

7 PM COMPILATION

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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Regulating Big Techs In India- Explained Pointwise

The issue of regulating Big Techs in India has gained prominence with the recent report of the **Committee on Digital Competition Law** recommending a separate legislation to regulate the market power of Big Tech firms such as Google and Meta.

Big Tech companies **wield significant power and influence** in various sectors due to their massive market capitalization, innovative products and services, and widespread user base. However, big tech firms have been found to be indulgent in various malpractices such as **breach of data privacy, antitrust laws** and **predatory practices**. It is in this context, the issue of regulating big techs in India has gained widespread traction.



<p>Abuse of Dominant market position</p>	<p>Big techs have been fraught with the issue of abusing their dominant market position. For ex- Google abusing its dominant position in the Android and Play Store ecosystem by pressurising app developers to use Google's proprietary billing system or face a fee if they opt for a competitor's service.</p>
<p>Self-preferencing and platform bias</p>	<p>It refers to the practice of a company promoting its services or subsidiaries on its platform while also operating as a competitor on the same platform. For ex- Amazon's e-commerce service has been under scrutiny in India due to its dual role of being a marketplace operator, as well as retailer on its own platform.</p>
<p>Bundling and Tying</p>	<p>Big Tech Firms compel consumers to purchase related services by linking their main products or services to other complementary offerings. For ex- Operating system providers like Microsoft, bundling the use of its search engine and products like Office, which generates pricing asymmetry.</p>
<p>Anti-Steering</p>	<p>Anti-steering provisions are employed by big tech entities to hinder business users from migrating away from the platform and utilizing alternative options. For ex- Apple's anti-steering practices prevents users from truly exercising their choice of services with the Apple ecosystem</p>

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What are Big Techs? What is their Significance?

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Big Techs- Big Tech refers to the largest and most influential global tech enterprises with assets spanning multiple countries.

Significance of Big Techs-

1. Market Capitalization and Widespread User Base- Big techs exert considerable influence over industry trends, consumer behaviour, and public policy.

a. Amazon- Amazon through its **Amazon.com** platform and Amazon Web Services (AWS) **dominates the E-commerce and cloud computing market.**

b. Google (Alphabet)- Google (Alphabet) through its search engine and subsidiary companies like YouTube and Google Ads **controls the majority of online search traffic and digital advertising revenue.**

c. Facebook (Meta)- Facebook (Meta) through its social media platforms such as **Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp** dominates the social media landscape.

2. Provide Innovative technological products and services- Big Techs have been pioneering advancements in various fields such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and digital entertainment.

a. Microsoft- Microsoft through its products like the Windows operating system, Office suite, Xbox gaming consoles and Azure cloud platform, **innovates in various technologies such as software, hardware and cloud services.**

b. Apple- Apple through its products such as the iPhone, iPad, and MacBook has been innovating in **groundbreaking communication products.**

c. Tesla- Tesla has been involved in **disruption of the automotive industry** with electric vehicles, renewable energy solutions, and autonomous driving technology.

3. Generates steady and profitable career possibilities- It attracts top people with attractive compensation and enticing employee incentives. **For ex- Amazon web service (AWS) region in India employs nearly 48,000 full-time employees yearly.**

4. Push to startups- Big techs provide the necessary push to the startups in India, with many utilising their Web services and cutting edge software technologies. **For ex- Deal between the Startup Hub of the Ministry of Electronics and IT with the social network company META** September 2022 to create an accelerator programme that would award incentives to businesses developing services for the metaverse.

5. Innovation in providing social sector services like Health and Education- Big Techs have been pioneering innovations in the fields of health and education through their innovative delivery mechanisms. **For ex- Microsoft and Apollo partnership to develop an API model for accurate healthcare diagnostics.**

What are the issues which necessitate regulating Big Techs in India?

1. Abuse of Dominant market position- Big techs have been fraught with the issue of abusing their dominant market position. **For ex- Google abusing its dominant position in the Android and Play Store ecosystem** by pressurising app developers to use Google's proprietary billing system or face a fee if they opt for a competitor's service.

2. Self-preferencing and platform bias- It refers to the practice of a company promoting its services or subsidiaries on its platform while also operating as a competitor on the same platform. **For ex- Amazon's e-commerce service** has been **under scrutiny in India** due to its **dual role of being a marketplace operator, as well as retailer** on its own platform.

3. Restrictions on Third-Party Applications- There are instances where entities have restricted the installation or operation of third-party applications. **For ex- Apple's restriction on installing third-party applications on the iPhone.**

4. Bundling and Tying- Big Tech Firms compel consumers to purchase related services by linking their main products or services to other complementary offerings. **For ex- Operating system providers like Microsoft, bundling the use of its search engine and products like Office**, which **generates pricing asymmetry** and results in the elimination of competition from the market.

5. Anti-Steering- Anti-steering provisions are employed by big tech entities to hinder business users from migrating away from the platform and utilizing alternative options. This results in restriction of customer choices. **For ex- Apple's anti-steering practices prevents users from truly exercising their choice of services** with the Apple ecosystem.

6. Arbitrary Pricing- The big techs demonstrate 'network effects', which **enable rapid growth of their user base** and fix arbitrary prices, which create challenges for new competitors to overcome. **For ex- Meta's subscription model** offering people in EU, European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland **the choice to use Facebook and Instagram without any ads**.

7. Concerns Over Data Privacy- Big Tech companies gather vast amounts of user data through their platforms and services. This has raised concerns about **privacy, digital surveillance, and data security**. **For ex- CCI's probe into WhatsApp's privacy policy**, on allegations that the messaging platform shares user data with its parent Facebook.

8. Killer Acquisitions and Mergers- **Killer acquisitions**, where big techs purchase valuable start-ups without being subject to merger control rules based on turnover, create an unfair playing field in the digital market. **For ex- Facebook's killer acquisition of Instagram and WhatsApp**, led to the monopolisation of social media communication domain.

9. Social and Political Impacts- The big techs are the foremost medium of fake news, hate speech, election manipulation. **For ex- Facebook's Cambridge Analytica controversy regarding electoral choice's by voter profiling**.

What steps are being taken worldwide and in India for regulating Big Techs?

1. US's Changed Stance- The US has changed its stance towards antitrust enforcement. **The US Department of Justice**, and **16 states** have recently **sued Apple** alleging that it monopolized and abused the smartphone market. The antitrust enforcement agencies in India and US, can now proceed in case of violations by these big tech firms without geopolitical repercussions because the protective shield of the home country (USA) for these firms has been lifted.

2. EU's Initiatives- EU enacted the Digital Markets Act (DMA), 2022 to ensure **contestable and fair markets in the digital sector**. The **European Commission** in March 2024 **initiated 'non-compliance investigations'** against the Big Techs like Apple, Meta and Google's parent Alphabet.

3. India-

a. Competition Act 2002 amended in 2007- This amended act provides the powers to the Competition Commission of India (CCI) to regulate anticompetitive practices adopted by the big techs in India. **In 2022, the CCI imposed a penalty of Rs 1,337.76 crore on Google** for abusing its dominant position in multiple markets for 'anti-competitive practices'.

b. The Information and Technology Act, 2000- Intermediaries like providers of network service, telecom service, Internet service and web hosting are required to preserve and retain specified information. They also have to obey the directions issued by the government from time to time.

Read More- [Taking on big tech](#)

What should be the way Forward to regulate big tech in India?

Implementing the recommendations of the Committee on Digital Competition Law-

1. Enactment of Digital Competition Act- The Committee on Digital Competition Law has recommended the enactment of a Digital Competition Act **aimed specifically at big techs, complementing the Competition Act.**

2. Systemically Significant Digital Enterprises (SSDEs) Classification- The tech companies with a **'significant presence'** in **'Core Digital Service'** market must **self designate themselves** as SSDEs. Specific rules for SSDEs must be determined after public consultations.

Implementing the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance for new digital competition regulations-

3. Regulating anti-competitive practices- The committee has pointed regulating 10 anti-competitive practices employed by the big techs like **anti-steering, deep discounting, bundling and tying together of services, targeted advertising** etc.

4. Identification of Digital Gatekeepers as SIDIs- India should identify key players in digital markets that could harm competition and classify them as **Systemically Important Digital Intermediaries (SIDIs)** based on factors like revenue, market capitalization, and user base. **SIDIs** should then **submit yearly reports** to the **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** outlining their efforts to meet mandatory requirements.

5. Platform Neutrality- **Significant Digital Intermediaries (SIDIs)** should not show preferential treatment towards their services over those of their competitors.

6. Protection of Data Privacy- **SIDIs should not process personal data of end users** who use **third-party services are dependent** on the SIDI's core services.

7. Allowing Third-Party Applications- **SIDIs** should allow and technically enable the installation and use of third-party software applications.

8. Revamping CCI- The committee has recommended the revamp of CCI by **creating specialised digital markets unit** in CCI. This unit would: (a) monitor established and emerging **SIDIs**, (b) give recommendations to the central government on designating **SIDIs**, and (c) adjudicate on cases related to digital markets.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS Paper-2- Regulatory and various Quasi-judicial Bodies, Govt policies and interventions in various sectors

Katchatheevu Island controversy- Explained Pointwise

The **Katchatheevu Island controversy** has resurfaced in the run-up to the Lok Sabha Polls 2024. The controversy has often been **used by political parties for attacking their adversaries.** The present NDA government has accused the past Congress government of **'callously' giving away the disputed territory to Sri Lanka,** as part of the Maritime Boundary Agreement in 1974.



Historical Timeline of Katchatheevu Island Controversy

Katchatheevu has been a **disputed territory between India and Sri Lanka** since the British period. Back then, both nations were British colonies.

Oct 21, 1921	<p>During the talks of delimitation of Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar, between the governments of Madras and Ceylon, both the governments claimed the island.</p> <p>Ceylon's (Sri Lanka) claim- It claimed sovereignty on the ground that the Portuguese who had occupied the island during 1505-1658 CE had exercised jurisdiction over the islet.</p> <p>Madras (India's) Claim- India's contention was that the erstwhile Raja of Ramnad [Ramanathapuram] had possession of it as part of his zamin. The British, citing the traditional claims of the Ramnad zamindari of Ramanathapuram, attached it to the Madras Presidency.</p>
Till Independence	<p>The zamin of Ramanathapuram collected taxes till 1947. The island was taken over by the State government following the Zamindari Abolition Act</p>
Post Independence	<p>The dispute over the control of the island broke out again after Independence over fishing rights around the island.</p>
June 28, 1974	<p>Under the 1974 'Indo-Sri Lankan Maritime agreement', the government headed by Indira Gandhi agreed to cede the Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka. It was aimed to settle the discord and strengthen ties with Sri Lanka.</p> <p>However, most of the Opposition including the DMK, AIADMK, Jan Sangh, Swatantra and the Socialist Party, opposed the agreement and staged walk outs in the two Houses.</p>
August 15, 1991	<p>In her Independence Day address, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalitha, urged the centre to retrieve Katchatheevu and restore the fishing rights for Tamil Fishermen.</p>
2008, 2013	<p>Both the major political parties of TN, AIADMK and DMK, approached the SC to declare the Katchatheevu agreements of 1974 and 1976, as null and void.</p>
July 2014	<p>Central Government informed the SC that the Katchatheevu islet is a sovereign property of Sri Lanka. The 1974 and 1976 agreements between India and Sri Lanka do not confer any fishing rights on fishermen from India</p>
December 2022	<p>The Union government, while referring to the two agreements of 1974 and 1976, pointed out in its reply in the Rajya Sabha that Katchatheevu lies on the Sri Lankan side of the India-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line. It added that the matter was sub-judice in the Supreme Court.</p>

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Where is Katchatheevu island located?

Location- Katchatheevu which is a **small, uninhabited island covering 285 acres**, is **located in the Palk Strait**, between India and Sri Lanka. The island lies 33 km northeast of Rameswaram and about 62 km southwest of Jaffna.



Figure 1. Source- The Indian Express

Demography of the Island- The island is uninhabited, as **there is no source of drinking water on the island**. The island originated from volcanic activity during the 14th century.

Sole Structure on the Island- The island's sole structure is **St. Anthony's Church**, built in the early 20th century. Every year, during a festival, Christian priests from India and Sri Lanka jointly conduct services, drawing pilgrims

from both countries.

Read More- [Facts about Katchatheevu Island](#)

What is the history of Katchatheevu Island Controversy?

Katchatheevu has been a disputed territory between India and Sri Lanka since the British period. Back then, both nations were British colonies.

Historical Timeline of Katchatheevu Island Controversy

<p>Oct 21, 1921</p>	<p>During the talks of delimitation of Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar, between the governments of Madras and Ceylon, both the governments claimed the island.</p> <p>Ceylon's (Sri Lanka) claim- It claimed sovereignty on the ground that the Portuguese who had occupied the island during 1505-1658 CE had exercised jurisdiction over the islet.</p> <p>Madras (India's) Claim- India's contention was that the erstwhile Raja of Ramnad [Ramanathapuram] had possession of it as part of his zamin.</p>
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	The British, citing the traditional claims of the Ramnad zamindari of Ramanathapuram, attached it to the Madras Presidency.
Till Independence	The zamin of Ramanathapuram collected taxes till 1947. The island was taken over by the State government following the Zamindari Abolition Act
Post Independence	The dispute over the control of the island broke out again after Independence over fishing rights around the island.
June 28, 1974	Under the 1974 ' Indo-Sri Lankan Maritime agreement ', the government headed by Indira Gandhi agreed to cede the Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka. It was aimed to settle the discord and strengthen ties with Sri Lanka . However, most of the Opposition including the DMK, AIADMK, Jan Sangh, Swatantara and the Socialist Party, opposed the agreement and staged walk outs in the two Houses.
August 15, 1991	In her Independence Day address, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalitha, urged the centre to retrieve Katchatheevu and restore the fishing rights for Tamil Fishermen.
Oct 31, 1991	Tamil Nadu Assembly adopted a resolution demanding retrieval of Katchatheevu
2001	CM Jayalalitha met the Indian PM A.B. Vajpayee and urged India to obtain the island on lease-in-perpetuity.
2008, 2013	Both the major political parties, AIADMK and DMK, approached the SC to declare the Katchatheevu agreements of 1974 and 1976, as null and void.
July 2014	Central Government informed the SC that the Katchatheevu islet is a sovereign property of Sri Lanka . The 1974 and 1976 agreements between India and Sri Lanka do not confer any fishing rights on fishermen from India
December 2022	The Union government, while referring to the two agreements of 1974 and 1976, pointed out in its reply in the Rajya Sabha that Katchatheevu lies on the Sri Lankan side of the India-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line. It added that the matter was sub-judice in the Supreme Court .

What are the provisions of the Maritime Boundary Agreement?

1974 Agreement- Each country shall have sovereignty and exclusive jurisdiction and control over the waters, the islands, the continental shelf and the subsoil, falling on its own side of the aforesaid boundary. Only navigational rights of the vessels of both Sri Lanka and India over each other's waters have been preserved.

Allowed activities for Indian fisherman in the island	Prohibited activities for Indian fisherman in the island
a. Resting and Net Drying b. Visit the annual St. Anthony's festival without the need of visa	The fishing vessels and fishermen of India shall not engage in fishing in the historic waters, the territorial sea and the Exclusive Economic Zone of Sri Lanka

1976 Agreement- Each Party shall **respect rights of navigation through its territorial sea and exclusive economic zone** in accordance with its laws and regulations and the rules of international law.

What are India's concerns with the Katchatheevu Island?

1. Detaining of Indian fishermen- Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu often face punitive action from the Sri Lankan authorities. At least **6,184 Indian fishermen have been detained** and **1,175 Indian fishing vessels have been seized** in the last 20 years.

2. Livelihoods of traditional fishing community affected- The Katchatheevu Island controversy has restricted the mobility of traditional fishing communities in coastal waters. This has made it difficult for these fishing communities to sustain their livelihood, **impacting the economic stability of these communities.**

3. Threat to the socio-cultural fabric of the region- This dispute has threatened the cultural and social fabric of the Indo-Srilankan region. **For ex- Fishermen associations in Ramanathapuram district boycotting the annual two-day festival at St. Anthony's Church,** which draws pilgrims from both countries.

4. Geostrategic significance- The island has assumed significant geostrategic significance in light of growing Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean region. India's sovereignty over the island would have countered the **Chinese String of Pearls in the Indian Ocean region.**

5. Undermining of co-operative federalism- The transfer of Katchatheevu has **sparked protests and opposition, particularly from Tamil Nadu,** which claims that the opinion of the state government was not taken before ceding the territory to Sri Lanka.

What are the implications of the Katchatheevu Island Controversy?

1. Deleterious Impact on the improving India- Sri Lanka ties- Raking up the Katchatheevu Island Controversy would deleteriously impact the **improving India- Sri Lanka ties, after the Sri Lankan economic crisis.**

2. Demonstrate India's big brother attitude- The controversy will damage India's credibility in the neighbourhood and reinforce India's big brother attitude perceived by its neighbours. **Reopening of old agreements, would set a bad precedent.**

3. Damage the 'whole architecture' of agreements with neighbouring countries- The controversy will damage India's architecture of boundary agreements, if there is a change in the original understanding. **For ex- Raises concerns for countries like Bangladesh which have finalised land boundary agreements with India.**

4. Growth of Chinese Influence- Any antagonistic actions taken by India on the finalised and operational agreements, would only propel the growth of Chinese influence **in India's neighbourhood.**

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Refrain from Political rhetoric- We must ensure that the national political rhetoric is not in **confrontation with India's stance on sovereignty and territorial integrity.**

2. No backtracking on the finalised agreements- We must not rake up issues of the finalised and operational agreements, as it **would hurt India's credibility.**

3. Look to improve India's relations with its neighbours- India must look to improve and not deteriorate its relations in the neighbourhood. The gains made due to neighbourhood policy should not be washed away.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- India and its neighbourhood relations

Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)- Explained Pointwise

The Supreme Court has recently endorsed the **sweeping powers of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).** Recently, a SC bench headed by Justice Bela M. Trivedi, **castigated**

four Tamil Nadu District Collectors for failing to appear in person in response to a summons issued to them under PMLA, by the anti-money laundering body. The SC bench reaffirmed ED's powers to call "anybody for any information" under the PMLA.

However, Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002 (PMLA) has been under scrutiny for inclusion of certain offences which are not directly aimed at combating money laundering. Recently, the Delhi Court **slammed the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for a faulty Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) probe** and said the ED must introspect steps to ensure expeditious and fair investigations. Opposition parties in India have **alleged the misuse of PMLA provisions by the ED to stifle democracy** in India. It is in this context, a **detailed introspection of PMLA becomes necessary**.

 Prevention of Money Laundering Act Salient Features	
Section 3 (Defines money laundering)	Section 3 of the PMLA defines money laundering as any attempt, assistance, or involvement in processes connected to the proceeds of crime to project it as untainted property
Offences under PMLA	<p>Offences mentioned under Part A, B and C of the Schedule of the Act.</p> <p>Part A- Includes money laundering offences under the following acts- Indian Penal Code, Prevention of Corruption Act, Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, Trademark Act, Wildlife Protection Act, Copyright Act and Information Technology Act</p> <p>Part B- Includes money laundering offences that are mentioned in Part A, but are of a value of Rs 1 crore or more.</p> <p>Part C- Includes money laundering offences under Trans-border crimes</p>
Section 4 (Punishment for Money Laundering)	The offence of money-laundering shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment for a term not be less than three years which can be extended upto seven years and shall also be liable to fine.
Agencies powers under the Act	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enforcement Directorate (ED)- ED is responsible for investigating the offences of money laundering and attachment of properties. 2. Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND)- It is the central national agency responsible for receiving, processing, analyzing, and disseminating information relating to suspect financial transactions. 3. Other Agencies- The scheduled offences are separately investigated by the agencies mentioned under respective acts. For ex- The local police, CBI, customs departments, SEBI, or any other investigative agency, as the case may be.
Obligations under the Act	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintenance of Records- Imposes obligations on banking companies, financial institutions, and intermediaries to verify and maintain client identity records. 2. Reporting of transactions- These financial firms are required to report their financial transactions to the Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND).
Setting up of Authority	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adjudicating authority- PMLA envisages the setting up of an Adjudicating Authority to exercise jurisdiction, power and authority conferred by it. 2. Appellate Tribunal- It also envisages the setting up of an Appellate Tribunal to hear appeals against the order of the Adjudicating Authority and the authorities like Director FIU-IND.
Special Courts	One or more courts of sessions are designated as Special Courts to try offences under PMLA and other related offences.

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What is Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)? What is the Historical Background of its enactment?

PMLA- The Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted to **prevent money laundering** and **provide for the confiscation of property derived from money laundering**. It aims to combat money laundering related to illegal activities such as drug trafficking, smuggling, and terrorism financing.

Objectives of PMLA

- 1. Prevention-** To prevent money laundering by implementing stringent measures and monitoring financial transactions.
- 2. Detection-** To detect and investigate instances of money laundering through proper enforcement and regulatory mechanisms.
- 3. Confiscation-** To confiscate properties derived from money laundering activities to deter offenders and disrupt illicit financial flows.
- 4. International Cooperation-** To facilitate international cooperation in combating money laundering and terrorist financing activities.

Historical background of enacting PMLA

The enactment of PMLA finds its genesis in the various conventions to combat money laundering.

United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988)	This convention urged all countries to take urgent steps to prevent the laundering of the proceeds of drug crimes and other connected activities.
Establishment of FATF	FATF was established to examine the problem of money laundering and make recommendations to combat it . India adopted the FATF recommendations for enactment of PMLA.
UNGA's Political Declaration and Global Programme of Action	This resolution urged all member-countries to enact suitable pieces of legislation to effectively prevent the laundering of drug money .
UN special session 'Countering World Drug Problem Together'	A declaration was adopted on the urgent need to combat money laundering
UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 2000 (Palermo Convention)	It advocated legislative and other measures to combat organized crime, and specifically called for 'criminalizing the laundering of proceeds of crime' .

PMLA was enacted under Art 253 of the Indian constitution to fulfil India's obligation under these treaties and conventions.

Read More- [Money Laundering- Explained Pointwise](#)

What are the Salient Features of Prevention of Money Laundering Act?

- 1. Section 3 (Defines money laundering)-** Section 3 of the PMLA defines **money laundering** as any **attempt, assistance, or involvement in processes connected to the proceeds of crime** to project it as untainted property.
- 2. Offences under PMLA-** Offences mentioned under Part A, B and C of the Schedule of the Act.

Part A	Includes money laundering offences under the following acts– Indian Penal Code, Prevention of Corruption Act, Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, Trademark Act, Wildlife Protection Act, Copyright Act and Information Technology Act
Part B	Includes money laundering offences that are mentioned in Part A, but are of a value of Rs 1 crore or more.
Part C	Includes money laundering offences under Trans-border crimes

3. Section 4 (Punishment for Money Laundering)- The offence of money-laundering shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment for a term not be less than three years extending to seven years and shall also be liable to fine.

4. Agencies powers under the Act

- The **Enforcement Directorate (ED)** in the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, is responsible for investigating the offences of money laundering and attachment of properties.
- The **Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND)**, under the Department of Revenue, is the central national agency responsible for receiving, processing, analyzing, and disseminating information relating to suspect financial transactions.
- The **scheduled offences are separately investigated by the agencies** mentioned under respective acts. For ex- The local police, CBI, customs departments, SEBI, or any other investigative agency, as the case may be.

5. Obligations under the Act

- Imposes obligations on banking companies, financial institutions, and intermediaries to verify and maintain client identity records.
- These financial firms are required to **report their financial transactions to the Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND)**.

6. Setting up of Authority

- PMLA envisages the setting up of an Adjudicating Authority to **exercise jurisdiction, power and authority** conferred by it.
- It also envisages the **setting up of an Appellate Tribunal** to hear appeals against the order of the Adjudicating Authority and the authorities like Director FIU-IND.

7. Special Courts under PMLA- **One or more courts of sessions are designated as Special Courts** to try offences under PMLA and other related offences.

What are the concerns regarding the PMLA Act?

1. Inclusion of minor and less serious offences- Inclusion of other less serious offences in the schedule dilutes the original intent of the law. The schedule of the Act has been expanded over the years, to include even **minor and non-serious offences** such as **copyright and trademark infringements**.

2. Equates punishment for ordinary crimes with serious crimes- PMLA equates the punishment under an ordinary crime with a serious economic offence. **For ex-** With the **addition of The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988** to the schedule of offences, **PMLA applies with all its rigour to public servants**. Thus, a **public servant charged with corruption and a hard-core drug trafficker are treated alike**.

3. Broad Definition of 'Proceeds of Crime'- The broad definition of 'proceeds of crime, **provides considerable discretion to the authorities**. Critics fear that this discretion, in determination of 'proceeds of crime', can be misused by the investigating authorities.

4. Stringent Bail Conditions- An accused is **denied bail by the entire hierarchy of courts** because the **bail provision under PMLA** state that a **judge can give bail only when he is satisfied that the accused is innocent**. This is **against the Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence**, which presumes a person innocent until proven guilty.

5. Burden of Proof of innocence on the accused- The burden of proof of innocence, on the accused, presents a prominent **challenge in ensuring a free and fair trial**.

6. Against the Federal principles and Basic structure Doctrine- Under the PMLA, **the ED, can carry out investigation without the prior consent of the concerned State**. This is unlike other central police organisations, (like CBI), which are required to obtain the consent of the state before carrying out any policing/investigating activity. This **impinges the principle of federalism**, which is part of the Basic Structure of the Constitution.

7. Violation of the Fundamental Rights of Accused

a. Violation of Article 21- Under PMLA, the ED does not require disclosing the details of **Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR)**, which contains the allegations against the accused person. This is against the fundamental **right of the accused to be informed of the charges and allegations**, which is a universally recognised right, and is **part of the right to life and liberty** under Article 21 of the Constitution.

b. Violation of Article 14- Equating the punishment of accused of minor crimes and serious economic offence, is **violation of the fundamental right to equality** under Article 14 of the constitution.

c. Violation of Article 20(3)- The power of the authorities to issue summons to 'any person' (including the accused), to **give evidence or produce records** during the course of an investigation is in **violation of the right against self-incrimination**, which is a fundamental right under Article 20(3) of the Constitution.

8. Extensive powers to the authorities- The Act grants the Enforcement Directorate (ED) extensive powers of summons, arrest, and raids. This excessive power to the authorities, can potentially lead to its misuse and overreach.

Read More- [Inclusion of less serious offences under PMLA](#)

What have been the observations of the SC?

Strict bail conditions	Nikesh Tarachand Shah vs Union of India (2018)- SC held that the bail provision of the PMLA Act was unconstitutional as it was violation of Article 14 and Article 21 . Restoration of the Provision by the Parliament: Parliament restored the strict bail provisions with certain amendments. Vijay Madanlal Choudhary vs Union of India (2022)- The SC upheld that the strict bail provision is reasonable and has direct nexus with the purposes and objects of the PMLA Act . SC upheld the constitutionality of the PMLA.
ED's Overreach	Pankaj Bansal vs Union of India- Supreme Court highlighted inconsistencies and lack of transparency in its operations. SC emphasized the need for the ED to act with fairness .
Procedural Violations	Pavana Dibbur vs The Directorate of Enforcement (2023)- SC observed procedural violations and misuse of the PMLA. It pointed out the need for strict adherence to legal standards by the ED and other authorities.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Precise Definition of 'Proceeds of Crime' - A precise definition of 'Proceeds of Crime' under PMLA must be incorporated to **mitigate the potential abuse of its definition** by the authorities.

2. Reassessment of Burden of Proof- An amendment to PMLA which provides a **more equitable distribution of the burden of proof between the prosecution and the accused**, can be brought.

3. Safeguards Against Overreach by Officers- An **independent oversight mechanism to review and monitor the actions of law enforcement officers** must be established at the earliest.

4. Review of the Stringent Bail Conditions- The stringent bail conditions for **minor and non serious economic offence must be done away with.**

5. Enhanced Independence and Transparency of ED- Measures like **regular reporting and disclosure of cases handled, convictions secured, and actions taken,** must be incorporated to enhance the transparency in ED's functioning. These measures will ensure confidence among the public that ED is not a politicised institution.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- Internal Security- Money-Laundering and its prevention

Fiscal Consolidation of state governments in India- Explained Pointwise

The **fiscal consolidation of state governments in India** has become a matter of **vigorous debate** between the Union and the State Governments. Recently, Government of Kerala has approached the Supreme Court for **increasing the borrowing limits of the state to bridge their deficit.** The Union government contends that the **borrowing limit of the states must be restricted to 3% of the State's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP).** This restriction on borrowing limit has created a tussle between the state of Kerala and the Union government.



States Contentions against Centre's Borrowing Limits

Government of Kerala has approached the Supreme Court for **increasing the borrowing limits of the state to bridge their deficit**. The Union government prescribes that **borrowing limit of the states must be restricted to 3% of the State's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP)**.

The States are demanding relaxation in the borrowing limit imposed by the centre on account of the following challenges

Expenditure Related Challenges of the State Governments

- 1. Higher Social Service expenditure by the State Governments-** In 2022-23, the expenditure on social services, by the Union Govt. was **₹2,230 billion** while the combined expenditure by all State governments was **₹19,182 billion (8.6 times the Union Govt's expenditure)**
- 2. Increase in State Government's Developmental Expenditure-** The combined developmental expenditures by all State governments has **increased from 8.8% in 2004-05 to 12.5% in 2021-22** as proportion of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
- 3. Capital Expenditure for creation of new jobs and incomes-** Higher state government borrowing **generates a virtuous cycle when the borrowed resources are effectively deployed in the capital creation** for new incomes and jobs.

Revenue Related Challenges

- 1. Reduced Financial Transfers to the States-** The share of states in the gross tax revenue (total tax revenue collected, which includes cess and surcharges) has **decreased from 35% in 2015-16 to 30% in 2023-24**
- 2. Issues with GST-** The compensation of revenue loss to states on account of GST implementation, have not been properly addressed. For ex- **Discontinuation of GST compensation cess** and **subsumption of State VAT under GST**
- 3. Decrease in Grants-in-Aid to the states-** Direct financial support to states, in the form of grants-in-aid, has **declined from ₹1.95 lakh crore in 2015-16 to ₹1.65 lakh crore in 2023-24**

Other Challenges

- 1. Violation of the principle of Federalism-** States argue that by curtailing their borrowing powers, the Centre is **undermining the State's ability to fulfil some of its basic financial commitments** and violating the principle of federalism.
- 2. COVID-19 Pandemic-** The COVID-19 pandemic **increased the revenue expenditure and suppressed the revenue receipts**, forcing the state Govt to increase their borrowings.

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What is Fiscal Consolidation? How do the state governments manage their Budgets?

Fiscal Consolidation of the states- It refers to the process of reducing fiscal deficits and public debt by adjusting expenditure and revenue policies. Fiscal Consolidation aims to limit the borrowings by the state governments.

Budgetary Source of State Government

Revenue Sources	Expenditure
1. State Govt Own Revenues (tax and non-tax) 2. Transfers from Union Govt (as shares of taxes and grants) 3. Market Borrowings	1. Social Services (Health, Education etc.) 2. Economic Services (Agri, Industry) 3. Local Self Government Devolutions 4. Interest Payments 5. Pensions 6. Other General Services 7. Capital Expenditures

States Demand for Increasing Borrowing Limit (Understanding it through the case of Kerala)

The state government of Kerala's case study will help us understand the demands of the state governments for increasing the borrowing limit.

Kerala State Government's Budgeted Expenditure	14.2% of GSDP
Union Government's Revenue Transfer to Kerala	2.8% of GSDP
State Govt Own Revenues (tax and non-tax)	8.0% of GSDP
Borrowing to be done by the state of Kerala	3.4% of GSDP (Crosses 3% limit)

State governments argue that the **limit on the borrowing by the states is a centrally dictated fiscal consolidation**. The state of Kerala has moved to the Supreme Court against this centrally dictated fiscal consolidation of state governments.

What are the challenges faced by state governments in Fiscal Consolidation?

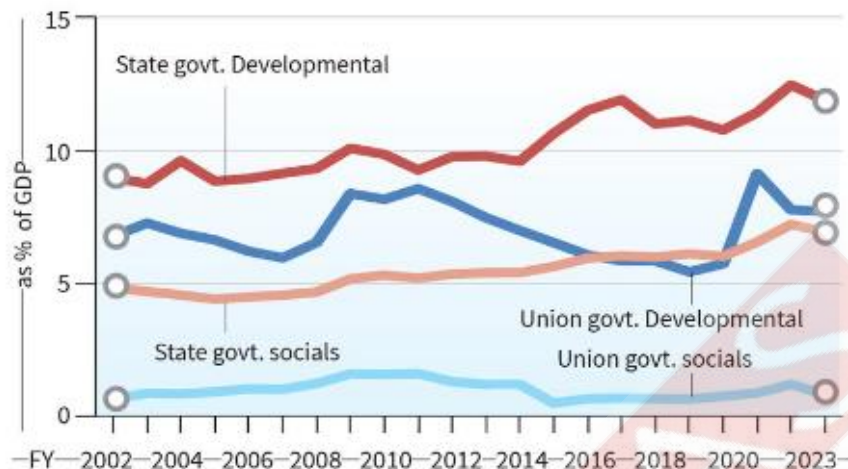
The States are demanding relaxation in the borrowing limit imposed by the centre on account of the following challenges

Expenditure Related Challenges of the State Governments

1. Higher Social Service expenditure by the State Governments- The overwhelming responsibility of social service expenditure (health, education) lies on the shoulders of the State governments. In 2022-23, the expenditure on social services, by the **Union Govt. was ₹2,230 billion** while the **combined expenditure by all State governments was ₹19,182 billion** (8.6 times the Union Govt's expenditure).

2. Increase in State Government's Developmental Expenditure- Development expenditure refers to the expenditure on Social services and economic services, such as on agriculture and industry. The combined developmental expenditures by all State governments has **increased from 8.8% in 2004-05 to 12.5% in 2021-22 as proportion of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**. On the other hand, **developmental expenditures by the Union government has remained somewhat unchanged** over the two-decade period.

Chart 1: The chart shows the developmental and social expenditures (revenue and capital) by the Union government and all State governments (combined) as percentages of GDP



Source- The Hindu

3. Capital Expenditure for creation of new jobs and incomes- Higher state government borrowing can generate a virtuous cycle if the borrowed resources are effectively deployed in the capital creation for new incomes and jobs.

4. Alleviation of Livelihood crisis through pensions, salaries and subsidies- The higher expenditure by the State governments that has helped to alleviate the livelihood crisis in the country, caused due to the slow growth of rural incomes and employment. **For ex-** Large Govt spending on Govt servants (half of them are women) engaged in Social sector in Kerala.

Revenue Related Challenges

1. Reduced Financial Transfers to the States- The share of states in the gross tax revenue (total tax revenue collected, which includes cess and surcharges) has decreased from 35% in 2015-16 to 30% in 2023-24.

2. Erosion of State Taxation Autonomy on account of implementation of GST- The ability of states to set tax rates on their own revenue sources has been significantly diminished due to the implementation of GST. **For ex-** State VAT have been subsumed under GST

3. Issues with GST- The compensation of revenue loss to states on account of GST implementation, have not been properly addressed. **For ex-** Discontinuation of GST compensation cess

4. Decrease in Grants-in-Aid to the states- Direct financial support to states, in the form of grants-in-aid, has declined from ₹1.95 lakh crore in 2015-16 to ₹1.65 lakh crore in 2023-24

Other Challenges

1. Violation of the principle of Federalism- States argue that by curtailing their borrowing powers, the Centre is undermining the State's ability to fulfil some of its basic financial commitments and violating the principle of federalism.

2. COVID-19 Pandemic- The COVID-19 pandemic increased the revenue expenditure and suppressed the revenue receipts, forcing the state Govt to increase their borrowings.

Read More- [Fiscal Centralisation In India](#)

What are the advantages of achieving Fiscal Consolidation of state governments?

- 1. Improvement of fiscal health of states-** Fiscal Consolidation of state governments improves the fiscal health and sustainability of State finances and **reduces their debt burden.**
- 2. Enhancement of expenditure quality-** Fiscal consolidation enhances the quality of expenditure of state governments and **increases the share of capital expenditure in total expenditure.** **For ex-** In FY 2022-23, **only 10.6% of Kerala's budgetary resources was directed to capital expenditure**, which is needed to build new infrastructure and institutions to speed up future growth.
- 3. Fostering economic growth and development-** Fiscal prudence gives a **boost to public investment in infrastructure and human capital**, which fosters economic growth and development.
- 4. Strengthening of investors confidence-** It strengthens the credibility and confidence of investors and creditors in State finances.
- 5. Fulfilment of FRBM mandate-** The States have enacted their own respective **Financial Responsibility Legislation in line with the FRBM targets**, which caps the annual budget deficits to 3% of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). Fiscal consolidation in line with the FRBM mandate will ensure macroeconomic stability and coordination with the Union Government.

What should be the way Forward?

- 1. Cooperative Fiscal Federalism between state and Centre-** The Union government and the State governments must work in **close collaboration to review the borrowing targets** on account of the state governments increasing developmental expenditures.
- 2. Increase in the share of capital expenditure-** Any increase in the borrowing limits of the state must be tied to capital expenditure. **A percentage of increased borrowing must be devoted to capital creation.**
- 3. Reduction of non-productive expenditures-** There must be a reduction of expenditure on non-productive items such as **excessive subsidies, administrative cost** etc.
- 4. Channelisation of private savings-** The state governments can be **allowed to access the large reserves of private savings through domestic financial institutions** (public sector banks and insurance companies). These savings can then be channelled for productive purposes.
- 5. Addressing the GST related Concerns-** The anomalies in GST like the **Integrated GST** which favours the consuming states like UP and Bihar, rather than the producing states of TN, Gujarat must be corrected. Also, efforts must be undertaken to **open more avenues for revenue generation by broadening the scope of GST** to include petrol, diesel.
- 6. Revisiting Article 246 and the Seventh Schedule-** The taxation powers listed in the seventh schedule must be relooked in the context of fiscal federalism. **Rationalisation of Central Sector and Centrally sponsored schemes must be undertaken.**

[Read More- The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Issues pertaining to centre-state relations

Falling Fertility Rate in India- Explained Pointwise

According to a recent Lancet study, the falling fertility rate in India is irreversible. According to the forecast of the study, the fertility rate in India **may dip to 1.29 by 2050**, which will be **far lower than the replacement rate of 2.1**. This points to a rapidly depleting working age population in India. While the declining fertility rate has its own advantages, it's dropping below the replacement rate has some perilous consequences.



India's Falling Fertility Rates and Reasons for it

DATA POINTING TO FALLING FERTILITY RATE IN INDIA

- 1. Lancet Study-** The fertility rate in India is dipping irreversibly. The fertility rate in India may dip to **1.29 by 2050**, which will be far lower than the replacement rate of **2.1**
- 2. National Family Health Survey (NFHS 2019-21) Data-** India's Total Fertility Rates (TFR) has reached **2.0 at the national level**. The total fertility rate, was as high as **6 or more in the 1950s**. The TFR is at **1.6 in urban areas** and **2.1 in rural India**
- 3. Global Burden of Disease, Injuries and Risk Factors Study (GBD) 2021-** India's TFR which was **6.18 in 1950**, reduced to **4.60 in 1980** and further declined to **1.91 in 2021**.

REASONS FOR FALLING FERTILITY RATE IN INDIA

- 1. Family Planning and Welfare Programmes introduced post independence-** There has been positive impact of the family welfare programmes, which included **maternal and child health-related cash transfer inducements** to reduce fertility
- 2. Improvement of Maternal and Child Health-** The **substantial decline in the infant mortality and maternal mortality rates**, guaranteed child survival and made small families a norm in India
- 3. Behavioural Changes-** The behavioural changes due to campaigns such as '**hum do humaare do**' and **use of contraceptives** have changed the mindset of the Indian population and nudged them to reduce fertility rates
- 4. Reversal of intergenerational flow of wealth-** With the reversal of intergenerational flow of wealth, **parents do not receive much benefit from their children the way they used to receive**. This has influenced their decision to have an additional child that would involve a substantial cost of bringing them up
- 5. Women empowerment-** The **rise of female literacy, women's participation in the workforce, career consciousness, financial returns and economic independence** have empowered Indian women to reconsider of the option of having a second child
- 6. Choice of adoption-** There is a significant **increase in the exercise of choice of adoption over child-rearing**, which has contributed to a decrease in the fertility rates in India

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What is Total Fertility Rate? What is the trend of falling fertility rate in India?

Fertility Rate/TFR- Total fertility rate (TFR) refers to the **total number of children born or likely to be born to a woman** (15-49 years) in her lifetime.

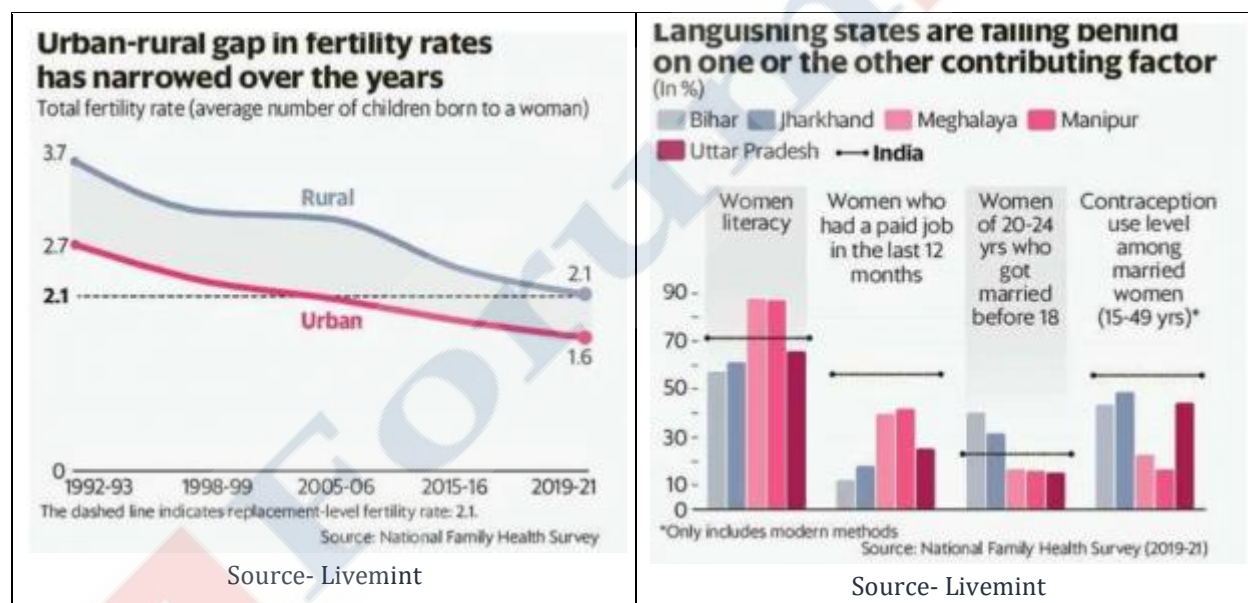
Replacement level fertility rate- A TFR of 2.1 is known as replacement level fertility rate. It is the **level of fertility** at which a **population exactly replaces itself** from one generation to the next.

TFR < Replacement level fertility rate- TFR lower than 2.1 children per woman indicates that **a generation is not producing enough children to replace itself**. This eventually leads to an outright reduction in population.

Data Pointing to falling fertility rate in India

National Family Health Survey (NFHS 2019-21) Data

- India's Total Fertility Rates (TFR) has reached **2.0 at the national level**. The total fertility rate, was as high as 6 or more in the 1950s.
- The TFR is at **1.6 in urban areas** and **2.1 in rural India**.
- Bihar, Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand** and **Manipur** remain the **only states with fertility rates above the replacement level** and the national average.



Global Burden of Disease, Injuries and Risk Factors Study (GBD) 2021

- India's TFR which was **6.18 in 1950**, reduced to **4.60 in 1980** and further declined to **1.91 in 2021**.
- Worldwide** also, the TFR has more than halved in the last 70 years, from around **five children for each woman in 1950** to **2.2 children in 2021**.

What are the reasons for falling fertility rate in India?

1. Family Planning and Welfare Programmes introduced post independence- There has been positive impact of the family welfare programmes, which included **maternal and child health-related cash transfer inducements to reduce fertility**.

2. Improvement of Maternal and Child Health- Another major reason for falling fertility rate in India, is the **substantial decline in the infant mortality** and **maternal mortality rates**. The decline in these rates guaranteed child survival and made small families a norm in India.

3. Behavioural Changes- The behavioural changes due to campaigns such as ‘**hum do humaare do**’ and **use of contraceptives** have changed the mindset of the Indian population and nudged them to reduce fertility rates.

4. Reversal of intergenerational flow of wealth- With the reversal of intergenerational flow of wealth, **parents do not receive much benefit from their children the way they used to receive**. This has influenced their decision to have an additional child that would involve a substantial cost of bringing them up.

5. Women empowerment- The **rise of female literacy, women’s participation in the workforce, career consciousness, financial returns** and **economic independence** have empowered Indian women to reconsider of the option of having a second child.

6. Choice of adoption- There is a significant increase in the **exercise of choice of adoption over child-rearing**, which has contributed to a decrease in the fertility rates in India.

What is the significance of falling fertility rates for India?

1. Improved labour productivity leading to accelerated economic growth- The decline in population growth would **increase the amount of capital resources and infrastructure available in per capita terms**. A young skilled workforce would improve labour productivity, leading to accelerated economic growth.

2. Better employment conditions for workers- A lower working force population will result in **improved working conditions** and **higher wages** for the workers. It would also lead to **elimination of wage discrimination for migrant workers** and the **mitigation of their security concerns** in the industrially developed states (southern states, Maharashtra, Gujarat), that have low fertility rates.

3. Enhanced participation of women in workforce- With decline in fertility rate, less time is needed for childcare, which enhances the participation of women in workforce. **For ex- Improved share of women in MNREGA employment in Southern States.**

4. Improvement in quality of Social service deliveries- Falling fertility rate improves the educational, health and skills of Indian population due to **increase in the per capita availability of social sector resources and infrastructure** like schools, colleges and hospitals.

5. Reduced pressure on environment and agriculture- The **impact of environmental problems** such as global warming, desertification, loss of farmland, pollution and use of non-renewable materials **will be reduced due to decline in population.**

What are the concerns with the fertility rates falling below the replacement levels?

1. Demographic disadvantage- Fertility rates, falling below the replacement level of TFR 2.1, leads to the problem of demographic disadvantage of an ageing population. **For ex- China’s demographic disadvantage due to falling fertility rate.**

2. Increase in ‘non-developmental expenditure’- Drastic fall in fertility rate will lead to increase in government’s non-developmental expenditure on pensions and subsidies, due to **increase in aged population** and **shrinking of workforce.**

3. Labour shortages endangering economic stability- Substantial decrease in the working age population will India’s economic and social stability. **For ex- Decline in Japan’s economic growth rates due to shrinking labour force.**

4. Less 'brain pool' for innovation- Young people are the 'brain pool' for entrepreneurship, innovation and new technologies development. With less young people in the population pyramid due to decrease in fertility rate, the potential 'brain pool' for innovation will be lesser.

5. Potential social imbalances- The Declining rate of fertility can lead to social imbalances due to gendered preference of having a male child. This can lead to an increase in the son-meta preference and skewed sex-ratios.

Read More- [Young and the old – lancet report on fertility rate](#)

What Should be the way Forward?

1. Implement Scandinavian countries model of 'supporting new families'- The Scandinavian countries model of 'supporting new families' by providing affordable childcare, investment in healthcare and large-scale male-engagement initiatives to build gender equity, must be implemented in India at the earliest.

2. Men assuming greater household responsibilities- Men taking up greater responsibilities of household and care work would help women in better management of motherhood with their careers. This would consequently lead to working women choosing child-rearing instead of adoption.

3. Tweaking of economic policy and agenda- Economic policies that stimulate growth and job creation, alongside social security and pension reforms, will also be essential in mitigating the impacts of declining fertility rate.

4. Designing policies for ethical and effective migration- The policies for ethical and effective inter-state migration must be designed to offset the regional imbalances due to falling rates of fertility in southern states of India.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 1- Population and Associated Issues

Committee Report on Digital Competition Law- Explained Pointwise

The Committee Report on Digital Competition Law, has recommended an ex-ante (intervention before an event occurs) regulation for digital markets in India. Presently, the Competition Commission of India (CCI), takes ex-post measures (intervention after an event occurs) for anticompetitive practices in the digital sector. In its report, the Committee also published a draft Digital Competition Bill to give effect to its recommendations.



Committee Report on Digital Competition Law

1. Digital Competition Law for ex-ante regulation of digital competition

The Committee has recommended enacting the Digital Competition Act to enable the Competition Commission of India (CCI) to **selectively regulate large digital enterprises in an ex-ante manner** (intervening before an event occurs)

2. Systemically Significant Digital Enterprises (SSDEs)

The Committee has recommended designating entities offering **certain core digital services** like search engines, social networking services, operating systems, and web browsers, as Systemically Significant Digital Enterprises (SSDEs)

3. Thresholds for classification of SSDEs

Parameters for significant financial strength- **Turnover** (at least ₹4,000 crore in India and global turnover of at least \$30 billion), **Gross merchandise value** (₹16,000 crore in India), and **market capitalisation** (global market capitalisation of \$75 billion in the immediately preceding three financial years)

Parameter for significant spread- **Number of business users** and **end users of the core digital service in India** (either 10,000 business users or one crore end users)

4. Obligations of SSDEs

The SSDEs are prohibited from carrying out certain practices. These include:

- (i) **favouring their own products** and services or those of related parties
- (ii) **use non-public data** of business users operating on their core digital service
- (iii) **restriction of users** from using third-party applications on their core digital services
- (iv) **Incentivising the users** of an identified core digital service to use other products or services offered by the SSDE.

5. Enforcement of provisions

- a. The **Director General**, appointed under the **Competition Act 2002** is required to investigate any contraventions when directed by the CCI.
- b. A **separate bench of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal** must be constituted for timely disposal of appeals.

6. Penalties

CCI has the powers to **impose monetary penalties for non-compliance** with ex-ante obligations and with its orders. The monetary penalties have been **capped at 10% of the global turnover of the SSDE**.

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What are the recommendations of the Committee?

Digital Competition Law for ex-ante regulation of digital competition

- a. The current **ex-post framework** (intervening after an event occurs) **under the Competition Act, 2002**, does not facilitate timely redressal of anti-competitive conduct by digital enterprises. It is **ineffective to address the irreversible tipping of markets** in favour of large digital enterprises (permanent dominance of a firm in relevant market).
- b. The Committee has recommended **enacting the Digital Competition Act** to enable the Competition Commission of India (CCI) to **selectively regulate large digital enterprises in an ex-ante manner** (intervening before an event occurs).

Systemically Significant Digital Enterprises (SSDEs) and Associate Digital Enterprises (ADEs)

The Committee has recommended **designating entities offering certain core digital services** like search engines, social networking services, operating systems, and web browsers, as Systemically Significant Digital Enterprises (SSDEs).

The **business enterprises within the SSDE group that are directly or indirectly involved in providing core digital services** are required to be notified by the CCI as Associate Digital Enterprises (ADEs).

Thresholds for classification of SSDEs

- a. The Committee has recommended using both **quantitative thresholds** and **qualitative criteria** to designate enterprises as SSDEs.
- b. Quantitative Criteria- Dual test for gauging **significant financial strength and spread**—
(i) Parameters for significant financial strength- **Turnover** (at least ₹4,000 crore in India and global turnover of at least \$30 billion), **Gross merchandise value** (₹16,000 crore in India), and **market capitalisation** (global market capitalisation of \$75 billion in the immediately preceding three financial years)
(ii) Parameter for significant spread- **Number of business users** and **end users of the core digital service in India** (either **10,000 business users** or **one crore end users**)
- c. Qualitative criteria- Since the quantitative criteria may not cover all digital enterprises that may have a significant presence in Indian digital markets, the committee has recommended qualitative criteria. This includes **resources of the enterprise** and **volume of data aggregated by them**.

Obligations of SSDEs

The SSDEs are **prohibited from** carrying out certain practices. These include:

- (i) **favouring their own products** and services or those of related parties
- (ii) **use non-public data** of business users operating on their core digital service
- (iii) **restriction of users** from using third-party applications on their core digital services
- (iv) **Incentivising the users** of an identified core digital service to use other products or services offered by the SSDE.

Enforcement of provisions

- a. The **Director General**, appointed under the Competition Act 2002 is required to investigate any contraventions when directed by the CCI.
- b. A **separate bench of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal** must be constituted for timely disposal of appeals.

Penalties

CCI has the powers of imposing civil penalties on the SSDEs found to be indulged in anti-competitive practices. CCI has the powers to **impose monetary penalties** for non-compliance with ex-ante obligations and with its orders. The monetary penalties have been **capped at 10% of the global turnover of the SSDE**.

What is the need for Digital competition Law?

1. Abuse of Dominant market position- Core digital service providers have been found to be involved in abuse of their dominant market position. **For ex- Google abusing its dominant position in the Android and Play Store ecosystem** by pressurising app developers to use Google's proprietary billing system or face a fee if they opt for a competitor's service.

2. Self-preferencing and platform bias- Core digital companies have been competing with other third party service by promoting their services or subsidiaries on their own platform. **For ex- Amazon's e-commerce service** has been under **scrutiny in India** due to its **dual role of being a marketplace operator**, as well as **retailer on its own platform**.

3. Restrictions on Third-Party Applications- There are instances where big digital entities have restricted the installation or operation of third-party applications. **For ex- Apple's restriction on installing third-party applications on the iPhone**.

4. Bundling and Tying- Big Digital tech firms have been compelling consumers to purchase related services by linking their main products or services to other complementary offerings. **For ex- Operating system providers like Microsoft, bundling the use of its search engine and products like Office**, which generates pricing asymmetry and results in the elimination of competition from the market.

5. Anti-Steering- Anti-steering provisions are **employed by big tech entities to hinder business users from migrating away from the platform and utilizing alternative options**. This results in restriction of customer choices. **For ex- Apple's anti-steering practices** prevents users from truly exercising their choice of services with the Apple ecosystem.

6. Network effect and Economies of Scale- The core digital services companies demonstrate '**network effects**', which enable rapid growth of their user base and fixation of arbitrary prices, which **creates challenges for new competitors to overcome**. **For ex- Meta's subscription model offering** people in EU, European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland the choice to use Facebook and Instagram without any ads.

7. Concerns Over Data Privacy- Core digital companies gather vast amounts of user data through their platforms and services. This has raised **concerns about data privacy, digital surveillance, and data security**. **For ex- CCI's probe into WhatsApp's privacy policy**, on allegations that the messaging platform shares user data with its parent Facebook.

8. Killer Acquisitions and Mergers leading to monopoly- Killer acquisitions, **where big techs purchase valuable start-ups without being subject to merger control rules based on turnover**, create an unfair playing field in the digital market. **For ex- Facebook's killer acquisition of Instagram and WhatsApp**, led to the monopolisation of social media communication domain.

What will be the purported advantages of Digital Competition Law?

1. Reduction in time for anti-competitive case redressal- Ex-post measures for redressal of anti-competitive practices were time-consuming. **For ex- CCI adjudicating in 2018 on a complaint of abuse of dominant position filed in 2012**. However, the ex-ante measures introduced with the digital competition law will reduce the redressal time.

2. Create Level Playing Field- The new Digital Competition law will create a level playing field for all **digital service providers** operating in India.

3. Further catalyse the startup growth- The new law will further catalyse the growth of digital startups in India. They will **not be in a disadvantageous position** due to the 'network effect' and 'economies of scale' of core digital service providers.

4. Address Data privacy Concerns- The **incorporation of penalties** for **violation of data privacy** will further strengthen data privacy regime in India.

5. Boost to Digital Economy- It is expected that India's digital markets will reach \$800 billion by 2030 by effective regulation through this digital competition law.

Read more- [Digital Competition Bill in India](#)

What are the prevailing Concerns?

1. Stifling of Innovation- There are concerns that strict regulations **could limit creativity and growth** in the digital sector.

2. Potential for Misuse- Critics point that the draft **Bill's ex-ante approach gives excessive discretionary power to the regulators**. This raises concerns about its potential misuse.

3. Duplication with Existing Laws- The proposed new law might overlap with provisions in the current Competition Act, leading to regulatory complexity and potential confusion.

4. Potential for Conflicting Decisions: The overlap between current competition law and proposed digital competition law could **result in parallel inquiries and divergent rulings for the same issue**.

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**.

3. 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**.

Read More- [PRS](#)

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

Inflation In India- Reasons and Solutions- Explained Pointwise

Recently, the Reserve Bank of India Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has released the **projection of retail Inflation in India for FY 25**. RBI's MPC projects Inflation in India to be **4.9% in Q1, 3.8% in Q2, 4.6% in Q3 and 4.5% in Q4 of FY25**. Inflation in India is now showing decreasing trend, after its upsurge in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion in Ukraine.

However, the **retail food inflation in India has been posing challenges** for the **final descent of inflation to the target of 4%**. But there is hope, for softening of food inflation softening in the months ahead, due to **easing**

global food prices and the onset of La Nina in India. This would provide the much needed leeway for the MPC to consider cutting the central bank's benchmark interest rates.



Measures employed in India to control inflation

Inflation management is a **complex task** as inflation is caused by several factors such as **demand-pull factors, cost push factors and structural factors**. Therefore a mix of macro-economic policies are needed to manage the inflation in the economy.

Main Tools For Inflation Management	
Monetary Policy	Monetary Policy tool is employed by the RBI to control the supply of money in the economy. RBI applies the repo rate to control the supply of money in the economy. By increasing the repo rate RBI tries to bring down the rate of inflation in the economy.
Fiscal Policy	Monetary Policy tool is employed by the Govt manage inflation through public expenditure and taxation . Government tries to reduce inflation by raising the tax rates and reducing public expenditure.
Other tools for Inflation Management	
Export policy	The government can temporarily ban the export and imposes Minimum Export Price (MIP) to discourage exports of certain commodities to ensure their availability in the domestic markets. Ex- Recent rice export and onion export ban .
Price control Policy	Under the Essential Commodity Act 1955 , the government can declare a commodity as an essential commodity to ensure supplies to people at fair prices.
Anti-Hoarding and Anti-speculation Policy	The Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980 allows for detention of persons engaged in activities like hoarding, creating artificial scarcities of essential commodities in the market and rigging up of the prices .

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What is Inflation? What are its different types?

Inflation- Inflation refers to the **rise in the prices of most goods and services of daily or common use** such as food, clothing, housing, recreation, transport, consumer goods. Inflation measures the **average price change in a basket of commodities and services** over a period of time.

Types of Inflation

Demand Side inflation	Demand Side Inflation is caused by high demand and low production which creates a demand-supply gap and it leads to a hike in prices due to increase in consumption.
Cost Pull inflation	Cost Pull Inflation is caused by shortage of factors of production like labour, land, capital etc. and also due to artificial scarcity created due to hoarding.
Built-in inflation	Due to the emergence of cost-push inflation and demand-pull inflation, employers need to offer competitive wages to avoid the risk of labour shortages. Companies resort to built-in inflation in these cases, which involves raising employee salaries while increasing prices to maintain profit margins.

Different Inflation indices used in India

WPI Inflation- WPI captures the **average movement of wholesale prices of goods only.** Its major components are- Manufactured goods (64.23%) > Primary articles (22.62%)> Fuel and Power (13.15%). It is primarily used for **ascertaining GDP Deflator** in the economy.

CPI Inflation- CPI captures the **movement in prices of goods and services** that are acquired by the households for consumption purposes. Its major components are- Food and Beverages (45.86%) >Housing (10.07%)> Transport and communication (8.59%)> Fuel and Light (6.84%). It is primarily used for **RBI's Inflation targeting** and **measurement of DA** for employees.

Headline and Core Inflation

Headline Inflation- Headline inflation is a **measure of the total inflation** within an economy, **including commodities such as food and energy prices**, which tend to be much more volatile and prone to inflationary spikes. The headline inflation is **reported through the Consumer Price Index (CPI)** in India.

Core Inflation- Core inflation is the **persistent component of inflation in India.** It attempts to remove the volatile, transitory movements from the CPI. In India, it is measured by **removing Food and Fuel categories from CPI.**

Inflation Targeting in India

The Reserve Bank of India is the authority to control inflation under **RBI Act 1934.**

Inflation Targeting Regime of RBI	
Began in 2016. Central govt fixes the target for RBI's Monetary Policy Committee for 5 years.	RBI has to retain the inflation target of 4%, with a tolerance band of +/- 2 percentage till March 2026.

What are the reasons behind the recently Increasing Inflation in India?

1. Decreased food production due to erratic weather- The prices of food commodities has increased, on account of decreased production due to **deficient monsoon** and **unseasonal rains.** This had caused a spike in the prices of wheat, rice, pulses, vegetables and edible oils.

2. Increasing cost of agricultural inputs- The increase in the cost of inputs such as **seeds, fertilizers, and labour** has raised the production costs for farmers in India. This, in turn, has led to **higher prices for cereals and pulses**.

3. Increase in Global Fuel prices- India has import dependency of around 80% for its fuel demands. **For ex-** A \$10 increase in crude oil price increases inflation in India by 40-60 bps.

4. Geopolitical Conflicts and tensions- The **Russia-Ukraine crisis** and **Israel-Hamas wars** have resulted in the increase of crude oil prices and have contributed to soaring food and commodity prices (wheat and sunflower oil).

5. Impact of COVID-19 pandemic- **COVID-induced lockdowns** caused **supply chain disruptions** across the world, pushing up the commodity prices. **Post COVID economic rebound** led to a drastic increase in demand for goods causing **demand pull inflation** in India.

6. Lack of Government Interventions- The lackadaisical approach government in actively controlling prices of the essential commodities like **lax action on hoarders and stockpilers** and **exports at prices lower than MSP** (Non-basmati rice exports surged from 1.38 MT in 2019-20 to 6.4 MT in 2022-23, at prices lower than (MSP), causing high food inflation).

What are the impacts of Inflation in India?

Moderate inflation in the range of 4%+/- 2%, has its positive impacts on the economy-

1. Increased economic growth- Increasing prices **encourages consumers to spend and invest**, which gives a boost to the economy and job creation.

2. Higher Profits and Boost to production- Inflation is advantageous to product manufacturers as it enables them to **make more money because of Increased Prices**. This also boosts to the production of more goods and services.

3. Better returns to the investors- Entrepreneurs and investors **get better returns on investments made in profitable ventures** during periods of inflation.

4. Increase in worker's wages- Inflation results in increased wages for the workers **as they need more money** to keep up with rising costs of products.

5. Reduction in debt burden- Inflation reduces the **real burden of debt** as the amount of money owed remains constant while the value of money decreases over time. This is particularly helpful for borrowers who are struggling to repay their debts.

However, high and soaring inflation rates (6% or more in India) has seriously negative impacts on the economy-

1. **Inflation tax**- High rate of Inflation **erodes the purchasing power of money**. People can buy less with the same amount of money, resulting in decreased standard of living.
2. **Exacerbates socio-economic inequality**- High inflation rates **disproportionately impacts** the **poor, unemployed, people with fixed incomes** and **retired workers**.
3. **Reduced economic activities**- High inflation increases the economic and financial uncertainties by resulting in **increased borrowing cost of businesses**(as RBI increases Repo rate).
4. **Reduced international competitiveness**- High Inflation makes a **country's goods and services more expensive relative to other countries**, thereby reducing its international competitiveness.
5. **Currency depreciation**- Inflation in India leads to **depreciation of currency** which can impact economic stability.

What are the measures employed in India to control inflation?

Inflation management is a **complex task** as inflation is caused by several factors such as demand-pull factors, cost push factors and structural factors. Therefore a **mix of macro-economic policies** are needed to manage the inflation in the economy.

Main Tools For Inflation Management	
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Anti-Hoarding and Anti-speculation Policy	The Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980 allows for detention of persons engaged in activities like hoarding, creating artificial scarcities of essential commodities in the market and rigging up of the prices.

What are the challenges with Inflation Management in India?

- 1. Rising Food Prices-** India's **food and oil components** of the consumer price index CPI are **about 50%**. The **RBI has no control over the prices of food and oil**, as these are driven by natural climatic factors as well as global uncertainties like Ukraine-Russia war. Therefore, it is left to squeeze less than 50% of the domestic economy to lower inflation.
- 2. Govt Failure in addressing supply shocks-** Govt's myopic policies of **export ban of agricultural products** (like **wheat, rice, onions**) induces fear and panic in the domestic market, leading to rise in stock holdings which ultimately resulted in price rise.
- 3. Monetary Policy's singular focus on demand side-** RBI's monetary policy **targets only demand constraints**. It faces the problem of tackling Supply shocks originating from food and oil.
- 4. Flawed Model of Inflation targeting-** The current model of Inflation targeting is based on the assumption that **inflation means overheating of the economy**-that is increased output greater than natural level output. However, **In India it is impossible to observe the actual level of output in an economy**. Hence, setting policy rates based on the assumption that the economy has overheated is unscientific.

Read More- [Inflation Management in India-Present Challenges- Explained Pointwise](#)

What should be the solutions for reducing inflation?

- 1. Implementing Farm Reforms-** Farm reforms which **aim to raise agricultural production and productivity** must be implemented at the earliest. Also, measures to enhance the processing of perishables like Onion and tomato must be undertaken.
- 2. Adjustment of Import Duties-** Import duties on items like wheat should be reduced as **cheaper imports** can help control domestic prices.
- 3. Release Excess Buffer Stocks-** The government holds more than **40 million tonnes of rice**, much above the **buffer stock norms** of 13.5 MT. This **excess stock** should be **unloaded by Food Corporation of India** in the open market at reasonable prices. This will cool down the food inflation.
- 4. Reduced dependence on fuels-** We must aim to increase **our renewable energy share in energy mix** at the earliest, so as to reduce the burden on imported fuels, which induce price volatility.
- 5. Updation of the CPI Basket Weights-** The **weight of food and beverages in the CPI basket should be adjusted** to reflect current realities as the weights are based on the 2011 consumption survey.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Indian Economy- Inflation and its management

SC Ruling on right against Climate Change- Explained Pointwise

Supreme Court (SC) in its latest judgement has recognised the right against the adverse effects of climate change as a distinct fundamental right in the Constitution. SC held that the right against adverse impact of climate change is intertwined with the right to life (Art 21) and right to equality (Art 14) that are embedded in the Indian constitution.



Supreme Court ruling on right against Climate Change

Right against Climate Change is a fundamental right- Right to a healthy environment, which is safe from the ill-effects of climate change, is a fundamental right.

Expansive view of the Fundamental rights under Art 14 and 21- SC has held that right to life (Art 21) and right to equality (Art 14) could not be fully realised without a clean, stable environment. SC has expanded the scope of Art 14 and Art 21 to underline the need to protect lives and livelihoods in the face of climate change.

Impact on the right to health (Art 21) due to Climate Change- The right to health (which is a part of the right to life under Article 21) is impacted due to factors such as air pollution, vector-borne diseases, rising temperatures, droughts. These factors are exacerbated due to climate change.

Impact on the right to equality (Art 14) due to Climate Change- Climate change and environmental degradation lead to acute food and water shortages in a particular area where the poorer communities suffer more than richer ones. Forest dwellers, tribal and indigenous communities have a higher risk of losing their homes and culture due to climate change as compared to other communities.

Interconnection between climate change and human rights- SC in its judgement has held that climate change impacts various human rights such as the right to health, indigenous rights, gender equality, and the right to development.

[For detailed Reading- 7 PM Link](#)



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What is the Supreme Court ruling on right against Climate Change?

The SC ruling has come in the case connected with the survival of the endangered Great Indian Bustard Species.

1. **Right against Climate Change is a fundamental right-** Right to a healthy environment, which is safe from the ill-effects of climate change, is a fundamental right.
2. **Expansive view of the Fundamental rights under Art 14 and 21-** SC has held that right to life (Art 21) and right to equality (Art 14) could not be fully realised without a clean, stable environment. SC has expanded the scope of Art 14 and Art 21 to underline the need to protect lives and livelihoods in the face of climate change.
3. **Impact on the right to health (Art 21) due to Climate Change-** The right to health (which is a part of the right to life under Article 21) is impacted due to factors such as air pollution, vector-borne diseases, rising temperatures, droughts. These factors are exacerbated due to climate change.
4. **Impact on the right to equality (Art 14) due to Climate Change-** Climate change and environmental degradation lead to acute food and water shortages in a particular area where the poorer communities suffer more than richer ones. Forest dwellers, tribal and indigenous communities have a higher risk of losing their homes and culture due to climate change as compared to other communities.
5. **Interconnection between climate change and human rights-** SC in its judgement has held that climate change impacts various human rights such as the right to health, indigenous rights, gender equality, and the right to development.
6. **Right against Climate change and right to clean environment two sides of the same coin-** SC in its ruling has observed that the right against adverse effect of climate change and the right to clean environment are two sides of the same coin. However, with the increase in adverse effects of climate change, it is imperative to recognise the right against adverse effects of climate change as a distinct right.

What is the significance of the Supreme Court Ruling on right against Climate Change?

1. **Reiteration of India's commitment to climate justice-** The SC ruling reiterates India's Climate responsibilities under International laws and agreements such as the Paris Agreement, which aim to provide environmental and climate justice.
2. **Makes the Issue of Climate change a part of public discourse-** The recognition of the right against climate change as a fundamental right, makes the issue of climate change a part of the public and political discourse in the country. It will nudge the Parliament to enact legislations on the issues of climate change.
3. **Opens the doors of constitution courts for Environmental Jurisprudence-** The recognition of the right against the climate change as a fundamental right, opens the doors of the constitutional courts for citizens to litigate climate change issues in future.
4. **Progressive step setting a significant legal precedent-** In the absence of a single or umbrella legislation against climate change in the country, the recognition of the rights of Indians against climate change by the Judiciary, is a progressive step setting a significant legal precedent.
5. **Recognises the Vulnerability of Indians to climate change-** The Supreme court ruling is a recognition of the Vulnerability of Indians to climate Change which has been highlighted by the several studies, including IPCC reports.

What are the vulnerabilities of Indians to Climate change which enhance the importance of the Verdict?

1. **Increase in Glacial lake outburst floods-** Climate change has increased the intensity and frequency of GLOFs due to rapid melting of the Hindukush Himalayan Ranges. For Ex- Recent GLOF induced flooding in Sikkim leading to destruction of lives and livelihood.

2. Changing Rainfall Patterns and increase in droughts- There has been increase in the frequency of droughts in **north-western India, Jharkhand, Orissa and Chhattisgarh.**

3. Increase in sea levels- The densely populated cities of Kolkata and Mumbai are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of **sea-level rise, tropical cyclones, and riverine flooding.**

4. Endangered Food and Energy Security- There has been a **decrease in the crop yields** because of extreme heat and low rainfall, which endangers the food security of the country. Further, the decrease in the availability of water due to climate change poses **major risk factors to hydro and thermal power generation.**

What are the other SC rulings on Environmental Issues?

The Supreme Court on several occasions in the past few decades has relied on the Constitution to uphold human rights pertaining to environmental issues.

MC Mehta vs Kamal Nath 2000	SC held that any disturbance of the basic environment elements, namely air, water and soil , which are necessary for 'life', would be hazardous to 'life' within the meaning of Article 21 of the Constitution. SC held that Right to life within Art 21 includes the right to live in a healthy environment, right to enjoy pollution-free water and air, and right to live in a pollution-free environment.
Virender Gaur vs State of Haryana 1995	It is the imperative duty of the State governments and municipalities to take adequate measures to promote, protect and improve both the man-made and the natural environment.
Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board vs C Kenchappa, 2006	Supreme Court took note of the adverse effects of rising sea levels and rising global temperatures.
Bombay Dyeing & Mfg. Co. Ltd. (3) v. Bombay Environmental Action Group, 2006	Supreme Court recognised that climate change posed a "major threat" to the environment.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Enaction of legislation to give effect to the right- **Enaction of legislation and framing of policies against climate change** will help in the actual realisation of the right of citizens against climate change.

2. Inclusion in Political Manifestos- This recognised fundamental right against climate change **must be a part of the political manifestos of the political parties** in the fray for Lok Sabha Polls. They must outline their plan of action for the realisation of these rights.

3. Avoiding hiatus between environmental jurisprudence and policy- **Governments must give proper respect to these SC rulings** that underline the links between ecology and human dignity. We must **aim to avoid the hiatus** between environmental jurisprudence and policy **like in the case of Delhi Air Pollution.**

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

UPSC Syllabus- **GS 2-** Issues related to Judiciary, **GS-3-** Environmental conservation

75 years of NATO- Explained Pointwise

April 4, 2024 marked the completion of 75 years of NATO. At the event celebrating the 75 years of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, its Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that **NATO is bigger, stronger, and more united than ever.**

NATO has certainly been **expanding as an organisation**, with the member countries reaching **32 from the initial 12**. However, expansion is believed to be a **key factor behind Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine** and the continued conflict. It also faces several challenges as an organisation.



NATO- It is a Western security alliance founded on **April 4, 1949, with 12 founding members**. The 12 founding members signed the Washington Treaty, which was **based on the Art 51 of the United Nations Charter**.

Background of Formation- The formation of NATO during the Cold War Era was to serve as a **deterrent against Soviet expansionism**.

Membership of NATO

Original Founding Members- There were **12 founding members**– Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Expanded Member States- It has expanded since its founding, with new member countries joining in multiple rounds. Currently there are **32 members of NATO**.

Objectives of NATO

- 1. Collective Defence-** It's primary objective is collective defence, as outlined in **Article 5 of the Washington Treaty** (North Atlantic Treaty).
- 2. Political Cooperation-** It's objective is to **promote democratic values** and enable the members to consult and cooperate on defence and security related issues to solve problems, build trust and prevent conflict.
- 3. Military Assistance-** It is also mandated to **provide military assistance and undertake crisis management operations**, in case of diplomatic failures in dispute resolution.

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What was the rationale behind the creation of NATO? What is the present structure and membership of NATO?

NATO- It is a Western security alliance founded on **April 4, 1949**, with **12 founding members**. The 12 founding members signed the **Washington Treaty**, which was based on the **Art 51 of the United Nations Charter**. Art 51 of the UN Charter **reaffirmed the inherent right of independent states to individual or collective defence**.

Background of Formation

The formation of NATO during the Cold War Era was to serve as a **deterrent against Soviet expansionism**. It was to **counter the risk that the Soviet Union would seek to extend its control of Eastern Europe** to other parts of the continent.

Membership of NATO

Original Founding Members- There were **12 founding members**– **Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States**.

Expanded Member States- It has expanded since its founding, with new member countries joining in multiple rounds. The alliance **currently consists of 32 member countries**. The expanded members include **Greece and Turkey (1952)**, **West Germany (1955; later as Germany), Spain (1982)**; **the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland (1999)**; **Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia (2004)**; **Albania and Croatia (2009)**; **Montenegro (2017)**; **North Macedonia (2020)**; **Finland (2023)**; and **Sweden (2024)**.

Objectives of NATO

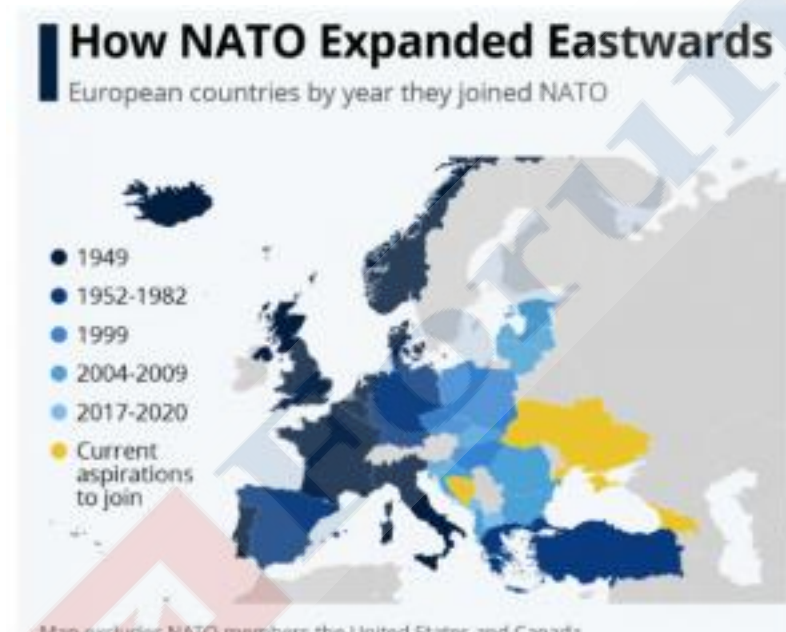


Figure 2 Source- The Guardian

1. Collective Defence- It's primary objective is collective defence, as **outlined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty** (North Atlantic Treaty). The concept of Collective defence stipulates that an **attack on any of the members is an attack on all of them** and demands collective action.

2. Political Cooperation- It's objective is to **promote democratic values** and enable the members to **consult and cooperate on defence and security related issues** to solve problems, build trust and prevent conflict.

3. Military Assistance- It is also mandated to provide military assistance and **undertake crisis**

management operations, in case of diplomatic failures in dispute resolution.

Read More- [Washington Treaty](#)

What have been the achievements of NATO in the last 75 years?

1. Collective security against superpowers of different ideology- During the Cold war era, NATO helped the **European countries** in **securing their countries** against a number of actual or potential dangers emanating **from**

the erstwhile USSR. Post cold, NATO is helping the European Countries to compete ideologically, economically and strategically against the emerging super power China.

2. Controlling militarized conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe- It has played a key role in containing and controlling militarised conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe by actively promoting stability within the former Soviet bloc.

3. Stabilization of Western Europe- It has helped in the stabilization of Western Europe, whose states had been bitter rivals in the past. For ex- France-Germany relations.

4. Crisis management operations- It provides support to other countries in their crisis management operations. These range from aid operations such as its delivery of relief supplies after the 2005 Kashmir Earthquake to counter-terrorism operations in the Mediterranean and the coast of Somalia.

5. Invocation of collective security only once- Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty has been invoked only once so far following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US. NATO forces were sent to Afghanistan and deployed for nearly 20 years.

6. Providing Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine- NATO has publicly denounced the Russian invasion of Ukraine and NATO member countries and allies have provided substantial aid to Ukraine. The Ukraine war has reaffirmed the importance of NATO, and even spurred Finland and Sweden to increase their efforts to join the alliance

What are the Challenges being faced by the organisation?

1. Funding Challenges- Only a few members have met the defence spending target of 2% of their GDP, pledged after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Currently, the US accounts for over 2/3rd of the alliance's defence spending, which is considered unfair by the republicans in US.

2. Intra-block tensions- Disagreements between countries have led to intra-block tensions within NATO. For ex- Turkey holding off Sweden and Finland's NATO's membership for criticism of Turkey's human rights violations. French president's criticism of NATO regarding lack of strategic coordination between European allies and the United States and Turkey.

3. Deterioration of ties with Russia- Russia's ties with NATO have now slipped to the level of direct confrontation in the face of NATO's open support for Ukraine in the Russia-Ukraine War.

4. Participation in military conflicts worldwide- NATO has gained a bad name for participation in more than 200 military conflicts worldwide, which includes 20 major conflicts. It has been criticised for inflicting damage, human toll and bringing destruction and alienation instead of declaring peace and stability. For ex- NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia, invasion of Iraq, and the unlawful military interference in Syria.

5. Continuation of Colonial practices in Modern Avatar- Increasing number of third world countries have started looking at NATO as a continuation of the ugly colonial practices in a modern avatar under the slogans of democracy, human rights and freedom as prescribed by the Euro-Atlantic rulers.

6. NATO's unwarranted expansionism- NATO's expansion in the post-Soviet space and Eurasia is creating more alienation and damaging the traditionally close ties between the countries. The possibility of Ukraine joining NATO has been cited as a significant reason for Russian actions in the Russia-Ukraine Conflict.

What Should be the Way Forward for its reform?

1. Restart the dialogue mechanism with Russia- NATO should abandon the strategic concept adopted at the 2022 NATO summit by which Moscow is proclaimed to be the most significant and direct threat to allied

security, peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic. The **dialogue mechanisms with Russia** must be started at the earliest.

2. Positive agenda for global peace- NATO should present its positive agenda to contribute to the maintenance of global and regional peace and security. It should **allay the fears of expansionism** and **continuation of colonial expansion** by enhancing transparency in their functioning.

3. Focus on Non-Traditional Threats- NATO should further **adapt to address non-traditional threats like terrorism, cyber attacks, disinformation campaigns**, and threats to supply chain security.

4. Enhance the Quality, Coherence and Timelines of Advice- The importance and functions of the five main policy committees within NATO, which include the **Military Committee, Political Committee, Policy Coordination Group, Executive Working Group, and Senior Resource Board**, must be enhanced.

[Read More- The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- International Organisations

Electoral Reforms In India- Explained Pointwise

With the impending General Elections 2024, the **issue of electoral Reforms in India** has started getting traction. India is both the largest and one of the most populous democracies in the world. **Elections lie at the very heart of Indian democracy**. They not only sustain democracy but enliven it as well. Hence, **holding of free and fair election is**, therefore, a sine qua non of democracy.

Various electoral reforms have been taken in India till date to ensure free and fair elections. However, **Electoral reforms remains a work in progress**.

What are electoral reforms? What Electoral Reforms have been taken in India?

Electoral Reforms- Electoral reforms in India refers to the **evolution and modification of the electoral system in India**. The Electoral Reforms seek to promote clean politics, free and fair elections, and ideal legislators.

Electoral Reforms have been undertaken in India since Independence. However the reforms can be sub divided under the following timelines-

Major Electoral Reforms Before 1996

Introduction of EVMs 1982	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.
Lowering of Voting Age 1988	The Voting age was reduced from 21 years to 18 years by the 61st Constitutional Amendment Act of 1988 , to encourage the youth to express their voice via vote.
Increase in the Number of Proposers 1988	To prevent the non-serious candidates from contesting , the number of proposers were increased for filing nomination papers to the Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Council.
Anti Booth capturing Provisions 1989	A provision was made for the adjournment of polls or countermanding elections in case of booth capturing in 1989.
Elector's Photo Identity Card (EPIC) 1993	Election Commission started issuing Elector's Photo Identity Card (EPIC) for registered voters.

Major electoral Reforms in 1996 on the recommendations of Dinesh Goswami Committee

Listing of names of candidates	Candidates wanting to contest elections were further divided three categories- a. Political party , b. Registered and Un-registered Party and c. Independent Candidates
Disqualification under Prevention of Insults to the National Honour Act	A person convicted for the offenses under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act of 1971 is disqualified to contest in the elections to the Parliament and State Legislature for 6 years
Increase in the number of proposers	The nomination of a candidate in a Parliamentary or assembly constituency should be subscribed by 10 registered electors of the constituency as proposers if the candidate is not sponsored by a recognized political party.
Contestants restricted to two constituencies	A candidate would not be eligible to contest from more than two Parliamentary/assembly constituencies and Rajya sabha/State legislative council
By-Elections	By-Elections were to be held in six months since the vacancy
Introduction of strict prohibitions	Strict prohibition on Arms and Sale of liquor near polling area

Major Electoral Reforms after 1996

Increase in the number of proposers and seconders 1997	Number of Proposers and Seconders for contesting Election to President and Vice president were changes accordingly- a. President : From 10 to 50 b. Vice President : From 5 to 20
Postal Ballot 1999	Provision was made for voting through Postal Ballot in 1999 under circumstances by the permission of Election Commission for any class persons.

Electoral Reforms in 2003

Introduction of proxy voting	A provision was made for voters from Armed forces to opt their vote through proxy.
Declaration of criminal antecedents, assets	The Election Commission issued an order directing every candidate to disclose the information on the matters of conviction, accusation, assets, and any liabilities.
Free supply of electoral rolls and travel exemptions	Election Commission passed a provision for free supply of electoral rolls and exemptions were made in travelling expenses made by Candidates.
Parties entitled to accept contribution	The political parties had to report any contribution in excess of ₹20,000 to the Election Commission for claiming income tax relief.
Allocation of time on media	Allocation for sharing of time on media and cable to each candidate was made by Election Commission. Introduction of Braille Signage features in EVM.

Electoral Reforms Since 2003 Till Today

Prohibition on exit polls 2009	Prohibition were imposed on conducting Exit Polls and publishing the results of exit polls.
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Time limit for submitting a case for disqualification 2009	A three-month time limit was added within which the specified authority will have to submit the case of a person found guilty of corrupt practice to the President to determine the question of disqualification.
Increase in security deposit 2009	The amount of security deposit to be paid by the candidates contesting elections to the Lok Sabha was increased from ₹10,000 to ₹25,000
Registration of Indian Citizen living outside India 2010	Every Indian Citizen living outside India is entitled to get his name registered in the Parliamentary or Assembly near the place of residence mentioned in his/her passport and are entitled to receive their voting rights

Electoral Reforms in 2013

Electoral roll Online	Election Commission made the provision for Online filling of the application form in the electoral roll.
Addition of NOTA option in the EVMs	Apex Court of India directed election commission to add NOTA (None of the above) option in EVM's
Introduction of VVPAT	Election Commission introduced VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail) for verification of voters vote .
Allowing persons in jail or police custody to contest elections	The Representation of the People Act, 1951 was amended in 2013 to allow the persons in jail or police custody to contest elections.
Immediate disqualification of convicted MPs and MLAs	Supreme Court, in Lily Thomas case (2013) , held that convicted MPs and MLAs will be immediately disqualified from holding membership of the House without being given three months' time for appeal.

Electoral Reforms after 2013

Increase in election expenditure 2013	Government raised the maximum ceiling on election expenditure of Lok Sabha from Rs.40,00,000 to Rs.70,00,000 . In bigger states assembly seats was increased from Rs.16,00,000 to Rs.28,00,000
Pics of candidates on EVMs 2015	Election Commission passed the order that EVM will carry the picture / photo of candidate, his/her name and symbol of the party to avoid the confusion amongst the common people.
Electoral Bonds 2017	Ceiling on cash donations lowered- The limit for anonymous cash donations by any individual to a political party was lowered from ₹20,000 to ₹2,000 . Cap on corporate contributions lifted- The limit on corporate contributions from 7.5% of the net profit of a company's past three financial years was removed .

What are the Challenges faced in conduction of free and fair elections in India?

- 1. Booth Capturing-** Even in new era and world of developments, there are reported incidents of violence and intimidation of voters at the booth. **For ex- Violence at polling booths in Bengal Panchayati Elections**
- 2. Criminalisation of Politics-** Despite the EC's measures regarding the disclosure of criminal records, the parties have not refrained from giving tickets to candidates having serious criminal antecedents. **For ex- About**

40% of sitting MPs have criminal cases registered against them out of which 25% have declared serious criminal cases under charges of murder.

3. Violation of Model Code of Conduct- The elections in India witness violations of the model code of conduct by the candidates and the political parties. **For ex- Illegal use of public places, loudspeakers, money for votes** etc.

4. Electoral Finance- Electoral finance has always been an Achilles heel problem for elections in India. Laundered and Black money are major sources of electoral finance. **For ex- SC recently stuck down Electoral bond scheme on the issue of lack of transparency in funding.**

5. Electoral Overspending- The political parties have no expenditure limit in the elections. This is exploited by the candidates for over expenditure in their constituencies during the election. **For ex- Star campaigners expenditure is not included in candidate's expenditure.**

6. Use of casteism and communalism card- The elections in India witness the card of casteism, communalism and regionalism played by the political parties to garner votes. These lead to social fragmentation of the electorate. **For ex- Use of Hate Speech in elections**

Read More- [Electoral Bonds Scheme](#)

What is the aim of Electoral Reforms?

- 1. Ensuring free and fair elections (Article 324):** Electoral reforms aim to address the issues of electoral malpractices and ensure that elections are conducted in a free and fair manner.
- 2. Enhancing voter participation-** Electoral reforms aim to increase voter turnout and to address the issue of voter apathy, difficulty in accessing polling booths, etc.
- 3. Reducing the influence of money and muscle power-** Electoral reforms help to reduce the influence of money and muscle power by regulating campaign finance and ensuring the safety of voters.
- 4. Encouraging transparency and accountability-** Electoral reforms initiate the measures such as mandatory disclosure of criminal records by candidates and the use of technology to monitor the electoral process. Thus they help in enhancing the transparency and accountability of elections in India.
- 5. Addressing electoral inequalities-** Electoral reforms aim to bring down the inequalities such as the under-representation of women and marginalized communities.

What should be the way Forward?

Implementation of the Electoral Reforms suggested by the EC which are provided below will help in addressing the issue of electoral malpractices and conduction of free and fair elections-

- 1. One Candidate one Constituency-** The Representation of People's Act must be amended to provide that **a person cannot contest from more than one constituency at a time.**
- 2. Lifetime Ban on contesting elections after conviction-** Election commission has endorsed the call for a lifetime ban which would **'champion the cause of decriminalization of politics'**.
- 3. Ban on advertisements six months prior to election-** **Advertisements of achievements of the governments, either Central or State,** should be prohibited for a period of six months prior to the date of expiry of the term of the House.
- 4. False Declarations to be an offence-** Election Commission proposes that making false declarations concerning elections be an offense under RPA.
- 5. Rules making under RPA to be conferred to the EC-** Rule-making authority under the Representation of the People Act, 1950, and Representation of the People Act, 1951, should be **conferred on the Election Commission instead of the Central Government.**
- 6. Use of common Electoral Rolls-** There should be the **use of common electoral rolls** at elections conducted by the Election Commission and the State Election Commissions.
- 7. Disqualification under anti-defection law-** The decisions relating to anti-defection matters should be **rendered by the President or the Governor with the recommendation of the Election Commission.**
- 8. Explore setting up of National Electoral Fund-** The idea of National Electoral Fund, put forth by former chief election commissioner **T.S. Krishnamurthy**, can be explored as an alternative to state funding of election. This **fund would allow contributions from all donors.** The money will then go to the parties according to the results of the elections or any other principle that all parties would agree upon.

Read More- [PRS](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Issues related to elections and the RPA

Importance of Andaman and Nicobar Islands- Explained Pointwise

The **strategic and economic importance** of Andaman and Nicobar Islands is **increasing in the power corridors of New Delhi.** The enhanced focus of New Delhi on the strategic importance of Andaman and Nicobar Islands is reflected by the **renewed emphasis on the creation of major military infrastructure (revamping of airfields, jetties, habitat for troops)** in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Government of India had earlier constituted **Islands Development Agency (IDA)** and a **NITI Aayog committee** for holistic socio-economic development of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

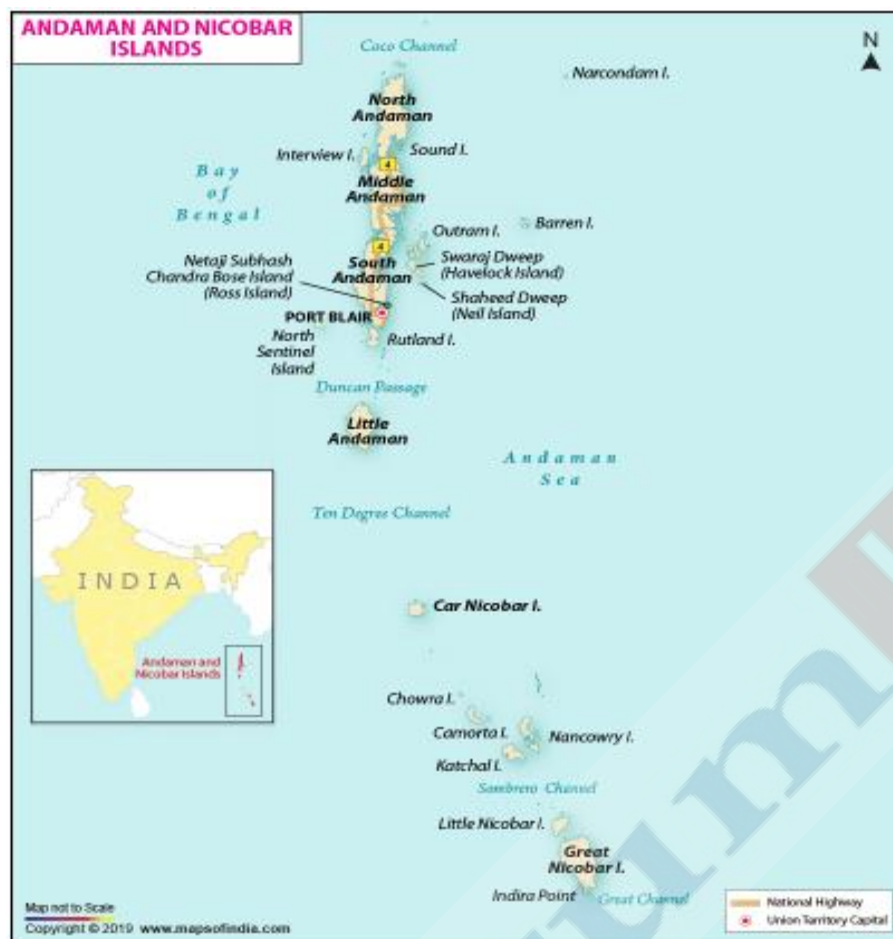


Figure 3. Source- Map of India

Where is the Andaman and Nicobar Island Chain located? What is the history of its association with India?

Andaman and Nicobar Islands- The Andaman and Nicobar Islands consists of two groups of islands, the Andaman Islands and the Nicobar Islands. It covers an area of 8,249 sq km. The entire island chain consists of 836 islands including islets and rocky outcrops, of which some 38 are permanently inhabited.

Governance- The islands are governed as a single Union Territory by the Central Government of India, through the Andaman Nicobar Administration.

History of India's association with Andaman and Nicobar Island

The aftermath of the 1857 War of Independence	British established a penal colony in the Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) islands, where many Indian revolutionaries and freedom fighters were incarcerated for life.
February 1942	The Andaman and Nicobar islands were occupied by the Japanese as a prospective springboard for the invasion of India after their occupation of Singapore
December 1943	The islands became the first part of India to be 'liberated' from British rule, when Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose visited Port Blair and hoisted the INA tricolour.
1945	British reoccupied the Andaman and Nicobar Islands after the Japanese surrender in 1945
On the eve of Independence	The fate of these islands hung in balance. The British Chiefs of Staff had recommended retaining the A&N, as a Crown possession given its strategic oceanic location. However, British PM Clement Atlee overruled the recommendations and let India have the Island.
1962	From Independence till 1962, the island was subjected to benign neglect by New Delhi due to the attachment of dark symbolism of Kalapani coupled with the remoteness of the islands. However, in 1962, the government sanctioned a detachment of 150 sailors to form

	a 'naval garrison' when the Indian Navy (IN) raised an alarm about the reported sighting of a Chinese submarine.
2001	India's first joint and Unified operational command- the Andaman Nicobar Command (ANC) was established in Port Blair after the post-Kargil War security review.

What is the importance and Significance of Andaman and Nicobar Islands for India?

Geo-strategic and Geo-Political Significance

- 1. Crucial Node for peace and security in the Indo-Pacific-** India can leverage the strategic position of the Andaman and Nicobar islands to emerge as the 'net security provider' in the Indo-Pacific region.
- 2. Enhances the scope of Maritime Partnership-** Andaman and Nicobar's geo-strategic location enhances the scope for India's maritime partnership with the US, Japan, Australia and France. **For ex- Enhances their scope for participation in Exercise KAVACH.**
- 3. Countering the growing Chinese influence-** Andaman and Nicobar Islands is like a 'Metal chain' strung right down the Bay of Bengal to the mouth of the Malacca, with the potential to block China's access to the Indian Ocean. Beefing up of military infrastructure creates a 'Malacca Dilemma' for China due to the proximity of Andaman and Nicobar Island to the Malacca Strait.
- 4. Protection of Maritime Choke points-** Its geo-strategic location gives India advantage of securing the Malacca Strait from where more than 90,000 merchant ships carrying about 30 per cent of the world's traded goods pass every year.

Geo-Economic Significance

- 5. Mineral Deposits-** The island provides India with 300,000 sq km of exclusive economic zone with the potential of undersea hydrocarbon and mineral deposits.
- 6. Tourism Potential-** The pristine beaches of the Andaman and Nicobar Island has a large tourism potential which can attract FDI in the hospitality sector in India.
- 7. Maritime and Startup Hub-** NITI Aayog has identified the potential for development of Andaman and Nicobar Island as a maritime and startup Hub. **For ex- NITI Aayog's proposed project for Great Nicobar** which includes international container trans-shipment terminal, a greenfield international airport, a power plant and a township complex.

Social Importance

- 8. Treasure of Tribes-** The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are home to 5 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups- Great Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges, Shompens and North Sentinelese. These tribal groups are a treasure for enrichment of our anthropological understanding.
- 9. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)-** The Andaman and Nicobar Island provides an opportunity for India to undertake disaster-relief, medical aid, countering piracy and human smuggling, aircraft/submarine search and rescue operations for the social welfare in the Indo-Pacific region.

What are the challenges in the realisation of full development potential of these Islands?

- 1. Environmental Concerns-**There are environmental concerns around the large scale development projects being undertaken in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. These developmental projects can endanger the flora and fauna of the island state. **For ex- Proposed Great Nicobar project will endanger the Giant Leatherback in the Galathea Bay area & threat to coral reefs and mangroves in the area.**

2. Geo Political insecurity-The geopolitical influence of Chinese military facility at **Myanmar's Coco Islands** lying 55 km north of A&N Islands poses a threat to India's blue economy and maritime security.

3. Maritime Challenges-There are maritime threats and challenges arising from **illegal migration, human trafficking, poaching, and subversive threats from the seas.**

4. Geological Vulnerability- The Andaman and Nicobar island group's location in the highly active geological zone makes it prone to a number of natural disasters. **For ex- 2004 earthquake and tsunami wiping one-fifth of the population** and 90% of mangroves in **Nicobar and Car Nicobar island.**

5. Lack of coordination-The development of islands and strategic infrastructure is a multidimensional project involving several ministries, departments, and agencies, that presents significant coordination challenges

6. Encroachment in Tribal Space-There has been intrusion in the tribal space due to **encroachment into their areas in the name of development, and lack of effective rehabilitation program.**

7. Socio-economic Challenges-The **influx of settlers, job-seekers, labourers, and migrants** that has created socio-economic problems on the island. The **high cost of living, lack of employment opportunities,** and distance from the mainland have led to a sense of negativity among the islanders.

Read More- [A grave Mistake in Nicobar](#)

What are the government initiatives for the Andaman islands?

Japan's Overseas Development Assistance	Japan approved a USD 265 crore grant aid for Andaman and Nicobar Development projects in 2021.
NITI Aayog's Project for Great Nicobar	It entails development of an international container transshipment terminal, an airport, a power plant, and a township.
NITI Aayog's Proposal for Little Andaman	The plan calls for the development of a new greenfield coastal city to compete with Singapore and Hong Kong.
Modernisation of Defence Infrastructure	Modern Hangar and Dispersal system at INS Utkrosh in Port Blair. Naval Communication Network (NCN) Centres at INS Kohassa, INS Baaz and INS Kardi, designed to further augment the communication and operational capability of the Andaman and Nicobar Command.
Submarine cable connectivity to Andaman & Nicobar Islands (CANI)	The 2300 Kms submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) will connect Andaman & Nicobar Islands to the mainland.

What should be the way forward?

1. Development in accordance with Sustainable Island Development Framework-**Environmental and Social Impact Assessment** should be made mandatory for any development activity in the Andaman and Nicobar Region. Planned habitation of uninhabited islands should be considered by providing incentives such as free or subsidised land, where eco-friendly entrepreneurial efforts could be encouraged.

2. Developing Island Security Model- A **long-term Capability Development Plan** must be prepared for the **Andaman and Nicobar Command, the Coast Guard, and the Andaman Police** for developing and implementing an Island Security Model. There must be robust maritime security to keep the vast area around the islands under surveillance.

3. Increasing the pace of Development Works- The pace of Socio-economic and Infrastructural Development works must be increased for the **holistic development** of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It's crucial to develop infrastructure on the southern group of islands, strategically positioned along the main shipping route from the Indian Ocean to Southeast Asia, to support India's maritime economy.

4. Making the Andaman's a formidable maritime bastion- This will **extend India's defensive perimeter** and also **bestow the ability to project power** or extend a hand of friendship to maritime neighbours.

Read More- [The Indian Express 1](#), [The Indian Express 2](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Internal Security, GS 2- International Relations

Tuberculosis- Role of private sector in Elimination- Explained Pointwise

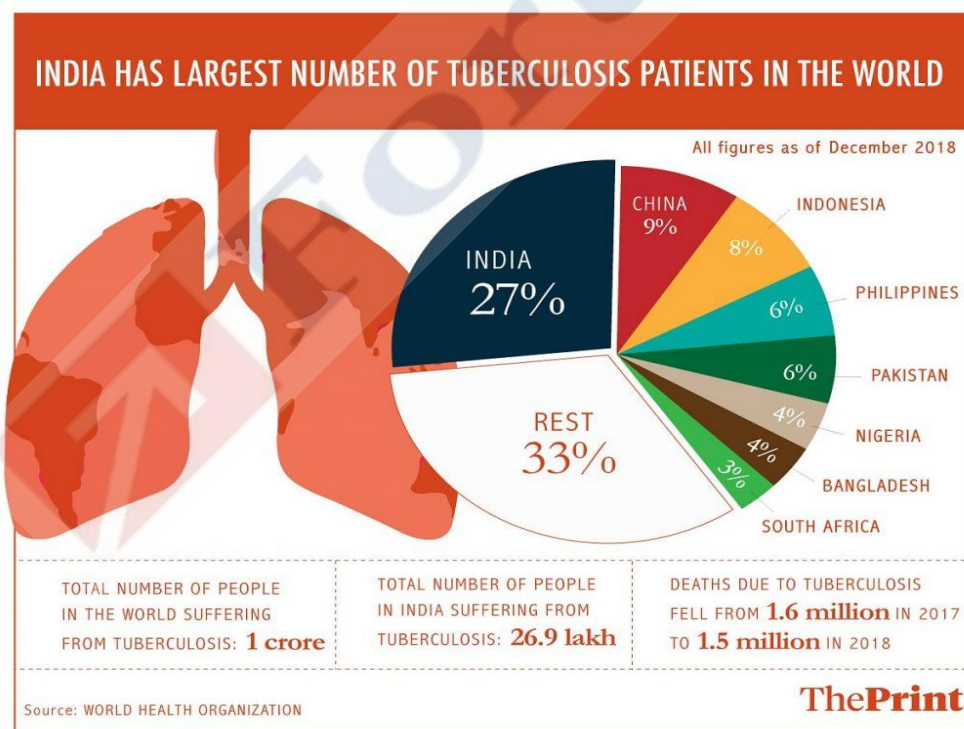
India has set an ambitious target to **eliminate tuberculosis (TB) by 2025**, five years ahead of the global target. The private health sector **continues to provide more than 80 per cent of initial primary care** in India. Hence, the **private sector needs to be roped in** the government's programme for achieving the ambitious goal of elimination of tuberculosis in India.

What is Tuberculosis? What is the Current Status of Tuberculosis Burden In India?

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

Current Status of TB Burden In India

- India has notified a record **25.5 lakh TB patients in 2023**. (More than 8.4 lakh patients were notified by the private healthcare sector). This is a 21-fold increase from 2013 notified level.
- According to WHO's Global TB report 2021, with **25.9 lakh TB cases**, **India is home to 25% of the global tuberculosis cases**.



What is the need for Eliminating TB earlier in India?

Eliminating TB earlier in India is crucial for a number of reasons which are mentioned below-

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

Figure 4. Source- The Print

2. **Economic impact-** TB has a significant economic impact, as it leads to **loss of income and productivity** for individuals and families. Eliminating tuberculosis would reduce this impact and help to boost the economy.
3. **Poverty reduction-** TB **disproportionately affects people living in poverty**, and eliminating the disease would help to reduce poverty and promote economic development.
4. **Global health-** TB is a **global health concern**, and eliminating the disease in India would contribute to the global effort to control and eventually eliminate TB.
5. **Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals-** Elimination of Tuberculosis is an **important target under the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) and its **elimination in India** would contribute to overall progress towards the SDGs.
6. **Social justice-** Eliminating TB would help to **promote social justice by reducing the burden of the disease on vulnerable and marginalized populations**, such as those living in poverty or with limited access to healthcare.

What are the challenges in Eliminating TB in India?

1. **High burden of TB cases-** According to the Global TB Report 2022, **India accounts for 28% of all TB cases in the world**. This makes it difficult to identify and treat all cases in a timely manner.
2. **Drug-resistant TB-** India has a **high burden of drug-resistant TB**, which is more difficult and costly to treat than regular TB. **Inadequate use of antibiotics** and **poor adherence to treatment regimens** have contributed to the emergence of drug-resistant strains.
3. **Limited access to healthcare-** Many people, particularly in rural areas, **lack the access to quality healthcare facilities or cannot afford to seek medical care**. This **result in delays in diagnosis and treatment**, and may also lead to the spread of TB.
4. **Stigma and discrimination-** The stigmatisation of Tuberculosis has led to reluctance among the population to **disclose their illness or seek treatment** due to fear of discrimination or social isolation.
5. **Poor living conditions-** **Overcrowded living conditions, poor sanitation, and lack of access to clean water** can increase the risk of TB transmission.
6. **Limited awareness-** Many people in India are **not aware of the signs and symptoms of TB** or the importance of completing the full course of treatment. This **leads to delays in diagnosis and treatment** and contribute to the spread of TB.
7. **Insufficient funding-** Despite being a major health problem in India, TB **receives insufficient funding and attention** from policymakers and healthcare providers.

Read More- [TB in India: A fight to the end](#)

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

<p>Introduction of CB-NAAT and TureNat for TB detection</p>	<p>The government has increased access to more accurate molecular diagnostic tests like CB-NAAT and TureNat. The government has implemented a universal drug susceptibility test, which use the antibiotic susceptibility of the mycobacterium is determined for all newly diagnosed cases.</p>
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Improvements in treatment protocols	Injectable kanamycin for TB elimination, which caused kidney failure and deafness, has been replaced by Bedaquiline and Delamanid . These new pharmaceuticals have also been included in the new National List of Essential Medicines , giving the government the authority to control their market pricing.
Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program (RNTCP)	The RNTCP is a national program that provides free diagnosis and treatment for TB patients. The program has been expanded to cover the entire country .
Community engagement programme	The government launched the community engagement programme where Nikshay mitras can adopt TB patients and provide them monthly nutritional support.
Engaging with private healthcare providers	The government has engaged with private healthcare providers to improve the quality of TB care and ensure that TB patients receive appropriate treatment.

What is the private sector involvement in Tuberculosis treatment?

Public Private Interface Agency (PPIA)- The **Public Private Interface Agency (PPIA)** is the most effective form of intervention for elimination of TB. The **agency functions as an intermediary** between the national TB programme and private healthcare providers.

Patient Provider Support Agency (PPSA)- This has created a **network of private health sector providers, including medical practitioners, retail chemists, laboratories, and corporate hospitals** to ensure that diagnostic and treatment practices adhere to the '**Standards of TB Care**' in India.

What Should be the way forward?

- Engaging better with private chemists**- Retail chemists who are the **first point of contact for patients in India** who must be trained for regular monitoring of the H1 schedule and prohibiting over-the-counter sale of antibiotics.
- Leveraging the contact of medical practitioners**- The network of rural medical practitioners and village doctors have a **high trust compact with the community**, must be leveraged for TB detection and elimination.
- Implementation of a comprehensive TB control program**- The Indian government should develop and implement a comprehensive TB control program that includes **early diagnosis, effective treatment, and follow-up care**.
- Investment in research and development**- Investment in research and development can help to **identify new diagnostic tools** and more effective treatments for TB. For ex- The recent **development of artificial intelligence software for detecting hot spots in the lungs from digital chest X-rays** is a promising tool for mass active case finding of TB in the community.
- Increase in govt funding**- TB prevention and treatment **should be a priority for the government and policymakers**, and funding should be increased to support research, prevention programs, and treatment efforts.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

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

Iran-Israel Conflict and India's stake- Explained Pointwise

The recent escalation of the Iran-Israel conflict has put India's stake in the West Asian region in danger. Iran launched hundreds of drones and cruise missiles towards Israel in response to the strike in Iranian diplomatic building in Syrian capital of Damascus on April 1, which killed a senior member of the Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards, and eight other officers. India has expressed 'serious concern' at the escalation of the Iran-Israel conflict, and has called for 'immediate de-escalation' of the conflict.



History of Iran-Israel Conflict

Phase of Cooperation	
From 1948-1979	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Pahlavi Dynasty (Mohammad Reza Pahlavi) which ruled Iran from 1925-1979 maintained close ties with Israel. 2. Iran became the second Muslim-majority nation after Turkey to officially recognise Israel in 1948. Israel established a de facto embassy in Tehran. 3. The two countries saw an extensive deepening of relations in the economic/trade (Iran became a major oil provider for Israel), military and security cooperation (SAVAK, the Iranian security and intelligence service was partly trained by Mossad)
Phase of Conflict	
After the Iran Revolution 1979	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was ousted and the new supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, adopted a policy of standing up to "arrogant" world powers and adopted a pro-Palestine stand. 2. Israel came to be known in Iran as the 'Little Satan' to the 'Great Satan' the US. 3. Iran cut of all ties with Israel. Israeli embassy in Tehran was transformed into the Palestinian embassy. 4. Khomeini declared every last Friday of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan as Quds Day, on which large rallies are taken out in support of Palestinians across Iran.
Modern Phase of Conflict	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proxy Militias and Wars- Iran has been engaging in proxy wars by fighting supporting proxy militias against Israel like Hezbollah (Lebanon), Hamas (Gaza), Houthis (Yemen) 2. Attack on Iranian Nuclear Programme- The Iranian nuclear programme, which has been a primary focus of Israel, was attacked by US' Struxnet computer virus in 2000s to target centrifuges enriching uranium as claimed by Iran. Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear agreement in 2018 was seen as a blow to Tehran and a victory for Israel.

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What is the history of Iran-Israel Conflict?

Iran and Israel have emerged from being friends to foes. The bitter hostility that prevails between the two nations did not exist until the Iranian revolution in 1979. The relationship has been on a downhill, from Cooperation to Conflict.

Phase of Cooperation	
From 1948-1979	The Pahlavi Dynasty (Mohammad Reza Pahlavi) which ruled Iran from 1925-1979 maintained close ties with Israel. Iran became the second Muslim-majority nation after Turkey to officially recognise Israel in 1948. Israel established a de facto embassy in Tehran. The two countries saw an extensive deepening of relations in the economic/trade (Iran became a major oil provider for Israel), military and security cooperation (SAVAK, the Iranian security and intelligence service was partly trained by Mossad)
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Modern Phase of Conflict	Proxy Militias and Wars- Iran has been engaging in proxy wars by fighting supporting proxy militias against Israel like Hezbollah (Lebanon), Hamas (Gaza), Houthis (Yemen). Israel is known to back Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK) , a Europe-based organization, Sunni organisations in Iran's southeastern Sistan and Baluchistan province, and Kurdish armed groups based in Iraqi Kurdistan. Attack on Iranian Nuclear Programme- The Iranian nuclear programme, which has been a primary focus of Israel, was attacked by US' Struxnet computer virus in 2000s to target centrifuges enriching uranium as claimed by Iran. Further, there have been attacks on Iranian nuclear scientists. US withdrawal from Iran Nuclear Agreement- Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear agreement in 2018 was seen as a blow to Tehran and a victory for Israel .

What are India's stake in the region which will be endangered by the recently escalating Iran-Israel Conflict?

1. Risks to the Indian Diaspora- The escalation of the Iran-Israel conflict poses a grave risk to the **lives and livelihoods of the the large Indian Diaspora** in West Asia. (~18,000 Indians in Israel, ~5,000-10,000 Indians in Iran, and around 90 lakh people Indians in the Gulf and Other West Asian region).

2. Endangers Energy security- Any escalation of the conflict will pose a grave threat to India's energy security as the **West Asia region contributes to India's 80 per cent of oil supplies**. The conflict will have an adverse impact on energy prices in India.

3. Endangers India's economic growth- A surge in oil prices on account of the war would impact India's economic growth, **drive up inflationary pressures, disrupt the balance of trade and current account deficit**, consequently **exerting pressure on the rupee**.

4. Risks to Indian Equity and Bullion markets- The Indian equity and bullion markets which are already **facing the pressure of reduced FDI and FPI inflows due to interest rate hikes in US**, will be further impacted by a full fledged war between Israel and Iran. **For ex- Further Increase in the gold prices** as previously witnessed in the Ukraine-Russia war and Israel-Hamas wars.

5. Derail the progress on the IMEC Corridor- The escalation of the Iran-Israel conflict will derail the **progress made by India to build consensus in the turbulent West Asia** on the **India-Middle-East-Europe Economic corridor**, which has strategic as well as economic benefits for Delhi

6. Diplomatic challenge of balancing strategic ties- The widening of the conflict will affect the balance of strategic ties maintained by India with both Iran and Israel. It would be **difficult for India to maintain an ambivalent position** in case of further worsening of conflict.

What is the importance of Iran and Israel for India?

Israel's Importance for India

1. Economic and Commerce- India has a positive trade balance with Israel. **India is Israel's third-largest trade partner in Asia**. The bilateral merchandise trade has grown from USD 200 million in 1992 to USD 6.35 billion (excluding defence).

2. Defence- India imports critical defence technologies from Israel. Nearly 41 % of Israel defence exports are to India. Indian armed forces use **Israeli Phalcon AWACS (Airborne Warning And Control Systems), Heron drones** to Barak anti-missile defence systems.

3. Energy- India has been **awarded exploration license to extract and import natural gas from the Tamar and Leviathan gas fields**. This is a clear sign of diversification of the relation from defence to energy sector.

4. Science & Technology- **India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F)** has been set up to promote, facilitate and support joint industrial R&D projects.

5. Space- In 2002, India and Israel signed a **cooperative agreement promoting space collaboration**. India has successfully launched TecSAR and RISAT-2 radar imaging satellites of Israel from PSLV of ISRO.

Iran's Importance for India

1. Energy Security- Iran has been one of the **major suppliers of crude oil to India**. This has recently suffered due to US sanctions.

2. Similar Geopolitical concerns- Both countries have **shared concerns on terrorism emanating from Pakistan and Afghanistan**. Both Iran and India share similar concerns on **Taliban's treatment of minorities** and the lack of an inclusive and representative government in Kabul.

3. Strategic location and projects- The Chabahar port of Iran developed by India is a strategic economic project, which acts as a gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Read More- [India-Israel Relations](#), [India-Iran relations](#)

What should be the Way Forward for India?

- 1. Clarification of India's Position-** India has already called for the 'immediate de-escalation' and 'stepping back from violence' and 'return to the path of diplomacy'.
- 2. Balance engagements with other key actors in the Middle East-** India must try to forever balance its engagement with key regional actors- [Egypt](#), [Iran](#), [Israel](#), [Qatar](#), [Turkey](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), and the [United Arab Emirates](#)- whose orientation and interests are often different in the middle eastern conflicts.
- 3. Pursue non-ideological engagements-** India must pursue non-ideological engagement in the middle east region to complement [India's expanding interests in the Middle East](#).

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- International events affecting India's interest

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

<p>General Conduct</p>	<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>
<p>Meetings</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Procession</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Polling Day</p>	<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>
<p>Party in Power</p>	<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>
<p>Election Manifestos</p>	<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.

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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 Assembly elections of Kerala in 1960 . 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 Lok Sabha Elections in 1962 .
1991	The EC decided to enforce the MCC more strictly after repeated flouting of the election norms.
2014	The EC issued guidelines prohibiting parties from making promises that exert an undue influence on voters . 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.
- 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 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**.
- 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.

- a. Deals with **transaction value of more than Rs 2,000 crore** will require CCI's approval.
- b. 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

- a. 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.
- b. 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 appellate 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 **≥ 45°C**

Severe Heat Wave- When actual maximum temperature **≥47°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?

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

What should be the way Forward?

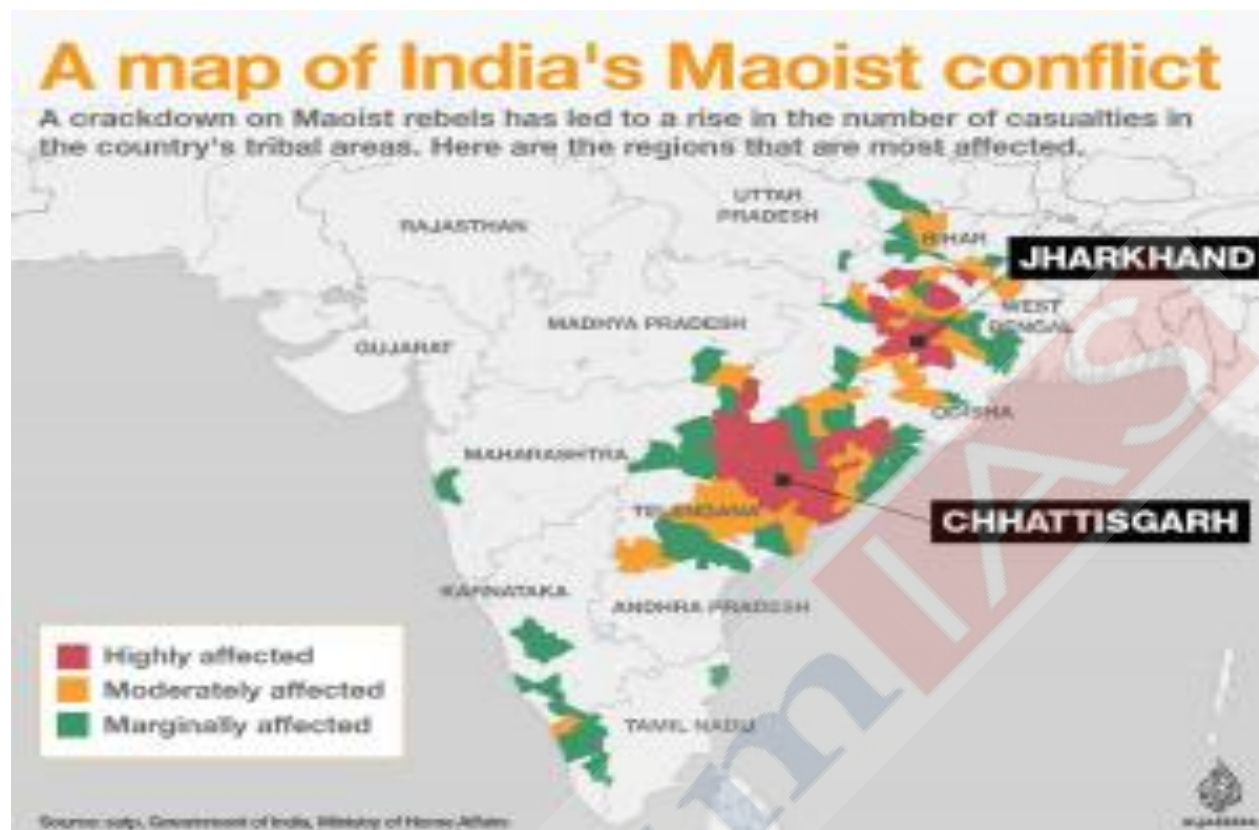
- 1. Effective implementation of Heat Wave Action Plan-** Effective implementation of the Heat wave action plan with the **State playing a leading role and sharing responsibility with other stakeholders** is now the need of the hour.
- 2. Sustainable Cooling-** Passive cooling technology like **construction 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

National Policy and Action Plan to address Left Wing Extremism 2015	This comprehensive action plan aims to enhance the capabilities of security forces to combat LWE. This action plan ensures that the rights and entitlements of local communities are safeguarded and focuses on socio-economic development in affected regions.
SAMADHAN Doctrine	SAMADHAN Doctrine encompasses the entire strategy of government from short-term policy to long-term policy formulated at different levels. SAMADHAN stands for S - Smart Leadership, A - Aggressive Strategy, M - Motivation and Training, A - Actionable Intelligence, D - Dashboard Based KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and KRAs (Key Result Areas), H - Harnessing Technology, A - Action plan for each Theatre, N - No access to Financing.
Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme	Under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme, the Central Government reimburses the Security Related Expenditure of 10 LWE affected States . These security related 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 .
Special Infrastructure Scheme (SIS)	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

Road Connectivity Project for LWE affected areas (RCPLWE)	The Government introduced this scheme in 2016 for improving road connectivity in LWE affected States . 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. 8124 km roads and 306 bridge works have been completed under this scheme .
LWE Mobile Tower Project	This project has been launched to improve mobile connectivity in the LWE affected areas . The aim is to improve the communication network for better governance delivery.
Aspirational Programme District	The Ministry of Home Affairs has been tasked with the monitoring of Aspirational districts programme in 35 LWE affected districts . 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.

Socio-Political Schemes for LWE

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

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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

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

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

What are the Causes Responsible for Coral Bleaching?

1. Rise in Sea Temperature- The rise in global warming has led to increase in the sea temperatures which has resulted in the destruction of corals.

2. Ocean Acidification- Due to rise in carbon dioxide levels, oceans absorb more carbon dioxide. This **increases the acidity of ocean water** and **inhibits the coral's ability to create calcareous skeletons**, which is essential for their survival.

3. Solar radiation and ultraviolet radiation- Changes in tropical weather patterns result in less cloud cover and more radiations which induce coral bleaching.

4. Infectious Diseases- Penetration of bacterium like *vibrio shiloi* inhibits photosynthesis of zooxanthellae. These bacteria become more potent with elevated sea temperatures.

5. Chemical Pollution- Increased nutrient concentrations affect corals by promoting phytoplankton growth, which in turn supports increased numbers of organisms that compete with coral for space.

6. Human Induced Threats- Over-fishing, pollution from agricultural and industrial runoff, coral mining, development of industrial areas near coral ecosystems also adversely impact corals.

What are the consequences of coral bleaching?

1. Affecting the Food Chain- Changes in coral communities can affect the species that depend on them, such as the fish and invertebrates that rely on live coral for food, shelter. Loss of such marine animals can disturb the entire food chain.

2. Loss of Biodiversity- Declines in genetic and species diversity occurs when corals die as a result of bleaching.

3. Economic Decline- Bleached and degraded reefs can discourage tourism, which can affect the local economy.

4. Affects Food Availability- Coral bleaching can cause large shifts in fish communities. This can translate into reduced catches for fishers, which in turn impacts food supply and associated economic activities.

5. Impact on Coastal Protection- Coral reefs protect coastlines by absorbing constant wave energy from the ocean, thereby protecting people living near the coast from increased storm damage, erosion and flooding.

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

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

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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

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

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?

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

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.

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

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

Emergence of Lower Aged Chess Grandmasters	There has been emergence of Grandmasters like R Praggnanandhaa, Vidit Gujrathi, D Gukesh, Koneru Humpy who have become Grandmasters at the age of 12-15 years . India's Chess Stalwart Vishwanathan Anand became a chess grandmaster at the age of 18 years.
Improved India's Rankings in International Chess	India is ranked No. 4 in the world in international chess, with 64 GMs and an average of 2668 points .
World Cup Final at Baku, Azerbaijan	R Praggnanandhaa made it to the finals of the World Cup Final at Baku, Azerbaijan in 2023 and finished runner-up .
Phenomenal Success at the recently concluded Candidates tournament	D Gukesh's victory at the Candidates tournament , makes him the youngest man ever to make the cut for the World Chess Championships.
Rise of Women Chess Players	Veteran Humpy Koneru and the 22-year-old first-timer Vaishali both finished joint second on points at the Candidates tournament.
Rise of Junior Chess Players	One-third of the top 30 junior Chess Players 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 **24x7 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.

- a. Levying a global minimum corporate tax rate
- b. Proposal in the US to levy a minimum 25% tax on taxpayers with wealth over \$100 million.
- c. 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?

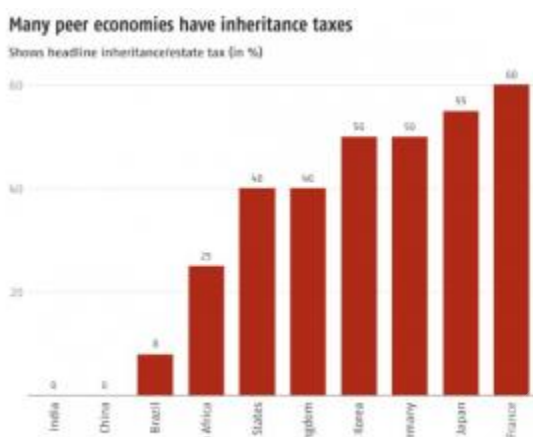


Figure 5. Source- Business Standard

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?

<p>Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017</p>	<p>The Act more than doubled the duration of paid maternity leave for women employees to 26 weeks. It proposed an option to work from home after this period, on mutual agreement with the employer. It made crèche facilities mandatory for establishments employing 50 or more women.</p>
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Anganwadi centres under the ICDS	They provide maternal and child nutritional security, a clean and safe environment, and early childhood education. Thus, they facilitate the ability of women to re-enter work post-childbirth.
Mission Shakti project	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.
National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013	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?

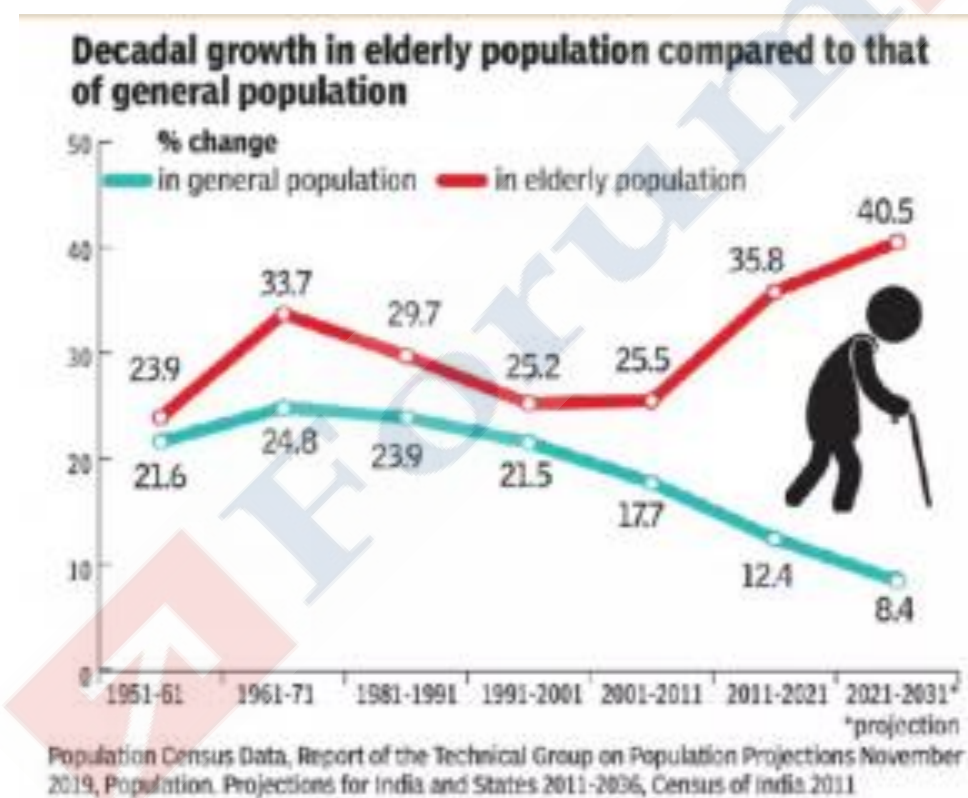


Figure 6. Source- MOSPI

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?

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

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

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

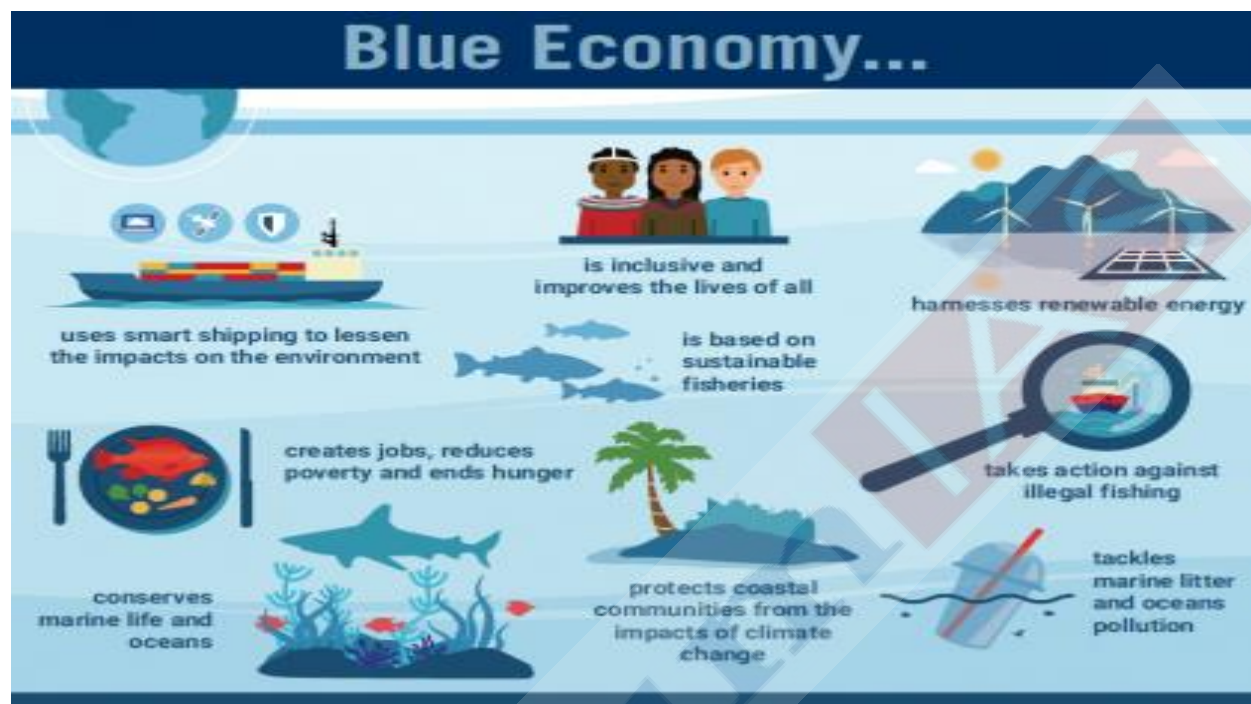
‘Blue Economy’ has been identified as one of the **major pillars of economic growth** for **making a Vikshit Bharat by 2047**. Despite its significant potential for the growth of the nation, it also faces **several constraints and challenges**. Overcoming these challenges will be crucial for the realisation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

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

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