

7 PM COMPILATION

16th to 31st December, 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
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Asymmetric Federalism- Explained Pointwise+ Infographics

The recent SC verdict on abrogation of Art 370 (Special provision with respect to J&K) has highlighted the nature of asymmetric federalism existing in India. The proponents of Art 370 argued that the provision was a part of the asymmetric federalism envisaged by our constitutional forefathers.



- » **Asymmetric federalism** is based on unequal powers and relationships in political, administrative, and fiscal arrangement spheres between the federal units constituting a federation.
- » Asymmetric federalism can be both due to the constitutional provisions and due to the various conventions practised in the federation.

Type of Asymmetric Federalism		Significance
Vertical Asymmetry (Centre and States)	Horizontal Asymmetry (Between States/UT's)	Fiscal Asymmetry
<p>Article 3- The Centre can unilaterally alter the state names and boundaries.</p> <p>Article 352 & 356- Provisions related to imposition of National Emergency and President's rule.</p> <p>Article 248- Residuary powers of legislation rests with the parliament.</p> <p>Single citizenship- In India, only single citizenship is available to citizens. They cannot be citizens of the state as well.</p> <p>Governor's appointment- The governor of a state acts as the centre's representative in the state.</p>	<p>Art 371A-371J- Special position, powers, and protection enjoyed by north-eastern states</p> <p>Schedule 5- The administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes residing in any State other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.</p> <p>Schedule 6- The administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.</p>	<p>Vertical asymmetry- As per the recommendations of the 15th FC, the share of states in the central taxes for the 2021-26 period is recommended to be 41%.</p> <p>Devolution among states (Horizontal asymmetry)- Criteria like income distance, demographic performance, forest and ecology, etc., are used for devolution among the states.</p> <p>Centrally sponsored schemes (CSS)- For special category status states, the Centre pays 90% of the funds required in a CSS, as against 60% in the case of normal category states.</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Helps in protecting fundamental rights and compensates for initial inequalities in the social system. » Ensuring Social justice for extremely disadvantaged group » Accommodation and integration of regional aspirations by providing self rule within a system of shared rule. » More power and autonomy to the minorities to protect their interests. » Addresses state-specific issues by giving them more resources and attention. » Strengthens federalism by ensuring decentralisation of power and democratic decision-making.

Challenges in the implementation of Asymmetric Federalism

- » **Selective application based on political considerations** resulting in differential treatment.
- » **Economic disparities and regional imbalances** by preferential funding or fiscal arrangements .
- » **Disparities** in the promotion and protection of **cultural and linguistic protections**.

For detailed Reading- 7 PM Link

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What is Asymmetric Federalism? What are the Relevant Constitutional Provisions?

Federalism- Federalism is a system of government in which powers have been divided between the centre and its constituent parts such as states or provinces

Asymmetric Federalism- Asymmetric federalism is based on **unequal powers and relationships in political, administrative, and fiscal arrangement spheres** between the **federal units** constituting a federation.

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Asymmetric federalism can be both vertical (between centre and states) and horizontal (among the states). It is promoted by the various constitutional provisions and conventions practised in the federation.

Types of Asymmetric Federalism with Constitutional Provisions

Vertical Asymmetry (Centre and States)	Horizontal Asymmetry (Between States/UT's)	Fiscal Asymmetry
<p>Article 3- The Centre can unilaterally alter the state names and boundaries.</p> <p>Article 352 & 356- Provisions related to imposition of National Emergency and President's rule.</p> <p>Article 248- Residuary powers of legislation rests with the parliament.</p> <p>Single citizenship- In India, only single citizenship is available to citizens. They cannot be citizens of the state as well.</p> <p>Governor's appointment- The governor of a state acts as the Centre's representative in the state.</p>	<p>Art 371-371J- Special position, powers, and protection enjoyed by some states.</p> <p>Schedule 5- The administration and control of tribal areas in 10 states other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.</p> <p>Schedule 6- The administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.</p> <p>Article 239AA- Delhi has a unique status among the UTs by having a state legislature.</p>	<p>Vertical asymmetry- As per the recommendations of the 15th FC, the share of states in the central taxes for the 2021-26 period is recommended to be 41%.</p> <p>Devolution among states (Horizontal asymmetry)- Criteria like income distance, demographic performance, forest and ecology, etc., are used for differential devolution among the states.</p> <p>Centrally sponsored schemes (CSS)- For special category status states, the Centre pays 90% of the funds required in a CSS, as against 60% in the case of normal category states.</p>

What is the Significance of Asymmetric Federalism in India?

- 1. Securing rights-** Asymmetric Federalism helps in protecting fundamental rights and compensates for initial inequalities in the social system.
- 2. Ensuring Internal security-** The border states of India have been given larger autonomy for management of Internal security by ensuring administrative convenience. **For ex-** Inner line permit.
- 3. Accommodation and integration-** Asymmetrical federalism allows for self-rule within the framework of shared rule, and it follows the principle of weighted and differentiated equality.
- 4. Protection of minorities-** Asymmetrical federalism ensures that minorities are not marginalised by giving more power and autonomy to regions where certain minority groups are concentrated.
- 5. Addressing State-specific issues-** Asymmetrical federalism ensures that the state-specific issues are given the attention and resources they need.
- 6. Strengthening Federalism-** Asymmetric Federalism strengthens federalism by ensuring decentralisation of power and decision-making as per requirements of the federal units.

Read More- [Special provisions to other states](#)

What are the Challenges with the Asymmetric Federalism in India?

- 1. Promotes Regionalism and separatism-** Special statuses sow seeds of regionalism and separatism and it impacts 'national integration.'

2. **Unequal Distribution of Powers-** Asymmetric federalism creates imbalances in decision-making and resource-allocation, leading to perceptions of favouritism and discrimination.

3. **Varying levels of cultural and linguistic protections-** There is difference in the level of cultural and linguistic protections granted by the application of asymmetric federal principles. This leads to disparities in the promotion and protection of cultural and linguistic protections.

4. **Financial arrangements-** Some regions benefit from preferential funding or fiscal arrangements, while others may receive fewer resources, resulting in economic disparities and regional imbalances.

5. **Selective application based on political considerations-** The application of these asymmetric federal principles may be influenced by political factors, resulting in inconsistent treatment.

Conclusion

India's founding fathers recognized the need for a salad bowl approach to governance, which recognizes the distinctive cultural differences in the country and permits self-rule within the scheme of a shared rule. This led to the unique governance model of India, as highlighted by the asymmetric federalism.

However, due to political considerations and in the name of greater autonomy, these special provisions are being misused, leading to dissatisfaction among the constituent units. Our aim must be to protect these principles, which would in turn strengthen our federation.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Federalism

Food vs Fuel (Food Security vs Energy Security) – Explained Pointwise

Recently, the Government lifted the ban on using sugarcane juice for ethanol production. This has brought to focus the effects of India's biofuel policy, which includes its implications on India's food security.

Initially, there were high expectations surrounding biofuels (such as Ethanol, Biodiesel) as a resource that could potentially **mitigate global climate change, contribute to energy security** and **support agricultural producers**. However, serious questions have been raised regarding the impact of biofuel production on food security.

What are Biofuels?

According to the **FAO**, biofuels are energy carriers that store the energy derived from biomass. A wide range of biomass sources can be used to produce bioenergy. These include – fibre and wood residues from the industrial sector, food and non-food crops, agricultural wastes, algae, etc.

Ethanol:

Ethanol-based biofuels are often considered a preferable alternative to fossil fuels due to their lower emissions due to less carbon dioxide emissions than conventional fuels.

It is produced from grains, their stalks, rotten potatoes, sugarcane juice, sugarcane molasses, and agricultural and industrial waste. When ethanol is produced directly from crops such as rice, maize, and sugarcane, the technology is referred to as **1G (1st Generation)**. When crop waste, non-food crops, industrial waste, and lignocellulosic (plant dry matter) feedstocks are used, the technology is **2G (2nd Generation)**.

What are some of the biofuel initiatives being undertaken by India?**National Biofuel Policy 2018:**

Read about it [here](#).

Ethanol Blending Programme: It involves producing bioethanol that would be blended with petrol. As per the policy, India was to achieve 10% blending rate (E10) by 2021-22 and 20% (E20) by 2025-26. It has led to the average ethanol blending in petrol rising from 1.6 to 11.8% between 2013-14 and 2022-23. Read a detailed article on **Ethanol Blending** [here](#).

Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana, 2019: To create an ecosystem for setting up commercial projects and to boost Research and Development in 2G Ethanol sector.

GOBAR (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources) DHAN scheme: It focuses on managing and converting cattle dung and solid waste in farms to useful compost, biogas and bio-CNG, thus keeping villages clean and increasing the income of rural households.

Why is India promoting Biofuel production?

Read about the **Significance of Biofuels** [here](#).

- 1) **Enhancing India's energy security:** By diversifying its energy sources, India can build a more resilient energy infrastructure, lessening its reliance on a single energy type and promoting a mix of renewable resources.
- 2) **Import Substitution:** India heavily relies on imports to meet its energy requirements (around 80% of its oil requirement is imported). Biofuels can help strategically reduce the dependence on imported fossil fuels and conserve foreign exchange reserves. For instance, India's crude oil import bill will fall annually by about **\$4 billion** under E20 (**NITI Aayog**).
- 3) **Negate Crude Oil Price Hikes:** Can significantly offset negative economic impacts of moderate oil price hikes.
- 4) **Addressing Environmental concerns:** As per **NITI Aayog**, petrol blended with 20% ethanol would **reduce carbon monoxide emissions by 50%** in two-wheelers and **30%** in four-wheelers.
- 5) **Boosting the domestic agricultural industry:** Biofuel production can lead to investment and innovation in agricultural practices. This can help achieve the target of '**Doubling farmer's income**'.
- 6) **Job Creation:** It can generate about 18 million rural jobs (as per the **Asian Development Bank**).

However, the push for ethanol as a fuel in India is not without its challenges, particularly in the area of food security.

How can India's biofuel policies harm food security of India?

According to the **FAO**, **crop diversion to biofuels** and climate change are the most significant threats to long-term food security.

India's biofuel policies can impact food security in several ways:

- 1) **Diversion of Food Crops:** Most ethanol (for blending) in the country is produced using 1G as 2G remains commercially unviable in India. The diversion of food crops such as rice – to ethanol – will hamper India's nutritional security ambitions.

For instance, in 2022, close to 1 million metric tonnes of rice fit for human consumption from FCI's stocks was sold at subsidised prices to produce ethanol.

2) **Diversion of Agricultural Land:** It can lead to the conversion of agricultural land used for growing food crops to cultivating biofuel feedstocks like sugarcane, corn, or oilseeds. This reduces the land available for growing essential food crops, potentially decreasing overall food production.

3) **Adverse impact on small and marginal farmers:** Increased demand for biofuel crops might compete with food crops for resources such as water, fertilizers, and agricultural infrastructure. This competition can lead to price hikes for these resources, affecting small-scale farmers.

4) **Rise in Food Prices:** A decrease in land availability for growing food crops can lead to an increase in food prices (due to lesser production).

For instance, the Centre has capped the use of 'sugarcane juice and sugar syrup' for ethanol production in the 2023-24 supply year due to concerns over sugar price rising.

5) **Disincentivises Crop Diversification:** Farmers may prefer to grow more sugarcane and rice due to price support schemes. This would push farmers away from crop diversification strategy of growing more pulses and oilseeds.

6) **Impact on Soil Health:** The practices of **monocropping** for biofuel feedstock crops (such as rice, sugarcane) will deplete the nutrients in the soil and make it infertile.

7) **Impact on Water Availability:** Incentives for ethanol blending might encourage increased sugarcane and rice cultivation — **water-guzzling crops**.

Producing a kilogram of sugar requires 1,500-2,000 litres of water — making it an unsustainable option.

8) **Climate Change Induced Vulnerability:** Biofuel production might contribute to **monoculture farming**. This can increase vulnerability to climate change-related risks such as pests, diseases, and extreme weather events.

However, biofuel production may also have a positive impact on India's food security.

How can India's fuel policy enhance food security in the longer term?

1) **Raise Agricultural Income:** For instance, biodiesel could help raise farm income by providing an additional market for oilseed crops. Farmers can grow oilseed crops in rotation with food crops such as wheat.

2) **Nutritional Security:** Biofuel production can create new income streams, generate jobs and lead to infrastructural development in rural areas. The resultant improvement in socio-economic indicators can enhance nutrient absorption by individuals, promoting nutritional security.

3) **Increased Farm Productivity:** Investment in biofuel technology can stimulate R&D in the agricultural sector. This can lead to technological advancements and increased farm productivity.

4) **Raise Private Investment in Agriculture:** Assistance to farmers for growing biofuel feedstocks can also encourage private investment in the agriculture sector.

Way Forward:

1) **Investment in R&D:** Investment in R&D on **2G (Non-food sources), 3G (Non-food, non-plant sources such as algae) as well as 4G (Genetically engineered) Biofuels** could significantly enhance the future role of biofuels without compromising food security.

2) **Safety Nets:** Social security nets such as the National Food Security Act are needed to protect vulnerable people from high food prices and ensure access to adequate food.

3) **Focus on 2G sources such as molasses-based ethanol:** If cultivated on wastelands with judicious water usage, it would not have major adverse impacts on food security.

4) **Proper Land Use Management:** Land use mapping and allocation studies as well as provisions to make wasteland available for biodiesel production should be undertaken.

5) **Optimising Incentives:** It is necessary to design a combination of tax, subsidy, and regulatory measures to ensure that the incentives given to the biodiesel sector do not lead to expansion of biodiesel cultivation into arable lands.

6) **Exploring Alternatives:** To achieve the goal of energy security as well as emissions reduction, alternative mechanisms – EVs, other renewable sources (such as solar, wind), etc. – need to be explored.

India, like many countries, faces the challenge of balancing its energy needs with other priorities such as agriculture and food security. Policies aimed at sustainable energy advancement, optimizing resource use, and coordinated planning can reduce the conflict between clean energy objectives and food security priorities.

India's Polar Expeditions in Arctic and Antarctic – Explained Pointwise

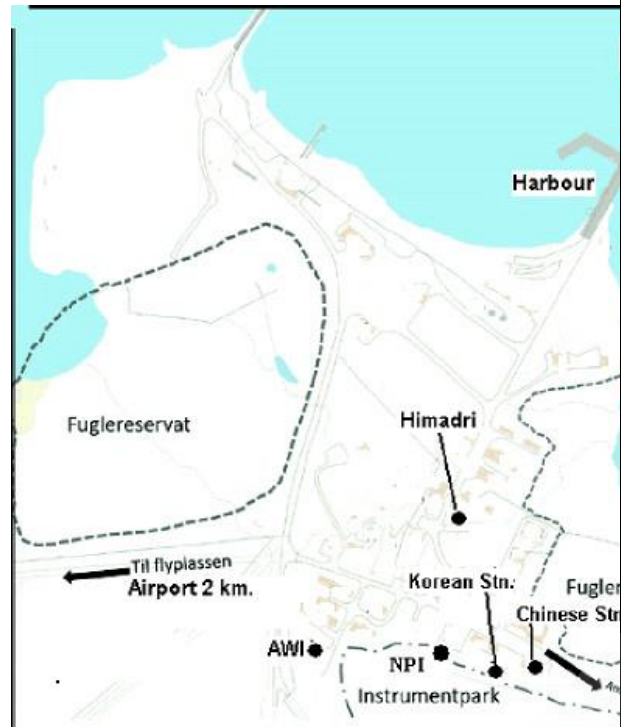
India's polar expeditions into the Arctic and Antarctic signify the nation's dedication to **scientific research, environmental studies, and geopolitical interests** in these remote regions. However, they encounter formidable challenges— such as extreme climates and logistical hurdles. Despite these obstacles, India has shown resolve in advancing polar research, fostering innovative technologies, international collaborations, and gathering deep insights into these critical ecosystems.

For instance, recently India sent off its first winter expedition of scientists to the Himadri Research Station in the Arctic, which will now remain operational throughout the year.

What are India's initiatives in the field of Polar Research in the Arctic and Antarctic?

Arctic Region	Antarctic Region
<p>1) India's Arctic Policy was released in 2022: It is built on six central pillars: Science and research, Environmental protection, Economic and human development, Transportation and connectivity, Governance and international cooperation, and National capacity building.</p> <p>2) Arctic Council: India holds one of the 13 positions as the Observer in the Arctic Council (a forum of countries that decides on managing the region's resources and popular livelihood).</p> <p>3) In 2008, India opened a research base Himadri in Svalbard, Norway. It is India's first permanent Arctic research station.</p>	<p>1) India's first expedition to Antarctica was in 1981.</p> <p>2) In 1983, India signed the Antarctic Treaty.</p> <p>3) India built its first research base, Dakshin Gangotri, in 1983-84. It was excavated in 1989 and now operates as a supply base and transit camp.</p> <p>4) The Maitri Base superseded Dakshin Gangotri in 1989. It is located atop the Schirmacher Oasis. India is rebuilding it to make it bigger and last for at least 30 more years.</p> <p>5) Bharati Base was established in 2012, located next to Larsmann Hill.</p>

4) India also has one underwater Arctic observation station, set up in 2015, called **IndARC**.



Map of Svalbard in the Arctic. Inset shows the 'Himadri' station. Source: CG Deshpande, ResearchGate.

6) **Sagar Nidhi**: In 2008, India commissioned the Sagar Nidhi ice-class vessel for research. It can cut through thin ice and is the first Indian vessel to navigate Antarctic waters.



Source: NCPOR

7) The **Indian Antarctic Bill** was passed in 2022, giving effect to the Antarctic Treaty.

Apart from the above:

1. **National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research**: It is an autonomous R&D institution of the Ministry of Earth Sciences. It is the **nodal agency** for India's polar explorations. It is responsible for planning, promotion, coordination and execution of India's entire Polar and Southern Ocean scientific research.
2. **Polar Science and Cryosphere (PACER) Scheme**: It encompasses the following components: a) Construction of polar research vessel. b) Construction of the third research base in Antarctica. c) Indian scientific endeavours in the Arctic. d) Polar expeditions-Antarctica. e) Southern Ocean Expedition.

What is the significance of India conducting research in the Arctic and Antarctic region?

India's research endeavors in the Arctic and Antarctic regions hold several significant implications:

- 1) **Scientific Exploration:** These regions are critical for understanding **global climate patterns, biodiversity, biological, geological, glaciological and earth sciences research**. The polar regions offer a pure environment for this.
- 2) **Climate Change Study:** Since these regions are disproportionately more affected by climate change (for e.g. **Arctic Amplification**), they can provide deeper insights into the effects of climate change, such as melting ice caps and rising sea levels.
- 3) **Geopolitical Significance Interests:** The region holds huge geopolitical importance. For instance, the Arctic is projected to be **ice-free by 2050** which will lead to a race to exploit the **region's natural resources and shipping routes** (for e.g. **Northern Sea Route (NSR)**). India's research allows it to have a stake in discussions related to resource management, shipping routes, and geopolitical interests.
- 4) **Resource Exploration:** For instance, the Arctic region is estimated to hold over **40% of the current global reserves of oil and gas** and could hold significant reserves of **coal, zinc and silver**.
- 5) **Studying the Impact on Monsoons:** Understanding changes in polar ice caps can have implications for **India's monsoon patterns**. Melting ice caps can influence global ocean currents, potentially affecting the Indian monsoon system, which is vital for agriculture and the economy.
- 6) **Studying the Himalayan Cryosphere:** The Himalayas are considered as a **"third pole"**. Because of its similarities with the Polar regions, polar research findings could be applied to understanding the Himalayan region.
- 7) **Technological Advancement:** Conducting research in such extreme environments requires developing **cutting-edge technology and infrastructure**. This can lead to technological advancement in other sectors of the economy as well.
- 8) **Fosters Global Partnerships:** Participating in research initiatives in these regions strengthens India's collaborations with other nations. It fosters international cooperation and allows for the **sharing of expertise, resources, and data**. For e.g. **Arctic Council, Antarctic Treaty**.

What are the challenges in pursuing research in the Arctic and Antarctic region?

India faces several challenges in pursuing research in the Arctic and Antarctic regions:

- 1) **Harsh Environmental Conditions:** The extreme cold, remoteness, and harsh weather conditions in these regions pose significant logistical and operational challenges. Accessibility to these regions is limited, leaving researchers with a **small window of time** to conduct studies.
- 2) **High Operational Costs:** Operating in the Arctic and Antarctic is expensive due to transportation, equipment, and logistical needs. Long-term research programs can **strain India's financial resources**.
- 3) **International Competition:** India may face challenges in securing its position for conducting research in the polar regions due to rising competition between countries for the region's resources.
- 4) **Technological Challenges:** Developing and deploying technology suitable for extreme polar conditions is a challenge. Equipment needs to withstand low temperatures, high winds, and other harsh environmental factors.

5) **Limited Human Resources:** India may face a **shortage of specialized personnel**, including scientists, engineers, and support staff, with expertise in polar research.

Also, managing the physical and mental well-being of personnel in isolation are significant challenges.

6) **Legal-Regulatory Issues:** Adhering to national and international regulations and agreements related to polar research, environmental protection, and resource utilization poses legal challenges. Compliance with various treaties and protocols while conducting research can be a challenge.

Way Forward:

For India to advance its research in the Arctic and Antarctic regions, the following steps can be undertaken:

1) **Investment in Infrastructure:** Allocate funds for establishing and maintaining research stations, laboratories, and specialized facilities in these polar regions.

2) **Capacity Building and Training:** Invest in training programs and educational initiatives to build a skilled workforce specializing in polar research. Encourage collaboration between academia, research institutions, and industry to foster expertise in relevant fields.

3) **International Collaboration:** Strengthen partnerships with other nations engaged in polar research. Promote **open access to data and information** collected from other polar researchers.

4) **Long-term Commitment and Funding:** Ensure sustained financial support for polar research programs, acknowledging the long-term nature of scientific exploration in these regions.

5) **Remote Sensing and Satellite Technology:** Leverage advancements in remote sensing and satellite technology to monitor polar environments.

6) **Public-Private Partnerships:** Foster **collaborations between government entities, research institutions, and private industries** to leverage resources, expertise, and technology for polar research initiatives.

7) **Policy Advocacy and Diplomacy:** Actively engage in international forums to advocate for policies supporting sustainable and responsible polar research. Strengthen diplomatic ties to facilitate collaborative research agreements and resource-sharing initiatives.

By adopting a **multifaceted approach** that combines investment in infrastructure, human capital, technology, collaboration, and policy support, India can advance its research efforts in the Arctic and Antarctic regions.

Telecommunications Bill, 2023 – Explained Pointwise

On December 18, the Centre introduced the **Telecommunications Bill, 2023**. The proposed law attempts to bring in **structural changes to the current regulatory mechanisms in the telecom sector**. The Union government has ushered in a series of reforms through this legislation.

It seeks to replace the **Indian Telegraph Act of 1885**, the **Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1933**, and the **Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act of 1950**.



What are the key provisions of the Telecommunications Bill 2023?

1) **Authorization for Telecom-related Activities:** Obtaining **prior approval from the central government is mandatory** for (i) providing telecom services, (ii) establishing, operating, or expanding telecom networks, or (iii) possessing radio equipment.

The Bill allows the government to take back the spectrum that is unutilised, and also allow for the sharing, trading, and leasing of spectrum.

2) Changes in the Allocation of Spectrum:

Spectrum will be assigned by **auction**, except for certain specified uses.

In some **specific use cases**, spectrum will be allocated **on an administrative basis (by the Government)**.

These include: (i) national security and defence, (ii) disaster management, (iii) weather forecasting, (iv) transport (railways, etc.), (v) satellite services such as DTH and satellite telephony, and (vi) BSNL, MTNL, and public broadcasting services.

Note: Supreme Court in 2012 had ruled that there should be competitive auctioning for distribution of natural public-owned resources such as spectrum. Since then, spectrum had been allocated only through the bidding process.

3) **Powers of Interception:** Government can suspend, assume control of, or oversee any telecom service in case of **public emergency or national security concerns**.

The Bill empowers the central and state governments or a **government authorised officer** to seek interception, disclosure, and suspension of powers in case of a public emergency or interest or safety.

4) **Digital Bharat Nidhi:** An earlier fund to provide telecom services in underserved areas has been renamed as Digital Bharat Nidhi, expanding its usage to include R&D.

5) **Dispute Settlement:** A tiered structure for settling disputes – involving an adjudicating officer, designated committee of appeals and the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) on top.

6) **Biometric Authentication of Users:** Entities have been mandated to carry out biometric authentication of their users as a measure to curb fraud.

7) **Territorial Applicability:** It now extends to offences committed outside India if the offence in question involves a telecom service provided in India.

What is the significance of the Telecommunications Bill 2023?

1) **Replaces Archaic Laws:** The Bill seeks to replace the **Indian Telegraph Act (1885), the Wireless Telegraphy Act (1933), and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act (1950)**, which are colonial-era archaic laws that need reforms, given that the telecom sector has changed significantly in the last few years.

2) **Provides Clarity for Satellite broadband services:** It provides clarity for **satellite broadband services**, an emerging field of telecom that is expected to expand connectivity to remote areas. It aligns India with international norms and sets the stage for global players to enter. It will also help drive innovation, create opportunities for startups, and strengthen the country's position in the global satellite market.

3) **Takes Away Executive Discretion:** An earlier draft stated that spectrum could be assigned through auction, administrative processes and “any other manner as may be prescribed.” In the 2023 bill, this has been limited to just auction or administrative processes.

4) **Technology-based Solutions for Governance:** For instance, there is a provision of **online dispute resolution** for grievance redressal which will usher in ease of doing business.

5) **Simplification of Bureaucratic Procedures:** Provisions such as applying for licences and permits for telecom operators have been simplified (through digitisation).

For instance, currently, the telecom department issues more than 100 types of licences, registrations, and permissions. The Bill seeks to club many of those in a single authorisation process.

This will give the much-needed **regulatory stability and enabling environment** for the next phase of telecom expansion.

6) **Does Not Interfere with OTT:** The Bill has stopped short of extending to telecom-adjacent services (such as OTT). This will prevent overregulation of the sector.

What are the challenges in the Telecommunications Bill 2023?

1) **Potential for Misuse by the Executive:** Concerns are being raised over the Bill's broad provisions that would allow the Centre to take over, manage or suspend any or all telecom services or networks in the interest of **national security or war**. Also, another clause proposes message interception and service suspension in case of a public emergency or for public safety.

2) **Privacy and Surveillance Concerns:** Another clause lets the government notify standards and ensure compliance for encryption and data processing in telecom. This raises the question of whether it empowers the

Centre to possibly prevent popular chat apps from encrypting text messages. **This goes against the user's right to privacy.**

3) **Legal Challenges to Administrative Allocation: Supreme Court's 2G spectrum allotment ruling of 2012** had recommended auctions of scarce natural resources. The 'administrative allocation' provision may go against this ruling.

4) **Ambiguity in Definitions:** Its definitions of telecom, telecom services and what constitutes a message are so broad that it potentially leaves a door open for wide interpretation. It is alleged that these definitions have been kept wide open to potentially regulate online platforms as well (such as messaging apps like Whatsapp, and OTT Platforms).

Way forward:

1) **Checks and Balances:** To prevent misuse, only a declared national emergency under **Article 352** of the Constitution should be allowed to trigger executive action. Any such action must require Parliamentary approval.

2) **Respecting the Right to Privacy:** The message interception and service suspension part must align with fundamental rights such as the right to privacy.

3) **Transparency:** The government must address privacy concerns with an open mind, considering the vast powers that the text of the Bill grants it. The government must also conduct rule-making with absolute transparency and consultation.

4) **Broader Consultations:** The government should conduct a broad based consultation on the current version of the bill, involving all stakeholders (private players, public, etc.).

This Bill is an attempt to rejuvenate the telecom industry, that holds so much promise for India. The telecommunications landscape has evolved dramatically since the Telegraph Act was first passed in the 19th century. Hence, regulation and lawmaking of the current telecommunication scenario should be equipped to comprehensively address the issues that have come with this digital explosion.

Suspension of MPs in Parliament – Explained Pointwise

49 opposition MPs, who had been pushing for a discussion regarding a **breach of security in the Parliament** on December 13, were barred from the legislature recently for allegedly causing disruptions during House proceedings. This move followed the suspension of **78 opposition MPs** from the crucial Winter Session of Parliament the previous day. The total count of suspended lawmakers has reached **141**, comprising 95 from the Lower House (Lok Sabha) and 46 from the Upper House (Rajya Sabha). This has raised concerns over the state of democracy in India.



What is the Process of Suspension of MPs?

General Principle:

The general principle is that it is the duty of the **Presiding Officer** — **Speaker of Lok Sabha and Chairman of Rajya Sabha** — to maintain order so that the House can function smoothly. To ensure that proceedings are conducted in a proper manner, the Speaker/ Chairman is empowered to force a member to withdraw from the House.

Terms of Suspension:

- a. The **maximum period** of suspension is for the **remainder of the session** (However, the House at any point of time can reinstate a suspended member by passing a motion).
- b. Suspended members **cannot enter the chamber** or **attend the meetings** of the committees.
- c. He/she will not be eligible to give notice for discussion or submission.
- d. He/she **loses the right to get a reply** to his questions.

Grounds for termination:

The grounds for termination are covered under the **Rules of Procedure and Conduct of the House**. This includes-

1. In the opinion of the Chairman, the conduct is **grossly disorderly**.
2. **Disregards the authority of the Chair** or abuses the rules of the House by persistently and willfully obstructing” business.

Why is the Provision for Suspension of MPs Required?

1) **Violation of Parliamentary Rules:** The provision allows for the suspension of members who violate the established rules and norms of conduct within the house. This includes **disrupting proceedings, disregarding the authority of the chair, using unparliamentary language**, etc.

- 2) **Maintaining Order in the House:** The provision for suspension is intended to maintain the **dignity, decorum, and smooth functioning** of the parliament.
- 3) **Disruption of Proceedings:** Continuously disrupting the normal functioning of the house by shouting slogans, staging protests, obstructing debates prevents the house from conducting its business. As per the PRS, the **16th Lok Sabha (2014-19) lost 16% of its scheduled time to disruptions.**
- 4) **Financial cost of disruption:** The cost of running Parliament is about **Rs 2.5 lakh per minute**. Any disruption in its functioning not only affects its efficiency but also has a monetary cost attached.
- 5) **Refusal to Obey the Speaker/ Chairperson:** **Disregarding the authority of the Speaker/Chairperson** by refusing to comply with their directions or orders during the proceedings and impacts its dignity.
- 6) **Maintaining Parliamentary Etiquette:** MPs are required to adhere to certain rules of parliamentary etiquette. For example, the Lok Sabha rulebook specifies that MPs are not to interrupt the speech of others. But untoward behaviour by MPs such as shouting slogans and displaying placards adversely impacts **India's democratic credibility.**
- 7) **Clearing Logjam in the House:** The rules are meant to clear obstruction in the House so that **business can be conducted without obstruction.**

What are the Issues Associated with Suspension of MPs?

- 1) **Convention of Suspension as a Last Resort not followed:** Suspension is usually resorted to as a last step. However, it is being used rampantly.
- 2) **Suspension on Unprecedented Grounds:** Some MPs have been suspended on the grounds of **pending investigation by the privileges committee** of the House. This ground of suspension is not in accordance with any rule or conventions.
- 3) **Erosion of Democratic Values:** The suspension of a substantial number of Opposition MPs casts a shadow over democratic values, raising **concerns about the fair representation of diverse voices within the legislative process.**
- 4) **Lack of Meaningful Opposition in Parliament:** The absence of a vibrant opposition **challenges the system of checks and balances**, potentially impacting the quality of debate and scrutiny in parliamentary affairs. This leads to a **lack of legislative scrutiny.**
- 5) **Erosion of Public Trust:** Trust in the democratic institutions may face erosion if citizens perceive a **lack of transparency, accountability**, and a conducive environment for meaningful discourse.
- 6) **Against Freedom of Expression of MPs:** Suspension might be seen as a way of **silencing dissent** or differing opinions.
- 7) **Partisan Decision Making:** Decisions to suspend members can sometimes be subjective, influenced by **political motives** rather than the actual violation of parliamentary rules. This can raise **concerns about fairness and impartiality.**
- 8) **Excessive Length of Suspension:** Sometimes, the duration of suspension might be seen as excessive, especially if it hampers the member's ability to represent their constituency effectively for an extended period.
- 9) **Deteriorating Quality of Bills:** Lesser debates will eventually deteriorate the quality of the bills due to a lack of debate and discussion in the absence of Opposition MPs.

10) **Diplomatic Implications:** The global community often observes the functioning of democracies, and any perceived challenges to democratic norms can influence international perceptions of India. For example, India's standing in indices such as the **Global Democracy Index** may suffer.

Addressing these issues requires a delicate balance between maintaining parliamentary decorum and ensuring that the disciplinary measures are fair and transparent, allowing for the representation of diverse views in a democratic setting.

What is the Way Forward?

1) **Striking a Distinction:** There is a need to strike a distinction between deliberate disruption and raising of uncomfortable but important issues.

2) **Alternative Methods of Discipline:** Some experts argue that there should be alternative ways to discipline members, such as **warnings, fines, or other measures that don't completely exclude MPs** from participating in parliamentary affairs. A former Speaker had suggested that TV cameras be focussed on the demonstrating members so that people could see for themselves how their representatives were behaving.

3) **Suspension Should be Considered as a Last Resort:** The House needs the uninterrupted services of all its members and hence, suspension of MPs has to be a last resort.

4) **Due Process:** The provision for suspension is intended to maintain the dignity, decorum, and smooth functioning of the parliament. However, its application should adhere to the principles of **fairness, due process, and the rule of law**.

5) **Cooperation Between Government and Opposition:** The ruling party responsible for governing should take other parties into confidence. The Opposition should play a constructive role in Parliament and be allowed to put forward its views and express itself in a dignified manner.

6) **Giving Powers to the Opposition:** **Letting the Opposition set the agenda for debate** in the two Houses can be a possible reform. The Parliament should incorporate specific days for the Opposition in its calendar for deliberating on issues that the Opposition considers important (**like in the UK House of Commons**).

7) **Political Maturity:** To protect the sanctity of the Parliament, political maturity on the part of both, the government as well as the opposition, is the need of the hour. While the government must engage Opposition in a meaningful manner, it is the responsibility of the Opposition to present its dissent in an orderly fashion.

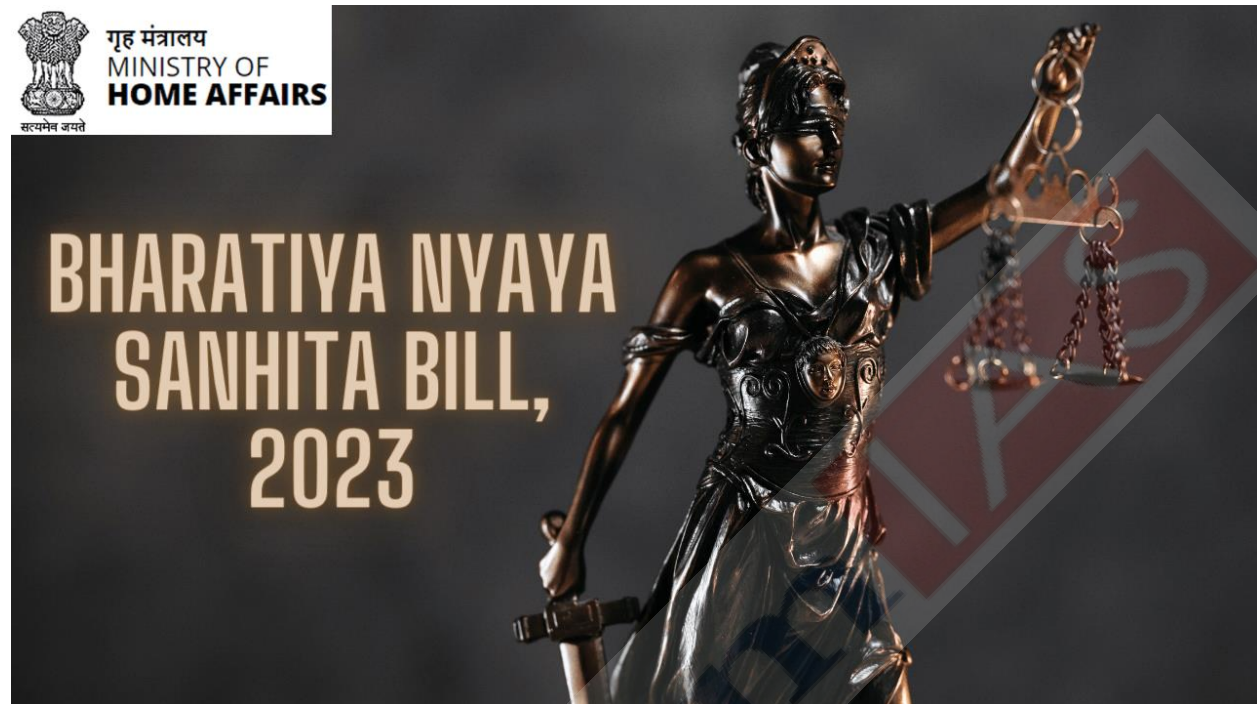
The recent disruptions and **mass suspension of MPs** should be a wake-up call for our national legislature. These events highlight that its reputation as the highest forum for deliberation is at risk. Parliament needs to find better solutions for fostering debate or risk the slow erosion of public faith in it.

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023 – Explained Pointwise

The **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**, set to **replace the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860** was recently passed in the Parliament. It is part of the government's efforts at a complete overhaul of the country's criminal justice system.

Earlier, the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2020 had constituted a **committee headed by Ranbir Singh** to review criminal law. The mandate of the committee was to 'recommend reforms in the criminal laws of the country in a principled, effective and efficient manner – which ensures the safety and security of the individual, the

community and the nation; and which prioritises the constitutional values of justice, dignity and the inherent worth of the individual’.



What are the key changes introduced?

New offences:

- 1) **Mob lynching:** It codifies offences linked to **mob lynching and hate-crime murders**, for cases when a mob of **five or more individuals** commits murder based on factors such as **race, caste, community, language, place of birth or personal belief**. The provision has punishment that extends from life imprisonment to death.
- 2) **Organised Crime:** **For the first time, tackling organised crime is brought under the realm of ordinary criminal law**. There are special state legislations for organised crime syndicates, such as Maharashtra's MCOCA, 1999. These special laws prescribe vast powers of surveillance and relax standards of evidence and procedure in favour of the state, which is not found in ordinary criminal law.
- 3) **Terrorism:** The BNS brings terrorism under the ambit of ordinary criminal law.
- 4) **Attempt to Suicide:** The BNS introduces a new provision that criminalises “whoever attempts to commit suicide **with the intent to compel or restrain any public servant** from discharging his official duty”. This provision could be invoked to prevent self-immolations and hunger strikes during protests.
- 5) **Promise to Marry:** The BNS introduces Clause 69 criminalising “**deceitful**” **promise to marry**. It adds that “deceitful means” shall include the false promise of employment or promotion, inducement, or marrying after suppressing identity.

Deletions:

- 1) **Unnatural Sexual Offences:** Section 377, which criminalised homosexuality among other “unnatural” sexual activities, has been repealed under the BNS.
- 2) **Adultery:** The offence of adultery, which was struck down by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional in 2018, has been omitted under the BNS.
- 3) **Thugs:** The IPC under Section 310 criminalises those who have been “habitually associated with committing robbery or child-stealing” and labels them a thug. This provision is criticised for attaching colonial notions of criminality for certain tribes. The BNS has fully omitted this provision.

Other Important Changes:

- 1) **Gender neutrality:** While rape laws continue to operate only for women, the BNS has tweaked some other laws, especially those dealing with children, to bring gender neutrality. For adults, the offence of outraging the modesty of women (354A of the IPC) and voyeurism (354C) now has gender neutrality for the accused under the BNS, which means that women can also be booked under the law.
- 2) **Fake news:** The BNS introduces a new provision under IPC Section 153B which deals with hate speech, criminalising publishing false and misleading information.
- 3) **Sedition:** The BNS introduces the offence of sedition under a new name and with a wider definition. Apart from a name change from ‘rajdroh’ to ‘deshdroh’, the new provision adds the following: **aiding through financial means, acts of “subversive activities”, and those encouraging “feelings of separatist activities.”**
- 4) **Community Service:** The BNS also calls for community service as a punishment for petty offences, which will be the part of penal code for the first time.

What was the need for the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)?

For a long period, it has been a recognized that a revamp the criminal justice system in India is necessary. The existing laws, stemming from the colonial era, no longer represent the present-day dynamics and aspirations of Indian society. Committees like the **Law Commission of India, Bezbaruah Committee, Viswanathan Committee, Malimath Committee, Madhav Menon Committee** have also recommended reforms in the past.

- 1) **Attempt to Remove Colonial Hangover:** Union Home Minister claimed that it is an attempt to remove the colonial imprint of the IPC, CrPC and the Evidence Act and replace it by a purely Indian legal framework.
- 2) **Incorporating Supreme Court Judgments:** For instance, omitting Section 377. Supreme Court had earlier struck down Section 377 that criminalised homosexuality.
- 3) **Gender Neutrality:** Introducing gender neutrality in certain provisions was an important step towards updating the IPC to reflect contemporary societal norms and values.

What are the concerns being raised?

- 1) **Ambiguity:** For instance, it omits the offence of sedition. However, a new offence has been added that criminalises exciting secession, armed rebellion, subversive activities or encouraging separatist feelings,

without defining them. The framing of this provision is very similar to that of sedition and can be misused by the government to curb dissent.

2) **No break from colonial legacy:** It makes minimal progress in this objective. It **continues to rely on long-term imprisonments and the death penalty**, by adding and increasing mandatory minimum sentences for certain offences, and by retaining vague definitions for offences against the state as well as for defamation.

3) **Lack of Legislative Scrutiny:** The three Bills that replace the body of criminal laws in India were passed by Parliament in its ongoing session where **more than 140 MPs were suspended**.

4) **Lack of Transformational Changes:** Except the reordering of the sections, **much of the language and contents of the original laws have been retained**. The new codes do not envisage any path-breaking change.

5) **Provision on Terrorism:** It is being questioned whether 'terrorism' should have been included in the general penal law when it is punishable under special legislation. Experts argue that **grave charges such as terrorism should not be invoked on a regular basis**.

6) **Marital Rape not Included as a Criminal Offence:** The provision legalising marital rape has been retained.

Way Forward:

1) **Modernization and Clarity:** Further update the BNS to reflect contemporary societal norms and values. Ensure that laws are **clear, concise, and easily understandable by both legal professionals and the general public**.

2) **Victim-Centric Approach:** Strengthen provisions that protect victims' rights and ensure their access to justice. This includes better support systems, compensation, and participation in legal proceedings.

3) **Focus on Rehabilitation:** Emphasize rehabilitative justice and ensure **reintegration of offenders into society** alongside punitive measures. Promote alternative sentencing options, especially for non-violent offenses, to **reduce overcrowding in prisons** and provide a chance for reform.

4) **Technology Integration:** Incorporate technology to **streamline legal processes, improve investigation techniques, and enhance evidence collection**. This could include digitization of records, use of forensic technology, and modernizing court procedures.

5) **Public Awareness and Education:** Conduct public awareness campaigns and educational programs to inform citizens about their rights and responsibilities within the criminal justice system.

6) **Consultation and Stakeholder Involvement:** Encourage active participation from various stakeholders, including legal professionals, law enforcement agencies, NGOs, and affected communities, in the reform process to ensure inclusivity and diverse perspectives.

Reforming criminal laws is a complex and ongoing process that requires collaboration, thoughtful deliberation, and a commitment to upholding justice and fairness for all members of society.

Yojana Summary December 2023 – Redefining Mobility: Transforming Land scape of Transport Sector

A well-knit and coordinated system of transport plays an important role in the sustained **economic growth** of a country. The transport system of India comprises various modes of transport including rail, road, coastal shipping, air transport etc.



Source: ntaindia.net

What is the importance of the Transport Sector of India?

The transport sector plays a crucial role in any economy for several reasons:

- 1) **Facilitating Trade and Commerce:** It enables the movement of goods and services from production centers to markets, both domestically and internationally. Efficient transportation networks **reduce costs, improve accessibility, and foster economic growth by connecting producers to consumers.**
- 2) **Employment Generation:** The transport sector creates jobs directly in areas like **logistics, driving, maintenance**, and indirectly in supporting industries such as **manufacturing (vehicle production)**, etc.
- 3) **Boosting Productivity:** Efficient transportation systems reduce transit times, enabling quicker delivery of goods and services. This leads to **improved productivity across various sectors**, allowing businesses to operate more effectively.
- 4) **Connectivity and Accessibility:** Transportation networks **connect remote areas to urban centers**, providing access to essential services, markets, and opportunities. This connectivity helps bridge economic disparities and encourages regional development.

5) **Supporting Tourism and Travel:** A robust transport system encourages tourism and travel, which contributes significantly to economic growth through spending in accommodation, food services, entertainment, and other related industries.

6) **Global Competitiveness:** Countries with efficient transport systems can compete better in international markets by offering quicker and more cost-effective transportation of goods, thus enhancing their global competitiveness.

Overall, the transport sector serves as a critical backbone of economic activity, influencing various aspects of trade, productivity, employment, and development within a nation and across borders.

Roadways

India has about 62.16 lakh km of road network, which is the **second largest in the world**.

This sector's development rests on the following departments and schemes:

1) **Bharatmala Pariyojana:** Developing road connectivity to **border areas**, development of **coastal roads** including road connectivity for non-major ports, improvement in the efficiency of **national corridors**, development of **economic corridors**, inter corridors, and feeder routes, along with **integration with Sagarmala**, etc., is envisaged under it.

2) **Green National Highways Corridor Project:** Its objectives include: to evolve a policy framework for plantation along national highways; to **reduce the impact of air pollution and dust** as trees and shrubs are known to be natural sinks for air pollutants; to reduce the impact of ever increasing noise pollution caused due to increase in the number of vehicles; to arrest soil erosion at the embankment slopes; etc.

3) **National Highways Authority of India:** It was set up under the NHAI Act, 1988. It has been entrusted with National Highways Development Project (NHDP), which includes development, maintenance and management of 50,329 km of national highways.

Note: **Highways/expressways constitute only about 1.7% of the length of all roads.**

4) **PM GatiShakti Plan:** PM GatiShakti – National Master Plan for Multimodal Connectivity, 2021 is essentially a digital platform to bring **16 ministries**, including Railways and Roadways together, for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure connectivity projects. The **multi-modal connectivity** will provide integrated and seamless connectivity for movement of people, goods and services from one mode of transport to another.

5) **e-Tolling National Electronic Toll Collection (NETC) programme** has been implemented on pan-India basis in order to ensure seamless movement of traffic through fee plazas and increase transparency in collection of user fee using **FASTag**.

Railways

The Railways provide the principal mode of transportation for **freight and passengers**. Indian Railways have grown into a vast network of 7,308 stations spread over a **route length of 68,043 km**. It has played a vital role in the economic, industrial and social development of the country. About **78.46% of total track kilometer is electrified**.

This sector's development rests on the following departments and schemes:

- 1) **Research and Development:** The Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO) is the R&D wing of Indian Railways. It functions as a consultant in technical matters.
- 2) **Vande Bharat Express:** The Vande Bharat Express is a semi-high-speed, electric multiple unit train operated by Indian Railways. It began its operations in 2019 when the first of its kind was flagged off between New Delhi-Kanpur-Prayagraj-Varanasi route. By September 2023, 50 Vande Bharat trains were running across the country.

Shipping

Maritime Transport is a critical infrastructure for the economic development of a country.

India has a long **coastline of about 7,517 km**, spread on the western and eastern shelves of the mainland and also along the Islands. It is an important natural resource for the country's trade. There are **12 major ports and about 200 non-major ports**. Indian shipping industry has over the years played a crucial role in the transport sector of the economy. Approximately **95% of the country's trade by volume and 68% by value is moved through maritime transport**. Of the total traffic handled by all Indian ports, 55% is handled by major ports and 45 by others.

This sector's development rests on the following departments and schemes:

- 1) **Sagarmala Programme:** Government has embarked on the ambitious Sagarmala Programme to **promote port-led development** in the country. The vision of the Programme is to reduce logistics cost of EXIM and domestic trade with minimal infrastructure investment. The objectives of the Programme include: port modernisation, new port development, port connectivity, coastal community development, etc.
- 2) **Inland Water Transport:** India has about **14,500 km long navigable inland waterway network**. Inland Water Transport (IWT) is a fuel-efficient, environment-friendly and cost-effective and lower carbon footprint mode of transport. However, cargo transport through it is, presently **less than 2% of the total cargo movement** in the country. Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) was set up in 1986 for regulation and development of inland waterways for the purposes of shipping and navigation in the country. To promote IWT, Government declared 111 (including 5 existing and 106 new) National Waterways (NWs) spread over 24 states under the **National Waterways Act, 2016**, to promote inland water transport in the country.

Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) is being implemented by the IWAI for the **capacity augmentation of National Waterway I** on the Haldia-Varanasi stretch of Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system.

Civil Aviation

Air transport is one of those sectors which prominently influence economy and employment generation through its direct and catalytic multiplier effects.

This sector's development rests on the following departments and schemes:

- 1) **Regional Connectivity Scheme:** The Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) – **Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik (UDAN)** was envisaged in National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) 2016. The primary objective of RCS-UDAN is to facilitate/ stimulate regional air connectivity by making it affordable to masses through measures such as concessions by the central government, state governments/UT administrations and airport operators to

reduce the cost of airline operations on regional routes; and Viability Gap Funding (VGF) to meet the gap, if any, between the cost of airline operations and expected revenues on such routes.

2) **Airports Authority of India:** Constituted under the **Airports Authority of India Act, 1994**. The primary responsibility of AAI is administration and cohesive management of airports and of all aeronautical communication stations for the purposes of establishing or assisting in the establishment of airports and for connected.

3) **Airports Economic Regulatory Authority:** As an independent economic regulator, AERA aims to create level playing field, foster healthy competition amongst all major airports, to encourage investment in airport facilities and regulate tariffs for aeronautical services.

4) **International Connectivity:** India operates a wide ranging network of international flights and currently has **Air Services Agreement with 116 countries**. India presently provides **direct connectivity to more than 52 countries**, whereas, connects **more than 100 countries through indirect routes**.

5) **Biometric Enabled Seamless Travel DigiYatra policy** is an initiative launched by Ministry of Civil Aviation for providing passengers seamless and hassle-free experience at airports without the need for verification of ticket and ID at multiple touch points. It envisages contactless, seamless processing of passengers at airports based on **Facial Recognition Technology**.

6) **Krishi Udan 2.0:** The Scheme aims to ensure **seamless, cost-effective, time bound, air transportation and associated logistics for all agri-produce originating especially from North-East, hilly and tribal regions of the country**.

Sanitation In India- Explained Pointwise

Sanitation systems are integral to our daily lives. They help in managing the disposal and treatment of used water, safeguarding public health and preventing environmental pollution. This article explores the diverse types of sanitation systems, their roles in rural and urban settings, and the benefits and challenges associated with these systems.



Figure 1. Source- The Hindu

What are the different types of Sanitation Systems being used In India?

1. On-site Sanitation Systems (OSS)

a. Twin Pits and Septic Tanks- In rural areas, where centralized sewage systems are impractical, twin

pits and septic tanks are commonly used. Twin pits involve two pits separated by at least one meter. One pit is left unused for two years to allow for natural decomposition while the other is in use. The liquid portion soaks into the ground, and solids degrade at the pit's bottom.

The **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan**, launched in India in 2014, has promoted the construction of twin pit toilets in rural areas, emphasizing safe containment and eco-friendly disposal of human waste.

b. Other On-site Systems- Bio-digester toilets, bio-tanks, and urine diversion dry toilets are alternative on-site systems. These structures serve as collection and storage units, allowing for passive treatment before disposal into the surrounding soil.

The **Sulabh International Social Service Organization** in India has pioneered the use of **bio-toilets**, offering sustainable and low-cost sanitation solutions in urban and rural areas.

2. Faecal Sludge Management (FSM)

a. Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs)- FSTPs are crucial in areas with on-site sanitation. These plants treat faecal sludge removed from pits or tanks. Mechanical or gravity-based systems are employed for treatment. Treated by-products can be reused in agriculture.

The **city of Warangal has implemented decentralized FSTPs** to treat faecal sludge locally, showcasing a model for effective urban faecal sludge management.

3. Urban Sanitation: Sewer Systems and Treatment Plants

a. Underground Networks of Pipes (Sewers)- In densely populated urban areas, sewer systems consist of interconnected pipes that collect and convey used water to treatment facilities. These networks transport wastewater from toilets, bathrooms, and kitchens.

The **Chennai Smart City project incorporates modern sewer systems** to manage urban wastewater efficiently, contributing to improved sanitation in the city.

b. Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs)- STPs use physical, biological, and chemical processes to remove pollutants from sewage. Mechanized and non-mechanized systems are employed, and treated water is discharged, while solids may be repurposed.

The **Okhla STP in Delhi** utilizes advanced membrane filtration for wastewater treatment, demonstrating technological innovation for water reuse.

The Necessity of Complex Sanitation Systems- Used water accumulates impurities, including organic matter, nutrients, pathogens, and heavy metals, necessitating comprehensive sanitation systems. The containment, removal, and treatment of used water are critical to preventing pollution and protecting public and environmental health.

What is the need of Sanitation System In India?

1. Public Health Impact- Sanitation facilities can have an implication for waterborne diseases and can have overall impact of India's health status. **For Ex-** Positive results of the **Total Sanitation Campaign** in India.

2. Environmental Protection- Discharge of untreated sewage water into River Ganga remains one of the important sources of pollution.

3. Social and Economic Benefits- Improved sanitation correlates with economic productivity, as healthier communities are more capable of participating in the workforce and contributing to economic development.

4. Cultural and Societal Dignity- Access to proper sanitation facilities enhances human dignity, especially for women, by providing safe and private spaces for personal hygiene.

5. Addressing the challenge of Manual Scavenging- Manual scavenging is a dangerous and unhygienic practice that continues in India, with over 50,000 manual scavengers. Moreover, over 73 per cent of these belong to Schedule Castes.

India's Sanitation Status and Achievement

1. Open Defecation Free (ODF) Status- All rural areas declared ODF by October 2019.

Over 100 million toilets constructed under **Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin**. Massive construction of toilets have been undertaken in rural and urban areas. India has now been ODF+ and ODF++.

2. Behavioural Change- “**Darwaza Band**” campaign and community-level awareness programs have promoted positive sanitation norms.

3. Reduction in Open Defecation Rates- Significant reduction in open defecation, particularly in rural areas.

4. International Recognition- **UN** and **WHO** have recognised India's progress in sanitation.

What are the Challenges in the implementation of the Sanitation systems in India?

1. Difficulty in Achieving Universal Access- Despite national initiatives, some remote and economically disadvantaged areas in India still face challenges in accessing adequate sanitation facilities.

2. Operational Challenges- Issues related to the maintenance of sanitation infrastructure are observed in some urban areas.

3. Affordability and Financial Barriers- The upfront costs associated with implementing sanitation infrastructure can be prohibitive for individuals and communities, particularly in economically challenged regions.

4. Behavioural and Cultural Factors- Deeply ingrained habits and cultural beliefs often impede the adoption of proper sanitation practices.

5. Climate and Geographical Considerations- Certain geographical features, such as rocky terrains or areas prone to flooding, pose challenges for the implementation of standard sanitation systems.

What should be the Way Forward?

Addressing the challenges and optimizing sanitation systems for enhanced efficiency is imperative for sustainable development. The following steps can guide the way forward:

1. Innovations in Technology- The adoption of decentralized and community-scale sewage treatment plants, like those implemented in the city of Devanahalli, showcases the potential of innovative technologies.

2. Community Engagement and Education- Initiatives like the “**Nirmal Gram Puraskar**” initiative of Ministry Of Rural Development recognizes and rewards open-defecation-free villages, promoting community engagement and education.

3. Policy and Governance- The **National Urban Sanitation Policy in India** provides a framework for the planning and development of urban sanitation infrastructure.

4. International Cooperation- Collaborative efforts with international organizations, such as **World Bank-supported projects**, can contribute in addressing sanitation challenges.

Sanitation systems are indispensable for maintaining public health and environmental integrity. By acknowledging the benefits, addressing challenges, and embracing forward-thinking solutions, societies, including India, can work towards achieving universal access to safe and efficient sanitation services and meet the

Inclusive Growth-Explained Pointwise

As per OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), **inclusive growth** is **economic growth that is distributed fairly across society and creates opportunities for all.**

UNDP described it as **“the process and the outcome where all groups of people have participated in growth and have benefited equitably from it”.**

Put simply, it refers to economic development that benefits all segments of society, ensuring equitable opportunities and outcomes for individuals regardless of their socio-economic background or circumstances.

What are the Major Components of Inclusive Growth?

- 1) **Reduced Poverty-** Inclusive growth strives to reduce poverty by **improving the poor’s access to opportunities and resources.**
- 2) **Women’s Empowerment-** Since women are frequently left out of economic possibilities, inclusive growth aims to provide them **more power through employment, education, and training.**
- 3) **Good Governance-** **Transparency, accountability, and efficient institutions** that meet the demands of all citizens are essential for inclusive progress.
- 4) **Education & Skill Development-** **Building skills** is a crucial component of inclusive growth because it paves the way for people to engage fully in the economy.
- 5) **Equal Opportunity-** Inclusive growth works to **level the playing field for everyone**, regardless of socio-economic position, gender, race, or religion.
- 6) **Access to Basic Services-** Inclusive growth seeks to guarantee that **all citizens have access to basic services including healthcare, education, and sanitation.** This access should include not only the quantity, but also quality, of these basic services.
- 7) **Employment Creation-** To combat poverty and advance economic development, inclusive growth aims to **increase employment, especially for disadvantaged and marginalised people.**
- 8) **Addressing the Marginalised-** Ensuring participation from all sections of society in the social, economic and political sphere.
- 9) **Reduction in Income Disparities-** Among the following:
 - a. **Sections of society (Religion, Caste, etc.)**
 - b. **Rural-Urban Areas**
 - c. **Genders**

What is the situation of inclusive growth in India?

India is now one of the fastest-growing economies globally. However, this growth has **not resulted** in a corresponding increase in its **Human Development Index (HDI)**. According to the **Human Development Report of 2021-22**, India ranks 132 out of 191 countries.

In the **Inclusive Development Index (IDI)**, 2018 compiled by the World Economic Forum (WEF), India ranked 62nd out of 74 emerging countries and was among the least inclusive countries in G20 countries.

The **“Public good or Private Wealth?” Report 2019**, published by Oxfam showed that India’s top 10% holds 77.4% of the total national wealth, while the top 1% holds 51.53% of the wealth. The bottom 60% of the population holds only 4.8% of the national wealth.

What are the reasons behind lack of Inclusive Growth in India?

1) **Historical reasons-** Discrimination against certain sections of the society since historic times has affected their access to opportunities and to education, employment and health. **Affirmative policies have been restricted to a few beneficiaries.**

2) **Gender Inequality-** **Females are treated as subordinate to males.** Girl education is considered a burden on the family and women have limited choices in employment.

3) **Large-scale informal employment-** **80% of the Indian labour force is employed in the informal sector.** Informal sector jobs are more insecure without regular pay and social security benefits. This increases the wage gap between formal and informal sectors.

4) **Overdependence on Agriculture-** A huge proportion of the population is still dependent on agriculture (~45% of the workforce) but the **share of agriculture to the total GDP is falling.**

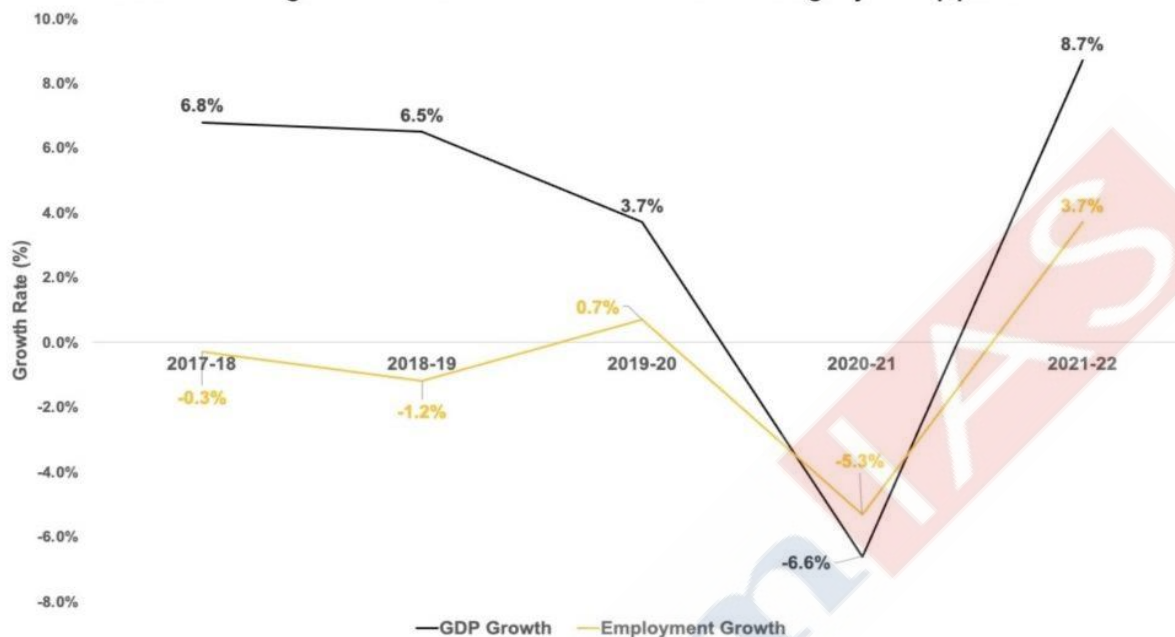
5) **Regional Disparities in Growth-** Growth has been different across sectors and regions. For example, **Green Revolution has disproportionately benefitted North-Western India** when compared to Eastern India.

6) **Globalisation-** Studies show that globalization and opening up the economy has benefited the rich more than the poor, thus raising inequality.

7) **Jobless Growth-** India experienced job growth of 3% p.a in the 70s at a time when the economy grew at 3-3.5% p.a but over the **last 3 decades the economy grew at over 5-8% p.a but job growth has been close to 1% p.a.**

Jobless Growth

India's economic growth has failed to create enough job opportunities



Source: CMIE, Bloomberg

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8) **Government Inefficiencies**- This includes **corruption, maladministration, red tapism** etc. This prevents the optimum utilization of resources and creation of jobs.

Read More- [Inclusive Growth](#)

What are the challenges in ensuring inclusive growth?

- 1) **Poverty**- The Multidimensional Poverty Index 2022 places India first, with an **estimated 23 crore people living in multidimensional poverty**.
- 2) **Uneven Distribution of Resources**- **Unfair resource allocation** can thwart efforts to create inclusive growth. Examples of unfair resource distribution include wealth, land, and education.
- 3) **Social and cultural obstacles**- Marginalised groups may encounter social and cultural obstacles that restrict them from accessing opportunities and services, such as **discrimination, exclusion, and gender inequity**. For instance, Women often face barriers in accessing education, employment, and other opportunities.
- 4) **Weak institutional capacity**- Policies and programmes aimed at **promoting equitable growth may be less effective** if there is a lack of proper implementation, infrastructure, functionaries, etc.
- 5) **Rural-Urban Divide**- Disparities between urban and rural areas persist in terms of infrastructure, access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. This **gap has still not been bridged**.
- 6) **Unemployment and Underemployment**- Creating enough jobs for the growing workforce, especially in **sectors that absorb a large number of people like agriculture and manufacturing**, remains a challenge. Many are employed in the informal sector without job security or proper benefits.

7) **Education and Skills Gap**- Access to quality education and skill development is uneven across regions and socio-economic groups. This leads to a lack of skilled workers and limits opportunities for many individuals.

What are the advantages of inclusive growth?

Ensuring inclusive growth leads to many advantages that positively impact both society and the economy. Some key advantages include:

- 1) **Economic Stability and Sustainability**- Inclusive growth contributes to economic stability by creating a **more balanced distribution of wealth**. When more people have access to resources and opportunities, it can lead to a more sustainable economic development trajectory.
- 2) **Social Cohesion and Stability**- Addressing disparities fosters a more cohesive society. It reduces social tensions arising from inequality, which can lead to a more **stable and harmonious community**.
- 3) **Increased Human Capital Development**- When marginalized groups have access to education and skill development, it **enhances the overall human capital of the nation**. Educated and skilled individuals contribute more effectively to economic growth and innovation.
- 4) **Expanded Consumer Base**- Inclusive growth expands the consumer base by **bringing more people into the formal economy**. This leads to increased demand for goods and services, spurring economic growth.
- 5) **Enhanced Political Stability**- When people feel included in the economic and social fabric of society, it often translates to **more stable political environments**, reducing the risk of social unrest or conflicts.
- 6) **Greater Innovation and Creativity**- Inclusive growth brings together **diverse perspectives, fostering innovation and creativity**. A diverse workforce and society can generate new ideas and solutions to complex problems.

What should be the Way Forward?

Achieving inclusive growth in India requires a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach. Here are the steps that can be taken to ensure inclusive growth:

- 1) **Education and Skill Development**- Improving access to quality education for all, especially in **rural and marginalized areas**, is crucial. Emphasizing skill development programs that align with market needs can enhance employability.
- 2) **Employment Generation**- Encouraging sectors that create more jobs, such as **manufacturing, services, and entrepreneurship**, can help reduce unemployment and underemployment.
- 3) **Social Protection Programs**- Strengthening and expanding social safety nets like the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)**, subsidized food programs, and healthcare initiatives can provide a safety net for vulnerable populations.
- 4) **Financial Inclusion**- Expanding access to banking and financial services, especially in rural areas, can empower individuals and small businesses. Initiatives like **Jan Dhan Yojana** and **Microfinance Institutions** can play a significant role here.
- 5) **Gender Equality**- Promoting gender equality through policies that **support education, employment, and entrepreneurship for women** can unlock significant economic potential.
- 6) **Rural Development**- Focusing on **agriculture by modernizing techniques**, providing better access to markets, and improving infrastructure can spur growth in rural areas.

7) **Policy Reforms**- Implementing policies that promote inclusive growth, such as **progressive taxation, land reforms, labour reforms**, and **policies** targeting marginalized communities, can play a pivotal role.

A holistic approach that addresses these multiple dimensions while considering regional disparities and the diverse needs of the population will be key in moving India toward a path of inclusive growth. Collaboration between government, private sector, civil society, and international organisations is crucial in executing these strategies effectively.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)
UPSC Syllabus- GS-3- Inclusive Growth

[Yojana December 2023 Summary] India's Growing Stature – A Rising Power- Explained Pointwise

Last nine years has overseen India's growing stature in the international arena. India has now entered the period of Kartavya Kaal, which will provide a golden opportunity for India to achieve unprecedented levels of scientific, technological, economic, and social progress. Today, India has emerged as a **Vishwa Mitra (global friend)**, a **Vishwa Guru (global teacher)** and a **Vishwa Vaid (global physician)**.

What are the reasons behind India's growing stature as a rising power in recent times?

India's emergence as a global leader and rising international power stems from various factors:

1) **Diplomatic Engagements:** India actively engages in multilateral forums, maintains diplomatic relations with various countries, and actively participates in global discussions, contributing to its role as a global leader. For instance, **India's Presidency of the G20** this year, despite doubts expressed by the perennial naysayers in India and around the world, was a big success in building consensus on key issues such as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), macro-economic stability, digital public infrastructure, climate challenge, a just and equitable green transition, and reforms of multilateral structures.

2) **Global Partnerships:** Strengthening ties with various countries through trade agreements, strategic partnerships, and collaborations in fields like defense, technology, and healthcare have contributed to India's rise as a global leader.

For instance, the **inclusion of the African Union (AU) into the G20** at the New Delhi Summit, hinged on India's strong advocacy of 'leaving none behind'.

India is also part of important multilateral institutions such as **I2U2, QUAD, BIMSTEC, BRICS, Supply Chain Resilience Initiative**, etc.

3) **Soft Power and Culture:** India's rich cultural heritage, Bollywood, cuisine, yoga, and diverse traditions contribute to its soft power, influencing global perceptions and relationships.

For instance, **International Day of Yoga, Medical Visa, Vaccine Maitri, proposal to recognise 2023 as the International Year of Millets**, etc.

4) **Climate Leadership:** India's commitment to addressing climate change and its role in global climate discussions further enhances its standing on the international stage.

This includes **International Solar Alliance (ISA), the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), and Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS)**. To this list should be

added the **Green Grids Initiative – One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG)**, which was proposed at the First Assembly of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in 2018. Also, **Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)**.

5) **Digital Public Infrastructure:** India has been at the forefront of technological advancements, particularly in the IT sector. It's a hub for technology and innovation, fostering startups and technological development. For instance, tech powered governance solutions such as **CoWIN, UPI, Aadhar, Aarogya Setu, etc.**

Apart from this, factors such as the following are also supporting India's rise:

1. Strategic Geopolitical Position: India's geographical location provides it with strategic significance, both in terms of trade routes and geopolitical influence. Its position in the Indian Ocean region amplifies its importance on the global stage.

2. Military Strength: India has been strengthening its military capabilities, enhancing its status as a regional power and contributing to global security initiatives.

3. Demographic Dividend: With a young population, India has a demographic advantage. A large, youthful workforce can be a driving force for economic growth and innovation.

4. Economic Growth: India's economy has been growing steadily, becoming one of the fastest-growing major economies globally. Its large market size and increasing GDP contribute significantly to its global influence.

India's emergence as a global power is a multifaceted process involving economic, technological, diplomatic, and cultural advancements that position it as an influential player in the international arena.

What are the challenges to India's growing stature, which can make India a superpower?

India faces several challenges on its path to becoming a global leader and rising international power:

1) **Economic Disparities:** Despite overall economic growth, India grapples with significant economic disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as income inequality. Bridging this gap is crucial for sustainable growth and social stability and cohesion.

According to **OxFam**, India's **top 10% holds 77.4% of the total national wealth**, while the top 1% holds 51.53% of the wealth.

2) **Infrastructure Development:** Infrastructure, including transportation, energy, and urban development, requires substantial investment and improvement to support the growing economy and population.

3) **Political and Bureaucratic Hurdles:** Bureaucratic red tape, corruption, political complexities, and governance challenges can sometimes hinder policy implementation and reforms, affecting the pace of progress.

For e.g. According to **Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2021**, India was ranked **86 out of 180 countries**

4) **Security Concerns:** Internal security issues, including regional conflicts, border disputes, and terrorism threats, demand attention and resources, diverting focus from economic and diplomatic efforts. For instance, the recent **Manipur issue, Galwan Valley Skirmishes**.

5) **Social Issues:** India faces social challenges like **caste divisions, gender inequality, religious strife and a lack of access of its people to basic education and healthcare**.

6) **Geopolitical Complexities:** India's relations with neighbouring countries and global powers can be complex due to historical tensions, territorial disputes, and shifting geopolitical dynamics. Balancing relationships with

different global powers, navigating alliances, and managing divergent interests among various countries poses diplomatic challenges.

7) **Global Competition:** As a rising power, India faces stiff competition globally, particularly from other emerging economies, necessitating consistent innovation and adaptability.

This includes countries like [China](#), [Turkiye](#), [Indonesia](#).

8) **Lack of Reform in Multilateral Institutions:** For instance, India is not represented in the [United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\)](#). This diminishes India's voice and influence in critical decision-making processes on global issues.

[Read More- Dilemmas of India's great power ambitions](#)

What should India do to cement its place as a rising power in global geopolitics?

To solidify its position as a rising power in global geopolitics, India can focus on several key areas:

1) **Economic Reforms and Growth:** Continue implementing economic reforms to foster growth, attract investments, and strengthen industries. This includes infrastructure development, ease of doing business initiatives, and promoting innovation and entrepreneurship.

Advancements in sectors like [AI](#), [renewable energy](#), [biotechnology](#), and [space exploration](#), can enhance India's global standing.

2) **Diplomatic Outreach:** Strengthen diplomatic ties with key global players while actively participating in multilateral forums and negotiations. Forming strategic partnerships and alliances can amplify India's influence on the global stage. Actively engage with neighbouring countries to resolve disputes and build cooperative relationships, contributing to regional stability and cooperation.

3) **Military Modernization:** Invest in modernizing the military to ensure security and stability in the region. This includes advancements in defence technology, joint military exercises, and collaborations with other nations on security issues.

5) **Focus on Soft Power:** Leverage India's [rich cultural heritage](#), [art](#), [cinema](#), [cuisine](#), [yoga](#), and [traditional practices](#) to enhance soft power, improving global perceptions and fostering cultural diplomacy.

6) **Addressing Social Issues:** Tackle social challenges such as [poverty](#), [healthcare](#), [education](#), [gender inequality](#), and [social divisions](#) to ensure inclusive growth and societal well-being.

7) **Promote Global Governance:** Advocate for reforms in global governance bodies to reflect the changing geopolitical landscape, seeking a more inclusive and representative global order. For instance, [India's 'NORMS' initiative \(New Orientation for a Reformed Multilateral System\)](#).

By focusing on these areas and adopting a comprehensive, inclusive, and forward-looking approach, India can further solidify its role as a significant global power and positively influence global geopolitics. Collaboration, innovation, and sustained efforts in these domains will be key to cementing its place in the international arena. India's growing stature in the international arena is indeed a moment of proud for us.

[Read More- The Times of India](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Illegal Migration from India- Explained Pointwise

The recent incident, involving the forced return of 303 Indians detained at a French airport, highlights the menace of illegal migration from India. The desperation and distress faced by Indian youths, particularly in the wake of the farming crisis, have led to a concerning surge in illegal migration from India.

Increasing illegal migration numbers

1. According to the latest U.S. Customs and Border Protection data, from November 2022 to September 2023, up to 96,917 Indians were arrested while crossing illegally into the U.S.
2. In 2019-20, 19,883 Indians were apprehended. In 2020-21, up to 30,662 Indians were arrested, while in 2021-22 this number was 63,927.

What is donkey routes used by the illegal migrants?

Donkey route- This illegal Migration from India is called taking 'donkey routes'. This refers to a method where migrants transit through various countries with lenient visa policies to finally reach their dream destinations, particularly the U.S., the U.K., Canada and EU.

Sometimes, migrants even resort to dangerous ways of crossing a border like-

- a. Traversing dense forests inhabited by wild animals and criminal gangs
- b. Travelling in sub-zero temperatures
- c. Crossing rivers and other water bodies in rickety boats and treacherous conditions

Route used to enter Europe by the illegal migrants

Siberia has Visa free regime for Indians. This is exploited by creating fake travel history to get into Siberia. From there, the illegal migrants enter into Austria, Hungary and Romania, and ultimately to Italy and France.



Source- The Indian Express

Route used to enter US by illegal Migrants

Countries like Ecuador, Bolivia, and Guyana have visas on arrival for Indian citizens. The illegal migrants use this route to get into US. Nowadays, many illegal migrants first go to Europe, and from there, directly to Mexico and ultimately get into US.

What are the factors propelling illegal Migration from India?

1. **Farming Crisis-** Low agricultural productivity, debt burdens, and unpredictable weather patterns have contributed to agrarian distress and farming crisis. This crisis has led to **plummeting of incomes and exacerbated the vulnerability of individuals**, making them susceptible to exploitation.
2. **Unemployment-** High youth unemployment in rural areas has driven individuals to seek illegal migration from India. **For ex- Punjab rural unemployment.**
3. **Poverty-** Economic hardship and poverty are significant drivers of illegal migration.
4. **Lack of Educational Opportunities-** Limited access to quality education **hampers skill development** among the youth, forcing them to seek high paying unskilled jobs outside.
5. **Social Pressures-** Social and familial expectations contribute to the pressure on young individuals to provide stable income to their families.
6. **Paralysis in implementation of Government Policies-** Ineffective policies related to agriculture, employment, and economic development have exacerbated the illegal migration distress.
7. **Trafficking Racket and Exploitation-** Trafficking racket appears widespread, particularly in **rural Punjab and Haryana**. Individuals in these regions seem to fall prey to promises of a better future in the U.S. exacerbating illegal migration from India.

What should be the way forward?

The following measures must be undertaken as a way forward to solve the complex problem of illegal migration from India.

1. **Agricultural Reforms-** Strengthen and expand policies like **PM-KISAN**, focusing on technology integration and market access. This will increase agricultural income and remove agricultural distress.
2. **Job Creation-** Enhance **MGNREGA** coverage and introduce sector-specific initiatives to boost employment in rural areas.
3. **Education and Skill Development-** Invest in education infrastructure and promote vocational training through **Skill India Mission**.
4. **Social Welfare Programs-** Extend the reach and impact of existing schemes, ensuring they address the specific needs of vulnerable populations.
5. **International Collaboration-** Collaborate with **destination countries like US and Europe**, sharing best practices and ensuring fair and legal migration pathways.

As India grapples with the complexities of illegal migration, these targeted interventions can pave the way for a more sustainable and inclusive future. By addressing the root causes and providing viable alternatives, the government can empower its citizens and create a conducive environment for growth and prosperity.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Indian Diaspora, GS 3- Indian Economy challenges

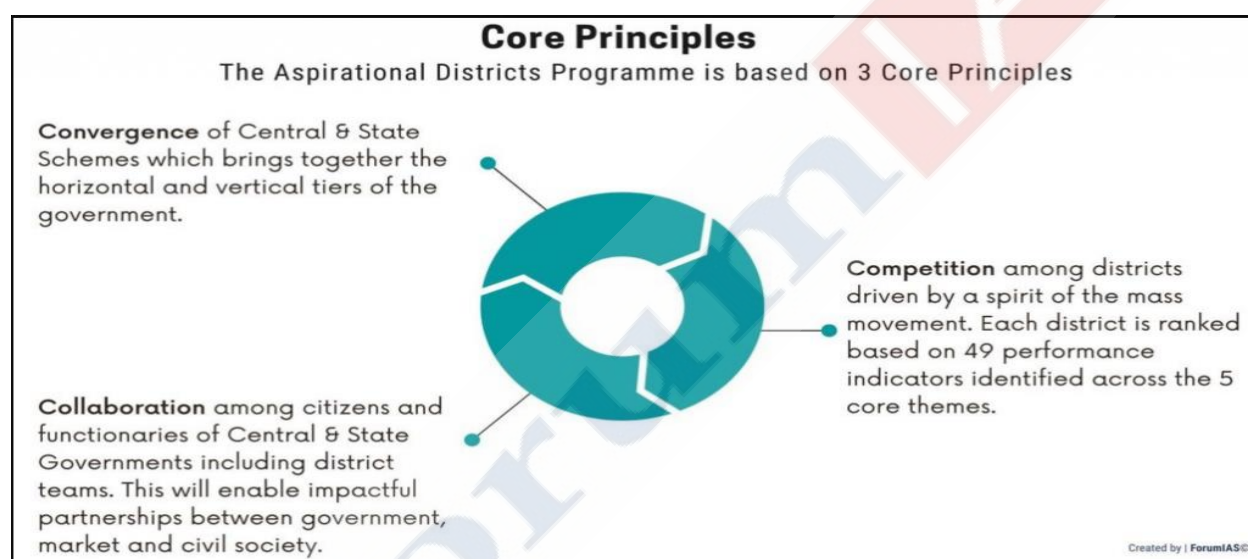
[Kurukshehra December 2023 Summary] Aspirational Districts Programme- Explained Pointwise

The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) was launched by the Prime Minister in January 2018. The programme seeks to improve socio-economic outcomes. With this initiative, the Government has tried to change the development narrative by referring to these districts as 'aspirational' instead of 'backward'. Since its launch, all 112 underdeveloped districts included in the programme have improved their performance.

What is the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP)?

It was launched in 2018 to **improve the socio-economic status of 112 aspirational districts** across **28 States**. These districts had witnessed the least progress along certain development parameters. The districts accounted for more than 20% of the country's population and covered over 8,600 gram panchayats.

The Programme is coordinated by **NITI Aayog** with support from **Central Ministries and the State Governments**.



Created by Forum IAS

5 Core themes of ADP- The 5 core themes include:

- (1) Health & Nutrition (30% weightage)
- (2) Education (30% weightage)
- (3) Agriculture & Water Resources (20% weightage)
- (4) Financial Inclusion & Skill Development (10%)
- (5) Basic Infrastructure (10%)

The delta ranking of the Aspirational Districts combines the innovative use of data with pragmatic administration. The programme ranks districts based on **the improvement achieved month-on-month** through the Champions of Change dashboard (An online Dashboard).

What is the institutional framework and core strategy of the Aspirational Districts Programme?

Framework

NITI Aayog anchors the program at Central level, while individual Ministries have been responsibility to drive progress in districts. The States are the main drivers of the programme. For each district, a **central Prabhari officer has been nominated**. He/she should possess a rank of joint secretary/additional secretary.

Core Strategy

The ADP is based on the following strategy-

- (1) Work on the strength of each district
- (2) Make development as a mass movement in these districts
- (3) Identify low hanging fruits and the strength of each district which can act as a catalyst for development
- (4) Measure progress and rank districts to spur a sense of competition
- (5) Districts shall aspire from becoming State's best to Nation's best

What is the significance of the Aspirational Districts Programme?

1. **Greater autonomy-** States and districts have a greater say in their own development. Local challenges differ significantly across the country. Thus, State and Local Governments are best-positioned to recognize their development challenges, and design customized policy interventions.
2. **Better outcomes by improved governance-** The programme has focused on improving governance, making use of existing resources more smartly and achieving better outcomes for the same amount of money.
3. **Replication of innovative service delivery approaches-** The smart classroom initiative being implemented in Banka, Bihar, to improve student learning outcomes, is being replicated in the aspirational districts across Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Jharkhand.
4. **Improved Collaboration-** The aspirational district programme has increased the government collaboration with the private sector, philanthropic organizations and technical partners.
5. **Competition among the districts-** It has spurred competition among districts by allowing them to regularly assess their position vis-à-vis other aspirational districts, as well as the best performing districts in the country.

Read More- [Aspirational District programme](#)

What are the achievements of the Aspirational Districts Programme?

The success achieved by the ADP has been globally recognized. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has appreciated the programme's 3Cs principle and recommended its replication in other parts of the developing world.

1. **Health and Nutrition-** Model Anganwadi centres have been set up across districts to benefit women and children. The number of institutional deliveries has increased, along with a dip registered in the rate of severe acute malnutrition in infants. Poshan App has been developed for real-time health data analytics in Ranchi.
2. **Education outcomes-** Innovation and digitisation have been the cornerstone of transformation in the education sector. The 'Hamara Vidyalaya' model adopted in Namsai, a remote district in Arunachal Pradesh has shown substantial improvement in learning outcomes and overall teaching practices.
3. **Agriculture and water resources-** District administrations have laid emphasis on improving irrigation facilities, yield and farmer education. Several innovative paths have been adopted to create market linkages for products indigenous to the aspirational districts. For ex- the farmers of Chandauli, U.P were encouraged to grow fertiliser-free organic black rice.
4. **Basic Infrastructure Development-** This pillar witnessed significant advancement especially in LWE affected districts. This ensured better connectivity and seamless movement from rural to urban regions. For ex- Bijapur in Chhattisgarh and Malkangiri in Odisha have greatly improved the network of roadways and ramped up the infrastructure projects in their jurisdiction.

5. **Financial inclusion and skill development-** Micro-ATMs have been launched in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district to provide financial assistance to women self-help group members. They are provided with commission-based income on every transaction.

What are the issues associated with the implementation of Aspirational District Programme?

1. **Inadequate Coverage:** Although the program is highly inclusive in nature, it fails to capture crucial variables like **environment and gender**.
2. **Imbalance in implementation:** Most districts channelised their efforts focused on health and nutrition, education, and agriculture and water resources. They paid less emphasis on the sectors of **Skill Development and Financial Inclusion**.
3. **Budgetary Constraints:** ADP is affected by the issue pertaining to insufficient budgetary resources. This sustains the lack of human resources and dearth of technical capacities at the district and block level.
4. **Issues in Coordination:** NITI Aayog plays a mentoring role in 27 districts in eight states. 12 Central Government Ministries have similarly adopted the remaining districts. Implementation involving multiple ministries leads to a lack of coordination.
5. **Shortcomings of Delta Ranking:** It is largely focused on **assessing quantity (that is, coverage of access) rather than quality**. For ex- Timely delivery of textbooks in schools is part of the ranking index, however very less weightage is given to the quality of education rendered in these districts.

What steps need to be taken going ahead?

1. **Formulate strategies for saturation of indicators-** Special focus is required in sectors like health, nutrition and education to recover lost ground due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. **Strengthen governance mechanisms-** Analysis has shown that districts perform better when the tenure of key officials like the District Magistrate, Chief Medical Officer, District Agriculture Officers etc. are stable. It is crucial that vacancies for these **key positions are regularly filled and stability is provided** by the state authorities.
3. **Extension of ADP template-** Extension of the ADP template to under-developed blocks and districts which are lagging behind in social indicators.
4. **Addition of sectors-** The first UNDP appraisal of the Aspirational Districts Programme has recommended a **realignment of sectors** under the program by addition of topics such as **environment and gender**.

Conclusion

The success of the Aspirational Districts Programme has been testified by national as well as international agencies. It is a flagship initiative for improving the lives of citizens residing in most backward regions of the country. The need of the hour demands overcoming its challenges and realizing the vision of '**SABKA SAATH, SABKA VIKAS**' for ensuring inclusive development.

Read More- [NITI Aayog](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS II, Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation, Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; GS III, Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.