

Forum IAS

7 PM COMPILATION

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Israel Lebanon War - Impacts and Way forward- Explained Pointwise

The ongoing **Israel Lebanon war** has escalated significantly in recent weeks. Israel has **intensified its military operations against Hezbollah**, and has launched a series of airstrikes across Lebanon. Israel has conducted over 1,300 strikes targeting Hezbollah strongholds and military installations. The escalation of conflict into a full-blown war, has led to widespread violence (killing of around 600 Lebanese) and has created a humanitarian crisis in Lebanon.

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Source- The Indian Express

What is the background of Israel Lebanon wars?

The Israel-Lebanon conflict has been marked by a series of wars and clashes, with the most notable of these conflicts being the **1982 Lebanon War**, the **2006 Lebanon War**.

Hezbollah	Hezbollah plays a central role in the Israel-Lebanon conflict. Hezbollah is a Shiite militant group and political party based in Lebanon. Hezbollah was founded in the early 1980s, with support from Iran, following Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Hezbollah has grown into a powerful force in Lebanese politics and maintains a military wing that regularly clashes with Israeli forces. Israel views Hezbollah as a major security threat due to its military capabilities, leading to regular Lebanese skirmishes.
Israeli Invasions	Israel has conducted several military operations in Lebanon. The most significant is the 1982 invasion . Israel's invasions in southern Lebanon have been initially driven by an aim to destroy the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in the 1990s and now against Hezbollah in recent years.

Other factors in the Israel-Lebanon Civil War

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1. Shebaa Farms Dispute- **Shebaa Farms**, which is located at the intersection of Lebanon, Israel, and Syria. It remains a **point of contention between Hezbollah and Israel**, after Israeli occupation of the territory.

2. Iran-Israel Proxy War- Iran's financial and military support for Hezbollah, is another key factor in the ongoing Israel-Lebanon conflict. Israel views Hezbollah as an extension of Iranian influence in the region.

What are the Global impacts of the escalation of Israel Lebanon war?

1. Disruption the geopolitical realignment Process in Middle East- Middle East in recent times has been witnessing geopolitical realignments from the **Israel-Arab reconciliation to the Iran-Saudi détente**. However, the recent Israel-Palestine conflict and Israel-Lebanon conflict has disrupted the peace and normalisation process in Middle East

2. Middle East as the theatre of Warfare- Middle East had been a theatre of War with Wars like **Gulf War, Iraq war, 6 day war**. The recent Israel-Palestine conflict has potential to become a full-blown war with involvement of foreign powers like US, EU. This has also made the region a theatre for proxy wars like US and Iran.

3. Disruption of the global connectivity projects and global transport routes- The envisaged projects like **India Middle East Economic Corridor (IMEC)** have been disrupted by the prolonged conflict in West Asia. The escalation of the Israel Lebanon conflict endangers the strategic supply routes like the **Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea**.

4. Disruption of the Global supply chains and increased Inflation- The escalation of the conflict impacts the **oil production and supply chain of goods**. This will further increase global inflation, which has already been rattling the world economy.

5. Increased Radicalization in the Middle East- The conflict could serve as a **rallying point for extremist groups across the Middle East and beyond**. Groups like al-Qaeda or ISIS might use the conflict as an opportunity to recruit new members, by framing the war as a broader jihad against Israel and the West.

What will be the impact of the Israel Lebanon Conflict on India?

1. Impact on De-hyphenation and West Asia Policy- India had been successfully implementing its de-hyphenation policy in the region. India's relation with both the Arab World and Israel has improved. However, the escalation of the Israel-Lebanon conflict puts **India in a diplomatic tight spot**, and affects India's de-hyphenation strategy in the region.

2. Increase in Inflation- The escalation of the conflict into a full-blown Israel Lebanon war **impacts the oil and gas production**. Inflation in the country will further increase as India is heavily dependent upon imported oil and gas.

3. Depreciation of the Indian Rupee- The conflict **impacts the inflow of FPI and FDI in the Indian financial market**. Increase in oil prices will further increase India's Current Account Deficit(CAD). All these will lead to depreciation of the Indian rupee.

4. Effect on the India Israel Trade- Israel is a major defence and strategic partner of India. Involvement of Israel for a long period in the conflict will **drastically reduce the trade between India- Israel**. In FY23, India's total exports to Israel stood at \$8.4 billion, while India's imports from Israel were at \$2.3 billion.

5. Reduction of the remittances from West Asia and safety of Indian emigrants- India has a **large diaspora and emigrant population** in West Asia. These are a source of large amount of remittance to India(~40 bn

dollars). If the conflict turns into a full-blown war across the Middle East, India will be severely impacted. The remittances will plummet. **Safe Evacuation of the Indian diaspora** will also be a grave challenge.

What should be the Way Forward?

- 1. UNSC must step up-** UNSC must broker a **peace talk between the two warring fractions**. Global leadership platforms must be used to not let Middle East become another theatre for warfare.
- 2. Indirect Negotiations-** Indirect talks mediated by third parties, such as the United Nations, the U.S., or European countries, could help lower tensions between Israel and Lebanon.
- 3. Strengthening UNIFIL's Role-** Strengthening the mandate and capabilities of the **United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon** (UNIFIL), which has been tasked with maintaining peace along the **Lebanon-Israel border**, could help in preventing further conflicts.
- 4. De-militarization of the Shebaa Farm Area-** The Shebaa Farms area could be demilitarized and placed under international control. This will reduce the likelihood of future between Israel-Lebanon conflict over the territory.
- 5. Engaging Regional Actors-** Regional powers like **Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar**, as well as the Arab League, could play an important role in mediating the Israel-Palestine conflict and fostering a more peaceful environment.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS2- International Relations

Sixth Schedule for Ladakh- Rationale and Concerns- Explained Pointwise

Recently, climate activist, **Sonam Wangchuk**, was detained at the Delhi border while leading a **protest for Ladakh's inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution**. The demand for sixth schedule status is aimed for **greater autonomy** to the region. While the demands for a separate public service commission and two parliamentary seats were met, the demands of the statehood for Ladakh and its inclusion under the sixth schedule of the Indian constitution has been rejected by the MHA.

Also, recently, **similar demands** have been made in **Arunachal Pradesh** and **Manipur** for their inclusion in the **sixth schedule**. The focus is on the protection of ethnic groups under special constitutional provisions.

In this article, we will look at the **historical roots of demands for fifth and sixth schedule of the constitution**. We will look at the provisions of the sixth schedule of the constitution. We will also look examine Ladakh's demands for inclusion in the sixth schedule.



Sixth Schedule

Sixth Schedule of the constitution is again in news, after the reconstitution of high-powered committee to examine **Ladakh's demand for inclusion** in the Sixth Schedule.

Sixth Schedule

- » **Constitutional Provisions- Art 244** of the constitution provides for the sixth schedule of the constitution which is applicable to specific areas of **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram**
- » **Purpose-** It provides for the formation of autonomous administrative divisions called **Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)** that have some legislative, judicial and administrative autonomy within a state.
- » The acts of Parliament or the state legislature do not apply to autonomous districts and autonomous regions, or apply with specified modifications and exceptions



Advantages

- » **Democratic Devolution of Powers-** Sixth Schedule has helped in democratic devolution of powers through the creation of **Autonomous District Councils**, which have some legislative, judicial and administrative autonomy within a state.
- » **Preservation of Cultural Practices and Customs-** Tribal language, customs and practices are protected. For ex- **Bodo language of Bodoland were protected.**
- » **Protection of tribal Land rights-** Autonomous councils the powers to legislate on matters like **land, forests, and fisheries.**
- » **Grant-in Funds- Finance commission** recommends Grant-in aids for sixth scheduled areas
- » **Sustainable Socio-Economic Development-** Ensures socio-economic development of a region in consonance with the cardinal virtue of sustainability.



Issues

- » **Limited Geographical Coverage-** Only limited to certain tribal pockets of **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram**
- » **Lack of Effective decentralisation-** Several districts have only one autonomous council. For ex- **Only one District council for entire Bodo Territorial Area districts**
- » **Legislative power of state over autonomous councils-** The laws made by the councils require the assent of governor. In case of conflict, the **governor's assent prevails.**
- » **Financial dependency-** Dependent on state govts for funds in addition to the occasional special package from the Centre. **Lack of timely constitution of State Finance Commission (SFC)**
- » **Corruption, Financial Mismanagement and Lack of skilled professionals**



Way Forward

- » **Increase geographical coverage-** Constitutional amendment to expand coverage of 6th scheduled areas in other tribal dominated regions which need protection. For ex- **Ladakh inclusion in 6th schedule.**
- » **Ensuring regular Elections-** The state governments must ensure regular, free and fair elections to these autonomous councils. For Ex- **Reduce the dominance of Tribal Elites.**
- » **Transparency-** Transparency in **funds, functionaries and functioning** of the autonomous district councils must be enhanced for effective socio-economic development.

What are the Historical roots of demands for the fifth and sixth schedule of the constitution?

Fifth and Sixth Schedule Roots- The demands for fifth and sixth schedule are **rooted in asymmetrical federalism** in India. India follows an **asymmetrical federal structure**, where **certain states or regions** have more autonomy than others. Unlike **symmetrical federations** like the **U.S. or Australia**, where all states share equal powers, India **grants special provisions to some areas** (under **fifth and sixth schedule**), especially those with unique ethnic compositions.

Historical Context behind the introduction of Fifth and Sixth Schedules

Impact of Colonial Rules- The **Fifth and Sixth Schedules** of the Indian Constitution have their roots in **colonial policies** that recognized the distinct nature of tribal populations.

Tribals maintained their autonomy over their lands until British forest policies restricted their rights. This led to rebellions like the **Kol** (1831-32) and **Santhal** (1885) revolts. To address tribal discontent, the Government of India Act of 1935 introduced 'excluded' and 'partially excluded' areas, which later influenced the creation of the Fifth and Sixth Schedules.

What are the Distinctive Features of the Special Schedules which provide for regional Autonomy?

Distinctive Features of special schedules

Fifth Schedule	The Fifth Schedule applies to 'Scheduled Areas,' which are identified based on criteria like a high tribal population and economic backwardness . The fifth schedule areas span across 10 states. Tribes Advisory Councils (TACs) advise on tribal welfare. Governors have powers to regulate land allotment and manage money-lending practices in these areas, ensuring some degree of tribal autonomy.
Sixth Schedule	The Sixth Schedule grants greater autonomy to tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura . Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) manage land use, inheritance laws, and social customs . ADCs hold legislative, executive, and financial powers , with the ability to collect taxes and manage local resources . Unlike the Fifth Schedule, ADCs can make laws that supersede those of the state, pending approval by the Governor.
Special Provisions for Northeastern States	Several northeastern states have additional protections under Part XXI of the Constitution (Articles 371A-H), which safeguard local customs and practices. These provisions ensure representation and development in tribal and hill areas of Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Sikkim, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh .

Why is Ladakh Demanding Inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of The Constitution?

- 1. Political Representation and autonomy-** The **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act 2019**, created two separate **UTs of J&K (with legislature)** and **Ladakh (without legislature)**. While there had been four MLAs from the Ladakh region in the erstwhile J&K Assembly, now the administration of Ladakh is **completely in the hands of bureaucrats**. Thus, sixth schedule status is being demanded to ensure political representation and autonomy.
- 2. Lack of Local Employment opportunities-** The administration of UT of Ladakh has failed to create local employment opportunities for youth of Ladakh. **For Ex- Absence of a public service commission and lack of comprehensive job policy** even after 4 years of creation of UT of Ladakh.
- 3. Preservation of Cultural Identity-** Sixth schedule status is also being demanded to protect Ladakh's unique cultural heritage and traditional customs. **For ex- Tribals like Gujjars, Bakarwals, Bots, Changpas, Baltis and Purigpas** have distinct cultures which can better be preserved under sixth schedule of the constitution.
- 4. Preservation of Ladakh's Fragile ecosystem-** Climate activists have raised flagged **serious concerns regarding mining and industrialisation** in the fragile glacial ecological system of Ladakh. Sixth schedule status is being demanded **to protect the high-altitude deserts, glaciers and alpine meadows** which are a crucial habitat for rare and endangered species.
- 5. Change in domicile policy of Jammu and Kashmir-** The change of domicile policy in UT of J&K has amplified demands for sixth schedule for Ladakh to ensure domicile for Ladakh population.

6. Strengthening of democratic institutions- The establishment of autonomous councils under the Sixth Schedule would also strengthen democratic institutions at the grassroots level. **For ex- More powers and autonomy to Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDC).**

What are The Advantages of Being Included in the Sixth Schedule of The Constitution?

1. Democratic Devolution of Powers- Sixth Schedule has helped in democratic devolution of powers through the **creation of Autonomous District Councils** which have some legislative, judicial and administrative autonomy within a state.

2. Preservation of Cultural Practices and Customs- The inclusion of a region in the sixth schedule ensures protection of local language, cultural practices and customs. **For ex- Bodo language of Bodoland were protected.**

3. Protection of tribal Land rights- Sixth schedule has also helped in protection of agrarian and land rights by granting the autonomous councils the powers to **legislate on matters like land, forests, and fisheries.**

4. Grant-in Funds- Sixth schedule areas are provided with enhanced quantum of Grant-in Funds for rapid development and transformation. **For ex- Finance commission recommendations for Grant-in aids for sixth scheduled areas**

5. Sustainable Socio-Economic Development- The inclusion of a region in the sixth schedule ensures **socio-economic development of a region** in consonance with the **cardinal virtue of sustainability.**

What are The Issues with The VI Schedule of the Constitution?

1. Limited Geographical Coverage- The sixth schedule areas are limited in their geographical coverage and exclude numerous tribal communities, leading to unequal treatment and exclusion. **For ex- Only limited to certain tribal pockets of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.**

2. Lack of Effective decentralisation- The sixth schedule areas often lack effective and real decentralisation of powers and administration. **For ex- Only one District council for entire Bodo Territorial Area districts.**

3. Legislative power of state over autonomous councils- The laws made by the councils **require the assent of governor.** Also, in case of conflict of interest between the District Councils and the state legislature, the latter would prevail.

4. Financial dependency- Autonomous councils are **dependent on their respective state governments for funds** in addition to the occasional special package from the Centre. **For ex- Lack of timely constitution of State Finance Commission for recommending devolution of funds to District Councils and Regional Councils.**

5. Corruption and Financial Mismanagement- The functioning of different councils in the sixth schedule areas has been marred by **corruption and financial mismanagement.**

6. Lack of skilled professionals- The autonomous councils lack skilled planning professionals, which **results in ill-conceived development projects** without proper technical and financial consideration.

7. Lack of Codification of customary Laws- The councils have failed in codifying customary laws of the local tribal population.

8. Political Interference- The autonomy granted by the Sixth Schedule is often undermined by **political interference** from the Centre and State governments.

9. Pending Constitutional Bill which provides for greater reforms- The delay in passage of the **125th Constitutional Amendment Bill**, which aims to empower ADCs, has **hindered greater self-governance** in these areas.

10. Non-implementation of FRA- The Forest Rights Act, 2006, which aims to protect tribal land rights, has not yet been implemented in the sixth schedule area.

What Should be The Way Forward?

1. Creation of elected Village Councils- Village councils must be created with their accountability to the local Gram Sabhas.

2. Ensuring regular Elections- The state governments must ensure regular, free and fair elections to these autonomous councils. For Ex- Reduce the dominance of Tribal Elites.

3. Representation of Women and other Ethnic Minorities- Women and other ethnic minorities must be provided adequate representation in these autonomous councils.

4. Increase geographical coverage- Constitutional amendment must be brought to expand coverage of 6th scheduled areas in other tribal dominated regions which need protection. For ex- Ladakh inclusion in 6th schedule.

5. Transparency- Transparency in funds, functionaries and functioning of the autonomous district councils must be enhanced for effective socio-economic development.

Source- The Hindu

UPSC Syllabus- GS-2 Issues related to Federal Structure

University Ranking Framework-Pros and Cons- Explained Pointwise

In recent times, a lot of importance is being accorded to the University Ranking Frameworks. Global ranking frameworks have gained prominence in recent times, for the rankings of Universities worldwide. India has also instituted its own university ranking framework, National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), for the rankings of Indian Universities.

The image shows the official website of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), Ministry of Education, Government of India. The page features a navigation bar with links for HOME, ABOUT NIRF, PARAMETERS, DOCUMENTS, RANKING, NOTIFICATION/ADVT, FAQs, and CONTACT. The main heading is "INDIA RANKINGS 2023". Below this, there are two rows of icons representing different ranking categories: Overall, Universities, Colleges, Research Institutions, Engineering, Management, Pharmacy, Medical, Dental, Law, Architecture and Planning, Agriculture and Allied Sectors, and Innovation.

Source- MHRD

What are the common University Ranking Frameworks?

Global Frameworks

QS World University Rankings	It is a portfolio of comparative college and university rankings compiled by Quacquarelli Symonds , a higher education analytics firm. The six metrics employed are- Academic reputation , Employer reputation , Faculty/student ratio , Citations per faculty , International faculty ratio and International student ratio .
Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)	ARWU is one of the oldest and most recognized university ranking systems globally. It is also known as the Shanghai Ranking .
Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings	These rankings are widely regarded and provide a detailed analysis of university performance. These use 13 indicators divided into 5 categories - Teaching (the learning environment), Research (volume, income, and reputation), Citations (research influence), International outlook (staff, students, research) and Industry income (innovation).

Indian Framework

National Institutional Ranking Framework	National Institutional Ranking Framework is a ranking methodology released annually by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, to rank institutions of higher education in India .
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What are the advantages of University Ranking Framework?

- 1. Global Recognition-** High rankings for the universities provide a **significant boost** to a **university's visibility** on an international scale. The recognition helps in attracting international students, faculties, donors, and potential research partners from around the world.
- 2. Performance Assessments-** The university ranking framework **provides valuable insights** into a **university's performance** relative to its peers. This information helps institutions in identification of their strengths and weaknesses, guiding them towards strategic planning and resource allocation.
- 3. Quality Enhancement-** The competitive nature of university rankings **encourages universities** to enhance their **educational quality** and **research output**. This drive for improvement leads to better academic programs and student outcomes.
- 4. Collaboration Opportunities-** Higher Rankings help in **facilitating partnerships between universities**, as institutions often seek collaborations with those having strong reputations. This helps in increasing the **number of joint research projects**, and **exchange programs** between the universities.
- 5. Alumni Connections-** Attending a highly-ranked university opens doors to valuable networking opportunities with alumni and industry leaders, making it **beneficial for students seeking internships** or **job placements** after graduation.

What are the arguments against these ranking frameworks?

- 1. Overemphasis on Research-** Global rankings **heavily prioritize research output**, and **fail to fully represent** the quality and relevance of research.
- 2. Increased education fees-** The focus on rankings has led to the **increase in student fees of the public institutions**, resulting in higher burden on the students. This has negatively impacted the students from economically weaker sections in India.

3. Decline of Teaching Standards- The obsession with metrics has diminished the importance of teaching, as the **faculty members are judged on research output** rather than **their ability to teach and mentor students**. Career advancement has been tied to research metrics, which has side lined teaching.

4. Compromise in research Quality- The focus on “**publish or perish**” has fostered a culture where research quality has sometimes been compromised, and has led to misconducts like **plagiarism**.

5. Bias and Lack of Inclusivity- Many ranking systems have biases in their metrics and evaluation criteria, and tend to favour the Western universities. This often **marginalizes institutions from developing countries** or those that **prioritize teaching over research**.

What should be the way Forward?

1. Balancing Research and Teaching- The universities must aim to **balance research and teaching**. While research is vital for innovation, it should not come at the expense of teaching.

2. Separation of research and teaching focussed faculties- Universities should create **separate tracks** for **research-focused** and **teaching-focused faculty** to prevent burnout and resentment.

3. Shift of Focus to Value Research- Universities must shift their culture to **value both research and teaching equally**. The research should be **valued for its societal impact**, and **not just for journal citations**.

4. Focus on enhancing student creativity- The current metrics-driven system **distorts the purpose of education**, **reducing knowledge to a commodity** and students to customers. The aim of the universities must be to prepare them to **become responsible citizens** and **equipping them for real-world challenges**.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Issues Related to Health and Education

State Control of Temples- Arguments for and against- Explained Pointwise

The recent **controversy over Tirupati Laddu Prasadam**, has once again **stirred the debate** over the **State control of temples in India**. The **State control over temples** in post independence India started with the **state of Tamil Nadu** (then Madras), which brought a **law for state control over temples**. Currently, other states in India also have **legislations for the management of Hindu temples**, which includes the states of Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

However, these laws of state control of temples in India, have been critiqued by several Hindu religious organisations in the past, on account of **treatment of temples as milch cows** and **non-representative temple boards**. In this article, we will look into the issue of state control of temples in India.



Source- Daily Free Traveller

What has been the History of State Control of Temples in India?

According to census 2011, Hindu temples form the majority of the around 30 lakh places of worship in India. The State control of temples in India has a long history, starting from the colonial period to post independent India.

<p>Colonial Period</p>	<p>a. The East India Company enacted laws in Bengal, Madras, and Bombay between 1810 and 1817, which allowed interference in temple administration to prevent income misappropriation.</p> <p>b. The Religious Endowments Act (1863) passed by the British government, aimed to secularise temple management by transferring temple control to committees. However, the government retained influence through legal frameworks like the Civil Procedure Code and the Charitable and Religious Trusts Act (1920).</p> <p>c. The Madras Hindu Religious Endowments Act (1925) established a statutory body, Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Board. It empowered provincial governments to legislate on temple matters, and allowed oversight by a board of commissioners.</p>
<p>Post Independence Period</p>	<p>a. The law commission of India recommended enactment of legislations to prevent the misuse of temple funds.</p> <p>b. The Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (TN HR&CE) Act, 1951, provided the creation of a Department of Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments for the administration, protection, and preservation of temples and their properties.</p> <p>c. Bihar Hindu Religious Trusts Act, 1950 was passed in Bihar to regulate the religious institutions.</p>

Constitution Provision Providing for State Control of Temples

Article 25(2)- Article 25(2) allows the state to regulate economic, financial, political, or secular activities linked to religious practices and to enact laws for social welfare, reform, and opening Hindu religious institutions to all classes of Hindus.

Seventh Schedule- Religious endowments and institutions are listed under the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, allowing both the Centre and states to legislate on the subject.

What are the Judicial Precedents providing for state control over Temple Management?

Shirur Mutt vs. The Commissioner, Hindu Religious Endowments, Madras Case, 1954	The Shirur Mutt case set important precedents for the protection of religious freedoms and property rights in India. The Supreme Court (SC) of India ruled that the state can regulate the administration of religious or charitable institutions.
Ratilal Panachand Gandhi v. State of Bombay Case, 1954	The SC held that the state can regulate the administration of trust properties.
Pannalal Bansilal Pitti vs. State Of Andhra Pradesh Case, 1996	The SC upheld a law abolishing hereditary rights over temple management and rejected the argument that such laws must apply equally to all religions.

What are the arguments in favour of state control of temples in India?

- 1. Prevention of Temple Mismanagement**- The central argument presented in favour of temple management control is the enhancement of transparency in the administration of temple funds, and reduction of risks of misappropriation and corruption. Government oversight helps in the responsible and ethical management of temple funds.
- 2. Protection from Commercialization**- Government involvement in the management of temple funds is aimed at their prevention from commercialization and exploitation by vested interests.
- 3. Promotion of Gender Equality**- State management of temples is aimed at ensuring that the temples' services and resources are accessible to all devotees regardless of their gender. For ex- Travancore Devaswom Board supported equitable access to the temple for women in the Sabrimala Temple entry case.
- 4. Redistribution of Resources**- The revenue generated from temples is redirected towards state initiatives that benefit the wider community, such as the infrastructure development or social welfare programs. For ex- HRCE Department of Tamil Nadu uses temple funds for community development programs such as establishing schools, colleges, and hospitals.
- 5. Religious and Cultural Inclusivity**- State control ensures that temples adhere to constitutional principles of inclusivity for the individuals from vulnerable communities. For ex- In Tamil Nadu, the HRCE Department has worked on ensuring temple entry for Dalits and backward communities in several temples that traditionally restricted access.
- 6. Prevention of Exploitation of Devotees**- State control aims to protect devotees from exploitation by temple authorities, such as charging of exorbitant fees for rituals or financially burdening practices. For ex- Temples in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, setting up guidelines on fees for rituals and offerings.

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What are the arguments against State Control of Temples in India?

1. Unfair Treatment- According to critics of government's temple control, while the **government controls Hindu temples in several states**, other religious institutions, such as **mosques, churches, and gurdwaras**, are generally allowed to manage their own affairs independently.

2. Mismanagement and Bureaucratic Inefficiency- Government-appointed boards or officials often **lack the expertise, commitment, or religious understanding** necessary to manage temple affairs effectively. This often leads to mismanagement, and bureaucratic inefficiency in the management of temple affairs. **For ex- Allegations of corruption**, poor administration, and neglect of temple properties by the **Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department (HRCE)**.

3. Diversion of Temple Funds- The diversion of temple funds for secular activities has often been opposed by the devotees. **For ex- The protests by devotees against the diversion of religious funds for secular activities.**

4. Erosion of Temple Heritage and Traditions- The imposition of administrative norms by the state that are not aligned with the spiritual and ritualistic aspects of temple management, often leads to the erosion of temple heritage and traditions. **For ex- The support to the entry of women in Sabrimala by the Govt**, has been at **odds with the temple's ritualistic traditions.**

5. Decline in Devotee Trust and Participation- Critics argue that the bureaucratic control of the temples leads to decline in the participation and involvement of devotees in temple management.

6. Economic Mismanagement of Temple Assets- In states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, there have been numerous reported cases of temple land encroachments by the private individuals or the government entities. This further fuelled concerns regarding the **economic mismanagement of temple resources by the State.**

7. Better Management through Private Trusts- Critics of the state control over temples argue that the temples that are not under state control, such as the **Shirdi Sai Baba Temple Trust in Maharashtra**, successfully run charitable hospitals, schools, and community programs.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Greater Autonomy with Oversight- Establishment of **independent temple trusts** comprising local religious leaders, community representatives, and legal or financial experts. The government should only undertake the oversight functions.

For ex- Management of Temples on the lines of the management of Golden temple by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), which is independent of state control.

2. Greater transparency and accountability in case of temple funds- An **independent auditing body** should conduct regular financial audits of temples and **public disclosure of temple funds** must be made **mandatory.**

3. Formation of Devotee Councils- Local councils comprising devotees and community leaders could be formed to **advise on temple management, rituals, and festivals.** This would **empower the community to safeguard the religious and cultural traditions of the temple.**

4. Government as a Custodian of Heritage, Not Manager- The state's role should shift to that of a custodian responsible for preserving the heritage and architecture of ancient temples.

5. Collaboration with Religious Leaders- Temple funds could be used for social welfare programs such as **healthcare, education, and poverty alleviation**, but only after consultation with temple authorities and religious leaders.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Constitutional Provisions

India-Maldives Relations- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

The recent visit of Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu to India from October 6 to 8, 2024, marks a significant diplomatic engagement, aimed at mending and enhancing India-Maldives relations. In the recent past, India-Maldives relations had become a major challenge for India's foreign policy establishment. In the recently concluded Maldivian Presidential elections, the electoral issue had become a tussle between **India First vs India out campaigns**. The victory of Mohamed Muizzu was being seen as **Victory of India Out Campaign**.

However, the recent visit of the Maldivian president aims at course correction in the India-Maldives relations. The visit is seen as an effort to reset India-Maldives ties. Some of the Key Highlights of the visit are presented below-

- 1. Comprehensive Economic and Maritime Security Partnership-** The Maldivian President and the Indian PM held extensive consultations for developing a comprehensive economic and maritime partnership.
- 2. Financial Assistance-** India has extended support to the Maldives in the form of a **\$400 million financial package** along with a **currency swap agreement** worth **₹30 billion**. This assistance aims to help the Maldives tackle its ongoing economic challenges.
- 3. Tourism Promotion-** India and Maldives agreed to launch marketing campaigns to attract more Indian tourists to the Maldives.
- 4. Agreements-** India and Maldives jointly inaugurated several initiatives, including the **launch of the RuPay card in the Maldives** and a **new runway at Hanimadhoo International Airport**.
- 5. Community Interaction-** President Muizzu addressed the concerns of the Maldivian community and reaffirmed his administration's commitment to their welfare.



Source- The Indian Express

What is the Historical Background of India-Maldives Relations?

India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, and commercial connections that date back to ancient times. The name Maldives is believed to be of Sanskrit origin (Mala (garland) + Dweep (Island)). The islands are believed to have been inhabited as early as 5th century BC by settlers from Sri Lanka and Southern India. There were close trade relationships between India and Maldives during ancient and medieval times.

Historical Evolution of India-Maldives Relations

1965	In 1965, Maldives gained Independence from the British. India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with Maldives. Indian Mission was set up in Male in 1972.
1978	In 1978, President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom took charge in Maldives. Gayoom made many visits to India which strengthened India-Maldives ties.
1988	In 1988, India sent its troops and ships to help Gayoom overthrow a coup attempt by a Maldives businessman and Sri Lankan Tamil fighters.
2008	In 2008, Mohamed Nasheed was elected President. During his tenure, India began closer security cooperation with Maldives. India loaned 2 helicopters, dornier aircraft and patrol boats to Maldives. These were for maritime reconnaissance, surveillance and coast guard security ops.
2013	In 2013, Abdulla Yameen of the opposition PPM was elected to power. The Presidential Period of Yameen saw major strains in the India-Maldives ties . India raised objections to Yameen's imposition of emergency. Yameen adopted pro-China policies . Yameen signed FTA with China & invited Chinese companies in for a number of major investments including the Hullumale island housing projects and friendship bridge. On the other hand Yameen threatened to evict Indian pilots and personnel from Maldives.
2018	In 2018, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih won the presidential elections by defeating Yameen. He adopted India-First Policy . India was invited to start many infrastructure projects including the \$500mn Greater Male connectivity project . In 2021, India-Maldives signed the Uthuru Thilafalhu project to maintain a coastguard harbour base for India. This sparked the India Out campaign .

What is the 'India out' Campaign and 'India First' Policy?

India Out Campaign	<p>'India Out' campaign-It is a political movement to mobilise people in Maldives against India. The campaign is against the presence of Indian military on Maldivian soil. The campaign got louder around key bilateral developments such as the signing of the Uthuru Thila Falhu (UTF) harbour development deal with India in February 2021 & India's announcement of the opening of a consulate in the southern Addu Atoll.</p> <p>Supporters of the Campaign- Abdulla Yameen who was the President of Maldives from 2013-2018 joined the campaign. Yameen was Pro-China during his tenure. Yameen signed FTA with China and gave ultimatum to India to withdraw two Indian helicopters from the strategically important Laamu and Addu atolls. The current president designate Dr. Mohamed Muizzu rallied support around the 'India Out' campaign.</p>
India First Policy	India First Policy- Maldives preference for India as the first choice in security partnership, socio-development assistance and COVID response(Vaccines).

	Proponent of the Policy- Ibrahim Mohamed Solih after he became the president in 2018 adopted the India First Policy. This Policy aimed to reverse the anti-India policies of Yameen between 2013-2018.
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What is the Significance of Maldives for India?

Maldives holds enormous significance for India. The Significance of Maldives for India is mentioned below-

- 1. Geo-Economic Significance-** Maldives is strategically located at the crossroads of several important trade routes that run through the Indian Ocean. **50% of India's external trade** and **80% of India's energy imports transit through** the Sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) in the vicinity of the **Maldives**.
- 2. Geo-Political Significance-** Maldives has been a partner of India in many regional groupings. Maldives is a member of the **Colombo Security Conclave (CSC)**, **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**, **SAARC**, **SASEC** and **SAGAR** initiative of India. Maldives supports India's permanent membership of UNSC.
- 3. Security Significance-** For India, Maldives is the **first line of defence** against terrorism, piracy on the high seas, drug trafficking, narcotics, and other maritime crime. Maldives geographical location makes it a 'toll gate' between the choke points of the western Indian Ocean (Gulf of Aden and the Strait of Hormuz) and the eastern Indian Ocean (Strait of Malacca).
- 4. Indian Diaspora Significance-** There is a sizeable Indian Diaspora in Maldives. Numerous **Indians are employed** in Maldives' education, medical care systems, tourism and hospitality sector.

[Read More- 7 PM Archives](#)

What have been the areas of Co-operation between India and Maldives?

India has been a major partner of Maldives in its development journey. The major areas of cooperation between India and Maldives are mentioned below-

- 1. Economic Cooperation-** The economic co-operation between India and Maldives is a major pillar of cooperation between India and Maldives. Mentioned below are some of the economic cooperation pillars-
 - (a) **\$500 million** in grants and financing to support maritime connectivity.
 - (b) **\$ 800-million line of credit** from the Export-Import Bank of India
 - (c) India is Maldives' **2nd largest trading partner**.
 - (d) Maldives is an important tourist destination for many Indians. Tourism is the backbone of Maldives economy.
- 2. Infrastructure Cooperation-** Development of sustainable infrastructure in Maldives is one of the main goals of India. India is developing many infrastructure projects in Maldives some of which are mentioned below-
 - (a) India is developing the **Greater Male Connectivity Project-** one the largest project infrastructure project in Maldives. The project aims to **connect Male to Villingili, Gulhifalhu and Thilafushi islands** through a series of bridges, causeways and roads. The project is crucial for the proposed Gulhifalhu Port. It will be a **major catalyst for the Maldivian economy in the future** through jobs and economic activity.
 - (b) India is undertaking Airport Redevelopment Project at the **Hanimaadhoo International Airport**.
 - (c) India is undertaking the development of **strategic harbour projects like Uthuru Thila Falhu Project(UTF)**. It will serve as a harbour for the coast guard of the Maldives National Defence Force
 - (d) India has also undertaken the design and construction of **61 police infrastructures across Maldives**. This will contribute to improved access to policing and will ensure the safety and security of the communities in the islands.
- 3. Military and Security Cooperation-** Maldives relies heavily on trilateral maritime security cooperation with India and Sri Lanka. Hence securing the maritime borders of Maldives is one of the foremost priorities of

Indian Government. The major areas of Military and security co-operation are as follows-

- (a) India and Maldives co-operate in **maritime security**, maritime domain awareness and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.
- (b) India has donated Landing Assault Craft and 24 Utility Vehicles to Maldives in order to bolster maritime security.
- (c) India has signed a comprehensive Action Plan for Defence in April 2016 to consolidate India-Maldives defence partnership.
- (d) India provides the largest number of training opportunities for Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF), meeting around 70% of their defence training requirements.
- (e) India and Maldives conduct many security Joint Exercises like “Ekuverin”, “Dosti”, “Ekatha” and “Operation Shield”.
- (f) India launched the Operation Cactus in 1988 to help the government of Maldives in the neutralizing the coup attempt.

4. Humanitarian Assistance Cooperation- India has always lent a helping hand to Maldives in humanitarian assistance. Mentioned below are some of the examples of humanitarian assistance

- (a) India has signed an MoU with Maldives for **High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs)** in 2019. A number of socio-economic development projects are planned to be implemented in Maldives through these projects.
- (b) India has provided **100,000 Covishield vaccines to Maldives** in January 2021 during the peak of the pandemic. Through **Operation Sanjeevani**, India supplied 6.2 tonnes of essential medicines to Maldives in the fight against COVID 19. India has handed over **two sea ambulances** to the Ministry of Defence of Maldives.
- (e) India provided assistance to Maldives during recovery efforts after the 2004 Tsunami. India also helped address the shortage of drinking water in Maldives in 2014 through **Operation Neer**.

What are the Challenges in India-Maldives Relations?

India-Maldives relations suffer from a lot of challenges. Some of which are mentioned below-

- 1. Political Challenges-** The president elect Dr. Mohamed Muizzu and the former president Abdulla Yameen have been vocal advocates in the **‘India Out’ Campaign**. Both leaders are opposed to India’s military presence in Maldives. Since they will be wielding power in Maldives, it will become a major challenge for India.
- 2. Radicalisation-** A large number of Maldivian citizens had joined violent extremist organisations such as the **Islamic State (IS)**. There has been a steady **rise in recruits joining jihadi groups in Pakistan** over the last decade. There is now a greater risk that terrorist organisations based in **Pakistan will use Maldives as a staging ground for attacks on India** and Indian assets.
- 3. Growing Chinese Influence-** China has enhanced its influence in Maldives. Maldives is an essential ‘pearl’ in China’s ‘String of Pearls’ initiative in South Asia. With the **return of pro-chinese government in Maldives**, India’s diplomatic space will reduce in the region.
- 4. Climate Change-** As both India and Maldives are low-lying island nations, they are vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including rising sea levels and marine heatwaves. Maldives faces the risk of submergence.

What Should be the Way forward for India-Maldives Relations?

- 1. Engage with the newly elected government-** India must engage with the newly elected government of Maldives and address its concerns. India must convey that the projects being undertaken are for the general good of the people of Maldives. Ex- The **redevelopment project at Hanimadhoo** will improve tourist inflow as both the runway and terminal capacity will be increased. Tourism is the mainstay of Maldives economy.

2. Increase the development assistance- India should increase development assistance to Maldives. India should target projects that have **larger impact on general population of Maldives**. This will enhance India's goodwill among the people of Maldives. It will address concerns that have led to **'India Out' Campaigns**.

3. Timely Completion of Infrastructure Projects- Timely completion of infrastructure projects being undertaken by India like the **Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP)** will offer a credible and lucrative alternatives to Chinese projects.

4. Target Youth Employment- India's **High Impact Community Development Projects (HICPs)** in Maldives must include projects that aim to **improve employability** and foster entrepreneurship among the youth. This will help in countering the threats of radicalisation and extremism emanating from the soil.

5. Increase in India's Development aid- India should continue to increase the **financial aid and assistance** to Maldives to prevent the debt crisis and economic catastrophe in Maldives.

The newly elected regime of Maldives must understand that China's entry in Maldives is solely to advance its own gains. A strong relationship with India will be to Maldives's benefit.

[Read More- The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- India and its neighbourhood relations

Artificial Neural Networks- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

The 2024 Nobel Prize in Physics has been awarded to **John J. Hopfield** and **Geoffrey E. Hinton** for their groundbreaking work on **artificial neural networks (ANNs)** and **machine learning**. Their discoveries have played a crucial role in the development of modern artificial intelligence (AI), which draws from various branches of science such as statistical physics, neurobiology, and cognitive psychology. Artificial neural networks form the foundation of modern machine learning.

Hopfield and Hinton's innovations provided essential methods for artificial neural networks. John Hopfield developed an **associative memory network** capable of **storing** and **reconstructing patterns like images**. Geoffrey Hinton, building on Hopfield's work, invented a method that enables machines to **autonomously identify features in data**, such as specific elements in images.



Source- The Indian express

What is Artificial Neural Network (ANN)?

Artificial neural networks are Computer algorithms that are designed to mimic the human brain's ability to perform tasks. Hopfield pioneered the work on Artificial neural network (**Hopfield Network**), which was further built upon by Hinton (**Boltzmann Machine**). The two models of Artificial Neural Networks are mentioned below-

Hopfield Network (Developed by Hopfield)	Hopfield network is a form of ANN that resembles a human brain's nerve cells . In this network, each neuron is connected to all others. It allowed computers to ' learn ' and ' remember ' by processing information through the entire network, not just individual parts. This leap allowed machines to recognize patterns, and serves as a precursor to modern facial recognition and image enhancement technologies .
Boltzmann Machine (Developed by Hinton)	Boltzmann machine is another significant ANN model which function by minimizing an energy function, which is a concept rooted in physics. These models performed far more complex and cognitive tasks such as data classification, pattern generation and voice and picture recognition . Hinton also developed backpropagation , which allowed neural networks to learn from mistakes and improve through training on large data sets. This has given

	rise to deep learning (a system with multiple layers of networks that continually refine their accuracy).
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ANN models have led to development and advancement in the field of Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Deep Learning and Artificial Generative Intelligence.

Artificial Intelligence is being applied in **numerous fields**, including **astronomy**, where it helps **scientists analyse massive data sets to discover new information**. Machine learning focuses efforts on **data with the highest potential for groundbreaking discoveries**. Deep learning is now central to technologies such as **voice recognition, image identification, translation, and self-driving cars**. The field of AI has further advanced to Generative AI, where AI is generating content.

Relation between AI, Machine Learning, Deep Learning & Generative AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI)	AI is a discipline which focuses on formulating theories and methodologies for constructing machines that emulate human thought processes and behaviours.
Machine Learning (ML)	Machine learning is a subfield of Artificial Intelligence . ML involves the development of programs that train models using accessible data from sources such as webpages, articles, books, etc. These trained models are then used to make useful predictions for new and never-seen before data . The most common ML method to train the models is the supervised learning method .
Deep Learning	Deep learning is a subset of Machine Learning . Deep learning is a type of machine learning that uses artificial neural networks . These multilayered and interconnected neurons (inspired by the human brain), are used to process complex data and make predictions.
Generative AI	Generative AI is a subset of deep learning . It uses artificial neural networks to process data using supervised learning methods . This large-scale supervised learning technology is termed the Large Language Model (LLM) .

What are the advantages of AI which are built upon the Artificial Neural Networks (ANN)?

- 1. Writing and advertising-** AI is being used as a **brainstorming companion** by the writers. **For ex- Drafting press releases, language translation, creating new advertisements** based on existing ones.
- 2. Reading-** Apart from writing, AI technology is used as a reading tool. **For ex- Auto Reading customer mails and segregating them based on complaints.**
- 3. Chatting-** AI is also being used for many special-purpose chatbot tasks. **For ex- Government chatbots** to help citizens get access to the right information on various schemes and policies.
- 4. Security Services-** AI technology built on the advanced Neural Networks can create front-on photos from photos taken at different angles and vice versa. This is being used in **face identification systems** to secure the **airports, international border check-points** etc.
- 5. Enhanced capability of Search Engine Services-** Advanced Artificial Neural Networks have the capability to take search engine services to the next level. **For ex- Text to Image translation** to provide search results.
- 6. Improving Healthcare System-** AI technology has the potential to revolutionise the healthcare sector by improving the accuracy of diagnosis. **For ex- Conversion of X-ray or any CT scan images to real images** can improve the accuracy of diagnosis.

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What are the Challenges with the Artificial Neural Networks?

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1. Increased Biases- Artificial Neural Networks can perpetuate and amplify existing biases. These systems can generate biased outputs like offensive language, demeaning imagery, and prejudicial content, if they are trained on biased, non-inclusive data. **For ex-** [US rights group observation](#) about an AI-based generative imagery programme showing [images of only white men for the prompt 'CEO'](#).

2. Threat of Job Losses- There are fears of job losses as AI can prove to be more cost-efficient and productive to firms as compared to human capital. **For ex-** [Customer service jobs are under threat from the AI chatboxes \(Zomato's Zia\)](#).

3. Use for Malicious Purposes- Generative AI systems based on advanced artificial neural networks can be used to create content for malicious purposes, such as **deepfakes**, disinformation, and propaganda. Nefarious actors may use AI-generated media to manipulate people and influence public opinion, like [use for Post Truth Doctrine](#).

4. Concern over Data Privacy- There are emerging concerns in regard to data privacy in using AI technology. **For ex-** [Use of AI in healthcare involves collecting private information about individuals](#), which raises concerns about data privacy.

5. Issues Related to Copyright and plagiarised contents- AI technology has been associated with copyright violations and production of plagiarised content. **For ex-** [Getty Images has sued Stable Diffusion](#) (Generative AI Company), [accusing them of copyright violations](#).

6. Limitations in Creativity- AI systems lack creativity, originality and human ingenuity as [they use past data as a template](#) for future work.

7. Environmental Concerns- AI systems require a lot of computing power, which have grave implications for the environment. **For ex-** [According to analysts, training a transformer model just once with 213 million parameters can emit carbon emissions equivalent to 125 flights between New York and Beijing](#).

What should be the way Forward?

1. De-biasing while training the AI- We must ensure fairness of the information which is being fed into the system, to ensure that AI [doesn't perpetuate](#) or amplify social biases, like [gender](#) and [racial biases](#).

2. Transparency of information- Users should have transparent information about the limitation and risks of AI.

3. Privacy protection- The user data and confidentiality must be protected to ensure user privacy. **For ex-** [Strict implementation of data protection laws](#).

4. Ethical use of AI- We must ensure that AI is used only for beneficial purposes. The push must be made towards [universal adoption of the Bletchley Declaration](#) by all the countries.

Conclusion

India's progress in AI and scientific research has been hindered by decades of low funding, inefficient governance, and inadequate support for blue-sky research. Many Indian researchers face challenges like resource constraints and administrative burdens, limiting their ability to focus on cutting-edge research. The 2024 Nobel Prize in Physics serves as a reminder of the importance of supporting fundamental research, which often leads to technological breakthroughs. Dismissing such research risks missing out on future opportunities in AI and other emerging fields.

[Read More- The Hindu](#)

[UPSC Syllabus- GS 3 Science and Technology](#)

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Rice Fortification in India- Needs and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

Recently, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the continuation of the **universal supply of fortified rice under all Union government schemes**, including the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), from July 2024 to December 2028. The primary goal of the scheme is to enhance the nutritional security for all citizens. However, concerns have been raised by the public health experts regarding the scheme.



Source- Down to Earth

What is rice fortification? What is the rice fortification scheme?

Rice fortification- It is the process of adding **essential micronutrients** like iron, folic acid, vitamin B-12, zinc, and vitamins A, B-1, B-2, B-3, and B-6, to rice to enhance its nutritional value. This process seeks to improve the nutritional quality of rice, and help address micronutrient deficiencies and public health concerns.

Rice Fortification Scheme

Type of Scheme	It is a centrally funded initiative , with 100% of the costs covered by the central government. The initiative is part of PMGKAY and aims to provide a unified institutional mechanism for its implementation.
Aim of the Scheme	This initiative aims to combat anaemia and address micronutrient deficiencies across the population.
Distribution of Fortified rice	The fortified rice will be distributed free of charge through welfare schemes like the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), and PM POSHAN in all States and Union Territories.

What are the advantages of Rice fortification in India?

1. Addressing nutritional deficiency- The process of rice fortification significantly helps in addressing the nutritional deficiencies of iron, zinc, and vitamins of Indian population, as rice constitutes a **staple food** for about **65% of the population**.

2. Reduction of Anaemia- Iron fortification specifically targets anaemia, particularly among vulnerable groups such as pregnant women and children. The Improved iron status can lead to **better maternal health** and **reduced risks** during pregnancy.

3. Affordable Intervention- Rice fortification is considered a cost-effective strategy to combat malnutrition as the estimated annual cost for the **scheme is around ₹2,700 crore**, which is manageable given the potential health benefits.

4. Utilization of Existing Infrastructure- The fortification process can be **integrated into existing rice production and distribution systems**, minimizing additional costs and logistical challenges.

5. Cognitive Development and improved educational outcomes- Rice fortification can help in mitigation of cognitive impairments associated with iron deficiency. This will lead to improved educational outcomes.

6. Enhanced productivity of workforce- The rice fortification initiative aims to improve overall public health, reduce healthcare costs associated with malnutrition-related diseases, and enhance productivity in the workforce.

[Read More- Nutritional Security in India- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise](#)

What are the concerns with food fortification in India?

1. Health Risk to Individuals suffering from haemoglobinopathies- Health experts have raised concerns about the indiscriminate distribution of fortified rice, particularly for individuals with **haemoglobinopathies** like **thalassemia** and **sickle cell disease**, as it could lead to serious health complications like organ failure.

2. Undermining of dietary diversity- The National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) recommends that no more than **40% of a healthy diet's total calories** should come from cereals, and only a fraction of that from rice. The promotion of consumption of **250-350 grams of fortified rice consumption per day**, could discourage dietary diversity.

3. Concerns about women health safety- Experts warn that the lack of **monitoring for iron fortification's** could be potentially harmful for women. **For ex-** Excessive iron intake in pregnant women can negatively affect fetal development and birth outcomes, which will increase the risk of chronic diseases in children.

4. Commercialisation- Experts have expressed concerns that fortification may benefit industries more than the people. There are concerns that it may be difficult to reverse fortification, even after micronutrient deficiencies are reduced, as commercial players may continue to use it for **profiteering purposes**.

4. Removal of Safety labels by FSSAI- The proposed amendment by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to remove the **warning labels regarding thalassemia and sickle cell anaemia**, has sparked concern among health experts.

What Should be the way Forward?

1. Dietary diversification- The focus must be on safer, long-term, community-based approaches that promote dietary diversification rather than focusing on fortification of a single food source like rice. The NIN, in its **2020 Nutrient Requirements of Indians report**, emphasized the need for a **diverse, natural diet** to meet micronutrient needs, rather than relying on fortification.

2. Increasing the intake of animal-based foods- The focus must be on improving the diet quality by increasing the intake of **animal-based foods and fruits**.

3. FSSAI mandatory labelling and warning- FSSAI must make it mandatory for the suppliers to display warnings about the **potential risks of fortified food to the patients suffering from thalassemia and sickle cell anaemia**.

5. Improving health care services- Improvement of access and utilization of prenatal and postnatal health care services must be prioritized. It would play a significant role in curbing undernutrition **among children through comprehensive awareness programs** and community participation.

Read More- [Down to Earth](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Issues related to poverty and hunger

India-ASEAN Relations- Cooperation and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

The PM of India attended the 21st East Asia summit and ASEAN-India Summit in Laos, which will provide a boost to India-ASEAN relations. PM Modi announced a **10 point plan to strengthen India-ASEAN relations**. India is making **concerted attempts** to reboot one of India's most valuable partnerships in Asia and the world. Earlier this year, Delhi had hosted the prime ministers of Malaysia and Vietnam and EAM S. Jaishankar had met several foreign ministers in the region and received them in Delhi. These engagements have once again demonstrated the extraordinary goodwill for Delhi in the ASEAN region and the high expectations from India.

PM Modi's 10 Point plan for Strengthened India-ASEAN Relations

- 1. ASEAN-India Year of Tourism-** Designate 2025 as the ASEAN-India Year of Tourism, with India allocating \$5 million for joint activities to promote tourism between member countries.
- 2. Scholarships Expansion-** Double the number of scholarships available at Nalanda University and introduce new grants for ASEAN students at Indian Agricultural Universities.
- 3. People-Centric Activities-** Celebrate the decade of the Act East Policy with events such as Youth Summit, Start-up Festival, Hackathon.
- 4. Women Scientists Conclave-** Organize an ASEAN-India Women Scientists Conclave under the ASEAN-India Science and Technology Development Fund.
- 5. Disaster Resilience-** Allocate an additional \$5 million to enhance disaster resilience initiatives.
- 6. Health Resilience Track-** Initiate a new Health Ministers' track aimed at building health resilience across ASEAN nations.
- 7. Trade Agreement Review-** Commit to reviewing the ASEAN-India Trade and Goods Agreement by 2025 to unlock further economic potential.
- 8. Cyber Policy Dialogue-** Establish a regular mechanism for an ASEAN-India Cyber Policy Dialogue to strengthen digital and cyber resilience.
- 9. Green Hydrogen Workshop-** Host a workshop focused on green hydrogen technologies to promote sustainable energy solutions.
- 10. Climate Resilience Campaign-** Invite all ASEAN leaders to participate in the 'Plant a Tree for Mother' campaign, aimed at fostering climate resilience.



Source- The Indian Express

What has been the history of India-ASEAN countries relations?

India's ties with Southeast Asia stretch back more than two millennia. This relation is forged in peace and friendship, religion and culture, art and commerce, language and literature.

Initial Years of engagement	India-ASEAN countries formal engagement began in 1992 as a 'Sectoral Dialogue Partner' (Secretary level interaction). The partnership was instituted as a 'Dialogue Partner' in 1995, which entailed interaction at the Foreign Minister's level. The partnership was elevated to the summit level in 2002 .
Era of Strategic Partnership	At the commemorative Summit meeting celebrating 20 year relationship between India and ASEAN, the partnership was elevated to a strategic partnership . During the 25-year Commemorative Summit in New Delhi (January 2018), India and ASEAN agreed that our Strategic Partnership will be focused on building cooperation in the maritime domain .
Comprehensive Strategic Partnership	The year 2022 marks the 30 years of ASEAN-India relations , and the year has been designated as the year of India-ASEAN countries friendship. At the 19th ASEAN-India Summit to commemorate 30th anniversary of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations, the Strategic Partnership was elevated to the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership . On this occasion, 'Joint Statement on ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' was released.

What have been the areas of Cooperation between India and ASEAN Countries?

India's engagement with the ASEAN has been driven by three goals- (i) **enhancing connectivity between India and ASEAN** (i.e. physical, digital, people-to-people, business etc.), (ii) **strengthening the ASEAN organization** and; (iii) **expanding practical cooperation** in the maritime domain.

Geopolitical Cooperation

1. India's engagement with ASEAN is a multi-level interaction process.

Apex Interaction	Annual summits between India and ASEAN, like ASEAN-India Summit .
Support Meetings	Foreign Minister level meetings like ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers Meeting (AIFMM) .
Senior Level Meetings	There is regular interaction between senior level officials like AISOM which is prior to the AIFMM and the AI summit .

2. India engages in the '**ASEAN-led frameworks**'- multilateral platforms chaired by ASEAN. India regularly participates in the meetings of the **East Asia Summit (EAS)**, **ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)**, **ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting+ (ADMM+)** and the **Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF)** meetings and its supporting processes.

Geostrategic cooperation

1. **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**- The relationship has evolved into a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, with special focus on **maritime cooperation**.

2. **Joint Initiatives**- India and ASEAN have established mechanisms like the **ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund** and **the ASEAN-India Science and Technology Development Fund** to support various collaborative projects.

Geo-Economic Cooperation

1. **Trade Relations**- ASEAN is India's **fourth-largest trading partner**, with bilateral trade reaching around **USD 70 billion**. India recently signed a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** in goods in 2009 and expanded this agreement to include **services and investments** in 2014.

2. **Commodities Trade**- Commodity trade between India and ASEAN region has reached **USD 110.39 billion** in April 2021-March 2022, with exports to ASEAN worth USD 42.327 billion and imports from ASEAN worth USD 68.07 billion. This is for the **first time bilateral trade** with ASEAN has **crossed 100 billion**.

3. **Consultation Mechanisms**- The **ASEAN Economic Ministers-India Consultations (AEM + India)** and the **ASEAN-India Business Council (AIBC)** promote Comprehensive Economic Cooperation between India and the ASEAN region.

4. **Investment Initiatives**- Between 2000-2019, cumulative FDIs from ASEAN to India were **\$117.88 billion**. However, these are mainly accounted for by Singaporean investments in India (\$115 billion).

Connectivity Cooperation

1. **Infrastructure Projects**- India-ASEAN relations are characterised by key initiatives, which include the **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway** and the **Kaladan Multimodal Project**. These aim to improve transport links between India and ASEAN countries, particularly enhancing access to Northeast India.

Cultural and Social Cooperation

1. **Educational Exchanges**- Programs such as **scholarships for ASEAN students in Indian institutions** and various cultural exchange strengthen people-to-people ties.

2. Capacity Building- Collaborative efforts between India and ASEAN includes capacity building in various sectors. This promotes **youth and women's participation in social development programs**.

[Read More - India and East Asia Relations](#)

What are the Challenges in India-ASEAN relations?

1. Geopolitical concerns- The complex regional environment with the **sharpening of US-China conflict** and **Delhi's own deepening troubles with Beijing**, is a major geopolitical concern for the relations. Further, **India's membership of the newly revived Quad** has also raised concerns in the region.

2. Geostrategic Challenges- The embroilment of ASEAN member states in territorial disputes like **South China Sea Dispute**, **complicates India's engagement with ASEAN**, as India seeks to navigate these disputes while promoting stability in the region.

3. Economic Concerns-

a. Walking out of RCEP- Delhi's decision to walk out of the **regional negotiations on trade liberalisation (RCEP)** at the eleventh hour has created a sense of economic disappointment for ASEAN members.

b. Growing Trade Imbalances- India faces a **growing trade deficit with ASEAN**, with China being the largest trading partner for ASEAN countries. There has been sluggish progress in India-ASEAN trade due to issues related to **implementation, customs procedures, and non-tariff barriers**.

c. Slow Implementation of Connectivity Projects- There has been slow progress on the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway projects, when contrasted with the China's Belt and Road Initiative, which has gained traction among some ASEAN nations.

d. Trade and Investment Barriers- Non-tariff barriers, such as **complex customs procedures** and **inconsistent regulations**, hinder smoother trade and investment flows between India and ASEAN countries.

Internal Divisions within ASEAN

Differing Responses to Myanmar- The military coup in Myanmar has led to varied reactions among ASEAN members, and has complicated collective action. This division makes it difficult for India to align its policies with ASEAN regarding the **regional stability** and **democratic restoration in Myanmar**.

What should be the Way Forward?

1. Redressal of Geopolitical concerns- India should reassert its **stand squarely behind ASEAN in the regional security architecture**. Delhi's efforts at reassuring ASEAN have shown a measure of success, with the region opening up to more defence and security cooperation with India.

2. Focus on emerging areas- India should also focus on enhancing cooperation in new areas such as **digitalisation, health, space technology** and **advanced manufacturing** to strengthen regional ties.

3. Semiconductor Diplomacy- India's '**semiconductor diplomacy**' with Malaysia and Singapore, both of which have significant capabilities in semiconductor production, should be extended with other ASEAN member countries.

4. Accelerated Infrastructure Development- Accelerating key connectivity projects, such as the **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway** and **the Kaladan Multimodal Project**, will further enhance trade and people-to-people connections.

5. Enhanced Trade Agreements- Expansion of the scope and effectiveness of the **ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement** (FTA) can help in addressing trade imbalances and reduction of non-tariff barriers.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- India and Its Neighbourhood relations- GS 2

Classical Languages of India – Explained, Pointwise

In 2004, the Indian government began recognizing certain languages as “classical languages” of India to highlight their historical importance. Tamil was the first language to receive this status in 2004. Over time, other languages such as Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia were also recognized. In October 2024, the government conferred the classical language status to 5 new languages Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Pali, and Prakrit.

This decision brings the total number of classical languages in India to 11. The move aims to preserve and promote these languages, which have significant historical, literary, and cultural importance .

The five languages were granted classical language status based on their fulfillment of the key criteria set by the Government.

Classical languages of India

India’s classical languages are those that hold great historical significance, possessing a rich corpus of ancient literature. Currently, the eleven classical languages are:

1. Tamil (2004)
2. Sanskrit (2005)
3. Telugu (2008)
4. Kannada (2008)
5. Malayalam (2013)
6. Odia (2014)
7. Marathi (2024)
8. Bengali (2024)
9. Assamese (2024)
10. Pali (2024)
11. Prakrit (2024)

What is the criterion for qualification for classical language status?

The decision to declare a language as a “classical language” in India is based on a well-defined set of criteria established by the government. These criteria were first introduced in 2004 and have been periodically revised, most recently in 2024. Here’s a detailed look at the basis for granting classical language status:

1. **High Antiquity:** The language must have ancient texts or recorded history that dates back at least 1500 to 2000 years. This antiquity demonstrates the long-standing existence of the language and its influence over time.
2. **Ancient Literature:** The language must possess a body of ancient literature or texts that are regarded as valuable heritage by generations of speakers. These texts typically span various fields such as philosophy, religion, literature, and science.
3. **Originality in Literary Tradition:** The literary tradition of the language must be original, meaning it is not borrowed from another speech community.

4. **Distinctiveness:** The classical language should exhibit a significant distinction from its modern form or its linguistic offshoots. This means that the even though the language has undergone notable changes over time, it has a preserved ancient form, distinct from contemporary usage.

In 2024, Linguistic Experts Committee (LEC) further **refined the criterion** as follows.

1. High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500–2000 years.
2. A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a heritage by generations of speakers.
3. **Knowledge texts, especially prose texts in addition to poetry, epigraphical and inscriptional evidence.**
4. The Classical Languages and literature could be distinct from its current form, or could be discontinuous with later forms of its offshoots.

On what basis new languages were declared classical languages?

Here's how each language qualified for this prestigious recognition:

Marathi

- **Antiquity:** Marathi traces its roots to **Maharashtri Prakrit**, a language spoken in western India during the Satvahana dynasty. The earliest inscriptions in Prakrit date back to the 1st century BCE. A significant example is a 739 CE copper plate found in Satara, which provides historical evidence of Marathi's antiquity.
- **Literary Tradition:** Marathi has a long and rich literary history from 13th century, with notable ancient texts like the *Dnyaneshwari* and *Tukaram Gatha*. Its medieval literary corpus is considered valuable heritage by generations of speakers .

Bengali and Assamese

- **Antiquity:** Both Bengali and Assamese have evolved from **Magadhi Prakrit**, with historical texts and inscriptions dating back to the timeline from the 6th to the 12th centuries. Both have a deep connection to early eastern Indian languages and shares roots with Assamese. It was also the official language of the Magadha court in East India.
- **Literary Tradition:** Bengali boasts a rich classical literature, including early texts such as *Charyapada* (Buddhist mystic songs from the 8th century CE). The language's medieval and early modern literary corpus, including works by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Rabindranath Tagore, has made significant cultural contributions .

Pali and Prakrit

The term "Prakrit" doesn't refer to just one language but rather a collection of closely related Indo-Aryan dialects.

These vernacular languages became associated with heterodox religious movements, such as Buddhism and Jainism, which emerged during the first millennium BCE. **For example, Jain religious texts**, like the Agamas and Gatha Saptashati, were written in Ardhamagadhi Prakrit, a dialect considered definitive by some scholars.

Similarly, **Pali**, a language derived from Magadhi Prakrit with some Sanskrit influences, was used in the Theravada Buddhist Canon, known as the Tipitaka. It is believed to have been the language spoken by the Buddha himself and remains in use in countries where Theravada Buddhism, such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand, thrived.

What are the constitutional provisions related to Languages in India?

Article 343: Hindi in Devanagari script is the official language of the Union. However, English continues to be used for official purposes until otherwise decided by law. Parliament may authorize the continued use of English for official purposes by enacting legislation.

Article 345: state legislatures are allowed to adopt **any official language** for the state.

8th Schedule (Articles 344(1) and 351)

- The Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution lists the official languages recognized by the government. Initially, it included 14 languages, but as of now, 22 languages are recognized, including Hindi, Tamil, Bengali, Marathi, and Urdu.
- Article 344(1) provides for the constitution of a Commission by the President to make recommendations on the progressive use of Hindi for official purposes and the restriction of English use.
- Article 351 directs the Union to promote the spread of Hindi and develop it so it becomes a medium of communication for all Indians, drawing upon other Indian languages to enrich it.

What are the Benefits of Identification of Classical Languages of India?

Cultural Preservation: These languages have been essential in preserving and transmitting India's ancient knowledge systems, philosophies, and values across generations for thousands of years. For example, Tamil's recognition as a classical language has led to an increase in research and preservation efforts for its ancient texts.

Recognition to the contribution of language: By recognizing these languages as classical, the government acknowledges their deep-rooted antiquity, vast literary traditions, and their invaluable contribution to the cultural fabric of the nation.

Academic and Research Promotion: Scholars working in these languages receive government support and awards, enhancing the study and promotion of the language.

- Two international awards are given annually to scholars who have made notable contributions to the research, teaching, or promotion of classical Indian languages.
- The University Grants Commission (UGC) is requested to create Professional Chairs in central universities to support the study of these classical languages.
- A Centre of Excellence for Studies in Classical Languages is established to support advanced research.

Employment and Opportunities: The preservation of ancient texts, archiving, and translation efforts create employment opportunities. For instance, the recent addition of Bengali and Assamese as classical languages will boost research and employment in their respective states.

Sense of Pride: it instills a sense of pride and ownership among the speakers of these languages, promoting national integration and aligning with the broader vision of a self-reliant and culturally rooted India.

What are the Challenges Associated with identification of Classical Languages in India?

1. **Diminished Native Speakers:** Many classical languages, such as Pali and Prakrit, no longer have active native speakers, which makes preservation efforts difficult. Languages like Pali have been out of everyday use for centuries.
2. **Lack of Digital Resources:** The process of digitizing ancient manuscripts and making them accessible is slow and costly. There is a significant gap in bringing classical language texts into the digital era.

3. **Limited Educational Integration:** Despite being classical, these languages are often not integrated into mainstream education systems. Many of these languages are not taught in schools, leading to a loss of knowledge among younger generations

What Should Be Done?

1. **Expand Educational Outreach:** Classical languages should be integrated into school curricula, particularly in regions where these languages were historically spoken. For example, integrating Prakrit and Pali into university studies will help preserve these languages
2. **Digital Preservation:** Governments should prioritize digitizing ancient texts to make them widely available. Tamil, which has benefitted from extensive digitization efforts, serves as a good example of how this can be done
3. **Promote Public Awareness:** Cultural events, academic conferences, and community outreach programs should be organized to raise awareness about the importance of preserving classical languages. Collaboration with international universities can further expand research efforts

By addressing these challenges and implementing targeted initiatives, India can ensure the long-term preservation and flourishing of its classical languages, safeguarding its rich linguistic heritage for future generations.

Gig Workers in India – Challenges and Way Forward – Explained Pointwise

The Union Ministry of Labour and Employment is drafting a national law to incorporate gig workers into social security schemes. This move aims to provide benefits such as health insurance and retirement savings to gig workers, a growing segment in the Indian economy. The government plans to require aggregator companies to contribute 1-2% of their revenue to create a social security fund for gig workers. The proposed law will establish a welfare board model to create a fund for gig workers' social security.

In the light of this development, we need to analyse the present status and challenges faced by gig workers in India.

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What is the present status of gig economy and gig workers in India?

Gig workers include ridesharing drivers, food delivery couriers, parcel delivery etc.

As of now, India has around **7-8 million gig workers**, and this number is rapidly growing. NITI Aayog estimates that the numbers of gig workers could expand to 23.5 million by 2029–30.

The gig economy is expected to expand at a **Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 12%**, reaching **23-25 million workers by 2030**. This would mean that gig workers would make up **4.1% of India's total workforce** by that time.

A report by **Boston Consulting Group (BCG)** suggests that the gig economy could potentially create **90 million non-farm jobs**.

The gig economy could create 90 million non-farm jobs and contribute an additional 1.25% to India's GDP, reflecting its potential as a significant economic driver.

What are factors behind rapid growth of gig economy in India?

The COVID-19 Pandemic During the lockdowns, many traditional jobs were disrupted, pushing people to seek alternative employment opportunities. With companies moving toward remote work and freelancers offering essential services like food delivery, healthcare support, and logistics, the gig economy became a viable option for many.

Digital Revolution: India's rapid digitalization has been a game changer. The increased access to smartphones, affordable internet, and the rise of platforms like Zomato, Uber, Swiggy, and Ola have provided gig workers with more opportunities.

Changing Workforce Preferences: Today's workforce, particularly younger generations, prefer flexible work arrangements over traditional full-time employment. The gig economy offers workers autonomy, allowing them to manage their own schedules and choose tasks or projects based on their interests or needs.

Additional income: Due to increasing cost of living and inflations, many people, especially those in lower-income groups, are turning to gig work to supplement their earnings.

Business Demand for Cost-Effective Solutions: Companies, particularly startups and small businesses, are leveraging gig workers to reduce costs. Instead of hiring full-time employees, businesses can hire gig workers for specific projects or tasks.

Who are gig workers?

As per NITI Aayog, Gig workers are those engaged in livelihoods outside the traditional employer-employee arrangement. It classifies gig workers into platform and non-platform-based workers.

1. **Platform workers** are those whose work is based on online software apps or digital platforms.
2. **Non-platform gig workers** are generally casual wage workers in the conventional sectors, working part-time or full time.

The Code on Social Security, 2020 also defines gig workers as those engaged in livelihoods outside traditional employer-employee relationship.

Government initiatives for gig workers in India

Labour falls in the Concurrent List of the Constitution, meaning both the Centre and states have jurisdiction over the sector.

Code on Social Security, 2020: The Code on Social Security, 2020 provides for framing of suitable social security measures for gig workers and platform workers on matters relating to life and disability cover, accident insurance, health and maternity benefits, old age protection, etc. The Code also provides for setting up a Social Security Fund to finance the welfare scheme. Section 113 of the Code on Social Security, 2020 provides for registration of unorganized workers, gig workers and platform workers. However, Social Security Code passed by Parliament in 2020 hasn't been implemented yet because the rules are yet to be framed by all states.

e-shram Portal: Government of India has also launched an online portal – e-shram – for registration of all informal and gig workers.

Rajasthan Act: Rajasthan was the first state to introduce a law for gig workers, enacting the Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act on July 24, 2023. This law established a welfare board and unique IDs for workers, and a system to monitor payments through a Central Transaction Information and Management System (CTIMS).

Karnataka Act: Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Bill-2024 provides provisions against unjust dismissal of gig workers and a dispute resolution mechanism. The labour department will set up a welfare board and a welfare fund for the workers.

What are the downsides of non-recognition of gig workers as Traditional formal employees?

Currently, Indian labour and employment laws recognize three main categories of employees:

- 1) Government employees,
- 2) Employees in government-controlled corporate bodies known as Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)
- 3) Private sector employees who may be managerial staff or workmen.

All of the above formal employees are ensured certain working conditions, such as minimum wages under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, a set number of hours of work, compensation for termination, etc.

Since gig workers in India lack the 'employee' status under Indian law, it has resulted in several consequences, such as an inability to form unions to represent their interests, exploitative contracts, etc. Therefore, there is also an absence of any tripartite dialogue between the government, employer's organizations and gig worker's unions.

What are the lacunas in present initiatives of government?

Absence of traditional employee status: The Karnataka Bill and Rajasthan Act, like the Code on Social Security 2020, avoids defining employment relations in gig work by using "aggregator" instead of "employer,". It places them outside traditional employer-employee relationships, which limits their access to full labor rights and protections. This prevents the application of protective labor laws to gig workers.

Minimum wages: Institutional protection such as minimum wage protection are missing for gig workers. Occupational safety and health regulations do not apply for gig workers.

Welfare Boards shortcomings: Historically, welfare board models have been poorly implemented, as shown by the Construction Workers Welfare Act of 1996 and the Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, where available funds were underutilized.

Exclusion: Gig workers are not included under the Industrial Relations Code 2020 and are not covered under the dispute resolution mechanism.

Misuse of Power balance by employers: As per the ILO study, asymmetric relations of power and control between workers and platform companies lead to many issues. Not only are workers are working without legal status and safety nets, there has also been a gradual pullback of the incentive structure and income levels of workers which had motivated them to join the platform economy in the first place.

e-Shram portal: Like informal workers, gig workers are required to register themselves under the e-Shram portal through self-declaration.

Formal companies with informal workers: Many gig employers, as in some of the well-known companies, operate as formal entities within the formal sector. Therefore, exclusion of gig workers from the traditional employment framework is not justified.

Social Security Gap: The Social Security Code 2020 sets to provide gig workers with only certain social security schemes but not institutional social security, which is provided to formal employees. For example, under institutional social security coverage, formal workers get 26 weeks of paid leave along with job security for the

entire period of maternity under the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961. Whereas, under social security schemes, for maternity benefits, there is a cash benefit such as ₹5,000-₹10,000 for registered informal workers.

Low Compensation and platform related issues: Despite being easy to enter, many gig jobs offer inadequate compensation and lack the benefits typical of traditional employment. Platforms have multiple other issues like (a) Frequent and random changes to the commission structure, (b) Delays in payments, (c) Deliberate miscommunication of earnings potential to attract gig workers

Gender Disparities: Women in the gig economy face challenges such as limited career advancement, lack of bargaining power, and lower pay due to gender-based discrimination.

Bad treatment: Due to non-recognition of workers, food delivery workers are often treated badly by the restaurants and order placing stores and even by security guards of housing societies.

What should be done?

Defining Employment Relations: The article argues that the key to securing gig workers' rights lies in clearly defining the employment relationship between aggregators and gig workers. U.K. Supreme Court ruled in the Uber case, where Uber drivers were classified as workers and Uber was considered an employer. A similar approach in India could formalize gig work and provide workers with necessary protections.

NITI Aayog's recommendations for welfare of gig workers in India

Financial Inclusion: Access to institutional credit may be enhanced through financial products specifically designed for platform workers and those interested to set-up their own platforms.

Skill development: Platform-led models of skilling and job creation need to be promoted for the gig and platform sector. This will create avenues for horizontal and vertical mobility for workers to take up jobs in the gig and platform sector.

Enhancing Social Inclusion: Gender Sensitisation and Accessibility Awareness Programmes for workers and their families should be undertaken. Platform businesses can undertake partnerships with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to enable different sections of workers such as women workers and PwDs.

RAISE Framework

NITI Aayog has proposed a five-pronged RAISE approach to ensure realisation of full access to social security for all gig and platform workers.

Recognise the varied nature of platform work to design equitable schemes.

Allow augmentation of social security through innovative financing mechanisms.

Ensure benefits are readily accessible to workers.

Incorporate, while designing schemes, the specific interests of platforms, factoring the impact on job creation, platform businesses and workers.

Support workers to subscribe to government schemes and welfare programmes through widespread awareness campaigns.

Source: NITI Aayog

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UPSC Syllabus : GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy – Issues related to growth and employment

Source: [The Hindu](#)

India-Canada Relations and the Khalistan Issue- Concerns and Way Forward- Explained Pointwise

India's **expulsion of six Canadian diplomats** and **withdrawal of its High Commissioner** marks a significant rise of tensions in India-Canada relations. This diplomatic fallout raises concerns over potential economic impacts, including the **\$75 billion Canadian pension fund investments in India**, the **stalled trade agreement negotiations**, and **remittance flows** from Canada.

One of the prominent reasons for the deterioration of India-Canada relations has been the Khalistan movement, which seeks to establish a separate Sikh state in India. This issue has become particularly pronounced following the **assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar**, a Khalistani leader, in Canada, which Canadian Prime Minister Justin

The Khalistan Shadow over India Canada Relations over the years

During Militancy In Punjab

1982- Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau (Justin Trudeau's father) declined to extradite **Talwinder Singh Parmar** accused of killing two police officers in Punjab.

1984- In the aftermath of **Operation Bluestar** (launched by the Indian army to root out militants from the Golden Temple in June 1984) bolstered the Khalistan movement among the diaspora.

1985- Babbar Khalsa (Khalistan separatist organisation) orchestrated the **bombing of Air India Kanishka** in June 1985 which resulted in 331 civilian deaths.

Post 2015 Period

2015- Justin Trudeau's **proximity to individuals sympathetic to Khalistan's** cause strained bilateral relations.

2017- The then Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh refused to meet Canadian Defence Minister **Harjit Singh Sajjan**, accusing him of associating with separatists.

2018- India got aggravated when Jaspal Atwal convicted of attempting to assassinate an Indian Cabinet minister in 1986 was invited to dine with Trudeau during his Visit to India. Trudeau got a **cool reception** during his visit to India when he was received at the airport by Minister of State for Agriculture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat instead of PM Modi.

2019- The annual '**Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada**' released in December 2018, mentioned 'Sikh extremism' and Khalistan for the first time. However, in 2019 Canada revised the report just a day before Vaisakhi, **removing all mentions of Khalistan and Sikh extremism**.

2020- India accused **Trudeau of inciting extremists** when he expressed concerns about New Delhi's response to the farmers' protest and pledging support for their rights.

2022- In March 2022, Trudeau's Liberal Party formed an alliance with the New Democratic Party (NDP), led by **Jagmeet Singh**, who openly endorsed the Khalistan Referendum on Canadian soil.

2023- During the recent G20 summit in New Delhi, PM Modi conveyed '**strong concerns**' about '**continuing anti-India activities of extremist elements**' in Canada.

Trudeau attributed to Indian government agents. India has vehemently denied these allegations and accused Canada of harbouring Khalistani extremists, leading to a severe diplomatic rift between the two nations.

What is the history of India Canada Relations?

Establishment of Relations	India-Canada established diplomatic relations in 1947 . This relationship was to be built upon built shared traditions of democracy, pluralism and strong interpersonal connections.
Phase of Thaw and Deterioration in Political Domain	<p>India Canada relations witnessed deterioration in the political domain despite economic engagement, regular high-level interactions and long-standing people-to-people ties.</p> <p>Thaw in India Canada Political Relations</p> <p>Canada's support for Plebiscite in Kashmir- Canada supported a plebiscite in the Indian state of Kashmir in 1948.</p> <p>Canada's opposition to India's nuclear tests- In the aftermath of the nuclear tests, India's relations with Canada deteriorated as Canada recalled its high commissioner to India following the nuclear tests. India's reluctance to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) further widened the gulf between New Delhi and Ottawa for many years.</p> <p>Khalistan Issue- Relations between India and Canada have remained strained due to Canada's alleged leniency toward supporters of Khalistan.</p>
Phase of Renewal of Bonhomie	However, during the tenure of Conservative Party's Stephen Harper as Canadian PM from 2006 to 2015 , Canada and India enjoyed strong relations . This period was marked by 19 high-level visits from Canada to India and the joint celebration of 2011 as the Year of India in Canada. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Canada in 2015 was the first bilateral visit by an Indian PM since 1973 . India Canada relation was elevated from bilateral relation to a strategic partnership . The government hailed the visit with the assumption that decades of mistrust over the Khalistan issue could be brushed aside.
Phase of Deterioration	However, India Canada diplomatic relations have deteriorated further since 2015 due to the Khalistan protests that have increased in the recent times.

What are the concerns with the recent diplomatic fallout between India-Canada?

- 1. Impact on India Canada FTA-** The diplomatic rift has stalled discussions on a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement** between India and Canada, which was previously seen as a pathway to enhancing trade ties.
- 2. Impact on India Canada Trade Relations-** Canada contributes to around **1% to India's trade**, and also accounts for **25% of pulses** and **5% of fertilizer imports**. The recent fallout endangers the bilateral trade between the two countries.
- 3. Impact on Canadian Investment in India-** From 2020 to 2023, **Canada was the 18th-largest foreign investor in India, contributing \$3.31 billion**. Canadian pension funds, like the Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB) and Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec (CDPQ), have invested over **\$75 billion**

cumulatively. These funds hold stakes in major Indian companies like Kotak Mahindra Bank, Paytm, Zomato, and Infosys, viewing India as a prime investment destination. The recent fallout creates uncertainties around Canadian Investments in India.

4. Impact on Indian Remittances- India, the world's largest recipient of remittances, received **\$125 billion** in 2023, with Canada among the top 10 sources. In 2021-22, **Canada contributed 0.6% of India's remittances.**

5. Impact on mobility of Indian Students- Canada is a key destination for Indian students, with about **427,000 Indian Students studying in Canada.** There are concerns of mobility of students for studies in Canada.

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What is the Significance of India-Canada Relations?

1. Cooperation in Indo-Pacific- **Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy** has listed India an important partner in the Indo-Pacific region. It has marked out China as an "increasingly disruptive global power", while referring to India as a "critical partner" with shared traditions of democracy and pluralism.

2. Trade and commerce – India is Canada's tenth-largest trading partner. Bilateral trade between India and Canada stands at **USD 5 billion.** More than 400 Canadian companies have a presence in India and more than 1,000 companies are actively pursuing business in the Indian market. **Canadian pension funds** have pledged over USD 55 billion in investments between 2014 and 2020. Canada and India are working toward a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement and a Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA).**

[Figures in billion US Dollars]

Details	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
India's Exports	1.692	1.841	2.065	1.754	2.064	2.581
India's Imports	1.477	1.667	2.268	1.881	2.024	2.635
Total	3.169	3.508	4.333	3.635	4.088	5.216

[Source: Statistics Canada]

Source-Statistics Canada

3. Development Cooperation- Canada has invested nearly **\$24 million in 2018-2019** to support 75 projects in India through its Non profit organisations like Grand Challenges Canada.

4. Energy sector – India and Canada signed a **Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (NCA)** in 2010 for which a Joint Committee on Civil Nuclear Cooperation was constituted by both the countries. Uranium supply deal has been signed during PM Modi's visit in 2015.

5. S&T and Space- **ISRO and CSA (Canadian Space Agency)** have signed MOUs for cooperation in the field of exploration and utilisation of outer space. **ANTRIX**, the Commercial arm of ISRO, has launched many Canadian Satellites.

6. Education Sector- Since 2018, India has been the largest source country for international students in Canada. This has helped Canadian universities and colleges to provide **subsidised education to domestic students**.

7. Indian Diaspora- Canada hosts one of the largest Indian diaspora in the world numbering **1.6 million (PIOs and NRIs)** which account for more than 3% of its total population. The diaspora has done commendably well in every sector in Canada. In the field of politics, the present House of Common (total strength of 338) has 22 Members of Parliament of Indian-origin.

What are the other challenges in the Relations between the two countries?

1. Khalistani separatist factor- It is the single most important challenge between India and Canada. The **Canadian government's Policy of balancing the Sikh assertions and its relations with India**, has jeopardised the India Canada Relations.

2. Attacks on Indian Consulates and Indian Diaspora- The attacks on **Non-Sikh Indian Diaspora, Indian Consulates and Temples** have further strained the India Canada Relations.

3. Trade Challenges- Structural impediments such as complex labour laws, market protectionism, and bureaucratic regulations have been roadblocks for Indo-Canadian trade relations. Bilateral agreements, such as the **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** and **Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements (BIPPA)**, have been in negotiation for long time and no progress has been reached by both the countries. Before the G20 summit, the Canadian government **independently halted trade negotiations** with India. All these have contributed to low Indo-Canadian trade.

4. Close relationship of China and Canada- There is a close relationship between the current federal government of Canada and the Chinese Communist Party's government. This has also strained India-China relation.

What Should be the way forward?

In recent times, Government of India has effectively conveyed to Canada that they **cannot simultaneously have** good relations with India while allowing anti-India separatist movements on their soil.

1. Constructive and Sustained Engagement- India will have to build a **constructive and sustained engagement** with the Sikh diaspora, **dispel the misinformation** propagated by the Khalistani separatists and showcase the sense of contentment prevailing in Punjab.

2. New Framework of Cooperation- There is a need to develop a **new framework of cooperation** that is more pragmatic and that emphasises on mutually beneficial areas, such as **trade, energy, infrastructure and transport**, for better Indo-Canadian relations.

3. Dehypenation- India and Canada must **dehypenate** their political contestations over the Khalistan issue and their trade and investment relations. Both the countries must look to be back on the trade negotiations table back soon to **finalise the Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** between the two countries.

4. Civil Society and Track II Diplomacy- India and Canada must encourage civil society organisations and **Track II diplomacy** initiatives to foster people-to-people connections, dialogue, and conflict resolution efforts.

5. Media and Public Diplomacy- Promotion of **responsible reporting** to ensure that media coverage and public discourse accurately reflect the complexities of the relationship and the efforts being made to strengthen it.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Effects of policies of Developed and Developing countries on India

Global Hunger Index and India-Explained Pointwise

Recently, Global Hunger Index 2024 was released by **Concern Worldwide** (Irish NGO) and **Welt Hunger Hilfe** (German NGO). India has been placed at **105th position out of 127** countries. In the Global Hunger Index(GHI) 2023, India was placed at 111th position out of 125 countries.



The report highlights the **failure of the Indian state to provide adequate food and nutrition**, which are crucial for capitalizing on its demographic potential. The paradox between high food production (332 million tonnes in 2023-24) and persistent malnutrition highlights systemic issues in India's healthcare and social safety net systems.



What is Global Hunger Index, and what is its methodology?

Global Hunger Index(GHI)- The GHI is a tool designed to comprehensively measure and track hunger at global, regional and national levels.

Methodology of Calculation of GHI

The GHI score of each country is calculated based on a formula combining **four indicators** that together capture the multidimensional nature of hunger.

S.No.	Indicators	Description	Logo
1	Undernourishment	The share of the population with insufficient caloric intake	
2	Child stunting	The share of children under age five who have low height for their age . Reflects chronic under nutrition .	

3	Child wasting	The share of children under age five who have low weight for their height . Reflects acute under nutrition .	
4	Child mortality	The share of children who die before their fifth birthday . Reflects the fatal mix of inadequate nutrition and unhealthy environments.	

Why has the Methodology of Global Hunger Index been criticised by the Indian Government in the past?

Indian Government has rejected the methodology of Global Hunger Index in the past. It has called it a flawed measurement of “hunger” that does not reflect India’s true position. Government of India’s criticism are as follows-

- 1. Use of Child Centric Indicators to determine overall hunger-** The government contends that **three indicators**(Child stunting, Child Wasting & Child Mortality) of the **four indicators** used in the GHI calculation **pertain solely to child health**. Govt has argued that such indicators cannot accurately represent the entire population’s hunger status.
- 2. Calculation of Undernourishment-** The significant indicator-‘Proportion of Undernourished population’-relies on a **limited opinion poll of only 3,000 individuals**. Govt of India has challenged the legitimacy of drawing nationwide conclusions from such a limited sample size.
- 3. Use of Child Mortality as an indicator-** Use of Child mortality as an indicator of GHI is based on the assumption that Child mortality is directly linked to hunger. However government has challenged this assumption. Govt has asserted that child mortality is influenced by multifaceted factors, making it an **insufficient metric** for evaluating hunger levels.
- 4. GHI data contradicts with Poshan Tracker Data of Indian govt-** The government has highlighted a **significant disparity** between the GHI 2023’s data of 18.7% child wasting rate and Poshan Tracker’s data of ~7.2% child wasting rate.

What are the causes of Hunger in India?

Despite Indian Government’s categorical rejection of the methodology of Global Hunger Index, we can not be oblivious to the presence of hunger and malnutrition in the country. Government of India’s NHFS data has

confirmed the presence of large number of Wasted and stunted Children. Listed below are the reasons for the hunger and malnutrition in India-

- 1. Declining agriculture output from small and marginal holdings-** Almost **50 million households in India** are dependent on small and marginal holdings. However the agricultural productivity of these holdings is declining due to reduced soil fertility, fragmented lands and fluctuating market prices.
- 2. Declining income levels-** The **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2017-18** has revealed that rural unemployment stood is at 6.1 per cent, which is the highest since 1972-73. These have adverse effects on the capacity to buy adequate food, especially when food prices have been on the rise.
- 3. Ineffective implementation of PDS scheme-** PDS scheme is not functioning well in many states due to **corruption and inclusion errors**.
- 4. Protein hunger-** Pulses are a major panacea to address protein hunger. However, there is a **lack of budgetary allocation** for inclusion of pulses in PDS. Also there is no inclusion of eggs in the mid-day meal menus of many states.
- 5. Micro-nutrient deficiency (hidden hunger)-** India faces a severe crisis in micro-nutrient deficiency due to **poor dietary intakes, prevalence of diseases & non-fulfilment of increased micro-nutrient needs** during pregnancy and lactation.

Read More- [7 PM Archives](#)

What steps have been taken by Government to reduce hunger in India?

Government of India has taken the following steps to fight the hunger and malnutrition in India-

- 1. Implementation of National Food Security Act 2013-** It has legally entitled 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population to receive **subsidized food grains** under the Targeted Public Distribution System.
- 2. Launch of POSHAN Abhiyan-** It has been launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2018. It targets to reduce **stunting, under nutrition, anaemia** (among young children, women and adolescent girls).
- 3. Food Fortification Programs-** Food Fortification or Food Enrichment is the **addition of key vitamins and minerals** such as iron, iodine, zinc, Vitamin A & D to staple foods such as rice, milk and salt to improve their nutritional content. Food fortification has been launched by the government to fight the micro-nutrient deficiency(hidden hunger).
- 4. Eat Right India Movement-** An outreach activity organised by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) for citizens to nudge them towards **healthy eating**.

What should be the way forward to fight hunger in India?

Listed below are the recommendations of the Global Hunger Report that should be implemented to fight hunger and malnutrition in India.

- 1. Focus on small and marginal holdings-** A renewed focus on small and marginal holdings is imperative as it would ensure **food security** in the country.

2. Dietary supplements in Mid day meals- Mid-day meals in Anganwadis and Schools must **include dietary supplements** so as to reduce micro-nutrient deficiency.

3. Give boost to rural employment schemes- Rural employment schemes such as **MGNREGA** should be given a boost to increase employment and wages. This will enable the rural population to ensure their food security.

4. Streamline PDS System- Access to food grains under the PDS needs to be streamlined by **simplifying technical processes** and reducing **Aadhaar-related glitches**. Also 'One Nation One ration Card' scheme's implementation must be thoroughly monitored.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2 Issues related to poverty and Hunger

SC ruling on Section 6A of citizenship act- Explained Pointwise

The Supreme Court (SC) of India has **upheld the constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act** in a 4-1 verdict. SC has upheld the process for **granting citizenship to migrants who entered Assam** before March 24, 1971. This verdict resolves a long-standing debate on the status of foreigners in Assam. The issue has **historically sparked agitation and violence**, especially during the Assam Movement in the 1970s and 1980s. This ruling not only impacts Assam but also addresses broader questions related to citizenship and Parliament's authority in the matters of citizenship.

ASSAM ACCORD CLAUSE 5 & CITIZENSHIP

IN 1979, All Assam Students Union (AASU) began an agitation demanding the identification and deportation of "illegal foreigners", predominantly from Bangladesh. The agitation went on for six years, culminating with the historic Assam Accord between the Central and state governments, and the leaders of the Assam Movement.

CLAUSE 5 of the Accord, which discussed the "Foreigners Issue", set January 1, 1966 as the "base date and year" for the "purposes of detection and deletion [from electoral rolls] of foreigners". Those who arrived after this date but up to March 24, 1971, would "have their names deleted

from electoral rolls" for 10 years, after which their names would be restored.

IN 1985, in order to give effect to the Assam Accord, Section 6A was introduced in The Citizenship Act, 1955. The petitioners argued that this section was arbitrary and discriminatory, as it applied only to Assam.

THE CAA, 2019, introduced another group-specific section, Section 6B, in The Citizenship Act, which set December 31, 2014 as the cutoff date for Hindu, Christian, Sikh, Parsi, Buddhist, and Jain migrants from the Muslim majority countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan.

Assam Accord.

Source- The Indian Express

What is Assam Accord and Section 6A of the Citizenship Act?

Assam Accord 1985	The Assam Accord of 1985, is an agreement between the Rajiv Gandhi government and the All Assam Students' Union. This accord aimed to address the influx of migrants by setting a cut-off date for citizenship.
Section 6A added to the Citizenship Act for Codification of Assam Accord	Section 6A of the Citizenship act codified the Assam Accord of 1985. The broad provisions of the section 6A of the citizenship act are mentioned below- 1. Identification of Foreigners- It set January 1,1966 as the base date for identification of "foreigners" and their removal from electoral rolls. 2. Application for Indian Citizenship- Section 6A allows migrants of Indian origin who entered Assam between January 1, 1966, and March 25, 1971, to apply for Indian citizenship.
Section 6B introduced by the CAA,2019	Section 6B of the Citizenship Act has been added by the CAA,2019. It introduces another group specific provision in the Citizenship Act. It sets December 31, 2014, as the cut-off date of citizenship for Hindu, Christian, Sikh, Parsi, Buddhist and Jain Migrants from the Muslim majority countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan.

The majority judges, which includes Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud and Justices Surya Kant, M.M. Sundresh, and Manoj Misra, upheld Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955. Justice J.B. Pardiwala dissented in the verdict.

What were the arguments against Section 6A of the Citizenship Act?

- 1. Violation of the citizenship provisions-** Petitioners argued that **Section 6A** was violative of the constitutional provisions on citizenship provided by **Article 6** and **7** of the Constitution, which govern citizenship for those who migrated from Pakistan.
- 2. Violation of Right to Equality-** Petitioners contended that Section 6A violated the Right to Equality by **granting citizenship only to migrants in Assam** while excluding other border states.
- 3. Arbitrary cut-off date-** The critics held that the cut-off date of March 24, 1971 for providing citizenship was arbitrary.
- 4. Violation of the right of Cultural preservation-** The petitioners argued that granting citizenship to migrants violated the rights of Assamese people under **Article 29(1)** of the Constitution, which protects the **right to conserve their distinct culture.**
- 5. Facilitation of external aggression-** The petitioners also argued that Section 6A facilitated "**external aggression**" by allowing illegal immigration, citing the court's previous ruling in *Sarbananda Sonowal vs Union of India (2005)*.
- 6. Violation of national fraternity-** Petitioners argued that India's Constitution **supports national fraternity instead of global fraternity.**

What is the Supreme Court Verdict in upholding Section 6A of the Citizenship Act?

- 1. Section 6A in-violative of Article 6 and 7-** SC held that **Articles 6 and 7** applied only to **citizenship at the time of the Constitution's commencement** in 1950, whereas **Section 6A** dealt with later migrants. SC also held that Section 6A aligned with the intent behind Articles 6 and 7, which aimed to protect the rights of Partition-affected migrants.
- 2. Section 6A in-violative of Right to equality-** SC has held that Assam's unique demographic and political situation, including the Assam Movement, **justified separate treatment in the form of Section 6-A**. The court emphasized that the migrant influx had a greater impact on Assam's smaller population and cultural fabric than in other states.
- 3. Endorsement of the Cut-off Date of March 24, 1971-** The court held that the cut-off date, aligned with the **Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act of 1983** and, marked the day Pakistan's military began **Operation Searchlight**, targeting the nationalist movement in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). SC held that the migrants who arrived before this operation were **considered part of the Partition-era migration**, which India had previously handled with a liberal policy.
- 4. Section 6-A in violative of the right of Cultural Preservation-** SC has held that changes in demography do not automatically infringe upon cultural rights.
- 5. Section 6-A is in alignment with India's fraternity goals-** SC rejected the petitioners restricted view of fraternity. SC has held that **fraternity in the Indian context is more broad based and inclusive**, and is aligned with social justice goals.
- 6. Section 6-A does not amount to external aggression-** SC held that Section 6A offers a '**controlled and regulated**' approach to migration, and does not amount to external aggression.

Read More- [7 PM editorial](#)

What is the Significance of the SC Verdict?

- 1. First comprehensive judicial examination of citizenship-** The SC verdict on the constitutionality of section 6A the first **comprehensive judicial examination** of citizenship under the Indian Constitution.
- 2. Liberal and broad view of citizenship-** The Supreme court has rejected the narrow interpretation of citizenship based on cultural exclusivity. The verdict has, reinforced that **citizenship is a broad, plural concept**.
- 3. Right of culture conservation must be viewed in the framework of multiculturalism-** The constitutional right to conserve culture must be **interpreted within the framework of India's multiculturalism**.
- 4. Upholds Parliament's Authority Over Citizenship Laws-** SC has upheld the Parliament's authority under Entry 17 of the Union List and Article 11, which grants it broad powers to make laws related to citizenship.

What are the concerns that remain with Section 6A?

- 1. Ineffective implementation-** SC has acknowledged that the **intention of Section 6A to restrict illegal immigration** after 1971 **has not been effectively implemented**. This has led to potential injustices.

2. Clash of Section 6A with section 6B- The CAA introduces Section 6B in the citizenship Act, which provides citizenship to non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh who entered India before December 31, 2014. Section 6B cut-off date could clash with the **March 25, 1971 cut-off date in Assam**, which has been upheld by the Supreme Court in Section 6-A verdict.

3. Lack of proper citizenship granting mechanism- There are concerns due to the lack of proper citizenship granting mechanism to those who **migrated** between **January 1, 1966**, and **March 24, 1971**.

4. Ineffectiveness of Section 6A- Section 6A has become ineffective over time due to the absence of a fixed timeframe for identifying and removing migrants from electoral rolls.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's ruling upholds the 1971 cut-off date for citizenship in Assam and emphasizes an inclusive interpretation of citizenship based on fraternity and plurality. However, the decision also leaves unresolved issues regarding the treatment of post-1971 migrants and how this will interact with the CAA's provisions. These questions will likely shape future legal and political debates on citizenship in India.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Issues related to Fundamental rights

Issues related to child marriages in India- Explained Pointwise

The Supreme Court of India has asked the Parliament to consider **banning child betrothals** (**marriages fixed in the minority of a child**) by amending the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act** (PCMA) of 2006. The Supreme Court has held that **marriages fixed in the minority of a child** violate their 'free choice' and 'childhood', and infringe on a child's rights to autonomy and self-agency.

A three-judge bench presided by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud held that international law, such as the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** (CEDAW), also stipulates against betrothals of minors.

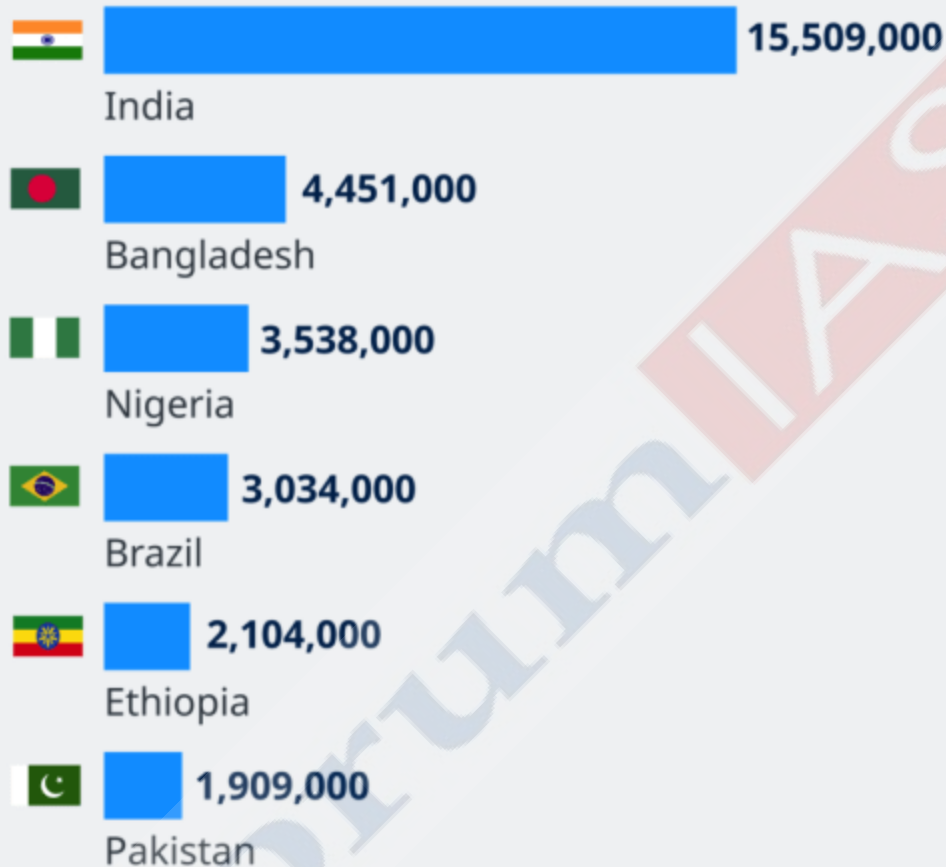
What is Child Marriage? What is the status of Child Marriage in India?

Child Marriage- Child marriage is defined as a marriage of a girl or boy before the age of 18. It includes both formal marriages and informal unions in which children under the age of 18 live with a partner as if married.

Status of Child Marriage

Global	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> About 40 million girls ages 15-19 are currently married or in a union worldwide. The Global Girlhood Report by Save the Children estimates that an additional 5 million girls are at risk of child marriage globally between 2020 and 2025, as a result of reported increases in all types of gender-based violence due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Save the Children, about 15 million girls and boys will never return to school following pandemic lockdowns and school closures. Children who don't come back to school are at greater risk of early marriage, child labour and recruitment into the armed forces.
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Countries with the highest number of child marriages*

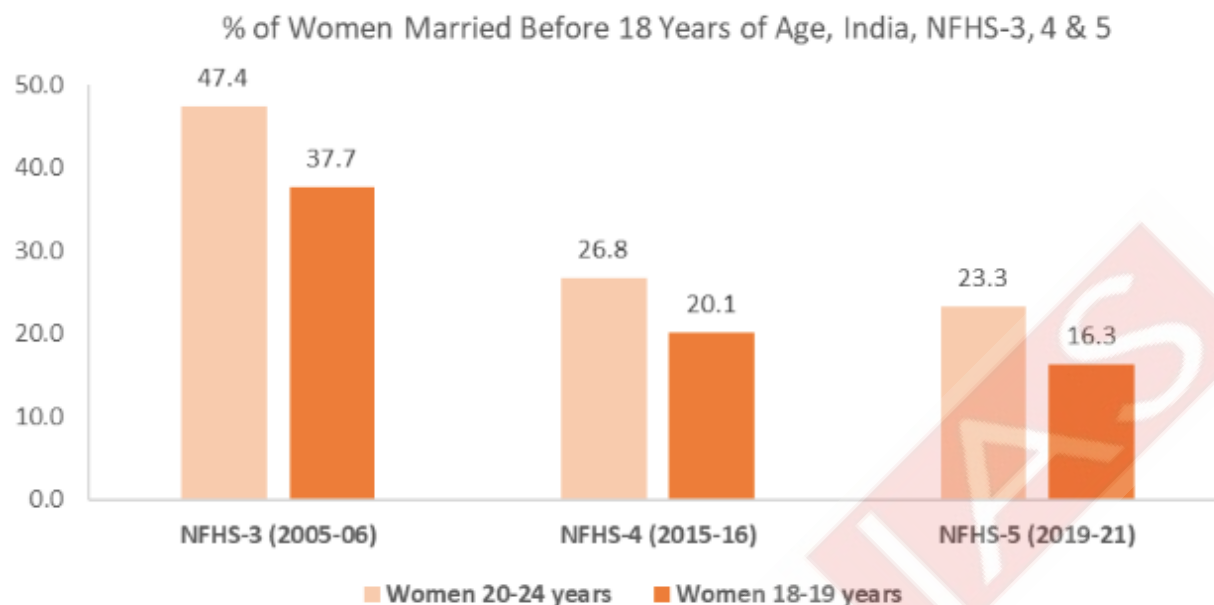


Source: Population data from United Nations |
*Women who were first married or in a union before they were 18-years-old

Source- UNICEF

India

1. According to the NHFS-5 data, child marriages in India have significantly decreased from **47%** to **23.3%** between 2015 and 2021, due to several measures such as Prevention of Child Marriage Act.
2. 8 States have a higher prevalence of child marriage than the national average, which includes states such as West Bengal, Bihar, and Tripura.
3. According to **UNICEF**, at least **5 million girls under 18 get married in India**. This makes India the **home to the largest number of child brides** in the world, accounting for **~33% of the global total**. Nearly 16% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 are currently married.



What are the harmful impacts of Child Marriage?

1. Violation of Child Rights- Child marriage violates the **right to education, right to health and right to be safe from physical and mental violence, sexual abuse, rape, and sexual exploitation**. It also robs the children their **right to freedom to choose their partner and life path**.

2. Social marginalisation and isolation- Early marriages deprive girls of their childhood and force them into social isolation. Similarly, boys who marry early are pressured to take on family responsibilities prematurely.

3. Increases Illiteracy- Child brides are often taken out of school and not allowed to get further education. This increases the illiteracy in India.

4. Breeds Intergenerational Cycle of Poverty- Child marriage **negatively affects the economy** and can lead to an intergenerational cycle of poverty. Girls and boys married as children more likely lack the **skills, knowledge, and job prospects** needed to lift their families out of poverty. Early marriage leads girls to have children earlier and more children over their lifetime, **increasing economic burden on the household**.

5. Health Issues-

(a) **Stunted Children-** Children born to adolescent mothers have a greater **possibility of seeing stunted growth** (According to NFHS-5, prevalence of child stunting is 35.5%).

(b) **Premature Pregnancy-** Child marriage leads to **pregnancy at a younger age**, with women having more than one child before their mind and bodies are ready.

(c) **Maternal Mortality-** Girls under 15 are **five times more likely to die** during childbirth or pregnancy. The leading cause of death for girls ages 15 to 19 around the world is pregnancy-related deaths

(d) **Infant Mortality-** Babies born to mothers younger than 20 have almost **75% higher death rates** than babies born to mothers older than 20 years. The children who do make it are more likely to be born premature and with a low birth weight.

(e) **Mental health-** Abuse and violence can lead to PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and depression.

What are the reasons for prevalence of Child Marriage?

Child marriage has strong roots in culture, economics, and religion.

- 1. Poverty-** Poor Families 'sell' their children through marriage to pay off debts or to get out of the cycle of poverty.
- 2. "Protecting" the Girl's Sexuality-** In some cultures, marrying a girl young is thought to "protect" the girl's sexuality and the family's honour.
- 3. Customs and Traditions-** The prevalence of customary practices like dowry also leads to an increase in child marriage. Generally, the amount of dowry rises with age of the girl (beyond a certain limit). So families prefer to marry their girls young.
- 4. Security-** Parents often marry their daughters off young to "secure" a good future for them. Abuse, rape, and other crimes against girls, also makes parents turn to child marriage as a way to protect their daughters.
- 5. Discrimination based on gender-** Child marriage is a manifestation of discrimination against girls and women. According to a UNICEF report on 'Child Marriage and the Law', child marriage a major manifestation of gender based discrimination.
- 6. Laxity in Implementation of Laws-** Laxity in implementation of laws like the Prevention of Child Marriage Act, 2006, non-registration of marriages, also increase the child marriage in India.

What steps have been taken to check Child Marriage?

Historical Efforts	In 19th Century, the social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Pandita Ramabai worked for uprooting this evil practice. The Sharda Act passed in 1929 raised the age of marriage to 14 years for girls and 18 years for boys.
Legislative Steps	The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 prescribes age for marriage as 18 for girls and 21 for boys . Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006- This law replaced the Child Marriage Restraints Act, 1929. It criminalizes the acts of the person who performs, conducts, directs or abets any child marriage and provides for punishment with an imprisonment up to 2 years and fine up to INR 1 lakh . Protection to a child bride is also provided by the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 ; the Domestic Violence Act, 2005 ; and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 .
Government Policies	Union Government- Under the National Population Policy 2000 and National Youth Policy 2003 , steps have been taken by the central government to address child marriage. The Union Government has launched schemes like the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao , Sukanya Samridhi Yojana for child marriage prevention. State Governments- Rajasthan has started the Action Approach for the Reduction of Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy. West Bengal's Kanyashree Scheme and Rupashree schemes are also aimed at elimination of child marriage.

What should be the approach going ahead?

- 1. Empowering the Girl Child**- The Governments should take all possible steps to improve access to education for girls, like **providing schools with proper sanitation facilities** and **Incentivising increased enrolment in school**.
- 2. Proper Implementation of Laws**- Village Panchayats must work closely with the **Child Protection Committees** and **Child Marriage Prohibition Officers** to prevent instances of child marriages.
- 3. Social Change**- There is a need to sensitize the parents and society about the ills of child marriage. Rallying the wider community to stand up for girls' rights will help bring the change.
- 4. Financial Upliftment**- Providing families with livelihood opportunities like **microfinance** loans is an effective way to prevent child marriages that occur as a result of financial stress.

Conclusion

Child marriage spells an end to childhood, deprives children of their rights and leads to negative consequences for society. The efforts of the Union and State Governments, NGOs have led to a sharp decline in the instances of child marriages. However, all stakeholders should continue their efforts till this evil practice is eliminated completely.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 1- Issues related to women

Phasing out coal in India – Rationale and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

According to a study by environment and climate change research think-tank iForest (International Forum for Environment, Sustainability, and Technology), India would require **over \$1 trillion or Rs. 84 lakh crores over the next 30 years**, for phasing out coal in India. According to the report, **coal will remain central to India's energy mix for at least another decade**, and phasing out coal in India poses a massive challenge.

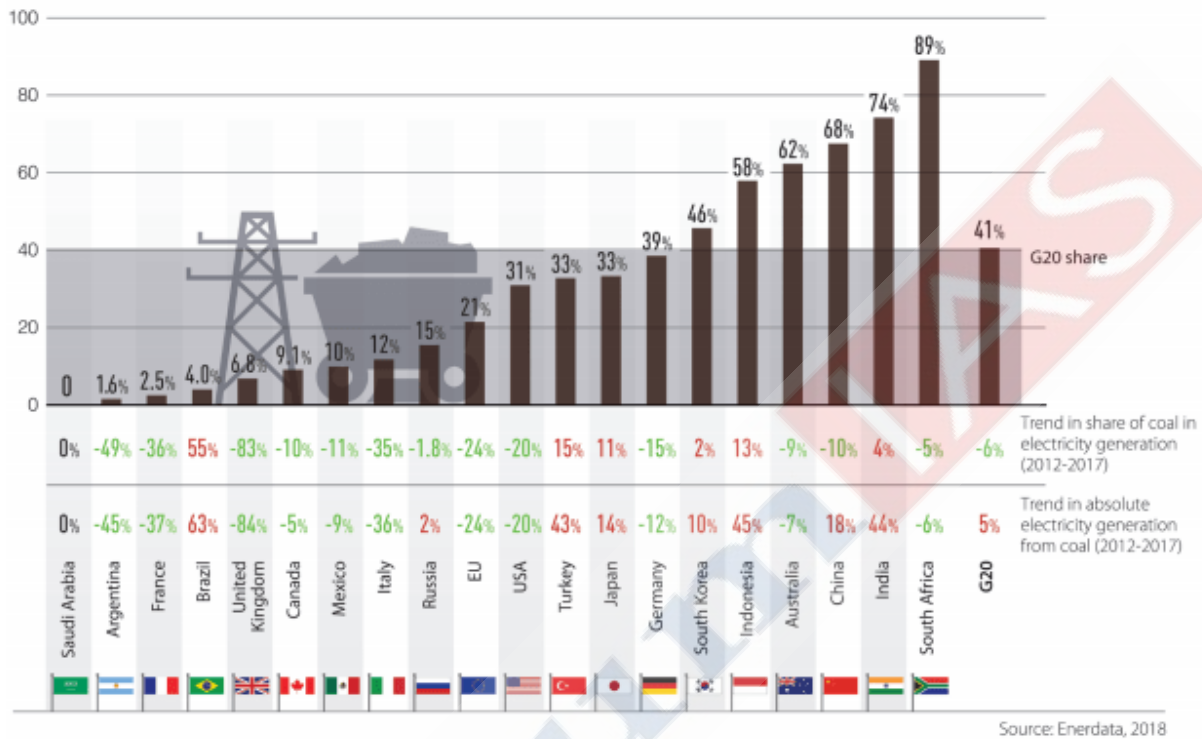
According to **The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)**, India needs to phase out coal altogether by 2050, to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. This is due to the fact that **coal remains the most important and abundant fossil fuel** in India. However, with India having the **2nd largest coal share in electricity generation globally**, and with **94 GW of coal-based power plants** under planning and under construction in India, there remain substantial challenges in phasing out of coal in India.

What is the status of coal usage around the world and in India?

<p>Coal usage in the World</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. China alone accounts for nearly half of the world's coal consumption. The G20 countries accounted for 85% of global coal exports in 2017. The major exporters include Australia (37% of global coal exports), Indonesia (16%), Russia (12%). So phasing out coal will impact their coal export revenue and create associated job loss etc. About 30% of the primary energy supply of the G20 countries depends on coal. Countries like the UK, Italy, France, the European Union, the United States
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show strong commitment and reduction in coal usage due to policies, such as **pre-retiring coal plants**, the **introduction of the carbon tax**.

The following image shows the share of coal in electricity generation in 2017.



Source- Enerdata

Coal usage in India

- India is currently the **second-largest producer of coal globally**.
- India holds the **5th biggest coal reserves** in the world. Around **7% of the world's proven coal reserves are located in India**.
- Coal sector accounts for more than **48.3% of India's energy mix**. While on the other hand, renewable energy accounts for around 44.3% of India's energy mix.
- India is also the **3rd biggest coal importer among G20 countries**. Further, India also accounts for 12% of global coal imports. According to the monthly production pattern of the Ministry of Coal, the Majority of Coal was used in Power production and Captive Power Plant(CPP).

➤ **Installed Generation Capacity (Fuelwise) as on 31.08.2024 :**

Category	Installed Generation Capacity (MW)	% Share in Total	
Fossil Fuel	Coal	2,10,970	46.8%
	Lignite	6,620	1.5%
	Gas	24,818	5.5%
	Diesel	589	0.1%
	Total Fossil Fuel :	2,42,997	53.9%
Non-Fossil Fuel	RES (Incl. Hydro)	1,99,583	44.3%
	Hydro	46,928	10.4%
	Wind, Solar & Other RE	1,52,654	33.9%
	Wind	47,192	10.5%
	Solar	89,432	19.8%
	BM Power/Cogen.	10,355	2.3%
	Waste to Energy	604	0.1%
	Small Hydro Power	5,071	1.1%
	Nuclear	8,180	1.8%
Total Non-Fossil Fuel :	2,07,763	46.1%	
Total Installed Capacity (Fossil Fuel & Non-Fossil Fuel)	4,50,760	100%	

What is the need for phasing out coal?

- Mitigation of the impact of Climate Change** – According to the IPCC’s Special Report Global Warming of 1.5 °C, phase out of coal by 2050 is necessary to limit global warming to 1.5 °C.
- Health benefits** – Coal is a major contributor to air pollution, and is **responsible for more than 800,000 premature deaths per year globally**. Phase out of coal will reduce millions of cases of serious and minor illness.
- Reduction of negative economic implications**- The phasing out of coal in India will reduce the negative economic implications associated with the use of coal, such as **increased healthcare costs** and **a higher number of lost working days**.
- Energy independence and fiscal benefits** – Reduction of coal imports promotes energy independence, and improves the balance of payments. Further, it also helps to reduce geopolitical tensions in purchasing coal. **For ex- India can reduce importing coal and save on its Forex reserves.**

5. Lower costs of renewable energy – Renewable energy is rapidly emerging as a lower cost option for new power generation. It is estimated that by 2025, electricity generation from new renewable energy infrastructure will get cheaper than power generation from new coal infrastructure.

What are the challenges in phasing out coal in India?

Phasing out the entire coal sector in India is a complex issue. There are many associated issues involved in phasing out coal. These are mentioned below-

1. Deprivation of the geographic advantage of resource-rich state- According to the **Geological Survey of India**, India has **319.02 Billion tonnes (BT)** of **cumulative coal reserves in India**. Out of these, **219.65 BT** (68% of total reserves) are present in only 3 states- **Jharkhand, Orissa, and Chhattisgarh**. Phasing out coal will reduce their economic capacity, as the entire economy of these states is dependent upon coal for other developments.

2. Huge Job cuts/losses- According to a PIB press release, public sector coal-producing entities alone **employ a workforce of 3,69,053 individuals** and **many more individuals are employed in the private sector, thermal power plants that run on coal, transportation, logistics**. Phasing out coal in India will create a huge job loss across the sector.

3. Reduction in Taxes- In FY20, the Centre alone collected **approximately Rs 29,200 crore** in **GST compensation cess from coal**. Phasing out coal will impact India's tax collection.

4. The economic influence of coal in freight movement- Coal alone accounts for around **40 percent of the total freight revenue in Indian Railways and trucks**. So, phasing out coal will reduce the logistical revenue of India.

5. Stranded assets risk- Economic shifts and policy changes may turn coal-fired power plants into stranded assets(non-performing assets). This will rapidly **decrease their value**, or may turn them into liabilities.

6. Economic Cost in phasing out- The German coal phaseout plan calls for an **investment of more than 50 billion euros for mining and plant operators**. Similar investment is not feasible in India.

What initiatives have been taken for phasing out Coal Worldwide?

Germany	Germany has enacted laws to phase out coal power by 2038 , and has sanctioned an outlay of over \$55 billion euros to close coal mines and coal-powered plants, while supporting development of coal dependent regions.
South Africa	South Africa's Just Energy Transition Investment Plans (JET-IP) , will receive financial support for phasing down coal from the UK, France, Germany, the US, the European Union, the Netherlands, and Denmark. A bulk of the finance will be for green energy investments.

What should be the Way Ahead for India?

1. Deployment of clean energy on a mass scale- According to The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), If India needs to achieve a net-zero greenhouse gas emissions target, then the share of renewables in the power mix needs to climb to 90%.

2. Focus on energy efficiency- Instead of phasing out coal immediately, India can move towards energy-efficient buildings, lighting, appliances, and industrial practices. This will help faster phase-out of coal in the future. The government has to encourage all states and UTs to make their respective carbon-neutral plan. **For ex- Carbon-neutral plan of UT of Ladakh and Sikkim state.**

3. Carbon sequestration plans- India needs to develop both natural and man-made Carbon Sequestration practices. The **use of biofuels** can help reduce emissions from light commercial vehicles, tractors in agriculture.

4. Public funding- Public funding, through **grants** and **subsidies**, and private investments in green energy plants and infrastructure will help in phasing out coal.

5. Proper use of DMF and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds- India has nearly **\$4 billion** in district mineral foundations funds. This fund can be used as a resource, along with CSR funds, for supporting new businesses in coal districts, and to support communities.

Phasing out coal is essential not only for India but for all countries. But developed countries that started their Industrialisation by burning coal has to adopt the **Common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities** (CBDR-RC) for phasing out coal. This will not only provide adequate time for developing countries like India and Least Developed Countries but also fix their responsibility also.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)
UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Environment

Ageing Population in South India- Concerns and Way Forward- Explained Pointwise

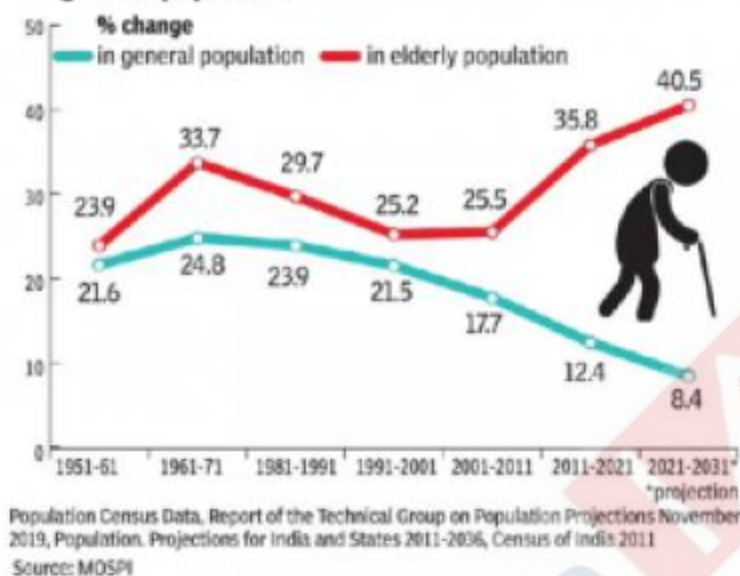
There are emerging concerns in South India **regarding the fall in fertility rates** and its ageing population. Recently, the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu announced that his government is working on a **law to incentivize families to have more children**. There are concerns amongst the **Southern states** that **smaller populations might reduce their political representation in Parliament** after future constituency delimitation.

What are the latest trends on the ageing population in South India?

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

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

Decadal growth in elderly population compared to that of general population



Source- MoSPI

Latest Projections regarding the regional variation in ageing population

With the 2021 Census delayed, the latest population projections from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare show a **rapidly ageing population across India**. According to the projections, the percentage of people aged 60 and above is expected to have a significant rise in Southern states like **Andhra Pradesh** and **Kerala**, where the fertility rate dropped earlier than in Northern states like **Uttar Pradesh**.

Key Data of the Report of MoH&FW

- 1. India's population increase-** India's population will grow by **31.1 crore** between 2011 and 2036, out of which **17 crore people will be added by just five north Indian states** of Bihar, UP, Maharashtra, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh.
- 2. Low contribution to population increase by Southern States-** The Southern states of **AP, Karnataka, Kerala, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu**, will contribute only **2.9 crore**, or **9%** to the population increase.
- 3. Increase in Share of Elderly population in India-** The elderly population (60+) will double from **10 crore in 2011 to 23 crore by 2036**. The share of elderly will rise from **8.4% to 14.9%**.
- 4. Regional Differences in Ageing Trends-** In Southern state of Kerala, the elderly population will be **25% of the states' population by 2036**. While the states like UP will remain younger, with elderly making up **12% of the population of the state by 2036**.

Why is the ageing population a cause of concern for Southern States?

1. Economic Burden on the state exchequer- A larger elderly population **increases the dependency ratio** (fewer working-age individuals needing to support a growing number of retirees). A rapidly ageing population will **put pressure on state resources for the support of the elderly population**.

2. Reduction in Labour productivity- The rapid ageing of population, leads to a **smaller proportion of working age population**. This can potentially lead to **labour shortages** and **reduce the economic productivity** of the South Indian states.

3. Concerns regarding the lower political representation- Southern states of India have transitioned to lower fertility rates earlier. There are fears that they **may lose parliamentary seats after constituency delimitation**, while Northern states with **larger populations could gain more seats**.

4. Increased Healthcare Costs- There are concerns of increase in the pressure on the healthcare systems in Southern states, as it would require investment in **geriatric care, hospitals, and nursing facilities**.

5. Inadequate Infrastructure for Elderly Care- Many Southern states lack the sufficient institutional support to cater to the growing elderly population, such as **assisted living facilities** or **elderly homes**.

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

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

2. Generational Link- The elderly citizens provide a **vital generational link** for the upcoming generation, such as **providing support** and **stability to families and society at large**. **For ex- Grandparents in joint families** provide a **crucial link for transferring values and morals** to the younger generation.

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

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

What are the Challenges Faced by Elderly Population in India?

Social Challenges

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

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

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

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

Economic and Financial Challenges

- 1. Lack of Income & Poor financial status-** According to **PFRDA report on Financial Security of India's elderly**, a large elderly population which remains outside the pension safety net. Furthermore, the pension provided to them remains very low for their proper sustenance.
- 2. Low funding by the government-** India **spends only about 1% of its gross domestic product on pensions**. India's income support systems in their current form remain incapable of catering to the old age population.
- 3. Lack of housing and other basic amenities-** The housing available to a majority of the senior citizens are **sometimes inappropriate and unsuitable to their requirement**.

Health Issues and Challenges

- 1. Rise in age-related chronic illness-** According to the Longitudinal Ageing Study of India (LASI) in 2021, **One in five elderly persons in India has mental health issues** and around 75 per cent of them suffer from a chronic disease.
- 2. Increasing need for geriatric care-** Increased health-related expenses for the treatment of diseases like **Non-Communicable diseases, cataract, hearing loss** etc. creates financial problem for the elderly population.

What Should be the Way Forward in addressing the concerns of ageing problem of South Indian States?

- 1. Reduce the obsession with pro-natalist policies-** Countries that have tried financial incentives or policies to increase birth rates have seen limited success. The **model of Scandinavian countries of providing strong family and childcare support** and **gender equality measures**, can be followed by the Southern states.
- 2. Addressing the Internal Migration-** Internal migration from Northern to Southern states, can help balance the working-age population in Southern states. States like US have benefitted from the pro-immigration policies, which has helped sustain economic growth and labour productivity.
- 3. Formalization of caregiving economy-** According to a NITI Aayog report, **healthcare offered at home can replace up to 65 per cent of unnecessary hospital visits** and reduce hospital costs by 20 per cent. Well-trained caregivers possessing empathetic outlook towards elderly need to be provided formal and better work place conditions. **Recognition of "home" as a place for providing care** and as a **"place of work" for caregivers** will be the first step towards elderly care.
- 4. Comprehensive policy on home based care-** The Southern states must draft a comprehensive policy for **streamlining of vocational training, nomenclature, roles, and career progression of the caregivers**. It must also streamline the registry of caregivers, ensure transparency and accountability and establish grievance redressal mechanisms.
- 5. Replication of Switzerland's time bank initiative-** Under this initiative, **the younger generation start to save 'time' by taking care of senior citizens**. Later, they can use the saved 'time' when they get old, sick, or in need of someone to take care of them. This initiative can be used by the South Indian States.

[Read More- The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Govt policies for vulnerable section

India-China LAC agreement- Explained Pointwise

Recently, the Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri announced that India and China had reached an **agreement** on **patrolling arrangements** along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**. India-China LAC agreement aims to resolve

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the border issues that arose from Chinese transgressions in 2020. However, clouds of concerns remain over long-standing “[legacy disputes](#)” in eastern Ladakh at [Demchok](#) and [Depsang](#).

Run-up to resolution

The Indian and Chinese militaries have been locked in the stand-off along the Line of Actual Control since May 2020. India announced that it has reached agreements on patrolling and other issues

June-July 2024: Minister Jaishankar meets Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Almaty, Vientiane

July-August: Working mechanism of diplomats, military holds meetings in Delhi, Beijing

September: National Security Adviser Ajit Doval meets Wang Yi in St. Petersburg

October: Military commanders, diplomats meet at LAC points



Major headway: Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri made the announcement on the breakthrough during a press briefing on PM Narendra Modi's visit to Russia on Tuesday. PTI

Source- The Hindu

What are the Key aspects of the recent India-China LAC Agreement?

- 1. Patrolling Protocols-** The agreement allows both nations to **resume patrols along previously established routes**. The agreement effectively aims to return to the status quo that existed before the tensions escalated in 2020.
- 2. Disengagement Process-** The agreement also seeks to complete the **disengagement process**, which has been a focal point of negotiations over the past four years.
- 3. Reduction of Military Presence-** According to the agreement, both India and China will **slightly withdraw their forces from current positions to prevent confrontations**. Regular monitoring and review meetings will be instituted to ensure compliance with the new protocols.

Read More- [India-China Agreement on LAC Tensions](#)

What are the implications of the agreement for India-China relations?

The recent agreement between India and China regarding the Line of Actual Control (LAC) has significant implications for India-China bilateral relations.

- 1. De-escalation of Tensions-** The agreement marks a move towards de-escalation in a region where both countries have maintained heavy military presence. The agreement reduces the **likelihood of confrontations** like [Galwan 2020](#) and fosters a more stable environment along the border.
- 2. Restoration of Diplomatic Relations-** Successful implementation of the agreement could facilitate the resumption of higher-level diplomatic engagements in forum such as **BRICS, SCO**.

3. Economic and Trade Relations- The normalization of military interactions will pave the way for improved economic ties between India and China. **For Ex- Resumption of Flights and increased Chinese investment in India.**

4. Influence on Regional Stability- A stable India-China relationship could set a precedent for resolving other territorial disputes in Asia. **For ex- Alteration of perceptions of China's border policies among neighbouring countries.**

5. Path for Long-term Territorial Dispute Resolution- The LAC agreement will pave the way for resolution of 'legacy border issues' like **Depsang** and **Demchok** in future.

What are the challenges in resolving the India-China border dispute?



Figure 1. Source- The Tribune

1. Historical Disagreements and 'Legacy Issues'- The India-China border dispute has a **long and complex history that dates back to the 1962 border war**. The presence of 'legacy issues', such as the disputes over **Depsang Plains and Demchok**, is a major challenge in the effective resolution of the India-China Border Dispute.

2. Unilateral Chinese actions- China's attempts to **unilaterally alter the status quo along the LAC**, including military incursions into Indian territory, have significantly escalated tensions and complicated resolution efforts in the past.

3. Strategic concerns and nationalistic sentiments- The strategic importance of the disputed territory, coupled with nationalistic sentiments on both sides, makes it more difficult for either government to compromise or concede territory.

4. Military build-up and infrastructure development- The strengthening of military presence and infrastructure along the LAC by both India and China adds to the layer of complexity in the effective resolution of dispute.

5. Lack of trust and mutual suspicion- The deadly clashes in the **Galwan Valley in 2020** have deeply impacted the level of trust between the two nations, **leading to heightened suspicion and uncertainty**. This lack of trust creates a volatile environment that is not conducive to long-term conflict resolution.

6. Imbalance in buffer zones- The establishment of buffer zones during the disengagement process has resulted in **India losing more territory than China**. This imbalance creates further tension and makes conflict resolution more difficult.

What should be the Way Forward?

1. Continued dialogue and negotiations- Both nations must continue high-level talks, keeping **dialogue channels open to facilitate negotiation and mutual understanding**. Military, political, and diplomatic conversations should be maintained to reduce tension along the LAC in future.

2. Establishment of trust- Both countries should actively **avoid actions** that could exacerbate the situation, such as **unilateral attempts to alter the status quo**, and work towards fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

3. Resolve legacy issues- The legacy issues, including **unresolved border claims**, should be addressed as a **future step in the LAC negotiations**. This would ensure a comprehensive solution to the border dispute.

4. Balanced disengagement- Future disengagements should aim for a balance, ensuring neither side disproportionately loses territory in the creation of buffer zones. This will help to maintain the equilibrium and contribute to a long-term peaceful resolution.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- International Relations

Global Supply chain and India- Explained Pointwise

Global supply chains are undergoing a significant transformation in the post COVID world. The COVID-19 pandemic **shifted priorities** from **efficiency** (just in time) to **resilience** (just in case). However, the recent event like **cyberattack on pagers and walkie-talkies used by Hezbollah in Lebanon**, has added **another priority of security** (just to be secure) in the Global Supply Chain.



Source- Silver Bird

What are the examples of emerging security concerns in the Global Supply Chains?

US's Proposal to ban connected Cars

Recently, the US Department of Commerce has proposed the ban on connected cars linked to China and Russia, citing national security concerns. The US's rationale is that **connected cars**, with their **communication capabilities**, could act as **mobile surveillance tools**. These vehicles could be **hacked**, **disabled**, or **hijacked** in the event of conflict.

Pager Attack in Lebanon	The pager attack has underscored the dangers posed by the weaponisation of low-tech devices . It has also raised questions on the security of advanced technologies embedded in everyday products.
Ban on Chinese companies like Huawei	The U.S., Australia, Japan, and India have banned Chinese companies like Huawei from their 5G networks , due to the fears that China's technology could be used for surveillance or sabotage .

What are Global Supply Chains? What has been the history of its Evolution?

Global Supply Chains- Global supply chains represent the **different stages of production** of a product or service, which takes place in different regions of the globe. These supply chains **dictate the regions** for undertaking **design, assembly, or production**. The supply chain model has dominated industrial production since the 1980s.

Examples of Industries with Global Supply Chains	Textiles- Clothing production Food processing- Packaged foods manufacturing. Complex Industries- Cars, electronics, and pharmaceuticals.
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Evolution of Design of Global Supply Chains-

1. From the 1980s to the 2010s, during the height of globalization, supply chains were designed for maximum efficiency (just in time). The products were assembled globally based on cost.
2. With the onset of Pandemic and the national security concerns, the priorities have changed from **efficiency** (just in time) to **resilience** (just in case) and **security** (just to be secure).

New Approach towards design of new Global Supply Chains

1. **Just to be Secure Approach-** The **"just to be secure"** approach should be applied to **high-risk sectors** like **communications** and **critical infrastructure**. It can be done through measures such as **audits, inspections, and adherence to security standards**.
2. **Zero Trust Approach-** A **"zero trust"** approach which assumes that all products are compromised should be used for the most sensitive technologies like military and advanced research. This should be done through strict verification during procurement and continuous monitoring.
3. **Just in Case Approach-** A **"just in case"** approach should be applied for **less critical technologies**. The focus should be on diversifying suppliers and friend shoring to address vulnerabilities.

What are the reasons for the Shift in the Global Supply chains from China?

1. **Rising Labour Costs-** The significant increase in China's labour costs has made it **less attractive for labor-intensive industries like textiles**. Countries such as **Vietnam, India, and Bangladesh** offer the advantage of **lower wage rates** to companies. This has prompted companies to relocate production away from China in these regions.
2. **Supply Chain Resilience-** The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in global supply chain's heavy dependence on China. Many firms are adopting strategies like **nearshoring** and **reshoring** to enhance resilience against these supply chain disruptions.
3. **Geopolitical Tensions-** The **U.S.-China trade war, tariff hikes** imposed on Chinese goods have led to the increased flight of firms from China. **For ex- Countries like Mexico have surpassed China** as the top trading partner for the U.S. in recent years.

4. Strategic Realignments- The formation of new trade alliances and partnerships such as **SCRI** (Supply Chain Resilience Initiative) and **IPEF** (Indo-Pacific Economic Framework) serve as alternatives to Chinese dominance of Global Supply Chains.

5. Regulatory Challenges- The growing apprehension about stricter oversight and rules for foreign companies in China, has also led to the shift of firms of global Value Chains from China.

Why is India being seen as an alternative to China?

1. Large Domestic Market- India's vast consumer base (**approximately 1.3 billion people**) presents significant opportunities in sectors like **electronics** and **textiles**.

2. Government Initiatives- The launch of **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme**, which offers tax breaks and subsidies to foreign firms, has also helped in shifting production base from China to India.

3. Improved Infrastructure- Investments in infrastructure, such as the **development of new ports and logistics facilities**, have enhanced India's competitiveness in GVC. **For ex-** Development of **\$900 million container port in Kerala** which is expected to significantly improve product delivery times.

4. Trade Agreements- India's fresh push towards more **comprehensive FTA 2.0** like the **India-UAE CEPA**, **India-Australia CEPA** and **India-EFTA FTA** has helped in attracting greater FDI in India as part of the Global Value Chain investment.

5. Service Sector Growth- India's excellent growth in **IT**, **back-office work**, **financial services**, and **logistics**, has been propelling investor's to look at India as part of their **China+1 strategy**.

What are the examples of rise of India in the GVC?

Tech Transfers & Manufacturing	The production of iPhones in India, and an early technology transfer for the advanced Mercedes-Benz EQS .
Growing Industries	Foxconn is setting up a chip-making fabrication plant in Gujarat. Sectors like automotives and pharmaceuticals are flourishing with the establishment of new plants.
Attractiveness to Foreign Investors	WTO has listed India as the fifth-largest importer of intermediate goods , with a 5% share, by the end of 2022.
New trade deals	UAE-India FTA partnership and ongoing negotiations with the UK and EU , indicate deep economic integration of India in the GVC.

What should be the way Forward for India?

1. Export-Oriented Approach- India should **promote export-oriented foreign direct investment** to effectively join global supply chains.

2. Trade Liberalization- Trade liberalisation measures, such as **increase in the FDI limits for different sectors**, will help in enhancing India's profile in Global Value Chains (GVCs).

3. Modern Special Economic Zones- Modern SEZs in **PPP mode** should be set up to enhance the business environment.

4. Domestic Technological Investment- India should invest in **domestic technology** to meet international standards in price, quality, and delivery.

5. Skill development- India must invest in tertiary-level education, like **STEM fields**, for a skilled workforce.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Economy

BRICS Plus Grouping- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

The **16th BRICS Summit**, hosted by Russia, recently concluded in Kazan. It was also the first summit-level meeting of the expanded BRICS+, which saw participation from leaders of the newly added BRICS countries- **Egypt, Ethiopia, UAE, Iran, and Saudi Arabia**. A special BRICS outreach conference was attended by around 30 Global South leaders.

Key Outcomes of the 16th BRICS Summit

- 1. Kazan Declaration-** Kazan Declaration was adopted, which emphasized the need for a more **equitable global governance structure** and **peaceful resolutions of international conflicts** through dialogue.
- 2. BRICS Pay-** An **alternative payment system to SWIFT** was introduced in Kazan. It aims at facilitating trade among member countries while reducing reliance on Western financial systems.
- 3. BRICS Grain Exchange-** The establishment of BRICS Grain Exchange aims to **enhance** food security and **agricultural cooperation** among the BRICS members.
- 4. Cross-Border Payment System-** The feasibility of a BRICS Cross-Border Payment System to further integrate member economies, was also explored by the members.
- 5. Political and Security Cooperation-** The summit also advocated for reforms in global institutions like the UN and IMF for equitable representation of developing countries.



Source- BRICS Global Television Network

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What has been the history of evolution of BRICS as a multilateral grouping?

2001	The term 'BRIC' was coined by Jim O'Neill, a Goldman Sachs economist, to describe the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China . According to Jim O'Neill, these emerging economies were poised to dominate the global economy by 2050.
2006	The BRIC nations held their first informal meeting on the sidelines of the G8 Outreach Summit in St. Petersburg, Russia . This meeting marked the beginning of diplomatic engagement among these countries.
2009	The inaugural BRIC summit took place in Yekaterinburg, Russia, where leaders discussed global governance and economic cooperation.
2010	South Africa was invited to join the group. This led to the rebranding of the institution from BRIC to BRICS .
2014	New Development Bank (NDB) was officially launched with an initial capital of \$100 billion, to provide development finance.
2023	BRICS was expanded to BRICS+ with the admission of six new member states- Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, Argentina, and the United Arab Emirates .

What is the significance of BRICS as a grouping?

- 1. Representative of Multipolar Global Order-** BRICS promotes the creation of multipolar world order with political and economic parity. The expanded BRICS comprises major emerging economies that collectively represent approximately **41% of the world's population** and **around 28% of global GDP**.
- 2. Representative of new world order-** BRICS represents the idea of New World Order decoupled from the hegemony of western powers. It serves as a **counter** to **groupings like G-7** which are dominated by the west.
- 3. Representative of the 'Global South'-** BRICS gave countries from the global south a platform to present their opinions on international issues and set an international agenda. The expansion of BRICS has **expanded** the **geographical footprint** of **global south countries**. **For Ex-** Recent inclusion of Egypt, Ethiopia, Argentina in the grouping.
- 4. Alternative to Bretton Wood Institutions-** World Bank, IMF which were a post WW II creation of the west represented the western economic agenda. The **New Development Bank (NDB)**, **Contingency Reserve Agreement** and **BRICS pay** represent the economic concerns, priorities, and agenda of the developing and underdeveloped economies.
- 5. Forum to achieve economic Decoupling from the West-** As BRICS represents around 23% of Global GDP and 18% of world trade, it aims for **de-dollarization of world trade** through increased use of domestic currencies in economic transactions.
- 6. Alternative Platform of engagement for Oil Trade-** BRICS-Plus represents **close to 45% of the world's oil production capacity**. It has **six of the top 10 oil-producing countries** of the world- **Saudi Arabia, Russia, China, UAE, Brazil, and Iran**. This can create an alternative platform for engagement of oil exporting countries apart from OPEC+.
- 7. Enhanced cooperation for achievement of SDGs-** BRICS as a forum serves to reduce poverty, alleviate hunger-malnutrition and achieve the sustainable development goals set up by the United Nations.

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What are the challenges faced by BRICS?

- 1. Chinese push for favourable expansion-** China is pushing for inclusion of countries like **Belarus** which are under **heavy debt trap influence of China**. India views this push for expansion as an attempt by China to make BRICS **a China centric platform**.
- 2. Nature of Grouping-** BRICS faces a challenge of either **retaining its core nature** as a group that is largely focused on financial and south-south challenge **or becoming a bigger geopolitical coalition** by admitting more nations.
- 3. Political Division among the member nations-** There are **disagreement** among the member nations over key issues such as **UNSC reforms**. Also, the group has drastically different political systems, ranging from **active democracy in India** to **entrenched oligarchy in Russia** to **communism in China**.
- 4. Economic Disparity among the member nations-** BRICS economies **differ in their magnitude of economic size** with countries like **China** and **India** leading in the economic ladder and countries like Brazil Russia languishing in the economic ladder.
- 5. Chinese Dominance-** Chinese economy has the largest share among the member countries, and it accounts for 38 percent share in the total export of BRICS. This has resulted in **dominance of China in the BRICS bloc** and in turn has stoked the economic nationalism in other member countries.
- 6. Failure to bring impactful reform-** BRICS has so far not succeeded in bringing reform in Bretton wood institutions like **IMF** and **WB** and has not been able to de-dollarize their economies.
- 7. Lack of Consensus on contentious issues-** BRICS has faced consensus challenges on important international issues such as **Russia-Ukraine war**. While China is leaning towards Kremlin, India relied on its Non-Alignment Strategy.

What should be the way forward?

- 1. Rule based Order-** BRICS-Plus should be based on rule-based order and the forum **should not leave any room** for '**economic hegemony**' and '**anti-West agenda**'.
- 2. Reducing the Dominance of RIC in BRICS-** The marked dominance of big three Russia-China-India is a challenge for the BRICS as it moves ahead. To become a true representative of large emerging markets across the world, BRICS must become pan-continental.
- 3. Clear rules for expansion of membership-** There must be a **clear definition of principles** and **criteria for membership** for further addition of countries to BRICS grouping.
- 4. Containing Chinese Dominance-** India must find creative ways of **blunting Chinese strategy in BRICS grouping** to ensure equitable distribution of power in the group.
- 5. Institution of a permanent secretariat-** The BRICS group must decide on a permanent secretariat for smooth functioning of the group.

[Read More- The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- International Organisations

Right to die with dignity- Explained Pointwise

Recently, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has released draft Guidelines for the Withdrawal of Life Support in Terminally Ill Patients. These guidelines aim to operationalise the Supreme Court's 2018 and 2023 orders on the right to die with dignity for all Indians. These draft guidelines, and the Supreme Court's judgment, provide a clear legal defined framework for withholding/ withdrawing life-sustaining treatment in India.



Source- The Indian Express

What is meant by withholding/ withdrawing life-sustaining treatment? How is it followed in India?

Withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining treatment- It refers to discontinuing **life-sustaining medical interventions** such as ventilators and feeding tubes etc., when these no longer help the condition of the patient or prolong their suffering.

Process of Withholding life support treatment- The withholding or withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment can take place either through

- a. **Informed Refusal-** Informed refusal by a patient with decision-making capacity
- b. **Advance medical directive or a 'living will'**- It is a document that specifies what actions should be taken if the person is unable to make their own medical decisions in the future.
- c. **Determination by the treating Physician in case of absence of living will-** The treating physician can determine the withdrawal of life support in case of absence of living will, in the following cases-
No reasonable medical probability of recovery from a **terminal** or **end-stage condition**, or **vegetative state**
 Any further **medical intervention** or **course of treatment** would only **artificially prolong the process of dying**.

Withholding/ Withdrawing life-sustaining treatment is Palliative Care, Not Abandonment

a. Withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining treatment is not a withdrawal of care but a **shift to palliative support**, which is aimed at minimizing pain and enhancing comfort.

What has been the history of evolution of Right to die in India?

The right to refuse medical treatment has always existed in common law, even if it results in death. Following the Supreme Court's decision in Common Cause vs Union of India (2018), the right to refuse medical treatment has also been recognised as a fundamental right under Article 21 (Right to life and personal liberty) of the Indian Constitution.

Aruna Shaubagh vs Union of India, 2011	SC recognised that the life-sustaining treatment could legally be withheld/withdrawn even from persons without decision-making capacity .
Common Cause vs Union of India, 2018	SC recognised the right to die with dignity as a fundamental right under Article 21 of the constitution , and legalised the use of advance medical directives or 'living wills' .
Common Cause vs Union of India, 2023	SC simplified the process for making living wills and withholding/withdrawing life-sustaining treatment by removing bureaucratic hurdles.

What are the latest guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for the Withdrawal of Life Support?

Establishment of Medical Boards and their recommendation	1. Hospitals have to establish Primary and Secondary Medical Boards to evaluate if continued treatment is beneficial for a terminally ill patient. 2. Primary Board- It will comprise the treating doctor and two subject-matter experts with at least five years of experience . It will assess the patient's condition, and will recommend the appropriateness of withholding/ withdrawing life-sustaining treatment. 3. Secondary Board- It will comprise a registered medical practitioner nominated by the district Chief Medical Officer , along with two subject-matter experts with at least five years of experience. All these members must be different from those on the Primary Medical Board . It will review the decision of the Primary Medical Board.
Consent by the Nominated Persons	The persons nominated by the patient in the advance medical directive or the surrogate decision-makers (where there is no directive) must consent to the withholding or withdrawal of treatment.
Notification of the decision to Judicial Magistrate	The hospital must notify decisions on withholding/ withdrawing life-sustaining treatment to the local judicial magistrate.

What is the significance of the Guidelines for withdrawal of life support?

1. Affirms the Right to Die with Dignity- The recent draft guidelines operationalises the Supreme Court's 2018 and 2023 rulings in the Common Cause of India case, **solidifying the legal right of terminally ill patients to die with dignity**.

2. Structured Mechanisms for Decision-Making- The guidelines call for the creation of **Primary** and **Secondary Medical Boards** in hospitals. These layers of oversight ensure that the decision to withdraw life support is thoroughly examined.

3. Procedure for Life Support Withdrawal- The guidelines define a clear procedure- the **Primary Board assesses the patient's condition**, and the **Secondary Board reviews it independently**. Consent from **patient-designated surrogates** or family members is required, and the hospital must notify a judicial magistrate of the decision. This process provides checks, transparency, and accountability.

4. Ethical Shared Decision-Making- The guidelines emphasize **shared decision-making** between doctors and the patient's family. This ensures that **medical care aligns** with the **patient's wishes** and **provides legal clarity**. This approach respects patient autonomy, protects medical professionals, and reduces family burden.

What are the challenges with the New Guidelines for Withdrawal of Life Support, which reinforce the right to die?

1. Complexity in Medical Board Setup- Establishment of **Primary** and **Secondary Medical Boards** for every hospital can be **resource-intensive**, particularly for smaller hospital facilities.

2. Lack of Dedicated Legislation- The absence of a specific law on the issue of Right to die could lead to inconsistent application and legal uncertainty. This might discourage hospitals from implementing the guidelines fully.

3. Misunderstanding of Treatment Withdrawal- The term "**passive euthanasia**" is still commonly used, leading to **confusion and social discomfort** with the **right to die with dignity**. This cultural and terminological barrier may hinder acceptance of life-support withdrawal.

4. Challenging Process for creation of living will- Creation of a living is a **complex process** involving **documentation** and **verification** by witnesses, executors, and a notary.

5. Potential for Delayed Decision-Making- The multistep process involving both **medical boards**, **family** or **surrogate consent**, and **judicial notification** could delay the withdrawal of life-support process. This impinges on the right to die with dignity.

6. Emotional and Ethical Strain on Families and Physicians- The **shared decision-making requirement**, while intended to protect patient rights, places emotional and ethical strain on families and doctors.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Legislative Clarity and Support- Lawmakers should consider **enacting legislation** that defines and governs life-support withdrawal in terminal cases. This would further affirm the **Right to die with dignity**.

2. Educating and Training Medical Professionals- Medical professionals should be provided **robust training on the ethical, legal, and procedural aspects** of withdrawing life-sustaining treatment.

3. Streamlining the Living Will Process- The process for **creating** and **validating** a living will should be **simplified**, and made accessible to people from diverse backgrounds.

4. Raising Public Awareness- Increased awareness will enable **families to make informed choices aligned** with their loved ones' wishes and alleviate unnecessary suffering.

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

Air Pollution In Delhi- Reasons and Solutions- Explained Pointwise

The air pollution in Delhi is again in the news, with the **worsening of Delhi's air quality** due to the **withdrawal of the southwest monsoon** and **the onset of winter**. PM 2.5 levels in Delhi and its surrounding areas have exceeded 300, which indicates "**very poor**" air quality. The annual pattern of declining air quality in Delhi aligns with increased stubble burning in Punjab.



Figure 2. Source- Wikipedia

What is air Pollution and how is it measured in India?

Air Pollution- Air pollution is the introduction of chemicals, particulates or biological materials into the atmosphere that cause discomfort, disease, or death to humans.







Measurement of Air Pollution In India

In India, air pollution is measured according to the

National Air Quality Index developed by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in 2014.

The measurement of air quality in the NAQI framework is based on **eight pollutants**, namely- Particulate Matter (**PM10**), Particulate Matter (**PM2.5**), Nitrogen Dioxide (**NO2**), Sulphur Dioxide (**SO2**), Carbon Monoxide (**CO**), Ozone (**O3**), Ammonia (**NH3**) and Lead (**Pb**).

Categorization of Air Quality under AQI:

AQI	Remark	Colour Code	Possible Health Impacts
0-50	Good		Minimal Impact
51-100	Satisfactory		Minor breathing discomfort in sensitive people
101-200	Moderate		Breathing discomfort to people with asthma and heart disease.
201-300	Poor		Breathing discomfort to most people on prolonged exposure.
301-400	Very Poor		Respiratory illness on prolonged exposure
401-500	Severe		Affects healthy people and seriously impacts those with existing diseases.

Source- CPCB

Read More- [Air Quality Standard of India](#)

What are the reasons for the rise in air pollution in Delhi?

1. Stubble Burning- Stubble burning in Punjab, Rajasthan, and Haryana emits large amounts of toxic pollutants in the atmosphere. These pollutants contain **harmful gases** like methane (CH₄), carbon monoxide (CO), volatile organic compounds (VOC) and carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. The **IIT consortium report** (IIT Kanpur, IIT Delhi, TERI, and Airshed, Kanpur) have estimated that stubble burning contributed up to **35% of Delhi's PM 2.5 levels** during the peak October-November season.

2. Reduced Wind Speed- Low-speed winds in winters are unable to disperse these pollutants effectively. Further, Delhi lies in a **landlocked region** and does not have the geographical advantage of sea breeze to disperse the suspended pollutants.

3. Effect of Northwesterly winds- After the withdrawal of monsoons, the predominant direction of winds in northern India is northwesterly. These northwesterly winds bring the **dust from the gulf region**, northern Pakistan and Afghanistan.

4. Dip in Temperatures lowers the inversion height- With the decrease in temperature, **inversion height lowers down, leading to concentration of pollutants in the lower atmosphere**. (Inversion height is the layer beyond which pollutants cannot disperse into the upper layer of the atmosphere).

5. Vehicular Pollution- Delhi has one of the **highest number of registered private vehicles** in India. Official emissions inventories of 2018 show that vehicles emit about 40 per cent of the particulate load in the city of Delhi.

6. Construction Activities and Open Waste Burning- Pollution due to **landfill burning and construction debris** enhances the pollution levels in the Delhi NCR region.

7. Firecrackers- Firecrackers burning during Diwali further adds to the increase in air pollution levels.

8. Urban development strategy in India- The current strategy focuses on real estate development, a widening of roads and allowing large fuel guzzling vehicles which are major reasons for increased pollution.

9. Expansion of 'Grey' infrastructure — Water bodies, urban forests, green cover, and urban agriculture have all reported shrinkage, and "grey" infrastructure has seen rapid expansion.

10. Land use change- The handing over of open spaces to real estate developers and lack of any meaningful afforestation affects the city's ecology.

11. Promotion of car sales- Widening roads induces people to buy more cars, thus leading to more pollution levels.

12. Construction activities- It contributes roughly 10% of air pollution in Delhi-NCR. There are hardly any steps being taken to monitor construction activities.

What are the harmful effects of air pollution?

The harmful effects of air pollution have been tabulated below-

Economic effects	(1) Leads to loss of labour productivity, GDP and per capita income levels . (The Confederation of Indian Industry estimates that air pollution costs Indian businesses \$95 billion, or 3 per cent of India's GDP every year). (Poor air amounts to about Rs 7 lakh crore of annual economic loss, which is more than a third of our annual GST collection) (2) Air pollution reduces agricultural crop yields and commercial forest yields.
Human Health Effects	(1) Air pollution leads to multiple health conditions including respiratory infections, heart disease and lung cancer .

	(2) As per the Global Burden of Disease comparative risk assessment for 2015, air pollution exposure contributes to approximately 1.8 million premature deaths and loss of 49 million disability adjusted life-years (DALYs) in India.
Environment	(1) Acid Rain - Damages crops, natural vegetation, soil chemistry and leads to damage to ancient monuments (Taj Mahal Yellowing). (2) Eutrophication of water bodies - Increases nitrogen intake of freshwater bodies leading to Eutrophication.

What Govt initiatives have been taken to reduce air pollution in Delhi?

- (1) **Crop Residue Management Scheme**- Crop Residue Management (CRM) scheme which provides subsidy to farmers for buying '**Turbo Happy Seeder**', '**Super SMS attachment**', '**rotavators**' and '**superseeder**'.
- (2) **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)**- CAQM is a statutory body formed under the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas, Act 2021. CAQM has provided a framework to tackle the problem of air pollution due to stubble burning.
- (3) **Initiatives to reduce Vehicular Pollution**- The **shift from BS-IV to BS-VI**, push for **Electric Vehicles (EVs)**, **Odd-even Policy** have all been implemented to reduce Vehicular pollution.
- (4) **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)**- GRAP measures like shutting down thermal power plants and a ban on construction activities are implemented to curb air pollution.

What should be the way ahead?

A start has been made to recognise the severity of air pollution on the health of the population and the economy. Delhi and Mumbai are the two financial backbones of our country. The following measures need to be undertaken to curb air pollution in Delhi and Mumbai-

- (1) **Increase the AQI monitoring stations**- The adequate numbers of AQI monitoring stations as mandated by the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) must be installed. Also, **sensor based AQI monitoring units** that give hyperlocal data must be set up.
- (2) **Enhanced powers to the authorities to take action according to the hyperlocal data**- It will help the authorities take **pre-emptive actions** and allow **denser monitoring**. For example, if it is found that construction is taking place in a certain pocket without following norms, the authorities can identify the location and immediately penalise the violators.
- (3) **National Nodal Authority for Air pollution**- India needs a **nodal authority with constitutional powers** to ensure collaborative pre-emptive action on air pollution with timelines for all stakeholders.
- (4) **Setting up Independent commissions for management of AQI**- Independent commissions like the **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) for NCR and adjoining regions**, should be set up in other major cities like Mumbai and Chennai. It will help in taking actions against the violators irrespective of the geographical region. **Regional or airshed approach** must be used to counter the geographical challenge to air pollution management as done in Los Angeles, Mexico City and many mega-urban regions in China.
- (5) **Stricter guidelines for industrial emissions**- **SEBI's Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) framework** can lay down tighter guidelines to ensure uniformity in the unit of reporting pollutant emissions, declaration of air pollution mitigation targets (like companies do for carbon emissions), and

reporting of disaggregated emissions data. We must reduce exposure across the value chain from production to consumption to recycling of goods and delivery of services.

(6) **Making 'Clean air' an investment sector-** The push for substitution of fossil fuels will increase investment opportunities in clean energy transition sector like **green mobility, clean cooking**. This will open up a new sector for investment and will help in reducing the air pollution simultaneously.

(7) **Funds and Manpower Training to combat pollution-** The Sixteenth Finance commission should provide finance to urban local bodies for climate change and air pollution reduction interventions. The urban local bodies manpower must be properly trained and the dysfunctional **State pollution Control Boards** must be empowered to take punitive actions.

(8) **Increased awareness and incentive for civil society-** Different stakeholders need to know why cleaning the air will benefit their livelihoods and businesses. For instance, **farmers will not curb stubble burning until a viable circular economy** for alternative uses of biomass emerges. We must adopt sustainable lifestyles which are in line with government's LiFE initiative.

(9) **Increased use of Public transport and reduced dependence on private vehicles-** **The Delhi Master Plan target of 80 per cent of motorised trips** by public transport by 2020 has not been met yet. The deadline has been shifted to 2041. This deadline needs to be met by augmenting the public transport system. The private vehicles use must be disincentivised by introducing **ward-wise parking management area plans** and **parking tax**.

(10) **Limit crop residue burning-** We must implement known solutions like shifting to less water-intensive crops, **altering irrigation arrangements**, timing, harvesting, baling practices and building a wider year-round market for straw.

(11) **End-to-end construction and waste management-** It is pivotal to reducing tonnes of dust and waste released in the air and water bodies.

(12) **Learnings from London, China, Singapore, Hong Kong must be incorporated-** London does not allow private vehicles in areas well-connected by public transport. China uses '**fixed number of car sales per year**' in Beijing. We must improve the public transport like London, China, Singapore and Hong-Kong.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

Digital Arrest Fraud- Concerns and Way Forward- Explained Pointwise

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi raised concern over '**digital arrest fraud**' in his **Mann Ki Baat address** to the nation. The Prime Minister played an **audio-video clip** that showed a **man donning a police uniform** and **asking the person** (victim) **on the other end to share his Aadhaar number** to get a mobile number blocked. This type of modus operandi is used by the fraudsters to **create fear of Digital arrest** and **con people based on their fears**.

Digital arrest fraud is a new form of cybercrime in India. These cyber crimes have **seriously grave concerns** and, hence, these must be addressed at the earliest.

What is Digital Arrest? What is the modus operandi?



Digital Arrest- Digital arrest involves cybercriminals **posing as law enforcement agents** (from the CBI, Narcotics Department, or Reserve Bank of India) who claim that the **victim is involved in illegal activities** like movement of drugs or a suspicious package. The victims are tricked into **remaining under constant visual surveillance** via Skype or other video conferencing platforms until the criminals' demands are met.



Source- PTI Graphics

Modus Operandi of Digital arrest

Caller ID Spoofing	Scammers disguise their phone number to look like it is from a legitimate government office or police department . Scammers also reach out via video calls using WhatsApp or Skype .
Intimidation	Victims are falsely accused of crimes like drug trafficking or money laundering , and are shown fake documents and setups that mimic police stations. The scammers use fear tactics, such as threatening for jail-term or property seizure, to create urgency.
Isolation	Victims are instructed to remain on the call and not to contact anyone else . This creates a sense of urgency and fear. The fraudsters also use deepfake videos and fake arrest warrants to impersonate officials of law enforcement agencies.

Demands for Money and Personal Identity Theft	The fraudsters demand immediate payment, often via gift cards, wire transfers, or cryptocurrency , which would make the money transfer difficult to trace. Some scammers ask for Aadhaar Details, Bank account details, and other personal information , which are later used for identity theft.
 <p>Source- PTI Graphics</p>	 <p>Source- PTI Graphics</p>

Examples of Digital Arrest Fraud Cases

Digital arrest fraud cases have not only targeted the vulnerable groups, but also wealthy individuals as well. Vast sums of Money have also been stolen from wealthy individuals.

Vardhman Director's case	Group Scammers duped the textile industry doyen S P Oswal into transferring Rs 7 crore to their bank accounts , by posing as CBI Officers and intimidating him on false money laundering cases.
Fake impersonation as CJI	There have been cases where a person impersonated Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, faked hearing a matter on skype and thereafter passed an order.

Rise in Digital arrest Cyber crime cases

a. The **Ministry of Home Affairs** (MHA) in March 2024, issued a press release, **alerting people** against **incidents of blackmail** and **digital arrest** by **cyber criminals** impersonating Police authorities, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Narcotics Department, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Enforcement Directorate and other law enforcement agencies.

b. As per the **National Crime Records Bureau** (NCRB) **data**, a significant rise in cybercrimes have been reported in the last few years- **10,395** in 2020, **14,007** in 2021 and **17,470** in 2022.

What are the concerns with the rising Digital Arrest Fraud cases in India?

1. Financial Losses- The financial losses to the victims become impossible to recover because the scammers request payments through untraceable methods like **cryptocurrency, gift cards, or wire transfers**.

2. Negative emotional and Psychological Impact- Victims feel intimidated and psychological pressure, which can lead to anxiety, stress. The scammers use **threatening language** and **claim serious consequences** like **jail time, asset seizures, or even deportation**.

3. Identity and Data Theft- Scammers often use stolen personal information for **identity theft, opening bank accounts, credit cards, or committing other forms of fraud** in the victim's name.

4. Increasing use of AI in Fraud- The increased use of AI like **Deepfakes** and **voice modulation** complicates the detection and identification of digital arrest fraud cases.

5. Difficulty in Tracing and Prosecuting Perpetrators- Many digital arrest scams **originate overseas**, which makes it difficult for law enforcement to trace and prosecute the scammers.

What have been the efforts of the government to control these frauds?

Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C)	The Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C), part of the cyber and information security division of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, is dedicated to address rising cybercrime . Between January and April 2024, I4C recorded Rs 120.30 crore in losses by Indians due to digital arrest scams.
Initiatives and Collaborations	I4C , in partnership with Microsoft , has blocked over 1,000 Skype IDs associated with these scams and launched public awareness campaigns. Prime Minister Modi has urged schools and colleges to assist in spreading awareness about cybercrime risks.
Interministerial committee against transnational crime	In May 2024, an inter-ministerial committee, comprising various law enforcement and intelligence agencies , was established to address the increase in transnational cybercrimes targeting Indians, especially from Southeast Asian countries like Cambodia.
Reporting Cybercrime	Individuals targeted by cyber scams can report incidents immediately via the cybercrime helpline at 1930 or online at cybercrime.gov.in and notify local police.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Staying Calm- On receiving a suspicious call, one should do not panic. A person should take a moment to assess the situation.

2. Verification of Identity- The personal information should not be shared over the phone or video calls.

3. Documenting Evidence- A person should try to record the call or take screenshots for evidence. This documentation can be crucial in the times of need of reporting the scam.

4. Contacting Authorities- In case of digital arrest cases, a person should report the incident to local police or through national cyber helplines (1930).

5. Education and awareness- Education and awareness is the key to avoid digital arrest frauds. Understanding that digital arrests are fraudulent can help the masses recognize and avoid such scams.

<p>‘DIGITAL ARREST’</p> <p>What to do if someone contacts you and threatens you with arrest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Stop all further communication and disconnect from the internet immediately ▶ Report the incident to local police or cyber crime authorities by calling 1930 (24/7 helpline number) ▶ Contact your bank and freeze accounts or change passwords if necessary ▶ Keep evidence like call recordings, and screenshots <p>Source- PTI Graphics</p>	<p>‘DIGITAL ARREST’</p> <p>How do you avoid getting scammed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Never trust unsolicited calls claiming to be from law enforcement agencies ▶ Verify caller's identity by contacting them directly through official number  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Do not provide personal details like passport number over video ▶ Install a reliable cyber security alert system to avoid scams <p>Source- PTI Graphics</p>	<p>‘DIGITAL ARREST’</p> <p>Steps to take if you're already a victim and have lost money</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Immediately contact your bank to freeze transactions and request a refund ▶ File a complaint with the Cyber Crime Cell (CC) or the Crime Record and Cyber Cell (CRCC) ▶ Seek help from your local police to assist in protecting your assets <p>▶ Gather all evidence for the authorities like call logs, messages, and transaction details</p> <p>Source- PTI Graphics</p>
<p>Read More- The Indian Express</p> <p>UPSC Syllabus- GS-3 Internal security challenges (Cyber Security)</p>		

UN Peacekeeping Missions- Successes and Failures- Explained Pointwise

Recently, the **UN Peacekeeping missions** are again back in news due to the ongoing West Asian Crisis. The UN peacekeeping forces in Lebanon, **United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)**, released a statement accusing the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) of intentionally destroying an observation tower and the perimeter fence of a UN post in Marwahin.

In this article we will look at the history of UN Peacekeeping forces, their successes and failures. We will also look at the challenges faced by peacekeeping forces. We will also look at the way forward for the same.

What is UN peacekeeping mission? Where are these forces currently deployed?

UN peacekeeping mission provides **security, political** and **peacebuilding support** to help war-torn countries make the difficult transition from conflict to peace. It involves the **deployment of military, police, and civilian personnel** to regions affected by conflicts or political instability.

Basis of UN Peacekeeping- The UN Charter has assigned the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The UNSC can establish a UN peace operation to fulfill its responsibility.

Basic Principles of Peacekeeping Operations

Capstone Doctrine covers the basic principles and key concepts related to UN peacekeeping.

- Consent of the parties
- Impartiality
- Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.

Functions and Mandate of UN Peacekeeping Forces

Monitoring Processes	Peace	Peacekeepers supervise the implementation of peace agreements and assist ex-combatants in their reintegration into society.
Confidence-Building Measures		UN Peacekeeping forces facilitate trust-building measures between conflicting parties through power-sharing arrangements and electoral support .
Rule of Law and Human Rights		Peacekeepers help strengthen legal frameworks and promote human rights within the host countries.
Support for Democratic Processes		Peacekeeping forces assist in organizing free and fair elections. Thus they help in upholding the democratic process.
Protecting Civilians		Peacekeeping forces provide security to vulnerable populations and preventing violence against them.

Deployment of Peacekeeping forces

First Mission- The first UN peacekeeping mission was established in May 1948. United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) was sent by the UNSC to monitor the Armistice Agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

Current Deployment- There are currently 11 UN peacekeeping operations deployed on three continents.

Current operations		
> MINURSO, Western Sahara	> MINUSCA, Central African Republic	> MONUSCO, D.R. of the Congo
> UNDOF, Golan	> UNFICYP, Cyprus	> UNIFIL, Lebanon
> UNISFA, Abyei	> UNMIK, Kosovo	> UNMISS, South Sudan
> UNMOGIP, India and Pakistan	> UNTSO, Middle East	

Source- UN Peacekeeping

What have been the successes and failures of UN peacekeeping forces?

Successes

1. Successful Resolution of conflicts- Since 1948, UN Peacekeeping forces has helped end conflicts and foster reconciliation by conducting successful peacekeeping operations in dozens of countries. These countries include **Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mozambique, Namibia** and **Tajikistan**.

2. Positive impact of the peacekeeping missions- UN Peacekeeping operations have made a positive impact on **restoring stability**, enabling the **transition to democratic governance**, and fostering **economic development**.

3. Noble Prize- UN Peacekeeping Forces was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1988 for their continuous striving towards peace and stability.

Failures

1. Failure in Rwanda and Bosnia- In 1994 and 1995, the UN failed to protect civilians, leading to mass casualties, such as the **Rwanda genocide**, where nearly 1 million Tutsis were killed.

2. Failure in prevention of escalation of current conflicts- The UN peacekeeping mission has been criticized for inaction in **Ukraine** and Gaza. The 100,000 peacekeepers could have been redeployed to prevent massive civilian casualties.

What are the Challenges with UN Peacekeeping Missions?

1. Lack of Clear Mandates and Objectives- Peacekeeping missions are often launched without clear, achievable mandates. **For ex-** The **UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo** has struggled with an unclear mandate, shifting from monitoring peace agreements to directly engaging in combat with rebel groups.

2. Inadequate Funding and Resources- The **UN mission in South Sudan** (UNMISS) has faced challenges protecting civilians due to lack of adequate funding and resources.

3. Hostility from Local Populations and Governments- Peacekeeping forces are often viewed with suspicion and hostility from local populations and governments. In Haiti, the **UN Stabilization Mission** (MINUSTAH) faced significant local opposition due to its linkage with cholera outbreak.

4. Security Risks and Attacks on Peacekeepers- The **UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission** (MINUSMA) in Mali has become one of the deadliest peacekeeping missions, with frequent attacks by Islamist militants.

5. Misconduct by Peacekeepers- The **Central African Republic mission** (MINUSCA) has been marred by numerous allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers. This has undermined the mission's legitimacy and has damaged the reputation of UN peacekeeping.

6. Huge dependence on Member State Contributions- The **UN mission in Darfur** (UNAMID) has been hindered by delays in troop deployment due to member states' hesitations and lack of commitment.

What is India's contribution to UN Peacekeeping Mission?

1. Historical Contribution- India has been actively participating in peacekeeping right from 1950 when it supplied medical personnel and troops to the UN Repatriation Commission in Korea.

2. Current Contribution-

a. India is **Fifth largest troop contributor** with **5,424 personnel** across **9 missions**. India's contribution to the peacekeeping budget stands at 0.16%.

b. Nearly **80% of the Indian peacekeepers** are deployed in hostile regions such as **Central African Republic** and **South Sudan**.

c. India has deployed a platoon of women peacekeepers in **Abyei** as part of the **Indian Battalion** in the **United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei** (UNISFA).

The Biggest Contributors to UN Peacekeeping Operations

Main contributors of uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping operations as of May 31, 2023*

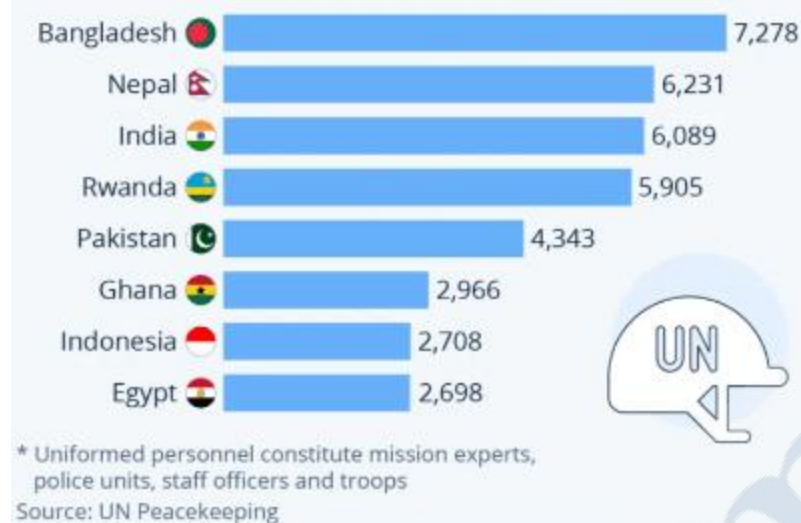


Figure 3. Source- UN Peacekeeping

3. Achievements-

- A total of 150 Indian peacekeepers serving with the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) have received **medals of honour** for their dedicated service and sacrifice.
- Major Radhika Sen has been awarded '**Military Gender Advocate of the Year 2023**' by the UN Headquarters.

What Should be the Way Forward?

- Clear and achievable Mandates-** Mandates should focus on realistic, achievable goals that align with available resources and ground realities. **For ex- Protecting civilians in clearly demarcated zones.**

2. Improved Funding and Resource Allocation- Member states should consider establishing more **predictable**, and **sustainable funding mechanisms** for peacekeeping missions. **For ex-** For missions like **MINUSMA in Mali**, access to better surveillance technology and transportation could improve peacekeepers' mobility and safety in high-risk areas.

3. Strengthening Relationships with Local Communities- Building trust within communities through programs focused on local needs like **healthcare**, **education** can help establish peacekeepers as allies rather than foreign entities.

4. Improving Data Collection and Technological Capabilities- Employing data analytics, artificial intelligence, and surveillance tools could help peacekeepers **anticipate risks**, **identify conflict hotspots**, and **better protect themselves and civilians**.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- International Organisations- their structure and Mandate