marriages would promote social acceptance of LGBT individuals and relationships. It would help to reduce social discrimination and stigma.

Transformative constitutionalism and progressive realisation of rights- The legalisation of same-sex marriage will be a step further in the domain of transformative constitutionalism and progressive realisation of the minority rights. SC of India invoked the aforesaid principles of transformative constitutionalism in the **Navtej Singh Johar Case (2018)** which **invalidated Sec. 377 of the IPC**.

Granting marriage equality does not require unprecedented move from SC- Both the **basic structure doctrine** and the **right to privacy** verdict involved far more substantial and extensive cases of interpretation of the constitution by the SC. Legalisation of same-sex marriage can be done within that extensive interpretation framework evolved by SC.

Homosexuality not limited to urban and elite areas- The ones who argue for same sex marriage, claim that homosexuality is not just limited to urban areas. A major percentage of homosexuals reside in rural areas and town. According to them, **homosexuals constitute around 7-8%** of the country's population.

Marriage is an evolving institution- According to the proponents of same-sex marriage, marriage is an evolving institution according to the prevalent social values of the times. **Gandharva marriages** based on mutual consent, **Daiva Marriages** where girl was married to a teacher and **Arsha marriages** where women were married to rishis, have all been the result of the prevalent social values of those times. The demand of modern times is same sex marriage. Hence it should be allowed.

Global Acceptance of same sex marriage- Same-sex marriage is legal in 34 countries around the world. Denial of this right to individuals in a democratic society goes against the global principles.

Right to Marry as a Human Right- Under the **UDHR, 1948**, the **right to marry is a human right. Article 16** provides that, "Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family."

Logical next-step after Decriminalisation of Section 377- It is logical to assume that in a situation when a couple are having a physical relationship, they may progress to a long-term relationship, including that of marriage.



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

What arguments were put against the legalisation of same sex marriage in India?

However, the central government and various other advocates put several arguments against the legalisation of same sex marriage in India. These are mentioned below-

Against religious and cultural beliefs- In India, aspects of marriage, succession and adoption are governed by religious personal laws. These marriage laws and customs are for **heterosexual couples only**. Hence, legalisation of same-sex marriage goes against the Indian religious and cultural beliefs.

Legal complications- Legalisation of same-sex marriages could lead to legal complications in issues related to **adoption, child custody, inheritance and taxes**.

Children's rights- The opponents have argued that **children are better off being raised by heterosexual parents**. In Indian society, where acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community is not universal, it can lead to **societal stigma, discrimination** and affect the mental health of adopted children of LGBTQIA+ couples.

Marriage is a matter of public policy and must be decided by the parliament- Marriage is a matter of public policy and must be decided by the Parliament and the executive alone. The

legalisation of same sex marriage, would also require changes in the age of consent, prohibition of bigamy, judicial and divorce acts.

Can create social unrest- Same-sex marriage is not widely accepted in Indian society. Legalisation of homosexual marriage could create social unrest, and disrupt social norms and values.

Urban-Elitist demand- The demand for same-sex marriage is only an urban-elitist demand. It is not the demand of the rural and semi urban areas.

Against the natural order of things- Some people argue that the primary purpose of marriage is procreation, and that same-sex couples cannot have biological children. Therefore, they believe that same-sex marriage should not be allowed because it goes against the natural order of things.

What should be the way forward for the same-sex couples in India?

The same-sex couples have been disappointed the verdict of SC which declined to grant legal status to same sex couples. It has left it on the legislature and executive to grant legal status to same-sex couples. However, the following steps must be taken in the meantime-

Centre must immediately form the committee under cabinet secretary- As directed by the SC, the centre must immediately form the committee under cabinet secretary to provide civil union rights and other rights like inheritance, adoption etc. to homosexual couples.

Gender just family laws- The legislature must improve Indian family law to make it more inclusive, gender-just and non-discriminatory.

Raise awareness- The purpose of awareness campaigns is to promote equality and acceptance of all sexual orientations and expand public opinion about the LGBTQIA+ community.

Dialogue and engagement- Engaging in a dialogue with religious leaders and communities can help bridge the gap between traditional beliefs and modern attitudes towards same-sex relationships. The engagement of queer couples with the politicians at the local, state and national level must be stepped up.

Govt must aim for Legal reforms- Govt must aim to make amendments in the Special Marriage Act, 1954 so that the demands of the same-sex couples are fulfilled at the earliest. The legislature must also try to fulfill the long standing demands of horizontal reservations for transgenders, anti-discrimination laws and equal access to marriage.

What are the past developments regarding the recognition of LGBTQI rights in India?

Section 377 IPC criminalised sex between non-heterosexual couples punishable with 10 years imprisonment. In 2009, the Delhi High Court declared Section 377 as unconstitutional in Naz Foundation Case.

This was set aside in Suresh Kumar Koushal Case by the Supreme Court in 2013, but ultimately upheld in Navtej Singh Johar Case in 2018.

The Court had also held in the NALSA Judgment (2014) that persons are entitled to identify their own gender. They may be born as males but if they want to identify as females or transgenders, they are entitled to do so.

The **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019** was passed by Parliament which provides the procedure for changing one's gender and protection against discrimination in diverse establishments, private or state.

Read More- [The Hindu](#), [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus-

- 1. Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.**
- 2. Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.**
- 3. Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India and Social empowerment**

[Kurukshetra October 2023 Summary]- Crop Residue Management In India- Challenges and Opportunities- Explained Pointwise

Introduction

Ecologically sustainable and environmentally safe management of **crop residue (agricultural waste)** is one of the major challenges in India. Harvesting, threshing and primary processing of crops leave behind a variety of plant materials that need safe disposal and recycling. The focus of government in recent times has been on effective management of crop residue.

What is crop residue and what is its utility?

Crop residue are the agricultural waste that are left in the fields after the harvesting and threshing process. **Stubbles, stalks, stover, husk, bran, bagasse and molasses** are generally classified under the category of crop residue (CR) in the Indian context. These crop residues were **once thought to be waste**. But these are **now regarded** as an **important natural resource** due to their versatile utility.

Utility of crop residue

1. Crop residues are primarily used as bedding material for livestock, animal feed, soil mulching, biogas generation, bio-manure and compost, thatching for rural homes, mushroom cultivation, biomass energy production, fuel for domestic and industrial use.
2. CR can be converted into a variety of value-added products such as papers, boards, eco-panels with the help of innovative technologies.

Crop residue problem in India (explained with Data)

Total crop residue(CR)	683 MT	* 2/3rds (67%) of CR are contributed by cereal crops (Rice generates the most CR followed by wheat). * 20% of CR are fibre crop residue (Cotton accounts 74% of fibre crop residue)
Recycled crop residue	500 MT	These residues are recycled in various sectors like industrial, domestic and livestock fodder.
Left over crop residue	183 MT	These residues are left without any single use. Nearly half of it is burned in fields across the

	states. Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh are the states where maximum residue burning takes place.
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What are the problems caused by unscientific crop residue management?

Listed below are the problems that are caused by unscientific crop residue management in India-

Deterioration of soil health- According to a [report from Punjab Agricultural University](#), every year **0.824 million tonnes of NPK** (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium) **are lost** from the soil due to Crop Residue (CR) burning in agricultural fields. Heat generated from burning of CRs elevates soil temperatures, causing the death of beneficial soil organisms.

Increase in Greenhouse gas emissions- Burning of crop residue releases carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, methane, sulphur oxide, nitrogen oxide gases. These gases are responsible for **aggravating** the global calamity of **climate change**.

Deleterious impact on human health- Burning of crop residue releases large amount of particulate matter (PM-2.5 and PM-10). These are **carcinogenic in nature** and could lead to various **airborne or lung diseases**. The burning of CRs also puts the lives of milk-producing animals in danger.

Why do farmers resort to unscientific crop residue management like stubble burning?

The reasons for unscientific crop residue management like stubble burning are mentioned below-

Paucity of time- Farmers face paucity of time **in clearing the paddy straws from the fields** before sowing wheat in the Rabi season.

False traditional belief- Farmers in this region have a **false traditional belief that burning crop residue will restore** nutrients back to the soil.

Shortage of on farm labours- In earlier times there was plentiful farm labour which helped farmers with manual harvesting, and no stubble was left in the field. But, of late, an acute shortage of labour prevails due to various socio-economic changes (**migration**) and employment guarantee schemes like **MGNREGA**. Hence the farmers find it easier to burn their stubble.

Non affordability and non inclination to invest in modern machines- Many rich farmers are not inclined to invest in modern crop residue management machines like '**Happy seeder**', '**Super SMS attachment**', '**rotavators**', '**superseeder**' etc. Many small and marginal farmers face affordability issues.

What steps have been taken to prevent unscientific crop residue management in India?

National Green Tribunal (NGT) order 2015- The order **prohibited** agricultural residue burning in any part of the **NCT of Delhi** and the states of **Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana**. Any person or body that violates the directions of NGT has to pay environmental compensation which has to be collected by the concerned State Governments.

Framework of Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)- CAQM is a statutory body formed under the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas, Act 2021. CAQM has provided a **framework to tackle the problem of air pollution due to stubble burning**. The State Governments of Punjab, National Capital Region (NCR) States

and the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) have developed detailed monitorable action plans based on this framework.

Crop Residue Management (CRM) scheme- This scheme was launched in 2018-19 with a multifaceted strategy. Under this scheme, financial assistance @50% is provided to the farmers for purchase of CRM machines like 'Happy seeder', 'Super SMS attachment', 'rotavators', 'superseeder' etc. Also financial assistance @80% is provided to cooperative societies, Farmer Producer Organisations and Panchayats for the establishment of Custom Hiring Centres in villages. These centres provide CRM machinery to farmers on rental basis at affordable rates.

Revised Guidelines for 'off-site' crop residue management- These guidelines have been issued for the 4 states of Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana. These guidelines aim to facilitate the alternative uses of crop residue and develop a paddy straw supply chain. The supply chain will help in making paddy straw available for various end uses such as power generation, heat generation, bio-CNG, bio-ethanol production.

Read More- [Forum IAS](#)

What are the alternative methods of crop residue management?

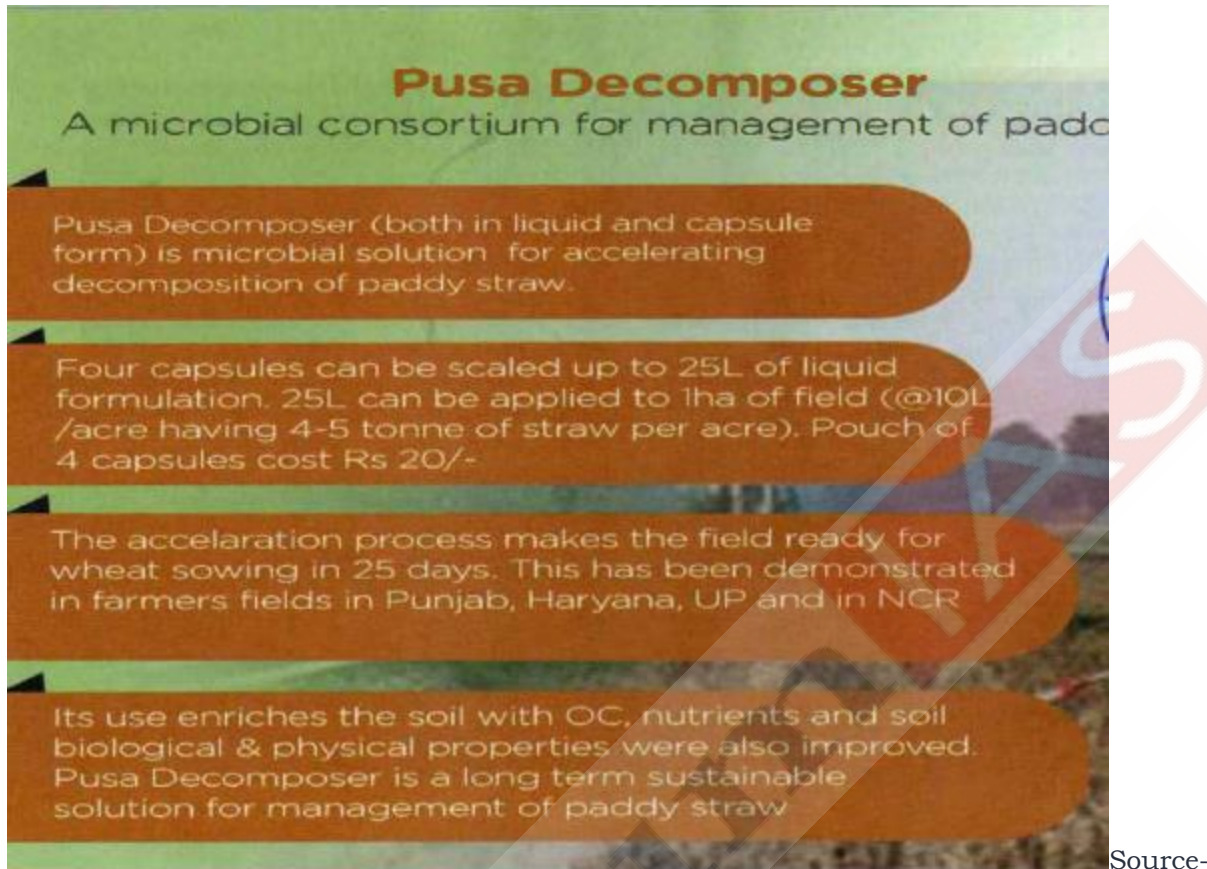
Mentioned below are the alternative methods of crop residue management which can be employed on large scale for effective crop residue management-

Pusa Decomposer Technology – Pusa Decomposer technology has been developed by The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) to biologically decompose paddy stubble in the farm. It's a microbial solution available both in liquid and capsule form for accelerated decomposition of straw.

Biochar usage- Biochar which is a carbon-rich material can be made from left over rice straw. This can be used as a soil-amendment to enhance the soil fertility, carbon storage and water filtration.

Palletisation- Paddy straw can be dried and converted into pellets. These pellets can be mixed along with coal and can be used in thermal power plants and industries as fuel. This can save coal as well as reduce carbon emissions.

Happy Seeder- Happy Seeder, which is a tractor-mounted machine, cuts and lifts rice straw, sows wheat into the bare soil, and deposits the straw over the sown area as mulch. This can be used for stubble management instead of burning the stubble.



Yojana

What should be the way forward ?

Crop residue management remains a pertinent challenge in India. We must take the following measures to counter this challenge-

Revitalisation of Stubble Management through govt schemes- Schemes like the MGNREGA should be replicated for harvesting and composting stubble burning. This will help in regulation of crop residue management at the ground level.

Use of New and Improved seed varieties- Use of new and improved varieties of rice and wheat crop like Pusa Basmati-1509 and PR-126, mature quickly. The use of these varieties provides more time to the farmers to clear their stubble before the next sowing season.

Replication of Chhattisgarh Innovative Model- Chhattisgarh government has developed an innovative model which involves the setting up of Gauthans. Gauthans are five-acre plots owned by each village where unused stubble or parali is collected through parali daan (people's donations) and turned into organic fertiliser by mixing cow dung with natural enzymes. This model can be replicated at the national level.

Increasing the Farmer Awareness- Farmers need to be educated and informed about how stubble burning poses a threat to human life as well as the fertility of the soil. They should be encouraged to adopt eco-friendly technologies.

Read	More-	<u>Indian</u>	<u>Express</u>
UPSC Syllabus- Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.			

[Kurukshetra October 2023 Summary]- Leveraging Agroecological Approaches for Clean and Green Villages- Explained Pointwise

Introduction

Villages in an agrarian economy like India are the focus points for transforming the country's developmental journey. 'Clean and Green' Villages are the key to rural development and the transformation to Vikshit Bharat by 2047. Promotion of agroecological practices in sectors, such as agriculture, energy, forestry can play a pivotal role in developing 'Clean and Green' Villages.

What is 'Clean and Green' Village and what are the agroecological approaches to develop 'Clean and Green' Villages ?

'Clean and Green' Village- The Clean and Green Village is the fifth among the nine themes adopted by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to transform rural ecosystems with the support of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).

Components of Clean and Green Village	
Clean	Green
1. Access to safe & adequate drinking water and sanitation services. 2. Low pollution and emission levels. 3. Clean air and water that enables people to lead healthy and productive lives.	1. Sustainable management of Village natural resources such as land and forests. 2. Ensuring food security while conserving the environment.



Source-Kurukshetra

Agro-ecological approach- Agro-ecological approach is an integrated approach that simultaneously applies ecological and social concepts, to the design and management of food and agricultural systems. It seeks to optimise the interactions between plants, animals, humans and environment.

What are the various agro-ecological practices being followed in India for 'Clean and Green' Village?

In India, the major agro-ecological practices and the schemes being followed are mentioned below-

1.'Organic and Natural Farming' Practices for Clean and Green Villages

Organic and natural farming practice are based on agroecological principles and exclude the use of synthetic or chemical inputs. Organic and natural farming provides chemical and pesticide-free food grains and crops, improves soil health, and reduces environmental pollution. Organic and natural farming contributes to 'Clean and Green' villages by helping in the conservation of natural resources, improving livelihoods, and providing safe and nutritious food.

Schemes and programmes for 'organic and natural farming'

Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)	PMVY has been launched in 2015-16. It promotes organic farming through the creation of Cluster and Farmer Producer organisations.
Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER)	MOVCDNER is a Central Sector Scheme, a sub-mission under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA). It is being implemented in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.
Bhartiya Prakratik Krishi Paddhati (BPKP)	BPKP launched in 2019-20 is a sub-scheme under PKVY. This scheme promotes natural farming in the country.
PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness Generation, Nourishment, and Amelioration of Mother-Earth (PM-PRANAM)	PM-PRANAM has been launched in 2003 by the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers. This programme is initiated as a mass movement to save the health of Mother Earth by promoting sustainable and balanced use of fertilisers, adopting alternate fertilisers, promoting organic farming and implementing resource conservation technologies.

2.'Waste to Wealth- Biogas and organic manure' Practices for Clean and Green Villages

Biogas and organic manure are agroecological practices that convert agricultural, industrial, animal and municipal wastes into useful forms like energy and agricultural input.

Biogas and organic manure contribute to 'Clean and Green Villages' by reducing the greenhouse gas emissions, reducing pollution and improving waste management.

Schemes and Programmes for 'Biogas and organic manure'

The Galvanising Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBARdhan)	This scheme was launched in 2018 and is an integral component of Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen). It ensures 'Clean and Green' villages by converting organic and biodegradable waste (cattle dung, kitchen leftovers, crop residue, market waste, etc.) into biogas and bio-slurry/bio-fertilizers.
National Biogas Programme	National Biogas Programme has been launched in 2022 by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE). It is to support the installation of biogas plants and their use as a source of alternative fuels for cooking purposes in the country.
Sustainable Alternative towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT)	SATAT initiative has been launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. It assures offtake of BioCNG or Compressed Biogas (CBG) after purification through Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) for sale as automotive fuels.

3. 'Agro forestry' Practices for Clean and Green Villages

Agro forestry is a cost-effective land management system that integrates crops, trees and/ livestock and provides economic and environmental benefits to small and marginal farmers.

Schemes and Programmes for Agro Forestry practices

Sub-Mission on Agroforestry (Har Medh Par Ped) Scheme	It has been launched in 2016-17 to encourage tree plantation on farm land along with crops/ cropping system to help the farmers get additional income and make their farming systems more climate resilient and adaptive.
Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)	It has been launched in 2014-15 for holistic growth of the horticulture sector covering fruits, vegetables, root and tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, cocoa and bamboo.

What are the advantages of the use of agro-ecological practices for 'Clean and Green' Villages?

Mentioned below are the advantages of the use of agro-ecological practices-

Economic transformation of Villages- The development of biogas sector, horticulture and organic farming increases the revenue sources of villages leading to their economic transformation.

Increased employment opportunities- The application of agro-ecological practices provides enhanced employment opportunities especially to rural women.

Mitigate effects of climate change- The application of agro-ecological practices increases ecological resilience with respect to volatile weather. It also increases carbon sequestration and water capture in soil.

Conservation of biodiversity and natural resources- Soil organic matter, water, crop genetic diversity and natural enemies of pests are conserved by the use of these practices.

Improvement of health and nutrition- There is reduction of incidence of pesticide poisonings and pesticide-related diseases due to adoption of organic farming.

What are the Challenges in the adoption of these practices?

Threats from powerful elites- Powerful lobbies (fossil fuel companies, fertilizer, seed companies & scientists with funding connections to agribusiness) perceive large-scale transitions to agroecology as a substantial threat to their influence on farming systems. They oppose organic farming and natural farming in India. Ex- National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, based on a brainstorming session that included industry representatives has sent a letter to the Prime Minister opposing Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF).

Low awareness among the farmers- The major challenge with the adoption of these agro-ecological processes is the lack of awareness among the rural population.

Lack of financial resources- Lack of access to financial resources is a major hindrance in setting up of rural industries for creating value added products.

Effect on the food industry- The diversion of good agricultural land to plantation may decrease the crop production and can create scarcity of food.

Conclusion

Clean and Green Village objectives can be expedited by scaling up agroecology-based programmes and schemes. Their implementation at the grassroots level must be improved with support from panchayats, cooperatives, Self Help Groups (SHG), and women-SHG.

Read More- [The New Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- Major crops and the cropping pattern in different regions/ parts of India

Vienna convention on diplomatic relations 1961- Explained Pointwise

Introduction

Recently, India has sent back 41 diplomats of Canada from New Delhi citing disparity in the number of diplomats between the two countries. However, Canada contends that New Delhi has not upheld its obligations under the **Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961**. However, MEA has insisted that its actions of sending back 41 diplomats is not against the Vienna Convention principles.

What is Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961?

About Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961

Signed- 1961

Entered into Force- April 24, 1964

Ratification by Nations- Universal ratification (Exception of Palau and South Sudan)

Purpose- Provides a comprehensive basis for the establishment, maintenance and termination of diplomatic relations with the consent of independent Sovereign States.

Important articles of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961

Article 22	Deals with the 'Inviolability' of mission premises- Bars the entry of law enforcement officers of the 'receiving state/host state' in the mission premises. Imposes a special duty on the 'receiving State/host' to protect the premises against intrusion, damage, disturbance of the peace or infringement of dignity.
Article 24	Deals with 'inviolability' of mission archives and documents- The 'receiving state/host state' may not seize or inspect the mission archives and documents or permit their use in legal proceedings.
Article 27	Guarantees free communication between a diplomatic mission and its sending State- The diplomatic bag carrying such communications may not be opened or detained even on suspicion of abuse.
Article 29	'Inviolability' for the person of diplomats and provides for their immunity from civil and criminal jurisdiction.
Article 36	Exemption from customs duties on diplomatic imports throughout a diplomat's posting.

What is the Significance of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations?

Vienna convention on Diplomatic Relations was signed in 1961 to provide a comprehensive basis for the diplomatic relations between two countries. The significance of the Convention is mentioned below-

Codification of 'diplomatic immunity'- The convention has codified the privileges of 'diplomatic immunity'. This has allowed diplomats to **carry out their duties** without fear of coercion or harassment.

Reaffirmation of the concept of 'inviolability' of Diplomatic Missions- The convention guarantees **freedom of expression & dignity, right to life and liberty** to the diplomatic mission through these provisions. The provisions ensure the efficient performance of the functions of diplomatic missions.

Development of 'friendly relations'- The rules of the convention are intended to facilitate the development of friendly relations among nations, **irrespective of their differences of constitutional and social systems.**

What are the Challenges with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations?

However the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations has been facing the following challenges-

Unilateral introduction of changes in the application of the convention by Western Countries- The developed western countries have violated the 'immunity' granted to the diplomats in their countries. They have applied their humanitarian and labour laws, to selectively target the diplomats of developing countries. **Ex- Arrest of Indian Diplomat 'Devyani Khobragade' by the US on account of domestic help's abuse.**

Abuse of 'diplomatic immunity'- 'Diplomatic immunity' has been misused as it has been allowed to shield crimes like sexual abuse, molestation and human trafficking by the diplomats. **Ex-The Consul General of Bahrain in 2013 invoked 'diplomatic immunity' to avoid his arrest in the molestation case in Mumbai.**

Use of the Convention's privileges for 'espionage'- The convention provides a safety cover to the **undercover intelligence officers** posted under cover in Embassies who are mainly involved in espionages in the host country soil.

No definition of 'household/family' in the convention- The **official definition of family differs from country to country**. In case of Western countries applying their official definition of family, many diplomats from developing countries with elderly single parents or dependent university going children face problems. On the other hand, western countries demand that live-in partners of their diplomats be accepted as family members under the Convention.

Unfair application of the 'principle of reciprocity'- Principle of reciprocity is applied if a diplomatic privilege is restricted or denied to one country, even if it is applied uniformly to all diplomats stationed there. On account of their power and economic clout some countries, unfairly apply the 'principle of reciprocity'. **Ex- Recent case of India sending back the 41 Canadian diplomats has been termed as unfair application of the 'principle of reciprocity' by the Canadian authorities.**

No absolute freedom of movement of diplomats- Many countries require that diplomats seek the clearance of the Foreign Ministries before leaving the capital city. In any event, sensitive areas are out of bounds for them. **Ex- Indian Supreme Court's decision to not allow the Italian Ambassador in to leave the country in 2012 was termed as a violation of the Convention's principles of freedom of movement.**

Past instances of complete violation of the Convention principle- The Convention principles have been entirely violated at times, rendering the convention as totally ineffective. For example- **Iran taking the complete US diplomats as hostage and attack on American embassy in 1979.**

Conclusion

The Vienna Convention is now 60 years old. In these decades, the world, including that of diplomacy, has changed in fundamental ways. A review of the Convention is imminent now.

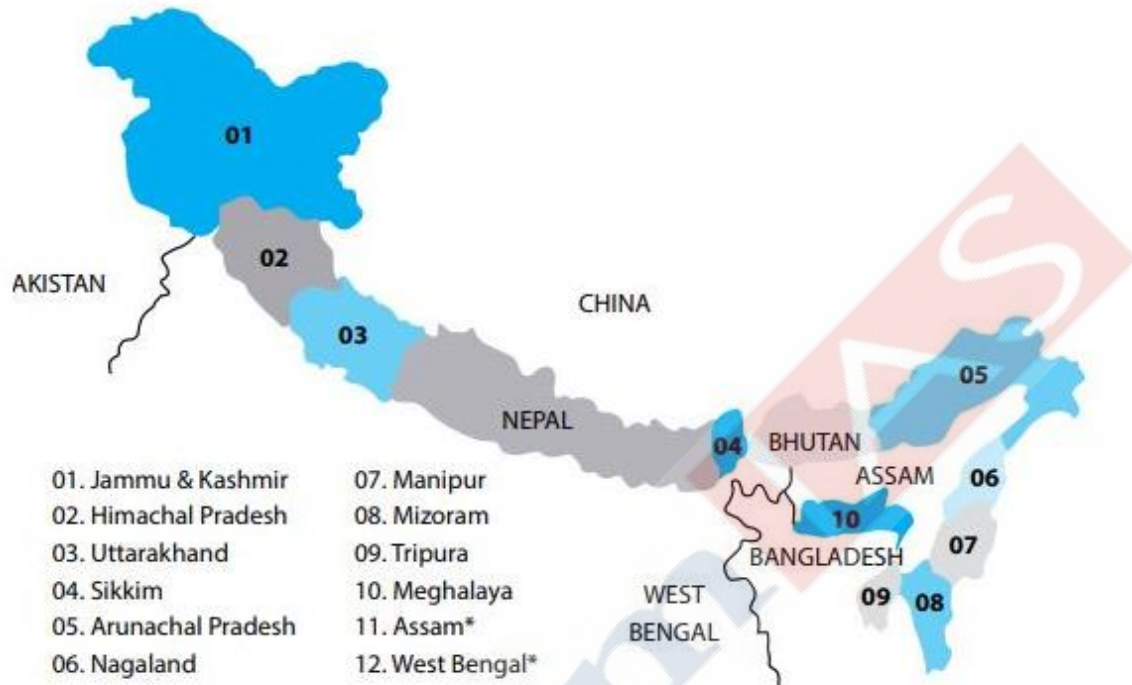
Read	More-	Indian	Express
UPSC Syllabus-	Important international institutions, agencies and fora-		Structure and Mandate

Restoring the Ecological Health of the Himalayas- Explained Pointwise

Introduction

Recently, the SC of India has asked the Union Govt to suggest a way forward in restoring the Ecological health of the Himalayas. The Union govt in its affidavit has proposed to set up a committee- under the **Chairmanship of Director of the G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment**- to suggest measures to restore the ecological health of Himalayas. Further, the Union govt has asked the SC to direct the 13 Himalayan states to form a committee at the state level under the chairmanship of the Chief secretary for the same purpose.

The Indian Himalayan Region (Source: National Mission on Himalayan Studies)



Source- National Mission on Himalayan Studies

How is the Ecological Health of the Himalayas measured?

Ecological health of the Himalayas is measured by the metric of 'carrying capacity'. Carrying Capacity- Carrying capacity of a region is the **maximum population size** that an ecosystem or environment can sustainably support over a specific period without causing significant degradation or harm to its natural resources and overall health.

Carrying Capacity is crucial in understanding and managing the **balance between human activities and the preservation of natural ecosystems** to ensure long-term sustainability.

When the carrying capacity of the ecosystem is breached, there is deterioration of the ecological health of the ecosystem. We have witnessed several examples of deterioration of ecological health of the Himalayan ecosystem.

Examples of Himalayan Ecosystem deterioration

1. **Glacial Lake Outburst in Sikkim (2023)**
2. **Glacial Lake outburst Flood in Chamoli District Uttarakhand (2021)**
3. **Subsidence of Joshimath(2022)**
4. **Kedarnath Flash Floods (2013)**

What are the Challenges to the ecological health of Himalayas?

Mentioned below are the challenges to the ecological health of Health of the Himalayas-

Climate Change and Glacial Melting- Rising temperatures due to climate change have led to the rapid melting of glaciers triggering Glacial lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) and affected the

downstream flow of water. Ex- A/c to National Remote Sensing Centre's (NRSC) Glacial Lake Atlas of 2023, India is prone to GLOF due to climate Change which can be seen in the Sikkim GLOF 2023.

Tectonic activities in the Himalayas- The Himalayas are young, fold mountains are prone to tectonic activities. This makes the region prone to natural disasters such as landslides, avalanches, and earthquakes.

Soil Erosion and Landslides- Deforestation, construction activities and improper land use practices increase soil erosion and the risk of landslides during heavy rainfall or seismic events. Ex- Recent Landslides in HP during the heavy rainfall.

Unsustainable Tourism- Himalayan mountains are treated only as tourist destinations, ignoring their micro-climate which has led to upset in the natural balance of the Himalayan ecosystem. Ex- Large crowds and jams in Shimla, Manali.

Flawed Development Model- Building of large scale infrastructure projects without taking into account their impact on environment of the Himalayan region. Ex- Chardham Mahamarg Vikas Pariyojna, a massive infrastructure project has claimed lakhs of trees, acres of forest land and the fertile topsoil of the fragile Himalayas.

Erosion of Cultural Values of Environmental conservation- Traditional Himalayan communities have distinct cultural practices and ways of life closely tied to their natural surroundings. However, Unsustainable urbanisation has been led to the erosion of cultural values of environmental conservation. Ex- Movements like Chipko Movement are no longer observed.

Growth of Invasive species- The growth of Invasive species in the Himalayan natural ecosystem has disrupted the delicate balance of ecosystem and threatened the survival of native species. Ex- Clusters of purple flowers (Cirsium arvense), mats of white clover (Trifolium repens) and small tumbleweed mustard with bright yellow flowers (Sisymbrium loeselii) are the threatening invasive species of the Himalayas.

Improper Waste Management- The slopes of Himalayan mountains have been dumped with garbage which has affected the natural flora and fauna balance of the Himalayan ecosystem.

Read More- [Forum IAS](#)

What is the importance of Himalayan Ecosystem?

Water Security- Abundant rainfall, vast snow-fields and large glaciers in Himalayas are the feeding grounds of the mighty rivers of India like Ganga, Brahmaputra. This ensures water security in the Northern India.

Energy Security- Almost 33% of the country's thermal electricity and 52% of its hydro power is dependent on river waters originating in the Himalayas.

Influence on Indian Climate- By virtue of their high altitude, length and direction, the Himalayas help in the sustenance of Indian monsoon. They also prevent the cold continental air masses of Central Asia from entering into India. It helps to maintain an ambient temperature in the Indian subcontinent which favours the flourishing of civilisation.

Forest Wealth- The Himalayan forests provide fuel wood and a large variety of raw materials for forest based industries. **Ex- Medicinal plant based pharmaceutical industry.**

Cultural and Spiritual Significance- The Himalayas are regarded as a sacred and spiritual centre by numerous cultures and religions, including **Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.**

Biodiversity Hotspot- The Himalayan region is recognized as one of the world's biodiversity hotspots and contributes to global ecological balance. **Ex- Eastern Himalayan Biodiversity hotspot.**

What are the government initiatives for the restoration of the Himalayan Ecosystem?

Government has taken the following initiatives for the restoration of the Himalayan Ecosystem.

National Mission on Sustaining Himalayan Ecosystem- It was launched in 2010 and covers 11 states (Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, all northeast states and West Bengal) and 2 UTs (J&K and Ladakh). It is one of the eight missions under the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).**

SECURE Himalaya Project- It is a part of "Global Partnership on Wildlife Conservation and Crime Prevention for Sustainable Development" (Global Wildlife Program) funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). It promotes **sustainable management of alpine pastures and forests** in the high range Himalayan ecosystems.

Mishra Committee Report 1976- The committee recommended placing restrictions on **heavy construction work, blasting and felling of trees** in the Himalayan region.

What Should be the Way forward?

The expert committee should not become a bureaucratic or technical group- The proposed committee of the Union Govt must include **adequate citizen representation from panchayats and other urban local bodies** (atleast one-third).

Separate EIA for Himalayan Ecosystem- Policymakers should explore a **separate Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** for the infrastructure projects in the Himalayan region.

Sustainable Infrastructure Projects- The building design of towns associated with the Himalayan region must reflect the local ecosystem while incorporating seismic fragility and aesthetics. **Sustainable hydropower projects** must be designed and the **dams must be re-engineered** in the Himalayan ecosystem.

Sustainable Tourism- Appropriate mechanisms should be devised to help **achieve tourism growth in the landscape** in a sustainable manner having minimal impact on biodiversity.

Vigilance and Regular Patrolling- Protected areas in Himalayan region like **Hemis National Park** and **Karakoram Sanctuary in Ladakh** require vigilance and regular patrolling to reduce unwanted wildlife-tourist interaction as well as habitat destruction.

International Collaboration- Himalayan countries need to build an **international network to monitor risks** such as those from glacial lakes and give early warning of hazards like GLOFs.

Implementation of geo-technical solutions for mitigation of GLOFs-The geo-technical solutions such as the **excavation of channels** for regulated discharge, **drainage** using pipes and

pumps, **spillway construction** and **setting up small catchment dams** to cut the speed of outflow must be implemented.

Multi-Disciplinary Approach- A multi-disciplinary approach which involves inputs from all scientific agencies like the National Remote Sensing Centre (**NRSC**), Central Water Commission (**CWC**) and the **NDRF** must be implemented.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

India's Bid to host Olympics 2036- Explained Pointwise

Introduction

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has confirmed India's bid to host Olympics 2036 saying that the country will "**leave no stone unturned**" to host the Olympics in 2036. PM Modi further added that India will also bid to host Youth Olympic Games in 2029. PM Modi's comments came at the Opening Ceremony of the **International Olympic Committee's 141st Session in Mumbai**. IOC president Thomas Bach was also in attendance at the event along with the who's who of the IOC.

What is the process of Selection of Host Country/City for Olympics?

The process of selection of Host Country/city has undergone a change. The change of process was necessitated because the initial process of selection of host country was marred by corruption, scandals and huge debts.

Initial Process of Selection of Host Country

Step 1	Olympic host Countries/Cities would submit a letter of interest to the IOC , through their respective national Olympic committees. This led to starting of a multi-year, multi-step evaluation process. The bidding Countries/cities would complete a series of questionnaires which was evaluated by the IOC.
Step 2	There was scrutiny of the bid by the IOC Evaluation Commission. A series of inspections of all venues were conducted by the IOC Evaluation Commission. The final bids were then put to vote at an IOC session. The hosts were selected seven years in advance as per the Olympic Charter . It often led to excessive spending among the bidders, to secure rights, often ending in huge debts, corruptions and scandals.

What is the 'new process' of selection of the Host Country/City?

In the 2014 IOC session, roadmap for the future of the Olympic Movement, **Olympic Agenda 2020**, was laid Down. One part of the Olympic Agenda 2020, dealt with a new process for host city selection, and it was called the '**new norm**'. It was officially adopted during the 2019 IOC session in Lausanne.

The new process is based in three Pillars- Flexibility, Sustainability and Cost Effectiveness.

Flexibility	The 'New Process' has done away with the 7 years time period for the selection of Host Country. The Hosts can be selected much before 7 years (Brisbane 2032 Olympics-Selected 11 years before in 2021). Also, the Hosts can be selected as lately as 7 years (Olympics 2036 can be selected even after 2030). There are two dialogue mechanisms- 1. Continuous Dialogue- Non-Committal stage . It is basically a discussion between the IOC's Future Hosts Commission (FHC) and interested parties about the hosts' vision for the Games, its purpose and long-term legacy. 2. Targeted Dialogue- Determining Stage . The host city/country is selected after detailed scrutiny and negotiation with the IOC. The host country/city can be considered for hosting later editions of the games as well.
Sustainability	Hosts are encouraged as far as possible to use existing and temporary venues . Any new venues built must be in line with existing developmental plans and have a long-term justification irrespective of the Games. All editions of the summer/winter/youth Olympic Games from 2030 onwards must also adhere to the IOC's climate positive commitment .
Cost-Effectiveness	As per the IOC's, the focus on using existing and temporary venues has led to an 80% decrease in the bid budgets for the 2026 Winter Games compared to the 2018 and 2022 editions.

Read More – [India's 2036 Olympic dream](#)

Why is India bidding for Host Country rights for Olympics 2036?

Following are the reasons for India bidding for Host Country Rights for Olympics 2036-

1. The Olympics as a medium for enhancement of Soft-Power- India wants to use Olympics games to showcase its display and enhance its soft power. For ex- **Post-World War Europe, post-apartheid South Africa, Brazil and China have used olympics as a medium for showcasing their soft-power.**

2.Hosting rights of Olympics aligns with India's Global Ambition- After a historic hosting of the G-20 summit, India wants to successfully host the Olympics to elevate its position in global politics. This will help in building a strong case for **India's candidature for permanent seat in the UNSC.**

3.Push to India's Sporting Culture- The government has been providing the nudge to sports culture with schemes like Khelo India, which has benefitted us in **Asian Games 2023 (107 medals)** and **Tokyo Olympics (7 medals)**. The world class infrastructure created for the Olympic games would give a further strong push to Indian sporting culture.

4.Promotion of Investment and Tourism- India's bid for hosting the olympics can catalyse investment and tourism in the country. For ex- **Beijing Olympics(2008) led to significant GDP growth acceleration of around 0.8% in China.**

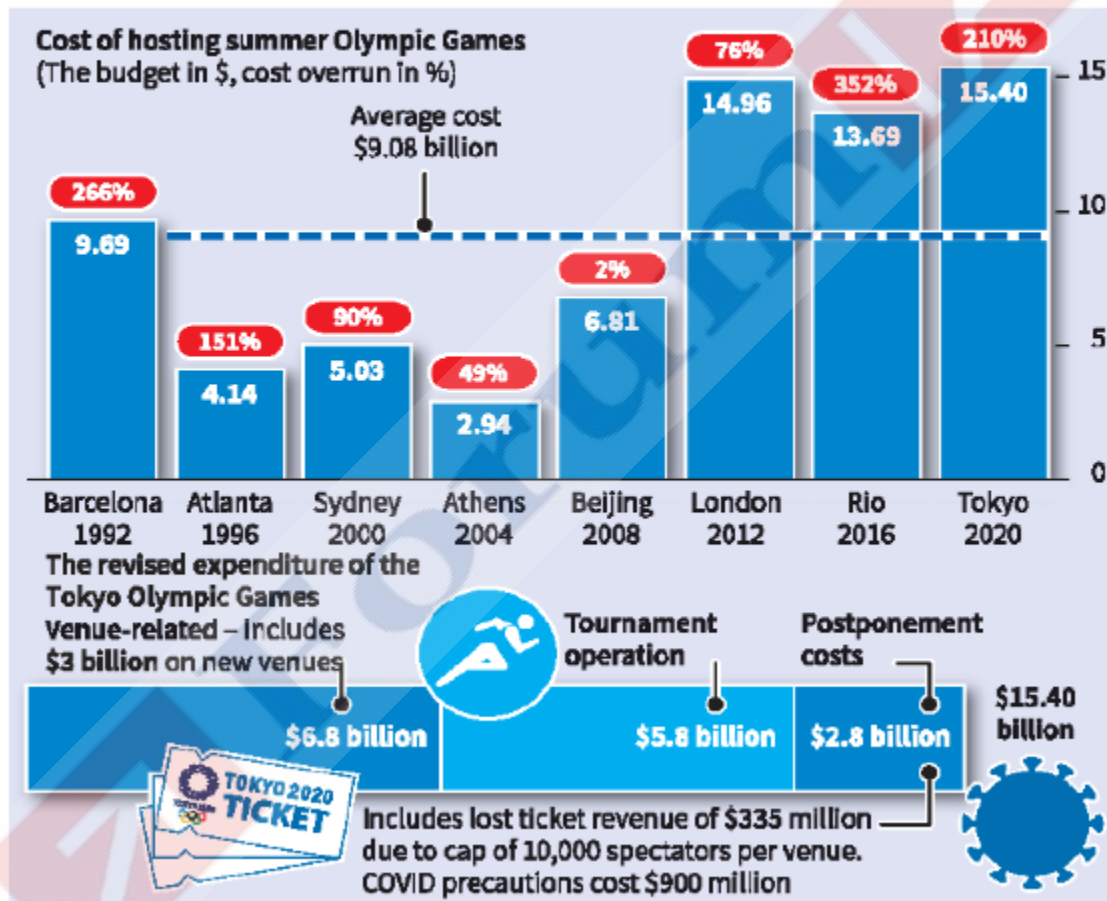
5.Previous Experiences of Hosting Big tournaments- India has successfully hosted several big tournaments in the past like the **Asian Games (1982)**. With India's large economic might now, it can successfully host the biggest sporting tournament on the planet.

What are the Challenges in successful hosting of the Olympics?

1.Cost Overruns and financial distress- The Olympic games have witnessed cost over runs and caused financial distress in many Countries. Ex- **Greece Financial crisis after the Athens Olympics 2004**, **Economic crisis in Brazil after the 2010 olympics** and **Tokyo Olympics 2020 cost over run (\$15.4 bn)**

The price of the Olympics

With India openly declaring its willingness to host the 2036 edition of the Olympic Games, a look at the cost of the Games as they become bigger and better each year



Source-

The Hindu

2.Bidding is an expensive endeavour- Bidding for Olympics is an expensive endeavour with countries spending close to \$50-100 million even for unsuccessful bids. For Ex- **Tokyo spent \$150 million for unsuccessful bid in 2016.**

3.Low capacity of Urban Local Bodies in India- The majority of expenditure and the implementation of the Olympic games is done by the Urban Local Body of the host city. Urban Local Bodies of India suffer from the **3F challenge** of **Funds, Functions and Functionaries**.

4.Previous corruption scandals/scams- The **Commonwealth games of 2010** was plagued by the corruption scandals by the administrators and organisers. There are challenges of politico-bureaucratic interference in successful conduct of the games.

5.Environmental Challenges- Building of large scale infrastructure for the games would involve large scale destruction of environment like **felling of trees**.

Conclusion

With India's ambition to hold the Olympics 2036, we need to work to resolve the challenges we may face in hosting the Olympics. India must aim to use the Olympics 2036 to arrive on the world stage as a major superpower as China did with the Beijing Olympics 2008.

Read	More-	The	Hindu
UPSC Syllabus- Important	International Institutions, agencies and fora – their Structure, Mandate.		
	Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.		

India-Bhutan Relations- Explained Pointwise

Introduction

India-Bhutan have maintained a close relationship for many years. However, recently **China has asked Bhutan** to **establish diplomatic ties with it** and **resolve the boundary issue** “as soon as possible” to transform the relations between the two neighbours into “legal form”. The Chinese statement came after the conclusion of the meeting between the Foreign Minister of Bhutan, Tandi Dorji and the Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi. This was any Bhutanese Foreign minister's first ever visit to China. **These developments in the China-Bhutan relations have deep implications for India-Bhutan relations.**

How have the India – Bhutan relations in the past and what are the various areas of cooperation?

Since 1947, when Bhutan got its independence, it has been close and friendly with India. India is Bhutan's biggest trading partner, and it provides Bhutan a lot of economic and technical help.

Read here- [India-Bhutan relations](#)

What is the importance of Bhutan to India and vice versa?

Importance of Bhutan to India-

Strategic Importance- India considers Bhutan as a **buffer state** between India and China, as Bhutan shares its borders with China. It gives buffer for the **Siliguri corridor(chicken's neck)** which connects the Indian mainland with the north eastern states.

Cultural Ties- Bhutan has deep cultural ties with India. Bhutan's religion, language, and customs are heavily influenced by India's culture. Additionally, Bhutan has been a strong supporter of India's cultural diplomacy.

Hydropower cooperation- Mutually beneficial hydropower cooperation with Bhutan forms the core of bilateral economic cooperation, providing clean power for India and economic prosperity for Bhutan. Hydroelectricity has become one of the biggest revenue earners of Bhutan, which makes Bhutan the country with the highest per capita income in South Asia today.

Importance of India to Bhutan-

Economic Support- India is Bhutan's largest trading partner and provides significant economic support. For instance, since 2014, India's trade with Bhutan has almost tripled from US\$484 million in 2014-15 to US\$1.42 billion in 2021-22, accounting for about 80 percent of Bhutan's overall trade.

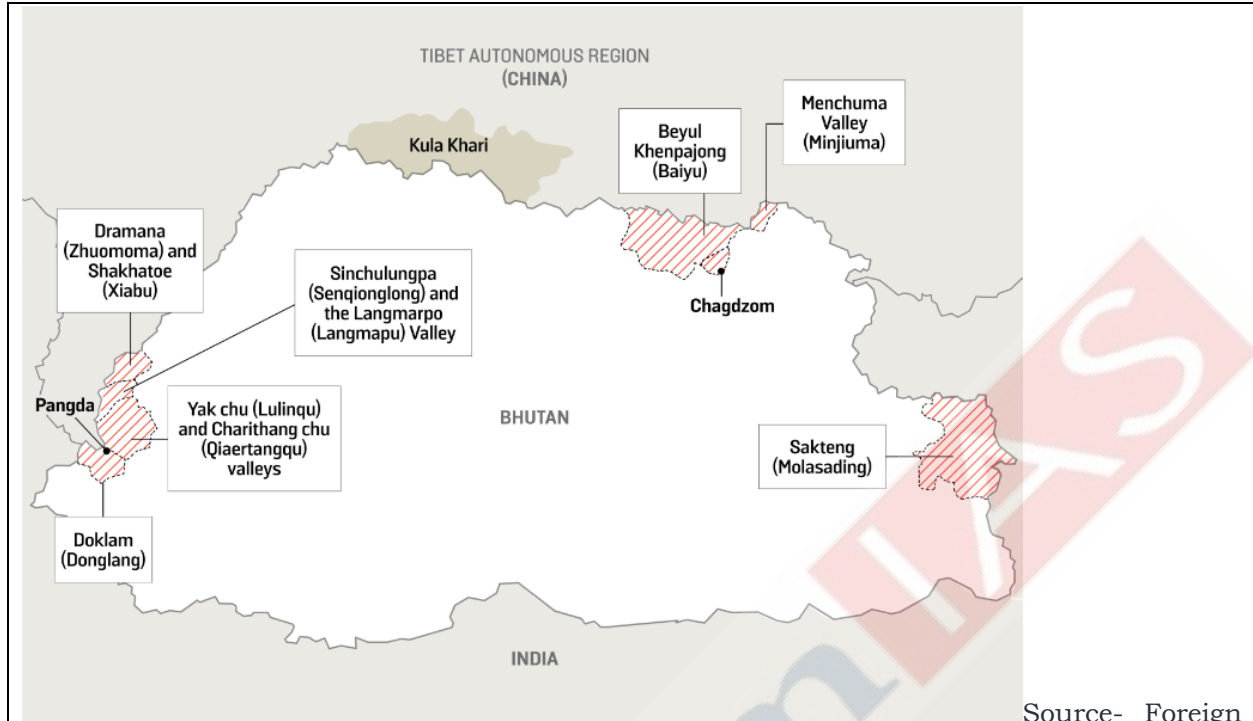
Security- India has been playing a crucial role in ensuring the security of Bhutan. For instance, India's military helps secure Bhutan's borders, and India has helped Bhutan in countering insurgent groups. For Ex- Doklam crisis 2017.

Diplomatic Support- India has been a strong diplomatic supporter of Bhutan. India has helped Bhutan in its international engagements, and India's support has been essential in ensuring Bhutan's sovereignty.

Socio-economic development- India has been extending assistance to Bhutan's socio-economic development since the early 1960s, including multi-sectoral project-tied assistance, small development projects and direct budgetary support.

What are the recent developments in China – Bhutan relations?

Border Dispute Resolution- China shares borders with 14 nations. Of those, 14 nations, 12 nations have settled their borders. Bhutan and India are the only two countries with which border disputes still remain. China has now turned to Bhutan to settle their long standing border dispute.



Source- Foreign

Policy Magazine

North Bhutan- **Jakarlung** and **Pasamlung** areas in North Bhutan. China has built several villages in this area of Bhutan.

West Bhutan- **Doklam Plateau**. China considers it an extension of its Chumbi Valley region, located between Sikkim and Bhutan. However, India considers the Doklam Plateau as Bhutanese territory.

East Bhutan- **Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary**. China considers it the part of its own territory. The wildlife sanctuary is located near the Arunachal Pradesh Border of India.

Push for Establishment of Formal Diplomatic Relations- China is pushing Bhutan to establish formal diplomatic relations by opening of embassies. Till now, Bhutan does not have any formal diplomatic relations with the P5 – the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Enhanced Economic Cooperation- China has been providing economic assistance to Bhutan, particularly in the areas of infrastructure development, agriculture, and tourism. In 2020, the two countries signed an agreement to establish a **sister city relationship** between **Xining**, the capital of Qinghai province in China, and **Thimphu**, the capital of Bhutan.

Endorsement of Xi Jinping's Vision by Bhutan- Bhutan has endorsed the Global Security Initiative (GSI), the Global Development Initiative (GDI) and the Global Cultural Initiative (GCI) of Chinese President Xi Jinping.

People-to-People Ties- In recent years, there has been an **increase in people-to-people ties** between China and Bhutan, with more Bhutanese students studying in China and Chinese tourists visiting Bhutan. In 2019, the two countries signed an agreement to promote tourism cooperation.

COVID-19 Pandemic- China has provided medical supplies and equipment to Bhutan to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, Bhutan received a donation of COVID-19 vaccines from China, which were used to vaccinate Bhutanese citizens.

What are the implications of the deepening China-Bhutan relations on India?

Strategic implications- If Bhutan gives into the claim of China over Doklam region, it will create deep security challenges for India. The Doklam region is located next to India's **Chicken neck (Siliguri Corridor)**. This corridor connects India's mainland with the north-eastern region.

Economic implications- China's growing economic influence in Bhutan could **impact India's trade and economic interests in the region**. It could also lead to China gaining access to Bhutan's natural resources like hydro-electricity, which could pose a challenge to India's energy security.

Diplomatic implications- China's growing influence in Bhutan **could impact Bhutan's traditional pro-India foreign policy**. This could lead to Bhutan distancing itself from India and aligning more closely with China, which could have diplomatic implications for India in the region.

What should the Indian response to counter the growing Chinese influence in Bhutan?

Further strengthening the Economic Ties- India must further strengthen the economic ties with Bhutan to counter the growing Chinese economic influence. Recently, India has extended the **additional "standby" credit facility to Bhutan** and offered financial assurances to Bhutan for its **13th Five Year Plan and administrative reforms**.

Focus on developing long-term bilateral arrangements- India must develop a long-term bilateral arrangement to ensure a reliable supply of critical commodities like petroleum, fertilisers, and coal to Bhutan. Also, India must develop closer relations in the energy sector with Bhutan. For ex- India has recently allowed Bhutan to sell power from its **Basochhu hydroelectric project** in India.

Resolution of Boundary Issues- India and Bhutan should work towards resolving their boundary issues through peaceful means. This will help in maintaining a peaceful border and will enhance the trust and confidence between the two countries.

Address China's concerns- India can try to address some of China's concerns regarding its presence in the region, such as by **promoting transparency and dialogue** in its engagement with Bhutan and other countries in the neighbourhood.

Use of multilateral platforms- India can use multilateral platforms such as the **BRICS** and the **SCO** to engage with China on issues related to the region and work towards finding mutually acceptable solutions.

Improving Connectivity- India can help Bhutan in improving its connectivity by providing **better road and rail links**. This will help in boosting trade and tourism between the two countries.

Enhancing Defence Cooperation- India and Bhutan can work towards enhancing their defense cooperation by increasing the frequency of joint military exercises and training programs. This will help Bhutan in **improving its defense capabilities**.

Addressing Environmental Concerns- India and Bhutan can collaborate on environmental issues by sharing their knowledge and expertise on sustainable development. India can also help Bhutan in addressing its concerns over climate change and natural disasters.

Promoting People-to-People Contact- To **strengthen the cultural bond** between the two countries, there should be more exchanges of students, academicians, and cultural groups between India and Bhutan. This will help in promoting mutual understanding and respect between the two countries.

Bhutan must also take into considerations India's national security concerns before finalising any boundary settlement agreement with China. A **border deal** that addresses Bhutanese concerns in the north while **preserving India's red lines in the west** will not necessarily undermine New Delhi's interests. Rather than alarm, India must approach the boundary negotiations with a greater understanding of Bhutan's reasoning, and with confidence that India's long-trusted neighbour will take both India's interests and its own into consideration before any final agreement.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- India and its neighbourhood relations

[Yojana October 2023 Summary] Agriculture Infrastructure In India- Explained Pointwise

Introduction

Agriculture infrastructure plays a vital role at every single step in agriculture like supply of input, sowing of crops and the post-harvest management. Indian government has taken several steps in recent years for the development of a resilient agriculture infrastructure in India.

What is agriculture infrastructure and what are its advantages?

Agriculture Infrastructure refers to the diverse systems and network of resources that are vital to produce, preserve, process, procure and trade agricultural products.

Advantages of agricultural infrastructure

1. Increase of the agricultural productivity- Developed agricultural infrastructure ensures proper availability of agricultural inputs like **seeds**, **water** etc. This has increased agricultural production in India over the decades.

Table 1. Area and production of major crops during 1950-51 and 2022-23

	Area (million hectares)			Production (million tonnes)		
	1950-51	2022-23*	Times increase	1950-51	2022-23*	Times increase
Foodgrains	97.32	132.2	1.36	50.82	330.53	6.50
Cereals	77.42	103.07	1.33	42.41	303	7.14
Rice	30.81	47.66	1.55	20.58	135.54	6.59
Wheat	9.75	31.82	3.26	6.46	112.74	17.45
Coarse cereals/Millets	37.67	23.58	0.63	15.38	55.95	3.64
Pulses	19.09	29.13	1.53	8.41	27.5	3.27
Oilseeds	10.73	30.09	2.80	5.16	40.99	7.94

Source-Yojana

2. Reduction of post-harvest losses- The construction of basic post-harvest agriculture infrastructures like **storage houses, pack houses, proper supply chain** etc. reduce the post-harvest losses.

3. Increase in farmers Income- Agricultural marketing infrastructures like **APMC, e-NAM** help in better price realisation of farmer's produce.

What are the challenges of agriculture infrastructure in India and what have been the various government initiatives ?

Agri Process/Inputs	Infrastructural Challenges	Government Initiatives
Seed	Availability and affordability of quality certified seeds	Establishment of 'Community seed Banks'. Push to create the infrastructure for seed storage and distribution through the Seed Act and PPVFR Act .
Fertilisers	Production, distribution and disproportionate use of fertilisers. storage, and use of	' New Urea Policy 2015 '- Aims to increase indigenous urea production. Soil Health Card and Neem coated Urea- To promote the proportionate use of Urea. DBT through PoS Machines- The infrastructure is to stop fertiliser subsidy leakages.
Irrigation	53% area is rain fed and there is acute shortage of irrigation infrastructure.	Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY) & Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) - Asset creation for irrigation. Interlinking of Rivers- Ex-Ken-Betwa interlinking Rain water Harvesting, Participatory Irrigation Management- Govt has been

		creating the infrastructure to improve water use efficiency for agriculture.
Agricultural credit	Lack of access to credit due to less banks and credit lending institutions in rural areas.	Lead Bank Scheme and Service area approach - To increase the presence of banking infrastructure in rural areas. Promotion of Micro-finance institutions (MFIs)- Micro-finance institutions have been promoted to provide improved access to credit infrastructure.
Agricultural Storage	Poor farm Storage facilities Concentration of cold storages in few states(CAG-64% in Punjab, Haryana,UP) Shortage of ripening Chambers, pack houses and cold storages. More than 30% of the produce from farm gate is lost due to inadequate cold chain infrastructure.	Agriculture Infrastructure Fund - It was launched in 2020 to create required pre and post-harvest management infrastructures in the agriculture sector. Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) - Post-Harvest Management Infrastructure including cold storage, cold room facilities for horticultural produce. Negotiable Warehouse Receipts (NWRs) - Farmers can seek loans from banks against the warehouse receipts issued to them against their storage.
Agricultural Marketing	Issues with the infrastructure of APMC like lack of assaying & grading facilities, increased cost of transportation to get the crops to Mandis, less space in APMC Mandi for sale of crops.	Electronic National Agricultural Market (E-NAM) - Pan India electronic trading platform which aims to create a seamless, unified national market for agricultural produce. Model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (APLM) Act 2017 - Setting up private wholesale market yards. Reduce the area covered by APMC mandi from 462 sq.km to 280 sq.km to reduce the cost of transportation.
E-Tech for Agricultural Extension	Lack of proper infrastructure for adoption of E-tech in agriculture.	m-KISAN portal, Meghdoot App - These E-tech infrastructures have been created to increase the agricultural production.

Read More- **Agricultural Technology**

What Should be the way forward to further improve agriculture Infrastructure in India?

Increase the private sector investment in Agri-Infra- **Ashok Dalwai Committee** has suggested treating 'agriculture as an enterprise'. Thus efforts must be taken to catalyse private investments through contract farming, agricultural marketing. This will help in development of world class infrastructure.

Improvement of Agri-futures markets- China and US have properly developed Agri-futures markets which has helped in improvement of their agricultural infrastructure. The deepening of Agri-markets in India would yield the same result.

Implementation of Shantakumar Committee Recommendations- Improving the private sector involvement in **Building Silos**, development of **Dedicated freight corridors** and **multi-modal logistics park** are some of the recommendations of Shantakumar committee to improve the transport and marketing infrastructure of agri-produce.

Early completion of Bharat Net Project and impartation of digital literacy to farmers- The future of agriculture depends upon the robust digital infrastructure. E-Tech projects like **Kisan Suvidha App**, **Meghdoot App** can spur development, growth, equity and sustainability of agriculture sector.

Read	More-	Indian	Express
UPSC Syllabus- Food Processing and Related Industries in India- Scope and Significance, Location, Upstream and Downstream Requirements, Supply Chain Management.			

India-Qatar Relations- Explained Pointwise

Introduction

India-Qatar relations is facing a **diplomatic stress test** after Qatar awarded death sentence to eight retired Indian Naval personnel on espionage charges.

A brief snippet of the Espionage Case

Timeline of the Case	<p>August 2022- Eight Indian Naval personnel were arrested by the Qatari Authorities on charges of espionage of Qatar's submarine program for Israel.</p> <p>September 2022- First bail plea was rejected.</p> <p>March 2023- First trial was held.</p> <p>June 2023- Second trial was held.</p> <p>October 1, 2023- India was granted consular access and Indian Ambassador met the prisoners in person.</p> <p>October 26, 2023- The eight Indian Navy personnel were handed the death penalty by a local court.</p>
India's Options for securing the release of personnels	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Invoking the agreement 'Transfer of Sentenced Persons'- India and Qatar signed the agreement in March 2015. Under this agreement, Indian prisoners convicted in Qatar can be brought to India to serve the remaining part of their sentence. Leveraging the defence ties- India must leverage the strong defence ties with Qatar(Defence Cooperation Agreement) to secure relief for the personnels. Legal Appeals- Pursue legal appeals through international courts like ICJ.(Kulbhushan Jadhav Case) Deft Diplomacy- Resolve the case through 'deft diplomacy' involving the political intervention even at the level of Prime Minister

(if needed).
5. **Campaign Diplomacy**- Building an international campaign to appeal for clemency.

What is the history of India-Qatar diplomatic relations?



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Source- Britannica Encyclopedia

1971	India was among the few countries which recognized Qatar soon after its independence in 1971.
1973	India and Qatar established full diplomatic relations in 1973. Year 2023, marks the 50 years of the bilateral diplomatic relations.
2008	Visit of PM Manmohan Singh to Qatar marked a significant turning point in India-Qatar Relations.
2015	The Emir of Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani visited India in 2015.
2016	PM Narendra Modi visited Qatar in 2016.

What is the significance of India-Qatar Relations?

Political Significance- Qatar's membership in **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** is politically significant for India, especially concerning issues like Kashmir. Also, India needs support of Qatar for **UNSC permanent membership**.

Energy Security- Qatar is the largest supplier of LNG to India. LNG makes up almost **50% of our LNG imports**.

Strong economic and trade ties- India is among the **top four largest export destinations** for Qatar (Qatar exports to India- LNG, LPG, chemicals and petrochemicals, fertilisers, plastics). India is also among the **top three sources of Qatar's imports** (India's key exports to Qatar include cereals, copper articles, iron and steel articles, vegetables, fruits).

Strong Business Presence of Indian Companies- Several Indian Companies like L&T, Wipro, TCS and TechMahindra operate in Qatar.

Large Expatriate Community and Remittances- Around **8 lakh Indian expatriate community** live and work in Qatar. The flow of remittances (**around 750 million dollars**) and safety of Indian expatriate community, makes Qatar vital for India's interest.

Defence and strategic co-operation- India and Qatar have signed a **Defence Cooperation Agreement** for stronger defence cooperation. The maritime relations are further strengthened by **Exercise Zair-Al-Bahr**.

Vibrant Cultural Exchanges- Cultural events organised by community organizations affiliated to the **Indian Cultural Centre (ICC)**. Qatar was a co-sponsor of India's resolution for **declaration of June 21 as International Yoga Day**.

What are the Challenges in the India-Qatar Relations?

Death sentence to arrested Indian Navy Personnel- The secretive trial and the harsh punishment to Indian Navy personnel have sent shock waves in the expatriate Indian community.

Islamic Conservatism- Qatar's condemnation of the remarks made by the Indian ruling party spokesperson about Prophet was the sharpest among all the West Asian nations.

Harbouring Terrorism- Qatar with its deep pockets has harboured the **Taliban** and is amongst the major backers of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Use of Soft-Power against India- The Qatar-financed Al-Jazeera channel has often run aggressive campaigns against India like **the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019**.

Read More- [On India-Qatar relations – Qatar Questions](#)

Conclusion

The conflict in West Asia has complicated New Delhi's task of smoothly managing its relations with Qatar. India should carefully use every diplomatic channel to help its citizens in Qatar. India must effectively use its 'West Asia' policy to further its engagement with Qatar.

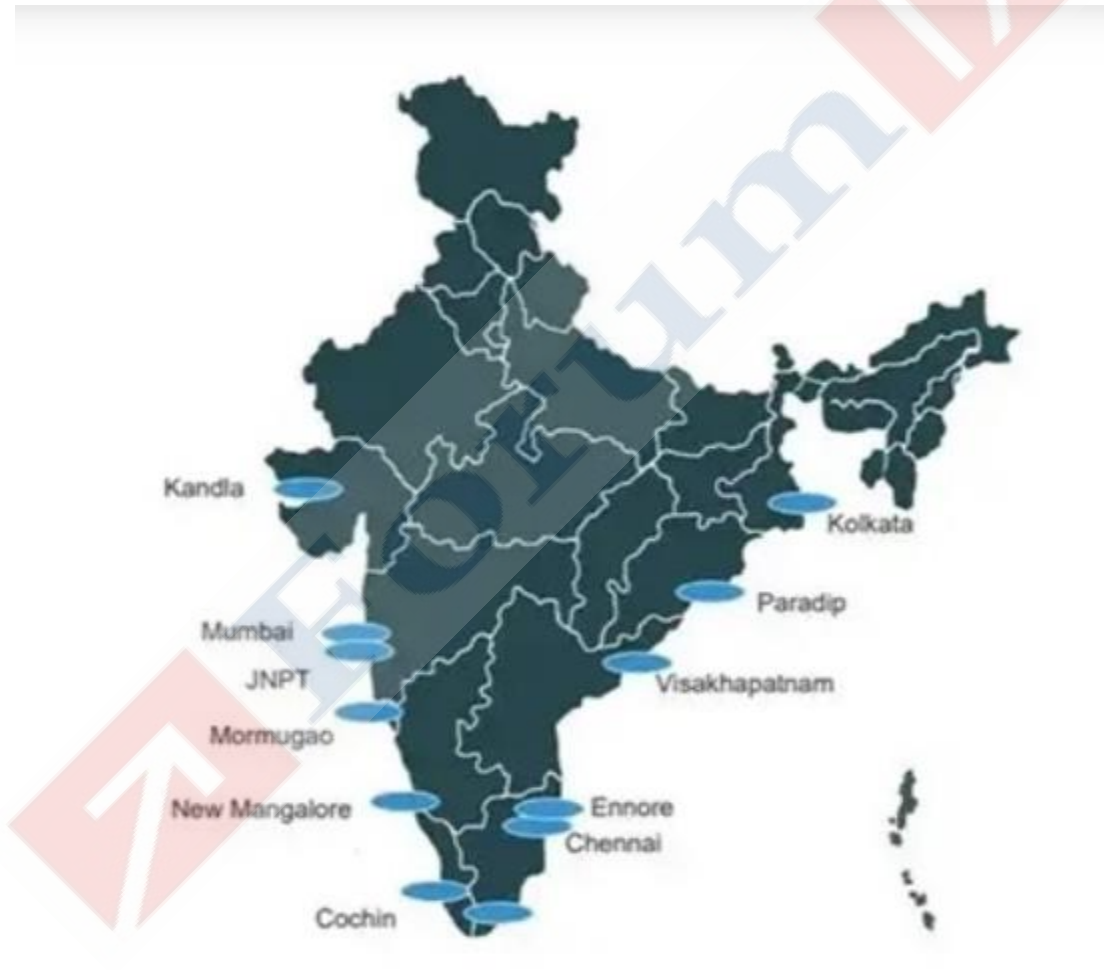
Read More- [The Indian Express](#)
Syllabus- GS Paper 2 International Relations — Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

[Yojana October 2023 Summary]-Port Infrastructure in India- Explained Pointwise**Introduction**

A highly developed Port infrastructure is necessary for the economic development and progress of a nation. Development of Port infrastructure has been a core focus area of India since Independence. In recent years, there has been further strong push from the Indian government for 'Port led Development'.

What is the Current Status of Port Infrastructure in India?

India's large coastline, which spans for over 7500 kms, is dotted with 13 Major Ports and 200 Minor Ports.

Major Ports- Represented on the Map

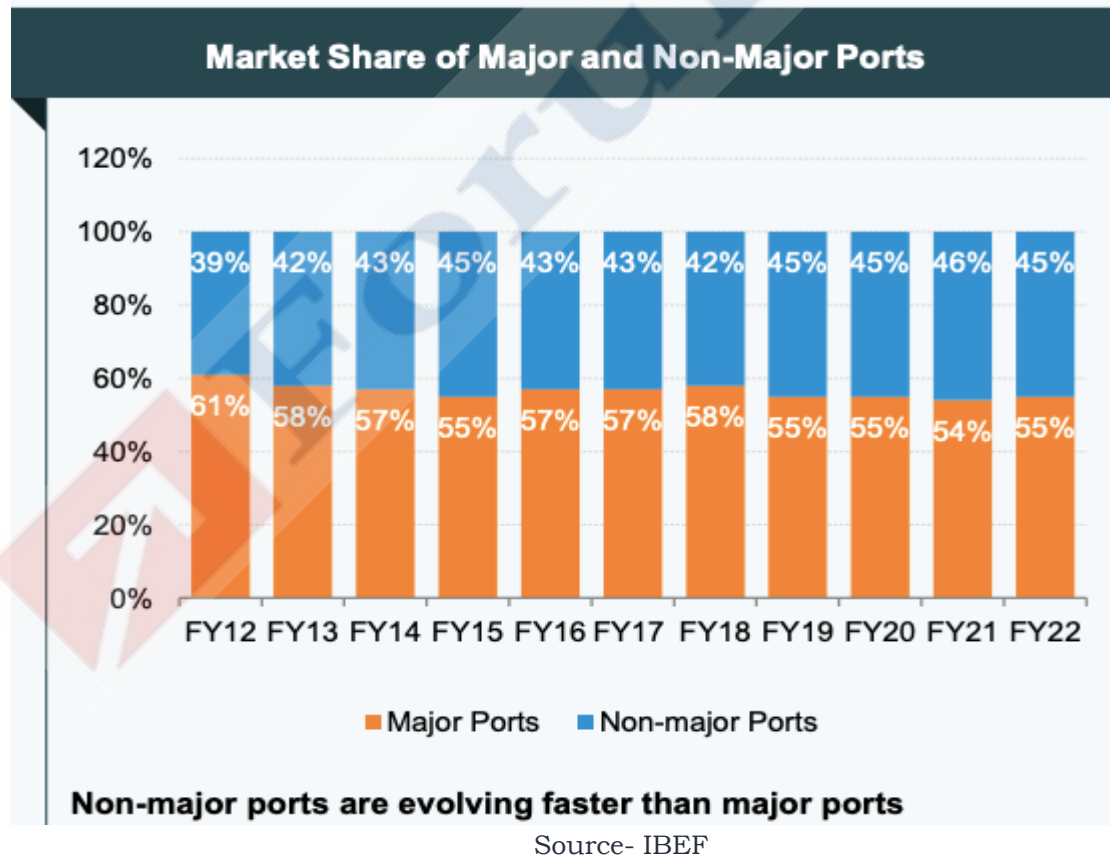
Source- IBEF

Institutional arrangement governing port Infrastructure in India

Major Ports	(1) Managed by the Central Government. (2) Falls under the Union List. (3) Major Ports Authorities Act 2021 (Repealed the earlier Major Ports Trust Act, 1963). The Government of India appoints a Board of Trustees to oversee each major port. Their responsibilities include port development, management and operations.
Minor Ports	(1) Managed by the State governments through State Maritime Board (Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu). (2) Falls under the Concurrent List. Comes under the jurisdiction of respective State Governments but the Union Government has overriding legislative and executive powers. (3) All the Non-Major Ports (minor ports) are governed under the Indian Ports Act of 1908.

Status of Trade Handling by the Port Infrastructure in India

- (1) Over 95% of India's trade by volume and 65% by value is done using maritime transport facilities at ports.
- (2) India's key ports had a capacity of 1,598 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) in FY22.
- (3) Turnaround time (time that is taken between the arrival of a vessel and its departure) has reduced to 62.16 hours in FY21 from 82.32 hours in FY17.
- (4) Non-major ports accounted for 45% of the total cargo traffic at Indian ports in FY22. There has been a significant shift of traffic from the major ports to the non-major ports.



What is the significance of developed port infrastructure for India?

- 1. Facilitates International Trade-** In FY 2020-21, the major ports in India handled 704.8 million tonnes of cargo which comprised a wide range of commodities such as coal, crude oil, iron ore and containers.
- 2. Employment generation-** According to a study by the **National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER)**, the port sector has the potential to create around 40 million direct and indirect jobs in India by 2025.
- 3. Reduction of logistics cost-** Growth of coastal shipping and inland waterways, which are **60 to 80% less expensive**, will help in bring down the logistics cost which is currently 14% of the GDP. This will increase the trade competitiveness, improve supply chain efficiency and boost economic growth.
- 4. Boost to Blue Economy-** India is one of the **world's top five producers of fish** in the world. Developed port infrastructure can boost the export of marine products.
- 5. Strengthening of National Security-** Developed port infrastructure ensures the security of strategic installations which are located near the ports like **naval bases, nuclear power plants, and satellite and missile launching ranges**. Illegal practices like **drug trafficking, maritime piracy** can be controlled by properly developed port infrastructure.
- 6. Emergence of India as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region-** Indian Port Development can serve as a **hub and spoke model** for the coastal development of other South Asian Countries. This will help in countering the Chinese BRI project which is coercive in nature.
- 7. Environment-** Development of port infrastructure is necessary to counter the challenges of **overfishing, coastal degradation, marine pollution** and **rising sea levels**.
- 8. Development of Coastal Communities-** Sustainable livelihood development of the fisheries sector **promotes the inclusive development** of coastal communities.

What are the challenges with the port infrastructure of India?

- 1. High Turnaround time-** Although the turnaround time of Indian ports has improved to 62.16 hours, it is still **poor compared to global standards** e.g., Japan (8.16 hours), Taiwan (10.56 hours), Hong Kong (12.48 hours). High turn around time has made the Indian ports less competitive.
- 2. Under developed Port Infrastructure-** According to a **report by the National Transport Development Policy Committee**, the capacity utilization of major ports in India was around 65% in 2019. Insufficient container tonnage, lack of handling equipments, lack of proper berthing facilities, lack of navigational facilities, IT systems and poor road and rail connectivity to and from ports etc. are some of the infrastructural challenges plaguing the port sector.
- 3. Issues with the acquisition of Land for Port Expansion-** According to a **report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism, and Culture**, land acquisition for port development in India has been a significant challenge. This has led to delays in several projects.
- 4. Complex custom procedures and lengthy documentation process-** In some **major ports like Singapore**, modernized custom administrations have adopted a highly selective procedure for examinations of containers and about 95% of containers are allowed clearance without any

physical examinations. In India, rules require 10% of the contents of each box to be checked and verified. It causes delay and adds a high transportation costs.

5. Issues with Regulations- Major and minor ports are governed by distinct authorities. According to a report by the World Bank, the lack of a unified regulatory body and overlapping jurisdictions among different agencies has led to regulatory uncertainty in the port sector.

6. Issues with the PPP model of operations of the ports- Tariff regulation, lack of a dispute settlement process and strict regulation on the scope of private players work are some of the issues with the PPP model of port operations.

7.Environmental Challenges- Oil Spills, ballast water discharge and the dredging operations for port development harm the marine environment and ecology.

8. Social impacts of Port Development- The majority of port development and initiatives result in displacement of indigenous coastal populations (such as Gangavaram Port in Andhra and Mundra in Gujarat).

What are the government Initiatives for Development of Port Infrastructure in India?

1. Sagarmala Project- To promote port-led development in the country through harnessing India's 7,500 km long coastline, 14,500 km of potentially navigable waterways and strategic location on key international maritime trade routes. The main vision of the project is to reduce logistics cost.

2. Project UNNATI- It has been launched to benchmark operational and financial performance of the 12 major ports with selected Indian private ports and best-in-class international ports for identifying improvement areas.

3. 100 % FDI under the automatic route for construction and maintenance of India Ports- Due to this FDI liberalisation, Indian ports have received cumulative FDI inflow worth US\$1.63 billion between April 2000 and June 2021.

4. Passage of Major Port Authorities Act 2021- The Act aims to decentralise decision-making and reinforce excellence in major port governance.

5. Marine Aids to Navigation Act 2021- The Act provides for increased safety and efficiency in vessel traffic services and training and certification at par with international standards.

6. The Indian Vessels Act 2021- The Act aims to bring uniformity in law and standardised provisions across all inland waterways in the country.

7. Tax Holiday for private port development players- A 10-year tax holiday has been provided to enterprises engaged in the business of developing, maintaining and operating ports, inland waterways and inland ports.

Read More- [Sagarmala Project](#)

What Should be the way forward?

Suggestions have been provided in the report titled "Promotion of Infrastructure in India's Maritime Sector" by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, to improve the port infrastructure and efficiency.

1. Formulate policies for generation of employment opportunities- Creation of **Coastal Economic Zones (CEZs)**, **Coastal Economic Units (CEUs)**, **Port-Linked Industrial & Maritime Clusters** and **Smart Industrial Port cities** would generate employment opportunities.

2. Link Private Ports with the Major and Minor Ports of the country- To cater to the growing requirement for import/ export of manufactured goods/ raw materials.

3. Close coordination between stakeholders- Ministry of Ports should work in close coordination with the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, NHAI, and Ministry of Environment to **address the delays in projects due to land acquisition** and **environmental clearances**.

4. Implementation of smart port technologies and solutions- Implementing technologies such as **blockchain**, **Internet of Things (IoT)** and **data analytics** can enhance transparency, efficiency and security in port operations.

5. Focus on Green port development- The Ministry of port should formulate proper guidelines and conduct an **environmental impact assessment** before releasing funds for any port connectivity project.

India must implement the **Maritime India Vision 2030** and take initiatives such as developing world-class Mega Ports, transshipment hubs and infrastructure modernization of ports.

Read More- [Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Airports, Roads, Railways, and others.

Electoral Bonds Scheme- Explained Pointwise

Introduction

A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud will begin hearing a batch of petitions challenging the Finance Ministry's **Electoral Bonds Scheme 2018**. The petitioners have argued that 'principle of anonymity' in the electoral bonds scheme **goes against the 'right to know'** which is a fundamental right under the 'right to information'(Article 19). However, **Attorney General R Venkataramani** told the Supreme Court, by way of written submissions, that the **citizens' right to know is subject to reasonable restrictions**. Against the backdrop of these developments, let us have a detailed look at the Electoral Bonds Scheme.

What are electoral Bonds?

Definition	Electoral bonds are interest-free "bearer instruments" . (Bearer Instruments are similar to promissory notes. These are payable to the bearer on demand)
Introduction	Electoral Bonds were introduced with the Finance Bill 2017 . The scheme was notified on January 29, 2018.
Eligibility of Donors	(1)Any citizen of India or entities incorporated or established in India can purchase these Bonds. (2)Citizens can buy electoral bonds either singly or jointly with other individuals.

Eligibility of Political Parties	Only political parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and which secured not less than 1% of votes polled in the last general election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of the State, are eligible to receive electoral bonds.
Functioning of the Electoral Bond Scheme	(1)The State Bank of India (SBI) issues electoral bonds in the months of January, April, July and October . (2)The electoral bonds are available in denominations from Rs 1,000 to Rs 1 crore . (3)The donors can buy electoral bonds and transfer them into the accounts of the political parties as a donation. The name of the donor is kept confidential . (4)Political parties create a specific account . This account is verified by the ECI . The political parties encash the electoral bonds only in this verified account . (5)The bonds remain valid for 15 days . Within that time, the political parties have to encash the electoral bond in the designated accounts.

What is the significance of Electoral Bonds Scheme 2018?

- 1. Transparency in political funding-** Electoral bonds provide a transparent route for parties to collect funds, as electoral bonds are allowed to be **sold only through SBI** and to **KYC validated individuals only**.
- 2. Reduced chances of misuse of bonds-** A limited window for the sale of these bonds and a **very short maturity period** (life of bonds is only 15 days), makes the misuse of these bonds difficult.
- 3. Protection of anonymity-** The bearer bonds provide anonymity to donors which prevent their **post-poll intimidation or harassment** by political opponents.
- 4. Political accountability-** The political parties are required to submit the details about contributions received through electoral bonds **to the Election Commission** which ensures their accountability.
- 5. Reduction of use of black money for Political Funding-** Under the Electoral bond scheme, the amount of money that a party can accept in cash from anonymous sources has **reduced from Rs 20,000 to Rs 2,000**.

What are the challenges/drawbacks with the Electoral Bonds Scheme 2018?

- 1. Against the 'right to know'**- Electoral bonds donations to political parties hide the identity of the donors and recipients. Before the introduction of electoral bonds, political parties had to disclose details of all its donors, who have donated more than Rs 20,000. Hence, electoral bonds compromise the citizen's 'right to know', which is **part of the right to freedom of expression under Article 19 of the Constitution**.
- 2. Information asymmetry-** Principle of anonymity does not apply to the government of the day, which can always access the donor details by demanding the **data from the State Bank of India (SBI)**. The bonds provide a ruling party with a chance to threaten the donors of the opposition party.

3. Loopholes in transparency of donation limits from corporate entities- The electoral Bond scheme removed the clause of the Companies Act 2013. As per the previous clause of the Companies Act 2013, a company could make a political contribution only if its net average profit of three preceding financial years was 7.5%. The removal of this clause has **raised concerns of black money in political funding through shell companies**.

4. Influence of foreign funding- Electoral bonds invite foreign corporate powers to impact Indian politics with the **removal of the cap on foreign funding**.

5. Leading to Crony-Capitalism- Electoral bonds may become a convenient channel for businesses to **round-trip their cash parked in tax havens** to political parties for a favour through shell companies.

6. Rise in large donations from corporates- One of the main arguments for introduction of electoral bonds was to allow common people to easily fund political parties of their choice, but more than **90% of the bonds have been of the highest denomination (Rs 1 crore)**.

7. Passage of electoral Bonds Scheme as Money Bill- The passage of Electoral Bonds scheme as money bill **by-passed the scrutiny of Rajya Sabha**.

Read More- Issues in Electoral Funding in India – Explained, pointwise

What should be the Way Forward?

1. State funding of Elections- The **Indrajit Gupta Committee on State Funding of Elections** has supported partial state funding of recognised political parties. State funding has proved its effectiveness in a number of countries like Germany, Japan, Canada, Sweden etc.

2. Explore setting up of National Electoral Fund- An alternative to electoral bonds is a National Electoral Fund to which all donors can contribute. The funds can be **allocated to political parties in proportion to the votes** they get. This will protect the identity of donors. Apart from that, it would also weed out black money from political funding.

3. Capping of anonymous donations to political parties- **The Law Commission of India in its 255th Report** has recommended to cap the entire donation received through anonymous sources at Rs. 20 crores or 20% of the total funding of a political party.

4. A complete ban on cash donations- One of the transparency measures for political funding is to put a **complete ban on cash donations** by individuals or companies to political parties. At present, political parties can receive cash donation below Rs.2000.

5. Audit of accounts of political parties- **Venkatachaliah Committee Report (2002)** has recommended strict regulatory frameworks for auditing and disclosure of party income and expenditure.

6. Learning and implementing global best practices- **France** banned all forms of corporate funding in 1995 and capped individual donations at 6,000 Euros. **Brazil and Chile** have also banned corporate donations after a series of corruption scandals emerged related to corporate funding.

Law Commission's Recommendations on Electoral Finance (255th Report)

- Extend regulation of election expenses from date of nomination to **date of notification**.
- Authorization of political funding by a corporate should be done at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and not Board of Director (BoD) meeting.
- Extension of norms of disclosures by candidates about their election expenses including funding received from non-Government corporate or a person and from the parent political party.
- **Public disclosure of electoral expenses documents** submitted by the candidates.
- Submission of **audited annual reports** by Political Parties detailing all the funds received and the expenditure incurred which shall be **disclosed publicly** by the ECI.
- **Disclose contributions** less than INR 20,000 if such contributions exceed INR 20 crore or 20% of the party's total contributions, whichever is less.
- Failure to disclose expenses results in disqualification for 3 years. This should be **extended to 5 years** to render the candidate ineligible for next election.
- **Penalty of 5 times the contribution received**, if such contribution is received from an ineligible donor under Companies Act and RoPA.
- **State funding of elections not feasible**. In-kind subsidies should be provided.

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Conclusion

A **clean & transparent electoral funding** process is vital to ensure a fair electoral democracy. Most developed countries in the West have robust mechanisms to ensure transparency in their political systems. As India aspires to emulate the West by setting the ambition of achieving developed country status by 2047, it must aspire for similar standards of transparency in the political sphere. **Cleaning up electoral finance** can be the first step in this regard.

Read More- [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS-2 -Salient Features of the Representation of People's Act.