

Forum IAS

7 PM COMPILATION

1st and 2nd Week July, 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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INDEX

| | |
|---|----|
| Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita- Significance and Concerns- Explained Pointwise | 2 |
| [Yojana June 2024 Summary] Forts in India- Explained Pointwise..... | 5 |
| [Kurukshehra June 2024] Tribal Art and Culture- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise | 9 |
| Stampede Disaster and its Management in India- Explained Pointwise | 12 |
| [Kurukshehra June 2024 Summary] Agricultural Festivals- Integral Part of Tribal Culture- Explained Pointwise..... | 19 |
| RBI's Financial Stability Report- Key Highlights and Risks- Explained Pointwise | 22 |
| India-UK Relations- Significance, Challenges and The way ahead- Explained Pointwise | 26 |
| Indus Water Treaty- Significance and Concerns-Explained Pointwise..... | 30 |
| India-Russia Relations- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise | 34 |
| India's Demographic Dividend- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise | 38 |
| SC verdict on right to maintenance of Muslim Women- Explained Pointwise..... | 41 |
| India-Austria Relations- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise..... | 44 |
| Fiscal Federalism in India- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise | 49 |

Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita- Significance and Concerns- Explained Pointwise

The **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita** (BNS), the **Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita** (BNSS), and the **Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam** (BSA) replaces the **Indian Penal Code** (IPC), 1860, the **Criminal Procedure Code** (CrPC), 1973, and the **Indian Evidence Act**, 1872 respectively. These three Bills were passed in Parliament last December. In this article we will analyse the significance and the associated concerns with these Bills/sanhitas.



Source- ForumIAS

What are the additions, deletions and changes in the provisions of the Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) and Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS)?

Addition of New Provisions in the Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS)

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| Mob lynching | Clause 103 codifies offences linked to mob lynching and hate-crime murders. It is applicable for cases when a mob of five or more individuals commits murder based on factors such as race, caste, community, language, place of birth or personal belief . The provision has punishment that extends from life imprisonment to death . |
| Organised Crime | Clause 111(1) codifies organised crime and terrorism. Organised crime and terrorism has been brought under the realm of ordinary criminal law for the first time. Unlawful Activities Prevention Act was used for terrorism, and state-specific laws such as the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act for organised crime. |
| Deceitful Promise to Marry | Clause 69 criminalises 'deceitful' promise to marry . 'Deceitful means' shall include the false promise of employment or promotion, inducement, or marrying after suppressing identity . It will be punished with imprisonment till 10 years, and will be liable for a fine. |

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| Attempt to Suicide | It criminalises attempts to commit suicide with intent to compel or restrain any public servant from discharging official duty . This provision could be invoked to prevent self-immolations and hunger strikes during protests . |
| Snatching | Clause 304 (1) adds snatching as a 'new' crime. It has been made distinct from theft . Both theft and snatching have a punishment of upto three-years in jail |

Major Deletions in the Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS)

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

Changes in the Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS)

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| Gender Neutrality | Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) has tweaked other laws , especially those dealing with children, to bring gender neutrality . Earlier offences like the offence of outraging the modesty of women (354A of the IPC) and voyeurism (354C) has now become gender neutral for the accused under the BNS. This means that women can also be booked under the law. |
| Fake news | The BNS introduces a new provision under the BNS which deals with hate speech, criminalising publishing false and misleading information . |
| Sedition | The BNS introduces the offence of sedition under a new name and with a wider definition. It changes the name of the offence from 'rajdroh' to 'deshdroh'. The new provision adds the following crimes to the offence of sedition- a. Aiding through financial means, acts of ' subversive activities ' b. Encouragement of ' feelings of separatist activities '. |
| Community Service | The BNS also provides for community service as a punishment for petty offences. It will be the part of penal code for the first time . |

Major Changes in the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS)

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| Expansion of Detention in Police Custody | There has been an expansion of detention in police custody from the 15-day limit in the CrPC to up to 90 days . |
| Victim being given an opportunity of being heard | The BNSS states that in cases where the punishment is seven years or more , the victim shall be given an opportunity of being heard before withdrawal of the case by the government. |
| Trials in absentia | According to this provision added in the BNSS, a person accused of a crime can be tried and convicted in his absence , as if he was present in court and has waived his right to a fair trial for all offences. |
| Removal of Statutory bail Provisions | The BNSS removes the provision for statutory bail if an accused has more than one offence against his name. Earlier under the CrPC, an accused could be granted |

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| | statutory bail if he has served at least half of the maximum sentence prescribed for the offence. |
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What is the significance of Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA)?

- 1. Decolonisation of laws-** The passage of these new sanhitas (laws) in Parliament, **represent laws that have been framed by Indians for Indians.**
- 2. Revamping of criminal justice system in India-** Committees like the **Law Commission of India, Bezbaruah Committee, Viswanathan Committee, Malimath Committee, Madhav Menon Committee** have suggested revamping of the criminal justice system in India. These laws represent the present-day dynamics and aspirations of Indian society.
- 3. Incorporation of SC Judgments-** These new laws incorporate the supreme court judgements on contentious issues. **For ex- Omission of Section 377 of the IPC** which criminalised homosexuality from the Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita. This was decriminalised by the Supreme Court in the **Suresh Kumar Koushal vs. Naz Foundation.**
- 4. Gender Neutrality-** Introduction of gender neutrality in certain provisions of the Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) is an important step towards updation of the IPC. **Crimes against women in the BNS**, comes before in Chapter V before offences against the state (like sedition). It **reflects contemporary societal norms and values.** Sexual intercourse with a minor wife has been brought under the ambit of rape.
- 5. Community service as an alternate form of punishment-** The introduction of Community service as an alternate form of punishment keeps first-time convicts and those convicted for minor offences out of prison. This is important as **three-fourths of India's prison population are undertrials.**
- 6. Acknowledgement of Hate Crimes-** The inclusion of offences for mob-lynching and hate crimes is a legislative acknowledgement of these crimes. The **emphasis on video-conferencing of trials**, and **prescription of timelines for speedy trials** will improve justice delivery.

What are the concerns with these Sanhitas?

- 1. No break from colonial legacy-** According to critics these sanhitas **make minimal progress** in the main objective of '**decolonisation of laws**'. The sanhitas **continue to rely on long-term imprisonments and the death penalty**, by adding and increasing mandatory minimum sentences for certain offences, and **by retaining vague definitions for offences** against the state as well as for defamation.
- 2. Ambiguity in definitions-** In BNS new offence has been added that **criminalises exciting secession, armed rebellion, subversive activities** or **encouraging separatist feelings**. However, these have not been defined. The **framing of this provision is very similar to that of sedition** and can be misused by the government to curb dissent.
- 3. No definition of community service-** The BNS does not define what constitutes community service. It leaves it to the discretion of judges, which **creates judicial ambiguity.**
- 4. Cosmetic changes in sedition-** BNS has in fact introduced the offence with a wider definition. It incorporates the SC guidelines in the 1962 Kedarnath Singh case, which upheld the constitutional validity for the crime of sedition. There has been a simple name change- from **rajdroh (rebellion against the king)** to **deshdroh (rebellion against the nation).**
- 5. Lack of Transformational Changes-** According to critics except the reordering of the sections, **much of the language and contents of the original laws** have been retained. Some legal experts opine that although the new laws make significant changes, **they do not 'overhaul'** the existing laws.

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

7. Fear of Misuse by the state- Critics argue that the **introduction of trials in absentia** under normal criminal law allows the state to forgo its duty to properly locate the accused before the trial begins.

8. Provision on Terrorism- Critics argue that **'terrorism' should not have been included** in the general Sanhita. It is punishable under special legislation. Critics argue that **grave charges such as terrorism** should not be invoked on a regular basis.

9. Marital Rape not Included as a Criminal Offence- The provision legalising marital rape has been retained.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Modernization and Clarity- It must be ensured that BNS laws are **clear, concise, and easily understandable by both legal professionals and the general public**.

2. Victim-Centric Approach- The provisions of the BNS **must strengthened to protect victims' rights** and ensure their access to justice. This must include **better support system, compensation, and participation in legal proceedings**.

3. Focus on Rehabilitation- There must be emphasis on **rehabilitative justice and reintegration of offenders** into society alongside punitive measures. There must be **promotion of alternate sentencing options**, especially for **non-violent offenses**, to reduce overcrowding in prisons and provide a chance for reform.

4. Technology Integration- There must be incorporation of technology to streamline legal processes, improve investigation techniques, and enhance evidence collection. This could include **digitization of records, use of forensic technology, and modernizing court procedures**.

5. Public Awareness and Education- There should be **regular conduction of public awareness campaigns** and educational programs to inform citizens about their rights and responsibilities within the criminal justice system.

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

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

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)
UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Governance

[Yojana June 2024 Summary] Forts in India- Explained Pointwise

In the vast expanse of India's historical landscape, **Forts in India stand as silent sentinels**, guarding tales of valour, culture and conquest. These are **valiant landmarks**, which are **scattered across the length and breadth of the country**. They serve as **portals to the past**, offering us glimpses into the rich tapestry of our heritage. We will explore the different types of Forts in India, their historical evolution and significance.



Source- Yojana

What are the Different types of Forts built in India?

Fort- A fort is a strong, fortified place, usually occupied by troops, that is designed for military defense.

Key Characteristics of Fort

Some key characteristics of forts include-

- These are often **surrounded by thick walls, ditches, ramparts, and parapets for protection.**
- They are **often located on hills or in strategic locations.**
- These can be made of **stone, earth, or other materials.**
- They may have a **citadel in the center** and extra space between the walls and citadel.
- Their gates are **often large to allow elephants** and highly decorated.

Forts are historically significant structures for **defense**. These have evolved from **natural defenses** to elaborate constructions using **local resources** and **technological advancements**.

Types of Forts in India

The forts in the Indian subcontinent have been influenced by the landscape, culture, and aesthetics of the ruling classes. **Arthashastra**, an ancient Indian political treatise, **classifies forts based on their physical nature**, which remains a foundational aspect in studying Indian forts.

Arthashastra's Classification of Indian Forts

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| Dhanva Durg or Desert Fort | This type of fort is surrounded by a desert or an arid stretch of land . These forts are designed to inhibit the swift movement of enemies. |
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| Mahi Durg or Mud Fort | This type of fort is protected by earthen walls and ramparts . Walls constructed of bricks and stones can also come under this category. |
| Jala Durg or Water Fort | This type of fort is surrounded by water bodies which could either be natural (sea or rivers) or artificial (moats, artificial lakes etc.) |
| Giri Durg or Hill Fort | This type of fort is situated on either the summit of a hill or a valley that is surrounded by hills . |
| Vriksha or Vana Durg, or Forest Fort | This type of fort has a thick forest cover as a preliminary line of defense. |
| Nara Durg or fort protected by soldiers | This type of fort primarily relies on man-power . It has a strong army to defend itself. |

Other Classification of Fort

1. Palace Forts- These fort complexes included palaces for **royalty** and **nobility**. These often served as military outposts & administrative and residential hubs. Hence, they served dual purposes of being **residential centres** as well as **strategic military stations**.

2. City Forts- These forts were **built to fortify existing cities**. The fort complex included schools, worship areas, residential quarters, palaces, and farms. These attracted populations and led to the development of cities nearby.

3. Trading Forts- These forts served as **hubs for commercial and financial activities**. These evolved from warehouses to fortified structures for protection. **For ex- Establishment and development of European forts in India.**

What has been the Historical timeline of Development of Fort in India?

Ancient Period Fort Development

The Ancient Indian History saw the rise and fall of numerous empires and dynasties across the subcontinent. The fort development was a synthesis of the indigenous architectural traditions and the changes that were introduced by the conquerors and adventurers.

1. Indus Valley Period Fort Development

Indus Valley settlements were divided into a citadel and a lower town. The citadel area was reflective of the fortified development. **For ex- Citadel area in Mohenjodaro** which was surrounded by a moat. **Kot Diji was a fortified site** with a massive wall made of limestone rubble and mud-brick.

2. Vedic Period

The Vedic Period also saw fortified settlements. The Rig Veda referred to tribes living in **fortified settlements** called **Pura**.

3. Mahajanpadas Period

The growth of the Mahajanpadas led to **increased warfare** and the **consequent need to strengthen military defenses and fortifications**. The capitals of these mahajanpadas used to be fortified cities. (Capital of Anga-Champa, Capital of Vatsa- Kaushambi, Capital of Panchala- Ahichchhatra, Capital of Avanti- Ujjayini)

For ex- The ancient capital of Magadha- **Rajgir**, had **two cities stone walled fortified cities of Old Rajagriha and New Rajagriha**.

4. Mauryan Period

The Mauryan Period thrust heavily on the importance of forts. Kautilya's arthashastra classified forts into different categories based on their terrain and defensive features, such as **desert forts, mud forts, water forts, hill forts, forest forts**, and **forts protected by loyal soldiers**.

5. Sangam Period

The construction of moats, turrets and bastions **reached an advanced stage** during the **Sangam Period**. **For ex-** The vivid description of the **grandeur of the fort at Madurai** is provided in the Sangam literature.

6. Gupta Period

The Gupta Empire saw the **development** of **several notable forts** and **fortified cities**. The Garhwa fort, dating back to the Gupta period, is a Hindu temple complex that exemplifies Gupta period fort architecture. It **features massive stone walls and fortifications** surrounding the temple structures.

Medieval Period Fort Development

Rajputs

Rajput forts stand as testament to the grand fort building exercise undertaken in Indian Architecture. The Rajput forts that stand today were mostly built during the early medieval period. **For ex- Forts of Chittorgarh, Gwalior, and Amer.**

Delhi Sultanate Period

The architectural style that developed during the Delhi Sultanate period was a **synthesis** of **indigenous traditions** and **influences from Central Asia**. Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq laid the foundation of the strong **Tughlaqabad Fort** near Delhi.

Mughal Period

The Mughal Empire (1526-1857 CE) saw extensive fort building and expansion of fortified cities across northern and central India. The fort building exercise was the development of a **syncretic architectural style**, with influences from Persian, Indian, and other regional traditions. **For ex- Agra Fort, Lahore Fort** and the **Allahabad Fort**.

Colonial Period Fort Development

European powers used forts for trade protection, and protection of their territories from the rebellion of local rulers. In due course of time these forts assumed a multi-functional role – serving as centers of commerce, military power, and colonial administration for the European powers in India.

Portuguese- The Portuguese began fortifying their settlements to protect their trade interests. They built their first fort- **Fort Emmanuel** in **Kochi in 1503**. The Portuguese also built Fort Aguada in Goa to defend against the Dutch.

Dutch- The Dutch established a trading post in Pipli, Odisha in 1630 and later in Chinsurah in 1653. The **Dutch Fort at Falta**, around 50km southeast of Kolkata, was built in the colonial era.

British- The British Raj built numerous forts across India to consolidate their power and protect their trading interests. Some of the most notable British forts in India include- **Fort St. George, Chennai, Fort William, Kolkata.**

What has been the role of Forts in Indian History?

Forts in ancient India have played a **crucial role in warfare**, and **shaping the socio-economic, and cultural landscape**.

1. Military Defense- The Forts served as the primary line of defense against invaders. These were **strategically located on hills or near water bodies**. They were surrounded by thick walls, clever designs (bastions, gateways), and innovative features (moats, machicolations) to repel attacks. **For Ex- Gwalior Fort** (Madhya Pradesh) and **Mehrangarh Fort** (Rajasthan).

2. Political Power- These forts were the **symbol of political authority**. Forts served as a tangible display of a ruler's power and prestige. **For Ex- The Red Fort in Delhi**.

3. Economic Hubs- Forts also served as **thriving centers of economic activities**. Trade routes often converged near or passed through forts, facilitating commerce and generating revenue. **For Ex- Cities like Agra**, initially built around **Agra Fort**, flourished due to their proximity.

4. Social and Cultural Centres- Forts also served as **Cradle of Culture**. These fostered the **blossoming of art, music, and literature**. The integration of **temples and other religious structures into fort complexes**, made them significant cultural and religious centers. **For ex- The intricate murals of Chittorgarh Fort or the serene Eklingji Temple within Mehrangarh Fort**.

5. Architectural Innovation- The forts served as **testing grounds of architecture**. Fort construction in India witnessed remarkable feats of engineering. **For Ex- Use of sloping walls to deflect cannonballs** during the Mughal era.

6. Enduring Legacy- The forts stand as captivating testaments to India's vibrant past. They are not only tourist destinations but also **a treasure trove of information for historians and archaeologists**.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 1- Art and Culture

[Kurukshetra June 2024] Tribal Art and Culture- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

The Tribal art and culture **reflects the creative energy found in rural areas** that acts as an undercurrent to the craftsmanship of the tribal people. Tribal art includes wide range of art forms such as **wall paintings, tribal dances, tribal music** etc. Tribes have rich and unique cultural traditions which includes their **own language, music, stories and paintings**.

In this summary of Kurukshetra, we will explore the significance of Tribal Culture, the challenges in its protection and the measures that need to be taken to preserve them.



Source- Kurukshetra

What are some of the prominent examples of Tribal Art in India?

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| Warli (Maharashtra) | Art | The warli art has evocative depictions of daily life, rituals, and folklore . It utilizes basic geometric shapes to convey harmony with nature. |
| Gond Art (Central India) | Art | It is inspired by nature and tribal folklore. Gond artists create detailed narratives featuring deities, animals, and celestial beings . It is marked by its vibrant hues, intricate patterns, and rich mythological themes . |
| Madhubani (Bihar) | Painting | Madhubani painting is a traditional art form that has been passed down through generations of Maithili women. This painting often depicts scenes from Hindu mythology and rural life. It is known for its intricate motifs, bold colors, and geometric patterns . |
| Pattachitra (Odisha) | Art | Pattachitra artworks frequently depict scenes from epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata . It is renowned for its meticulous detailing, vibrant colors, and mythological narratives . |
| Santhal Art (Eastern India) | Art | Santhal artists employ natural materials like clay, dyes, and bamboo to create artworks reflecting their deep connection to the environment and community. It features earthy tones, rustic charm, and tribal motifs . |

What is the significance of Tribal Art and Culture?

- 1. Symbolism and connection to Nature and life-** Motifs that symbolise natural elements, and spiritual elements are central to many tribal artworks. **For ex-** The Bhil tribe of Central India employs a distinctive style involving dots and dashes to narrate stories, where each dot represents a grain of millet. This **signifies prosperity and connection to their agrarian way** of life.
- 2. Medium for education and cultural continuity-** The tribal artwork fosters a sense of identity and continuity in tribal communities. Each artwork serves as a **repository of community knowledge and traditions**.
- 3. Heartbeat of tribal celebrations and rituals-** The tribal art and culture reflects the cultural expression of India's tribal communities. **For ex-** **The Santhal tribe of Jharkhand is renowned for its rhythmic drumming and folk dances** that narrate stories of harvest, hunting, and festivals.

4. Representation of our glorious past- The art work serves as reminder of our glorious past. It tells us about their beliefs and how they live. **For ex- Pattachitra art from Odisha** use it to tell stories from Hindu myths.

5. Source of livelihood- The tribal handicrafts and paintings are important source of livelihood for the tribal community. **For ex- Commercialisation of Worli art work printed sarees and paintings.**

6. Community Bonding- The creation of tribal artwork is **community-based approach**. It enhances individual abilities but also strengthens the bonds within the community.

What is the global relevance of Tribal artwork?

1. Emphasis on sustainability and minimal environmental impact- The emphasis on sustainability and minimal environmental impact **serves as a model for the global community**. In a world grappling with environmental issues and the pursuit of sustainable living, these art forms and daily practices of India's tribal communities offer valuable lessons in eco-friendly living.

For ex- The use of organic materials in craft, the conservation of local flora and fauna through sacred groves, and the sustainable harvesting practices all highlight an integrated approach to living that can inspire global environmental strategies.

2. Coexistence and respect for all life Forms- The tribal communities of India, through their art and lifestyle, champion a balance between human needs and environmental stewardship. This provides a **blueprint for sustainable living that the rest of the world** can learn from.

3. Maintenance of ecological balance and cultural richness- Tribal art is not only a cultural treasure but a pivotal element in the global dialogue on sustainability.

What are the government of India's initiatives for Tribal Art promotion?

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| Zonal Cultural Centres (ZCCs) | Seven Zonal Cultural Centres (ZCCs) across the country have been set up to preserve and promote various forms of folk art and culture of the tribals. |
| Documentation of indigenous practices | Ministry of Tribal Affairs provides funding for documentation of indigenous practices like tribal medicine, languages, agriculture, dances, etc. A digital repository has been developed to preserve and promote tribal cultural heritage. |
| TRIFED | TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India) has been organizing Adi Mahotsav festivals for the protection and promotion of tribal art and culture. |

What are the challenges Faced by Tribal Art Forms in India?

1. Lack of Preservation Efforts- **Insufficient support and recognition** has made it difficult for the tribal art forms to survive in the modern world.

2. Shifting Preferences and Globalization- The rise of contemporary and digital art forms have contributed to a decline in the popularity of traditional Indian paintings. **For ex-** The **mass production of cheap replicas** has also diminished the value and exclusivity of authentic traditional artwork.

3. Limited Exposure and Awareness- The **lack of educational initiatives, museums, and galleries** specializing in traditional art hinders the promotion and exposure of tribal art work.

4. Displacement, Marginalization, and Assimilation of Tribal Communities- Tribal communities have been facing challenges such as displacement, marginalization, and assimilation. These have have **threatened the very existence of their cultural heritage**.

What should be the strategies for Global Representation and protection of tribal art?

1. Protection of Intellectual Property- Protecting the intellectual property (IP) rights of tribal art is **critical for ensuring that tribal communities are recognised and rewarded** for their cultural contributions. Establishment and enforcement of IP rights is **essential to prevent unauthorised use and appropriation** of tribal designs, motifs, and techniques.

For ex- Introduction of geographical indication GI tags for tribal arts, such as **Warli paintings**, has proven to be an effective measure in safeguarding these cultural expressions

2. Promotion of Ethical Tourism- Ethical tourism encourages interactions that are sensitive to the cultural traditions and ecological realities of tribal communities. It **educates tourists about the rich cultural tapestry of the tribes** and **also create economic opportunities that benefit the tribal communities directly**.

3. Establishment of Living Museums- Living museums offer interactive experiences that allow visitors to engage directly with cultural practices and daily life activities of tribal communities. These museums provide a **unique opportunity for cultural education and appreciation**, bridging the gap between the past and the present.

For ex- Dakshinachitra in Tamil Nadu and the Tribal Museum in Madhya Pradesh illustrate the successful implementation of living museums.

4. Cultural exchange Programs- International cultural exchange programs, exhibitions, and collaborations can bring tribal art to a broader audience. This would ensure **that these practices are not only sustained financially** but are also appreciated as essential elements of the global cultural mosaic.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 1- Indian art and architecture

Stampede Disaster and its Management in India- Explained Pointwise

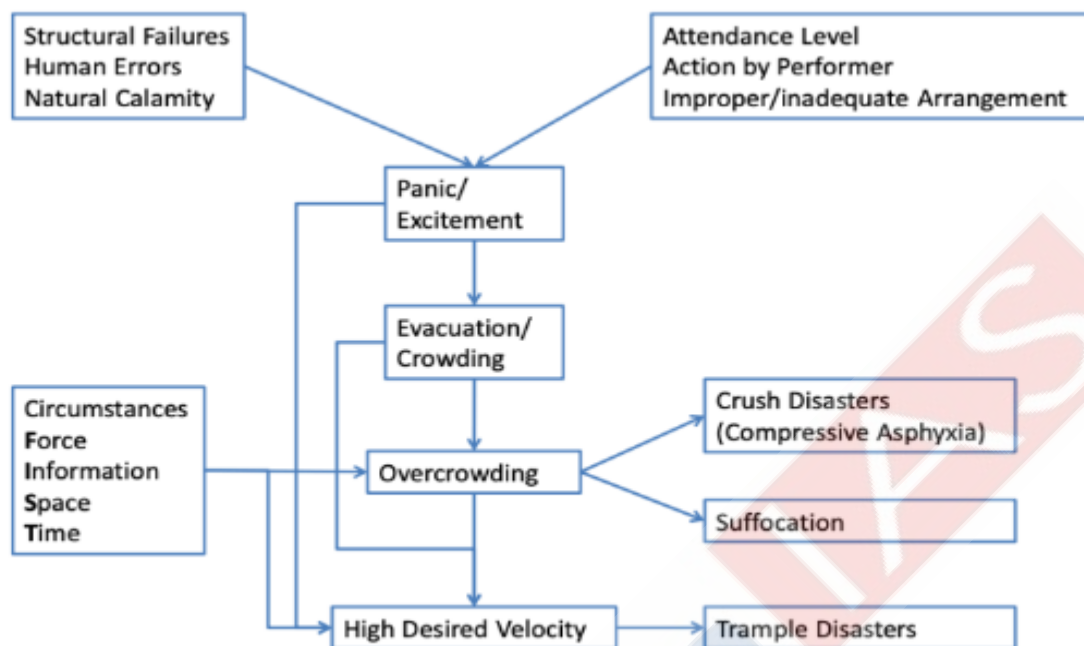
In the **recent stampede during a religious gathering** in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras district on July 2, at least 121 people (almost all women) lost their lives. This is not the first time when a large number of people have lost their lives in a stampede at a religious gathering. **79% of all stampedes in India from 1954-2012** have taken place in **religious mass gatherings**.

This calls for a detailed look into the issue of Stampede Disaster and the measures needed to be taken to manage it.

What is stampede? What are the infamous stampede cases in India?

Stampede- Stampede is the **disruption of the orderly movement of crowds** which leads to injuries and fatalities. This **impulsive mass movement of crowd** often takes place in response to a **perceived danger, loss of physical space** or a **will to attain something as gratifying**.

Process of a Stampede



Source- NDMA Disaster Guidelines

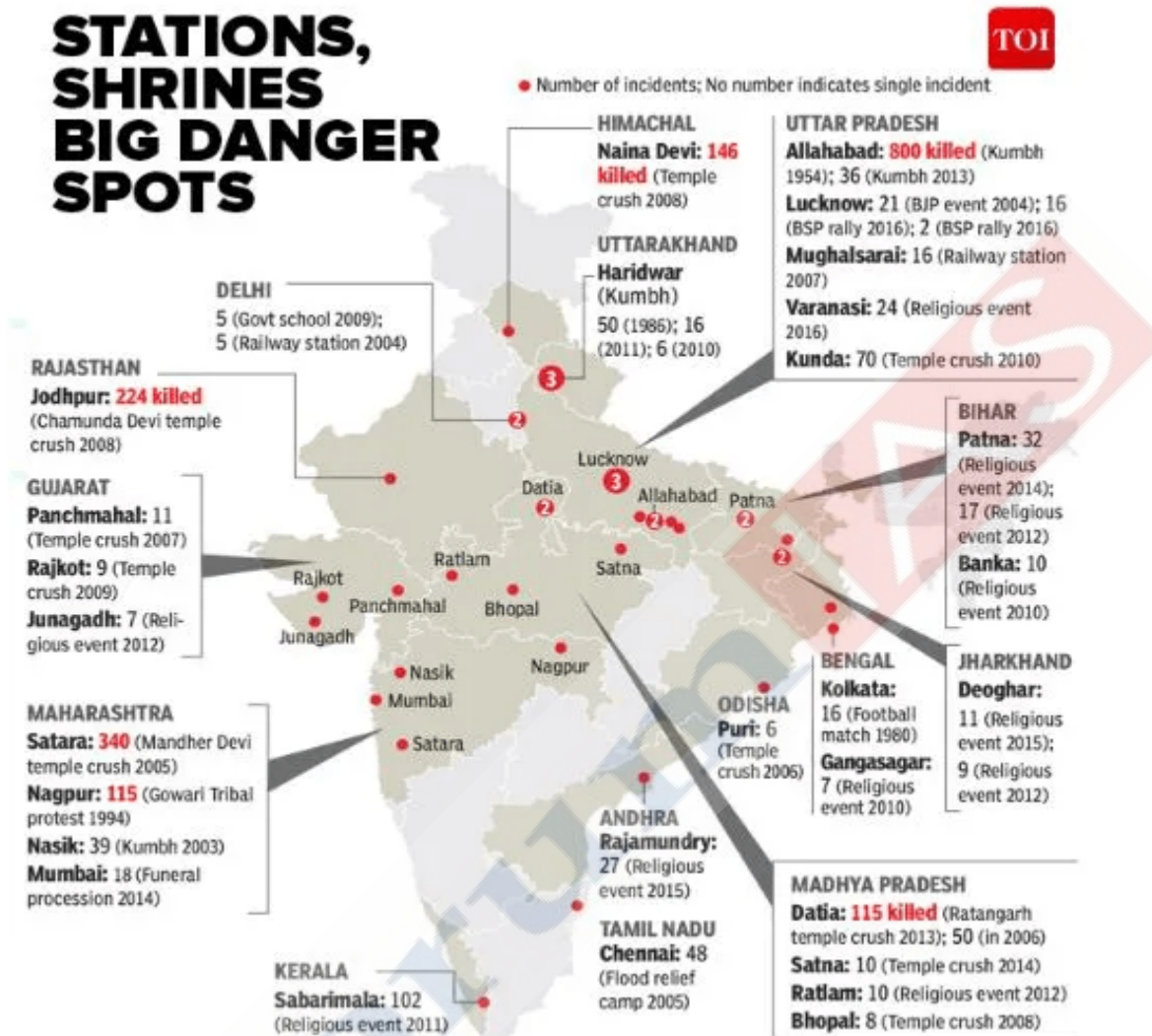
Some Notable Deadly Stampede Disasters in India

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| Allahabad Kumbh Mela Stampede (1954) | It is the most fatal Kumbh Mela stampede in history. It resulted in the loss of around 800 lives . |
| Wai Stampede (2005) | The stampede at the Mandhardevi temple in Maharashtra's Satara district resulted in the death of 340 people . |
| Naina Devi Temple Stampede (2008) | Rumors of landslide started the stampede at the Naina Devi Temple in 2008 . It resulted in the death of at least 145 people which included dozens of women and children. |
| Jodhpur Temple Stampede (2008) | The stampede at the Chamunda Devi Temple resulted in the death of at least 168 people . |
| Allahabad Railway Stampede (2013) | Last-minute change in the platform for the pilgrims who had gathered for the Khumbh Mela, created panic and resulted in a stampede. It led to the loss of around 36 lives . |
| Mumbai pedestrian bridge Stampede (2017) | The stampede at the crowded Pedestrian Bridge connecting the two Mumbai railway stations resulted in the death of 22 people and injured 32. |
| Mata Vaishnav Devi shrine (2022) | The Stampede at the Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine resulted in the death 22 people and injured 32. |

Stampede Statistics In India

According to the **National Crime Records Bureau figures**, from 2000 to 2013, **almost 2,000 people died in stampedes in India**.

A 2013 study published by International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction (IJDRR) points out that **religious gathering and pilgrimages have been venues for 79% of the stampedes in India**.



Source- TOI

What are the major causes of Stampedes in India?

Structural Causes

The stampedes occur due to structural and design failures in the buildings, bridges etc. This includes the following causes-

- Structural collapse** of makeshift bridges, railings, temporary structures
- Improper and **unauthorised built structures**
- Railings of the bridge collapsing** due to panic triggered by rumours
- Difficult terrain** (famous religious sites built on top of hills that are difficult to access)
- Narrow streets** with very few entry/exits
- Absence of emergency exits

Fire/Electricity causes

This includes the following causes-

- Fire in a makeshift facility** or a **shop**, and illegal and unauthorised structure
- Non-availability of fire extinguishers** in working condition

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- (c) **Building and fire code violations**, unauthorized fireworks in enclosed places
- (d) **Electricity supply failure creating panic** and triggering a sudden exodus
- (e) **Illegal electric connections** and faulty electric equipment

Crowd Behaviour

The stampedes are either triggered or made worse by panic. **Crowd behaviour plays an important role in it.** Following are some crowd behaviour causes-

- (a) Craze- In large group settings, this “craze” percolates to every member and can make them act in detriment to their own individual interests. **For ex-** One of the major causes **behind the recent Hathras Stampede** has been the rush to touch the preacher’s feet and trying to collect soil from where he walked.
- (b) Crowds **forcing to entrance/exits** a venue after the start/closing time
- (c) **Rush during distribution** of disaster relief supplies
- (d) A **large** (much more than expected) **anxious and competitive crowd** gathering at promotional events
- (f) **Unruly and irresponsible** crowd behaviour
- (g) **Last minute change in platform for train arrival/departure** resulting in lots of movements within short period of time

Security Issues

This includes:

(a) Security Personnel

- (i) **Under deployment of security staff** and deployment of untrained staff
- (ii) **Lack of adequate rehearsals** and briefing of security personnel on crowd control
- (iii) **Lack of adequate scientific planning** in making police arrangement to deal with crowd with proper sectoral deployment, and lack of proper wireless deployment
- (iv) **Ineptitude of the police** in effectively managing the crowd and enforcing prohibitory orders

(b) Surveillance

- (i) **Lack of adequate observation towers** with proper wireless communication to monitor and regulate crowd
- (ii) **Lack of adequate CCTV surveillance** of the crowd
- (iii) **Absence of public announcement systems** or effective wireless system with the police;

(c) Infrastructure

- (i) **Lack of adequate road opening parties** to secure the routes
- (ii) **Lack of adequate metal detectors** and frisking of pilgrims entering the pilgrimage area or persons entering the gathering area

Lack of Coordination between Stakeholders

This includes the following issues-

- (a) **Coordination gap between agencies** (e.g. Police and District Magistrate; PWD, Fire Service, Forest officials, Revenue officials, Medical officers etc.)
- (b) **Poor infrastructure** (Plans on paper but no implementation due to lack of funds, resources, or will)
- (c) **Inadequate water, medical assistance, public transport/parking facilities**
- (d) **Communication delays**
- (e) **Vacant/late/delayed posting** of key personnel

What are the Impact of these Stampedes?

Stampedes at religious gatherings in India have significant impacts on local communities. Mentioned below are some of the major impacts.

1. Trauma and Loss- Witnessing a stampede tragedy and the resultant deaths and injuries causes immense trauma, **especially for those who lost loved ones**. **For ex-** Deadly stampede killing 121 people in Hathras.

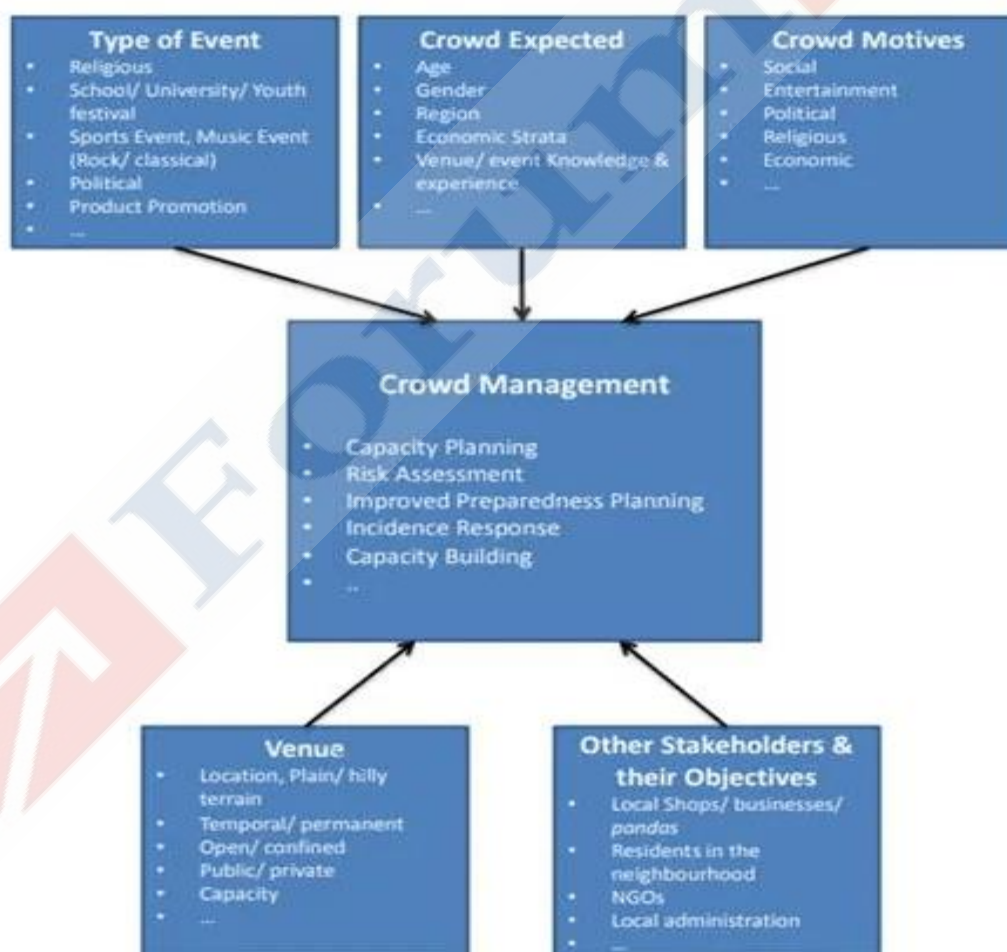
2. Economic Hardship- The majority of victims in **such stampedes come from lower castes and poor backgrounds**. Their deaths **leave families without primary breadwinners**, causing economic hardship in the community. Also the **cost of funerals and medical expenses** further strain already limited resources.

3. Erosion of Trust- Repeated stampedes at Indian religious festivals due to similar failures further **undermine faith in the ability of organizers to keep devotees safe**. **For ex-** **Gross negligence** like **poor planning**, with **insufficient exits, inadequate crowd control**, and **lack of emergency preparedness**, by organizers and authorities erodes trust in religious institutions.

4. Loss of Social and Human Capital- **Many young children and women are the victims** of these stampede tragedies. This leads to **loss of the productive social and human capital** of the country.

What are the NDMA Guidelines for the prevention of Stampedes in India?

In view of the recurring stampedes at places of mass gathering, including religious places, and typically ad-hoc responses to those, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has prepared '**Suggestive Framework for Preparation of Crowd Management Plan for Events/Venues of Mass Gathering**'.



Source- NDMA

| | |
|---|--|
| Understanding venue, visitors and stakeholders | It requires understanding of- a. Type of event (such as religious, schools/ university, sports event, music event, political event) b. Expected Crowd (age, gender, economic strata) c. Crowd Motives (such as social, academic, religious, entertainment, economic etc.) d. Venue (location, topography of area, temporal or permanent, open or closed) e. Role of other stake holders (such as NGOs, neighbours of event venue, local administrators etc.) |
| Crowd Handling | a. Proper regulation of Traffic around the mass gathering venues. b. A route map for venues along with emergency exits route maps . c. Barricade facility to control the movement of crowd queues. d. Snake line approach should be followed in case large crowd queues e. The organizers of crowded events/venue managers should discourage general admissions and have plans to handle VIP visitors . |
| Safety and Security | a. The venue Organisers should ensure authorised use of electricity, use of fire safety extinguishers as per the safety guidelines. b. Use of CCTV cameras to monitor crowds and use of mini UAV in case of big crowd spread. |
| Communication | A public address system , with loudspeakers installed at all crowded points, to communicate with the crowds. |
| Medical and Emergency care | Medical first-aid rooms and emergency operations centres to handle post-disaster emergencies should be set up |
| Role of Event Managers | The event organizers and venue managers should develop, implement, review and revise the disaster management plan in coordination with others including local administration and police. |
| Role of Civil society | Event/venue managers should involve NGOs and civil defence in traffic control, people flow control, medical assistance, sanitation and mobilization of local resources in case of disaster. |
| Role of police | The police should actively participate in venue assessment and preparedness checks and guide crowd and traffic movements . |
| Role of Media | (a) Educational- Media can educate public about the possible disaster threats, ways to prevent them and how to be better prepared in the face of a disaster (b) Critical- Media can critically evaluate the disaster management plans to highlight the gaps for correction; |
| Capacity Building | Capacity building, conduction of drills, periodic assesment of training of security personnel, police is essential to prevent crowd disasters |

Use of ICT in Stampede Management

| ICT for Disaster mitigation and Prevention | ICT in Disaster response and relief |
|---|--|
| Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GIS, Remote Sensing • Radio, Television, telephone • SMS, UMS, Cell Broadcasting, Internet/Social Media • RFID • Space based sensors and balloons | Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA system, SMS, UMS, Cell Broadcasting, Inter-operability of mobile service providers • Emergency lighting, alarms • RFID Tags • Registration database software • Space based sensors and balloons |
| Typical Usage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early warning system, Potential Risks, Vulnerabilities • Registration of visitors, Virtual Queues, RFID • Information dissemination • To regulate flow of visitors • Prepositioning of resources | Typical Usage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure rumours do not spread • Registering missing persons • Search and rescue • Keeping track of relief organizations, Camps of displaced persons • Insurance processing • Resource inventory management |

Source- NDMA Guidelines for ICT use in Disaster Management

What are the Challenges in the implementation of these Guidelines?

- 1. Lack of adoption and implementation-** The state governments and local authorities **have not yet properly implemented the NDMA guidelines** on crowd management.
- 2. Rapidly rising population-** With rising population and rapid urbanization, urban areas have become more susceptible along with places of frequent mass gatherings like **temples**.
- 3. Greater tolerance to crowd-** According to several psychologists, there is very high tolerance for crowded places in India, because **Indians don't feel uncomfortable until it's very packed**. Hence, **large-scale events in India become more susceptible to stampedes** because of a greater tolerance for high-density crowds.
- 4. Governance and accountability-** Agencies responsible for issuing permissions/ licences for mass gatherings, events **often fail to follow the guidelines and the requirements**. Further, there is lack of accountability on part of the authorities.

What Should be the Way Forward?

- 1. Legislation, Rules and Regulations for Stampedes-** **Supreme Court in Uphaar Cinema Tragedy** observed that there is a **need for a comprehensive legislation dealing with tortious liability of the State**.
- 2. Specialisation and Professionalism-** India needs to **emphasize effective communication, sensitive on-ground interventions, specialized personnel training, safety insurance, online customer feedback system, transparency, statutory compliances and professionalism**, to maintain the decorum of the crowd in huge events.
- 3. Use of technology-** Latest technology such as **CCTV surveillance with HD IP cameras with VMS** (Video Management Software), **mobile control room, drones for roof level surveillance** and public address system, **face recognition among crowds and robotic support** should be deployed extensively in crowded places.

4. **Capacity Evaluation-** There should be **proper evaluation of the capacity of a location or structure** before holding mass gatherings. Existing infrastructural problem should be addressed to avoid mishaps.
5. **Crowd Behaviour Management-** Every mass event must have a **public address system** for the officials to **stop rumours** from getting out of hand, **calm panicking crowds**, and **help people exit in a systematic manner**.
6. **Penalties-** **Stricter penalties, revocation of licenses for construction/fire safety violations, random checks and inspections**, must be adopted ensure effective compliance.
7. **Engaging Civil Society-** The Local Civilian Organisations like NGOs **must be actively engaged in the event for capacity building of event managers** etc, for easy mobilization of local resources, better preparedness and traffic control.
8. **Learning from Global Best Practices-** The learnings from Global Best Practices in Crowd Management must be adopted for effective management of Stampedes in India. **For ex- Crowd management during Haj Pilgrimage in Makkah.**

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3 Disaster Management

[Kurukshehra June 2024 Summary] Agricultural Festivals- Integral Part of Tribal Culture- Explained Pointwise

The agricultural festivals form an **integral Part of Tribal Culture**. Various agricultural activities like **sowing, caring of crops, harvesting** are **dependent on nature and weather**. Any adversity in weather conditions pose a big challenge to ancient agrarian societies for their survival and sustenance. Hence, **to keep their crops safe from any natural calamity**, the tribals have started worshipping the agricultural fields and related deities with songs, dances and various offerings.



Source- Kurukshehra

What are the various agricultural Festivals celebrated by the tribal communities in India?

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Most of the agricultural festivals are celebrated twice a year, one at the beginning of cultivation and the other at the time of harvest. These are community celebrations wherein deities are worshipped along with **traditional food, music, dances**. Nowadays, tourists are also warmly welcomed into these celebrations where they experience rich and varied tribal culture of India.

Tribal agricultural festivals are celebrated in each corner of the states. These begin from Jammu and Kashmir in the north to Kerala in the south, to Gujarat in the west, and Manipur in the east. Such festivals are also part of tribal culture in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep.

Some of the major Tribal Festivals in India

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Bhagoria Tribal Festival | Bhagoria Haat or Bhagoria tribal festival is celebrated by Bhils and Bhilalas tribes during the month of March every year. The festival celebrates completion of harvests in fields. |
| Karma or Karam Festival | Karma or Karam is a festival largely celebrated among tribes of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Bihar, and Assam. It is dedicated to the worship of Karam-Lord to seek his blessings for good harvest and health. |
| Hareli | Hareli is a very popular tribal festival of Chhatisgarh dedicated to crop harvests, trees and greenery. It is celebrated mainly by Gond tribe with great pomp and show on the new moon day in the month 'Shravan' (July-August). The Goddess 'Kutki Dai' is worshipped during this festival to seek blessings for good monsoon and bumper crops. |
| Redgram Week Festival | Savara and Jatapu tribals celebrate Makar Sankranti as traditional ' Redgram Week Festival ' with a set of their own rituals and customs. Newly harvested crop of redgram is first offered to God with prayers, and then cooked for family. |
| Ali-Aye-Ligang and Porag | In Assam, Mising is the major tribe which celebrates two major agricultural festivals namely Ali-Aye-Ligang and Porag . Ali-Aye-Ligang marks the beginning of cultivation while Porag is a post-harvest festival . |
| Aelong Festival | Nagaland consists of 17 tribe dwelling communities. They celebrate various agricultural activities as festivals such as the sowing of seeds, cleaning of fields after sowing, and completion of harvest . Aelong festival is celebrated after sowing of new seeds in the fields to seek divine blessings for bumper harvest. |
| Myoko | Myoko is one of the most important festivals of the Apatani tribe In Arunachal Pradesh. This festival reinforces their age-old belief that by performing the rituals they can ensure fertility, both in the fields and its people . |
| Losoong or Noomsong | Losoong or Noomsong festival celebrates the end of reaping season of crops . It also marks Sikkimese new year. |

What is the significance of agricultural festivals celebrated by tribal Communities in India?

The agricultural festivals celebrated by the tribal communities in India are significant for several reasons:

- 1. Celebration marking the end of agricultural cycle-** Harvest festivals **commemorate the end of the agricultural cycle** and **the beginning of a new year**.
- 2. Expression of gratitude for a bountiful harvest-** These festivals are a way to **recognize the hard work and labor** involved in growing crops and to give thanks for the abundance of the season.

3. Means of community celebration- The tribal community is a close knit community. These festivals help the people come together to celebrate the end of the growing season. This provides an important **social and cultural bonding experience**.

4. Religious and spiritual origins- Many agricultural festivals are linked to ancient agricultural rituals or celebrations of deities associated with agriculture. **For ex-** The Goddess 'Kutki Dai' is worshipped during the **Hareli festival** to seek **blessings for good monsoon and bumper crops**.

5. Reflective of contemporary values and needs- The celebration of harvest festivals **underscore the importance of sustainability** and **environmental protection** for prosperous and productive agriculture.

What are the challenges/ threats to the tribal culture of agricultural festivals?

1. Displacement, Marginalization, and Assimilation of Tribal Communities- Tribal communities have been facing challenges such as displacement, marginalization, and assimilation. These have **threatened the very existence of their cultural heritage** like **agricultural festivals**.

2. Shifting Preferences and Globalization- Rise in globalisation and shifting of preferences of the tribal communities, is threatening the tribal cultural practices. **For ex-** **The shift of the tribals to cities** and **loss of community bonding** due to increasing globalisation and interconnectedness.

3. Limited Exposure and Awareness- The lack of educational initiatives, museums, and galleries specializing in display of tribal cultural practices such as agricultural festivals.

4. Spread of monoculture crops and plantations- The spread of monoculture crops and plantations **under the garb of 'development'** as well as other displacement projects implemented without understanding the value of tribal farming. This **harms the self-reliance of tribal communities** and **the traditional systems** that sustain their festivals.

5. Climate Change- **Rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and an increase in extreme weather events** threaten traditional food systems and make it more difficult for tribes to produce, harvest, and access the foods and ingredients needed for their festivals.

What Should be the way Forward?

1. Increased Government Support- The govt should provide **funding support for tribal research institutes to document** and study tribal agricultural practices and festivals.

Schemes like the **"Support of Tribal Research Institute"** and **"Tribal Festival, Research, Information and Mass Education"** should be strengthened to ensure quality research, training, and awareness generation about tribal cultures.

2. Community Engagement- Tribal communities **should be empowered to take a lead role in preserving their own cultural practices** through community-based conservation efforts.

Initiatives like the **Van Dhan Yojana** that form clusters of tribal self-help groups and producer companies **can help sustain traditional livelihoods** linked to agricultural festivals.

3. Protection of Intellectual Property- **Geographical Indication (GI) tags** should be used to protect and promote unique tribal products showcased at festivals.

4. Establishment of Living Museums- Living museums offer interactive experiences that allow visitors to engage directly with cultural practices and daily life activities of tribal communities. These museums provide a **unique opportunity for cultural education and appreciation**, bridging the gap between the past and the present.

5. Cultural exchange Programs- International cultural exchange programs, exhibitions, and collaborations can bring tribal art to a broader audience. This would ensure that these practices are not only **sustained financially** but are also appreciated as essential elements of the global cultural mosaic.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 1 Indian Art and Culture

RBI's Financial Stability Report- Key Highlights and Risks- Explained Pointwise

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently released its **Financial Stability Report (FSR)** for June 2024. The report provides a **comprehensive assessment** of the **resilience and stability of India's financial system**. According to the report, **global financial system faces major risks** such as alarming levels of public debt, frequent geopolitical conflicts, and increasing economic and financial fragmentation. Amidst these global headwinds, the **Indian economy is exhibiting strength and resilience**, with strong macroeconomic fundamentals and buffers.

What is the Financial Stability Report released by the RBI?

Financial Stability Report-

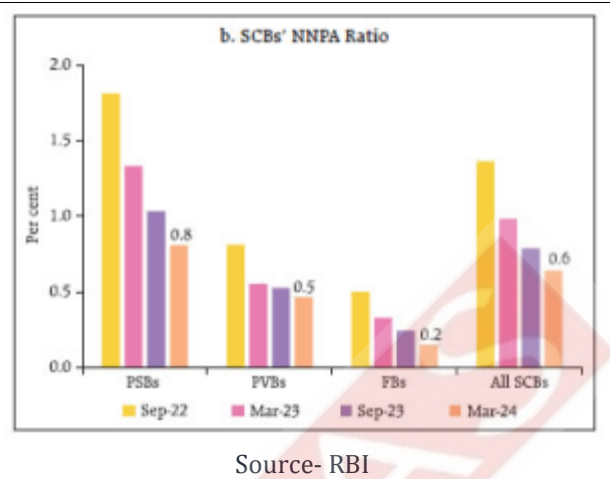
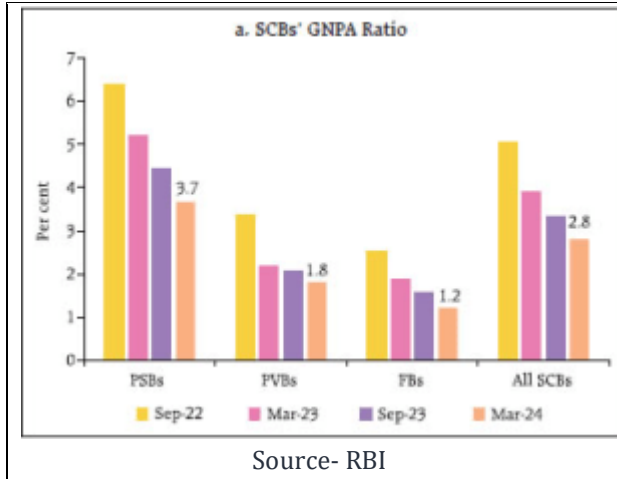
| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Released By | Financial Stability Report is released by the RBI . It is published twice a year . It reflects the collective assessment of the Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC – headed by the Governor of RBI) on risks to financial stability and the resilience of the financial system. |
| Details of the Report | The Financial Stability Report details the state of financial stability in the country. It is prepared after taking into account the contributions from all the financial regulators. |
| Risk assessment | RBI conducts a Systemic Risk Survey (SRS) as part of the FSR. The opinions of the experts and market participants are taken to assess the financial system on five different types of risks . The risks which are evaluated are Global, Financial, Macroeconomic, Institutional, General . |

What are the key highlights of the Financial Stability Report?

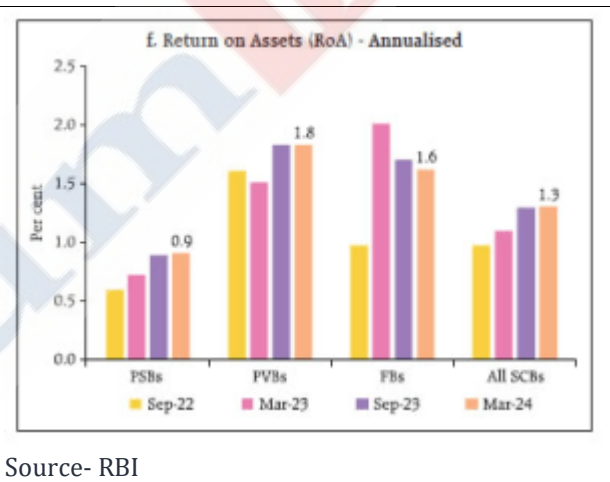
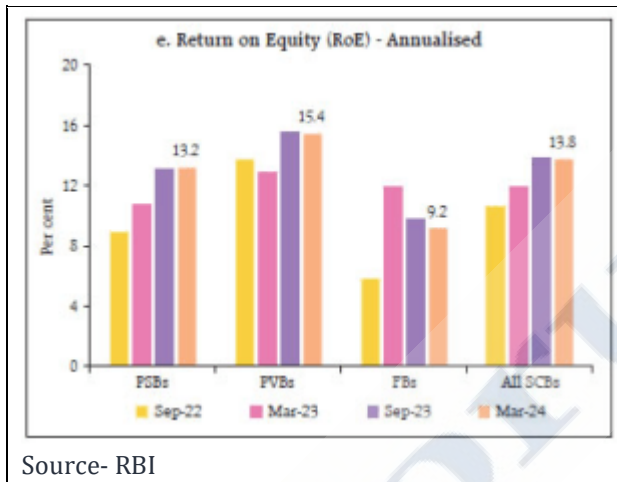
In this uncertain international economic and financial environment, **the Indian economy is exhibiting resilience** and remains the fastest growing major economy. Moreover, **India's contribution to global growth** is rising and currently stands at **18.5 per cent** in 2023-24.

1. Indian Banking System- The Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) have shown remarkable improvement in profitability and asset quality.

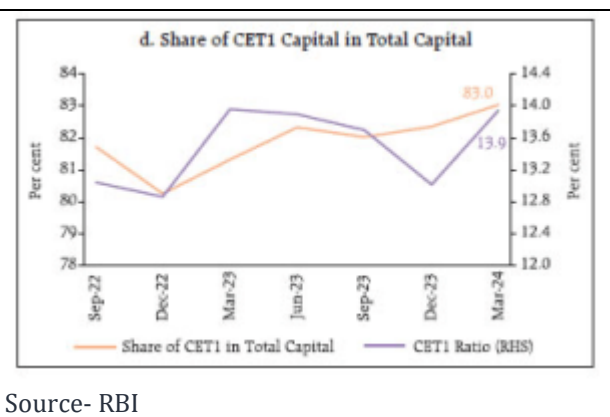
a. Improved Asset Quality- The asset quality of SCBs **recorded sustained improvement** and their **GNPA ratio moderated** to a **12-year low** of 2.8% in March 2024. The decline has been observed across public, private and foreign banks.



b. Increased Profitability- The Return on assets (RoA) and return on equity (RoE) have increased to **1.3%** and **13.8%**, respectively.



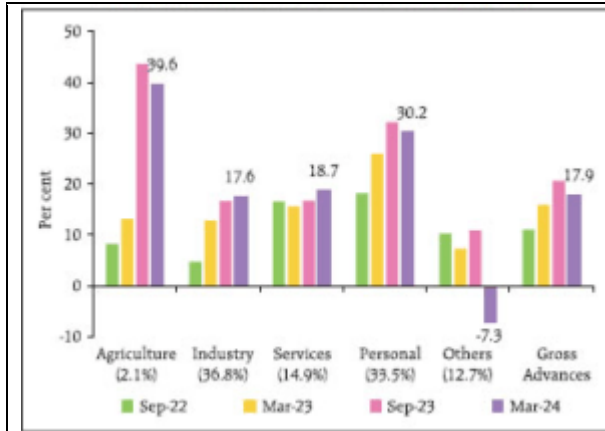
c. Capital Buffers- The **capital to risk-weighted assets ratio** (CRAR) and the **common equity tier 1** (CET1) ratio stand at **16.8%** and **13.9%**, respectively. This is well above the regulatory minimum set by the RBI.



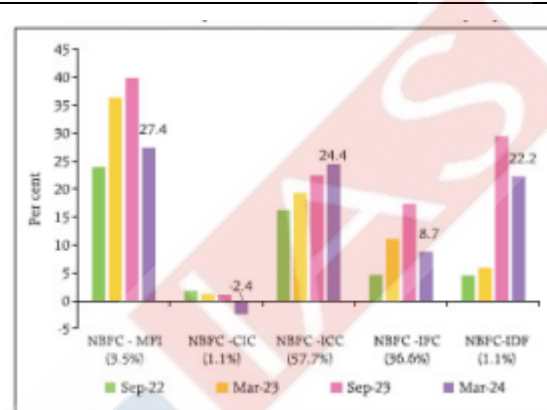
d. Positive Stress test results- The stress tests conducted to gauge the strength of bank balance sheets reveal that **SCBs are well capitalised** and **capable of absorbing macroeconomic shocks** even in the absence of any further capital infusion by stakeholders.

2. Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)-

a. Robust Credit Growth- NBFCs maintained robust credit growth in 2023-24. Personal loan growth decelerated whereas growth in loans to industry and services accelerated. Credit growth in respect of the largest category of NBFC by activity, investment and credit companies (NBFC-ICCs), has been accelerating in the post-pandemic period

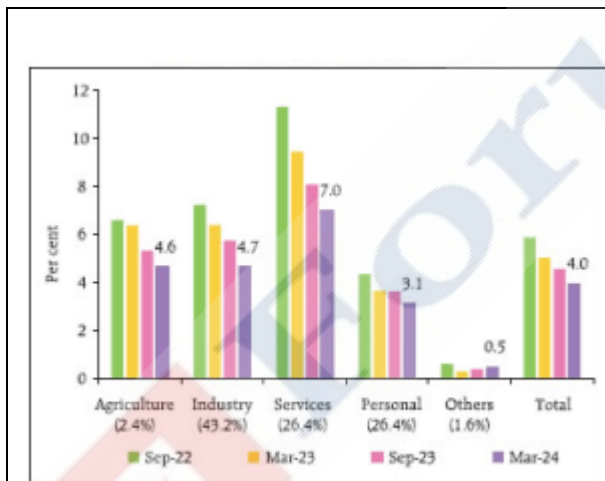


Source- RBI

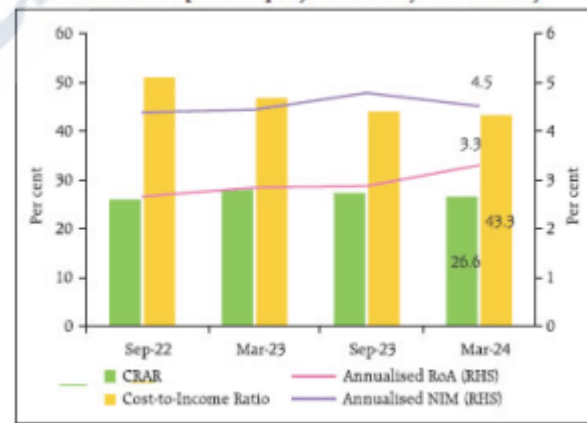


Source- RBI

b. Healthy asset quality- The asset quality of the Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) remains healthy. It has a CRAR at 26.6 per cent, GNPA ratio at 4.0 per cent and return on assets (RoA) at 3.3 per cent.



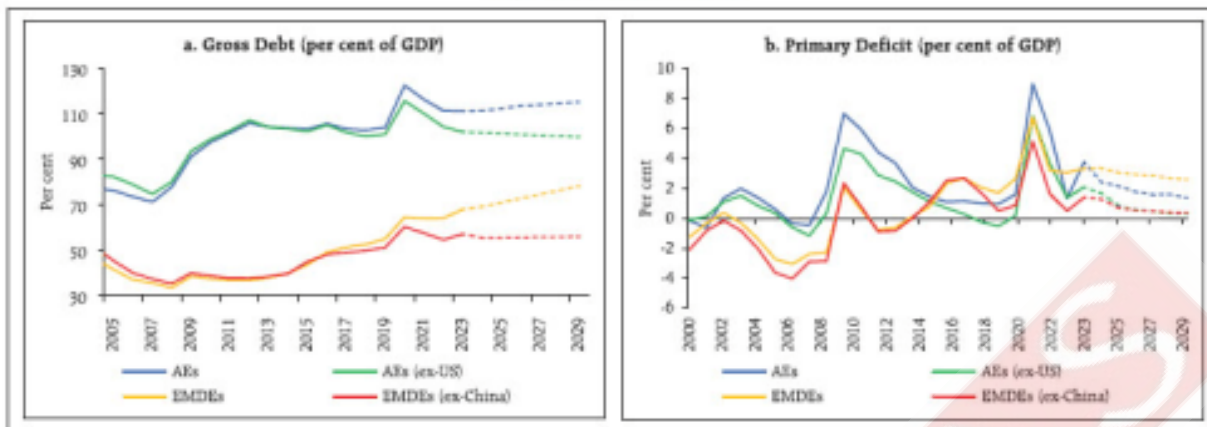
Source- RBI



Source- RBI

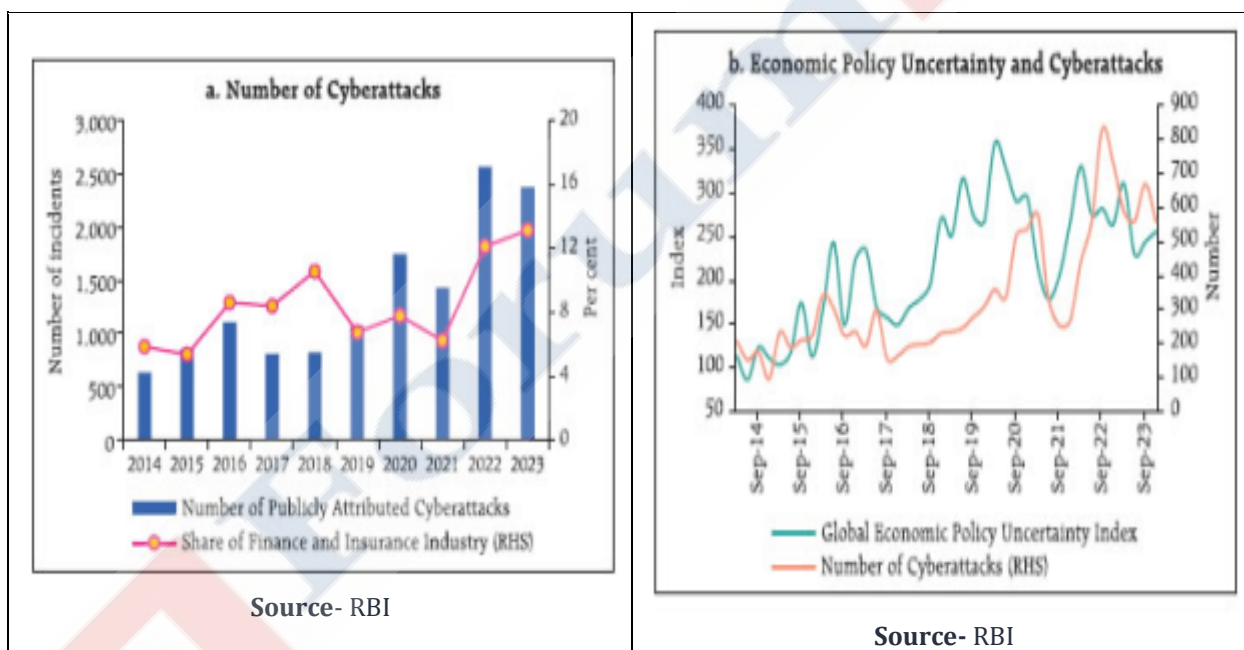
What are the risks highlighted by the Financial Stability Report?

1. Global Economic Headwinds- The global economy is facing heightened risks from prolonged geopolitical tensions, elevated public debt, and the slow progress in the last mile of disinflation. These headwinds pose challenges to the growth and stability of Indian Financial Sector.



Source- RBI

2. Increasing Cyber Risks- With increasing digitalisation of financial services, the recurring intensity of cyberattacks has dominated financial stability concerns. The number of publicly reported cyberattacks has been rising globally at an alarming pace, with the share of attacks in the financial domain increasing at a rapid pace.



Source- RBI

Source- RBI

3. Domestic Risks- Disruption of supply-chain conditions, rise in commodity prices, slack in the rural economy and uncertainties related to weather conditions are the prominent domestic risks to the Indian Financial Sector.

4. Interconnectedness and Contagion Risk- Due to increasing interconnectedness, the share of interbank exposures in the total assets of the banking system has reached a 3-year peak in September 2023. This makes the Indian financial system susceptible to contagion risk.

5. Risks in the Unsecured Retail Loan Segment- There has been a rapid growth in the unsecured retail loan segment. It has seen 23% growth in the last two years compared to 12-14% overall credit growth. This growth in the unsecured loan segment creates substantial risks for the stability of Indian financial sector.

What are the RBI initiatives for the stability of the Indian Financial System?

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The RBI has taken several measures to address the risks highlighted in the latest Financial Stability Report.

| | |
|--|--|
| Strengthening Banks' Internal Surveillance | The RBI has advised banks and NBFCs to strengthen their internal surveillance mechanisms to address the build-up of risks in the rapidly growing unsecured retail loan segment |
| Revised Prudential Framework on Stressed Assets | The revised prudential framework on stressed assets issued by the RBI on June 7, 2019 extends the stressed asset resolution framework . It also builds in incentives for early adoption of a resolution plan . |
| Large Exposures Framework | RBI introduced a revised large exposures framework (LEF) to address counterparty concentration risk in the banking sector. |
| Supervisory Mechanism for Banks | RBI has recently reviewed the structure of supervision in the context of the growing diversity, complexities and interconnectedness within the Indian financial sector. |
| Dedicated Cloud Facility | The RBI announced the establishment of a dedicated cloud facility for the financial sector in India to help banks and financial entities manage the ever-increasing volume of data . |

Conclusion

The **regulators**, including the Reserve Bank, **must remain committed** to promote innovation, financial inclusion, efficient payment and settlement systems, and a robust financial system.

All stakeholders must invest adequately to take full advantage of technological advancements like Artificial Intelligence. However, **they must also take steps to safeguard the security and soundness** of their systems.

Efforts must be made to **develop an ecosystem that puts the interests of the customer at the forefront**. Ultimately, the preservation of the trust of the customer is the cornerstone of safeguarding systemic stability.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3 Indian Economy

India-UK Relations- Significance, Challenges and The way ahead- Explained Pointwise

The **labour party** has emerged victorious in the **recently concluded elections in the UK**. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has **moved quickly to establish cordial relations with the new Labour Party Government in UK**. Indian Prime Minister has also **extended an invitation to the newly elected UK Prime Minister Mr Keir Starmer** to visit India. All eyes are now fixated on the future of the India-UK relations.

Changes expected in the India-UK relations under the Labour Party Govt

- a. Early conclusion of the India-UK FTA-** With the **new labour Party govt with a overwhelming majority** at the helm of affairs in UK, it is being expected that it will lead to **early conclusion of the the ambitious India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**. The **Labour Party manifesto** contained a **commitment** for the development of a **new strategic partnership** with India.
- b. Free and Open Indo-Pacific-** Labour plans to work with India to promote a "free and open Indo-Pacific" based on a **rules-based order**.
- c. Deepening of Cooperation across all sectors-** The labour party has committed to deepening cooperation with India in areas like **technology, climate change, and education**.
- d. Push for reforms of Multilateral Institutions-** The new labour party govt in the UK will push for multilateralism and reform of multilateral institutions like WTO.

e. Deepening of defence and security partnership- The India-UK defence and security partnership is likely to be strengthened, **building on recent momentum from the 2+2 mechanism**. The labour party has also changed its earlier stance on Kashmir, and now holds Kashmir as an internal Issue between India and Pakistan.



Source- The Indian Express

What has been the history of India-UK relations?

India and the United Kingdom share a long and complex history of relations that spans centuries.

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Colonial Era (1858-1947) | After the rebellion in 1857, India came under direct British rule in 1858 . The British monarch became the Empress/Emperor of India . |
| After Independence | India decided to remain in the Commonwealth of Nations after becoming a Republic in 1950 |
| Phase of Strained Relationship | India-UK Relations were strained during the Cold War era. India pursued a non-aligned foreign policy while the UK was a NATO ally of the US . The UK opposed India's wars with Pakistan and India's nuclear tests. |
| Phase of Improvement | With the end of the Cold War and economic reforms in the 1990s, UK became more eager to build economic relations with India. This started a phase of improvement in India-UK relations . |
| Phase of Strategic Partnership | The India-UK relationship was upgraded to a Strategic Partnership in 2004 . Regular high-level visits and dialogues have strengthened cooperation in areas like trade, investment, defence, and people-to-people links. |

Today, India and the UK enjoy a modern partnership bound by strong historical ties and a shared membership in the Commonwealth. The two countries collaborate extensively across a wide range of areas and are **working to establish a comprehensive strategic partnership by 2030**.

What are the areas of Cooperation between India-UK?

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1. Geo Political Cooperation- UK supports India's proposal for **permanent membership** of the **UNSC**. The UK is also an **important interlocutor** for India in the EU, G8, G20 and global forums. India-UK political cooperation deepens through institutions and fora such as **India-UK Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Dialogue**, **India-UK JWG on Counter Terrorism** and **India-UK Foreign Office Consultations**.

2. Economic Cooperation- After the establishment of **Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO)** in 2005, the India-UK economic relations has further deepened.

a. The trade between India and the UK has "**more than doubled**" between 2007 and 2019. The India-UK bilateral trade has **increased to USD 20.36 billion** in 2022-23.

b. In 2022, India was the **UK's twelfth largest trading partner**, accounting for 2% of the UK's total trade.

c. India has invested in **120 projects and created over 5,000 jobs in the UK** to become their **second-largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI)** only behind the United States.

3. Defense and Security- India and the UK signed the **Defence and International Security Partnership (DISP)** in November 2015. It provides a **strategic roadmap and direction** to the **evolving India-UK Defence Relations**. At present, **some 70 companies in the UK supply goods for aircraft and related equipment** besides supporting platforms like the Jaguar, Mirage and Kiran aircraft.

4. Nuclear Cooperation- India and UK have signed a **Civil Nuclear Cooperation Declaration** in 2010 for the promotion and facilitation of cooperation in the nuclear field. In 2015, a **Nuclear Collaboration Agreement** was signed between the two countries as part of a comprehensive package of collaboration on energy and climate change.

5. Education- India and UK have been closely collaborating in the field of Education. This is evident in the following cases-

a. The launch of '**UKEIRI Mobility Programme: Study in India**' in 2019. Under this Britain's universities collaborate with Indian partners and send UK students to India.

b. UK is among the favoured destinations for Indian students to pursue higher education, with **around 50000 Indian students currently studying in UK**.

6. Health- India and UK have been **closely cooperating in the field of healthcare management**. The close collaboration and association are mentioned below-

a. The **successful partnership** between **Oxford University, AstraZeneca** and **SII on COVID-19 vaccine** has **demonstrated the potential of Indian and UK expertise** working together to solve international healthcare challenges.

b. The two sides are also working on pandemic preparedness, Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), digital health, Ayurveda and alternative medicines, as well as health worker mobility.

7. Climate and Environment- **India-UK Green Growth Equity Fund** has been established, which helps in the **mobilisation of institutional investments** in the renewable energy, waste management, electric mobility and environment sub-sectors in India.

8. Cultural Cooperation- India and UK have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Cultural Cooperation in 2010. **The Nehru Centre (TNC)**, established in 1992 in London, is the **cultural outreach** of the **High Commission of India in UK**.

9. Diaspora Collaboration- Around **1.5 million people of Indian origin live** in Britain. Indian diaspora are making significant contributions to the British Society. **The representation of people from Indian Origin has increased in the British Parliament**. The outgoing PM of UK was also of the Indian Origin.

What is the Significance of the close India-UK relations?

1. Geo-Strategic- Deepening of engagement with UK **can help India to counter China's rise** in the Indian Ocean Region. The **UK can use India** as an alternative destination to China and its companies can invest in India as part of '**China plus one strategy**'. (**China Plus One Strategy-** It is the business strategy to avoid investing only in China and diversify business into other countries).

2. Geo-Political- A healthy relationship between the two is **imperative for enhancing cooperation** in the **Indo-Pacific, Afghanistan, UNSC, G20 and Commonwealth**. For ex- India welcoming the **UK's accession in the Indo-Pacific Ocean's Initiative** under the Maritime Security pillar.

3. Economic- The India-UK FTA will give a further boost to India's labour-intensive sectors, increase Indian service exports, and diversify Indian trade partners. The FTA will boost **UK's beverage and automobile industry** and **UK's investment in India**.

Read More- [India-UK FTA- Explained Pointwise](#)

4. Climate Change- The deepened India-UK relations **will be helpful to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and to implement the Glasgow Climate Pact**. For ex- India and UK have agreed to work for **early operationalisation** of the **Global Green Grids-One Sun One World One Grid Initiative (OSOWOG)** under **ISA**.

What are the Challenges in the relations?

1. Delay in the conclusion of India-UK FTA- The India-UK FTA which will be **win-win situation for both India and UK**, has been delayed and has missed several deadlines. The deal **has missed** the '**Diwali Deadline**' which was set last year.

2. Different stands on Russia Ukraine conflict- The U.K **has openly criticized** the Russian invasion while the same has not yet been done by India. This may **emerge as a potential bottleneck in future**.

3. UK's closeness to Pakistan and China- The **UK's ties with Pakistan** complicate the process of building a closer defence and security with India. U.K. governments have simultaneously supplied India and Pakistan with weapons or curbed weapons exports.

UK and India have also **sometimes diverged** in their **positions towards China's role** in the Indian Ocean. While India has been concerned with **China's growing influence** in the Indo-Pacific region through the **Belt and Road Initiative project**, the UK by contrast has engaged **substantially with Belt and Road**.

4. Khalistan Issue- The allegations regarding **UK harbouring the issues surrounding Khalistan and Sikh separatism** remain as a formidable challenge for deepening of India-UK relations.

5. Slow progress in deepening of Defence Ties- The UK has been slow to adapt to the Indian government's increasingly preferred method of acquisition- through **Government-to-Government (G2G)** agreements or Foreign Military Sales (FMS) for deals.

6. Extradition Rigidities- Both the countries have an extradition treaty between them. However, **speedy expedition is still a far-fetched dream**. India has not been able to extradite Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi and other fugitives from London.

7. Illegal Migrants- There are more than 1 lakh of illegal Indian immigrants in the UK. The UK government has put pressure to send them back but both the countries have not yet signed the migration and mobility agreement.

8. Anti-colonial resentment against Britain- India still suffers from the legacy of Partition like the **problem with Pakistan** and **the issue of Kashmir**.

What Should be the Way Forward?

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- 1. Early materialization of the proposed FTA-** The early finalisation of the FTA under the new UK government, will be a **stepping stone** to a comprehensive agreement that **will help revive investments and jobs**.
- 2. Jointly reviving multilateralism and multilateral institutions-** India and UK must shed their differences in the stand in the **multilateral bodies** like **WTO** and **UNFCCC**. UK government should stand with the causes of the underdeveloped and developing countries instead of siding with the developed countries.
- 3. Agreement on “migration and mobility”-** India and Britain should explore an agreement on “migration and mobility” to **facilitate the legal movement of Indians into Britain**.
- 4. Streamlining the extradition process-** UK should live up to its commitment to the extradition of Indian fugitives. **For ex- Nirav Modi should be extradited** as his extradition process is almost completed.
- 5. Deeper defence and security engagement-** The UK and India’s convergence of interests in the Indian Ocean region offers an important opportunity to increase engagement on defence and security. Hence, both nations **should promote standards of transparency** and **sustainability for infrastructure projects** in the **Indian Ocean region**.
- 6. Better balancing of relations-** The UK should take care for ensuring **stronger ties with China and Pakistan** are **not at the expense of a deeper partnership with India**. This will improve India UK relations further.

Read More- [Livemint](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- India’s relation with the developed nations

Indus Water Treaty- Significance and Concerns-Explained Pointwise

Indus Water Treaty **negotiated in 1960** between India and Pakistan is a **landmark transboundary water-sharing mechanism**. However, disagreements have persisted among both India and Pakistan over the treaty.

India had called for amendments in the treaty last year due to its **dissatisfaction over the dispute resolution process**, blaming Pakistan’s continued ‘**intransigence**’ in implementing the treaty. Pakistan has also raised objections regarding India’s construction of **Kishenganga** and **Ratle** hydroelectric projects.

This calls for an analysis of the provisions of the Indus Water treaty, the associated concerns and the Way Forward to address these concerns.

INDUS WATER TREATY

Key Provisions

| | |
|---|--|
| River Water Distribution | Eastern Rivers- Ravi, Sutlej, and Beas with India. Western Rivers- Chenab, Indus and Jhelum with Pakistan India's Share- 20% and Pakistan's Share- 80% |
| Western River Water utilization permitted for India | Non Consumptive Use of Western River Water like construction of Run of River Hydroelectric Plants Permitted to India. |
| Dispute Resolution Mechanism | 3 stage Dispute Resolution Mechanism Stage 1- Permanent Commission Stage 2- Neutral Expert (NE) Stage 3- Court of Arbitration |

Significance of the Treaty

- Successful Model-** Only cross border water sharing treaty between two nations in Asia. Treaty between two rivals.
- Generous towards lower riparian state-** Pakistan's share is about **90%** greater than Mexico's share in the **1944 treaty with US**.
- Passed the Crisis test-** The Permanent Commission has met even during the **1965 and 1971 wars**.

Concerns with the Treaty

India's Concerns

- Dispute over India's Hydroelectric Projects-** Pakistan has raised objections on **Ratle and Kishanganga Projects**.
- Climate Change Impact-** Indus River System is the **most water stressed** according to NASA.
- Loss to Indian States in the Indus Basin-** J&K and Punjab Complain of million dollar losses

Pakistan's Concerns

- Lower Riparian Concerns-** infrastructure developments will **reduce downstream flows**
- Accusations of 'Water Terrorism'-** Pakistan has raised objections regarding the **Shahpurkandi barrage project**.

Way Forward

- Integration of Ecological Perspectives and Recognition of Climate Change Impacts.**
- Enhanced Water Data-Sharing**
- Incorporation of International Legal Standards like 1997 UN Watercourses Convention and 2004 Berlin Rules on Water Resources for sustainable water use**
- Pro activeness on India's Part in utilization of allocated water share like desilting of canals and run-off river hydroelectric plants.**

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What is the History behind the introduction of the Indus Water Treaty? What are its main provisions?

History Behind the Indus Water Treaty

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| Pre Independence | Preceding partition , the six rivers of the Indus basin , which originated in the Himalayas/Tibet (Indus, Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Jhelum and Chenab) was a common network, for both India and Pakistan. |
| At the Time of Partition | The partition of India raised questions about the distribution of water between the two nations . Since the rivers flowed from India, Pakistan felt threatened by the prospect of control of river waters by India. |
| Inter-Dominion accord (May 4, 1948) | The Inter-Dominion accord of May 4, 1948 laid out that India would release enough water to Pakistan in return for annual payments (by Pakistan). However, |

| | |
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| | the problems of this arrangement were soon realized and it was considered necessary to find an alternative solution. |
| Indus Water Treaty 1960 | India and Pakistan signed the Indus Water Treaty with the intervention of the World Bank in 1960. Precise details were laid out regarding the way in which the waters would be distributed. |

Main Provisions of the Indus Water Treaty

| | |
|--|--|
| Eastern Rivers with India | Under the Indus treaty, all the waters of 3 eastern rivers namely Ravi, Sutlej, and Beas (with a mean annual flow of 33 Million Acre-feet (MAF)) were allocated to India for exclusive use. |
| Western Rivers with Pakistan | Pakistan gets control of 3 Western Rivers (Chenab, Indus and Jhelum) with a mean annual flow of 80 Million Acre-feet (MAF) . |
| Western River Water utilization permitted for India | The Indus River treaty allows India to utilize the waters of Western Rivers for a. Limited irrigation use b. Non-consumptive use - For applications such as power generation, navigation etc. This, allows India to generate hydroelectricity through a run-of-the-river projects (without the storage of waters) on the western rivers, subject to specific criteria for design and operation. c. Storage level permitted - India can store up to 3.75 MAF of water of the Western Rivers for conservation and flood storage purposes. |
| Water Division Ratio | The Indus Water treaty gives India 20% of the water from the Indus River System and the rest 80% of the water to Pakistan. |
| Dispute Resolution Mechanism | The Indus Water Treaty provides a three step dispute resolution mechanism . a. Permanent Commission - The disputes of the parties can be resolved at the Permanent Commission , or can also be taken up at the inter-government level . b. Neutral Expert (NE) - In case of unresolved questions or ' differences ' between the countries on water-sharing, such as technical differences , either side can approach the World Bank to appoint a Neutral Expert (NE) to come to a decision. c. Court of Arbitration - If either party is not satisfied with the Neutral Expert's decision or in case of 'disputes' in the interpretation and extent of the treaty , matters can be referred to a Court of Arbitration. |

What has been the significance of the Indus Water Treaty?

The Indus Waters Treaty has been **largely successful in maintaining water cooperation** between India and Pakistan for over 60 years, despite periods of political tensions and conflict between the two countries.

- 1. Only cross border water sharing treaty in Asia**- The Indus water Treaty is the **only cross border water sharing treaty** between two nations in Asia.
- 2. Generous towards lower riparian state**- It is the only water pact that compels an upper riparian state to defer to the interests of a downstream state. **Pakistan** has been given **80% share** in the river water system. This is **90 times greater volume of water** than **Mexico's share under a 1944 pact** with the US.
- 3. Passed the Crisis test**- The **Permanent Commission** set up as a part of the Dispute Resolution Mechanism under the treaty **has met even during the 1965 and 1971 wars** between India and Pakistan.

4. India's Generosity- India's respect for the **values trans-boundary river treaty** is also a major factor behind the successful functioning of the treaty. India chose not to invoke the **Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties**, to withdraw from the Indus Water Treaty in the face of terror attacks like **Indian Parliament** in 2001, **Mumbai** in 2008, **Uri** in 2016 and **Pulwama** in 2019.

5. Successful Model- The Indus Water Treaty serves as a successful model of cooperation between two rival countries.

What are the concerns with the Indus Water Treaty?

India's Concerns

1. Most Generous treaty- Experts have termed this the **most generous water sharing** treaty. The treaty has resulted in unequal sharing of the waters with **80% allotment to Pakistan**. It is the **only water-sharing pact in the world** that **compels upper riparian State** to defer to the interests of the downstream State.

2. Prevents India from building any storage systems on Western Rivers- Despite the Indus water treaty providing for **certain exceptional circumstances** for **building storage systems on Western Flowing Rivers**, Pakistan has deliberately stopped such efforts. The extensively technical nature of the treaty allows Pakistan to stall legitimate Indian Projects.

3. Dispute over India's Hydroelectric Projects- In recent times disputes over the **Kishenganga** and **Ratle hydroelectric projects** have intensified, with **Pakistan** directly seeking arbitration at The Hague, **bypassing treaty-compliant proceedings**.

4. Climate Change Impact- The Indus basin, which has been **ranked as the world's second most over-stressed aquifer by NASA in 2015**, has been severely **affected by climate change**. India seeks renegotiation and amendments to the treaty for sustaining its burgeoning population.

5. Loss to Indian States in the Indus Basin- There have been substantial economic losses to the Indian States in the Indus River Basin. **For ex- According to J&K Govt's hired consultant report, J&K has been suffering economic losses to the tune of hundred of millions annually** due to the Indus Water Treaty.

Pakistan's Concerns

1. Lower Riparian Concerns- As a lower riparian state, **Pakistan fears infrastructure developments** will **reduce downstream flows**.

2. Accusations of 'Water Terrorism'- Pakistan accused India of "water terrorism" for the **Shahpurkandi barrage project**, despite the project's compliance with the IWT.

3. Environmental Flow Issues- Pakistan insists on **maintaining environmental flows**, supported by the **2013 Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling on India's obligation** to release flows downstream of the **Kishanganga project**.

Read More- [Need to amend the Indus Waters Treaty](#)

What are the Concerns with the termination or abrogation of the IWT?

Renegotiating or abrogating the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) between India and Pakistan could have serious consequences for the region:

1. Escalation of Geopolitical Tensions- Attempts at renegotiating the treaty or abrogation of the treaty is likely to escalate political tensions between India and Pakistan. This might heighten the **risk of water conflicts** between the **two nuclear-armed neighbors**.

2. Threat to Regional Stability- The Indus river basin is shared by **India, Pakistan, China and Afghanistan**. Instability in the IWT could have **ripple effects on water cooperation in the wider region**.

3. Damage to India's International Standing- Unilaterally suspending or withdrawing from the IWT **could damage India's image as a responsible global power**. It may be a **setback for future negotiations of water treaties**, like the **Teesta Water Treaty** with countries like Bangladesh.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Integration of Ecological Perspectives- The ecological perspectives must incorporate Environmental Flows (EF) to sustain the Indus Valley ecosystems, as suggested by the **Brisbane Declaration** and the **2013 Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling on Kishanganga**.

2. Recognition of Climate Change Impacts- Strategies must be developed to manage climate change effects. **India should explore** the **possibility of using climate change** as a **'change in circumstances'** to initiate conversation on renegotiation of the IWT.

3. Enhanced Water Data-Sharing- A World Bank-supervised, legally binding data-sharing framework should be established to monitor water quality and flow changes. Such estimates **would add to the accuracy of each side's dependence on the other** in sharing the waters of these rivers.

4. Incorporation of International Legal Standards- The treaty provisions must be aligned with the **1997 UN Watercourses Convention** and the **2004 Berlin Rules on Water Resources** for sustainable water use.

5. Pro activeness on India's Part in utilization of allocated water share- As suggested by the **standing committee of water resources**, the **canal systems in Punjab and Rajasthan** should be **repaired to increase their water carrying capacity**. Also, India should take steps to **completely utilize its entitlement of waters** of Western Rivers.

6. Use of pressure tactic in case of escalation- As suggested by some experts, in case of escalation of hostilities by Pakistan in future, India can suspend the meetings of Permanent Commission. If the first state of dispute redressal is not functional, the subsequent two steps of 3-tier dispute redressal don't kick in.

[Read More- The Indian Express](#)

[UPSC Syllabus- GS 2 India and its neighbourhood Relations](#)

India-Russia Relations- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

PM Narendra Modi visited Russia in his **first Bilateral Visit** in his **third term**. This is also the first time that the **Indian PM Narendra Modi** and the **Russian President Vladimir Putin** met in person after the Russia invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The visit to Russia is a **statement of the importance New Delhi accords** to its **relationship with Moscow**. The visit underlines India's foreign policy priority and the importance of deepened India-Russia Relations.

In this article, we will analyse the significance of India-Russia relations, the challenges this relation faces and the way forward for further strengthening of the relation.

Key Highlights of the Recent 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit

- a. **Increasing the Bilateral Trade-** India and Russia agreed to increase bilateral trade to **\$100 billion dollars** by 2030. This includes the use of national currencies to circumvent Western sanctions.
- b. **New connectivity routes-** India and Russia agreed on completion of new connectivity routes like the **Chennai-Vladivostok maritime route**, **Northern Sea Route** and the **International North-South Transport Corridor** via Iran.
- c. **Increasing investment in priority areas-** India and Russia agreed on enhancing investments in the **energy sector** including nuclear energy, infrastructure development.
- d. **MoUs between institutions-** India and Russia signed a number of MoUs between institutions on **climate change**, **polar research**, **legal arbitration** and **pharmaceutical certification**.
- e. **Streamlining Defence Cooperation-** The delay in **defence supplies was discussed**. Both parties have committed to exploring more areas of co-production of defence equipment such as the **India-Russia joint venture for assault rifles**.
- f. **Facilitation of the Indian Prime Minister-** Prime Minister accepted Russia's highest civilian honour, the Order of St Andrew the Apostle.



Figure 1. Source- The Indian Express

What is the history of India Russia Relations?

Russia has been a **longstanding** and **time-tested partner** for **India**. Development of India-Russia relations has been a key pillar of India's foreign policy. It is pertinent to look at the historical

development of India-Russia relations.

India and Russia (formerly the Soviet Union) have had a longstanding and strategic relationship since the **establishment of formal diplomatic ties in April 1947**, just months before India's independence. The relationship **has evolved over the decades**, with **periods of both cooperation and tension**.

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Early Years (1947-1955) | Initial relations between the newly Independent India and Soviet Union were negligible due to ideological differences . Soviet Union under Stalin viewed India's independence movement with suspicion . However, this began to change in the 1950s, with key visits by Indian PM Nehru to Moscow in 1955 and Soviet leader Khrushchev to India later that year . The steel plants at Bhilai and Bokaro were direct outcomes of these visits. |
| Cold War Era (1955-1991) | India and the Soviet Union developed a strong strategic, military, economic and diplomatic relationship during the Cold War. The Soviet Union became a major supplier of arms and military equipment to India, strengthening its defense capabilities. It played a crucial role in various conflicts, including the 1962 Sino-Indian War and the 1971 Indo-Pak War . The Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1971 was a key milestone . |

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| | in India-Russia relations. It included a security provision for mutual consultations in the event of a threat to either country. |
| Post-Cold War (1991-2000) | Post Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, India-Russia relations weakened due to economic challenges and the changing global landscape . The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1993 attempted to revive ties between India and Russia. However, the cooperation in most areas declined. |
| Phase of Strategic Partnership | Signing of the ' Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership ' in 2000 elevated the India-Russia ties to a new level . This strategic partnership has enhanced cooperation in political, security, defense, trade, economy, science, technology and culture. High-level engagements like the annual India-Russia Summit have further strengthened the relationship. |

What are the areas of Cooperation between India and Russia?

1. Geopolitical Cooperation-

- India and Russia have close geopolitical cooperation
- Engagement of India and Russia in regional forums like **BRICS, SCO** and the **G20**.
 - India **refrained from adverse voting in the UN**, and **disregarded Western threats of sanctions on its energy imports from Russia**.
 - India and Russia champion the establishment of a multi-polar world order.
 - Strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and all terrorist "safe havens" by both the Countries.

2. Defense Cooperation-

- Russia is a major defense equipment supplier to India.
- Military Hardware and Technology Transfers-** Licensed production of **T-90 tanks** and **Su-30 MKI** aircraft in India; agreements for the supply of **S-400 Triumf** mobile surface-to-air missile systems, **MiG-29K aircraft**, **Kamov-31 helicopters**, and upgrade of **MiG-29 aircraft**; Joint development and production of military platforms like the **BrahMos supersonic cruise missile**; and establishment of **Indo-Russia Rifles Private Limited (IRRPL)** to produce **AK-203 rifles** in India under "Make in India".
 - Joint Military Exercises-** Tri-service military exercise '**INDRA**', **Avia Indra** joint air force exercise.
 - Institutionalized Mechanisms for Defense Collaboration-** Establishment of India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation (**IRIGC-MTC**) at the apex level; and **2+2 Dialogue mechanism** involving the Defense and Foreign Ministers in 2021.

3. Economic Cooperation-

- India and Russia share close economic relations. These are explained below-
- Trade and Investment-** The bilateral trade between India and Russia stands at around **\$65 billion**. **India's imports of Russian crude at discount** has **surged** in after the **invasion of Ukraine** led to the oil sanctions by the U.S. and Europe.
 - Cooperation in the Russian Far East-** India provides financial and personnel assistance to develop the resource-rich but sparsely populated Russian Far East region bordering China. A **5-year program of cooperation in the Far East for 2021-2025** is being finalized between **NITI Aayog** and **Russia's Ministry for Development of the Far East**.
 - Close Business Cooperation-** India and Russia have both **institutionalised CEO's Forum**. **Indian companies** invest in Russia, **especially in natural resources** such as coal, fertilizers, hydrocarbons, minerals, rare earth metals.
 - Banking and Financial Links-** India and Russia have explored on deepening banking and financial links such as **ruble-rupee trade**; and **collaboration between financial institutions** like **SBI and VTB Bank**.

4. Scientific and Research Cooperation-

- Since the cold war era, Russia has been a major scientific and research partner of India.
- Civil nuclear energy Cooperation-** India and Russia jointly developed **Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant**

(KKNPP). India and Russia have jointly signed agreements on the **construction of 12 nuclear power plants in India** during the coming decades.

b. **Space relations-** Russia and India have signed an agreement to **train Indian astronauts** for India's first manned space mission (Gaganyaan). **C-DAC** and **GLONASS** have signed the agreement for cooperation in technologies based on **satellite navigation**.

c. **Health-** India approved Russian Vaccine **Sputnik V** under emergency use authorization.

5. Diaspora and Cultural Relations- India and Russia have a deep diaspora and cultural relation. The following are the areas of engagement between India and Russia.

a. **Respect for languages and Culture-** **Hindi**, and **other languages** such as Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Urdu, Sanskrit and Pali are taught in Russian Institutions. Organizations like the **Indian Cultural Centre in Moscow** and the **Indian Students' Association** promote Indian culture and heritage in Russia.

b. **Indian Diaspora-** The Indian diaspora in Russia is estimated to be **around 30,000-40,000**, which consists of mostly professionals, students and businesspeople.

c. **Extension of line of Credit for Russian Far East-** India has extended **\$1 billion as a line of credit** for the development of the Russian Far East.

What is the significance of India Russia Relations?

1. Geopolitical- Deepened strategic partnership with India holds a lot of geopolitical importance for India.

a. **Russian support on critical Issues-** Russia supports **India's demand for permanent seat in the UNSC**. It has also supported **India's stand on the Kashmir Issue**.

b. **Counterbalancing Chinese Aggression-** Russia can help in defusing rising tensions with China.

2. Defense- Russia still remains a critical defense supplier for India with **60-70% of India's defense equipment** estimated to be of Russian and Soviet origin. Though **India has diversified its defense imports** from countries like US, France, it **still cannot alienate Russia** especially in the face of Chinese aggression at the border.

3. Economic- The purchase of **large amounts of Russian oil at a discount**, cushions India from the inflationary impact of rising crude prices. India is contemplating a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** with the **Eurasian Economic Union** led by Russia.

4. Strategic Balancing-

a. Smooth India-Russia relations **offers India a better bargaining chip** in negotiations with the western powers. It also offers India to **strategically balance and align with the powers according to its national interest**. **For ex-** PM Modi's visit is taking place when leaders of the 32 nations in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) gather in Washington DC to celebrate 75 years of the anti-Russia military alliance.

b. Close India-Russia relations provides New Delhi the opportunity to **offset the Chinese advantage in Eurasia**.

What are the Challenges in the relation?

1. Deepening of India-US relations- The India-US relations is rapidly deepening especially in the defense sector, which is exemplified in the **India-US nuclear deal in 2008**, **US emerging as the top arms supplier** to India by overtaking Russia and **India-US Foundational agreements** such LEMOA, COMCASA, BECA.

Due to these developments, Russia changed their decades-old policy and start supplying China with weapon systems like Sukhoi 35 and the S-400 missile defence system.

2. Russia's growing dependence on China- Moscow and Beijing have forged the closest possible ties in their history. This has generated fears that **Russia will become a subordinate partner** given the growing economic, demographic and technological asymmetry between them. This could **jeopardize Moscow's neutrality on Sino-Indian tensions**.

3. Russia's increased engagement with Pakistan- Russia has been increasing its economic and defence cooperation with Pakistan, like **conduction of bilateral exercise Friendship**. The RCP axis (Russia, China, Pakistan) will be detrimental to India's national interest.

4. Trade Imbalances- Even though the bilateral trade between the two nations has increased in the face of crude oil imports, there is considerable trade imbalances between India and Russia. **Of the total trade of \$65 billion**, India's exports **constitute less than \$5 billion**.

5. Defense Delays- There have been considerable delays in the delivery of **military spares** and big-ticket weapon systems like the **S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile systems**, to India due to the Ukraine War.

6. Ukraine Crisis- The continuing Russia-Ukraine war has put India into a diplomatic tightspot. India has been facing **significant criticism** for **not condemning the invasion** and **continuing energy and economic cooperation** with Moscow.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Neutral Player in the resolution of Ukraine Crisis- India must continue to maintain its positioning as a neutral player that could be a mediator between the two sides in the resolution of the Ukraine Crisis. India must continue to appeal to both sides to **'abide by the international rules and conventions'**.

2. Addressing defense supply chain shocks- India and Russia must explore setting up **joint venture partnerships** to address the shortage of critical defense spare parts.

3. More diplomatic and financial investments- India and Russia must invest more diplomatic and financial resources to finish the pending works for the **International North-South Transport Corridor**. Both sides should expedite discussions on the **Free Trade Agreement with the Eurasian Union** for better trade and commerce.

4. Enhanced focus on Eurasia- India and Russia have to explore their opportunities in the Eurasian region. India can study the possibility of expanding Russia's idea of **'extensive Eurasian partnership'** involving the EAEU(Eurasian Economic Union) and China, India, Pakistan, and Iran.

5. Unequivocal message to the Western countries- India must send unequivocal message to the West that **Russia occupies a pivotal place in India's strategic calculations**. It must be conveyed that the **West needs India just as much as India needs the West**.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2 International Relations- India's Relation with Developed Countries

India's Demographic Dividend- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

The World Population Day which is observed on **July 11 every year**, was instituted in **1989 by the United Nations** after the renowned demographer Dr. K.C. Zachariah proposed it. The day was instituted after the global population crossed the **five billion mark** and **challenges** such as **poverty, health** and **gender inequality** were plaguing the world, and developing countries in particular.

The population is now estimated to be **8.1 billion**. India has become the most populous nation with **~1.44 billion** population, which is slightly more than China. The exponentially increasing population levels in the 1970s, predicted a doom for India and the World. However, the Indian Population growth story **has belied the prediction of doom**. With **drop fertility rates** (which is now below the replacement levels today), **significant**

reductions in maternal and child mortality rates, India's demography has entered into a phase of 'demographic dividend'.

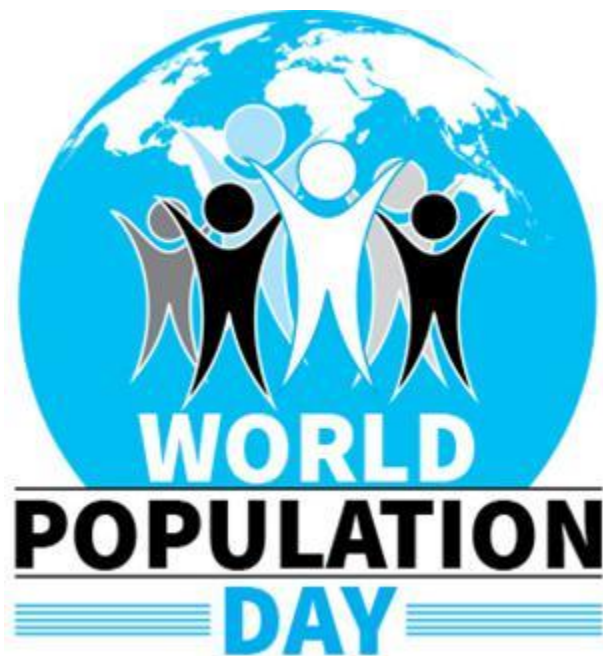


Figure 2. Source- The Hindu

years, with the total fertility rate (TFR) declining to 2 in 2020-2021 from about 3.4 in the early 1990s. A TFR of 2.1 is necessary for a country to attain population stability.

Population projections- India's population is forecast to grow to 1.67 billion in 2050 and peak at 1.7 billion in 2064 before settling at 1.53 billion in 2100.

Potential demographic dividend- Two-thirds of India's total population are between the ages of 15 and 64. It presents a potential demographic dividend if education, skill development, and opportunities are provided, particularly for youth from disadvantaged sections and women.

What factors have resulted in India's demographic dividend phase?

Three factors which have played a pivotal role in shaping India's demographic landscape are mentioned below-

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|------------------|--|
| Fertility | India has made significant strides in reducing its fertility. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5, India's total fertility rate (TFR) decreased from 3.4 to 2 between 1992 and 2021, dropping below the replacement level of 2.1 |
| Mortality | All the critical mortality indicators have seen steady declines. The Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) decreased from 384.4 in 2000 to 102.7 in 2020. The mortality rate for children under five reduced significantly post 2000s. The infant mortality rate also reduced from 66.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000 to 25.5 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2021. |
| Migration | The rural to urban migration of the Working age population has led to increased labour force in the Urban areas. |

What are the opportunities with demographic dividend in India?

1. Increased Supply of Labour- The rapidly rising young population results in the increased labour supply, as more people reach working age.

What is demographic Dividend? What is India's Demographic Status?

According to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), demographic dividend means, the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure. The demographic dividend leads to an increased labour supply that increase the production of goods and boost savings and investment. India has one of the youngest populations (62.5% of its population in the age group 15-59) in an aging world.

India's Demographic Status

According to the State of World Population Report 2023, published by the UNFPA, India has surpassed China as the most populous country, with a population of 142.86 crores compared to China's 142.57 crores.

Slowing population growth- India's population growth has slowed down significantly in the past 10

2. Economic growth- Demographic Dividend results in better economic growth brought about by increased economic activities due to higher working age population and lower dependent population. Demographic dividend has **historically contributed up to 15 % of the overall growth in advanced economies.**

3. Capital formation- The **propensity of saving increases** with the **decrease in the number of dependents.** This **increases national savings rates, increases the stock of capital in developing countries** and provides an opportunity for **enhanced capital formation** through investment.

4. Creation of Infrastructure- Increased fiscal space created by the demographic dividend **enables the government to divert resources** from spending on children to investing in physical and human infrastructure.

5. Increase in Female Human capital- Decrease in fertility rates result in healthier women and fewer economic pressures at home. This provides an opportunity to engage more women in the workforce and enhance human capital.

6. Innovation and entrepreneurship- A young population can lead to increased **innovation and entrepreneurship**, with more **startups** and **unicorns emerging in various sectors** like healthcare, education, agriculture, and financial services.

7. Climate action and sustainability- A **young and educated population** can drive sustainable development by prioritizing climate action and adopting environmentally friendly practices.

8. Increase in Global influence- India's rising population, combined with its position as the world's largest democracy and a major economy, can help it become a global manufacturing hub, startup capital, and **exporter of skilled manpower.**

What are the Challenges that can turn this Demographic Dividend into a Demographic Disaster?

1. Poor human capital- Poor human capital formation is reflected in low employability among India's graduates and postgraduates. **According to ASSOCHAM, only 20-30 % of engineers find a job suited to their skills.** Thus, low human capital base and **lack of skills** is a big challenge.

2. Low human development- India ranks **134 out of 189 countries** in **UNDP's Human Development Index.** The Life expectancy at birth, and the mean years of schooling is much lower than other developing countries.

3. Hunger and Malnutrition- In the Global Hunger Index (2023), **India was ranked at 111 out of 125 countries.** The nutrition, stunting, wasting and underweight among children below five years and anaemia among women pose serious challenges. According to **India's epidemiological trajectory**, India faces the double burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases (NCD).

4. Informal economy- Informal nature of economy in India is another challenge in reaping the benefits of demographic transition in India. The workers in the Informal economy are **underpaid** and **devoid of social security benefits.**

5. Jobless growth- As per the **NSSO Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-18**, India's labour force participation rate for the **age-group 15-59 years is around 53%.** This means that around half of the working age population is jobless. There are future concerns of further jobless growth due to **deindustrialization, de-globalization, the fourth industrial revolution** and **technological progress.**

6. Low Women workforce Participation rate- According to the latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (2022-23) female LFPR is around 37.0%. This poses a serious challenge in effectively reaping the demographic dividend.

What should be the Way Forward?

1. Building human capital- We must invest in healthcare, quality education, jobs and skills to build human capital. This is key to **reaping demographic dividend** which can in turn **support economic growth**, end extreme poverty, and create a more inclusive society.

2. Investment in Skilling- India's labour force needs to be empowered with the right skills for the modern economy. Government has established the **National Skill Development Corporation** (NSDC) with the overall target of skilling/ up skilling 500 million people in India by 2022..

3. Investment in Education- India, which has almost **41% of population below the age of 20 years**, can reap the demographic dividend only if with a better education system. Enhancing educational levels by properly investing in primary, secondary and higher education is the need of the hour.

4. Improvement of Health and Nutrition- Improvement in healthcare infrastructure would ensure higher number of productive days for young labour-force. This increases the productivity of the economy. Hence we must focus on the successful of schemes like **Ayushman Bharat** and **Integrated Child Development** (ICDS) programme.

5. Job Creation- The nation needs to **create ten million jobs** per year to absorb the addition of young people into the workforce. Promoting businesses' interests and entrepreneurship would help in job creation to provide employment to the large labour-force.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 1- Population and associated Issues

SC verdict on right to maintenance of Muslim Women- Explained Pointwise

In a **landmark judgment** on the right to maintenance of Muslim Women, the Supreme Court (SC) bench of Justice B.V. Nagarathna and Justice Augustine George Masih has held that a **divorced Muslim woman** can seek **alimony** from her husband under **Section 125** of the **Code of Criminal Code** (CrPc). The court held that Section 125 of CrPC is a "**religion neutral**" provision that applies to all married women, including Muslims.

Post the enactment of **The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act 1986**, which provided **maintenance rights to Muslim women during the Iddat Period**, there has always been an **ambiguity**, on whether the **Muslim Women could seek remedy under Section 125 of the CrPC**. Several High Court judgments took different views on whether Muslim women should avail of **Section 3 of the 1986 Act** or **Section 125 of CrPC**.

Now the **verdict settles this question** by holding that the **codification** of a **Muslim woman's maintenance rights** in the 1986 Act, **was only in addition to and not in derogation** of her right to **seek maintenance like a woman of any other religion**, provided under Section 125 of the CrPC.



Source- The Hindu

What is the historical background of the evolution of laws on Muslim Women's right to maintenance?

| | |
|------|---|
| 1973 | Section 125 of the CrPC codified the laws governing maintenance for destitute wives, children, and parents. It holds that a divorced woman has the right to seek maintenance/monthly allowance from her husband until her remarriage. It is a religion neutral provision which was universally applicable to all women belonging from different religions. |
| 1985 | In the famous Shah Bano case, Supreme Court (SC) upheld a Muslim woman's right to seek maintenance from her divorced husband under Section 125 of the CrPC. The verdict was perceived by many to be an affront to religious personal laws. |
| 1986 | The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 was enacted to overturn the SC verdict in the Shah Bano Case. It is a religion-specific law that provides for a procedure for a Muslim woman to claim maintenance during divorce. Section 3 of the Act a. Period of maintenance- Section 3 of the Act guarantees the payment of maintenance to a divorced Muslim woman by her former husband. However, the maintenance will be provided during the period of <i>iddat</i> . (It is a period, usually of three months, which a woman must observe after the death of her husband or a divorce before she can remarry). b. Maintenance Amount- The maintenance amount shall be equal to the amount of <i>mahr</i> or dowry given to her at the time of her marriage or any time after that. c. Recourse after the end of Iddat Period- After the completion of the Iddat period, a woman can approach a first-class magistrate for maintenance in case she has not remarried and is not in a position to take care of herself financially. |
| 2001 | In the Danial Latifi v. Union Of India (2001) case, the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of the 1986 Act. It, however, reduced the period of maintenance to the completion of <i>iddat</i> . |
| 2009 | In the Shabana Bano v. Imran Khan, SC division bench reiterated a divorced Muslim woman's right to claim maintenance under Section 125 of the CrPC until her remarriage. |

| | |
|------|--|
| | It further highlighted that such a relief would be extended even <i>after the expiry of the iddat period</i> . |
| 2019 | Patna HC's verdict underscored that a divorced Muslim woman has the option to avail of maintenance both under the CrPC and the 1986 Act. |

Case Question- There prevailed an **ambiguity** whether **Muslim Women could claim maintenance rights** under **Section 125 of the CrPC**, after claiming their **rights under Section 3 of the Muslim Woman's (Protection of rights on Divorce) Act, 1986**.

SC Verdict-

- The Muslim Women **can claim remedy under Section 125 of the CrPC**, despite claiming the **remedies** provided under Section 3 of the **Muslim Woman's (Protection of rights on Divorce) Act, 1986**.
- The SC held that a **Muslim woman's right to claim maintenance under criminal law (CrPC) cannot be extinguished even if she has claimed her rights in personal law (Muslim Women' Protection of Rights on Divorce Act, 1986)**.
- A **parallel remedy** in law that **applies universally (CrPC) cannot be taken away by religious custom** despite the latter being codified as legislation.

What are the four main pillars of the SC Verdict?

1. Social justice measure must be insulated from applicable personal laws- The SC held that **Section 125 of CrPC** was introduced as a measure of **social justice** to protect women and children. The provision manifested the **constitutional commitment of social justice** under **Article 15(3)**, which provided for special measures to ensure a life of dignity for women at all stages of their lives.

A claim under Section 125 CrPC is maintainable, irrespective of the applicable personal laws of the parties.

2. Equivalent rights of maintenance- The SC held that both- **the secular provision of Section 125 of the CrPC** and the **personal law provision of Section 3 of the 1986 Act**- provide equivalent rights of maintenance in their distinct domains.

The SC held that passage of the 1986 Act did not '**militate against or dilute**' relief under Section 125 of the CrPC. The intent of the Parliament behind the 1986 Act was to provide an **additional remedy for divorced Muslim women**.

3. Harmonious Interpretation- The SC has held that the **two conflicting statutes** should be **harmoniously and purposively interpreted**. SC has held that a divorced Muslim woman is entitled to seek recourse to either or both the provisions.

The **choice lies** with the **Muslim woman to apply for maintenance** either under **Section 125 of the CrPC** or the **1986 Act**. If the woman is unable to provide for herself, she can seek remedy under Section 125 of the CrPC. If she is financially independent, **she can seek maintenance under the 1986 Act** till the expiry of the iddat period.

4. Muslim women divorced through triple talaq entitled to relief- The SC has held that Muslim women who have been divorced through **illegal methods** such as **triple talaq** are entitled to maintenance under **Section 125 of the CrPC**.

What is the Significance of the Verdict on Muslim Women right to maintenance?

The Supreme Court's recent verdict affirming a divorced Muslim woman's right to seek maintenance under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code, irrespective of her religion, is likely to have several significant implications for the future of personal laws in India-

1. Primacy of Secular Law over Personal Law- The judgment has firmly established that the 'religion neutral' provisions of secular law take precedence over personal law provisions. The verdict reaffirms the supremacy of the Constitution and secular law in matters of gender equality, overriding restrictive personal law interpretations.

2. Maintenance as a Right and not a Charity- The court has framed maintenance as a 'facet of gender parity and enabler of equality, and not charity' for all married women, which includes Muslim women. This shift in perspective from maintenance being a religious obligation to a legal right can have far-reaching consequences.

3. Benchmark for challenging Discriminatory practices in other Laws- The verdict can serve as a precedent for challenging discriminatory practices in other personal laws, such as the Hindu Succession Act, Christian personal laws, and Parsi personal laws. This may lead to more reforms to align personal laws with constitutional principles of equality.

4. Upholding the Constitutional Values- The verdict protects the spirit of the Constitution and its promise of equality, guaranteed by Article 14. It further protects and emboldens the value of social justice for women provided by Article 15 (1), Article 15 (3) and Article 39 (e) of the Constitution.

5. Socio-economic safety net to women- The verdict offers a socio-economic safety net to married women who often sacrifice employment opportunities to nurture the family, pursue child rearing, and undertake care work for the elderly.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's verdict is a testament to the Court's ability to employ a harmonious interpretation to broaden the scope of rights and secularize access to remedies. In the process, the Court has also neutralised the perception that the right of Muslim women to seek maintenance under secular provisions stood extinguished since 1986.

The ruling has significantly strengthened the rights of divorced Muslim women and is likely to have far-reaching implications for the future trajectory of personal laws in India. It may potentially lead to more challenges to discriminatory practices and greater alignment with the Constitution's principles of equality and justice.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Issues related to Constitution, GS 1- Issues Related to Women

India-Austria Relations- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

Recently, the India-Austria relations has assumed significance with the visit of the Indian PM to the European Country. The recent visit of PM Narendra Modi's visit to Vienna was the first by an Indian Prime Minister to Austria since June 1983, when Indira Gandhi travelled to the country. This was the Prime Minister's first visit to Austria and that of an Indian Prime Minister after 41 years. This year marks the 75th year of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The Prime Minister's decision to travel to Vienna immediately after he met President Vladimir Putin in Moscow was significant, as Austria is a European country that is not a part of NATO.

Highlight of PM's Visit to Austria

a. Enhanced economic and technological cooperation- Both PM Modi and Chancellor Nehammer identified stronger economic and technological ties as a strategic goal between India and Austria. They welcomed the first high-level bilateral Business Forum and discussed opportunities for collaboration in areas like green and digital technologies, renewable energy, water management.

b. India-Austria Startup Bridge- India-Austria Startup Bridge was launched to foster innovation and entrepreneurship between countries.

c. Alignment on global and regional issues- Both countries affirmed their commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region and peaceful resolution of Ukraine conflict.

d. Cooperation on climate action and sustainability- Both countries pledged to collaborate on renewable energy, with a specific focus on Austria's Hydrogen Strategy and India's Green Hydrogen Mission. Both the countries expressed support for EU's target for climate neutrality by 2050, Austria's goal for 2040, and India's aim for net zero emissions by 2070.

e. Strengthening cultural and people-to-people ties- The leaders appreciated the rich tradition of cultural exchanges and the growing interest in yoga and Ayurveda in Austria. They encouraged efforts to promote bilateral cultural ties and tourism.

f. Coordination on global governance- The leaders reiterated their commitment to achieving comprehensive reforms of the United Nations, including its Security Council. India reiterated its support for Austria's UNSC candidature for 2027-28, while Austria expressed support for India's candidature in 2028-29. India invited Austria to join the International Solar Alliance.



Source- The Indian Express

What is the History of evolution of India-Austria Relations?

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| | |
|--|---|
| Establishment of Diplomatic Relations | Diplomatic relations between India and Austria were established in 1949 by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Austria's first post-World War II Chancellor Leopold Figl . |
| India's Intervention in the State Treaty of Austria | In 1953 , India intervened in favour of Austria during its negotiations with the Soviet Union on the State Treaty of Austria that resulted in the independence of Austria in 1955 . |
| State Visits | The visits by the leaders of the two states have strengthened the India-Austria Relations. Prime Minister Nehru visited Austria in 1955, which was the first Prime Ministerial visit. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Austria in 1971 and 1983 . Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky visited India in 1980 . Austrian Chancellor Fred Sinowatz visited India in 1984. President K.R. Narayanan visited Austria in 1999, with President Pratibha Patil visiting in 2011. |
| Recent State Visit | In the recent state visit, PM Modi and Chancellor Nehammer discussed for upgradation of bilateral partnerships , focusing on infrastructure, renewable energy, e-commerce, fintech, and media. |

What are the areas of cooperation between India and Austria?

India and Austria have a **multifaceted partnership** spanning political, economic, sectoral, and cultural domains, with regular high-level exchanges and growing cooperation across various areas. The main areas of Cooperation between India and Austria are explained below-

1. Political Cooperation- The India Austria political relations have been strengthened by the high level political exchanges by the **heads of the states, ministerial level engagements and visits, parliamentary level exchanges**.

2. Economic Cooperation- India-Austria economic and commercial cooperation constitutes an important dimension of the bilateral relationship. The two sides have taken steps to strengthen and deepen bilateral economic cooperation.

a. Establishment of The Indo-Austrian Joint Economic Commission (JEC)- The **Indo-Austrian Joint Economic Commission (JEC)** was established in **1983**. It provides a forum for bilateral interaction between the governmental Ministries and Chambers of Commerce and Industry. There have been **more than 200 collaborations**, including **100 technical collaboration** and **60 joint ventures** between Indian and Austrian firms especially in the fields of steel, manufacturing technology, railway and transport, equipment and metallurgy.

b. Indo-Austria Bilateral Trade- In 2022, the bilateral trade is **USD 2.84 billion** with and increase on **14.97 %** over the **2021 levels**. For 2021, Indian exports to Austria were **USD 1.29 billion** and imports were **USD 1.18 billion**.

Indian key exports to Austria: Electronic Goods, Apparels, Textile, Footwear, Rubber articles, Vehicles & Railways parts, Electrical machinery and Mechanical appliances.

India's key imports from Austria: Machinery, Mechanical appliances, Railway parts, Iron and Steel etc.

Annual Trade Data (India- Austria)*Source: Statistik Austria*

| Year | Austria's Import from India (Billion US\$) | Austria's Export to India (Billion US\$) | Total Trade (Billion US\$) |
|------|--|--|----------------------------|
| 2017 | 0.93 | 0.85 | 1.78 |
| 2018 | 1.08 | 1.06 | 2.14 |
| 2019 | 1.14 | 1.02 | 2.16 |
| 2020 | 1.06 | 0.99 | 2.05 |
| 2021 | 1.18 | 1.29 | 2.47 |
| 2022 | 1.61 | 1.23 | 2.84 |

Source- MEA

c. Investment- The **key Austrian investors in India** include – Plassner & Theurer (Railways track laying machines), Andritz (machines for hydroelectric power plants), AMS Semiconductors (semiconductors). The **key Indian Investors in Austria** include Wipro Technologies, Shilpa Medicare, VA Tecg Wabag Ltd, KTM-Bajaj Auto. In December 2021, **Indian Edutech company Byju's** acquired an Austrian start-up Geogebra for about USD 100 million.

3. Science and Technology Cooperation- **Austria's first two satellites TUGSAT-1/BRITE and UniBRITE** were launched by India's PSLV-C20 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota on 2013. The two satellites are developed in **collaboration** with the **Institute of Communication Networks and Satellite Communications (IKS)** at the Technical University of Graz (TUG), **Institute for Astronomy of the University of Vienna**, and the **Space Flight Lab (SFL)** at the University of Toronto Institute Of Aerospace Studies (UTIAS).

4. Cultural Cooperation- The Indo-Austrian cultural relations have a long tradition dating back to 16th century when Balthasar Springer traveled from Tyrol in 1505 to India along with the third Portuguese fleet.

a. Visit of Rabindranath Tagore- The visit of India's philosopher-poet and Nobel Laureate **Rabindranath Tagore** twice to Vienna – in **1921** and **1926** was one of the **crucial bridges** of **cultural and intellectual exchange** between **India** and **Austria**. Gurudev's famous lecture in 1921 '**The religion of the forest**', portrayed the value of getting closer to nature and learning union and compassion.

b. Contemporary Indian Culture- There is a lot of interest in contemporary Indian literature and theater. **Ayurveda**, the Indian **traditional system of medicine** has been widely acknowledged and practiced in Austria. The holistic approach of Yoga in health care and well being has led many Austrians to embrace Yoga and is testified by the **presence of many Yoga schools in Vienna and other Austrian cities**.

5. Diaspora Connection- There are an estimated over **31,000 Indians** (majority from Kerala and Punjab) living in Austria. The Indian diaspora mainly consists of professionals working primarily in the Health Care sector and in the multilateral UN bodies, businessmen and self-employed self-employed individuals.

What is the significance of India Austria Relations?

1. Geo-political Significance- Both countries **share values of democracy and pluralism**, and have cooperated on global issues like UN Security Council reforms. Austria has supported India's bid for a permanent UNSC seat, recognizing India's growing global role.

2. Economic Significance- Austria is one of the richest countries in the European Union. It is an **important link for India** in its relationship with Europe, especially with **countries of central and Eastern Europe**.

3. Technological Significance- Austria has expertise in Green Hydrogen and other renewable technologies. Austrian expertise can be of **immense significance for India's Green Hydrogen Mission**, and **India's aim for net zero emissions by 2070**.

4. Shared Global Perspectives- Both countries' have adopted balanced approaches to the **Russia-Ukraine conflict**, maintaining **diplomatic and commercial relations** amidst global tensions. Austria has adopted **neutral stance** which is established by the 1955 Austrian State Treaty.

What are the Challenges in India Austria Cooperation?

India and Austria have generally maintained cordial diplomatic relations, but there are several challenges that have affected their relationship.

1. Geographical Distance- India and Austria are **geographically distant** from each other. This has **limited the frequency and depth of bilateral engagements**.

2. Trade Imbalance- There exists a **significant trade imbalance in favor of Austria**. India mainly imports high-value goods like machinery, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals from Austria while exporting relatively less.

3. Differences in Economic Structures- India's economy is primarily driven by services and agriculture, whereas Austria has a strong industrial and manufacturing base. This difference in economic structures have **led to low trade bilateral trade penetration**.

4. Delay in Visa Issues- The **slow and delayed Visa policies and procedures** for travel between the two countries can impact people-to-people contacts, business travel, and tourism.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Mobility Partnership Agreement- The signing of "**Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement**" between India and Austria will help in the redressal of the Visa and Mobility issues between the two nations.

2. Enhancement of Cooperation- India and Austria must enhance cooperation in areas such as **renewable energy, technology, and education**.

3. Enhancing Geopolitical Coordination- India and Austria must align on a **free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific** and support peace efforts in regions like Europe and the Middle East.

4. Leveraging Complementarities- India must leverage Austria's position as a neutral European power and India's role as a geopolitical bridge-builder for mutual benefit. India and Austria must explore synergies between **India's development priorities and Austria's technological and industrial capabilities**.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2 India's Bilateral Relations

Fiscal Federalism in India- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

Recently, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin alleged that the Union government was withholding funds for the State's Metro rail completion and other vital projects. States of Southern India have also raised the **issue of reduced fiscal devolution** despite higher contribution in the Gross tax revenues. Several **state governments** have **alleged** that **Central Government's tax policies have reduced aggregate financial transfers to States**, and has weakened cooperative fiscal federalism in India.



Figure 3. Source- The Hindu

What is Fiscal Federalism? What are the constitutional provisions which provide for Fiscal Federalism in India?

Fiscal Federalism- Fiscal federalism refers to the **division of financial powers and**

responsibilities between the **central government** and state governments in India.

Constitutional Provisions- The Indian Constitution defines the taxation and expenditure powers of the central and state governments through various provisions

a. Seventh Schedule- The Constitution **assigns specific tax bases** to the central and state governments, listed in the **Union List** and **State List** respectively.

b. Article 270- Article 270 of the Indian Constitution provides for the **distribution of net tax proceeds** collected by the Union government between the Centre and the States.

c. Article 280- The **Finance Commission** which is a constitutional body under Article 280, recommends the **sharing of tax revenues** and **grants-in-aid to the states**.

d. Article 275- It provides for the grants-in-aid system which involves discretionary transfers from the Centre to states for specific purposes.

Examples of Cooperative Fiscal Federalism

a. Introduction of GST- The introduction of Goods and Services Tax (GST) through the 101st Constitutional Amendment is a **historic example of cooperative fiscal federalism in India**. The GST act has **transformed India's indirect tax landscape**, and **fostered Centre-State cooperation**.

b. Passage of FRBM Act- The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act 2003 aims to promote fiscal discipline at the central and state levels. **21 states enacted their own FRBM Acts**, incentivized by debt and interest rate relief provided by the 12th Finance Commission. This is a historic example of **centre-state cooperation in maintenance of Fiscal prudence**.

c. Introduction of performance based grants- Performance-based grants are being used to incentivize states to achieve developmental targets. This has led to **competitive and cooperative federalism** between the Centre and States in the sphere of finances and public expenditure.

What are the Challenges to Fiscal Federalism in India?

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- 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. Disproportionate Growth between Union Govt's & State Govt's Revenue-** From 2015-16 to 2023-24, while the **Union government's tax revenue** has increased by **2.3 times** from ₹14.6 lakh crore to ₹33.6 lakh crore, the **states' share in the tax revenue** has **only doubled** from ₹5.1 lakh crore to ₹10.2 lakh crore. This indicates a **disproportionate growth** between **Union Govt's** and **State Govt's Revenues**.
- 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**.
- 4. Increase in the share of non-devolvable cess and surcharge-** The share of collected cess and surcharge (which are not shared with states) has increased from **Rs. 85,638 in 2015-16** (5.9% of the Union government's tax revenue) to **Rs. 3.63 lakh crore in 2023-24** (10.8% of the Union Govt's tax revenue).
- 5. Centralisation of Public Expenditure-** **Out of the combined allocation of ₹19.4 lakh crore** for Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and Central Sector Schemes (C Sec Schemes) in 2023-24, **only ₹4.25 lakh crore was devolved to States**. These are **tied grants** and **the states have no autonomy to plan their expenditure**.
- 6. Interstate Inequality in public Finances through CSS schemes-** The Union government compels the State to commit more or less an equivalent quantum of financial resources in the implementation of CSS schemes. **Wealthy States can afford to commit equivalent finances** and leverage Union finances inwards through the implementation of CSS. However, **less wealthy States will have to commit their borrowed finances in these CSS**, thus **increasing their own liabilities**. It has created inter-state inequality in public finances.
- 7. Increase in Conditional Transfers-** Several grants to states are contingent on fulfilling certain conditions, including **the insistence on specific labelling**, which imposes Union government preferences over state priorities.
- 8. 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.
- 9. 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**.

[Read More- On the Issues with Fiscal federalism](#)

What is the Significance of Fiscal Federalism?

- 1. Addressing Diversity and Disparities-** Fiscal federalism allows the central and state governments to **address the regional imbalances** through mechanisms like **tax sharing, grants-in-aid, and performance-based incentives**.
- 2. Promotes cooperation and consultation between states-** Fiscal federalism encourages cooperation and coordination between the Centre and states, as they negotiate the sharing of resources and responsibilities. **For ex-** The **GST Council brings together the Centre and states** to jointly administer the Goods and Services Tax.
- 3. Ensuring Fiscal Discipline-** Fiscal federalism frameworks like the **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act** promote fiscal discipline at both the central and state levels. This helps **maintain macroeconomic stability and sustainability**.

4. Enabling Decentralized Governance- Fiscal federalism **supports decentralization** by empowering state and local governments with financial autonomy and resources. This **strengthens grassroots democracy** and **responsive governance** closer to the people.

5. Undertaking Economic Reforms- Fiscal federalism helps to adapt to changes like the shift towards a market-oriented economy (**1991 economic reforms**), and undertake taxation reforms like **the introduction of GST**.

What are the finance commission recommendations for Fiscal federalism?

The Finance Commissions have made several important recommendations over the years to promote fiscal federalism in India-

a. Vertical Tax Devolution- The 14th Finance Commission radically increased the share of states in the central divisible pool of taxes from 32% to 42%, **the biggest ever increase in vertical tax devolution**. This enhances the fiscal autonomy and resources of state governments.

b. Horizontal Distribution Formula- The 15th FC used criteria like income distance (45%), population (2011) (15%), area (15%), demographic performance (12.5%), and forest and ecology (10%) **to determine each state's share**. This helps **equalize fiscal capacities and addresses horizontal imbalances** between states.

c. Grants-in-Aid- The Finance Commissions **provide grants-in-aid to specific states or sectors** that are in need of assistance or reform. This promotes the spirit of competitive and cooperative fiscal federalism.

d. Fiscal Consolidation- The finance commissions have suggested maintenance of fiscal prudence by the states. The **12th FC recommended a multi-dimensional restructuring** aimed at both qualitative and quantitative aspects of managing government finances

What should be the way Forward to strengthen Fiscal Federalism in India?

1. Enhanced devolution by the 16th Finance Commission- The 16th Finance Commission (FC) must look to **enhance the state's share in the net taxes from 41%** (currently awarded by 15th FC). Further, **the principles of Vertical and Horizontal devolution, must be relooked** to ensure equitable distribution of taxes among the states.

2. Rationalisation of Public Expenditure by Central Govt- A mechanism must be instituted for thorough **financial rationalisation of the Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored schemes**, in collaboration with state governments.

3. 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 etc.

4. Revisiting Article 246 and the Seventh Schedule- The **taxation powers listed in the seventh schedule** must be relooked in the context of fiscal federalism.

5. List of Taxation for Third Tier of Govt- Specific taxation powers **must be devolved to the local self governments** to help them raise their own resources and **reduce their dependence on grant-in-aids**. This will help in achieving fiscal federalism in its true sense.

6. Reduction of Borrowing Constraints on States- The Union government should revisit the borrowing constraints placed on state investment funds, as suggested by Kerala.

7. Reduction in Cesses and Surcharges- The Union government should reduce the degree to which it uses cesses and duties to **expand its share of tax collections**.

8. Minimisation of the discretionary aspect of transfers to states- Some of these transfers can be made automatic. For other transfers, clear and non-discriminatory methods should be followed.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

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