

## 7 PM COMPILATION

**1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Week Dec, 2024**

### Features of 7 PM compilation

- ❖ Comprehensive coverage of a given current topic
- ❖ Provide you all the information you need to frame a good answer
- ❖ Critical analysis, comparative analysis, legal/constitutional provisions, current issues and challenges and best practices around the world
- ❖ Written in lucid language and point format
- ❖ Wide use of charts, diagrams and info graphics
- ❖ Best-in class coverage, critically acclaimed by aspirants
- ❖ Out of the box thinking for value edition
- ❖ Best cost-benefit ratio according to successful aspirants

**INDEX**

Places of Worship Act 1991- Explained Pointwise .....	2
Persons with Disabilities in India- Explained Pointwise .....	4
Child marriages in India- Explained Pointwise .....	11
Issue of fertility rate in India- Explained Pointwise .....	15
Integrated Theatre Command- Explained Pointwise .....	19
PRAGATI Portal- Explained Pointwise.....	22
Syrian Crisis- Explained Pointwise .....	24
Issues related to fertiliser sector in India- Explained Pointwise .....	26
Space sector in India- Explained Pointwise.....	28
Impeachment of Judges- Explained Pointwise .....	32
Universal Health Coverage (UHC)- Explained Pointwise.....	35
Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2024- Explained Pointwise.....	39

## Places of Worship Act 1991- Explained Pointwise

The recent **Sambhal** and **Ajmer Sharif shrine disputes**, has brought the Places of Worship Act 1991, back into national focus. The Act was enacted to freeze the status of religious places of worship as they existed on 15th August, 1947. It **prohibits conversion of any place of worship** and **provides for the maintenance of the religious character** of any place of worship.

However, former Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud's remark that the Places of Worship Act does not preclude determining a site's religious character on the specified date (15th August, 1947), has brought much confusion to the law. **Places of Worship Act 1991.**

### What is the background, aim and major provisions of the Places of Worship Act 1991?

**Background of the Act-** As the **Babri-Masjid Ram Janmabhoomi** dispute escalated, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and other Hindu organizations also contested the **Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi** and the **Shahi Idgah in Mathura**. In September 1991, the P.V. Narasimha Rao government passed a special law freezing the status of places of worship as they were on August 15, 1947. This law excluded the Ayodhya structure since its litigation was still in progress.

**Aim of the Act-** The Act aims to **prevent the conversion of any place of worship** and ensure the **preservation of its religious character**. It states that the religious character of a place of worship must remain as it was on **August 15, 1947**.

### Major Provisions of the Act

<b>Prohibition of Conversion (Section 3)</b>	<b>Prevents the conversion of a place of worship</b> , whether in full or part, from one religious' denomination to another or within the same denomination.
<b>Maintenance of Religious Character (Section 4(1))</b>	Ensures that the <b>religious identity of a place of worship remains the same</b> as it was on <b>August 15, 1947</b> .
<b>Abatement of Pending Cases (Section 4(2))</b>	Declares that <b>any ongoing legal proceedings concerning the conversion of a place of worship's religious character</b> before August 15, 1947, <b>will be terminated</b> , and <b>no new cases can be initiated</b> .
<b>Exceptions to the Act (Section 5)</b>	a. The Act <b>does not apply to ancient and historical monuments</b> , archaeological sites, and remains covered by the <b>Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958</b> . b. It also <b>excludes cases that have already been settled or resolved</b> and disputes that have been resolved by mutual agreement or conversions that occurred before the Act came into effect. c. The Act does not extend to the specific place of worship known as <b>Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid in Ayodhya</b> , including any legal proceedings associated with it.
<b>Penalties (Section 6)</b>	Specifies penalties, including a <b>maximum imprisonment term of three years and fines</b> , for violating the Act.
<b>Read More- <a href="#">The Places of Worship Act, 1991</a></b>	

### What are the arguments raised against the Places of Worship Act 1991?

**1. Unconstitutional as it bars judicial review-** Critics of the act hold it unconstitutional as it **bars the right to seek judicial review of a grievance** (Art 13(2)).

**2. Violation of principle of law 'ubi jus ibi remedium'-** Critics hold that the Places of Worship Act goes against the principle of law **'ubi jus ibi remedium'** (**where there is a right, there is a remedy**). It thus **violates the concept of Rule of Law**, which is the core of Article 14.

**3. Arbitrary and irrational retrospective cutoff date-** The opponents of the Act criticize it on the account of it **creating arbitrary irrational retrospective cutoff dates**. The **status quo determined by a colonial power is considered final** by barring the remedies against illegal encroachment on the places of worship and pilgrimages.

**4. Violation of principle of Secularism-** The critics of the Places of Worship Act criticize the act for violating the principle of secularism. The **prohibition of Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and Sikhs** from reclaiming their places of worship which were invaded and encroached upon by fundamentalist barbaric invaders, is cited as a major reason for the opposition of Places of Worship Act.

**5. Violation of Freedom of Religion-** The Places of Worship Act, 1991 is held by its critics **against the liberty of belief, faith, and worship to all citizens**. **Freedom of religion** is guaranteed to all citizens under **Articles 25 and 26** of the Constitution.

### What is the significance of Places of Worship Act 1991?

**1. Preservation of Religious Status Quo-** The Act ensures the **continuity of religious practices** and **prevents retrospective claims on places of worship** by mandating that the religious character of all places of worship, as it stood on August 15, 1947, cannot be altered.

**2. Promotion of Communal Harmony-** The Act aims to prevent communal tensions and conflicts by **prohibiting the conversion of any place of worship**.

**3. Promotion of Secularism-** The law reinforces India's commitment to secularism by ensuring that **disputes over religious sites do not undermine the principle of equality** among all religions.

**4. Deterrence Against Misuse-** The Act **discourages individuals or groups** from attempting to **stir communal unrest for political or social gains** by criminalizing the alteration of religious sites.

### What implications are created by challenges against the Places of Worship Act 1991?

**1. Threat to Secularism-** The challenges to the Places of Worship Act **potentially undermine India's commitment to secularism**, as the Act was designed to protect the religious character of places of worship.

**2. Political Implications-** The petitions and debates are becoming a tool in political agendas and are influencing political narratives

**3. Historical Reinterpretation-** The petitions, by questioning historical facts and attempting to change the religious status of sites, could lead to a reinterpretation of history, **impacting the collective memory and cultural heritage of the nation**.

**4. Public Trust and Harmony-** Challenges to the Act and the filing of numerous petitions against mosques risk breaching of public trust and could lead to communal disharmony. The recent case of Sambhal Violence is the case in Point.

### Way Forward

**1. Comprehensive evaluation by SC-** The SC must conduct a **comprehensive evaluation of the Places of Worship Act** to address its criticisms and limitations.

**2. Safeguarding judicial review-** The judiciary's ability to **review cases must be safeguarded to ensure that the constitutional rights** are upheld.

**3. Maintenance of Balance-** A balance must be maintained between protecting the religious character of sites and respecting the rights of diverse communities.

**4. Promotion of fairness and consistency-** Fairness and consistency must be promoted through public consultation, transparency, and reconsideration of exclusions for specific sites.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Indian Constitution

## Persons with Disabilities in India- Explained Pointwise



December 3, observed as the **International Day of Persons with Disabilities**, advocates for the **rights of people with disabilities**, raising awareness about their needs and inclusion. Persons with disabilities remain one of the **most marginalized** and **underrepresented communities** globally.

In this article we will look at the status of persons with disabilities in India. We will also look at the provisions for disabled in India and the challenges faced by them. We will also delve into the way forward for their betterment. **Persons with Disabilities in India.**

### **Who are classified as Persons with Disabilities? What is the status of differently abled people in India?**

**Persons with Disabilities-** According to **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (UN CRPD), Persons with disabilities are the ones who have **long-term physical, mental, intellectual** or **sensory impairments**, which **hinder their full and effective participation in society** on an equal basis with others.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, uses the same definition as the UN CRPD. It further defines **'Person with Benchmark Disability'** as **'A person with not less than 40% of a specified disability'**.

**Expansion of Disabilities in India-** The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 has **expanded the types of disabilities** from **7** (under the Person with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995) to **21**. The act also provides the Union Government **the power to add more types of disabilities**.

## Types of Disabilities

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### Physical Disability

- **Locomotor Disability**

- (i) Leprosy cured person; (ii) Cerebral Palsy; (iii) Dwarfism; (iv) Muscular Dystrophy; (v) Acid Attack Victims.

- **Visual Impairment**

- (i) Blindness; (ii) Low Vision.

- **Hearing Impairment**

- (i) Deaf; (ii) Hard of Hearing.

- **Speech and Language Disability.**

### Intellectual Disability

- (i) Specific Learning Disabilities; (ii) Autism Spectrum Disorder.

### Mental Illness

### Chronic Neurological Conditions

- (i) Multiple Sclerosis; (ii) Parkinson's Disease

### Blood Disorders

- (i) Haemophilia; (ii) Thalassemia; (iii) Sickle Cell Disease.

### Multiple Disabilities including Deaf-Blindness

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## Data on Disability in India

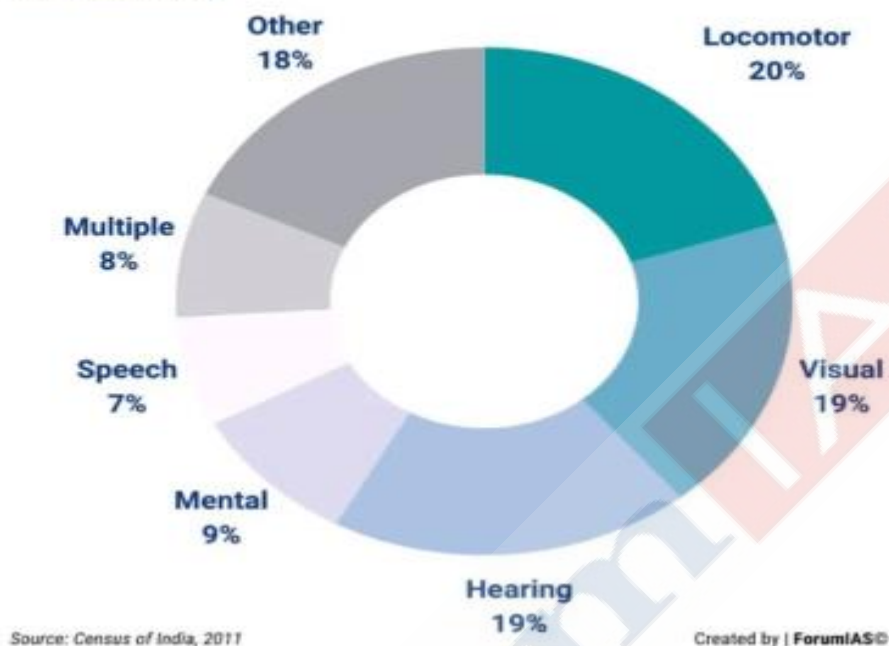
**a. Number of Persons with Disability in India-** In India, there are around **26.8 million** persons with disabilities. It constitutes around **2.21% of India's total population** (2011 Census). There are around **14.9 million men** (2.41% of men) and **11.9 million women** (2.01% of women) with disabilities. Disabilities are **highest** in the age group **10-19 years** (46.2 lakh people). **69%** (18 million) of persons with disabilities reside in rural areas.

However, a 2019 WHO survey found severe disability prevalence among Indian adults to be 16%.

**b. Disability % distribution-** **20%** of persons with disabilities in India have a **disability in movement**, **19%** have **visual impairment**, **19%** have a **hearing impairment** and **8%** have **multiple disabilities**.

## PwDs by Disability

Proportion of disabled Indian Population by type of disability



Created By Forum IAS

### What are the provisions for accessibility of persons with disabilities in India?

India as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	Article 9 of the CRPD mandates measures to ensure equal access to physical spaces, transportation, communication, and public services. India, as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), is committed to promoting accessibility.
Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016	The RPwD Act aligns with the CRPD's objectives, and seeks to ensure a dignified, discrimination-free, and equitable life for persons with disabilities. The RPwD Rules (2017) were introduced to establish accessibility standards.

### What other provisions have been made for persons with disabilities in India?

#### Constitutional Provisions

Preamble	The Preamble of the Indian Constitution seeks to secure social, economic and political justice to all citizens (which includes persons with disabilities) along with equality of status and of opportunity.
Fundamental Rights	Dignity of the individual is the fundamental notion behind all the fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution. All fundamental rights are available to the persons with disabilities.
Directive Principles	Article 41 exhorts the State to make effective provisions for securing the right to work, education and to public assistance in case of unemployment, old age, sickness and disability. Article 46 provides that the state shall promote educational and economic

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	interests of the weaker sections of the people and protect them social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
Schedules of the Constitution	Relief of the Disabled is a <b>State Subject (Entry 9 in List II)</b> under the Seventh Schedule. Welfare of the Disabled and mentally retarded is listed as <b>item 26 in the Eleventh Schedule</b> and <b>item 09 in the Twelfth Schedule</b> .

### Legal Provisions

The Mental Health Act, 2017	It replaced the Mental Health Act, 1987. It has been passed with the objective to provide for <b>mental healthcare</b> and <b>related services for persons with mental illness</b> and <b>to protect, promote</b> and <b>fulfill their rights</b> .
The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016	This Act came into force in April 2017, and replaced the <b>Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995</b> . It fulfils the obligations to the <b>United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)</b> . The Act has several provisions for benefit of persons with disabilities- a. It has <b>increased the magnitude of reservation</b> for Persons with Disabilities from <b>3% to 4% in government jobs</b> and from <b>3% to 5% in higher education institutes</b> . b. It stresses to <b>ensure accessibility in public buildings</b> in a prescribed time frame.
The Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992	It provided statutory status to the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI, established in 1986). The mandate given to RCI is to a. <b>regulate and monitor services</b> given to persons with disability b. <b>standardize syllabi</b> and to maintain a <b>Central Rehabilitation Register</b> of all qualified professionals and personnel working in the field of Rehabilitation and Special Education.
The National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999	It has been enacted with the objective to provide for the constitution of a body at the National level for the <b>Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities</b> . The trust aims to <b>provide total care to persons</b> with <b>mental retardation</b> and <b>cerebral palsy</b> and also manage the properties bequeathed to the Trust. The Trust strives to enable persons with disability to live independently by- (a) <b>Promoting measures for their protection</b> in case of death of their parents (b) <b>Evolving procedures for appointment</b> of their guardians and trustees (c) <b>Facilitating equal opportunities in society</b> .

### Welfare Programmes

Accessible India Campaign	It aims for creation of Accessible Environment for PwDs. The aim of the Campaign is to make a <b>barrier free</b> and <b>conducive environment for Persons with Disabilities</b> all over the country. The campaign targets three separate verticals for achieving universal accessibility (a) Built up environment; (b) Transportation ecosystem; (c) Information & Communication Technology (ICT) ecosystem.
Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)	DDRS aims to create an <b>enabling environment</b> to <b>ensure equal opportunities, equity, social justice</b> and <b>empowerment of persons with disabilities</b> . Under DDRS, NGOs are provided with financial assistance for running their projects for the rehabilitation of persons with disability.
Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase of Aids and Appliances (ADIP)	Its aim is to <b>assist the needy disabled persons</b> in procuring <b>durable</b> and <b>scientifically manufactured appliances</b> . It is implemented by <b>NGOs</b> , National Institutes under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, and <b>ALIMCO</b> (a PSU that manufactures artificial limbs). It helps promote their <b>physical, social,</b>



	and <b>psychological rehabilitation</b> by reducing the effects of disabilities and enhancing their economic potential.
<b>Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre</b>	It promotes the use of sign language and also to develop human resources in the field.
<b>National Institute of Mental Health Rehabilitation (NIMHR)</b>	It aims to work towards <b>capacity building</b> in the field of <b>mental health rehabilitation</b> . It also aims to <b>develop community-based rehabilitation protocols</b> for mainstreaming persons with mental illness who have been successfully cured.
<b>Divyang Protocol and Mission Vatsalya of Haryana</b>	The Haryana Department of Women and Child Development implements the <b>Divyang Protocol</b> and <b>Mission Vatsalya</b> to promote disability inclusion.

### What are the Challenges faced by the people suffering from disability?

**1. Social Challenges-** The following are the challenges faced by the people suffering from disability in India:

**(a) Discrimination and Inequality:** They face several types of discrimination like reluctance to hire PwDs for employment

**(b) Loss of Social Status:** Lack of opportunities results in lack of employment, money etc.

**(c) Inhuman Treatment:** People suffering from mental illness or mental retardation are subject to social exclusion

**(d) Loss of Identity:** The identity of PwDs becomes linked with their disability and become a subject of pity.

**2. Barriers to Education-** There is **lack of special schools** and **trained teachers** for children with learning disabilities. Persons with **visual impairment lack education materials** for their studies. Children with **learning disabilities** are shunned and not admitted to schools.

**3. Lack of adequate Healthcare facilities-** The persons with disabilities lack quality healthcare facilities which further marginalizes them.

### Barriers to Healthcare

According to WHO, people with disability encounter a range of barriers in accessing health care

#### ✓ Attitudinal Barriers

- Prejudice, stigma, discrimination by health service providers.
- Service providers lack knowledge about needs of the disabled.
- Women with disability face barriers to sexual, reproductive health services and information.

#### ✓ Physical Barriers

- Lack of appropriate infrastructure to access healthcare facilities like ramps to access passages, doorways, toilets on wheelchairs.
- Fixed-height furniture, including examination beds and chairs, can be difficult for people with disability to use.
- Lack of healthcare facilities in remote areas.

#### ✓ Communication Barriers

- Limited availability of written material or sign language interpreters at health services for persons with hearing impairment.
- Lack of information and prescription in accessible formats, like Braille or large print for persons with vision impairment.

Source: WHO

#### ✓ Financial Barriers

- Over half of all people with disability in low-income countries cannot afford proper health care.
- Inability to afford the costs associated with travelling to a health service and paying for medicine.

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### 4. Prevalence of Unemployment-

Disabled persons have lower employment rates. Private sector is reluctant to hire PwDs due to stereotypes and stigma. It **impacts their ability to be financially independent and be self-sufficient.**

### 5. Accessibility-

Lack of appropriate disabled-friendly physical infrastructure creates accessibility issues for persons

suffering with disabilities. **For ex- PwDs find it difficult to commute in public transportation, or access buildings.**

### What are the key highlights of the SC ruling on accessibility for disabled?

The Supreme Court noted a lack of enforcement mechanisms under the RPwD rules. The SC held that the rules offered self-regulatory guidelines.

A report by the National Academy of Legal Studies and Research (NALSAR) has also highlighted the gaps in accessibility for persons with disabilities in India.

Highlights of the NALSAR Report	
<b>Lack of Transport accessibility</b>	There is huge interstate variation in the transport accessibility in India. In Delhi, <b>3,775 low-floor CNG buses were available for accessible travel</b> , while Tamil Nadu lagged significantly, <b>with only 1,917 out of 21,669 buses accessible</b> for disabled travelling.
<b>Intersectionality of accessibility with other challenges</b>	The report noted that <b>accessibility challenges were compounded by factors such as caste, gender, and region</b> . For instance, Job portals often exclude visually impaired users, and lack of sign language recognition is disadvantageous for individuals with hearing and speech impairments.

The SC ruling on accessibility for the disabled stems from a **2005 writ petition filed by Rajive Raturi**, a visually impaired petitioner advocating for safety and accessibility in public spaces.

#### Key highlights of the ruling-

**a. Mandatory Rules to be drafted by the central government-** The Court declared **Rule 15(1) of the RPwD Rules ultra vires**. The court held that the RPwD rules **only provided recommendatory guidelines**. It directed the Union government to **frame enforceable, “non-negotiable” standards within three months**.

**b. Stakeholder Consultation-** The government must consult stakeholders, including **NALSAR’s Centre for Disability Studies (CDS)**, while drafting the rules.

**c. Compliance and Penalties-** The SC has directed that **non-compliance with accessibility standards would be penalized**. The penalty will include withholding completion certificates and imposing fines.

#### What are the SC guidelines to prevent stereotyping and discrimination of Persons with Disabilities?

**1. Avoiding Derogatory Language-** The court has emphasized on avoiding words that cultivate institutional discrimination, such as **‘cripple’ and ‘spastic’**. These words contribute to **negative self-image and perpetuate discriminatory attitudes**. Also, language and words that individualize the impairment and overlook disabling social barriers, like **‘afflicted’, ‘suffering’ and ‘victim’**, should be avoided.

**2. Focus on Accurate Representation-** The court has held that stereotyping of differently abled persons in visual media and films must end. Creators must focus on providing an **accurate representation of disabilities** rather than mocking them. Creators should practice the principle of **“nothing about us, without us,”** and involve persons with disabilities in the **creation and assessment of visual media content**.

**3. Creative Freedom vs Marginalizing Portrayals-** The court has clarified that **creative freedom** of filmmakers **cannot include the freedom to lampoon, stereotype, misrepresent or disparage** marginalized communities. If the overall message of the content infringes with the rights of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), then the right of creative freedom will not be protected.

**4. Collaboration with Disability Advocacy Groups-** The court has emphasized on **collaboration with disability advocacy groups** to gain insights and guidance on respectful and accurate portrayals. The **training programmes** for writers, directors, producers, and actors **must be developed** to emphasize the impact of portrayals on public perceptions and experiences of PwDs.

## SC Guidelines to prevent Stereotyping of persons with disabilities

<p><b>Avoiding Derogatory Language</b></p>	<p>Words that cultivate institutional discrimination, such as "cripple" and "spastic", and words that individualizes the impairment such as "afflicted," "suffering" and "victim" should be avoided. These words contribute to negative self-image and perpetuate discriminatory attitudes.</p>
<p><b>Accurate Representation</b></p>	<p>Creators must provide an accurate representation of disabilities rather than mocking them. Creators should practice the principle of "nothing about us, without us," and involve persons with disabilities in the creation and assessment of visual media content.</p>
<p><b>Creative Freedom vs Marginalizing Portrayals</b></p>	<p>Creative freedom of filmmakers cannot include the freedom to lampoon, stereotype, misrepresent or disparage marginalized communities.</p>
<p><b>Collaboration with Disability Advocacy Groups</b></p>	<p>The film makers should collaborate with disability advocacy groups to gain insights and guidance on respectful and accurate portrayals. Training programmes for writers, directors, producers, and actors should be conducted for real portrayal of challenges of PwDs.</p>

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### What Should be the Way Forward?

- 1. Accommodation and Inclusion-** There is a need to identify opportunities to better accommodate people with disabilities in Society- like providing better education, equal opportunity in job, and initiating them to take active part in social and political decision.
- 2. Greater Social Sensitisation-** The focus must be on overcoming stigma is necessary in order to facilitate better integration of Persons with Disabilities into the mainstream. People need to be educated and be sensitized about the challenges faced by PwDs. For ex- Use of the term "Divyangjan" to address persons with disabilities.
- 3. Preventive Measures for early prevention of disabilities-** Scaling up The Comprehensive Newborn Screening (CNS) programme under the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram for early detection and prevention of disabilities.

**4. Interventions in Public Policy-** A larger portion of the budget should be allocated to the welfare of disabled people. There ought to be **budgeting for people with disabilities** in line with the **gender budget**.

**5. Appointments of the Commissioners of Disability-** Many States fail to appoint Commissioners on time, as highlighted in a 2021 writ petition (**Seema Girija Lal vs. Union of India**). The States must be proactive in appointment of the commissioners of disability. The states should appoint experts in law, human rights, social work, and NGOs, rather than civil servants.

**6. Proactive role of the Entertainment Sector-** The private entertainment sector must address the needs of persons with disabilities, ensuring **inclusive recreational spaces** and **opportunities**.

**Read More-** [The Hindu](#)

**UPSC Syllabus-** GS II, Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

### 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. **Child marriages in India.**

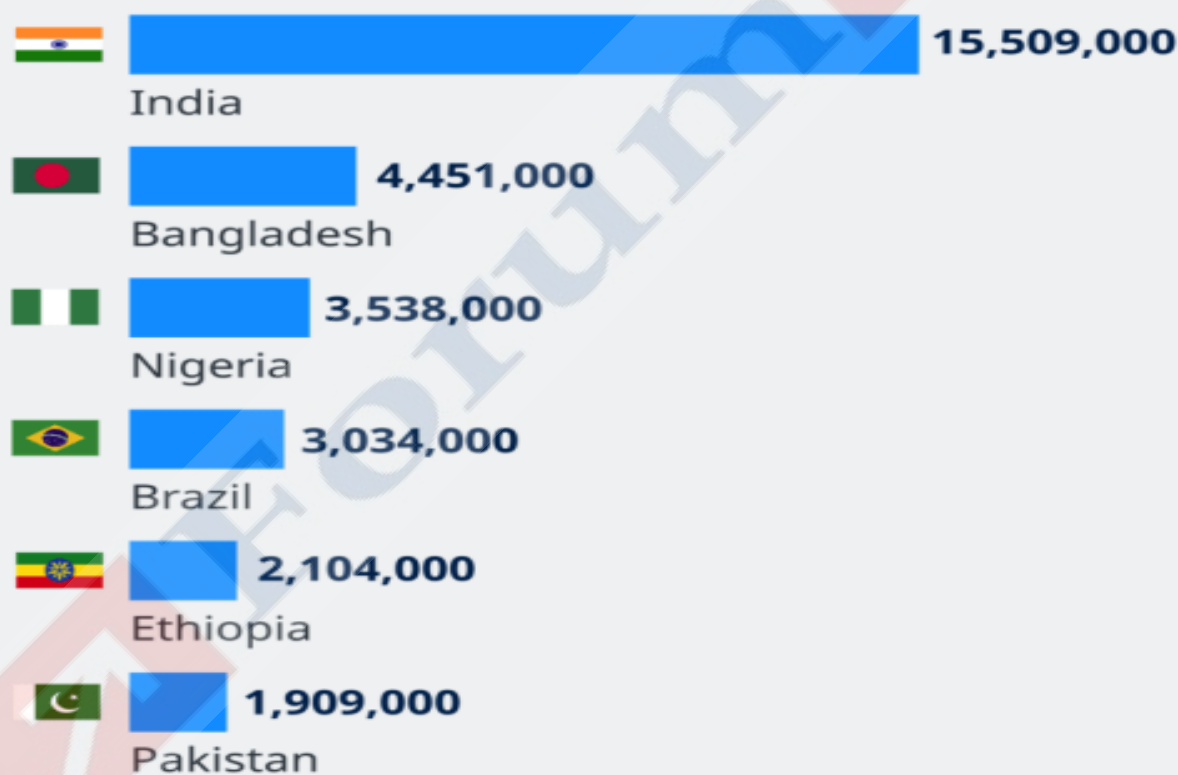
## What is Child Marriage? What is the status of Child Marriage in India?

**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

<b>Global</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About <b>40 million girls</b> ages <b>15-19</b> are currently married or in a union worldwide.</li> <li>The <b>Global Girlhood Report</b> by <b>Save the Children</b> estimates that an additional <b>5 million girls</b> 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.</li> <li>According to <b>Save the Children</b>, about <b>15 million girls and boys</b> 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.</li> </ol>
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## Countries with the highest number of child marriages\*

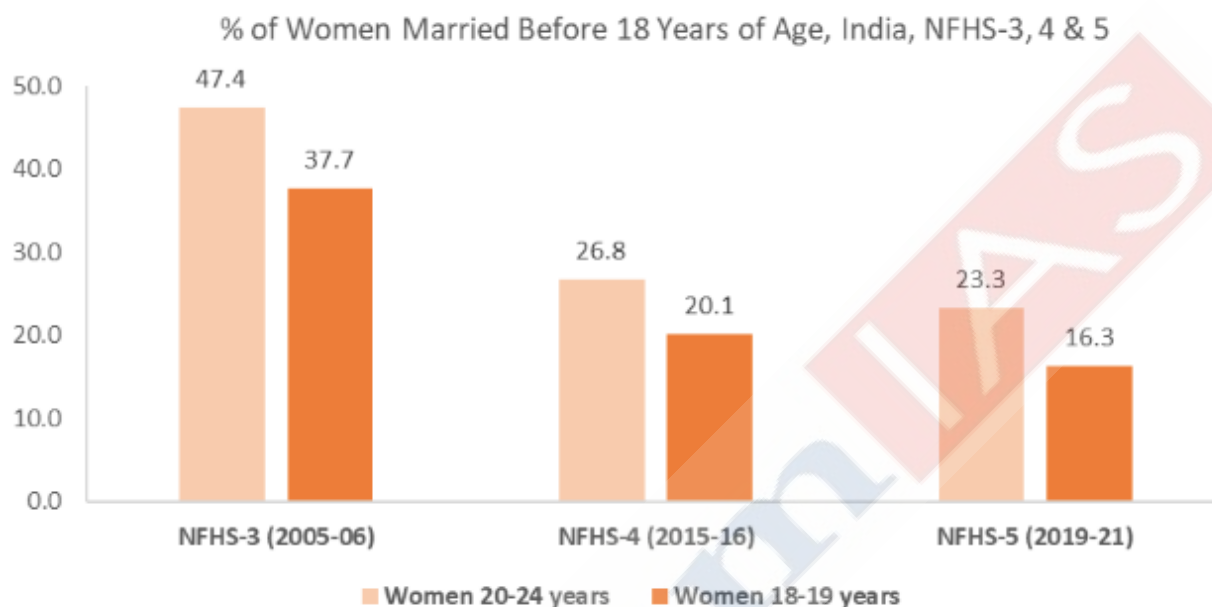


Source: Population data from United Nations |  
\*Women who were first married or in a union before they were 18-years-old

Source- UNICEF

<b>India</b>	1. According to the NHFS-5 data, child marriages in India have significantly decreased from <b>47%</b> to <b>23.3%</b> between 2015 and 2021, due to several measures such as Prevention
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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.

- Poverty-** Poor Families 'sell' their children through marriage to pay off debts or to get out of the cycle of poverty.
- “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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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?

<b>Historical Efforts</b>	In 19th Century, the social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Pandita Ramabai worked for uprooting this evil practice. The <b>Sharda Act passed in 1929</b> raised the age of marriage to 14 years for girls and 18 years for boys.
<b>Legislative Steps</b>	The <b>Hindu Marriage Act, 1955</b> prescribes age for marriage as <b>18 for girls and 21 for boys</b> . <b>Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006-</b> 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 <b>imprisonment up to 2 years</b> and fine up to <b>INR 1 lakh</b> . <b>Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme (2015)-</b> The programme which is implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, aims to break gender stereotypes and prevent child marriage. Protection to a child bride is also provided by the <b>Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015</b> ; the <b>Domestic Violence Act, 2005</b> ; and the <b>Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012</b> .
<b>Government Policies</b>	<b>Union Government-</b> Under the <b>National Population Policy 2000</b> and <b>National Youth Policy 2003</b> , steps have been taken by the central government to address child marriage. The Union Government has launched schemes like the <b>Beti Bachao Beti Padhao</b> , <b>Sukanya Samridhi Yojana</b> for child marriage prevention. <b>State Governments-</b> Rajasthan has started the Action Approach for the Reduction of Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy. West Bengal’s <b>Kanyashree Scheme</b> and <b>Rupashree schemes</b> are also aimed at elimination of child marriage.

### What should be the approach going ahead?

- 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**.
- 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.

**5. Community Involvement-** Adoption of the **Child Marriage Free Village Initiative** and "Child Marriage Free" certifications for villages and gram panchayats on the lines of "Open Defecation Free Village" under the Swachh Bharat Mission can be explored.

### 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.

### Issue of fertility rate in India- Explained Pointwise



The falling fertility rate in India is dominating the demographic shifts debate in India. According to a Lancet study, the fertility rate in India may dip to 1.29 by 2050, which will be far lower than the replacement rate of 2.1.

In Southern states in India, like Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is already below 1.9. This has led to emerging concerns in South India regarding the fall in fertility rates, ageing population and their decreased representation. 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.



While the declining fertility rate has its own advantages, the **fertility rate dropping below the replacement rate** has some **perilous consequences**. Recently RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has advocated couples to have three or more children to arrest the falling fertility rates. However, raising fertility in poorer states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh will increase the risk of exacerbation of socioeconomic challenges. **Issue of fertility rate in India**

In this article we will delve into the issue of declining fertility rate in India.

### What is Total Fertility Rate (TFR)? What is the trend of falling fertility rate in India?

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

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

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

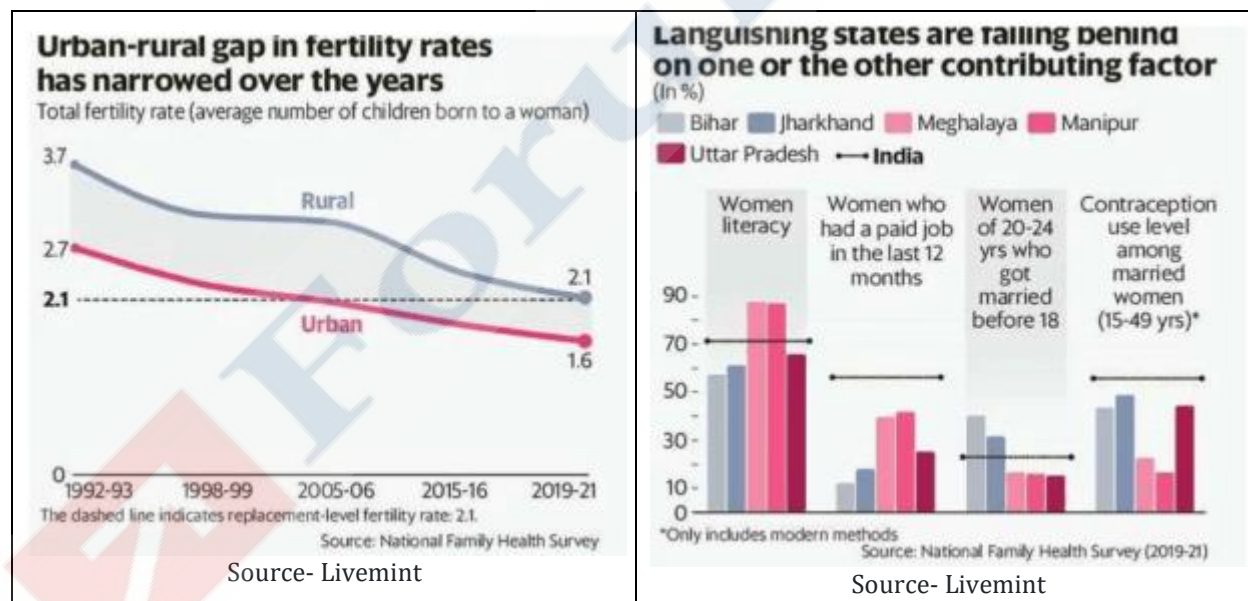
### Data Pointing to falling fertility rate in India

#### National Family Health Survey (NFHS 2019-21) Data

a. India's Total Fertility Rates (TFR) has reached **2.0 at the national level**. The total fertility rate, was as high as 6 or more in the 1950s.

b. The TFR is at **1.6 in urban areas** and **2.1 in rural India**.

c. **Bihar, Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand** and **Manipur** remain the **only states with fertility rates above the replacement level** and the national average.



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

a. India's TFR which was **6.18 in 1950**, reduced to **4.60 in 1980** and further declined to **1.91 in 2021**.

b. **Worldwide** also, the TFR has more than halved in the last 70 years, from around **five children for each woman in 1950** to **2.2 children in 2021**.

### Key Data of the Report of MoH&FW

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**.

- 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**.

#### What are the reasons for falling fertility rate in India?

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

#### What is the significance of falling fertility rates for India?

- 1. Improved labour productivity leading to accelerated economic growth-** The decline in population growth would **increase the amount of capital resources and infrastructure available in per capita terms**. A young skilled workforce would improve labour productivity, leading to accelerated economic growth.
- 2. Better employment conditions for workers-** A lower working force population will result in **improved working conditions and higher wages** for the workers. It would also lead to **elimination of wage discrimination for migrant workers** and the **mitigation of their security concerns** in the industrially developed states (southern states, Maharashtra, Gujarat), that have low fertility rates.
- 3. Enhanced participation of women in workforce-** With decline in fertility rate, less time is needed for childcare, which enhances the participation of women in workforce. **For ex- Improved share of women in MNREGA employment in Southern States**.
- 4. Improvement in quality of Social service deliveries-** Falling fertility rate improves the educational, health and skills of Indian population due to **increase in the per capita availability of social sector resources and infrastructure** like schools, colleges and hospitals.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**6. 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.**

**What Should be the way Forward?**

**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 India.

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

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

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

**6. 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.

**7. 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.

**8. 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 1- Population and Associated Issues**

### **Integrated Theatre Command- Explained Pointwise**

India boasts **one of the world's largest and most disciplined militaries**, with approximately **1.4 million personnel** across the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Despite its military prowess, **India lacks a cohesive apex-level management structure** to unify military power during conflicts and strengthen civil-military relations in peacetime.

The **creation of Theatre Commands** (Theaterization) has been hailed as a major military reform for better responses during conflict. The plan is to have five unified or theatre commands, which will help in better planning and military response, and aim to have a unified approach to fighting any future war. But, the entire process has been riddled with a visible lack of consensus amongst the three arms of the military forces.

#### **What is Integrated Theatre Command (TC)? What is the existing command structure in India?**

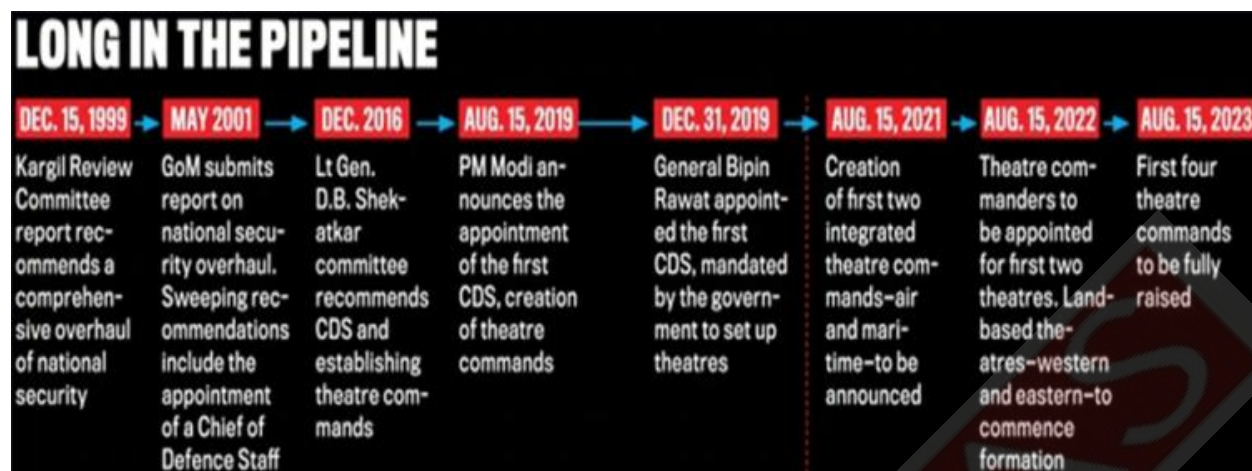
**Integrated Theatre Command-** It is a **military structure** which seeks to **integrate the capabilities of the three services- army, air force and navy-** in order to **optimally utilize their resources for wars and operations**.

**Organisation of Theatre Command-** These '**unified combat commands**' are organized either on a **geographical basis** (with a defined mission in a specific 'area of responsibility' somewhere on the globe) or on a **functional basis**.

**International operation of Theatre command-** Almost all major countries like **China, Russia, the US, the UK and France** work on a theatre command concept. **For example- China's Western Theatre Command** looks after the entire borders with India.

<p><b>Existing Command Structure in India</b></p>	<p>India has <b>17 single service commands</b> and <b>only two tri-service commands</b>.  <b>Single Service Command-</b> The <b>17 single service commands</b> are divided as- <b>Army - 7 commands; Airforce - 7 commands; Navy - 3 commands</b>.  <b>Tri-Service Command-</b>The two tri-service commands are- <b>Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC)</b>, and <b>The Strategic Force Command (SFC)</b>. The Andaman and Nicobar command is a full-fledged command raised as a tri-service command in 2001. The Strategic Force Command (SFC) handles the nuclear weapons.</p>
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#### **What has been the committee recommendations on Integrated Theatre commands in India?**



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<b>Committee Recommendations</b>	Kargil Review Committee, Naresh Chandra Committee (2012), and Shekatkar Committee (2016), recommended creating a tri-service commander role, which will help in the creation of integrated theatre commands.
<b>Appointment of CDS</b>	The appointment of CDS in 2019 and the decision to create the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) within the Ministry of Defence have all been steps in the direction of achieving jointness between the three branches of the armed forces.

**What are the recent steps taken by the Government on Integrated Theatre Command?**

<b>Proposal to create a national defence committee</b>	There is a proposal for theatre commanders under a national defence committee likely to be headed by the Defence Minister.
<b>Inter-Services Organisation (Command, Control and Discipline) Act 2023</b>	The act empowers the commander-in-chief and the officer-in-command of inter-services organisations with disciplinary and administrative powers over personnel from the other services serving in them.

**Proposed Organizational structure for Integrated Theatre Command**

<b>Appointment of a Vice Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)</b>	The Vice CDS is likely to be an officer of the rank of General or equivalent. He is expected to look after strategic planning, capability development and procurement-related matters.
<b>Appointment of a Deputy CDS</b>	The Deputy CDS is likely to be an officer of the rank of Lieutenant General or equivalent. He will be responsible for operations, intelligence and will coordinate the allocation of assets between theatres.
<b>Proposed commands</b>	The overall plan is to establish three adversary-based theatre commands— one facing Pakistan, another opposite China, and a maritime theatre command to tackle maritime threats outside the coastal borders of the country.
<b>Role of three service chiefs</b>	The three service chiefs will be responsible for raising, training and sustaining the individual services. No additional manpower is likely to be enrolled. Only readjustments within organisations will be carried out to meet the requirements of the theatre commands.

**What are the benefits of Integrated Theatre Commands (ITC)?**

**1. Increased efficiency-** It will lead to rationalization of war fighting resources, and efficiency of executions resulting in an integrated action to counter threats.

**2. Rationalization of the command structure-** The present command structure in the Indian military is pretty uneven. The **Indian Army has seven commands**, while a **much smaller Indian Air Force has a similar number of commands** and the Indian Navy has three commands. This structure will be rationalized under the theatre command concept.

**3. Effective neutralization of Chinese threat-** China's Western Theater Command looks after the entire borders with India, unlike India where it has multiple Commands and structures to respond with different officers at the top.

**4. Cost-effective in the long run-** Theaterization will help in better planning and military response and also bring down costs. **While the cost may go up in the immediate future** since all theaters would have to be armed with sufficient systems, **it will prove to be cost-effective in the long term** as all acquisitions will be a unified one.

**5. Operational Freedom-** The integrated theatre commander **will not be answerable to individual Services**, and will be free to train, equip and exercise his command to make it a cohesive fighting force capable of achieving designated goals.

### What are the Challenges in the establishment of Integrated Theatre Command in India?

**1. Inter-Service Competition-** The **intense focus of each service on its own assets** and influence can hinder the creation of synergy among the services.

**2. Massive funding-** Creation of infrastructure for the Theatre commands will require **huge amounts of funding**.

**3. Different service cultures-** The service culture and way of functioning of the three services is very different. The Indian Army has regimental affiliations and is bound by its legacy. **Finding the right mix of service culture** remains a challenge.

**4. Perception of Army Dominance-** There are concerns that the integration of the commands that may perpetuate the perceived dominance of the army and provide it with greater operational control.

**5. Infrastructure and Logistical coordination issues-** Coordinating and synchronizing the infrastructure and logistics requirements across different services could be complex and resource-intensive.

**6. Lack of National Security Strategy (NSS)-** Many retired military professionals have criticised implementing theatre commands without having a coherent National Security Strategy (NSS).

### What Should be the Way Forward?

**1. A supportive ecosystem-** In order for Theatre Commands to be effective, there needs to be a supporting ecosystem. **India still remains the 2nd largest arms importer in the world**. Hence, indigenous technology and hardware by self-reliance should be a priority.

**2. Managing internal & external security-** There needs to be an assessment of how the internal and external security will be managed under the theatre commands. It is because there are lakhs of paramilitary personnel and the Indian Coast Guard.

**3. Parliament's role-** The legislature needs to play a far more pro-active role. **A Dedicated Standing Committee of Parliament should be created**. It needs to be staffed with military advisers and other professionals to independently monitor the transition very minutely.

**4. Geography-based theatres-** Keeping in mind the changing nature of threats, India can also aim for four geography-based theatres—Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Western—each equipped to use land, sea, air, space, and cyber power to handle all threats in their areas.

**5. Talent based appointments-** No theatre should 'belong' to any service, and command appointments should be decided based on talent and experience in joint operations.

**6. Clear working out of Budgetary allocations-** Budgetary allocations and the distribution of funds need to be clearly worked out to enable the setting up of a seamless theatre command system

**7. Modular structure-** In the theaterization debate, India must not forget to modularize its armed forces. The present big hierarchical formations need to be divided into many small networked brigades. Multiple studies have shown that these are superior to the division-based structure in terms of deployability, employability, and sustainability.

India operates the 4<sup>th</sup> largest military in the World, and with each service acting independent of each other, the formation of theatre commands is indeed a need of the hour. But, the successful launch of the Theatre Commands should not be rushed. Issues and concerns of all the stakeholders must be resolved first.

**Read More-** [Business Standard](#)  
**UPSC Syllabus-** GS 3- Security

### PRAGATI Portal- Explained Pointwise

As nations tackle the **dual challenges** of **rising costs** and **complex regulatory hurdles** in implementing infrastructure agendas, India has revolutionized infrastructure management through a transformative digital platform- **PRAGATI Portal**. A recent Oxford study has praised India's PRAGATI platform for its outstanding role in digital governance, particularly in infrastructure and social development.



Source- Indian Express

#### What is the PRAGATI Portal?

**PRAGATI Portal-** The PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation) platform, was **launched in 2015** by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as a part of **Digital India program**. The portal is managed by the **Prime Minister's Office (PMO)** and aims to address inefficiencies in project implementation through a structured review process.

#### Objectives of PRAGATI

- a. This innovative platform is designed to **enhance governance** by improving communication among various government departments and ensuring timely execution of projects across the country.
- c. It also monitors and reviews key programs and projects of the Government of India, along with those

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identified by State Governments.

b. It combines leadership with digital tools such as **video conferencing, drone monitoring, and data management.**

### Key Features of PRAGATI

<b>Three-Tier System</b>	The PRAGATI portal operates on a <b>three-tier architecture</b> , allowing for effective monitoring and evaluation of government projects.
<b>Monthly Reviews</b>	A monthly review meeting, termed " <b>PRAGATI Day</b> ," is held on the fourth Wednesday of each month, where the Prime Minister <b>reviews flagged issues</b> related to ongoing programs and public grievances.
<b>Real-Time Monitoring</b>	The platform facilitates real-time tracking of project progress, enabling early identification of delays and issues.

### What have been the successes of PRAGATI Platform?

**1. Swift completion of delayed projects-** Projects like the **National Highway 8, the Chenab Bridge** (the world's highest rail bridge), and the **Bogibeel Bridge in Assam**, which were previously delayed for years, were completed swiftly under PRAGATI's purview.

**2. Accelerated Completion of Infrastructure projects-** PRAGATI initiative has accelerated over **340 major infrastructure projects** worth approximately **\$205 billion**.

**3. Leadership-Driven Accountability-** The **top-level involvement** of **Prime Minister** and key stakeholders, including **state chief secretaries** and **central ministry officials** in the PRAGATI meeting, has made infrastructure a national priority, injecting urgency and accountability into bureaucratic processes.

**4. Enhanced Centre-State Collaboration-** The platform has proven its utility across political boundaries, facilitating progress in states regardless of their ruling party. **For ex-** The **unprecedented cooperation** between state and central agencies **under PRAGATI** in the completion of **Bogibeel bridge**.

**5. Extension to social development initiatives-** PRAGATI's impact extends to social development initiatives, like **acceleration of rural electrification** and **provision of tap water connections to millions**. This integrated approach demonstrates the potential of digital governance to address both physical and social infrastructure needs.

**6. Positive economic Impact-** India's digital governance model has **proven economically impactful**, with studies showing a **2.5 to 3.5-rupee GDP gain** for **every rupee spent** on infrastructure creation.

### What are the other complimentary platforms for Infrastructure monitoring?

India introduced complementary platforms like **PM Gati Shakti in 2021** for geospatial planning and **PARIVESH** for streamlining environmental clearances. PRAGATI, PM Gati Shakti, and PARIVESH together form a **robust digital ecosystem** for infrastructure development. These platforms have reduced approval times significantly- from **600 days** to as little as **70-75 days**- and optimized project design while minimizing environmental impact.

<b>PM Gati Shakti</b>	PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP) was launched on 13th October 2021 for <b>providing multimodal connectivity infrastructure</b> to various economic zones. The focus will be on <b>planning, financing including through innovative ways, use of technology</b> and <b>speedier implementation</b> of the infrastructure projects in India.
<b>PARIVESH</b>	PARIVESH is a <b>Single-Window Integrated Environmental Management System</b> , developed in pursuance of the spirit of ' <b>Digital India</b> ' initiated by the Prime Minister and capturing the essence of Minimum Government and Maximum Governance. It aims to <b>streamline environmental clearances</b> of infrastructure projects.

### What lessons does PRAGATI provide for Global South?

PRAGATI offers critical insights for other nations, particularly in the Global South, where infrastructure challenges are compounded by rapid urbanization and population growth.



**1. Sustained leadership-** Sustained leadership from the top is essential for driving implementation of the large scale infrastructure projects in India.

**2. Cross- Government collaboration-** Digital platforms for infrastructure monitoring must enable cross-government collaboration while respecting local autonomy.

**3. Combination of multiple tools-** The infrastructure projects must combine multiple technological tools, such as drone monitoring and video conferencing, to enhance project oversight.

**4. Emulation of the platform for key initiatives-** PRAGATI's approach is particularly relevant for initiatives like [Africa's Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa \(PIDA\)](#), which aims to close the continent's infrastructure gap through cross-border projects.

### Conclusion

India's PRAGATI exemplifies how technology, when combined with visionary leadership, can drive transformative change in infrastructure development, serving as a model for emerging economies around the globe. By demonstrating how digital governance and leadership can overcome bottlenecks, PRAGATI provides a tested blueprint for fostering accountability, transparency, and effective resource utilization worldwide.

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

### Syrian Crisis- Explained Pointwise

After nearly 15 years of civil war, [Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was ousted](#) in a rapid two-week offensive. On December 8, rebel forces captured Damascus, and Assad has reportedly flown to an undisclosed location. The ousting of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has sparked celebrations in Damascus. However, the [development raises critical questions about Syria's future](#) and [the role of foreign powers](#). Global capitals, including New Delhi, remain wary of the complex dynamics that have unfolded amidst the rebellion.

#### Who are the Key Players in Syrian conflict?

<b>Bashar al-Assad</b>	Assad <a href="#">assumed power in 2000</a> . He succeeded his father, Hafez al-Assad, who had ruled Syria since 1971. Assad was initially seen as a reluctant leader. However, he transitioned to prominence, being voted the "most popular" Arab leader in a 2009 CNN poll.
<b>Foreign Actors supporting Bashar al-Assad</b>	Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah provided critical military backing to Bashar al-Assad
<b>Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) under Abu Mohammad al-Jolani</b>	This is the main group behind Assad's ousting. HTS has evolved from <a href="#">al-Qaeda's Syrian branch</a> into a <a href="#">more locally focused Islamist faction</a> under Abu Mohammad al-Jolani. The group <a href="#">dismantled both ISIS and Al-Qaeda's Syrian branch</a> . It focuses more on <a href="#">Syrian nationalism</a> over <a href="#">global jihad</a> .
<b>Foreign Actors against Bashar al-Assad</b>	The <a href="#">U.S.</a> and <a href="#">Turkey</a> (Turkey-backed Syrian National Army) supported anti-Assad factions. <a href="#">Israel</a> has also targeted Syria over its support for Palestine.

#### What are the reasons behind the ousting of Bashar al-Assad?

**1. Economic Missteps and Social Discontent-** Bashar al-Assad's economic reforms, which aimed at modernization, [ignored social equity](#). This left the lower classes of the Syrian society struggling for economic empowerment.

**2. Brutal Suppression of Demands for Democratic reforms-** The [Arab Spring protests of 2011](#) which reached Syria, was met with a brutal crackdown by Bashar al-Assad. This resulted into a civil war.

**3. Rise in religious extremism-** The secular society also saw rising influence from religious extremists, as groups like the [Islamic State](#) gained control of parts of Syria.

**4. Accusation of marginalization of majority-** Syria's Sunni majority accused Assad's Alawite-led regime of monopolizing power. Further, the broader dissatisfaction with unemployment and rising prices, made Bashar al-Assad extremely unpopular.

**5. Shift in Balance of Power-** After years of frozen conflict, the Islamist rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) emerged as a dominant force. Further, the distraction and weakening of Assad's allies- **Russia in Ukraine**, **Iran in regional conflicts**, and **Hezbollah in Gaza**, helped HTS to seize the capital Damascus.

### How does the ongoing Syrian Crisis impact India?

The Syrian crisis has significant implications for India, impacting diplomatic relations, economic interests, and regional stability.

**1. Can affect India's Historical Ties-** India and Syria have maintained a long-standing relationship based on historical, cultural, and civilizational ties. India has consistently supported Syria's claims, particularly regarding the Golan Heights, and has received Syria's backing on issues such as Kashmir.

**2. Effect on Indian Investments in Syria-** India has made substantial investments in Syria's infrastructure and energy sectors. This includes a **USD 240 million line of credit for the Tishreen Thermal Power Plant** and **oil exploration agreements involving ONGC**. The fall of Bashar al-Assad could jeopardize these investments, especially if extremist groups gain power.

**3. Rise of Extremism-** The rise of global extremism like the **strengthening of ISIS** can create internal and external security challenges for India. **Ex-** Rise of ISIS based recruitments in India.

**4. Diaspora Concerns-** The Indian Diaspora in Syria faces serious human rights threats with Syria on the path of turning into a **'Mediterranean Afghanistan'**.

### What Should be the way ahead for India to navigate the Syrian crisis?

India must adopt a balanced, pragmatic strategy to navigate the complexities of the Syrian crisis while safeguarding its interests in West Asia and promoting stability in the region.

**1. Maintenance of Political Neutrality-** India should avoid taking sides in Syria's internal conflict or aligning explicitly with any faction. India should ensure that its policy remains **non-interventionist** and remains focused on peacebuilding.

**2. Engage Regional Stakeholders-** Collaborate with key players like **Russia, Iran, Turkey**, and the **Arab League** to promote a political settlement.

**3. Extend Humanitarian Aid-** India should partner with international organizations to provide essential assistance, including food, medical supplies, and shelter, to displaced populations within Syria and in refugee camps.

**4. Safeguard Economic and Strategic Interests-** India should **engage with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** countries to mitigate any economic fallout from regional instability.

**5. Enhanced focus on Counter-Terrorism-** India should **remain vigilant about the resurgence of extremist groups in post-Assad Syria**. The intelligence-sharing and security cooperation with global partners should be enhanced to prevent threats from spilling over into South Asia.

**6. Minute tracking of HTS's Role-** India should closely observe the policies and actions of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), particularly regarding minority rights and governance.

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

**UPSC Syllabus-** GS 2 International Relations

## Issues related to fertiliser sector in India- Explained Pointwise

Soil health is a crucial determinant of agricultural productivity, environmental sustainability, and food security. On **December 5, 2024**, the world observed the **10th World Soil Day** under the theme “Caring for Soils – Measure, Monitor, and Manage”. It emphasizes the importance of soil conservation and proper management to ensure long-term agricultural productivity.

In **India**, where agriculture remains the backbone of the economy, **soil degradation** has emerged as a significant challenge, **driven by nutrient deficiencies** and the **unsustainable use of fertilisers**. This article explores the state of Indian soil health, the role of the fertiliser sector, its associated challenges, and the policy reforms required to address these critical issues. **Fertiliser Sector Issues in India.**



**What is the current state of nutrient deficiency in Indian soil?**

According to recent reports Indian soils **suffer from acute deficiencies in essential nutrients** which are listed below. These nutrient deficiencies severely affect soil fertility and crop yields.

Figure 2. Source- PSU Watch

<b>Nitrogen Deficiency</b>	Less than 5% of Indian soils have adequate nitrogen levels, essential for healthy plant growth.
<b>Phosphate Deficiency</b>	Only 40% of soils are sufficient in phosphate, an important nutrient for root development and flowering.
<b>Potash Deficiency</b>	32% of soils are deficient in potash, which is crucial for plant disease resistance and overall growth.
<b>Organic Carbon Deficiency</b>	Just 20% of soils have adequate organic carbon, which is necessary for improving soil structure and water retention.
<b>Micronutrient Deficiencies</b>	Soils in India also suffer from deficiencies of micronutrients such as <b>zinc, iron, sulphur, and boron</b> , which are critical for optimal plant growth.

### What is the role of fertiliser sector in promoting soil health?

- 1. Ensure the availability of essential soil nutrients-** The fertiliser sector has played a crucial role in sustaining India's agricultural output by ensuring the timely availability of essential nutrients such as **nitrogen (N), phosphate (P), and potash (K)** through both domestic production and imports.
- 2. Driving India's Agricultural Dominance-** The efforts of the fertiliser industry in supplying critical nutrients have helped India maintain its status as a global agricultural powerhouse. **Between 2020-21 and 2022-23, the country exported 85 million tonnes of cereals while providing near-free grain to over 813 million people during the pandemic.**
- 3. Sustainability Initiatives-** The fertiliser sector encourages the use of advanced products like **slow-release fertilisers** and those fortified with micronutrients to enhance efficiency and reduce environmental impact.

**4. Education and Awareness-** The sector works closely with farmers to educate them about proper fertiliser application techniques, soil testing (**Soil Health Card**), and nutrient management for maintaining soil vitality.

#### What are the key challenges in the Indian fertiliser Sector?

The Indian fertiliser sector faces several key challenges that impede the effective and efficient use of fertilisers, undermining both soil health and agricultural productivity.

**1. Imbalanced Fertiliser Use-** A major issue in Indian agriculture is the **overuse of nitrogen (N) fertilisers, especially urea**, while other essential nutrients like phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) are underused. **For example**, in Punjab, **nitrogen use is 61% higher than recommended**, but **under uses potash by 89%** and **phosphate by 8%**. This imbalance results in green fields but lower crop yields, as plants need all three nutrients for optimal growth.

**2. Low Nutrient Use Efficiency (NUE)-** The efficiency of fertiliser use in India is very low, with **only 35-40% of fertilisers being absorbed by crops**. The **rest is wasted or lost to the environment**, such as nitrogen escaping as nitrous oxide, a harmful greenhouse gas. This inefficiency leads to higher costs for farmers and environmental harm.

**3. Distortions from Fertiliser Subsidies-** India's fertiliser subsidy system, especially for urea, has caused an imbalance in nutrient use. **Urea is heavily subsidised**, making it **cheaper than other fertilisers like DAP and MOP**, leading to overuse of nitrogen. This has **resulted in excessive nitrogen use** and insufficient application of other key nutrients, negatively impacting soil health.

**4. Fertiliser Diversion and Smuggling-** A significant portion (**20-25%**) of **subsidised urea** is diverted for non-agricultural uses or smuggled out of the country. This deprives farmers of necessary fertilisers and strains government finances.

**5. Neglect of Micronutrients-** Micronutrients like **zinc, boron, and iron** are often overlooked, despite their crucial role in plant growth. Their deficiency is widespread and contributes to the decline in soil health and agricultural productivity.

#### What is fertiliser Subsidy and the related Schemes implemented in India?

**Fertiliser Subsidy-** The government provides a subsidy to fertiliser producers so farmers can buy fertilisers at lower prices. The subsidy **covers the difference between the cost of making or importing the fertiliser and the price farmers pay**. Subsidy on 3 basic fertilisers in India- Urea, DAP and Muriate of Potash (MOP) is discussed below:

**a. Subsidy on Urea:** Urea is the most widely produced and used fertiliser in India. It is subsidised only for agricultural use. The government pays a subsidy based on the cost of production at each plant, and urea is sold at a fixed Maximum Retail Price (MRP).The **subsidized MRP of 45 kg bag of urea is Rs.242 per bag** (exclusive of charges towards neem coating and taxes applicable).

**b. Subsidy on Non-Urea Fertilisers:** Non-urea fertilisers, such as **DAP and MOP**, are generally sold at market prices, but the government has recently regulated them due to global price increases (especially after the Russia-Ukraine war). These fertilisers are **covered under the Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme**. The MoP is being sold at Rs 1,500-1,600 per bag, while the **price of DAP is Rs 1,350 per bag**.

#### Fertiliser subsidy schemes

<b>Urea Subsidy Scheme</b>	<p><b>a.</b> Under the Urea Subsidy Scheme, urea is sold at a statutorily notified uniform MRP (Maximum Retail Price). Farmers pay a subsidised price of ₹242 per 45 kg bag of urea, significantly lower than the market price.</p> <p><b>b.</b> The difference between the cost of production/importation and the retail price is paid to the urea manufacturer/importer by the government as a subsidy</p>
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<b>Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme</b>	<p>a. The NBS scheme was <b>introduced in 2010</b> to address the nutrient imbalance in Indian agriculture.</p> <p>b. Under this scheme, fertilisers are provided at subsidised rates based on the nutrients they contain, namely nitrogen, phosphate, potash, and sulphur.</p> <p>c. <b>Fertilisers fortified with secondary and micronutrients are also given additional subsidies.</b> However, <b>urea is excluded from the NBS scheme.</b></p>
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### What are the challenges with the Subsidy System?

The fertiliser subsidy system has created several challenges:

- 1. Nutrient Imbalance:** By focusing heavily on urea, the subsidy system has encouraged an imbalanced use of fertilisers, with nitrogen being overused and phosphate and potash underused. This imbalance harms soil health and reduces agricultural productivity in the long run.
- 2. Financial Strain on the Government:** Fertiliser subsidies are a significant financial burden on the government, **amounting to ₹1.88 lakh crore, or nearly 4% of the Union budget.** This high expenditure diverts resources away from other critical sectors, such as health and education.
- 3. Environmental Harm:** The inefficient use of fertilisers has led to pollution, including the **release of greenhouse gases and contamination of water bodies.** The low NUE further exacerbates these environmental impacts.
- 4. Diversion of Subsidised Fertilisers:** The diversion of urea for non-agricultural uses and illegal exports leads to shortages for farmers and additional costs for the government.

### Solutions and Way Forward

- 1. Rationalising Subsidies-** The government should **bring urea under the Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) scheme** to balance the prices of nitrogen, phosphate, and potash. This will encourage balanced fertiliser use and reduce reliance on urea.
- 2. Deregulating Fertiliser Prices-** **Allowing market forces to set fertiliser prices can remove distortions caused by price controls.** Farmers should receive direct income support, such as digital coupons or cash transfers, to purchase fertilisers based on their needs.
- 3. Promoting Micronutrient Use-** To address micronutrient deficiencies, the government should promote fertilisers enriched with micronutrients. Encouraging balanced fertiliser use, including micronutrients, is crucial for better soil health and crop yields.
- 4. Improving Nutrient Use Efficiency (NUE)-** Improving NUE is essential, which can be achieved through **precision farming, better soil testing**, and using technology to apply fertilisers more efficiently.

Read more- [Indian Express](#)  
UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Agriculture

### Space sector in India- Explained Pointwise

India's space sector has achieved remarkable progress, exemplified by the recent success of Chandrayaan-3, which highlights its advancing technological capabilities. **Over the next two decades, the Government of India has set ambitious goals**, including the development of powerful, reusable rockets like ISRO's upcoming **Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV)**. These advancements are critical for achieving self-reliance and global competitiveness in space exploration.

This article explores recent developments in India's space sector after the success of Chandrayaan-3. We will also discuss the space sector significance and the challenges it faces.



Source- Financial Express

**What have been the recent developments in Space Sector in India post the Successful Chandrayaan-3 mission?**

#### New Space Launches

<b>Aditya-L1 Mission</b>	Aditya-L1 spacecraft has been <b>launched to study solar radiation</b> from the Earth-Sun Lagrange point (L1), aboard the <b>Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)</b> . It reached its orbit around L1 by January 6, 2024, and completed its first orbit on July 2, 2024. In May 2024, it tracked a <b>solar storm in collaboration</b> with ground observatories and lunar spacecraft.
<b>Gaganyaan TV-D1 Test Flight</b>	The test successfully <b>separated the crew module from the Test Vehicle (TV)</b> , ensuring it safely descended and was recovered by the <b>Indian Navy vessel INS Shakti</b> . This test is a key part of <b>ISRO's human spaceflight program</b> .
<b>XPoSat Launch</b>	It studies the polarization of radiation from celestial objects and <b>follows NASA's IPEX mission</b> .
<b>RLV-TD Tests</b>	ISRO tested its Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV), Pushpak, with <b>landing experiments that mimicked conditions from space</b> . These successful tests provided key data and set the stage for the upcoming Orbital Return Flight Experiment.
<b>SSLV Development</b>	ISRO successfully completed the final test flight of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV). This milestone <b>confirms the SSLV's readiness for commercial use</b> . The payloads included earth observation tools and an ultraviolet dosimeter for the Gaganyaan mission.

#### Regulatory and Institutional Developments

<b>NewSpace India Ltd. (NSIL)</b>	NSIL now <b>manages commercial activities</b> like Indian Remote Sensing satellite data. On May 1, 2024, NSIL signed a <b>launch deal with SpaceX</b> for the GSAT-20/GSAT-N2 satellite. It has also sought qualifications for LVM-3 production and signed a launch agreement with an Australian company for the SSLV.
<b>Private Sector Contributions</b>	Private space companies are progressing with their missions- <b>Agnikul Cosmos</b> launched its SoRTeD-01 vehicle, <b>Skyroot Aerospace</b> is developing the Vikram 1 rocket, and <b>Dhruva Space and Bellatrix Aerospace</b> contributed to the PSLV-C58 mission.
<b>Regulatory Developments</b>	India's space regulator, <b>IN-SPACE</b> , has <b>updated its policies and issued new licences</b> , including the first satellite broadband license to Eutelsat OneWeb and

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	the first ground station license to Dhruva Space. The government has amended its foreign direct investment (FDI) policy to allow 100% FDI in most space sectors. However, there are some limits on <b>satellite manufacturing</b> (74%) and <b>launch infrastructure</b> (49%).
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### Future Roadmap and Initiatives

<b>Gaganyaan Program</b>	<p><b>a.</b> ISRO is advancing its Gaganyaan program, which will send an Indian crew to space for the first time, showcasing India's human spaceflight capabilities.</p> <p><b>b.</b> By 2035, ISRO aims to establish India's own space station, the '<b>Bharatiya Antariksh Station</b>' (BAS). The revised Gaganyaan Programme includes the development of the first module of BAS and four missions to demonstrate and validate various technologies for BAS by December 2028.</p>
<b>Next-Generation Launch Vehicle</b>	<p><b>a.</b> ISRO is working on a <b>Next Generation Launch Vehicle</b> (NGLV). It will be a <b>three-stage rocket</b> using <b>semi-cryogenic, liquid, and cryogenic engines</b>.</p> <p><b>b.</b> The NGLV will replace some existing launch vehicles, such as the GSLV. The NGLV will <b>triple the payload capacity of the LVM3</b> (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mk III), India's most powerful rocket. Additionally, ISRO is upgrading the LVM3 with a new semi-cryogenic engine.</p> <p><b>c.</b> In contrast to India's existing rockets, which are expendable and designed for single use, a <b>significant portion of the NGLV will be reusable</b>. Reusability requires that the rocket keep some of its fuel for controlled descent back to the earth's surface.</p>

### What is the significance of Space sector in India?

- 1. Boost to 'Space Industrialisation'**- Currently, India manages to occupy only 2%, or US\$ 7 billion, of the global space economy. The development of space sector will **promote space Industrialisation in India, provide a boost to space-tech ecosystem** and **help India's space economy to reach \$100 billion by 2040**.
- 2. Low Cost Missions**- The Indian space sector has the **potential of launching space vehicles at a much lower cost**. This will help in getting many foreign contracts. **For ex- Mars Orbiter Mission was 10 times cheaper than western missions**.
- 3. Presence of Budding Entrepreneurs**- According to a global report published in June 2021, **India has 368 private space firms, placing it 5th in the world** in size after the US, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Germany. With these many firms, India is leading China (288), France (269), and Spain (206) in the private space industry.
- 4. Enhancement of India's role and position in the Artemis accord**- India is now a member of the Artemis Accords. With the further growth and development of space sector, India has an opportunity to lead the other Artemis countries alongside the U.S.

**Artemis Accord**- It is the U.S.-led **multilateral effort to place humans on the moon by 2025** and thereafter to expand human space exploration to the earth's wider neighbourhood in the solar system.

- 5. Expansion of cooperation in outer space**- While geo-political rivalry is a reality, India's space sector provides India an **opportunity to limit competition** and expand cooperation in outer space. However, **it also allows India to gain military advantage in space** over their geopolitical rivals on Earth.

### What are the challenges in further development of space infrastructure in India?

- 1. Budgetary Challenges**- Space sector in India faces budget constraints despite its successes in launching missions. There has been an **8% decline in budget allocations to ISRO in 2023-2024** with respect to 2022-2023. The funds allocated to the space sector are very less in comparison to other countries. The US spent 10 times and China 6 times more than India in the space sector in 2019-20.
- 2. Manpower Challenges**- ISRO, the foundational pillar of Indian space sector, faces manpower challenge due to the **problem of Brain Drain** and **fewer students pursuing advanced spaced space studies**.

**3. Absence of a Clear Legislative Framework-** The draft Space Activities bill, which was **introduced way back in 2017 but has not yet been passed**. This has hindered the further growth and development of the space sector in India.

**4. Lack of robust Dispute Settlement Mechanism-** This discourages private investment in the space sector in India. The void was seen in **Antrix-Devas cancelled satellite deal**. The Government of India owes nearly \$1.2 billion to Devas Multimedia as per an order of a tribunal of the International Chamber of Commerce.

**5. Technological Challenges-** ISRO faces **challenges in upgrading its technology**, such as **developing more powerful launch vehicles** with higher payload capacities. **For example**, Chandrayaan-3 took about six weeks to reach the Moon, while the failed Russian mission Luna-25 took only one week. Currently, India uses two LVM3 rockets for uncrewed lunar missions and **relies on foreign rockets like SpaceX's Falcon 9 for heavier payloads**.

**6. Government funding driven sector-** Some critics have argued that such **massive spending by the government alone in the space sector** curtails **Indian government's spending capability in social sectors** like poverty alleviation, education, and health which must be the priority for developing country like India.

**What Steps have been taken by the Government to address these challenges?**

<b>Indian Space Policy, 2023</b>	Indian Space Policy 2023 is a <b>landmark policy for the development for India's space sector</b> . It offers an opportunity to build upon past achievements and harness the potential of the evolving space sector.
<b>IN-SPACe</b>	It aims to provide a <b>level-playing field for private companies to use the Indian space architecture</b> . IN-SPACe will act as a channel between ISRO and any private players that want to participate in space activity, thereby culling lengthy bureaucratic procedures.
<b>FDI Policy</b>	The government has amended its <b>foreign direct investment (FDI)</b> policy to allow 100% FDI in most space sectors. However, there are some limits on <b>satellite manufacturing (74%)</b> and <b>launch infrastructure (49%)</b> .
<b>New Space India Limited (NSIL)</b>	It is a <b>Central Public Sector Enterprise</b> under the Department of Space that was established in 2019. It has been mandated to <b>transfer the technologies emanating out of the Indian space programme</b> and enable Indian industry to scale up high-technology manufacturing base.

**What should be the Way forward?**

**1. Push for greater privatization-** India should create **space policies that boost private sector investment and focus on commercial growth**. The Department of Space can **award contracts to Indian companies to develop reusable, heavy-lift rockets**. A milestone-based funding mechanism, where payments are made to private players after meeting specific objectives at each stage, would ensure accountability and reduce cost overruns.

**2. Passage of space Activities Bill-** The passage of the **Space Activities Bill** should also be done in order to give private players greater clarity and protection. This should involve proper consultation and discussions with the concerned stakeholders.

**3. Setting up Space Dispute Tribunal-** The plan to set up **an independent tribunal to adjudicate disputes among private space entities** should be implemented promptly.

**4. Enhanced International Collaboration-** India must do more collaboration and research with pioneer countries like the **US & Russia**, who have already ramped up their space infrastructure.

Indian Space sector possesses huge untapped potential which can be realized with adequate policy measures by the government. This would boost the confidence of the private sector and deliver optimum results, thereby helping the country acquire the top spot in the global space industry.

**Read more- [The Hindu](#)  
UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Space**



## Impeachment of Judges- Explained Pointwise



The judiciary is the cornerstone of a democracy, entrusted with safeguarding constitutional values, ensuring justice, and upholding the rule of law. However, when a judge's conduct or capacity to function in their esteemed position comes into question, the **Constitution of India provides a detailed and rigorous process for their removal through impeachment.**

Recently, this issue gained prominence as Opposition INDIA bloc parties in the Rajya Sabha initiated a **motion to impeach Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav of the Allahabad High Court** for alleged controversial statements against minorities. This article delves into the constitutional provisions, process, limitations, and recommendations for addressing the challenges associated with the impeachment of judges in India.



Source- iPleaders

### What are the constitutional provisions for the impeachment of judges in India?

Article 124 (4), (5)	Applicable for the removal of a Supreme Court judge
Article 217 (1) (b) and Article 218	Applicable for the removal of a High court judge

Although the **Constitution does not explicitly mention the term ‘impeachment,’** it is commonly used to describe the process outlined in Article 124 (4) , Article 217 (1) (b) and Article 218. The term **impeachment**, as **officially used under Article 61** of the Indian Constitution, **applies exclusively to the removal of the President of India.**

### Grounds for Removal of Judges

1. The provisions under article 124 (4) (5), 217 (1) (b) and 218 allow for the removal of a Supreme Court or High Court judge on the grounds of “**proved misbehaviour**” or “**incapacity**”.
2. The provisions **mandated** that a judge of the Supreme Court or High Court **shall not be removed from office unless an address is presented to the President in the same session in which it is passed by each House of Parliament.** This requires:
  - a. A majority of the total membership of each House.
  - b. A majority of not less than **two-thirds** of the members of each House present and voting.

Once Parliament passes the motion, the President is required to issue an order for the judge’s removal.

### What is the Procedure for the removal of Judges in India?

The procedure for removal of judges is **codified in the Judges Inquiry Act, 1968 and Judges Inquiry rules 1969.** The process involves several critical steps:

**1. Initiation of Motion:** The removal process begins with a notice of motion signed by at least **100 members of the Lok Sabha** or **50 members of the Rajya Sabha**. This motion is then submitted to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha or the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, depending on the House where it originates.

**2. Admittance of Motion:** The Speaker or Chairman examines the motion and decides whether to admit it. **Upon admission, a three-member inquiry committee is constituted.**

**3. Inquiry Committee:** The committee comprises **the Chief Justice of India (or a Supreme Court judge)**, the **Chief Justice of a High Court**, and **a distinguished jurist**, as per the opinion of the Speaker/Chairman. The committee investigates the charges, frames them formally, and has the authority to call for **evidence** and cross examine **witnesses**.

**4. Committee Findings:** The committee submits its report to the Speaker/Chairman. If the charges of misbehaviour or incapacity are not proven, the process terminates. **If proven, the motion is taken up in the originating House of Parliament.**

**5. Parliamentary Voting:** The motion must be passed by both Houses with a majority of the total membership and a two-thirds majority of those present and voting.

**6. Presidential Order:** Once both Houses approve the motion, an address is sent to the President, who issues the order for the judge's removal.

### What are the Instances of Impeachment in India?

India has witnessed six impeachment attempts since independence, none of which resulted in a judge's removal. Some notable cases include:

<b>Justice V. Ramaswami (1993)</b>	Accused of financial impropriety, Justice Ramaswami faced impeachment. Despite the inquiry committee's finding of guilt, the motion failed due to political considerations and Congress's decision to abstain from voting.
<b>Justice Soumitra Sen (2011)</b>	Accused of misappropriation of funds, Justice Sen was impeached by the Rajya Sabha. However, he resigned before the Lok Sabha could discuss the motion, leading to the termination of the proceedings.
<b>Justice S. K. Gangele (2015)</b>	Allegations of sexual harassment were levied against him, but the inquiry committee cleared him of wrongdoing.
<b>Justice C.V. Nagarjuna (2017)</b>	Accused of victimising a Dalit judge and financial misconduct, the motion failed as MPs withdrew their signatures.
<b>Justice Dipak Misra (2018)</b>	The politically charged impeachment motion against the former Chief Justice of India was rejected at the preliminary stage by the Rajya Sabha Chairman.

### How are Judges impeached in other countries?

**1. United Kingdom**– Judges hold office during “**good behaviour**” and **can be removed by the Crown** following an address by both Houses of Parliament. Allegations of misconduct are **investigated by a tribunal or the Office for Judicial Complaints**, which advises the Lord Chancellor before a motion is presented in Parliament.

**2. United States**– Federal judges serve during “**good behavior**,” as per Article III. **Only Congress has the authority to remove an Article III judge.** This is done through a vote of impeachment by the House and a trial and conviction by the Senate.

**3. Canada**– Judges hold office during “good behaviour” and can be **removed by the Governor General** following an address by the Senate and House of Commons. Grounds for removal include **age, infirmity, misconduct, failure in duty, or incompatibility with judicial office.**

### What are the limitations of the impeachment Process in India?

Despite its robust design, the impeachment process has several limitations:

- 1. Ambiguity in Grounds:** Terms like “**proved misbehaviour**” and “**incapacity**” are not clearly defined, leading to subjective interpretations and potential misuse.
- 2. Political Interference:** The process relies heavily on parliamentary approval, making it susceptible to political considerations, **as seen in the case of Justice Ramaswami**.
- 3. Partisan Whip:** The **anti-defection law under the 10th Schedule** mandates party members to follow the party’s stance, stifling independent judgment.
- 4. Resignation Loophole:** Judges can evade accountability by **resigning before the impeachment process** concludes, as demonstrated in Justice Sen’s case.
- 5. Transfer as a Solution:** Allegations against judges often result in their transfer instead of proper inquiry, undermining the accountability mechanism.

### Solutions and Way Forward

To address these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of the impeachment process, the following measures can be considered:

- 1. Clarify Grounds for Removal:** The terms “proved misbehaviour” and “incapacity” must be clearly defined in the Constitution or through legislative amendments to prevent subjective interpretations.
- 2. Establish an Independent Body:** An independent commission, akin to the **Lokpal**, could be constituted specifically to handle impeachment cases, ensuring impartiality and reducing political influence.
- 3. Restrict Whip Usage:** Amend the anti-defection law to allow MPs to vote according to their conscience on impeachment motions, ensuring decisions are **based on merit** rather than party directives.
- 4. Address Resignation Loophole:** Laws should mandate that allegations against a judge be investigated even if they resign, ensuring accountability and deterring misuse of resignation as an escape route.
- 5. Strengthen Inquiry Mechanisms:** The inquiry process should include stringent timelines and safeguards to ensure timely and impartial investigations.
- 6. Promote Judicial Accountability:** A culture of **transparency and accountability within the judiciary**, coupled with regular performance reviews, can prevent instances requiring impeachment.

Read more- [The Indian Express](#)  
UPSC Syllabus-GS 2- Indian Judiciary

### Universal Health Coverage (UHC)- Explained Pointwise

December 12 is recognized as International Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day. UHC is firmly grounded in the **1948 WHO Constitution**, which declares **health a fundamental human right** and commits to achieving the highest attainable standard of health for all.

In India, achieving UHC is both a challenge and an opportunity, given its population size, economic diversity, and healthcare disparities. This article explores the concept of UHC, its evolution, India’s progress, and the challenges and solutions in achieving this goal.



Source- WHO

### What is Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and how has it evolved?

**Universal Health Coverage (UHC)**– According to the World Health Organization (WHO), UHC means that “all people have access to the full range of quality health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship.” It is embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals (**SDG target 3.8**).

**UHC has three key dimensions:**

<b>Access to Health Services</b>	Everyone should receive necessary services, irrespective of their ability to pay.
<b>Quality of Services</b>	Services should be effective, safe, and promote desired health outcomes.
<b>Financial Risk Protection</b>	No one should fall into debt due to healthcare costs.

UHC covers the full continuum of essential health services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care across the life course.

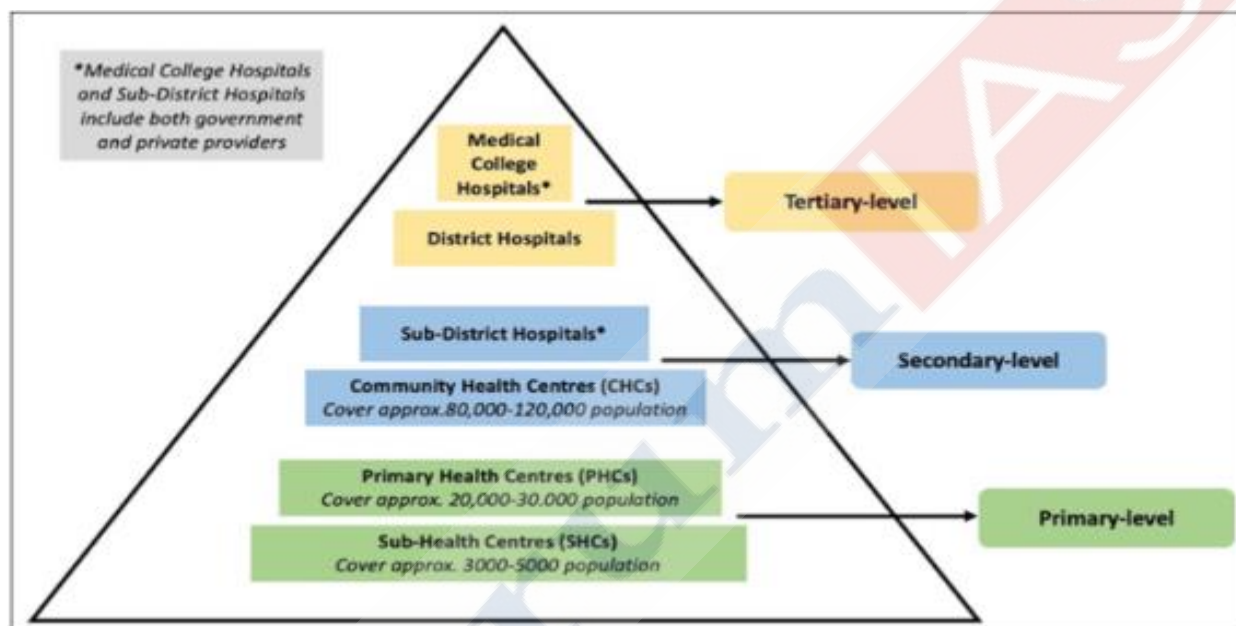
**Key guiding principles of UHC**– It is guided by the principles of **equity, non-discrimination**, and the **right to health**, focusing on reaching marginalized populations to ensure no one is left behind.

### Evolution of the Idea of UHC

The concept of UHC has evolved over decades:

<b>Alma-Ata Declaration (1978)</b>	The WHO conference emphasized “ <b>Health for All</b> ” as a global priority.
<b>Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015)</b>	Achieving UHC was made one of the targets under 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals ( <b>SDG target 3.8</b> ) in 2015. Progress is measured through indicators like essential health service coverage (SDG 3.8.1) and financial protection (SDG 3.8.2).
<b>Global Action Plan (2019)</b>	The first UN High-Level Meeting on UHC adopted a Global Action Plan to support countries in achieving SDG 3.8.

**What measures has India taken to achieve UHC?**



Source- Research gate

India’s commitment to UHC is reflected in its policies, programs, and constitutional provisions. **Articles 39(e), 42, and 47 of the Indian Constitution** mandate the State to improve public health and ensure access to quality healthcare. Some significant initiatives include:

**1. National Health Mission (NHM)**- It aims to achieve universal access to equitable, affordable, and quality healthcare services that are accountable and responsive to people’s needs. Under this mission, **technical and financial support is provided to States and Union Territories** to strengthen the public healthcare system. The mission comprises **two sub-missions**:

- a. National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)
- b. National Urban Health Mission (NUHM)

**2. National Health Policy (NHP) 2017**- It focuses on achieving UHC to all at affordable cost by **strengthening primary care, integrating AYUSH, leveraging digital tools**, and collaborating with the private sector.

**3. Ayushman Bharat Program**- This flagship program aims to achieve universal health coverage and consists of **two main components**:

- a. Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs): It delivers comprehensive primary care.
- b. Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY): It provides health insurance coverage of ₹5 lakhs per family annually for **secondary and tertiary care**.

**4. Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)-** It will enhance equitable access to quality healthcare. This is by promoting technologies like telemedicine and ensuring national portability of health services through the creation of **ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account) numbers** for citizens.

**5. Other important schemes and programmes-** Include the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP), National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly, **POSHAN 2.0 for nutrition**, and Fit India Campaign for promoting healthy lifestyles.

#### What is the current status of India's healthcare Sector?

<b>Market Size and Employment</b>	The health sector is valued at <b>\$372 billion (2023)</b> and employs 7.5 million people. Sub-sectors like telemedicine and e-health are booming.
<b>Doctor-Population Ratio</b>	India's doctor-to-population ratio stands at <b>1:854</b> , including both allopathic and AYUSH practitioners. It is fall short of of the <b>WHO-recommended 1:1000</b> .
<b>Medical Tourism</b>	Medical tourism positioned India as a global hub, contributing <b>\$7.69 billion in 2024</b> , projected to grow to <b>\$14.31 billion by 2029</b> .
<b>Insurance Penetration</b>	Only 41% of Indian households had a member with health insurance or financial coverage. (National Family Health Survey 2019-21).
<b>Healthcare Utilization</b>	About 48% of households avoid public health facilities due to perceived poor quality.

#### What are the challenges in implementing UHC in India?

**1. Inadequate Public Health Expenditure-** Despite being the world's most populous country, **India spends only 1.9% of its GDP** on healthcare (Economic Survey 2023-24), while the **WHO recommends 3%**. This results in substandard quality of public healthcare.

**2. Regional Disparities-** Healthcare infrastructure is unevenly distributed, with urban areas having access to superior facilities compared to rural areas. **For example**, while 70% of India's healthcare professionals are located in urban regions, 65% of the population resides in rural areas.

**3. Struggling Primary Health Centres (PHCs)-** Primary healthcare is vital for universal health coverage, but PHCs face key challenges that hinder their performance. It includes **limited access**, lack of trust between patients and providers, **insufficient funding**, **poor infrastructure**, and weak governance.

**4. Unregulated Private Sector:** In urban India, private hospitals provide approximately 74% of outpatient care and 65% of hospitalization services. However, these hospitals are mostly unregulated, resulting in high treatment costs and the prevalence of unethical practices.

**5. Low Focus on Preventive Healthcare:** Preventive measures like immunization, screening, and lifestyle changes are underused despite being cost-effective. According to NFHS-5, in 2021, **India's full immunization coverage was just 76.4%**, leaving many children at risk.

**6. Low Health Awareness-** Factors like low educational levels, poor functional literacy, and limited focus on health contribute to low awareness about personal well-being. **For example**, many Indian women are unaware of the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding for children, resulting in issues like stunting and malnutrition.

#### What are the recommendations for achieving UHC in India?

**1. Increase Healthcare Spending:** India must significantly boost healthcare funding, aiming to allocate 3%-5% of GDP to healthcare. This can be achieved by **enhancing public-private-philanthropic partnerships** and adopting blended finance models to mobilize additional resources.

**2. Shift from Sick Care to Preventive Healthcare:** Strengthening Primary Health Centers (PHCs) with adequate staff, equipment, and focus on preventive care is essential. **Initiatives like the Fit India Movement** and

increased emphasis on yoga, along with mandatory preventive screenings, can reduce long-term disease burden and healthcare costs.

**3. Improve Access in Rural Areas:** The government should incentivize private players to build healthcare infrastructure in rural areas. Tax incentives and financial rewards for doctors practicing in underserved regions, along with establishing medical colleges in rural areas, can help address workforce shortages.

**4. Strengthen Health Insurance Systems:** Expanding the scope of insurance policies, including outpatient packages, will improve financial protection. The inclusion of diagnostic services for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) can reduce healthcare costs through early identification.

**5. Embrace Digital Health and Innovation:** Expanding the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission and integrating telemedicine platforms will ensure access to healthcare, especially in remote areas. Supporting research and indigenous innovations in health technologies will further strengthen India's healthcare system.

**6. Blending Traditional Medicine with Modern Healthcare-** Integrating AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy) with modern healthcare can enhance India's health system. Including AYUSH practitioners in Health and Wellness Centres under Ayushman Bharat can ease the load on allopathic doctors and offer culturally accepted alternatives.

**7. Regulating the private sector:** A standardized system for healthcare quality reporting should be established, requiring hospitals, physicians, and insurance companies to mandatorily report basic input indicators.

## Conclusion

Achieving Universal Health Coverage in India is a daunting yet achievable goal. It requires a concerted effort to address systemic challenges, reduce inequalities, and prioritize preventive and primary healthcare. With a strategic focus on equity, quality, and financial protection, India can fulfill its constitutional mandate of ensuring health as a fundamental right. A robust healthcare system is not only essential for societal well-being but also critical for India's aspiration to become a global economic powerhouse.

Read more- [The Indian Express](#)  
UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Issues related to health

## Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2024- Explained Pointwise

The Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2024, has been recently passed in the Lok Sabha. It aims to establish a unified and streamlined legal framework for Indian Railways by **repealing the Indian Railway Board Act, 1905**, and **incorporating its provisions into the Railways Act, 1989**. This initiative simplifies the legal structure governing



Figure 3. Source- Invest India

Indian Railways while addressing emerging challenges in governance, financial sustainability, and modernization.

### Timeline of Indian Railways governance milestones

The construction of India's railway network began as a **branch of the Public Works Department before Independence**. Over time, the need for a structured framework led to the enactment of various railway governance laws, as outlined below:



1890	The <b>Indian Railways Act of 1890</b> was introduced to regulate railway operations effectively, marking the formal legal framework for railways.
1905	<p>a. The <b>Indian Railway Board Act of 1905</b> was enacted, establishing the Railway Board and granting it specific powers and functions under the Indian Railways Act, 1890.</p> <p>b. The railway organization was also <b>separated from the Public Works Department</b>.</p>
1989	The <b>Indian Railways Act of 1890</b> was replaced by the <b>Railways Act of 1989</b> , modernizing railway operations. However, the Railway Board Act of 1905 remained in force, and the Chairman and Board members continued to be appointed under its provisions.

### What are the objectives and key features of the Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2024?

#### Key Objectives of the bill:

**Statutory Backing to the Railway Board:** The Bill proposes to amend the Railways Act, 1989, to provide statutory backing to the Railway Board, which has operated without such authorization since its inception.

**Simplification of Legal Framework:** By integrating provisions of the 1905 Act into the 1989 Act, the Bill eliminates legislative redundancy and ensures a consolidated legal structure.

#### Key Features of the bill:

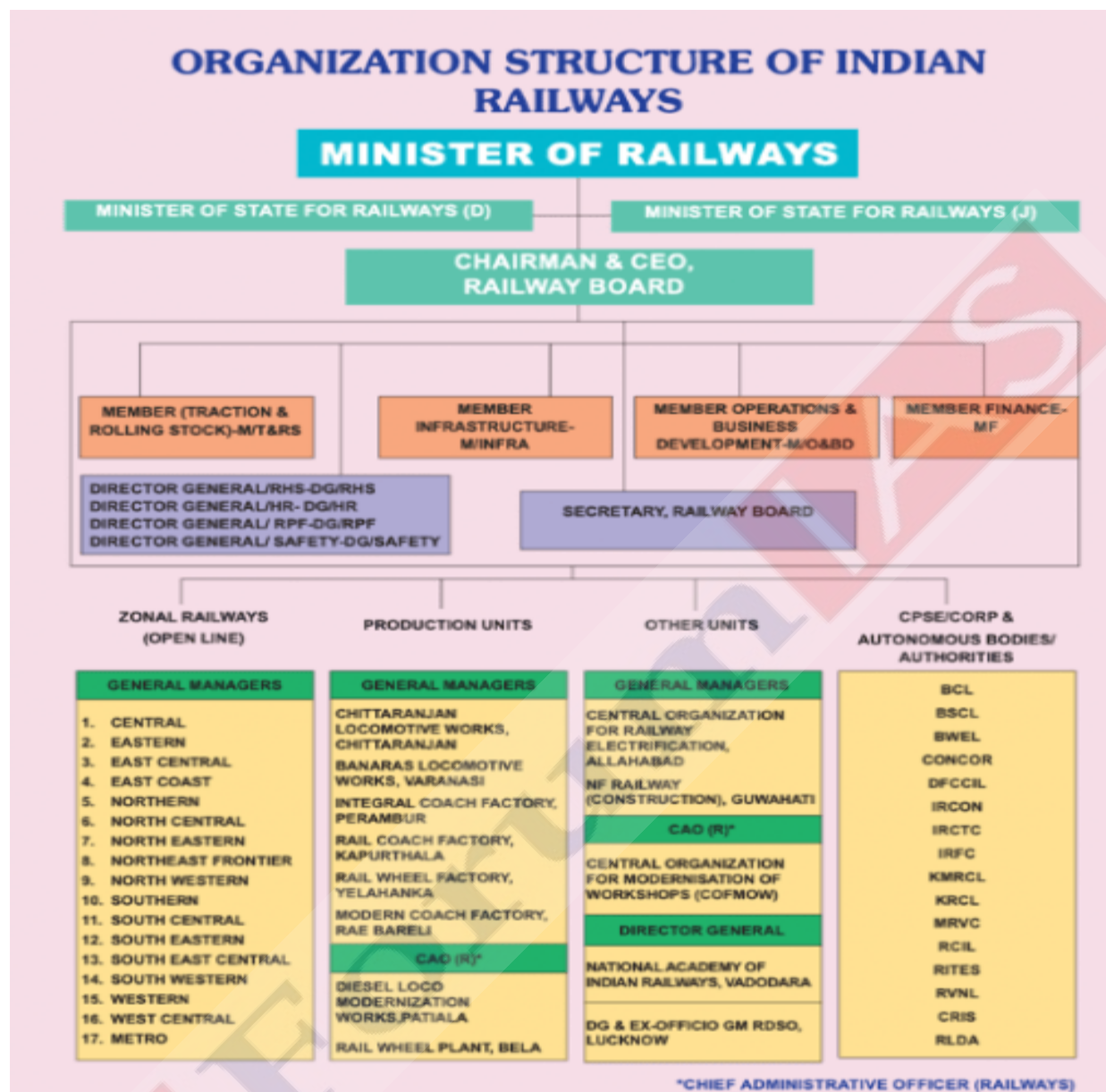
**1. Constitution of the Railway Board-** It authorizes the **Central Government** to **decide the number of Board members, as well as their qualifications, experience, and terms** and **conditions of service**. It also defines the manner of appointment for the Chairman and Board members.

**2. Infrastructure upgrades-** It Introduces **provisions for expedited development of superfast trains** and enhanced infrastructure, such as extending critical routes like the Arunachal Express, with significant investment.

**3. Independent Regulator-** The Bill proposes to establish an independent regulator to **oversee tariffs, safety,** and the participation of the private sector in the Railways.

**4. Decentralization and Autonomy-** The Bill also proposes to improve operational efficiencies and decentralise powers, granting **greater autonomy to Railway Zones**.

**Note-** However, the bill retains the current organisational structure of the Indian Railways.



Source- Indian Railways

### Why was the amendment needed?

- 1. High operating costs**– A significant portion of the budget is allocated to salaries and pensions which leaves limited resources for infrastructure development.
- 2. Passenger business losses**– Cross-subsidization of passenger services by freight revenues has resulted in financial strain. Underpriced tickets have contributed to continued losses.
- 3. Under-investment in capacity augmentation**– Limited private participation and poor surplus generation have constrained infrastructure expansion and modernization.
- 4. Network congestion**- A congested network reduces freight competitiveness, further impacting revenues.
- 5. Lack of a unified framework**– The coexistence of the Indian Railway Board Act, 1905, and the Railways Act, 1989, led to **legislative complexity** and inefficiency in governance.

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**Recommendations for Change:**

The Bill aligns with proposals by various committees, including:

<b>The Sreedharan Committee (2014)</b>	Suggested granting <b>autonomy to railway zones</b> and restructuring the Railway Board.
<b>2015 Expert committee on Railway Reforms (Bibek Debroy Committee)</b>	<p><b>a.</b> A major recommendation was to set up an <b>independent regulatory body</b> to ensure fair competition and regulate pricing.</p> <p><b>b.</b> The committee also recommended '<b>liberalization</b>', allowing private operators to participate in rail services to increase competitiveness and improve services.</p>

**What is the significance of the bill?**

- 1. Legal simplification**– This bill integrates the provisions of the 1905 Act into the 1989 Act, which reduces the redundancy and creates a cohesive legal framework.
- 2. Improved governance**– It empowers the central government to define qualifications and terms for the Railway Board. It ensures **merit-based appointments** and **better leadership**.
- 3. Enhanced efficiency**– It decentralizes decision-making to railway zones which enables **faster project implementation, improved resource utilization**, and better service delivery.
- 4. Private sector participation**– The establishment of an independent regulator ensures a **level playing field for private players**, attracting investments in railway infrastructure.
- 5. Alignment with development goals**– A modernized railway system supports India's broader economic and infrastructure objectives by improving connectivity and reducing logistics costs.

**What are the concerns regarding the amendments in the Bill?**

- 1. Privatization fears**– Opposition parties, particularly Congress, have argued that the Bill could pave the way for privatizing Indian Railways, undermining its accessibility for the poor and vulnerable sections of society.
- 2. Impact on autonomy**– Critics fear that increased government control over Board appointments may erode the autonomy of Indian Railways, potentially leading to **politicization of key decisions**.
- 3. Passenger welfare**– The **discontinuation of fare concessions** for senior citizens, journalists, and economically weaker sections during the pandemic has drawn criticism. Several MPs have demanded their restoration to uphold Railways' social responsibility.
- 4. Lack of clarity on regulator**– While the Bill proposes an independent regulator, details on its composition, functions, and operational framework remain vague.
- 5. Regional Inequalities**– There are concerns that prioritizing certain regions for infrastructure upgrades may lead to uneven development across the country.

**Way Forward and Solutions**

The Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2024, is a commendable effort to modernize the governance framework of Indian Railways. However, its success depends on addressing key challenges and ensuring balanced implementation:

- 1. Safeguarding public interest**– Any move toward private sector participation must prioritize affordability, accessibility, and public welfare. Safeguards should be in place to prevent exploitation or over-commercialization.
- 2. Transparency in appointments**– A transparent and merit-based process for appointing Railway Board members is essential to ensure accountability and maintain autonomy.

**3. Strengthening the regulator**– Clearly defining the role, powers, and structure of the independent regulator will build investor confidence and ensure fair practices.

**4. Decentralization with oversight**– While granting autonomy to railway zones, **mechanisms for effective oversight and accountability** must be established to prevent inefficiencies.

**5. Focus on financial sustainability**– Innovative measures to increase revenue, reduce operational costs, and attract private investment without compromising public welfare are crucial for long-term sustainability.

**6. Balanced regional development**– Infrastructure projects should be planned to ensure equitable development across all regions, addressing disparities and fostering national integration.

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