

Forum IAS

7 PM COMPILATION

1st and 2nd Week May, 2024

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
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INDEX

Redistribution of wealth- Explained Pointwise.....	2
[Kuruksheetra April 2024 Summary] Rural Tourism- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise	4
India's Spice Exports – Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise.....	6
Vaccine Regulations In India- Explained Pointwise	9
India's Online Gaming Sector- Explained Pointwise.....	11
Child labour in India- Explained Pointwise	14
India Nepal Border Issues- Explained Pointwise	19
Coral Bleaching- Explained Pointwise.....	22
Forest Fire in India- Reasons and Solutions	25
Affordable Housing In India- Explained Pointwise.....	28
Chabahar Port Agreement – Explained Pointwise	30
NHRC status deferral by GANHRI- Explained Pointwise	33

Redistribution of wealth- Explained Pointwise

The **debate surrounding the redistribution of wealth** has gained prominence during the ongoing election campaign, with the ruling government and the Opposition engaged in heated exchange. Furthermore, the **Supreme Court (SC)** has also **constituted a nine-judge Bench to interpret the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)** with respect to ownership and control of material resources.

What are the Constitutional Provisions which provide for the Redistribution of Wealth? How has the redistribution of Wealth been applied historically?

Constitutional Provisions for redistribution of Wealth

Preamble	The Preamble to the Constitution aims to secure to all citizens social and economic justice, liberty and equality .
Fundamental Rights	The fundamental rights listed in Part III of the constitution guarantees liberty and equality for the citizens.
Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)	Article 39(b) and (c) of DPSP contain principles that are aimed at securing economic justice . They provide that ownership and control of material resources of the society should be distributed to serve the common good . The operation of the economic system should not result in concentration of wealth to the common detriment.

Policies and Measures taken for Redistribution of Wealth after Independence

a. Curtailment of the Right to Property through various amendments-

Right to Property was originally envisaged as a **fundamental Right** under **Art 19(1)(f) of the constitution**. It further provided that under **Article 31** the state shall pay compensation in case of acquisition of private property.

Since the Government wanted flexibility in acquiring land for land reforms and public welfare, it curtailed the scope of right to property through various amendments.

Article	Amendment and Year	Brief Explanation about the Amendment
31 A	1st Amendment 1951	Provided that laws made for acquisition of states etc. shall not be void on the ground that it violated fundamental rights, including right to property.
31 B	1st Amendment 1951	Made laws placed under the ninth schedule were to be immune from judicial review on the grounds of violation of fundamental rights. In the Coelho Case (2007), the SC held that laws placed in the ninth Schedule after April 1973,
31 C	25th Amendment 1971	Provided primacy to the DPSP under Articles 39 (b) and (c). Laws made to fulfil these principles shall not be void on the ground that it violated fundamental rights, including the right to property.

In the **Kesavananda Bharati case (1973)**, the Supreme Court **upheld the validity of Article 31C** but made it subject to judicial review.

In the **Minerva Mills case (1980)**, the Supreme Court ruled that the **Constitution exists on a harmonious balance** between **fundamental rights and DPSP**.

b. 44th Amendment Act which abolished Right to Property as a Fundamental Right

The 44th amendment act 1978, **omitted right to property as a fundamental right** and made it a **constitutional right under Article 300A**. This was done to avoid excessive litigation directly in the Supreme Court by the propertied class.

c. 'Socialistic Model of Economy'- Policies like **Nationalisation of banking and insurance, extremely high rates of direct taxes (Even up to 97%), Estate duty** on inheritance, tax on wealth and **The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 (MRTP Act)** that restricted private trade were adopted. These were aimed at reduction of inequality and redistribution of wealth among the poorer sections.

However, these **measures stifled growth** and also **resulted in the concealment of income/wealth**. Taxes like estate duty and wealth tax generated revenue that was much less than the cost incurred in administering them.

What has been the Government economic policy in the post-liberalisation era for wealth redistribution?

Indian economy adopted the modern liberal welfare economist model, with the Govt opening up the economy to private players, raising resources through taxes and redistributing them using a welfarist approach.

a. The Indian economy has **moved from the closed economy model** towards **liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation** in the 1990s.

b. The **new industrial policy was adopted in 1991** to empower market forces, improve efficiency and rectify deficiencies in the country's industrial structure.

c. The **MRTP Act was repealed** and **replaced with the Competition Act, 2002** and income tax rates were reduced considerably.

d. **Estate duty was abolished in 1985** and wealth tax in 2016.

The market driven economy **has resulted in additional resources** for the government that has helped in **bringing people out of abject poverty**. For ex- India has registered a **significant decline in multidimensional poverty in India** from 29.17% in 2013-14 to 11.28% in 2022-23.

However, these policies have not been able to address the growing problem of inequality in India. There has been concentration of Wealth in the hands of few

What is the need for redistribution of Wealth in India?

1. Rising wealth and income inequality in India- In the post-liberalisation period of the Indian economy, the wealth and income inequality has been rising in India. According to a report by the World Inequality Lab, **the top 10% of the country's population** have a **share of 65% and 57% of the wealth and income respectively** as of 2022-23. The **bottom 50%** have a meagre share of **6.5% and 15% of the wealth and income**, respectively.

2. Lack of Inclusive Growth- The Gini wealth coefficient in India has gone up from **81.3% in 2013 to 85.4% in 2017 (100% represents maximal inequality)**. The growth in India has not been inclusive.

3. Creation of meritocratic society- It will help in **creation of a meritocratic society** by **chipping away the advantages the children of the wealthiest families** enjoy by accident of birth. The redistribution of initial endowments can help in the establishment of optimal social state.

4. Reduction of Intra generational inequalities- The inheritance tax **reduces Intra- Generational Inequality** and **promotes Inter-Generational Equity** by preventing the concentration of income and wealth in the hands of a few.

What are the Challenges to redistribution of Wealth in India?

- 1. Political Resistance-** Redistributive policies face resistance from powerful interest groups and vested interests, including wealthy individuals and corporations. **For Ex- Opposition** by the **dominant landholding classes** to the **Land reform policy** in India.
- 2. Large Informal Economy-** Redistribution of wealth fail to reach informal economy, which are characterized by **low wages**, **lack of job security**, and **limited access to social protection**. This makes it challenging to effectively address the income inequality.
- 3. Deep-rooted Social Inequalities-** There are **deep-rooted** caste, gender, religious, and ethnic inequalities in India. These social inequalities **perpetuate economic disparities** and **hinder the effectiveness of redistributive policies**, as marginalized groups face barriers in accessing resources and opportunities.
- 4. Capacity Constraints-** India's institutional capacity to implement redistributive policies effectively is limited by bureaucratic inefficiencies, inadequate infrastructure, and resource constraints. **For ex- Corruption and leakages in the welfare schemes.**

What Should be the Way Forward?

- 1. Introduction of Inheritance tax with higher threshold-** A inheritance tax with higher threshold needs to be introduced for redistribution of wealth in India. **For ex- A moderate inheritance tax of 10-15%** (like other Asian countries such as the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand) on **India's 101 billionaires who are more than 65 years old** and collectively own ₹10.54 trillion can create a financial base of wealth redistribution.
- 2. Strengthening of institutional capacity and governance-** The governance mechanisms must be strengthened, to ensure the efficient delivery of welfare services and benefits. **For ex- Plugging the leakages in the welfare schemes.**
- 3. Socio-Political consensus-** Socio-Political consensus must be created on **progressive taxation and welfare programs** to address income inequality and promote equitable wealth distribution.
- 4. Attenuation of Govt Policies-** The Govt policies must be **reframed in line with the current economic model so that Innovation and growth is not curtailed**, but the benefits of growth should reach all sections, especially the marginalized sections. **For ex- Resource based Development Policies.**

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Indian Economy, Inclusive Growth

[Kurukshehra April 2024 Summary] Rural Tourism- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

Rural tourism in India has gained momentum in recent years as travellers seek authentic rural experiences away from the hustle and bustle of urban life. Recently, **Central Nodal Agency- Rural Tourism and Rural Homestays (CNA - RT and RH)** under the Ministry of Tourism has identified six niche experiences for tourism in rural areas. These six niche experiences include **agritourism**, **art and culture**, **ecotourism**, **wildlife**, **tribal tourism** and **homestays**.

What is Rural Tourism? What are the Different Forms of Rural Tourism in India?

Rural Tourism- Rural tourism in India is a **form of tourism** that **focuses on exploring and experiencing the rural lifestyle and culture**. Its activities focus on rural areas with **low population density, landscape and land use dominated by agriculture, forestry, traditional and social structure, rural lifestyle, heritage, and nature**.

Rural tourism was first prioritized through the eleventh five-year plan (2007-2012) by providing infrastructural development in rural areas.

Different Form of Tourism

Tribal Tourism	This form of tourism focuses on showcasing tribal customs and culture . For ex- Tribal Tourism in Majuli Island which is dominated by tribals where the Sattriya Culture is centre of attraction for tourists.
Agricultural Tourism	The agricultural system in the lush green nature attracts tourists towards these places. For ex- Farm of Happiness in Ratnagiri District , Maharashtra, where visitors are encouraged to be actively involved in the farming process.
Eco Tourism	This form of tourism attracts tourists based on the unique ecology of the region. For ex- Eco tourism in Madla , Madhya Pradesh which has all three natural geographic characteristics within one kilometre (Ken river- the cleanest in Asia, Panna National Park and Khajuraho- UNESCO site)
Art and Culture Tourism	The unique art and culture of these rural areas becomes a centre of attraction for the tourists to experience it in its true form. For ex- Arjakh print artwork in Arjakhpur, Gujarat draws many tourists.

What is the significance of Development of Rural Tourism?

- 1. Economic Development in Rural India-** It is instrumental in the economic development of rural India. It is also a valuable foreign exchange earnings, thereby bolstering our forex reserves. **For ex-** **There was an inflow of \$21.4 bn due to tourism in 2022.**
- 2. Revitalisation of local art and crafts-** It helps in revitalization of local art and crafts. Thereby, it prevents viable traditional occupations from being displaced from their roots. **For ex-** **Sikki Grass craft workers of Bihar.**
- 3. Employment Generation-** It also results in generation of local employment and creation of new business opportunities for people in rural areas. **For ex-** **Hospitality and transportation related business.**
- 4. Promotes the Vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'**- Rural tourism helps in the revitalization of local art and crafts which is aligned with the vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and the mantra of 'Vocal for Local'.

What are the Challenges in the Development of rural tourism in India?

- 1. Lack of Infrastructure-** Rural areas often **lack basic amenities** such as **good roads, electricity, and healthcare facilities**, which deters tourists from visiting. Further, the Inadequate infrastructure makes it difficult for local communities to provide quality services to visitors.
- 2. Threat to Ecologically fragile regions-** Overcrowding, pollution, and destruction of natural habitats can harm the local ecology and culture of the rural areas. **For ex-** **Ecological vulnerability of Himalayan states like Himachal and Uttarakhand has increased** due to overcrowding of tourists.
- 3. Safety Concerns-** Rural areas are generally perceived as unsafe by tourists due to a lack of proper security arrangements. **For ex-** **Recent rape attempt at a tourist in Jharkhand.**
- 4. Limited Awareness-** Lack of awareness about rural tourism among tourists and local communities often hinders its growth. **For ex-** **Limited awareness in regions of north-east about the tourism potential.**

Read More- [Rural Tourism development potential](#)

What Steps have been taken by the Government ?

Swadesh Darshan Scheme	It was launched by the Ministry of Tourism in 2014-15 . It aims to develop theme-based tourist circuits on the principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner.
PRASHAD Scheme	The National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) was launched by the Ministry of Tourism in the year 2014-15. It is a Central Sector Scheme launched with the objective of integrated development of identified pilgrimage and heritage destinations .
Adopt a Heritage Scheme	It aims to ensure quality & inclusive provision of amenities and facilities across heritage, natural, & tourist sites through active participation of private and public sector organizations.
Best Tourism Village Competition Portal	It was launched recently to select the best tourism village from across the country, and also to promote rural tourism in the country.

What Should be the Way Forward?

- 1. Innovative approaches to boost and promote different tourism segments-** Government must adopt innovative approaches to boost and promote different tourism segments such as **niche tourism, wellness tourism, adventure tourism, and spiritual tourism**.
- 2. Learning from Successful models of rural tourism-** Villages must learn from successful models of rural tourism to achieve maximum output with minimum inputs. **For ex-Strategies of Pochampally Village in Telangana State** can be adopted. It was selected as one of the best Tourism Villages by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 2021.
- 3. Focus on Infrastructural Development-** Modern buses and stations at reliable frequency, taxi, **shared mobility, App-based integration of guides**, parking, charging and refueling facilities must be developed for rejuvenating rural tourism.
- 4. Addressing security concerns-** The security concerns prevailing in the hinterland must be addressed to attract more tourists to those areas.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3 Indian Economy

India's Spice Exports – Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

According to the Economic think tank **Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) report**, the recent ongoing controversy regarding **MDH and Everest spice companies** could **threaten over half of India's spice exports**. The report has further added that in order to preserve the reputation of India's spice exports, India needs to address the quality issue of spices on an urgent basis.

What are spices? What is the status of India's Spice Exports?

Spices- Spices are dried parts of plants which include **seeds, roots, bark, and fruits**. These are valued for their flavours, aromas, preservative qualities and their ability to mask undesirable odours.

Spice Sector in India- India is the **world's largest producer, consumer and exporter of spices**. A total of **52 spices are under the purview of the Spices Board**. Spices Board (Ministry of Commerce and Industry) is the flagship organization for the development and worldwide promotion of Indian spices. It was established by the Spices Board Act, 1986.

India's Spice Export Data 2023-24

1. The export of spices **contributes 41% of the total export earnings** from all **horticulture crops** in the country.
2. It ranks **fourth in terms of exports among agricultural commodities**– behind only the marine products, non basmati rice and basmati rice.

Total Spice Export Data	Total Value of exports- USD 4.25 billion Total Value of India's Spices- India's Share in Global Spice Exports- 12% (Total Spice trade of the world- USD 35 billion. China is the top exporter, with exports of USD 8 billion in 2023).
Major Spices exported from India	1. Chilli powder- USD 1.3 billion 2. Spice oils and oleoresins- USD 1 billion 3. Cumin- USD 550 million 4. Turmeric- USD 220 million 5. Cardamom- USD 130 million
Major Spices Imported By India	1. Spice oils and oleoresins- USD 354 million 2. Cinnamon and cassia- USD 270 million 3. Coriander and cumin- USD 210 million 4. Nutmeg- USD 118 million 5. Asafoetida- USD 110 million
Markets of Indian Exports	1. China- USD 928 million 2. US- USD 574 million 3. Bangladesh- USD 339 million 4. UAE- USD 256 million 5. Thailand- USD 193 million 6. Malaysia- USD 147 million 7. Indonesia- USD 137 million 8. UK- USD 122 million 9. Australia- USD 63 million 10. Singapore- USD 50 million 11. Hong Kong- USD 5.5 million

What has been the recent issues with India's spices export?

1. **Detection of carcinogenic chemicals-** Popular spices brands like MDH and Everest have been banned for selling their products in Hong Kong and Singapore, after alleged **detection of the carcinogenic chemical ethylene oxide** in their products.
2. **Detection of Salmonella Contamination-** There has been detection of salmonella contamination in Indian Spices. This contamination is a frequent bacterial cause of foodborne illness.
3. **Contamination of equipments and utensils-** FDA inspection of MDH's manufacturing plant has found inadequate sanitary facilities, as well as **contamination of equipment and utensils**.

4. Rejection over quality issues- There has been constant rejection of India's spices over quality issues. **For ex- EU has constantly rejected Indian spices in the past over their failure to address the quality requirements.**

5. Trade Wars- The trade wars in spices aim to bring down the global prices of spices. India's export earnings from spices had doubled in the past four to five years.

6. Inadequate Infrastructure and Logistics- Inadequate infrastructure and logistics **pose challenges in transporting spices** from production centres to ports for export.

What is the Significance of Spice exports from India?

1. Economic Contribution- Spice exports contribute substantially to India's foreign exchange earnings, which helps in improving the country's balance of trade and strengthening its economy. **For ex- India earned 4.25 bn USD through spice exports.**

2. Employment Generation- The spice industry, **being a labor-intensive sector**, provides employment opportunities in rural areas. This contributes to poverty alleviation and rural development. **For ex- In Kerala, it is a major source of employment.**

3. Diversification of Agriculture- Spice cultivation offers farmers an alternative source of income and helps diversify agricultural production. **For ex- Spices contribute to 41% of India's horticultural export earnings.**

4. Cultural Heritage Promotion- Spices are an integral part of India's rich cultural heritage and culinary traditions. The export of spices helps **promote Indian culture globally** and **enhances the country's soft power.**

Read More- [Salmonella contamination in spices](#)

What steps have been taken by the Government for promotion of export of Spices?

Export Promotion Schemes	The government has introduced export promotion schemes such as the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) and the Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) Scheme to incentivize spice exporters.
Quality Certification and Assurance	Certification schemes such as the Spice House Certification Scheme (SHCS) ensure adherence to quality standards and promote the export of safe and high-quality spices.
Research and Development	The government supports research and development efforts in spice cultivation, processing, and value addition technologies through institutions like the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the Spices Board .
Promotion Campaigns	Branding initiatives like ' Brand India ' and ' Flavourit – Indian Spices ' position Indian spices as premium products with unique flavours and health benefits.

What should be the way Forward?

1. Swift investigation- Swift investigations and the publication of findings are essential to re-establish global trust in Indian spices. The **Erring firms** found indulged in the contamination **should face immediate repercussions.**

2. Increase in sampling size of spices for inspection- **Spices Board** and the **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** must increase its sample size of spices units for inspection.

3. Market Diversification- Indian spice exports must be **diversified into emerging markets** to reduce dependence on traditional markets like the US, EU, and Middle East.

4. Improvement of Infrastructure- Improvements in storage facilities, transportation networks, and port infrastructure are needed to reduce transit times and maintain freshness of Indian spices.

Read More- [The economic Times](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Indian Economy and Indian agriculture

Vaccine Regulations In India- Explained Pointwise



Recently, the Global pharmaceutical manufacturer, **AstraZeneca** has admitted that its Covid-19 vaccine, can cause a **rare side effect of blood clotting** and **low platelet count** after immunisation. **175 crore doses of the same vaccine have been administered in India** under the brand name of Covishield, which has been manufactured by the Pune-based Serum Institute. This development has put the spotlight on **Vaccine regulations in India**.

What is the Vaccine Regulation in India?

In India, the regulations for the approval of new drugs, which include vaccines, are governed by the **New Drugs and Clinical Trial Rules** that were notified in March 2019.

Vaccine Approval Regulation In India

1. **Identification** and **development** of an **appropriate vaccine strain** that is potentially safe and immunogenic.
2. **Full characterisation** of the **vaccine strain** by **in-vitro experiments**.
3. **Pre-clinical studies** in **small animals** such as mice, rabbits, guinea pigs to determine safety and dose regime.
4. **Preclinical studies** in **large animals** to determine safety, protective efficacy and potential dose and

formulation.

5. **Phase-I** human clinical trials on **less than 100 individuals** to establish the **safety of the vaccine**.
 6. **Phase-II** human clinical trials on usually **less than 1,000 individuals** to determine the **immunogenicity or immune protection**.
 7. **Phase-III** human clinical trials in **several thousands** to determine vaccine efficacy.
- The regulatory approval is accorded after the successful completion of phase III studies.**
8. **Phase-IV** human clinical trials refer to post marketing surveillance studies. This data is analysed for long-term decision-making.

A key aspect of granting approval to a vaccine or a drug in India is the requirement of clinical trials conducted within the country- from phase-I to phase-III.

Regulatory Bodies Involved in Vaccine Regulations in India- The manufacture of vaccines in India is strictly controlled by a hierarchy of regulatory bodies.

1. Guidelines provided by the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** set the rules of conduct for clinical trials. These guidelines **address ethical issues that arise during Phases I-IV of every vaccine study**.
2. The licences and permissions required for the manufacture of any vaccine are obtained under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940**. Clinical study reports after the completion of each phase of the trial (Phase I, Phase II, Phase III, Phase IV) are furnished to the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).
3. Upon successful completion of all three phases of the trials (Phase I, II, III), a market authorization application is filed by the manufacturer, as per **Rule 122B of Drugs and Cosmetics Rules 1945 (Rules)**.

Relaxation provided during Pandemic

Emergency use authorizations (EUA) were provided to the vaccines for early remedy of the growing malaise of COVID-19. **Special provisions for accelerated approval** for a vaccine were employed, for the vaccines which showed 'Remarkable efficacy' during Phase-II trails.

What are the challenges associated with the Vaccine regulatory approvals in India?

1. **Challenges with Clinical Trials-** The clinical trials in India have been plagued by the problems of Mistrust, arbitrary decree, opacity and lax regulations. **For ex- Reports of animal cruelty in clinical trials.**
2. **Delays in approval-** In India, the procedure for receiving regulatory approval have been found to be time-consuming. The regulatory and bureaucratic **delays have been a sore point in urgent situations like epidemics or emergencies.**
3. **Primarily focussed on foreign approval-** India's regulatory framework has been primarily focused on analyzing formulations that have **received foreign regulatory approval** and determining their appropriateness for India. **For ex- 'Emergency use authorizations (EUA)'** uses the foreign regulatory approval.
4. **Inadequate regulation-** Poor regulation of vaccine floods the market with poor-quality and fake medications. The lack of efficiency, safety, and potency standards endangers the life of patients.
5. **Inadequate monitoring-** The **inadequate monitoring of adverse drug reactions** and lack of proper post-market surveillance **hampers the proper detection** and reduction of possible dangers from the adverse reactions of vaccines. **For ex- The controversy around Covishield Vaccine.**

What should India do to streamline its vaccine regulation?

- 1. Strengthening of regulatory oversight-** We must augment the resources and capacity building of regulatory agencies like **CDSCO** and the **Drug Controller General of India** like **FDA in the United States** or the **EMA in the European Union**. This will help in proper regulatory scrutiny.
- 2. New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules during pandemic-** There should be clear guidelines on the process to be followed for vaccine approval during exigencies and epidemics.
- 3. Single regulatory agency-** The establishment of a single regulatory body will enhance oversight and quicken the approval process for medications.
- 4. Post-Market Surveillance-** Systems for post-market surveillance like VAERS in the United States, will enable us to detect cases of rare adverse events and ensure timely responses to emerging safety concerns.
- 5. Pharmacovigilance-** The current gaps in the regulatory landscape can be filled by creating effective pharmacovigilance programs and encouraging transparency and accountability.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2 – Issues related to Health

India's Online Gaming Sector- Explained Pointwise

India's Online Gaming Sector has **received renewed attention**, with the **Prime Minister's recent engagement** with **seven of the top gamers** in the country. The Prime Minister has the vision of **establishing India as a prominent global gaming hub**. The recent interaction also focussed on the nuanced distinction between **skill gaming and gambling (game of chance)**. This holistic discussion could pave the way for a more **conductive and forward-looking regulatory environment** for India's Online Gaming Sector.

What Online Gaming? What is the extent of India's Online Gaming Sector?

Online Gaming- It refers to mobile games or video games that are played over the internet through various devices. It involves collaborative gameplay in which player connections are facilitated through internet.

Types of Online Games- There are several types of Online Games played in India.

Types of Online Games which are legal in India

- a. E-sports-** It includes organised electronic sports which include professional players. **For ex-** **BGMI, PUBG, Call of Duty, Tekken 7, DOTA 2, and FIFA.**
- b. Fantasy Sports-** This sports involves choosing real life sports players and win points based on players' performance. **For ex-** **Dream 11 and My Fantasy 11.**
- c. Skill Based-** Skill based online games are based on mental skill set like **Online Chess Games.**

Types of Online Games which are illegal in India

- a. Games of chance-** These games are based on luck, such as **roulette, blackjack, and craps.**
- b. Sports betting-** This is the act of betting on the outcome of a sporting event.

Extent of India's Online Gaming Industry

Revenue of the Online Gaming Industry	India is one of the largest gaming markets in the world. The Indian gaming industry's revenue stands at 3.1 billion dollars in the financial year 2023 .
Growth of India's Online Gaming Industry	The industry in India has expanded at 28% CAGR between FY20 and FY23 .
Number of Online Gamers	According to a survey by the U.S.-based Limelight Networks conducted in 2019, India had the second-largest number of gamers after South Korea.
Projected size of Online Gaming Sector	The gaming Sector in India is projected to grow to ₹33,243 crore by FY28 , with a sustained 15% CAGR.

What is the significance of India's Online Gaming Sector?

- 1. Enormous Growth Potential-** The size of the global gaming industry has crossed **\$300 billion in 2021**, which is more than the combined market size of the movie and music industry. With the Indian Online gaming revenue just **constituting 1.1% of the global Online gaming revenue**, there is enormous growth potential for its growth and development.
- 2. Goal of \$1 trillion digital economy-** The Indian online gaming industry is an important part of '**India Techade**' and provides a **multi-billion opportunity for Indian start-ups**. These tech startups will contribute to the goal of \$1 trillion digital economy.
- 3. Connect with Local Culture-** The increasing number of **games based on Indian mythology** provides an opportunity for the promotion of Indian Culture and engagement of Indian youth with their Cultural and Mythological traditions.
- 4. Gaming as a career-** The evolution of gaming as a career opportunity will benefit India by providing a **growing pool of talented individuals** who will drive innovation and push boundaries in the gaming landscape.

What are the Government initiatives for the regulation of India's Online gaming sector?

Regulations for Online Gaming in India

Legal Jurisdiction- **Entry No. 34 of List II** (State List), gives the **state legislators the exclusive power to make laws** relating to **Gaming, Betting and Gambling**.

Most Indian states regulate gaming on the basis of a distinction in law between 'games of skill' and 'games of chance'. **For ex- Meghalaya and Nagaland Legislations**

Other Acts regulating Gaming in India

Public Gambling Act, 1867	The Public Gambling Act, 1867 is the central law governing gambling in all its forms. However, it is an old and ill-equipped law which is incapable to handle the challenges of digital casinos, online gambling and gaming.
The Lotteries Regulation Act, 1998	The lottery is considered legal in India, provided that the lottery is organised by the state government and the place of Draw is in that particular state .
Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999	Remittance of the income generated from lottery winning, and racing/riding is prohibited under FEMA Act,1999.

SC Judgement on Game of Skill Vs Game of Chance

The Supreme Court of India in the **State of Andhra Pradesh v. K. Satyanarayana & Ors.** has ruled that games of skill are not gambling. However, the definition of a game of skill is still being debated.

The **new Gaming Amendments to the Information Technology Rules, 2021**, clarify that online games that are purely games of skill are not prohibited. However, it is still illegal to offer online games of chance for real money.

Recent Initiatives taken for regulation of Online Gaming in India

The below mentioned are the recent initiatives have been taken for the regulation of India's online gaming sector.

- a. **Establishment of the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comic and Extended Reality taskforce** by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for effective regulation of online gaming sector.
- b. The introduction of a series of regulations through the **IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021** which provide for self-regulation of online gaming.
- c. Clarification around the ambiguity concerning **tax deduction at source on winnings**.

What are the Challenges with India's Online Gaming Sector which necessitate regulation?

- 1. Gaming addiction-** Gaming addiction has been **destroying lives and devastating families**. The Compulsive gaming by children is affecting their performance in schools and impacting their social lives & relationships with family members.
- 2. Negative Impact on Physical and Mental Health** – The rise in online gaming has **negatively impacted physical health** by causing health challenges like **insomnia, near-sightedness, obesity**. Also, the rise of these online games has brought **mental illness issues**, and have even driven individuals to commit suicide. World Health Organization (WHO) categorised gaming disorder as a mental health condition in 2018. **For ex- Suicides due to Blue Whale Challenge Game.**
- 3. Offshore gambling leading to tax evasion-** Online Betting in India which is done through off-shore websites like **Betaway, Bet365 and DafaBet**, which are headquartered in tax havens like **Malta, Cyprus and Gibraltar**. **For ex- India loses approximately \$45 billion annually in potential taxation due to offshore gambling.**
- 4. National Security and Money Laundering-** According to Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance, the online gaming sector has been a source of security concern and money laundering. **For ex-** Gaming app like **'Dani Data'** created by Chinese and **'Mahadev'** app were used as instruments for money laundering.
- 5. Threat to Data privacy-** Inadvertent sharing of personal information have been leading to cases of **cheating, privacy violations, abuse, and bullying.**
- 6. Regulatory Ambiguity in distinction between Skill-Based Gaming and Gambling-** **Regulatory ambiguity** regarding the lack of clear definitions between skill-based gaming and gambling has sparked **ethical debates** and **diverse interpretations** about the nature of these gaming activities. **For ex- Online Ludo has created regulatory uncertainties.**
- 7. High GST rates on Online gaming-** The **highest GST rate of 28% on the total face value of bets**, regardless of skill based and luck based game, **raises concerns about the industry's sustainability in the long term** and its consequential impact on jobs being created in this sector.
- 8. Ineffective implementation of IT Rules 2021-** The **IT rules 2021** provide for the **establishment of self-regulating bodies by the gaming industry**. However, the delay in their constitution has led to ineffective regulatory vigilance.
- 9. Challenges with State Bans-** Despite some states attempt to ban online gaming, the enforcement of these bans has become difficult due to the **cross-border nature of Internet.**

What should be the Way Forward?

- 1. Creation of a Central Gaming Authority-** The authority can be made responsible for the gaming industry, **monitoring its operations, preventing societal issues**, suitably classifying games of skill or chance, overseeing consumer protection, and combatting illegality and crime. **For ex- UK's centralized gaming authority.**
- 2. Regulation of the online gaming hours for Children-** India should work towards regulating gaming hours for children as in the case of **China where children below 18 years are restricted to just three hours of online games per week.** Also, OTP- mechanism which needs parents approval must be made mandatory for minor children.
- 3. Strengthening of KYC purchase norms-** The KYC norms of the online games must be strengthened, and **no purchases should be allowed without the consent of parents.**
- 4. Self-regulation on part of the Gaming Industry-** The gaming industry must establish self-regulating bodies as part of the IT rules 2021. This will help in **enhancement of transparency in their operations** and **proper grievance redressal mechanism.**
- 5. Prohibition of Offshore betting apps-** The proposed **Digital India Act** can include offshore betting apps in the list of prohibited apps user harms to prevent harm to users.
- 6. User education and Awareness-** The government and Gaming companies should proactively educate users about potential risks of online gaming and **identification of the situations of cheating and abuse.**

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Govt Policies and interventions in various Sectors

Child labour in India- Explained Pointwise

An **Australian Parliamentary committee** in its recent report has raised **concerns over Child Labour in India.** According to the Parliamentary report, the mini trade deal (**The Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)**) signed between India and Australia, does not recognise international labour rights and disregards environmental standards. The report has also noted that **India has a well-documented presence of child and forced labour**, which is a form of modern slavery.

Child Labour is a **rampant problem in India**, despite a plethora of legislations to curb it. It is a **humanitarian crisis** which **tarnishes the international image of India** as well as **damages its trade prospects.** Hence, the malpractice needs to be curbed at the earliest.



Source- Unicef

What is Child Labour? What is the Extent of Child Labour in India?

Child Labour- According to The International Labour Organisation (ILO), child labour is a work that **deprives children of their childhood**, their **potential and dignity**, and that is **harmful to their physical and mental development**.

However, children or adolescents who participate in work **that does not affect their health and personal development** or **interferes with their schooling**, is not child labour. **For Ex-** Helping their parents at home, assisting family or earning pocket money outside school hours and on holidays.

Child Labour in India Statistics

Number of Child Labourers in India	According to the last available Census 2011 , there were 10.1 million child labourers in India. According to the International Labour Organisation , India has the highest number of child labourers in the 5-17 age range in South Asia.
NCRB Report 2022 on Child Labour	According to NCRB Report 2022 , in 2021 , around 982 cases were registered under the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 . The highest number of cases were registered in Telangana, followed by Assam.
Impact of COVID-19 on Child Labour	According to a study by Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL) , there has been a significant increase in Child labour in India. According to a new report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UNICEF , the number of children in child labour has increased to 160 million worldwide.
Biggest Employers of Child Labour In India	India's biggest child labour employers are- Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra

What are the Causes of Child Labour in India?

1. Poverty and Indebtedness- Poverty is the greatest cause of child labour in India. For impoverished households, income from a child's work is crucial for his or her own survival or for that of the household. **For ex- Bonded Labour due to Family Indebtedness.**

2. Adult unemployment and under-employment- High prevalence of adult unemployment and under-employment often **force children to work to support family**.

3. High prevalence of Illiteracy and ignorance of parents- Illiteracy and ignorance of the parents put children under the risk of inhuman exploitation.

4. Lack of access to quality education and skills training- **Deplorable quality of education and lack of coverage of 15-18 year age group in compulsory education**, has led to increase in dropout rates and forced children into child labour.

5. Cultural factors- Children often take up family's traditional work from an early age, contributing to enhancement of Child labour. **For ex- A Goldsmith's son taking to gold-smithery, or a carpenter's child taking up carpentry from an early age.**

6. Social factors- India's **differentiated social structure** also **contribute to child labour**. The majority of child labourers in India belong to the **marginalised social groups** like **SCs, STs and the Muslim religious minority**.

7. Epidemics and Disasters- Natural disasters, conflicts, and pandemics **increase the vulnerability of Children towards forced labour**, as they forced to work for survival and are often exploited by traffickers and perpetrators.

What is the impact of the Prevelance of Child Labour in India?

1. Impedes Children from gaining skills and education- Child labour **impedes children from gaining the skills and education** they need to have opportunities of decent work as an adult. This violates their right to life and liberty as provided by the constitution.

2. Health and Physical Risks- **Long working hours and hazardous working conditions** adversely affects a child's physical and mental health and impairs their intellectual, emotional and psychological development.

3. Negatively affects Human Capital Formation- Child labour diminishes children's ability to accumulate skills and knowledge, thereby **affecting their future productivity and income**.

4. Perpetuation of poverty- Child labour is both a cause and consequence of poverty. Household poverty forces children into the labour market to earn money. Thus, the children **miss out on an opportunity to gain an education**, further perpetuating household poverty across generations.

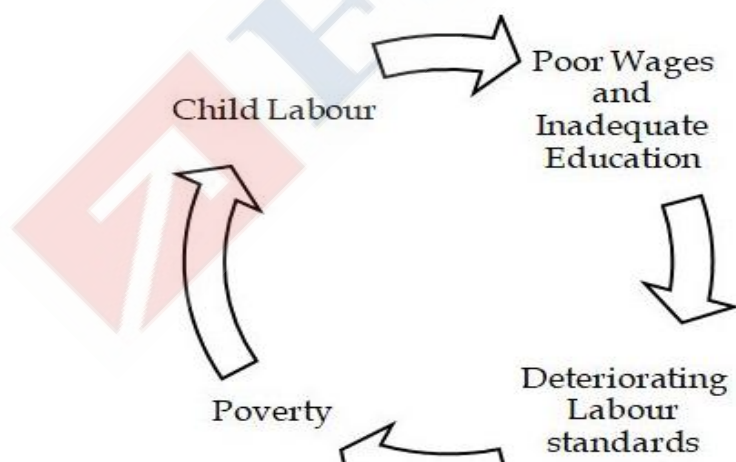


Figure 1. Created By Forum IAS

5. Obstacle to Socio-Economic Welfare of the country- Presence of a large number of child labourers has long term effect on the economy and it is a serious obstacle to socio-economic welfare of a country. **For ex- Cancellation of trade pacts on account of human right abuses such as Child Labour.**

Read More- [PENCIL Portal](#)

What are the International and National Provisions to curb the practice of Child Labour?

International Provisions

International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions	The ILO Conventions- Convention 138 (Minimum age convention) and Convention 182 (Worst forms of Child Labour Convention) aim to eliminate the malpractice of Child Labour. India has ratified both the Core Conventions of International Labour Organization (ILO).
Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959	The Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959 aims at elimination of the malpractice of Child Labour .
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989	It sets out different rights of children – civil, political, economic, cultural, social and health. Article 32 states that the government should protect children from work that is dangerous or might harm their health or their education.

National Policy Framework surrounding Child Labour

Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986	The Act was passed in 1986 , based on the recommendations of the Gurupadswamy Committee (1979). The act aims to prohibit the engagement of children in certain employments and to regulate the conditions of work of children .
Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016	The Amendment Act completely prohibits the employment of children below 14 years . The amendment also prohibits the employment of adolescents in the age group of 14 to 18 years in hazardous occupations .
National Policy on Child Labour (1987)	It contains the action plan for tackling the problem of Child Labour . It focuses more on rehabilitation of children working in hazardous occupations and processes, rather than on prevention.
The Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009)	The Act made it mandatory for the state to ensure that all children aged six to 14 years are in school and receive free education.
Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000 and Amendment of the Act in 2006	Section 23 (cruelty to Juvenile) and Section 26 (exploitation of juvenile employee) prohibit child labour by children in need of care and protection.

Schemes

National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme	The Government has initiated the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme to eliminate all forms of child labour through identification. It also aims to withdraw children from child labour and prepare them for mainstream education along with vocational training.
Pencil Portal	The platform has been launched by the Ministry of Labour and Employment and aims at engaging the Central Government, State Government, District, civil society and the public in eradicating child labour.

What are the challenges in combating Child labour in India?

1. Issues with Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016-

- a. The amendment act has drastically decreased the types of hazardous industries provided in the list. This allows employers in industries like **chemical mixing units, cotton farms, battery recycling units, and brick kilns** etc. to employ adolescent labour.
- b. The **amendment allows the child to be employed in "family or family enterprises"**. This promotes child labour in agrarian rural India, where poor families are trapped in intergenerational debt-bondage.

2. Definition of Child- One of the biggest challenges in eradicating child labour is the confusion around the definition of a child, in terms of age, in various laws dealing with child labour. **For ex- Conflicting age of Child provided in Juvenile Justice Act and Child Labour Act.**

3. Lack of proper identity documents- Child labourers often **lack school registration certificates and birth certificates**, which, creates an easy loophole in the law to exploit. Also, lack of reporting of children of migrant workers working as labourers and domestic help, further aggravates the problem of Child Labour.

4. Weak enforcement of law and poor governance- Weak enforcement of law, lack of adequate deterrence and corruption is a major hurdle in eradicating child labour.

5. Socio-Economic crisis- The economic contraction and lockdowns lead to **income reductions for enterprises and workers**, promoting child labour.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Uniformity in Indian Laws dealing with Child Labour- We must aim to bring uniformity in existing Indian laws dealing with child labour. The laws must expand the definition of a child. We must also **ensure free and compulsory education (RTE, Act, 2009) for children below 18 years.**

2. Police action in case of failure to register child labour- The 52nd report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour has suggested incorporating provisions for taking action against the police **for not registering FIRs in the CALPRA Act, similar to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.**

3. Social Protection Schemes- There should be concerted effort towards social protection programmes and cash transfers to **improve the economic situation of families** and to reduce the "need" to send children to work.

4. District-level Funds and National Level Child Tracking Mechanism- The 52nd report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour has **recommended establishing a district-level fund and National Level Child Tracking Mechanism** for immediate relief and rehabilitation for child laborers.

5. Raise Awareness- Government with the **help of NGOs like Bachpan Bachao Andolan, ChildFund, CARE India, Talaash Association, Child Rights and You** should take adequate measures to raise awareness among families and communities. Parental literacy can play an important role in ensuring the rights of children are upheld.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- Govt Policies and Intervention for Vulnerable Sections

India Nepal Border Issues- Explained Pointwise

The **recent decision of Nepal cabinet to put a map on its Rs 100 currency note** showing certain areas administered by India in Uttarakhand as part of its territory, has drawn strong reactions from India. **EAM S Jaishankar has strongly remarked** that such “**unilateral measures**” by Kathmandu would not change the reality on the ground. India and Nepal have long-standing border disputes which are yet to be resolved.

What is the Border Dispute Between India and Nepal?

The territorial border dispute between India and Nepal are as follows-

- a. A 372-sq-km area that includes **Kalapani, Limpiadhura, and Lipulekh** at the India-Nepal-China trijunction in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district.
- b. **Susta Region** in West Champaran district, Bihar.

a. Kalapani Region



Source- BBC

Controversy Regarding the Dispute

The Treaty of Sugauli signed by the Kingdom of Nepal and British India (after Anglo-Nepalese War) in 1816 located the Kali River as Nepal's western boundary with India. The Kali River in the Kalapani region demarcates the border between India and Nepal.

The **discrepancy in locating the source of the Kali river** has to boundary disputes between India and Nepal. Each country has produced its own maps supporting their own claims.

Nepal's stand

Nepal is of the view that the **river which flows to the west of Kalapani is the main River Kali**. They also believe that River Kali originates at either Limpiadhura or the nearby Lipulekh pass, which are both within the Nepalese territory.

India's stand

India believes that the **River Kali originates from a smaller rivulet named Pankhagad**. It lies on the southern portion of Kalapani. Hence, it is the true border, and the Kalapani territory lies in India.

b. Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura region

Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura (Limpiya pass) located on the **Nepal-Tibet border**. **Lipulekh** is the **shortest route to reach Taklakot**, a Tibetan township of China.

Nepal claims that the Indian army has encroached on both regions during the 1962 territorial offering of King Mahendra.

c. Susta Region (West Champaran)

Susta, is **another disputed area in the India-Nepal border**. It is a **145-sq-km area** that had **fallen on the Indian side** after the **River Gandak** changed course.

During the **1816 Treaty of Sugauli**, the **west side of the Gandak river** belongs to Nepal and the **Eastern part of the river belongs to India**. But due to frequent change of course by the Gandak river, the Susta region at present belongs to the Eastern part. This is not accepted by Nepal.

What steps have been taken for the resolution of India-Nepal Boundary Dispute?

a. In the 1980s, India and Nepal set up the **Joint Technical Level Boundary Working Group** to delineate their boundary. The group demarcated every border except **Kalapani** and **Susta area**.

b. **In 1988**, Nepal officially brought the **issue of Kalapani before India**. Prime Minister I K Gujral (April 1997-March 1998) promised to give up these areas if Nepal was able to produce evidence for its claim.

c. **In 2000**, at the prime ministerial level talk held between PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the visiting Nepal PM G P Koirala, **both the sides agreed to demarcate the outstanding areas (including Kalapani) by 2002**. However, the mechanism led by the two foreign secretaries did not make progress.

d. **In 2014**, at the meeting between **PM Narendra Modi** and **his Nepali Counterpart Sushil Prasad Koirala**, it was agreed to set up a boundary working group for speedy settlement of the border issue in Kalapani and Susta.

However, the issue has not been resolved between the two countries. Recently, a Constitutional Amendment Bill was passed by Nepal's parliament to legitimize the alteration to the country's map with the addition of Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura.

Why is the early resolution of the Border Dispute between India and Nepal necessary for both the parties?

Nepal's importance to India

a. **Strategic location**- Nepal shares a border of about **1850 km** with five Indian States – **Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal** and **Sikkim**. This makes it an **important buffer state for India's security interests**.

b. **Connectivity**- Nepal provides a crucial transit route for India to connect with other neighbouring countries and enhance regional connectivity. **For ex- The location of Lipulekh pass provides connectivity to Tibetan region**.

c. **Energy cooperation**- Nepal's hydropower potential can contribute to **India's renewable energy requirements**. This will **help India to fulfil its Panchamrit obligations**.

d. Regional stability- A stable and friendly Nepal is essential for India's overall regional stability and influence. It will also help to **counter the growing Chinese influence in the region.**

India's importance to Nepal

a. Economic dependence- **Nepal relies on India for trade and transportation of goods**, as well as access to sea routes.

b. Cultural and religious Ties- **India and Nepal share a deep cultural and religious heritage**, which strengthens their social bonds.

c. Assistance and support- During times of crisis, such as the **2015 earthquake and pandemic**, India has provided significant aid and support to Nepal.

d. Infrastructure development- India's involvement in infrastructure projects, such as hydropower, contributes to Nepal's economic growth and development.

e. Security cooperation- India plays a crucial role in **ensuring the security and stability of Nepal**, supporting its defence and border management.

Read More- [India-Nepal Relations- Explained Pointwise](#)

What are the Challenges in resolving border Disputes?

a. Cartographic Disagreements- India and Nepal have disputes over the historical maps issued by the British Surveyor General of India in **1819, 1821, 1827, 1856, 1921 and 1947.**

b. Frequently changing courses of rivers- Since the boundaries have been demarcated based on the drainage pattern of the rivers, the meandering of these rivers have resulted in boundary disputes. **For ex- Meandering of Gandak river causing the emergence of Susta dispute.**

c. Growing Chinese influence- There has been an **increase in the Chinese Influence in the domestic affairs of Nepal.** This has also resulted in the aggravation of the Border Disputes.

d. Anti India Feeling- The **134-day blockade of Nepal in September 2015** and the **Madhesi issue** has created significant distrust against India. This has led to the **prolongation of the border dispute between India and Nepal.** It has prompted Nepal to sign a **trade and transit agreement with China** in order to create a fallback source for the supply of essential goods.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Establishment of permanent mechanism of Boundary Dispute Resolution- A permanent mechanism of Boundary Dispute resolution must be established between India and Nepal for peaceful resolution of Disputes through Diplomatic Channels. **For ex- Nepal sorting out its boundary issues with China in the early 1960s.**

2. Addressing the geographical and ecological concerns- A **consultative approach needs to be evolved** where ecological concerns and the changing geographical patterns of the rivers are addressed.

3. Mutual addressal of Concerns- The Nepal government has to **shed its rigid stance of territorial nationalism** and the **Indian Government must shed its big brother attitude to arrive at mutual consensus** to resolve their boundary concerns.

The India-Nepal relationship is a unique relationship, built by friendship and cooperation with cultural and civilizational links. The border dispute is one of the important issues to solve to take ahead India and Nepal

relations to another level. But to be successful, forgetting the mistakes and claims of the past along with a fresh start is key to both the countries.

[Read More- The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- India and its neighbourhood Relations

Coral Bleaching- Explained Pointwise

Researchers at the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute have found that **marine heatwaves since October 2023** have **resulted in widespread bleaching of coral reefs in the Lakshadweep Sea**. Further, according to the **US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)**, the **fourth global mass coral bleaching event** has been **triggered by extraordinary ocean temperatures**. The mass coral bleaching could have serious consequences for ocean life and millions of people who rely on reefs for **food, jobs, and coastal defence**.



Source- NOAA

What are coral and coral reefs?

Corals- Corals are small (0.25-12 inches), soft-bodied marine invertebrates (not possessing a spine) which **belong to the group cnidaria**. These are **sessile animals** which permanently attach themselves to the ocean floor.

Each individual coral animal is known as a **polyp** and it lives in groups of hundreds to thousands of genetically identical polyps that form a 'colony'. They **use their tiny tentacle-like hands to catch food** from the water and sweep into their mouth.

Mutualistic relation between Corals and Algae- These coral polyps have **microscopic algae called zooxanthellae** living within their tissues. The corals and algae have a mutualistic relationship. The coral provides the zooxanthellae **with the compounds necessary for photosynthesis**. In return, the **zooxanthellae supply the coral with organic products** of photosynthesis, like **carbohydrates**, which are utilized by the coral polyps for **synthesis of their calcium carbonate** skeletons. In addition to providing corals with essential nutrients, **zooxanthellae** are responsible for the **unique and beautiful colours of corals**.

Types of Corals- There are two types of corals- Hard coral and soft coral.

a. Hard corals- These corals also called **hermatypic** or 'reef building' corals which extract **calcium carbonate from the seawater** to build **hard, white coral exoskeletons**.

b. Soft Corals- Soft corals borrow their appearance from plants, and attach themselves to such skeletons and older skeletons built by their ancestors. Soft corals add their own skeletons to the hard structure over the years and these growing multiplying structures gradually form coral reefs. They are the **largest living structures on the planet**.

Coral Reefs in India- Coral reefs in India are located in seven regions namely **Goa coast, Kerala coast, Palk Bay, Gulf of Kutch, Gulf of Mannar, Lakshadweep islands** and **Andaman and Nicobar islands**.

What is the significance of Corals?

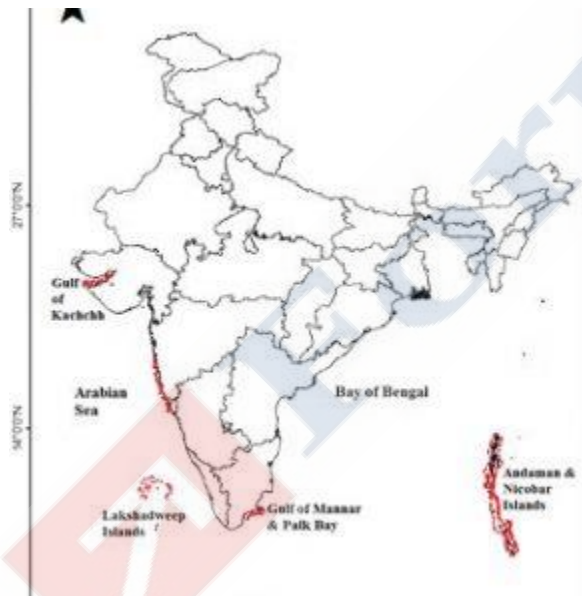


Figure 2. Source- Researchgate

1. Rainforests of the sea- Coral reefs **support over 25% of marine biodiversity**, including fish, turtles and lobsters, while taking up 1% of the seafloor. **For ex- The Great Barrier Reef** contains over **400 coral species, 1,500 fish species, 4,000 mollusc species** and **six of the world's seven sea turtle species**.

2. Economic value- Coral structures provide **economic goods and services worth about \$375 billion each year**. More than **500 million people** across the world dependent on coral reefs for food and income.

3. Coastal protection- Coral reefs absorb up to **97% of the energy from waves, storms, and floods**, which prevents loss of life, property damage, and soil erosion. The absence of coral reefs results in severe ramifications for marine life and humans.

What is coral bleaching? What are the mass coral

bleaching events which have taken place?

Coral Bleaching- When **corals are stressed by changes in conditions** such as **temperature, light, or nutrients**, they expel the symbiotic algae (**zooxanthellae**) living in their tissues, causing them to turn completely white. This is called **coral bleaching**.

Coral Death- Bleached corals can survive depending on the levels of bleaching and the recovery of sea **temperatures to normal levels**. If heat-pollutions subside in time, over a few weeks, the zooxanthellae can come

back to the corals and restart the partnership. But in cases of **severe bleaching and prolonged stress in the external environment** can lead to **coral death**.

Mass Coral Bleaching Events

First Mass Bleaching	It occurred in 1998 when the El Niño weather pattern caused sea surfaces in the Pacific Ocean to heat up . This event led to the death of 8% of the world's coral .
Second Mass Bleaching	This event took place in 2010 . It led to increased destruction of 35% coral reefs .
Third Mass Bleaching	The event that took place between 2014-17 and affected reefs in Guam in the Western Pacific region, the North, South-Pacific, and the Indian Ocean . It affected 56% of coral reefs around the world.

Fourth global bleaching event is currently underway. Nearly 54 countries, territories and local economies- from Florida, the US, Saudi Arabia to Fiji- have confirmed bleaching. Bleaching has been confirmed in the **Western Indian Ocean**, including **Tanzania, Kenya, Mauritius, Seychelles, and off the western coast of Indonesia**.

What are the Causes Responsible for Coral Bleaching?

- 1. Rise in Sea Temperature-** The rise in global warming has led to increase in the sea temperatures which has resulted in the destruction of corals.
- 2. Ocean Acidification-** Due to rise in carbon dioxide levels, oceans absorb more carbon dioxide. This **increases the acidity of ocean water** and **inhibits the coral's ability to create calcareous skeletons**, which is essential for their survival.
- 3. Solar radiation and ultraviolet radiation-** **Changes in tropical weather patterns** result in less cloud cover and more radiations which induce coral bleaching.
- 4. Infectious Diseases-** Penetration of bacterium like **vibrio shiloi** inhibits **photosynthesis of zooxanthellae**. These bacteria become more potent with elevated sea temperatures.
- 5. Chemical Pollution-** **Increased nutrient concentrations affect corals by promoting phytoplankton growth**, which in turn supports increased numbers of organisms that compete with coral for space.
- 6. Human Induced Threats-** **Over-fishing, pollution from agricultural and industrial runoff, coral mining, development of industrial areas** near coral ecosystems also adversely impact corals.

What are the consequences of coral bleaching?

- 1. Affecting the Food Chain-** Changes in coral communities can **affect the species that depend on them, such as the fish and invertebrates** that rely on live coral for food, shelter. Loss of such marine animals can disturb the entire food chain.
- 2. Loss of Biodiversity-** Declines in genetic and species diversity occurs when corals die as a result of bleaching.
- 3. Economic Decline-** Bleached and degraded reefs can discourage tourism, which can affect the local economy.
- 4. Affects Food Availability-** Coral bleaching can **cause large shifts in fish communities**. This can translate into reduced catches for fishers, which in turn impacts food supply and associated economic activities.
- 5. Impact on Coastal Protection-** Coral reefs protect coastlines by absorbing constant wave energy from the ocean, thereby protecting people living near the coast from **increased storm damage, erosion and flooding**.

What are the Initiatives to Protect Corals?

A number of global initiatives are being taken to address the issues-

Institution of International organisations	International Coral Reef Initiative, Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), Global Coral Reef Alliance (GCRA) and The Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform have been established to deal with the issue.
Biological restoration	It uses methods for coral growth and transplanting to assist the restoration of a coral reef. It includes Asexual propagation and Coral Gardening .
Structural restoration	It involves the construction of artificial reefs , or relocation of rocks/dead coral heads . The goal is to increase the amount of reef structure and habitat available for the corals and other reef organisms to grow on . For ex- Bio rock technology
Physical restoration	It addresses the conditions in which the corals are growing to improve their health, growth rates, or reproductive ability.

What should be the way forward?

- 1. Halting unplanned development-** Halting unplanned coastal development would play a significant role in reversing the decline of reefs in some locations.
- 2. Promotion of sustainable fishing-** Promoting sustainable fishing and **providing opportunities for ecotourism** can help conserve corals.
- 3. Minimal use of chemical fertilisers-** There is a need to **minimise the use of chemically enhanced fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides, and herbicides which are non degradable** and harm corals.
- 4. Measures for prevention of global warming-** Taking all possible measures to **prevent actions that worsen global warming** since Climate change is the greatest global threat to coral reef ecosystems.

Read More- [Livemint](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Environment conservation, GS 1- Effects of Climate Change

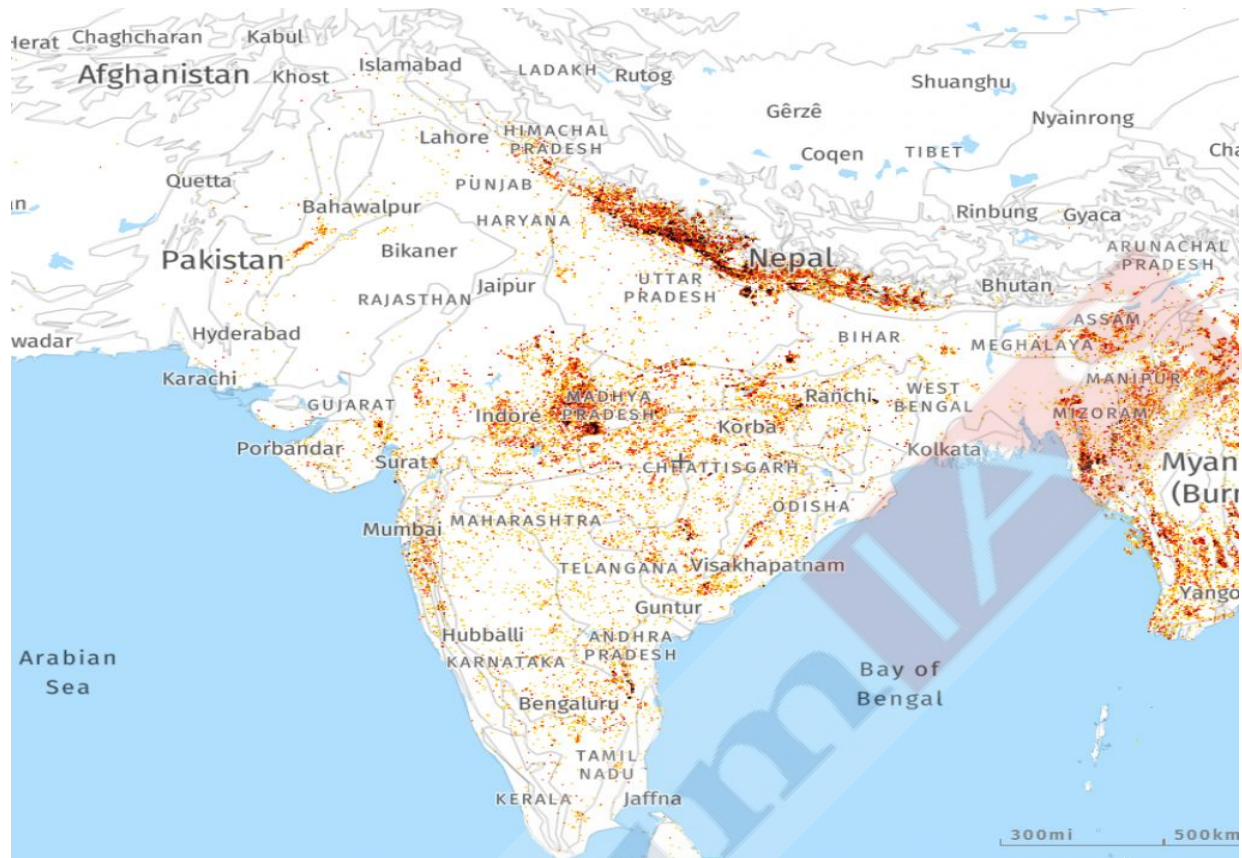
Forest Fire in India- Reasons and Solutions

The devastating forest fires in Uttarakhand have brought **widespread attention** to the **extensive destruction** caused by it. Most forest fires in India take place during the dry season, between the April-May months. However, in recent years, the forest fires have become more frequent than usual. Over time, Forest Fire has become a **matter of great environmental concern**, and its cases are continuously increasing.

What is Forest Fire? What is the Status of Forest Fires in India?

Forest Fire- A forest fire is an **uncontrolled fire** that destroys large parts of the forest. November to June is considered to be forest fire season in India. The Peak fire season typically begins in late February and spans about 12 weeks.

Forest Fire Prone Regions- According to the **India State Forest Report (ISFR) 2019**, 21.67% of India's geographical area is forest. Of that, Forests in **Assam, Mizoram** and **Tripura** have been identified as '**extremely fire-prone**'. Dry deciduous forests are highly susceptible to severe fires.



Source- DTE

What are the reasons for Forest Fires in India?

There are both natural and anthropogenic causes of forest fires in India. These are mentioned below-

Natural Causes

- a. **Lightning-** A lightning strikes **power cables, trees, or rocks** can produce a spark triggering forest fires.
- b. **Volcanic eruption-** Hot magma in the earth's crust is **usually expelled out as lava** during a volcanic eruption. The hot lava then flows into nearby fields or lands to start wildfires.
- c. **Heat patterns-** **Increased temperatures due to global warming** make the forests more vulnerable to forest fires. **Rising atmospheric temperatures** and **dryness (low humidity)** make favourable circumstances for a fire to start.
- d. **Lack of soil moisture-** The dryness in the soil triggers fire in forests. **For ex-** The recent **Uttarakhand wildfires** have been caused due to this.
- e. **Natural availability of materials triggering forest fire-** In India, availability of large quantities of **dry wood, logs, stumps, dead leaves, dry grass** and **weeds** in forest lands are also reasons of forest fires.

Anthropogenic Factors

- a. **Smoking-** Smoking is the leading cause of forest fires globally. **Throwing away the cigarette butts** without completely extinguishing them can lead to wildfires.

b. Campfires- During camping or outdoor activities, people normally leave lit fires or combusting materials unattended. This ignites wildfires.

c. Burning Debris- Wastes and trash on several occasions are burned to ashes as a way of reducing the accumulation of rubbish. This also leads to forest fires in India. **For ex-** **The recent Simlipal Forest fire.**

d. Slash and Burn Cultivation- This is one of the major reason for the fire in India's Northeastern region.

Why peak forest fires occur during the spring?

Spring in India occurs between March and April. In India, the **occurrence of wildfires will be at peak during spring season.** The reasons are as follows-

a. Less rainfall during the winter months- Less rainfall during winter months reduce the soil moisture in forests. The forest soil loses the capacity to control the fire on its own. **For ex-** **The recent Uttarakhand forest fires.**

b. Large availability of combustible materials- The large availability of combustible materials like **dry wood, logs, stumps, dead leaves, dry grass** and **weeds**, increase the intensity of forest fires. Further, strong winds enhance the intensity of forest fires.

What is the Impact of forest fires in India?

a. Loss of Ecosystems and Biodiversity- Forest fires **destroy the habitats and the intricate relationships of diverse flora and fauna**, leading to loss of ecosystems and biodiversity. **For ex-** **Extinction of wildlife in India.**

b. Forest Degradation- Forest fires reduce the quality of certain forest features like soil fertility, biodiversity, and ecosystems.

c. Impact on livelihood- According to the **2011 census, 1.70 lakh villages in India have proximity to forests.** The livelihood of several crores of people is dependent on fuelwood, bamboo, fodder, and small timber. Forest fires directly impact their livelihood.

d. Air Pollution- Forest fires reduce carbon sequestration, and **instigate huge clouds of smoke** leading to massive air pollution.

e. Soil Degradation- Forest fires **kill beneficial soil microorganisms** that are responsible for breaking down the soil and promoting soil microbial activities. Further, the **wildfires also make soils vulnerable to soil erosion.**

f. Destruction of Watersheds- Forest fires lead to the destruction of wetlands of forest, which are protected by the forest.

What are the Government initiatives for forest Fires in India?

Forest Fire Alert System (FFAS)	Forest Survey of India(FSI) developed a Forest Fire Alert System (FFAS). This system has been developed to monitor wildfires in real-time.
MODIS (Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer) Sensors	Using these sensors, the real time information on forest is collected and sent to the Forest Survey of India . The FSI forwards the data by email to state, district, circle, division, range and beat levels. People in the locality receive SMS alerts.
National Master Plan for Forest Fire Control	The government prepared the National Master Plan for Forest Fire Control. Under this, the government aims to introduce a coordinated and integrated fire-management programme.

What should be the Way Forward to reduce Forest Fires?

- a. **Capacity Development-** Capacity development of forest departments' officials at different levels (national, regional, local) to reduce the vulnerability of Indian forests fire.
- b. **Forest Control Manuals-** Creation of forests fire control manuals for field staff helps in early detection, reporting and controlling the fires.
- c. **Comprehensive forest fire policy-** A cohesive policy or action plan should be formulated to set forth the guiding principles and framework for wildfire Management. The policy should also incorporate the dimension of climate change.
- d. **Indigenous knowledge-** Using indigenous knowledge and techniques of local and tribal people in comprehensive wildfire management.
- e. **Infrastructure creation-** Improving the Staffing and capacity of firefighters in the country. For ex- Construction of watchtowers and crew stations, hiring seasonal fire watchers to spot fires etc.
- f. **Development of Technology-** Modern firefighting techniques such as the radio-acoustic sound system for early fire detection and Doppler radar should be adopted. We must also aim at developing a National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) and Fire Forecasting System for faster detection and control of fire.

Read More- [Business Standard](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Environment conservation

Affordable Housing In India- Explained Pointwise



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The issue of affordable housing remains a major challenge in India. According to 2011 Census, India has around **1.7 million homeless people** who are in **dire need of affordable housing**. The quality of build, congestion and inadequate infrastructure remains a major concern for even those people with houses.

What is affordable Housing? What is the extent of requirement of affordable Housing in India?

Affordable Housing- According to the definition of government, affordable housing properties are those properties with an area **not more than 60 sq.m** and their **price capped at ₹45 lakh**. The **right to housing** has been held to be a **part of the fundamental right to life** under **Article 21** of the Constitution by the Supreme Court.

Requirement of Affordable Housing in India

a. According to a Government of India report in 2012, an estimated **18.78 million more houses were required** to cater to the housing demand in the country.

b. A study done by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) in 2020 has found that **India's urban housing shortage rose by 54% from 2012 to become 29 million in 2018**. (This included homeless populations, inadequate houses that could not be upgraded, obsolete houses and congested households).

c. According to the 2011 census, about **5% of India's total population** (over 65 million people), lived in slums.

What are the government interventions for the development of affordable housing sector?

Indira Awaas Yojana	Indira Awaas Yojana was the first policy intervention, which came from the Government in 1985. It focused on rural housing
JNNURM	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), was launched in 2005, with focus on urban housing .
Rajiv Awas Yojana and Rajiv Rinn Yojna	These urban housing interventions were launched in 2008, based on the Parekh Committee report .
Housing for All schemes (2015-22)	Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin) and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) are the two wings under the Housing for All schemes (2015-22). The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)- It was launched in June 2015 to tackle urban homelessness. PMAY-U promised houses for 1.18 crore families by December 2024 . However, as of March 2024, it has only achieved around 67% of its target-around 80 lakh. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin)- It was launched in 2016 with the aim of constructing 2.95 crore houses . The scheme offers ₹1.3 lakh for each unit constructed under the scheme , with a 60:40 funding split between the Centre and State. As of April 30, 2024, a total of 2.6 crore houses have been completed.

State Govt schemes for Affordable Housing- Andhra Pradesh government has undertaken schemes such as the **Navaratnalu-Pedalandariki Illu**.

What are the Challenges in Affordable Housing Sector in India?

Despite government's intervention for affordable Housing sector in India, there multiple challenges associated with them:

1. Non achievement of targets of PMAY(U) and PMAY(G)- PMAY(U) promised houses for **1.18 crore families by December 2024**. However, as of **March 2024**, it has only **achieved around 67% of its target-around 80 lakh**. There are several constraints attached to these schemes, such as PMAY(U) is applicable only for families having access to capital and land, and not for urban landless poor.

2. Higher cost of affordable housing units- The **high cost of land** and **construction materials** make the affordable homes economically unviable for low-income people. The low-income class cannot afford the house without subsidy.

3. Unaffordability of Vacant units- According to an analysis done by the Centre for Social and Economic Progress of the 2011 Census data, despite the urban housing shortage of 19 million units, there are **11 million vacant units**. However, these vacant units are unaffordable for the lower middle class.

4. Limited Availability of Low-Cost Land- Scarcity of suitable low-cost land within city limits poses a significant challenge for the development of affordable housing projects.

5. Lack of easy access to Finance- The affordable housing developers lack the access to institutional finance for affordable housing development.

6. Delays on the part of affordable Real estate Developers- The real estate developers operating in the affordable housing sector **suffer from the challenges of lengthy approval procedures, multiple clearances and thin profit margins**. These contribute to delays and hamper the swift execution of projects.

Read More- [Challenges facing India's public housing programs](#)

What should be the Way Forward?

1. Addressing Demand side constraints- The **provision of subsidies, funds for affordable infrastructure development** and **provision of basic services/amenities** around these housing projects, will help in rejuvenating the affordable housing sector in India.

2. Matured rental market for affordable housing- **Development of a matured rental market** that specifically enhances the robustness of affordable rental housing will enable the holistic development of the affordable housing sector.

3. Promotion of Rental Vouchers- The **National Urban Rental Housing Policy's** rental voucher scheme must be implemented more broadly to help urban poor and migrants afford private rentals in suitable locations.

4. Administrative efficiency- The regulatory authorities must **proactively speed up the process of regulatory clearances for the affordable housing projects**, to spur growth in this sector.

5. Increase focus on Urban Housing Needs- We must also aim to **redirect some resources from rural to urban housing projects**. This will support the workforce in **urban and semi-urban settings**, and would in turn **enhance labour mobility and economic productivity**.

Policy reforms for the affordable housing sector should be participatory. They must also take into account other stakeholders and the reality of the real estate market.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2 Policy interventions for Vulnerable Sector

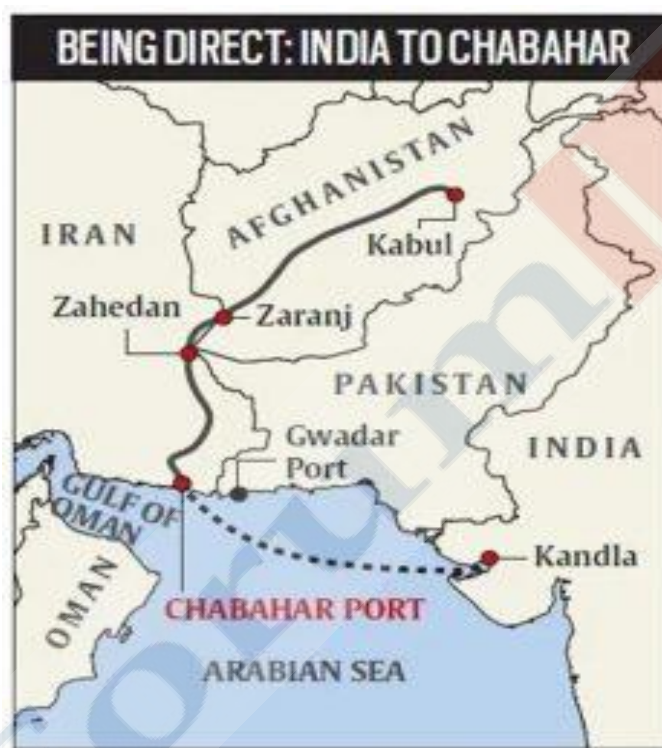
Chabahar Port Agreement – Explained Pointwise

After years of negotiations and setbacks, **India and Iran signed the Chabahar port agreement**. This agreement will allow India to operate and manage the strategically important Chabahar Port. Union Minister for Shipping, Ports and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal witnessed the signing of the contract between **India Ports Global Ltd (IPGL)** and **Ports & Maritime Organisation of Iran (PMO)** in Tehran.

According to the agreement, **IPGL will invest approximately \$120 million** to equip and operate the port for the duration of the contract. Also, a credit window in rupees equivalent to \$250 million was offered for mutually identified projects to improve infrastructure related to the port.

Where is Chabahar Port located? What has been the historical timeline of the Chabahar Port Agreement?

Chabahar Port- Chabahar is a deep water port, located on the **Makran Coast of Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province**. It is next to the **Gulf of Oman and at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz**. It is the only Iranian port with direct access to the Indian Ocean and consists of two separate ports named Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti.



Source- Indian Express

Historical Timeline of India's Engagement with Chabahar

Phase of Origin and conception of Chabahar	
1970s-1980s	The conception of development of Modern Chabahar started in the 1970s . Iran realised the strategic importance of the port during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s .
January 2003	Iranian President Khatami and Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee signed off on an ambitious roadmap of strategic cooperation, which included the development of Chabahar Port.
Phase of Stagnation	
2004-2015	The US declared Iran as one of the "axis of evil" along with Iraq and North Korea. This pushed New Delhi to abandon its strategic relationship with Tehran. Chabahar project became a casualty.

Phase of Progress and Completion	
2015	After the signing of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) which normalised the relation between Iran and the P-5+1, a fresh impetus was given to the development of Chabahar port.
2016	Trilateral Agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan to establish the International Transport and Transit Corridor was signed in May 2016. Thereafter, India's Shipping Ministry worked at a brisk pace to develop the Chabahar project.
2018	Despite US's withdrawal from JCPOA, India managed to get a waiver from the US for the Chabahar project . India cited connectivity with Afghanistan and countering Chinese aggressive infrastructure as major reasons for the push.

What is the importance of Chabahar Port?

Geostrategic Importance

- 1. Viable gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia-** The Chabahar port provides an **alternative route for India to reach Afghanistan and Central Asia**. India's land access to Afghanistan has been blocked by a hostile Pakistan.
- 2. Enhancing India's Connectivity with Russia and Eurasia-** The Chabahar port compliments INSTC for optimising Indian connectivity with Russia and Eurasia.
- 3. Diversification of India's Import routes-** The Chabahar Port provides strategic advantages to the Indian oil and gas sector through diversification of import routes

Geopolitical Importance

- 1. Facilitate supply of Humanitarian assistance-** The Chabahar port has facilitated the supply of humanitarian assistance, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Till date, a total of **2.5 million tonnes of wheat** and **2,000 tonnes of pulses** have been trans-shipped from India to Afghanistan through Chabahar port.
- 2. Bolstering bilateral Relations-** The Chabahar port has given a boost to deepening of bilateral relations between India and West Asian neighbours. **For ex-** India supplied **40,000 litres of the environment friendly pesticide (malathion)** through the **port to Iran to fight locust attacks in 2021**.
- 3. Countering Chinese aggressive infrastructure push-** Chabahar project helps in countering the aggressive Chinese push in the Central and West Asian region due to projects such as BRI. **For ex- Counters the Gwadar Port being Developed by China in Pakistan.**

Geoeconomic Importance

- 1. Anchor for Indian trade in the West Asian region-** Chabahar port serves as an **anchor for Indian trade in the West Asian region**. It also enhances India's role in the Global Supply Chain.
- 2. Enhanced access to new markets-** The Chabahar port provides India the opportunity to access to new markets in Central Asia, and for infrastructure development opportunities.

What are the Challenges to Chabahar Project?

- 1. Potential US sanctions-** United States has warned that "anyone" considering business deals with Tehran needs to be aware of the "potential risk of sanctions." The **Chabahar deal can attract US Sanctions**.
- 2. Geopolitical uncertainty over INSTC project-** The **war in Ukraine** and **the destruction of Europe's relationship with Russia** has complicated the integration of Chabahar port with INSTC.

3. Rising Geopolitical tensions in West Asia- Rising Geopolitical tensions between **Iran and Israel, Saudi Arabia and Iran** is also a major geopolitical challenge for smooth operation of the Chabahar project.

4. Declining India-Iran Trade- The stringent western sanctions on Iran has led to a significant drop in India's energy imports from Iran. These sanctions can impact the volume of trade through the Chabahar port.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Focus on Connectivity- Cooperation regarding the **integration of the Chabahar port and the International North-South Transport Corridor** should be undertaken.

2. Securing Waivers from US sanctions- India must strive to obtain waivers from US sanctions on Iran, for smooth port operations.

3. Enhancement of bilateral trade- The bilateral trade between India and Iran must be increased to reap the full benefits of the Chabahar port.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- India and neighbourhood relations

NHRC status deferral by GANHRI- Explained Pointwise

Recently, the leading international body on human rights- **Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)**- has **deferred the "A" status accreditation** of India's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). The decision of deferring the accreditation was taken by GANHRI's Sub Committee on Accreditation (SCA). It is for the **second year in a row** that **India's "A" status accreditation** has been deferred.

What is GANHRI? What is the Accreditation process followed by GANHRI?

GANHRI- GANHRI is a **global network of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)** that works to **promote and protect human rights**. GANHRI represents **120 NHRIs** from around the world. It is affiliated to the **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights**.

Aim of GANHRI- GANHRI's mission is to unite, promote, and strengthen NHRIs to operate in line with the UN Paris Principles.

Paris Principles- The Paris Principles set out **internationally agreed minimum standards** that NHRIs must meet, to be considered credible. These 6 principles are- **Mandate and competence, Autonomy from Government, Independence guaranteed by a Statute or Constitution, Pluralism, Adequate Resources, and adequate powers of investigations**.

Accreditation by the GANHRI

Who Conducts the Accreditation	GANHRI's Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) reviews NHRIs accreditation through a unique peer-review-based accreditation process .
When is the accreditation conducted	A NHRI is reviewed by the SCA when a. It applies for initial accreditation b. It applies for re-accreditation every five years c. The circumstances of the NHRI change in any way that may affect its compliance with the Paris Principles.

Criterion for accreditation	The accreditation is awarded based on the extent of NHRI's adherence to Paris Principles . a. NHRIs that are assessed as complying with the Paris Principles are accredited with ' A status ' b. NHRIs which partially comply are accredited with ' B status '.
Utility of 'A' status accreditation	'A' status accreditation grants participation of NHRI in the works of GANHRI, Human Rights Council and other UN mechanisms.
Appeal Mechanism	An appeal process for NHRIs to ensure greater transparency and due process.

India's Accreditation over the Years

India's NHRC received '**A status accreditation**' for the first time in 1999. It retained it in 2006, 2011. In early 2017, the **SCA had put the NHRC in the deferral category**, but it was lifted after a review later that year. Hence, **India retained its 'A' status**.

However, **suspension of 'A' status for two consecutive years (2023 and 2024)** marks a significant setback for India's human rights record and its international standing.

Issues with NHRC which have led to the deferral by GANHRI

1. Lack of Transparency in Appointment of Members- GANHRI has raised concerns over the amendments to the **NHRC Amendment Act 2019**. It has cited lack of transparency in the **process of appointing members** to the NHRC. Transparency in appointment and functioning of NHRC, ensures credibility and impartiality in human rights investigations and interventions.

2. Inadequate Gender and Minority Representation- GANHRI has pointed to the **inadequate representation of gender and minority groups in NHRC's member panel**. Inclusivity is essential for ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered in addressing human rights issues effectively.

3. Appointment of Police Officers for Human Rights Investigations- GANHRI has raised objections **regarding the appointment of police officers** to oversee human rights investigations. This practice **might compromise the independence and integrity of investigations**, raising doubts about the impartiality of the NHRC.

Impact of Deferral of 'A' Status on NHRC

a. Brings disrepute to the human rights body- The prestige of Indian human rights watchdog is tarnished with the deferral of the status by GANHRI.

b. Hindrance in participation in UN bodies- The downgrade and deferral of status restricts the active participation of NHRC in the works of GANHRI, Human Rights Council and other UN mechanisms.

What is NHRC? What is its Mandate?

NHRC- NHRC is a **statutory body** established under the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993**. The Commission is the watchdog of human rights in the country. It is a **multi-member body** consisting of a chairperson and five members.

Chairperson	The Chairperson is a retired chief justice of India or a judge of the Supreme Court .
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Members	<p>One Member who is, or has been, a Judge of the Supreme Court</p> <p>One Member who is, or has been the Chief Justice of a High Court</p> <p>Three Members, to be appointed from amongst persons having knowledge and practical experience in matters of human rights, one of whom shall be a woman</p>
Appointment	The chairperson and members are appointed by the President on the recommendations of a six-member committee consisting of Prime Minister as its head, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Leaders of the Opposition in both the Houses of Parliament, Central Home Minister
Tenure	The chairperson and members are appointed for the term of 3 years or till the age of 70 years , whichever is earlier.
Reappointment	The chairperson and members are eligible for reappointment.

Mandate of NHRC

- 1. Investigation-** Investigating complaints or failure of any **public official** regarding the rights' violation, either suo moto or after receiving a petition.
- 2. Prevention and Safeguard-** Monitoring the **living conditions of the inmates** and to make recommendations thereon. Reviewing statutory safeguards or treaties for the protection of human rights.
- 3. Intervention-** NHRC intervenes in any proceeding **involving any allegation of violation of human rights pending before a court** with the approval of such court.
- 4. Human rights-** NHRC review the factors, including acts of terrorism, that **inhibit the enjoyment of human rights** and recommend appropriate remedial measures.
- 5. Awareness-** NHRC **spreads human rights literacy amongst various sections of society** and promotes awareness of the safeguards available for the protection of these rights through publications, the media, seminars and other available means.

What are the Provisions for Protection of Human Rights in India? What are the successes and failures of NHRC in Human rights protection in India?

Human rights- Human rights are **rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual** guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by courts in India

Provisions for Protection of Human Rights in India

- 1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights-** The UDHR principles have been adopted by India to guarantee human rights.
- 2. Right to equality (Art 14-18) of the Constitution-** This guarantees **equality before law, prohibition of discrimination** on grounds of religion, race, caste, gender or place of birth, and **equality of opportunity in matters of employment, abolition of untouchability and abolition of titles.**
- 3. Right to freedom (Art 19-22)-** This guarantees the **freedom of speech and expression**, assembly, association or union or cooperatives, movement, residence, and right to practice any profession or occupation, **right to life and liberty, protection in respect to conviction in offences and protection against arrest and detention in certain cases.**
- 4. Right against exploitation (Art 23 and 24)-** This prohibits all forms of **forced labour, child labour and traffic of human beings.**

5. Bandhua Mukti Morcha V. Union of India (1984)- SC held that Art. 21 guarantees Right to Life. The meaning of life under this article means a life of not only animal existence but life with human dignity

Successes of NHRC

Since its formation, the NHRC has widely dealt with issues relating to the application of human rights. Despite its limitations, **NHRC has been striving to provide human rights relief to citizens in India**. Some of the success stories are mentioned below-

- a. Campaigns against **discrimination of HIV patients**.
- b. Intervention in the cases of Child sexual abuse and violence such as **Nithari Village in Noida, UP**.
- c. **Suo-moto cognisance** in the case of **killing of 10 people in police firing during Anti-Sterlite protest in Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu**.
- d. Intervention in the case of **killing of Rising Kashmir editor Shujaat Bukhari** after an appeal via press, by a network of editors and media practitioners.

Failures of NHRC in Human rights Protection

However, NHRC has failed in securing Human rights to all, which are evident from these examples-

- 1. Existence of Custodial Torture and extrajudicial killings**- The recent **Sathankulam case in Tamil Nadu** is proof of existence of custodial torture. Extrajudicial Killings like fake encounters, mob lynching, etc. have not stopped in India.
- 2. Arbitrary Arrest and Detention**- Both the NHRC and SHRC both **have failed to control them due to their lack of powers**.
- 3. Prevalence of Gender based Violence**- Violence and discrimination against Women, Children like rape, murder, sexual abuse are also prevalent in India.
- 4. Prevalence of Manual scavenging**- Manual Scavenging is still prevalent in India. According to the 2011 Census, there are more than 26 Lakh insanitary latrines in the country. Even though the government enacted a law and NHRC given its recommendations, the practice still exists in India.

What are the other Limitations/Challenges faced by NHRC in India?

- 1. Status of recommendatory Body**- NHRC is **only a recommendatory body**, without the power to enforce decisions. The lack of authority to ensure compliance, can sometimes lead to the outright rejection of its decision.
- 2. Lack of effective investigation powers**- NHRC **lacks an independent investigative machinery** to enquire into complaints. Further, the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993**, prohibits NHRC from pursuing investigation of an event, **if the complaint was made more than one year after the incident**. Therefore, many genuine grievances remain unaddressed.
- 3. Jurisdictional Limits**- NHRC **cannot address human rights violations** committed by **private parties**. NHRC cannot investigate the violation in case of armed forces and has to rely on the report of the Centre.
- 4. Lack of effective enforcement powers**- NHRC **lacks authority to penalise the authorities** that fail to implement its orders.
- 5. Post retirement club**- NHRC has become a **post-retirement destination for judges, police officers and bureaucrats with political clout**. The composition of the commission which is heavily judicial has given it a **court like character**.

6. Lack of funds and functionaries- The **inadequacy of funds, functionaries**, and the bureaucratic way of functioning, hampers the effectiveness of the commission.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Enhanced enforcement powers- The **decisions of NHRC should be made enforceable** by the government. The efficacy of commissions will be greatly enhanced if their decisions are made enforceable by the government.

2. Revamping the membership structure- The members of NHRCs **should include civil society, human rights activists, minorities**, etc. rather than ex-bureaucrats. The search cum selection committee must ensure transparency in the selection of members.

3. Independent Staff- NHRC should have its **independent investigating staff** recruited by the commission directly. The present practice of deputation of staff must be stopped.

4. Developing scientific Human rights framework- NHRC must explore creating a scientific human rights framework tailored for India.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- Non Constitutional Bodies