

# Forum IAS

## 7 PM COMPILATION

**3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Week April, 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
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### Model Code of Conduct- Explained Pointwise

Recently, a plea was lodged before the Delhi High Court, accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi of violating the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) by allegedly soliciting votes on the basis of religion during his address in Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh. The petitioner is seeking a severe penalty, urging for a six-year ban on Prime Minister Modi's participation in elections. The plea has reignited discussions surrounding the adherence of political parties and campaigners to the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).



## Key Provisions of Model Code of Conduct

General Conduct	<p>a. No party or candidate shall engage in any activity which may aggravate existing differences or create mutual hatred between different castes and religious or linguistic communities.</p> <p>b. No party or candidate shall engage in bribing of voters, intimidation of voters, impersonation of voters, canvassing within 100 meters of polling stations, holding public meetings during the period of 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for the close of the poll.</p>
Meetings	The party or candidate shall inform the local police authorities of the venue and time any proposed meeting well in time so as to enable the police to make necessary arrangements for controlling traffic and maintaining peace and order.
Procession	A Party or candidate organizing a procession shall decide before hand the time and place of the starting of the procession, the route to be followed and the time and place at which the procession will terminate.
Polling Day	<p>a. All Political parties and candidates shall co-operate with the officers on election duty to ensure peaceful and orderly polling.</p> <p>b. All Political parties and candidates shall refrain from serving or distributing liquor on polling day and during the forty eight hours preceding it.</p>
Party in Power	<p>a. Ministers shall not combine official visits with election work or use official machinery for the same.</p> <p>b. Public spaces and rest houses shall not be monopolized by the party in power and other parties shall also be allowed to use them.</p>
Election Manifestos	<p>a. Political parties shall avoid making promises that are likely to vitiate the purity of the election process or exert undue influence on voters.</p> <p>b. Manifestos shall reflect the rationale for promises and broadly indicate the ways and means to meet the financial requirements for it.</p>

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### What is the Model Code of Conduct? What is the history of its evolution?

**Model Code of Conduct-** The Model Code of Conduct is a **set of guidelines** issued by the Election Commission of India for political parties and candidates **to maintain decorum** in their campaigning. It **lays down a list of dos and don'ts for leaders and parties** ahead of elections.

**Duration of Model Code of Conduct-** The MCC comes into force **from the date the election schedule is announced** until the date that results are out.

**Legal Enforceability of MCC-** MCC **does not have any statutory backing**. It has come to acquire strength in the past decade because of its strict enforcement by the EC.

Certain provisions of the MCC may be enforced through **invoking corresponding provisions in other statutes** such as the **IPC 1860, CrPC 1973, and RPA 1951**.

**Penalties for its violation-** If the Election Commission **finds a party or candidate in violation of the Model Code of Conduct**, it can take measures from issuing a warning to ordering an FIR against the concerned party or candidate.

### History of Evolution of Model Code of Conduct

1960	The origin of the MCC lies in the <b>Assembly elections of Kerala in 1960</b> . The State administration prepared a 'Code of Conduct' for political actors.
1962	ECI circulated the Model Code of Conduct to all recognized political parties and State governments. It was followed in the <b>Lok Sabha Elections in 1962</b> .
1991	The EC decided to <b>enforce the MCC more strictly</b> after repeated flouting of the election norms.
2014	The EC issued guidelines <b>prohibiting parties from making promises that exert an undue influence on voters</b> . The EC also suggested that manifestos must also indicate the means to achieve promises.

### What are the key provisions of MCC?

#### General Conduct

- No party or candidate **shall engage in any activity** which may **aggravate existing differences or create mutual hatred or cause tension** between different castes and religious or linguistic communities.
- All parties and candidates **shall avoid scrupulously all activities** which are 'corrupt practices' and 'offences' under the election law, such as **bribing of voters, intimidation of voters, impersonation of voters, canvassing within 100 meters of polling stations, holding public meetings during the period of 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for the close of the poll, and the transport and conveyance of voters to and from polling station**.
- Parties and candidates **shall refrain from criticism of all aspects of private life**, which are not connected with the public activities of the leaders or workers of other parties.

#### Meetings

- The party or candidate **shall inform the local police authorities of the venue and time any proposed meeting well in time** so as to enable the police to make necessary arrangements for controlling traffic and maintaining peace and order.

b. The party or candidate shall **apply to the authority concerned well in advance to obtain permission or license for the use of loudspeakers or any other facility** in connection with any proposed meeting.

### Procession

a. A Party or candidate organizing a procession **shall decide before hand the time and place of the starting of the procession, the route to be followed and the time and place at which the procession will terminate.**

b. The organizers shall take steps in advance to arrange for passage of the procession so that there is **no block or hindrance to traffic.**

c. The **carrying of effigies** purporting to represent member of other political parties or their leaders, **burning such effigies in public** and such other forms demonstration **shall not be countenanced by any political party or candidate.**

### Polling Day

a. All Political parties and candidates **shall co-operate with the officers on election duty to ensure peaceful and orderly polling.**

b. All Political parties and candidates **shall refrain from serving or distributing liquor on polling day and during the forty eight hours preceding it.**

c. All authorized party workers at polling booths **should be given suitable badges or identity cards.** Identity slips supplied by them to voters shall be on plain (white) paper and shall not contain any symbol, name of the candidate or the name of the party.

### Polling Booth

The EC **will appoint observers to whom any candidates may report problems** regarding the conduct of the election.

### Party in Power

a. Ministers **shall not combine official visits with election work** or use official machinery for the same.

b. The party in power shall **avoid advertising at the cost of the public exchequer or using official mass media for publicity on achievements** to improve chances of victory in the elections.

c. Ministers and other authorities **shall not announce any financial grants**, or promise any construction of roads, provision of drinking water.

d. Public spaces and rest houses **shall not be monopolized by the party in power** and other parties shall also be allowed to use them.

### Election Manifestos

a. The election manifesto **shall not contain anything against the ideals and principles enshrined** in the Constitution.

b. Political parties **shall avoid making promises that are likely to vitiate the purity of the election process** or exert undue influence on voters.

c. Manifestos **shall reflect the rationale for promises** and **broadly indicate the ways and means to meet the financial requirements** for it.

d. Manifestos shall not be released during the prohibitory period (before 48 hours), as prescribed under Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act 1951, for single or multi-phase elections.

### What is the significance of MCC?

- 1. Ensuring free and fair elections (Article 324):** Model Code of Conduct aims to address the issues of electoral malpractices and ensure that elections are conducted in a free and fair manner.
- 2. Addressing electoral inequalities-** Model Code of Conduct aims to bring down the inequalities by proscribing the use of government machinery by the party in power for propagating their achievements.
- 3. Ensuring social harmony-** Model Code of Conduct aims to preserve social harmony by proscribing the political parties and candidates in engaging in any activity which may aggravate existing differences, create mutual hatred and cause tension between different castes and communities, religious and linguistic groups.
- 4. Encouraging transparency and accountability-** MCC encourages transparency and accountability on part of the political parties to reflect the rationale for their electoral promises and broadly indicate the ways and means to meet the financial requirements for it.

### What are the Challenges with the Model Code of Conduct?

- 1. Lack of legal enforceability-** The MCC is election commission's moral sanction to get political parties and candidates to fall in line. But the norms of the Model Code of Conduct are flouted due to lack of legal backing.
- 2. Ineffectiveness in Curbing Malpractices-** The MCC has failed to prevent electoral malpractices such as hate speech, fake news, money power, booth capturing, voter intimidation and violence.
- 3. Challenges from evolving technologies-** MCC norms are also being increasingly challenged by new technologies like AI based deepfakes, and social media platforms that enable faster and wider dissemination of misinformation and propaganda.
- 4. Vague Clauses-** Some MCC clauses, such as maintaining the 'purity of the election process', are subjective and can be misinterpreted.
- 5. Reliance on Political Cooperation-** The MCC's effectiveness depends on the cooperation from political parties and governments. Parties and governments often indulge in the violation of MCC. For ex- Hate Speeches during election campaigning.
- 6. Lack of Enforcement capacity of Election commission-** ECI suffers from the shortage of functionaries for the effective implementation of the MCC.
- 7. Interference with Governance-** ECI is criticized for the early application of MCC as it imposes limitations on policy decisions, public spending, welfare schemes, transfers, and appointments.
- 8. Lack of Awareness and Compliance-** The provisions of the Model code of conduct is not widely known or understood by voters, candidates, parties, and government officials.

Read More- [Electoral Reforms in India](#)

### What Should be the Way Forward?

- 1. Establishment of fast track courts-** Special fast track courts must be established for early adjudication of MCC violation cases.
- 2. Explore the option of providing statutory backing to MCC-** The recommendation of standing committee on electoral reforms of providing statutory backing to MCC must be considered and explored.

**3. Changes in MCC to counter the misuse of new technologies-** Changes in MCC must be brought and the capacity of ECI must be increased to deal with the misuse of social media like **Whats app and Facebook which are used to influence opinions on the day of election.**

**4. Neutrality on part of ECI-** ECI must be neutral in application of MCC across all the parties and candidates.

**Read More- [ECI](#)**

**Syllabus- GS 2- Electoral reforms and issues related to RPA**

## Competition Law in India- Explained Pointwise

Recently the CCI has made flurry of changes in the competition law in India. These include guidelines for **monetary penalty**, regulations for **settlements and commitments**, the introduction of **new thresholds** and the introduction of **'leniency plus' provisions**. These changes emanate from the Competition Law Amendment Act of 2023. According to the CCI chief, these recently notified guidelines on **settlement, commitment, 'leniency plus'** and **global turnover** will be applicable to cases that are under CCI investigation.

### What are the latest changes in the Competition Law in India?

The competition in the Indian market is regulated by the **The Competition Act, 2002**. This act **regulates and prohibits anti-competitive practices** such as **cartels, abuse of dominant market position, and mergers and acquisitions that may have an adverse effect on competition.**

#### 1. New Threshold for acquisitions and mergers

The amendment act introduces new threshold to prohibit firms from entering into a combination which may cause an adverse effect on competition.

- Deals with **transaction value of more than Rs 2,000 crore** will require CCI's approval.
- The amended act **reduces the timeline for the CCI** to pass an order on such transactions from **210 days to 150 days.**

#### 2. Penalties for Competition Law Violations

- The amended act amends the **definition of 'turnover'** for the imposition of penalties. The penalties will be imposed on **company's global turnover**, rather than just its turnover in India.
- Penalty can go up to **30% of the average relevant turnover/ income**, subject to the legal maximum of 10% of the company's global turnover.

#### 3. Introduction of 'Leniency Plus' provisions

This provision allows the Competition Commission of India (CCI) to give an **additional waiver of penalties to an applicant** who **discloses the existence of another cartel** in an unrelated market.

#### 4. Expedition of clearances of mergers and acquisitions

The amended competition law in India provides for the **expedition of CCI clearance of mergers and acquisitions** to **within 150 days** with an additional conservatory extension of 30 days. This is a reduction from the time limit of maximum of 210 days now.

#### 5. Decriminalization of certain offences

- a. The amended competition law in India decriminalizes certain offences by **changing the nature of punishment from imposition of fine to civil penalties**.
- b. These offences include **failure to comply with orders of the CCI** and **directions of the Director General** related to anti-competitive agreements and **abuse of dominant position**.

### What are the purported advantages of the changes in the Competition Law In India?

- 1. Promotion of Ease of Doing Business-** The amendments to the Competition Act **aim to reduce regulatory hurdles** and promote ease of doing business in India. The amendments are expected to **provide greater clarity to businesses operating in India** and reduce the compliance burden for companies.
- 2. Enhancement of Transparency-** The **inclusion of global turnover in the definition of "turnover"** aims to **enhance transparency and accountability** in the Indian market.
- 3. Strong deterrence against anti-competitive practices-** The amendment to the competition law in India ensures that companies **cannot escape penalties for competition law violations by shifting their revenue to other countries**.
- 4. Broadening the scope of anti-competitive practices-** It broadens the scope of 'anti-competitive agreements' by the **introduction of 'leniency plus' agreements** to catch entities that facilitate cartelization.
- 5. Prevention of market monopoly-** The amended act aims to prevent market monopoly of the large firms by **introduction of revised thresholds** for holding them to account for anti-competitive behavior. It would the CCI to make **speedy market corrections** in cases of market monopoly.

### What are the challenges associated with the Competition law in India?

- 1. Low rate of recovery of penalties-** The recovery of penalties for anti-competitive behavior has been only **0.4% over the past five years**. CCI has low success rate in defending its decisions at various forums like the **apellate tribunals** and **the higher courts**.
- 2. Fears of loss of FDI-** The inclusion of provisions of penalties based on the global turnover can have **substantial impact on companies with global operations**. Fines imposed on global turnovers could deter firms that sell multiple products in multiple markets across the world.
- 3. Lack of Capacity of CCI-** CCI lacks the manpower and resources to **effectively monitor the anti-competitive practices** being employed by the **big techs**.
- 4. Fear of affecting sunrise sector-** There are fears that the introduction of stringent penalties may end up affecting the sunrise industries in India like the **semiconductors, electronics, electric vehicles, renewable energy, avionics** and **defence equipment**.

Read More- [Committee Report on Digital Competition Law](#)

### What Should be the way Forward?

- 1. Revamping of CCI-** The institutional structure of CCI must be revamped by **creating separate cell/division, beefing up the technical manpower** for dealing with digital anti-competitive practices.
- 2. Early establishment of separate bench of NCLAT-** The government must **constitute a separate bench in the NCLAT at the earliest** for **early adjudication of anti-competitive cases**. Provision in the Competition Act (Section 39) for **recovery of the penalty amount under the Income Tax Act 1961**, could be liberally used after getting cases finalized in appeals.



**3. Multilevel scrutiny before imposing fines based on Global Turnovers-** CCI must employ a multilevel scrutiny process like EU and Germany before imposing fines based on global turnover levels. The factors like nature of infringement, consequential harm, market share etc. must be taken into account before imposing the penalties.

**4. Effective Checks and balances-** A mechanism of ensuring effective checks and balances must be instituted to curb any abuse of discretionary powers by the authorities.

**5. Protecting the sunrise sector-** CCI must effectively balance its role of regulating the anti-competitive behavior as well as protecting the sunrise sectors of the economy. Enforcement must be kept in tune with the ease of doing business.

**Read More-** [Livemint](#)

**UPSC Syllabus- GS Paper 2-** governance-Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

### Heatwaves in India- Explained Pointwise

Heatwaves in India have become more severe and intense having severe effect on human health. Recently, The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted an increase in the maximum temperature and the frequency of heatwaves in the forthcoming days over eastern and southern India. Hence, India must remain prepared for tackling these recurring heatwaves.

#### What are heatwaves? How are they defined in India?

**Heatwaves-** Heat waves are prolonged periods of excessively hot weather that can cause adverse impacts on human health, the environment, and the economy.

**Definition of Heatwave-** In India IMD defines heatwave based on the following criteria.

#### Physiography of regions

**Plain-** The maximum temperature recorded at a station is 40 degrees Celsius or more.

**Coast-** The maximum temperature recorded at a station is 37 degrees Celsius or more.

**Hills-** The maximum temperature recorded at a station is 30 degrees Celsius or more.

#### Based on Departure from Normal Temperature

**Heat Wave-** Departure from normal is 4.5°C to 6.4°C

**Severe Heat Wave-** Departure from normal is >6.4°C

#### Based on Actual Maximum Temperature

**Heat Wave-** When actual maximum temperature  $\geq 45^{\circ}\text{C}$

**Severe Heat Wave-** When actual maximum temperature  $\geq 47^{\circ}\text{C}$

\*Heat Wave is declared if above criteria are met in at least 2 stations in a Meteorological subdivision for at least two consecutive days.

#### What is the status of Heatwaves in India?

India has been affected by the Heatwaves since a long time. However, during the last few decades, due to increased instances of climate change, the impact of heat waves has also enhanced quite significantly.

- a. States like **Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh** have been affected the most by the Heatwaves.
- b. According to IMD, **between 1981 and 1990** there were **413 heatwave days** in India. However, the heatwave days have increased to **600 days** between **2011 and 2020**.
- c. The number of deaths from heat-related causes increased from **5,457** between **1981 and 1990** to **11,555** between **2011 and 2020**.

### What are the factors behind the increase in Heatwaves in India?

Heatwaves can be caused by a combination of natural and human-induced factors. The main causes are mentioned below-

#### Natural causes

1. **High Atmospheric Pressure Systems**- Heatwaves occur when **high-pressure systems stall over a region**. These systems **trap warm air near the Earth's surface** and **prevent the normal movement of air masses**, leading to prolonged periods of hot weather.
2. **Climate Variability**- Natural climate variations, such as **El Nino** and **La Nina events**, influence weather patterns and increase the likelihood of heatwaves. **For ex- During El Nino events, warmer ocean waters in the tropical Pacific** lead to changes in atmospheric circulation and weather patterns.
3. **Drought and Dry Conditions**- Prolonged periods of drought and lack of precipitation reduces the overall moisture of the soil, causing the land to heat up more quickly during heat waves.
4. **Changes in Wind Patterns**- Shifts in wind pattern transports hot air from one region to another which **intensifies heat waves in areas that are not typically prone to such extreme temperatures**.
4. **Geography and Topography**- Geographic features and topographical conditions also contribute to the development of heat waves. **For ex- Landlocked valleys and regions surrounded by mountains trap hot air and lead to temperature spikes**.

#### Human-Induced Factors

1. **Global Warming**- The **long-term increase in Earth's average temperature**, primarily driven by **human activities** such as **burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial processes**, contributes to the frequency and intensity of heat waves.
2. **Urban Heat Island Effect**- Urban areas with **high population density, extensive concrete and asphalt surfaces, and limited vegetation** tend to **absorb and retain more heat**, has created localized zones of higher temperatures. This phenomenon, known as the **urban heat island effect**, has intensified heat waves in cities.

### What are the impacts of Heatwaves?

1. **Impact on Human Health**- Rapid rises in heat compromises the **body's ability to regulate temperature** resulting in a **cascade of illnesses**, including **heat cramps, heat exhaustion, heatstroke, and hyperthermia**.
2. **Impact on Energy**- Heatwaves increase the electricity demand for cooling purposes, leading to **strain on power grids** and **potential blackouts**.
3. **Impact on the economy**- Heatwaves **disrupt economic activities, affecting productivity of workers and labourers**, lacking the access to reliable electricity for cooling during heatwaves. According to an ILO study at 34°C, workers can lose up to 50% of their work capacity.

**4. Impact on Water Resources-** Heatwaves exacerbate water scarcity issues in India due to drying up of water bodies and decrease in the groundwater table. This exacerbates the inter-state conflict over water. **For ex-Cauvery water Dispute.**

**5. Impact on the food security-** The rise in heat waves **increase the probability of droughts, enhance demand of irrigation water**, which impacts agricultural production and increases food insecurity.

Read More- [Protecting the most Vulnerable due to Increasing heatwaves in India](#)

**What steps have been taken by the government to address the issue of heatwaves?**

<b>Heat Action Plans</b>	The Indian government has updated <b>Heat Action Plans across 23 states</b> , aiming to strategically combat and manage heatwaves.
<b>Public Health Preparedness</b>	The Union Health Ministry reviews the <b>preparedness for managing Heat-Related Illnesses (HRIs) periodically</b> indicating a proactive approach to address the health impacts of heatwaves.
<b>Focus on Vulnerable Groups</b>	The government initiatives <b>prioritize protecting high-risk groups</b> like <b>children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with chronic diseases.</b>
<b>Awareness Campaigns</b>	About 100 districts have initiated campaigns to raise awareness about heatwave risks and precautions.

**What should be the way Forward?**

**1. Effective implementation of Heat Wave Action Plan-** Effective implementation of the Heat wave action plan with the **State playing a leading role and sharing responsibility with other stakeholders** is now the need of the hour.

**2. Sustainable Cooling-** Passive cooling technology like **construction of ventilated buildings** and the **use of porotherm bricks**, can be a vital alternative to address the urban heat island for residential and commercial buildings.

**3. Heatwave Mitigation Plans-** Heatwave mitigation plans which includes **access to drinking water, oral rehydration solutions (ORS), shade at public places, flexible working hours in workplaces** must be effectively designed and implemented.

**4. Creation of more Green Spaces-** According to the UN, investment of US\$ 100 million in street trees globally can bring 1°C temperature reduction. India must scale up its reforestation and tree plantation efforts. **For ex-Haritha Haram project of Telangana Govt** to increase the green cover in Telangana from the current 24% to 33%.

**5. Adoption of energy efficient solution-** The masses should be encouraged to adopt more energy efficient solutions like **using desert coolers in place of air conditioners in dry areas.**

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

**UPSC Syllabus- GS Paper 3-environment-climate change and GS Paper 1- geography-Important Geophysical phenomena such as Heatwaves.**

## Maoist Insurgency in India- Explained Pointwise

Recently, the **Maoist insurgency in India** suffered a **serious blow** from paramilitary and police forces which included the killing of at **least 29 Maoists in the Bastar region in Chhattisgarh**. The operation is the **largest in terms of Maoists' bodies recovered** and is among the biggest successes for security forces in their decades-long fight against Maoist insurgency and left-wing extremism (LWE).



Source- Aljazeera

### What is Maoist insurgency in India? Where is it prevalent in India?

**Maoist insurgency**- Maoist insurgency, which is also known as **Left-wing Extremism (LWE)/Naxalism**, is an **armed movement rooted in political ideologies** that seek to bring about socio-political and economic changes through **violent means**.

### Prevalence of Maoist Insurgency/ Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)

The Maoist Insurgency/Left Wing Extremism has been a long standing security threat which started in 1967 and gradually spread to different parts of the country. The Maoist insurgency peaked in the early mid-2000s.

However, with the **government's continued push to end the Maoist insurgency** through the **mix of anti Naxal Operations** and **Welfare measures for the tribals**, has started showing results. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) website, Left wing extremism has been limited to 70 districts in the country. Out of these 70 districts, 25 districts are 'Most LWE affected Districts'.

Now the LWE has been **limited to the jungles of central India** and **places of sparse tribal presence** with a weaker presence of the developmental and welfare state relative to the rest of the country. The prevalent area of LWE

is called 'Red Corridor'. This region stretches across several states, including Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, and parts of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Maharashtra.

### What are the reasons that led to the growth of Left-Wing Extremism in India?

The 2006 D Bandopadhyay Committee identified governance gaps and extensive discrimination against tribals in economic, socio-political, and cultural spheres as the primary causes of Naxalism's proliferation. Some of the reasons are enumerated below-

**1. Inequitable Socio-economic development-** Increasing Socio-economic inequities and unemployment in hinterland region nudge the youth to take up arms. There has been disruption of traditional occupations and lack of alternative work opportunities.

**2. Governance failure-** Governance deficit in the remote parts of Red Corridor regions led to the growth of Left Wing Extremism. There was development apathy and huge corruption in the red corridor area. For ex- Lack of food security due to corruption in the PDS scheme.

**3. Political Marginalization-** The tribal groups were politically marginalized by the self-serving dominant groups. This led to political deprivation among the marginalized groups leading to hopelessness and a sense of powerlessness.

**4. Land Alienation and Displacement-** There was failure of land reforms especially in land redistribution after independence. The development projects and acquisition of land for industrial purposes have sometimes led to the displacement of local communities without adequate compensation or rehabilitation. This has been a focal point of Naxalite agitation.

**5. Discrimination against tribals-** There has been poor implementation of laws prohibiting transfer of tribal land to non-tribals in the Fifth Schedule areas. Non-regularisation and hasty rejections of land grants of traditional land rights under FRA, 2006 have also led to the growth of left-wing Extremism.

### What are the challenges posed by Left-wing extremism (LWE) in India?

**1. Threat to Internal Security-** Left-wing extremism poses significant internal security threats to India, leading to violent clashes and loss of lives among security forces and civilians. For ex- Maoist rebels engaging in deadly attacks on security forces in remote areas like Dantewada.

**2. Social and Economic Disruption-** LWE in India disrupts social and economic development in affected regions, hindering infrastructure and welfare projects. For ex- Maoists targeting their roads, schools, and other vital infrastructure to maintain control over their territories.

**3. Forced Recruitment and Child Soldiers-** Maoist groups have been known to force vulnerable individuals, including children, to join their ranks, exploiting them for their cause. This practice violates human rights and disrupts the lives of countless innocent people.

**4. Extortion and Illegal Activities-** LWE groups often engage in extortion and other illegal activities to fund their operations. For ex- Demands of 'protection money' from local businesses, leading to economic stagnation in affected areas.

**5. Political Instability-** Maoist insurgency contributes to political instability in India, as the affected regions struggle with governance issues and weakened trust in democratic institutions. This can undermine the overall stability of the country.

**6. Human Rights Violations-** LWE groups have been known to commit human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, abductions, and torture. These actions not only **harm innocent civilians** but **also tarnish India's international reputation**.

**7. Alienation of Tribal Populations:** Maoist insurgents often exploit and **alienate tribal population** in their stronghold, creating a cycle of violence and mistrust between the communities and the government. This **makes it difficult to address the root causes of extremism** and **to foster long-term peace and stability**.

#### What are the various government policies to control Maoist insurgency in India?

The Indian government has employed various approaches to control Left-wing extremism (LWE), **focusing on a combination of security, development, and political initiatives**. Some of these approaches include:

#### Security Schemes for LWE

<b>National Policy and Action Plan to address Left Wing Extremism 2015</b>	This <b>comprehensive action plan</b> aims to <b>enhance the capabilities of security forces</b> to combat LWE. This action plan <b>ensures that the rights and entitlements of local communities are safeguarded</b> and focuses on socio-economic development in affected regions.
<b>SAMADHAN Doctrine</b>	SAMADHAN Doctrine encompasses the <b>entire strategy of government from short-term policy to long-term policy</b> formulated at different levels. <b>SAMADHAN</b> stands for <b>S</b> - Smart Leadership, <b>A</b> - Aggressive Strategy, <b>M</b> - Motivation and Training, <b>A</b> - Actionable Intelligence, <b>D</b> - Dashboard Based KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and KRAs (Key Result Areas), <b>H</b> - Harnessing Technology, <b>A</b> - Action plan for each Theatre, <b>N</b> - No access to Financing.
<b>Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme</b>	Under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme, the <b>Central Government reimburses the Security Related Expenditure of 10 LWE affected States</b> . These security related <b>expenditures are related to training and operational needs of security forces, ex-gratia payment to the family of civilians/security forces killed/injured in LWE violence, rehabilitation of surrendered LWE cadres, community policing, village defence committees and publicity materials</b> .
<b>Special Infrastructure Scheme (SIS)</b>	Under this scheme, funds are being provided to States for strengthening the infrastructure related to Security. Under this scheme 250 Fortified Police Stations are being constructed.

#### Development Schemes for LWE

<b>Road Connectivity Project for LWE affected areas (RCPLWE)</b>	The Government introduced this scheme in 2016 <b>for improving road connectivity in LWE affected States</b> . The roads included under the scheme have been identified by the Ministry of Home Affairs in consultation with the State Governments and the security agencies. <b>8124 km roads and 306 bridge works have been completed under this scheme</b> .
<b>LWE Mobile Tower Project</b>	This project has been <b>launched to improve mobile connectivity in the LWE affected areas</b> . The aim is to <b>improve the communication network for better governance delivery</b> .

<b>Aspirational Programme</b>	<b>District</b>	The Ministry of Home Affairs has been <b>tasked with the monitoring of Aspirational districts programme in 35 LWE affected districts</b> . Government has implemented various welfare and development schemes to address the root causes of LWE, such as poverty, unemployment, and social inequality in these aspirational districts.
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### Socio-Political Schemes for LWE

<b>Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996</b>	Through this act <b>government aims to strengthen local governance in LWE-affected areas</b> by promoting democratic participation and empowering local institutions.
<b>Civic Action Programme (CAP)</b>	This Scheme aims to <b>bridge the gaps between Security Forces and local people</b> through personal interaction and bring the human face of Security Forces before the local population. The <b>CAPFs deployed in LWE affected areas are provided funds for conducting civic activities</b> for the welfare of the local people.
<b>Media Plan</b>	Government is implementing this Scheme in LWE affected areas to counter the false propaganda of Maoists. Under this scheme activities like <b>Tribal Youth Exchange programmes</b> are organised by NYKS along with radio jingles, documentaries and pamphlet distribution.
<b>Inter-State Coordination</b>	The government is promoting coordination among states affected by LWE to ensure a unified response. For Ex- <b>Regular meeting of Union Home minister with the CMs and DyCMs of all LWE states</b> .
<b>Surrender and Rehabilitation Policies</b>	Government has introduced surrender and rehabilitation policies for LWE cadres willing to <b>renounce violence and join mainstream society</b> . These policies offer financial incentives, vocational training, and support for reintegration into society.

### What are issues associated with government measures to control LWE?

- 1. Human Rights Violations-** Security operations against Maoist insurgency have sometimes led to **human rights violations**, including **extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests**, and **harassment of civilians**. These actions can alienate local communities and create resentment against the government.
- 2. Inadequate Implementation of Development Schemes-** Despite numerous welfare and development programs, their implementation in LWE-affected areas is often hampered by **corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies**, and a **lack of coordination between various agencies**. As a result, the intended benefits may not reach the affected communities.
- 3. Insufficient Capacity Building of Security Forces-** The security forces sometimes lack specialized training, equipment, and intelligence support to effectively tackle Maoist insurgency. This sometimes leads to **operational failures** and **increased casualties** among security personnel.
- 4. Reliance on Force-** Excessive focus on security operations overshadows the need for political engagement and dialogue with LWE groups. A **purely militaristic approach could prolong the conflict** and hinder efforts to find a peaceful resolution.
- 5. Incomplete Rehabilitation Programs-** While surrender and rehabilitation policies exist, they are not effectively implemented. There are certain cases of **Inadequate support for reintegration** such as insufficient vocational training or financial assistance.

**6. Lack of Trust and Cooperation-** Mistrust between the government and affected communities **hinders the implementation of development initiatives** and security operations. Building trust is crucial for fostering cooperation and addressing the root causes of LWE.

**7. Political Instability and Opportunism:** Political instability and opportunism undermines efforts to address LWE. Politicians often **exploit the issue for electoral gains**. This further complicates the government's response to the problem.

Read More- [Tackling the Maoists: On left-wing extremism](#)

### What should be done to effectively control Left Wing Extremism in India?

**1. Focus on Development-** The **successful implementation of development projects** in **Andhra Pradesh** and **Telangana** reduced Maoist insurgency. Thus we must focus more on the effective implementation of development projects.

**2. Strengthen Local Governance-** Empowering local governments to address grievances and deliver public services effectively, as seen in the **Panchayati Raj system's success in reducing Naxalism in West Bengal**, can help build trust between communities and authorities.

**3. Enhance Security Forces' Capabilities:** Provide specialized training and better equipment to security personnel, similar to the **Greyhounds force in Andhra Pradesh**, which proved effective in countering Maoist insurgency due to their specialized training and local knowledge.

**4. Encourage Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution:** Engage in meaningful dialogue with Maoist groups to address their grievances, similar to the **peace talks between the Indian government and Naga insurgents**, which led to a ceasefire and reduced violence in the region.

**5. Foster Community Engagement:** Involve local communities in decision-making processes and development projects, as seen in the success of the **Janmabhoomi program in Andhra Pradesh**, where community participation helped build trust and reduce Maoist influence.

**6. Ensure Accountability and Transparency-** Strengthen measures to prevent corruption and human rights abuses, as demonstrated by the **National Human Rights Commission's interventions** in cases of alleged human rights violations by security forces, which can help restore public trust in government institutions.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- **GS 3: Security Issues** – Linkages between development and spread of extremism.

### Fourth global mass coral bleaching- Explained Pointwise

According to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the **fourth global mass coral bleaching event** has been triggered by extraordinary ocean temperatures. According to the EU Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S), **the average sea surface temperature (SST) has been increasing** and it has reached a record monthly high of 21.07 degree Celsius. This fourth mass coral bleaching could have **serious consequences for ocean life and millions of people** who rely on reefs for **food, jobs, and coastal defence**.





Created by 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 colors 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?

**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

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

Read More- [Fifth mass coral bleaching event](#)

#### What are the Initiatives to Protect Corals?

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

**1. 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.

**2. 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.

**3. 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

**4. 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- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Environment Conservation

### Food Safety Regulations in India- Explained Pointwise

The recent report **alleging the multinational company Nestle for adding unhealthy amounts of sugar to its baby products** has raised concerns about the lax implementation of Food Safety Regulations in India. A study by International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) and the Switzerland-based investigating agency, Public Eye, has alleged that the **company added 2.7 g of sugar per serving to its baby food brand, Cerelac**, destined for developing countries, including India. Indian Food safety standards regulator FSSAI has begun investigations regarding the violations of food safety standards.



## FSSAI Initiatives For Food Safety

<b>Eat Right India Movement</b>	This movement has been launched to <b>transform the country's food system</b> in order to ensure <b>safe, healthy and sustainable food</b> for all Indians. It is aligned to the <b>National Health Policy 2017</b> with its focus on preventive and promotive healthcare.
<b>Eat Right Station Certification</b>	It is awarded by FSSAI to railway stations that set benchmarks ( <b>as per the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006</b> ) in providing safe and wholesome food to passengers.
<b>Food Hygiene Rating Scheme</b>	It is a <b>certification system developed by FSSAI</b> for food businesses supplying food directly to consumers, either on or off-premise.
<b>Food Safety Mitra scheme</b>	The scheme aims to create an <b>ecosystem of Food Safety Mitras (FSM)</b> who will help Food Business organisations (FBO) with licensing and registration, training and auditing hygiene among others
<b>State food safety index</b>	It is an index developed by FSSAI to measure the performance of states on five significant parameters of food safety- <b>compliance, Human resources and institutional data, Food testing- infrastructure and surveillance, training &amp; capacity building and consumer empowerment</b>

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### What are the operational Food Safety regulations in India?

**Food Safety-** Food safety refers to the **procedures, practices, and regulations** implemented to **ensure that food is safe for consumption**. It **encompasses all measures** taken to **prevent foodborne illnesses, contamination, and other hazards** that may arise during the **production, processing, storage, distribution, and preparation of food**.

**Food Safety Regulator in India-** Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is the food safety regulator in India. Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is an **autonomous statutory body** established under the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006** (FSS Act). **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India** is the administrative Ministry of FSSAI. Its headquarter is in Delhi.

**Role of FSSAI-** The main role of the authority is to **regulate and monitor** the **manufacturing, processing, distribution, sale and import of food** while ensuring **safe and wholesome food to the consumers**.

### Food Safety Regulations in India

<b>Food Safety and Standard Act, 2006</b>	The act aims to establish a <b>single reference point</b> for all matters relating to <b>food safety and standards</b> , by moving from multi- level, multi-departmental control to a single line of command. The Act <b>established FSSAI and the State Food Safety Authorities</b> for each State.
<b>Food Safety and Standards Rule, 2011</b>	The act provides for <b>Food Safety Appellate Tribunal</b> and the <b>Registrar of the Appellate Tribunal, food safety and standards on Organic Food</b> and <b>regulates Food Advertising in India</b> . The rule prohibits and <b>restrict sales or approval for Non- Specified Food and Food Ingredients</b> . It also covers <b>Licensing and Registration, Packaging and Labelling of Food Businesses, Food Product Standards and Food Additives Regulation</b> .

### What are the challenges to food Safety in India?

- 1. Rampant Adulteration-** Widespread and rampant adulteration of food products which includes milk, spices, and edible oils, remains a grave challenge to food safety in India. **For ex-** A 2012 study conducted by the FSSAI across 33 states found that **milk in India** was **adulterated with diluted water, detergent, fat and even urea**.
- 2. Feeding of 'empty calories'**- Major packed food brand products **contain items that have no nutritive value** like **added sugar**. These are major causes of diabetes, cardio vascular diseases and obesity in India.
- 3. Weak Enforcement and Accountability-** The enforcement of food safety regulations is often lax in India. **Many food businesses operate without proper licenses and continue to compromise on safety standards**.
- 4. Corrupt practices on part of FMCG players-** The Fast Moving Consumer Goods industry players are often **found to indulge in violation of the labelling requirements** about the ingredients in their products. **For ex-** Maggi noodles ban due to high levels of lead and MSG.
- 5. Lack of Infrastructure and Resources-** The food safety standards domain in India suffers from the **challenge of shortage of laboratories, trained personnel, and funds necessary for regular and stringent food inspections**. **For ex-** Use of synthetic sweetener in cake leading to death of teenage girl in Punjab.
- 6. Limited Public Awareness-** A significant proportion of the Indian population remains unaware of food safety practices, including proper food handling, storage, and hygiene. **For ex-** **Over use of pesticides and fruit ripening agents in agriculture cause cancer**.

**7. Complex Regulatory Framework-** The complex regulatory framework for food safety makes it **difficult for small and medium enterprises businesses, to adhere to the necessary standards.** These also lead to **regulatory gaps and inconsistencies in enforcement.**

### What are the consequences of the Decline in Food Safety Standards in India?

The deteriorating state of food safety and the violation of food safety standards in India have far reaching consequences, which are mentioned below-

**1. Deterioration of Public Health-** Consumption of contaminated or adulterated food leads to a range of public health issues like **foodborne illnesses, gastrointestinal disorders, cardiovascular diseases, obesity and diabetes.** The impact is particularly severe on vulnerable populations like children and the elderly.

**2. Economic Implications-** Contaminated and unsafe food products often leads to massive product recalls, loss of consumer trust, and damage to the reputation of the food brand. **For ex- Recall of Maggi after test results confirmed of high levels of lead and MSG.**

**3. Undermining of 'Make in India' Initiative-** The **decline in food safety standards** become a significant roadblock in India's effort to promote indigenous manufacturing and boost exports under the 'Make in India' initiative. Safety concerns deter both domestic and international consumers from embracing Indian products. **For ex- Rejection of Indian agricultural and food products from EU markets on account of violation of food standards. Recent ban on MDH spices in Hong Kong.**

**4. Environmental Impact-** The use of substandard and unsafe agricultural practices harm the environment through **soil and water contamination.** The overuse of pesticides and the mishandling of food waste contribute to **ecological degradation.**

Read More- [In FSSAI index, nearly all major states slip on food safety](#)

### What are the initiatives taken by the government and FSSAI to promote Food Safety?

<b>Eat Right India Movement</b>	This movement has been <b>launched to transform the country's food system</b> in order to ensure safe, healthy and sustainable food for all Indians. It is <b>aligned to the National Health Policy 2017</b> with its focus on preventive and promotive healthcare.
<b>Eat Right Station Certification</b>	It is awarded by FSSAI to railway stations that set benchmarks ( <b>as per the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006</b> ) in providing safe and wholesome food to passengers.
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<b>State food safety index</b>	It is an index developed by FSSAI to measure the performance of states on five significant parameters of food safety- <b>compliance, Human resources and institutional data, Food testing- infrastructure and surveillance, training &amp; capacity building and consumer empowerment</b>

### What should be the way Forward?

**1. Strengthen Infrastructure and Resources-** There must be an increase in the **investment in food safety infrastructure**, including **laboratories, training facilities, and regulatory bodies.** Adequate funding and resources are needed to **conduct regular inspections and ensure compliance with safety standards.**

**2. Simplification of Regulations-** The regulatory framework for food safety should be **made more accessible and business-friendly**. Simplification and streamlining of regulations **can encourage compliance**, especially among **small and medium-sized enterprises**.

**3. Strict Enforcement and Accountability-** Regulatory bodies must rigorously enforce food safety standards. This includes imposing stringent penalties for violations and taking legal action against non-compliant businesses. **For ex- Specification of an upper limit for added sugars.**

**4. Enhancement of Public Awareness-** A comprehensive public awareness campaign on food safety should be launched targeting both consumers and producers regarding the importance of food safety.

**5. Encouragement of Responsible Agricultural Practices-** **Promoting responsible and sustainable agricultural practices** can reduce contamination risks at the source. **Encouraging the use of organic farming, reducing pesticide usage, and implementing proper waste management** are essential steps.

The controversy around Nestle should lead to debates on the quality of products in the market for children and catalyze the tightening of rules and plugging regulatory gaps.

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

**UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Government Intervention and regulation of various sectors**

## Healthcare Expenditure In India- Explained Pointwise

The Supreme Court of India has **expressed concerns** over the **rising Healthcare expenditure in India**. The SC bench is **hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL)** filed by an NGO praying for direction to determine charges in hospitals across the country in terms of **Rule 9 of the Clinical Establishment Act**. The rules mandate notification of a standard rate for various medical treatments and procedures, subject to certain conditions and in keeping with the living standards of different regions.

The Court has **threatened to impose the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) rates on all hospitals** as an interim measure, if the government failed to find a solution. The SC has directed the **Union Health Secretary to convene a meeting of state health secretaries** to ensure that **standard rates are notified within a month**.

### What is the structure of Healthcare Sector of India?

**Healthcare Sector in India-** It comprises hospitals, medical devices, clinical trials, outsourcing, telemedicine, medical tourism, health insurance and medical equipment.

India's healthcare delivery system is categorised into two major components – public and private.

**Public Sector-** It comprises **limited secondary and tertiary care institutions in key cities** and focuses on providing basic healthcare facilities in the form of Primary Healthcare Centers (PHCs) in rural areas.

**Private Sector-** The private sector **provides the majority of secondary, tertiary, and quaternary care institutions** with a major concentration in metros, tier-I, and tier-II cities.

The exorbitant rates charged by the private sector and the low public expenditure by the govt on healthcare has led to the increase in health care expenditure in India.

### What is Status of Health Care Expenditure in India?

**1. High Out of Pocket Expenditure (OoPE)-** According to the **National Health Accounts** over **47% of the total medical spending** is done from people's pockets. India's total out-of-pocket expenditure is **around 2.3 % of GDP**.

**2. Low Government Expenditure-** The total central government budget for health (not including research) will be roughly **Rs 86,175 crore** (Budget 2023-24). This translates to **only Rs 615 for every citizen**.

**3. High rate of Healthcare inflation-** Healthcare Inflation in India is higher than the overall inflation rates in India. According to estimates the healthcare inflation has risen by **9.6% in 2023** and is **expected to rise by 11% in 2024**.

**4. Low Healthcare coverage-** The Health insurance coverage is very low In India. **Nearly 400 million individuals in India have zero access to health insurance**.

### What are the Challenges in Reducing Health care Expenditure in India?

**1. Vested Interest of Private Healthcare Industry-** The private healthcare industry is entrenched everywhere in India and has extremely vested Interests of generating huge profits. **The private health care industry has strong links with politics and government**. Many politicians are directly involved in the medical education and hospital sectors.

**2. Non applicability of 'Cashless everywhere' scheme of General Insurance Industry-** The lack of standardised treatment rates and resistance of private healthcare industry, has defunct the 'Cashless everywhere' scheme of General Insurance Industry.

**3. Higher cost of treatment in private hospitals-** The private hospitals in India charge higher rates of treatment due to **lack of proper regulations and enforcement**. **For ex- Cataract surgery in a government hospital costs up to Rs 10,000 while the same costs around Rs 30,000-1,40,000 in a private facility**.

**4. Low Healthcare expenditure by the Govt-** The government (Centre and states put together) spends about Rs 2.8 lakh crore, that is **roughly around 1.1% of the GDP**. This is extremely low when compared to other government health expenditure in countries like **China (3%), Thailand (2.7%), Vietnam (2.7%) and Sri Lanka (1.4%)**.

**5. Non implementation of Clinical Establishment (Central Government) Rules 2010-** These rules mandate the **notification of a standard rate of treatment** in consultation with states for the treatment and procedures of ailments in metros, cities and towns. However, these rules have not been implemented resulting in higher cost of treatment.

Read More- [Out-of-pocket health spending still high, despite hike in government expenditure](#)

### What are the advantages of reducing Healthcare expenditure in India?

**1. Improving the Access to Healthcare-** The Lancet in its latest study ranked India at **145th among 195 countries in terms of quality and accessibility of healthcare**, behind its neighbours China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Bhutan. Thus, there is a need to decrease the Healthcare expenditure to make it more accessible in case of future epidemic.

**2. Improved Health Outcomes-** Affordable healthcare can lead to earlier detection and treatment of diseases, resulting in improved health outcomes and a decrease in the burden of illness. **For ex- Early detection and treatment of Non-Communicable diseases like Cardiovascular Diseases**.

**3. Reduction of Financial Burden-** Reducing healthcare expenditure can alleviate this financial burden and improve household financial stability by **reducing their high out of pocket expenditure**. According to the WHO, **55 million people fall into poverty or deeper poverty every year** due to catastrophic expenditures on health.



**4. Social Justice-** Universal healthcare and publicly funded health system would provide timely, effective and free care, irrespective of social class. This in turn will promote social justice and the **fulfillment of DPSP principles**. Promote the healthcare of elderly and the children belonging to lower economic strata.

#### What have been the Government initiatives to reduce healthcare expenditure in India?

Mentioned below are the govt initiatives to reduce healthcare expenditure in India.

<b>Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)</b>	AB-PMJAY, launched in 2018, is a <b>national health protection scheme</b> that provides financial protection to over 100 million families for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.
<b>Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs)</b>	The government is working towards <b>transforming primary health centers into HWCs</b> to provide comprehensive primary healthcare services, including preventive and promotive care.
<b>Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY)</b>	PMSSY aims to <b>enhance tertiary care capacities and strengthen medical education in the country</b> by setting up new AIIMS (All India Institutes of Medical Sciences) institutions and upgrading existing government medical colleges.
<b>Jan Aushadhi Scheme</b>	The Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) aims to <b>provide quality generic medicines</b> at affordable prices through Jan Aushadhi Kendras.
<b>National Digital Health Mission (NDHM)</b>	NDHM aims to create a digital health ecosystem, including <b>health IDs for citizens</b> and the <b>establishment of a national digital health infrastructure</b> .

#### What Should be the Way Forward?

- 1. Implementation of the NITI Aayog Action Plan for Health-** It has recommended to focus on public health through significantly increasing government expenditure on it (**2.5% of GDP**) and **prioritize preventive care rather than provide curative care**.
- 2. Rationalisation of Health care rates-** The Health care rates must be rationalised according to the Clinical Establishment (Central Government) Rules 2010, for **increasing the viability of public healthcare schemes like the AB-PMJAY**.
- 3. National commission for Health care cost management-** The government should appoint a national commission to make recommendations for the spending on healthcare systems and monitor its performance.
- 4. Universal health coverage-** State governments **should draw up blueprints for universal health coverage** and begin experimenting and innovating with pilot programmes.

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

**UPSC Syllabus- GS 2-** Issues related to Health

### India's Chess Success- Explained Pointwise

The recent India's Chess success is a **resounding success** and is **making global headlines**. In FIDE's (International Chess Federation) **rankings** list for **April 2024**, there are **5 Indian men among the top 25**. In the women's ranking, there are **3 Indians among the top 15** and in junior rankings there are **7 Indians among the**

top 20. There has been emergence of teen chess sensations who are restless to leave the prodigy tags behind and fight the big boys.

### What is Chess? What has been India's Chess Success Over the Years?

**Chess-** Chess is a board game for **two players**. It is played on a square chessboard with **64 squares** arranged in an **eight-by-eight grid**. One player controls **sixteen white pieces**– **one king, one queen, two rooks, two bishops, two knights**, and **eight pawns**, while the other player controls **sixteen black pieces**.

**All India Chess Federation (AICF)-** The Federation was **founded in 1951** and is affiliated to **Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE)**, the world body for chess. It is responsible for player development and training & representing India in International Chess Organisations.

### India's Recent Chess Success

<b>Emergence of Lower Aged Chess Grandmasters</b>	There has been emergence of Grandmasters like <b>R Praggnanandhaa, Vidit Gujrathi, D Gukesh, Koneru Humpy</b> who have become <b>Grandmasters</b> at the age of <b>12-15 years</b> . India's Chess Stalwart <b>Vishwanathan Anand</b> became a chess grandmaster at the age of 18 years.
<b>Improved India's Rankings in International Chess</b>	India is <b>ranked No. 4 in the world</b> in international chess, with <b>64 GMs</b> and an <b>average of 2668 points</b> .
<b>World Cup Final at Baku, Azerbaijan</b>	R Praggnanandhaa made it to the finals of the World Cup Final at Baku, Azerbaijan in 2023 and <b>finished runner-up</b> .
<b>Phenomenal Success at the recently concluded Candidates tournament</b>	<b>D Gukesh's victory at the Candidates tournament</b> , makes him the youngest man ever to make the cut for the World Chess Championships.
<b>Rise of Women Chess Players</b>	Veteran <b>Humpy Koneru</b> and the <b>22-year-old first-timer Vaishali</b> both finished joint second on points at the Candidates tournament.
<b>Rise of Junior Chess Players</b>	<b>One-third of the top 30 junior Chess Players</b> in the world are Indians.

These recent phenomenal achievements have prompted the Great Magnus Carlen (World's number 1 player and five time world chess champion) to describe India as a leading chess nation in the world.

### What Factors have contributed to India's Chess Success?

**1. Rapid Growth in Grassroot Base of Chess Players-** There has been rapid explosion of Chess In India aided by **cheap internet data packs** and **easily available chess apps** on mobile phones. It has helped players to **hone their skills online** through **electronic databases, analytical resources**, and **24×7 chess websites**.

**2. Rise of Online Chess tournaments-** There has been an implosion of Online tournaments in the post-pandemic era which have **led to a lot of Indian youngsters** taking on **super grandmasters** and **even former world champions**. These contests have been crucial in making these elite players seem less formidable.

**3. Development of Chess Academies-** The establishment of Chess academies like **WestBridge Anand Chess Academy**, have played a crucial role in nurturing young talents and providing them with guidance. The mentoring provided by the tallest chess figure in the country **Vishwanathan Anand**, has been **instrumental in nurturing young talents**.

**4. New Generation of Elite Players taking up coaching roles-** A generation of elite players have taken up coaching duties to help out the next generation. **For ex-** **Grandmaster RB Ramesh** coaching R Praggnanandhaa and Vaishali, **GM Vishnu Prasanna** coaching D Gukesh since age 11 and **GM Surya Shekhar Ganguly** coaching Vidit Gujrati.

**5. Cash-rich franchise-style tournaments-** The invention of franchise style Chess tournaments which are cash rich have also propelled Indian Chess forward. **For ex-** **Global Chess League** funded by **Tech Mahindra in collaboration with FIDE**, where Indian prodigies like **Gukesh, Pragg** have played in the same team as **Magnus Carlsen**.

**6. Egalitarian, accessibility and high social acceptance-** Chess as a game is **highly accessible** and **is egalitarian nature with no socio-economic barriers to entry**. Also, the **highly cerebral nature of the game** has earned it high social acceptance in India.

**7. Increasing Media Coverage and Spectator Engagement-** The media coverage of Chess events like **Tata Steel Chess Championship** and **Chennai Chess Olympiad** has led to enhanced spectator engagement.

#### **What are the Challenges to further development of Chess as a sport in India?**

**1. Limited mainstream engagement as compared to other mainstream sports-** Indian mainstream sports is **dominated by Cricket**, which attracts huge sponsorship, money and fame. Chess is still at a nascent stage of development for gaining popularity in India.

**2. Lack of Government patronage-** Chess lacks the government patronage which is provided for other sports in the form of assured government jobs in **RBI, Railways, Defence** sector.

**3. Low Women participation-** Even though the queens are the most powerful piece of the checkered squares, the Chess sports arena is mainly dominated by men. **Out of the 84 Grand Masters (GMs) in India, only 3 are women.** (Koneru Humpy, Harika Dronavalli and Vaishali Rameshbabu)

**4. Lack of proper Infrastructure in Rural Areas-** Many parts of India, especially rural areas lack proper infrastructure for chess training and tournaments like **lack of access to quality chess clubs, coaches, and training facilities.**

**5. Financial Constraints-** Chess training and participation in tournaments is an **expensive affair**, which makes it inaccessible to many talented individuals from underprivileged backgrounds, to pursue the sport with zeal.

Read More- [Chess ecosystem offers lessons for other sports](#)

#### **What should be the Way Forward?**

**1. Conducting more tournaments-** Conducting world level elite tournaments like the **Super Grandmaster tournament** would help in producing more Grandmasters. We must also aim to **scale up the TATA Chess championship.**

**2. Increasing the Government and corporate patronage-** The government and corporate patronage must be provided **in terms of jobs and sponsorships** for further development of Chess in India.

**3. Increasing Media Coverage-** Increased media coverage of the chess championship events will help in raising the profile of chess in India. **For ex-** **Live telecast of Chess events.**

**4. Providing International exposure-** Providing financial support and logistical planning to Indian players to compete in international tournaments regularly is essential for their growth and development. **For ex-** **Need more academies like WACA which is being run by Vishwanathan Anand.**

**5. Promoting more women in the sport-** Women must be promoted in the sport by providing **more female scholarships** for **travelling abroad** and **accommodation**.

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

**UPSC Syllabus-** GS Paper 2- Government policies for various sectors

### **Inheritance Tax in India- Explained Pointwise**

Recently, during the Lok Sabha elections campaigning, the **issue of introduction of Inheritance Tax in India** has led to the eruption of a major political row. Inheritance Tax is perceived by many as a **taxation tool for equitable wealth distribution**. However, there remains **concerns** about its use as a **symbolic tool** and **its marketing as a Robin Hood Tax**, for populism.

**What is Inheritance tax? What has been its history in India? What is its status around the world?**

**Inheritance Tax-** This tax is imposed on those those who inherit assets from a deceased person. The rate of this tax **depends on the value of the property received by the heir** and his **relationship to the decedent**. This tax is a form of **death tax**.

#### **India's history of Inheritance Tax**

India used to impose another form of Inheritance Tax (Death Tax), which was popularly known as the **estate duty**. It was **introduced in 1953**. The Estate duty was **levied on the market value of all immovable properties in India**, as well as on all movable property passed on to successors upon the death of an individual.

However, **large number of litigations** and **high tax administration costs**, led to its scrapping by the Rajiv Gandhi Government in 1985.

#### **Inheritance Tax in US**

In the United States, inheritance tax is levied on money or property that is inherited from a deceased person's estate. The inheritance tax is fulfilled by the beneficiary. The tax is implemented in 6 states of US- **Lowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Nebraska, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania**.

Calls to tax billionaires to build more equitable societies have been growing louder globally.

- Levying a global minimum corporate tax rate
- Proposal in the US to levy a minimum 25% tax on taxpayers with wealth over \$100 million.
- France and Brazil have been pushing for a G20 declaration on taxing the super rich

**Why has there been growing demands for the implementation of Inheritance Tax 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 **Credit Suisse 2018 Global Wealth Report**, the **richest 1% own 51.5%** and the **richest 10% account for 77.4% of the nation's wealth**. Bottom 60% of the population own only a meagre 4.7% nation's wealth.

**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. Endowments to Social Sector Institutions-** Indian hospitals, universities, and other institutions need endowments and funds from inheritance tax. **For ex- Harvard University receiving funds from estates, is exempt from Inheritance tax.**

**4. Need for more direct taxes-** The government's fiscal deficit has increased after the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, additional sources of direct taxes like inheritance tax need to be explored to contain the fiscal deficit as **mandated by the FRBM Act.**

**5. International practices-** **Developed countries** such as England, France, Germany, the USA and **India's South East Asian counterparts** like Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand have been charging inheritance tax.

### What are the benefits of Inheritance Tax?

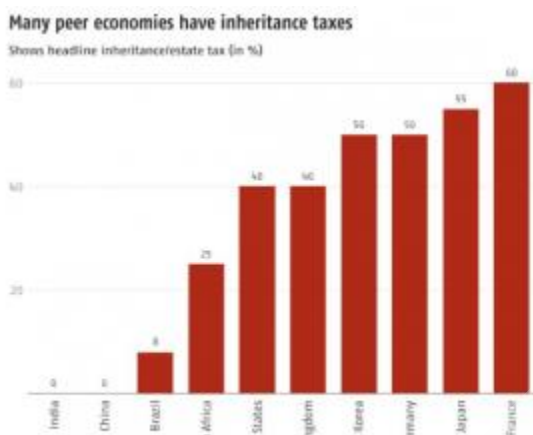


Figure 1. Source- Business Standard

**1. Reduction of 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.

**2. Greater financial resources for Govt-** According to an Oxfam Survey of 2018, 51 of a total of 101 billionaires are more than 65 years old and collectively own ₹10.54 trillion. A moderate **inheritance tax of 10-15%** (like other Asian countries such as the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand) can act as a stable and significant source of revenue for the government.

**3. Greater Revenue to fund public welfare-**

Inheritance tax provides additional sources of revenue to the government for **expansion of social sector programmes**, and its **push towards universal health insurance.**

**4. 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.

**5. Progressive in nature-** Inheritance tax is a progressive tax as it places a **higher tax burden on wealthy individuals** only.

### What are the Challenges in the implementation of Inheritance Tax in India?

**1. Difficulty in evaluation-** The government will have to incur **large levels of expense and expertise** in the valuation of property and collection of the revenues accruing from inheritance tax.

**2. Risk of closure of businesses-** Inheritance tax will create extra pressure on less profitable businesses and small businesses, as the recipient of the property may not have the money available to pay tax. This could also lead to **situations of distress sale.**

**3. Flight of Capitals and Entrepreneurs-** Inheritance tax can result in the **outflow of entrepreneurial human capital and financial resources.**

**4. Dampening of capital asset creation and high inflation-** Inheritance tax can **discourage savings and increase consumerism.** This can result in high inflation rates in the economy. Also, the tax can **dampen the spirit of capital asset creation** which can **hamper the economic growth.**

**5. Secondary Tax leading to double taxation-** Inheritance tax is criticized for **double taxation** as the property or money inherited has already been taxed as earned income.

Read More- [Inheritance tax- Need of the Hour](#)

#### What should be the way Forward?

**1. Introduction of higher threshold-** If the government intends to introduce inheritance tax, it should introduce it with a **higher threshold**.

**2. Making provisions for donations to hospitals and universities-** The **endowments by the super rich to the hospitals and universities should be exempted** from the inheritance tax calculations.

**3. Improving the government's tax administrative capacity-** The tax agencies should draw strength from the **information technology revolution** to reduce the marginal cost of administering and monitoring compliance of inheritance tax. **For ex- Usage of Project Insight of the Central Board of Direct Taxes.**

**4. Changes in complementary taxes-** The government must make changes in complementary taxes like the **Wealth Tax and Gift Tax** to ensure that **inheritance tax is not evaded by the super rich**. **For ex-** Increasing evidence of the creation of family trusts such as the Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) by high net-worth individuals for tax avoidance purposes.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Issues related to Indian Economy

### SC verdict on childcare leave- Explained Pointwise

Recently, a Supreme Court (SC) bench headed by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud has delivered its verdict on a **case of childcare leaves**. The court was hearing a plea by an assistant professor in the Government College, Nalagarh, **who was denied childcare leave (CCL) to attend to her child suffering from a genetic condition**. SC Court held that the **state as a model employer cannot be oblivious to the special concerns** which arise in the case of women who are part of the workforce.

#### What is the case? What is the SC verdict which expands the scope of Childcare leaves?

**Case-** The case involves denial of Child care leaves by the State Govt of Himachal Pradesh to an assistant professor for taking care of her ailing child who is suffering from Osteogenesis Imperfecta, a rare genetic disorder.

**Employer's argument-** The employer (State Govt of Himachal Pradesh) argued that it was the state's choice to not adopt the special Child care leave policy as provided under **Rule 43-C of the Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972**.

**SC Verdict-** SC directed the State Govt of Himachal Pradesh **to review its policies on Child Care Leaves (CCL) concerning working mothers**, especially mothers of children with special needs. The Court has held that the **state as a model employer cannot be oblivious to the special concerns** of working women.

#### What is the significance of the Judgement?

**1. Reaffirms the importance of Article 15 as an enabling provision-** The judgment has highlighted that Article 15 is **not merely a restrictive provision** (which restricts discrimination based on gender) but **also an enabling provision** (enables state to make special provisions for women)

**2. Addresses the issue of child care responsibilities of working women-** The judgement addresses the need for childcare services to bolster women's participation in paid work.

**3. Responsibility of state and employer to boost women employment rate-** The SC judgement puts the onus and responsibility on the state and the employer **to enable women to join and retain their employment.**

### What are the issues faced by working women in India with regards to child care?

**1. Childcare Burden on Working women-** Working women in India have to single-handedly manage the **triple burden of housework, child care work and paid work.** As per the **Time Use Survey of India, 2019**, Indian men spend 173 minutes compared to 433 minutes spent by women for unpaid domestic and care work.

**2. Marriage penalties and motherhood penalties-** Working women face 'marriage penalties' and 'motherhood penalties' due to their temporary forced withdrawal from workforce due to motherhood and childcare services.

**3. Lack of implementation of Labour codes providing creche facilities-** The new labour codes **provide for the paid maternity benefits for childcare and mandate crèches on worksites.** However, as the Annual Reports of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, these codes have been rarely implemented.

**4. High degree of informalization-** According to a 2018 study by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), **more than 95% of India's working women are informal workers.** The absence of social security net, like paid leaves for Child care, in the informal sector discourages women from participating in the labour force.

**5. Challenges with National Crèches Scheme-** The scheme suffers from the challenges of underfunding, its limited reach and usage.

### What are the advantages of providing childcare leaves?

**1. Economic Boost-** According to the IMF, **gender parity in the workforce** can improve India's GDP by 27%. A decrease in women's unpaid care work is related to a **10-percentage point** increase in women's labour force participation rate.

**2. Tackling poverty-** It helps to tackle the **phenomenon of feminisation of poverty**, which is a result of highly informalised work performed by women.

**3. Improvement in Social Indicators-** Encouraging more women to enter the formal workforce will improve indicators like **Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR).**

**4. Self Confidence and Dignity-** Financial independence enables women to play a greater role in decision-making like **family planning.**

Read More- [Women Empowerment](#)

### What steps have been taken by the government to provide child care facilities for Women?

<b>Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017</b>	The Act more than doubled the duration of paid maternity leave for <b>women employees to 26 weeks.</b> It proposed an option to work from home after this period, on mutual agreement with the employer. It made <b>crèche facilities mandatory for establishments employing 50 or more women.</b>
<b>Anganwadi centres under the ICDS</b>	They provide maternal and child nutritional security, a clean and safe environment, and early childhood education. Thus, they <b>facilitate the ability of women to re-enter work post-childbirth.</b>

<b>Mission Shakti project</b>	Under this project, Ministry of Women and Child Development has introduced the 'Palna Scheme'. It provides options to the state governments to open standalone crèches or turn Anganwadi centres into crèches.
<b>National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013</b>	Apart from providing affordable food, it entitles pregnant and lactating mothers to a cash transfer of at least INR 6,000. This is done to break the compulsion for early returning to work.

### What should be the way forward?

- 1. Child Care Subsidies-** Child-care subsidies should be provided to free up mothers' time to enter the labour force, which would have significant implications in increasing female employment.
- 2. Institutionalisation of Anganwadi centre-cum creches-** There is a need to institutionalise Anganwadi centre-cum creches with a committed budget
- 3. Incorporation of special childcare leaves-** The state governments must also incorporate special Child care leaves as provided under Rule 43-C of the Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972.
- 4. Collective responsibility of State, employers and communities-** Labour markets need to consider women as primary earners and enable them to take up full employment. There is evidence of high female labour force participation in countries where unpaid care work responsibilities are equally shared.

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

**UPSC Syllabus-** GS 3 Inclusive Growth, GS 1 Women empowerment, GS 2 Vulnerable sections of the society

## Supreme Court VVPAT judgement- Explained Pointwise

Recently, the Supreme Court VVPAT judgement reposed the faith in the integrity of the current electoral process involving the use of VVPAT and EVM. The Supreme Court has rejected a plea for 100% verification of Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) slips with the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) count.

### What is the recent Supreme Court VVPAT Judgement?

- 1. No change for the Voter and Voting process-** Voting will continue to take place using EVMs, with 100% of the machines attached to a VVPAT unit. Moreover, as per the existing provisions, VVPAT slips of five randomly selected Assembly constituencies or segments would be counted to verify with the count of the EVMs.
- 2. Storage of symbol loading units (SLUs) –** The SC has directed the EC to adopt some new post poll procedures. The supreme court has given directions to the EC to seal and store the symbol loading units (SLUs) for 45 days after declaration of results.

**Note-** SLUs are memory units that are first connected to a computer to load election symbols onto it, and then used to enter symbols of the candidates on the VVPAT machines. These SLUs are to be opened, examined and dealt with in the same way as EVMs.

- 3. Candidates can seek verification of the EVMs-** SC has enabled candidates to seek verification of the EVMs. Candidates coming second or third can ask for a verification of the burnt memory semi controllers in 5% of EVMs per Assembly segment of each Parliamentary constituency.



**4. EC to examine the feasibility of counting VVPAT slips using a machine-** SC has nudged the EC to examine the feasibility of counting the **VVPAT slips using a counting machine**. VVPAT slips can have a barcode printed on them for enhancing the counting speed.

### **What is the history of Introduction of EVMs and VVPATs in India?**

**Introduction of EVMs-** EVMs were **introduced for the first time** for conducting general election in Kerala in May 1982. In 2004, in the General Election to the Lok Sabha, the EVMs were used in all 543 Parliamentary Constituencies in the country.

**Introduction of VVPAT-** In Subramanian Swamy Case (2013), the SC directed the Election Commission to introduce VVPAT in EVMS in a phased manner for the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and asked the Centre to provide funds for procurement.

### **What are the advantages of EVM and VVPAT?**

#### **Advantages of EVM**

- 1. Cost effective-** Eliminates need for production and printing of ballot papers. EVMs have led to a **substantial reduction in expenses** in terms of transportation, storage, and recruiting counting staff.
- 2. Elimination of booth capturing-** EVM has eradicated booth capturing. It has **limited the rate of vote casting to four votes a minute** and has thus significantly increased the time required for casting false votes.
- 3. Increased Administrative convenience in conducting election-** EVMs provide **administrative convenience for the polling officers** on the day of the poll and has made the counting process faster and error-free.
- 4. Time effectiveness-** It has reduced the time taken to conduct elections and declare the results in India.

#### **Advantages of VVPAT**

- 1. Enables vote verification-** VVPAT provides instant feedback to voter that **vote polled has been allocated to the intended candidate**, thereby enabling vote verification mechanism.
- 2. Direct Recording Election System (DRE)-** VVPAT operates under a Direct Recording Election system (DRE) which detects fraud and existent malfunctions in the election system.
- 3. Greater transparency to the electoral process-** VVPAT enables authorities to **count the votes manually in case of dispute in the electronically polled votes**. This gives both the voters and political parties an assurance regarding electoral sanctity.

### **What are the challenges associated with EVMs and VVPAT?**

#### **Challenges with EVM**

- 1. Hacking susceptibility-** EVMs being electronic devices are **vulnerable to manipulation and hacking**. The legitimacy of the results is compromised if electronic voting machines are tampered with, undermining the electoral process as a whole.
- 2. Limited Transparency-** EVM source code is confidential and **not available for public inspection**. It is challenging for individuals and independent specialists to evaluate the security and dependability of EVMs due to a lack of transparency in their design and operation.
- 3. Inadequate Security Measures-** The voting process can be compromised by **unauthorized access, physical manipulation, or cyberattacks**, which could produce unreliable results.

### Challenges with VVPAT usage

- 1. Small sample size being used-** Currently, the sample size for checking EVM counts with VVPAT slips is **five per assembly constituency/segment**. This is not based on scientific criteria and may not detect faulty EVMs during counting.
- 2. Technological glitches-** There are challenges of malfunctioning of VVPATs due to extreme weather conditions and sensitivity to light. There are also other challenges like **paper jamming, running of ink, running out of battery**.
- 3. Voter intimidation-** The counting of voting slips using VVPAT assembly wise can result in **identification of booth-wise** polling behavior by various political parties. This may result in **profiling and intimidation**.
- 4. Storage concerns-** There are concerns associated with the safe storage of VVPAT machines and their proper integration with EVM machines.

Read More- [Voting process reforms in India](#)

### What should be the way Forward?

- 1. Addressing lacunae in VVPAT technology-** Measures like **making VVPAT independent of battery, the usage of sustainable inks** and **reducing its sensitivity to heat and light**, must be urgently taken to make VVPAT more reliable.
- 2. Evolving a proper statistical method for counting-** A proper statistical method should be deployed for **while deciding on the required proportion of tallying V-VPAT with EVMs**.
- 3. Increasing the reliability of VVPAT-** The VVPAT protocol **should be updated to offer an option for voters to cancel their vote** if they observe any discrepancies.
- 4. Open-Source Code Review-** Openness should be promoted by **allowing the general public to see the source code of EVMs**. This will **make it possible for impartial specialists to evaluate the technology's accuracy and security**.
- 5. Risk-Limiting Audit (RLA)-** These audits can be carried out for **cross-checking the electronic tally with VVPAT counts**. This proactive approach will help in maintaining the integrity of the voting process.
- 6. Public Awareness and Education-** Public must be educated on **EVM technology, security measures, and steps for a transparent electoral process** to build crucial confidence in electronic voting systems.

Rather than moving to paper ballot system of election, the focus should be on improving the efficiency, credibility and transparency of the EVM-VVPAT enabled electoral process.

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

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

## Care for elderly population in India- Explained Pointwise

The **care for elderly population in India** is an emerging challenge with the rapid growth in the number of elderly population in India. With all the focus on demographic dividend, India is also witnessing a **silent rise in the elderly population in India**. The need of the hour is to provide adequate care for the elderly population in India.

### What is the Status of Elderly Population in India?

The number of elderlies (persons above 60 years) is set to increase from **100 million in 2011** to **230 million in 2036**. By 2050, the elderly population is expected to constitute nearly **one-fifth of the total population**.

**Increase in the old age-dependence ratio-** The old age-dependence ratio denotes the number of persons aged 60-plus per 100 persons in the age group of 15-59 years.

According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's (MOSPI) 'Elderly in India 2021' report, the old-age dependency ratio is increasing in India. The old age-dependence ratio has increased from **10.9% in 1961** to **14.2% in 2011** and is projected to increase to **15.7% in 2021** and **20.1% in 2031** respectively.

### What is the need for taking care of the Elderly Population in India?

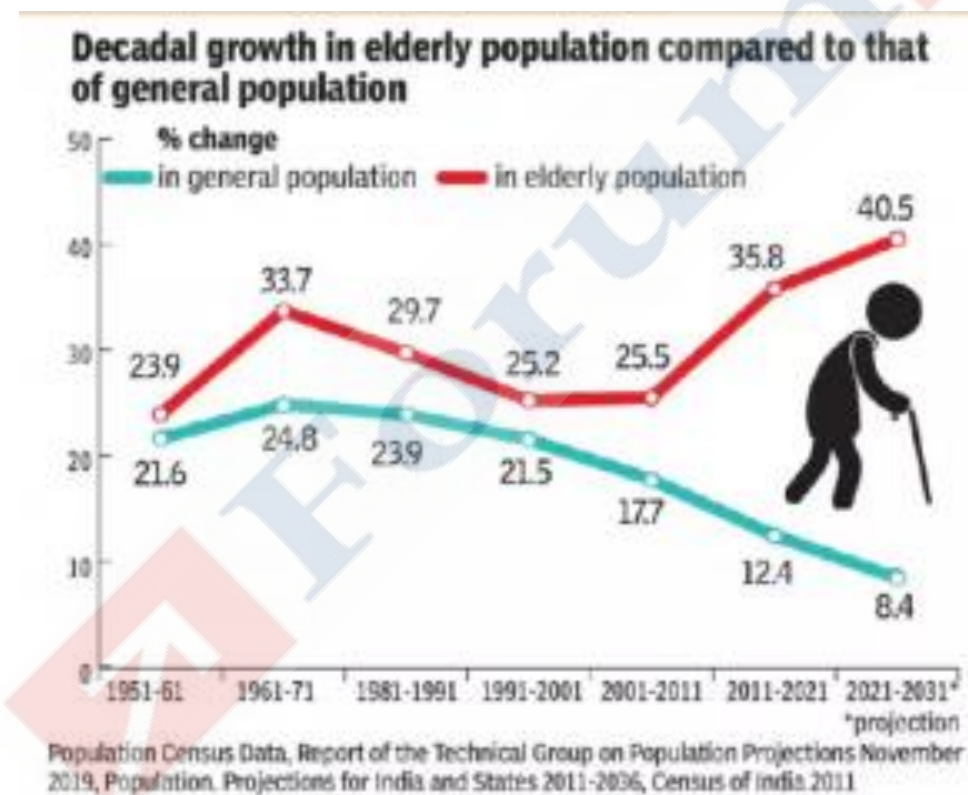


Figure 2. Source- MOSPI

**For ex- Grandparents in joint families** provide a **crucial link for transferring values and morals** to the younger generation.

**3. Social Harmony-** The deep cultural impressions and social experiences of the elderly population in India **provide the necessary buffer** against **intolerance, violence** and **hate crimes**.

**1. Channelization of experience-** Elderly peoples carry an **immense personal and professional experience**. We need to channelize these experiences by taking care of the elderly population.

**2. Generational Link-** The elderly citizens provide a **vital generational link** for the upcoming generation, such as **providing support and stability to families and society at large**.

**4. Moral and ethical responsibility-** It is the moral and ethical responsibility of the society to care for its people beyond their prime. This helps in **reciprocating their lifetime of physical, social, emotional, and economic investment** in the society.

### What are the Challenges Faced by Elderly Population in India?

#### Social Challenges

**1. Social Neglect-** Elderlies are increasingly being neglected by the younger generation due to various social reasons such as **western education**, globalisation, **nuclear family structure**.

**2. Abuse of the elderly population-** Elderlies in India face **various forms of abuse** such as **physical, sexual, psychological** or **financial**. They suffer from emotional harm that emerges from verbal or emotional abuse.

**3. Intersection of Caste and Elderly-** The lower caste elderly have to keep on working for livelihood even at old age due to financial issues. While for the upper caste elderlies, good jobs become less available and they hesitate to take menial jobs which **creates a feeling of 'worthlessness'** amongst them.

**4. Feminisation of ageing-** The life of elderly widows is riddled with stringent moral codes of the society. Social bias against elderly women results in **unjust allocation of resources, neglect, abuse, exploitation, gender-based violence, lack of access to basic services** and **prevention of ownership of assets**.

#### Economic and Financial Challenges

**1. Lack of Income & Poor financial status-** According to **PFRDA report on Financial Security of India's elderly**, a large elderly population which remains outside the pension safety net. Furthermore, the pension provided to them remains very low for their proper sustenance.

**2. Low funding by the government-** India **spends only about 1% of its gross domestic product on pensions**. India's income support systems in their current form remain incapable of catering to the old age population.

**3. Lack of housing and other basic amenities-** The housing available to a majority of the senior citizens are **sometimes inappropriate and unsuitable to their requirement**.

#### Health Issues and Challenges

**1. Rise in age-related chronic illness-** According to the Longitudinal Ageing Study of India (LASI) in 2021, **One in five elderly persons in India has mental health issues** and around 75 per cent of them suffer from a chronic disease.

**2. Increasing need for geriatric care-** Increased health-related expenses for the treatment of diseases like **Non-Communicable diseases, cataract, hearing loss** etc. creates financial problem for the elderly population.

### What are the Government initiatives for elderly care in India?

<b>National Policy for Older Persons 2011</b>	The policy aims to <b>encourage individuals to make provisions for their own and their spouse during old age, to bring non-governmental organizations for caring for older persons</b> and to <b>provide healthcare facilities to the elderly</b> .
<b>Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)</b>	The scheme provide an <b>old-age pension</b> for persons above the age of 60 years belonging to the BPL category.
<b>Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)</b>	The scheme provides <b>Physical Aids and Assisted-living Devices for Senior citizens</b> belonging to the BPL category.

<b>Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana</b>	The scheme aims to provide <b>social security during old age</b> . It also protects elderly persons aged 60 and above against a future fall in their interest income due to uncertain market conditions.
<b>Senior care Ageing Growth Engine (SAGE) Initiative and SAGE portal</b>	It aims to <b>help startups interested in providing services for elderly care</b> .

### What should be the Way Forward?

- 1. Formalization of caregiving economy-** According to a NITI Aayog report, **healthcare offered at home can replace up to 65 per cent of unnecessary hospital visits** and reduce hospital costs by 20 per cent. Well-trained caregivers possessing empathetic outlook towards elderly need to be provided formal and better work place conditions. **Recognition of “home” as a place for providing care** and as a **“place of work” for caregivers** will be the first step towards elderly care.
- 2. Comprehensive policy on home based care-** This policy must include within its ambit the **streamlining of vocational training, nomenclature, roles, and career progression of the caregivers**. It must also streamline the registry of caregivers, ensure transparency and accountability and establish grievance redressal mechanisms.
- 3. Passage of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (Amendment) Bill, 2019-** The next session of the parliament must aim to pass this bill which seeks to regulate home-based care for older people.
- 4. Strengthening pension systems-** The government must allocate a special budget for the elderly population to strengthen the pension systems through better funding and coverage.
- 5. Replication of Switzerland’s time bank initiative-** Under this initiative, **the younger generation start to save ‘time’ by taking care of senior citizens**. Later, they can use the saved ‘time’ when they get old, sick, or in need of someone to take care of them. This initiative must be applied to Indian setup.
- 6. Raising of retirement age-** India should raise the retirement age in the future, in a phased manner so as not to jeopardize opportunities for younger generations.
- 7. Proactive government policies-** The Government **should proactively work on lifestyle modification, non-communicable disease management, vision and hearing problem management, and accessible health care of the elderly population in India**.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Govt policies for vulnerable section

## [Yojana April 2024 Summary] Blue Economy- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

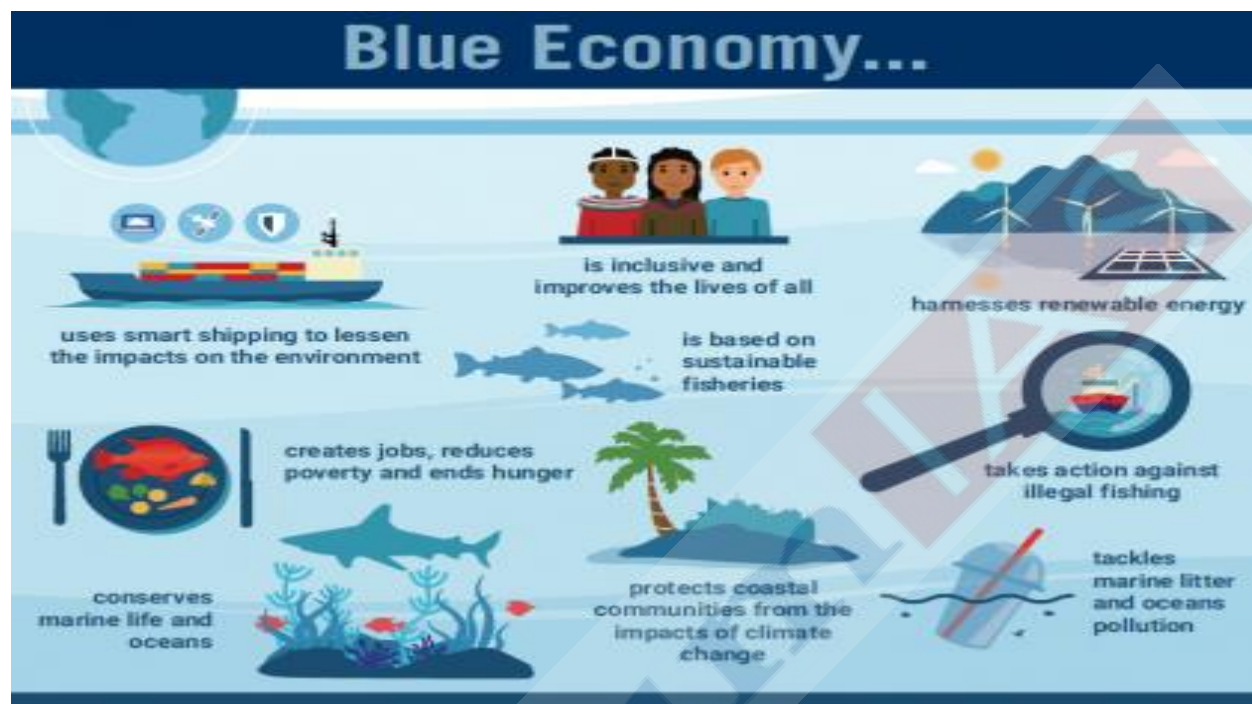
‘Blue Economy’ has been identified as one of the **major pillars of economic growth** for **making a Vikshit Bharat by 2047**. Despite its significant potential for the growth of the nation, it also faces **several constraints and challenges**. Overcoming these challenges will be crucial for the realisation of true potential of this sector.

### What is ‘Blue Economy’? What is the extent of ‘Blue economy’ in India?

**Blue Economy-** World Bank defines blue economy is defined as the **sustainable development of ocean resources** for **economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of the ocean**

**ecosystem.** The concept was first given by **Gunter Pauli** in **2010** in his book ‘The blue economy, 10 years, 100 innovations, 100 million jobs’.

### Components of Blue Economy



Source- UN

The blue economy encompasses a diverse range of activities that are critical for sustainable development.

<b>Renewable Energy</b>	Renewable and Sustainable marine energy resources like <b>offshore wind</b> and <b>tidal energy</b> constitutes an important component of Blue Economy.
<b>Fisheries</b>	Sustainable management of fisheries ensures a <b>continuous supply of fish for greater revenue</b> while <b>simultaneously contributing to the restoration of fish stocks</b> . This supports both economic and environmental goals.
<b>Maritime Transport</b>	Sustainable, safe and secured maritime transport is an <b>important component of the global economy</b> , as it connects nations and facilitates trade.
<b>Tourism</b>	<b>Ocean and coastal tourism</b> offer recreational opportunities, contribute to job creation and economic growth, making it a key component of the blue economy.
<b>Climate Change</b>	Oceans act as crucial carbon sinks for the absorption and storage of carbon dioxide.

**Potential for the World Economy-** Oceans contribute to around **3-5% of Global GDP** and over **80% of international goods transportation**. The UN has declared the period 2021-2030 as the ‘**UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development**’.

**Extent of Blue Economy in India-** India has a coastline of more than 7500 km spread across 9 states. India also has an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of more than 2.2 million sq km. India’s blue economy accounts for ~4% of the GDP and is estimated to increase over the period of time.

### What is the significance of Blue Economy for India?

Blue economy can contribute to India's economic growth in the following ways-

### 1. Oceanic Resources

**a. Fisheries-** Indian marine fisheries constitute a major portion of India's agri-allied exports. India produced ~3.7 MMT of marine fisheries in 2019-20.

**b. Rare Earth Minerals-** The continental margins of India have an extensive variety of heavy and rare earth minerals like **ilmenite, magnetite, monazite, zircon, and rutile.**

**c. Hydrocarbons-** The oceanic sea beds are a major source of hydrocarbons. India has 26 sedimentary basins, spread across a total area of 3.4 million square km.

**d. Renewable Energy-** Renewable energy in offshore regions has tremendous potential in the form of offshore wind, waves, ocean currents, tidal currents, and thermal energy.

### 2. Ports, Shipping, and Marine Tourism

**a. Port led Development-** India is focussing on port led development with the vast network of port connectivity. India comprises 200 ports, of which 12 are major ports that handled 541.76 million tonnes in FY21.

**b. Shipping and Maritime Transport-** India has the largest merchant shipping fleets among the developing countries. Around 95% of the country's trade by volume and 68% by value is moved through maritime transport. Hence, shipping sector has the potential to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities.

**c. Coastal tourism-** Coastal Tourism has contributed largely to the development of India's tourism sector and livelihood creation.

### 3. Ocean Science and Services

**a. Observations, data, and information services-** The data set and information services help in providing information regarding **Marine Fishery Advisories, Ocean State Forecasts, Tsunami and Storm Surge Early Warnings, Sea Level Rise, Oil Spill Trajectories.** These are key to enhancing the safety of lives and livelihoods of coastal communities.

**b. Conservation of Marine Biodiversity-** Sustainable use of ocean helps in the conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity.

**4. Employment Opportunities-** Blue economy provides an avenue for employment generation to the burgeoning youth population. For ex- Enhanced employment opportunities in **Fishing and Aquaculture, Marine Tourism, Shipbuilding** etc.

### What are the challenges associated with Blue Economy in India?

**1. Overfishing-** Overfishing has emerged as a major challenge in India's coastal waters. It has led to the depletion of fish stocks and harming of the marine ecosystem. For ex- Depletion of fishery resources in the Palk Bay Area due to bottom trawling.

**2. Marine Pollution-** Pollution from sources such as oil spills, plastic waste, and industrial effluent harm the marine ecosystems and have negative impacts on the blue economy. For ex- Oil spill in Chennai originating from the Chennai Petroleum Corporation Ltd (CPCL's) refinery.

**3. Lack of Infrastructure-** The lack of ports, airports, and road connectivity has hampered the development and expansion of economic activities in these regions.

**4. Piracy and International Conflicts-** The piracy in the Indian Ocean region near the Red Sea and **unsecured sea lanes of transport** are a major threat to the development of Indian Shipping Industry. Further, the strings of pearls of China and conflicts over maritime boundaries are also a major challenge. **For ex- India-Sri Lanka Fishing Conflict.**

**5. Climate Change-** Rising sea levels, negative Indian Ocean dipole and amplification of cyclones also **pose risks to coastal communities** and also have negative impacts on the blue economy.

#### What are the Government initiatives for the Development of Blue Economy?

<b>Sagarmala Project</b>	It aims for <b>holistic port infrastructure development</b> along the <b>7,516-km long coastline</b> through modernisation, mechanisation and computerisation. The projects under this project aim for <b>Coastal Infrastructure Development, Coastal Industrial Development, Coastal Community Development and Development of Coastal Tourism.</b>
<b>Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan</b>	ICZM is a process for the <b>management of the coast using an integrated approach</b> , to achieve the goal of sustainable management of coastal regions.
<b>Deep Ocean Mission</b>	It is India's ambitious program to <b>explore and harness the depths of the ocean</b> . The mission aims to address scientific and economic challenges associated with <b>ocean exploration and resource utilization.</b>
<b>O-SMART</b>	The scheme encompasses a total of 16 sub-projects addressing ocean development activities such as Services, Technology, Resources, Observations and Science.

#### What Should be the Way Forward?

**1. Skill Development Initiatives-** Skill development initiatives along with **preservation of traditional knowledge** are integral to harnessing the full potential of the blue economy and ensuring prosperity for all.

**2. Blue Diplomacy Cadre-** We must aim to develop a 'blue diplomacy cadre' through the use of policies and platforms such as **SAGAR, IORA, BIMSTEC, SAARC** in the Indo-Pacific region. This will be helpful in peaceful resolution of all international disputes and securing global maritime transport routes.

**3. Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning-** This scientific approach should be used to **analyse and allocate coastal and marine resources** over space and time. It will help in sustainable fisheries development and optimum use of oceanic mineral resources.

**4. Proper waste Disposal Policies-** Proper waste disposal policies like **robust Plastic Elimination** and **National Marine Litter policy**, that prevent pollution, accumulation of marine debris, must be enacted and implemented.

**5. Research and Funding-** Funds must be provided for R&D in the emerging fields of blue economy such as marine biology, marine technology, marine chemistry, geology, shipping, oceanography.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- **GS 3- Indian Economy**