

## 7 PM COMPILATION

**December, 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
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## 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, archaeological sites, and remains covered by the 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.
<a href="#">Read More- The Places of Worship Act, 1991</a>	

### 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

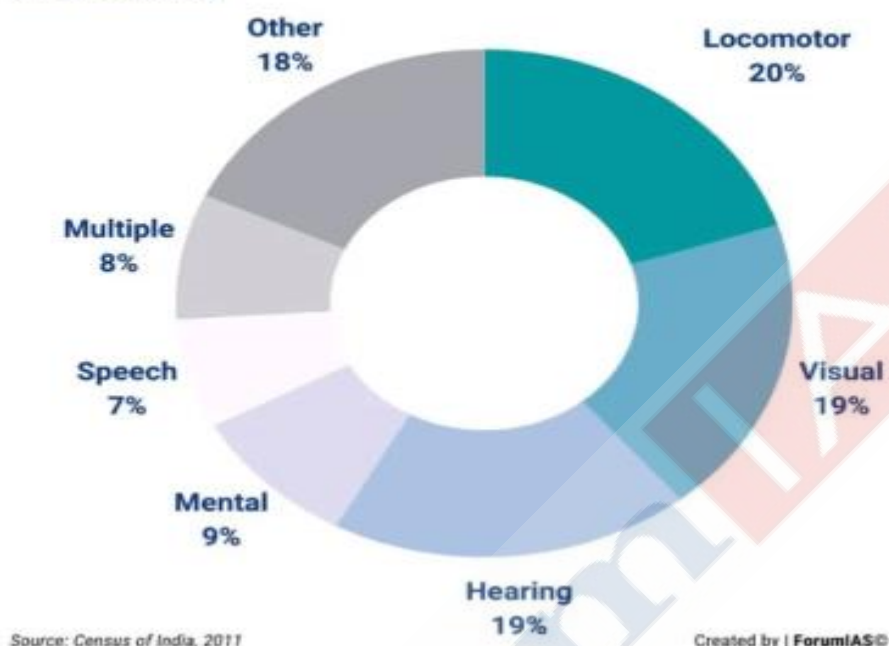
**a. Number of Persons with Disability in India-** In India, there are around **26.8 million** persons with disabilities. It constitutes around **2.21% of India's total population** (2011 Census). There are around **14.9 million men** (2.41% of men) and **11.9 million women** (2.01% of women) with disabilities. 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

<b>The Mental Health Act, 2017</b>	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> .
<b>The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016</b>	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.
<b>The Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992</b>	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.
<b>The National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999</b>	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

<b>Accessible India Campaign</b>	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.
<b>Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)</b>	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.
<b>Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase of Aids and Appliances (ADIP)</b>	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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Figure 1. Created By- Forum IAS

### 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



## Child Marriages in India

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.**

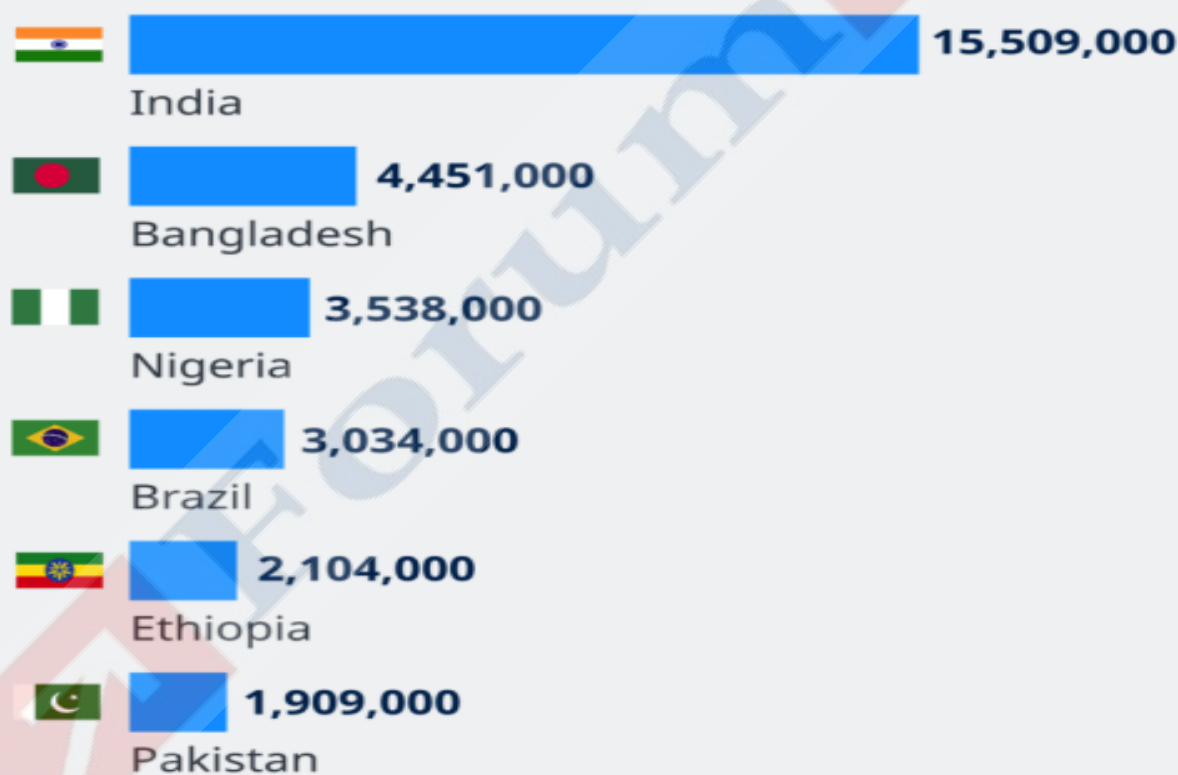
### What is Child Marriage? What is the status of Child Marriage in India?

**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>1. About <b>40 million girls</b> ages <b>15-19</b> are currently married or in a union worldwide.</li> <li>2. 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>3. 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\*



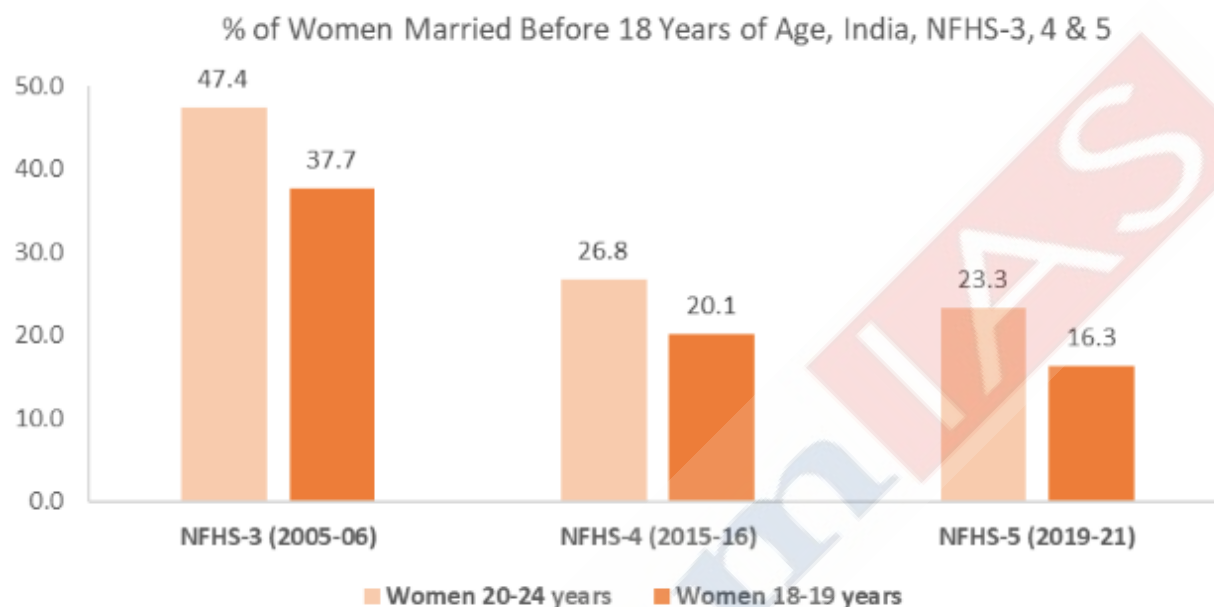
Source: Population data from United Nations |  
\*Women who were first married or in a union before they were 18-years-old

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.

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

### What steps have been taken to check Child Marriage?

<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?

- 1. Empowering the Girl Child-** The Governments should take all possible steps to improve access to education for girls, like **providing schools with proper sanitation facilities** and **Incentivising increased enrolment in school**.
- 2. Proper Implementation of Laws-** Village Panchayats must work closely with the **Child Protection Committees** and **Child Marriage Prohibition Officers** to prevent instances of child marriages.

**3. Social Change-** There is a need to sensitize the parents and society about the ills of child marriage. Rallying the wider community to stand up for girls' rights will help bring the change.

**4. Financial Upliftment-** Providing families with livelihood opportunities like **microfinance** loans is an effective way to prevent child marriages that occur as a result of financial stress.

**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



## Issue of fertility rate in India

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.

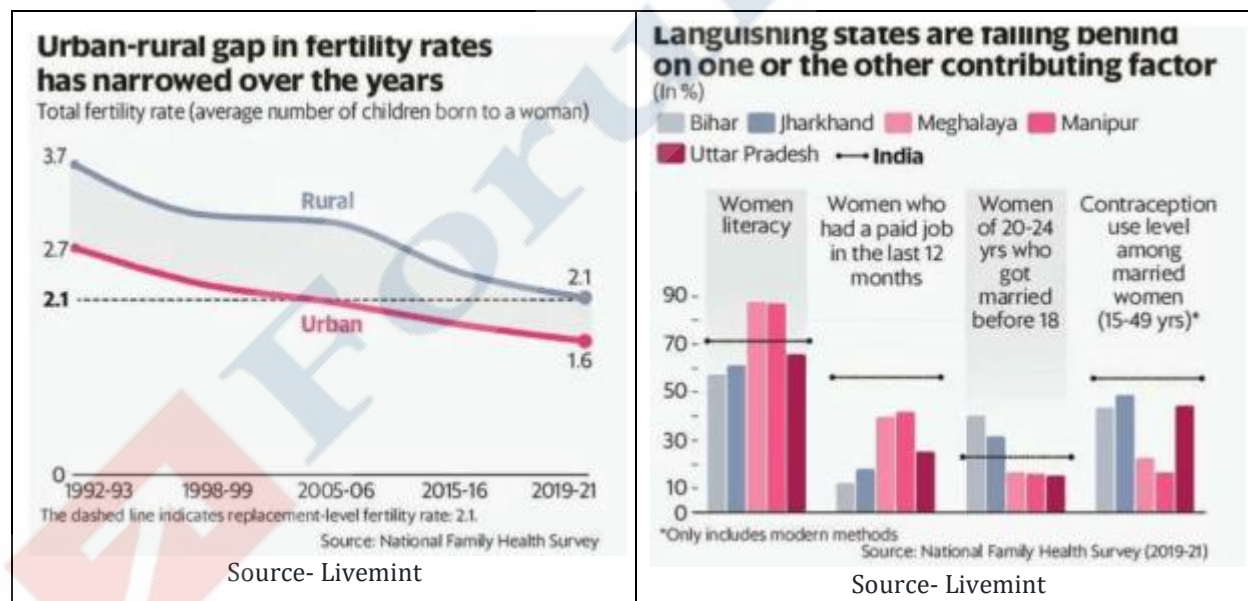
### Data Pointing to falling fertility rate in India

#### 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?**

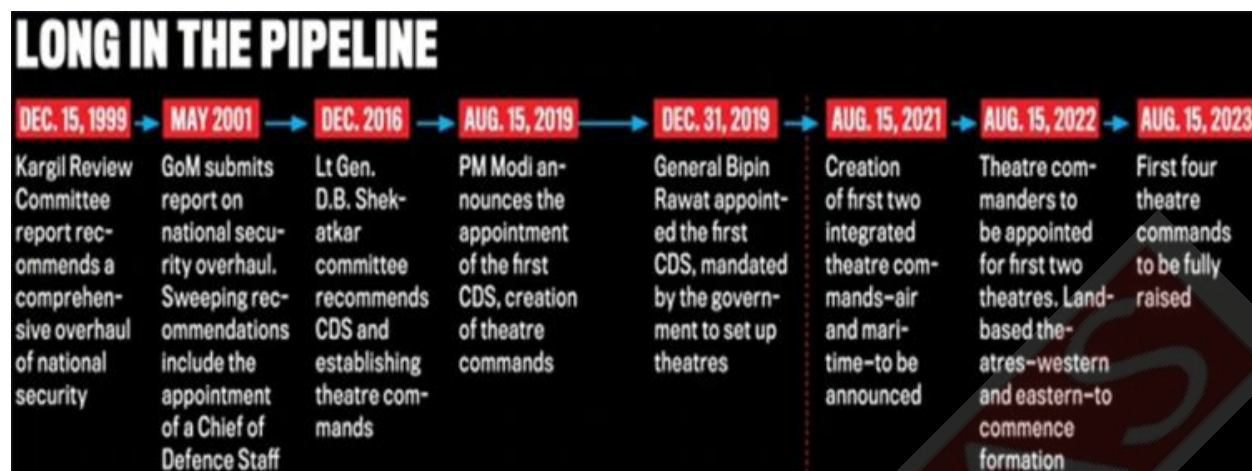
**Integrated Theatre Command-** It is a **military structure** which seeks to **integrate the capabilities of the three services- army, air force and navy-** in order to **optimally utilize their resources for wars and operations**.

**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 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

<p><b>Urea Subsidy Scheme</b></p>	<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.

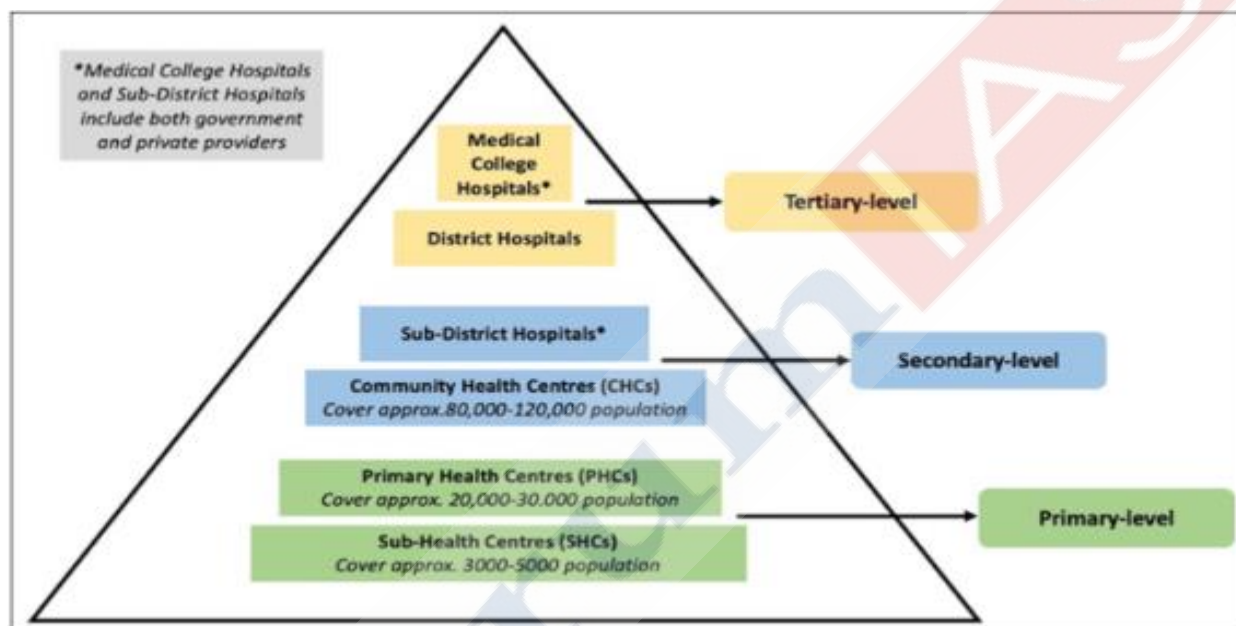
**Key guiding principles of UHC**– It is guided by the principles of **equity, non-discrimination**, and the **right to health**, focusing on reaching marginalized populations to ensure no one is left behind.

### 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:

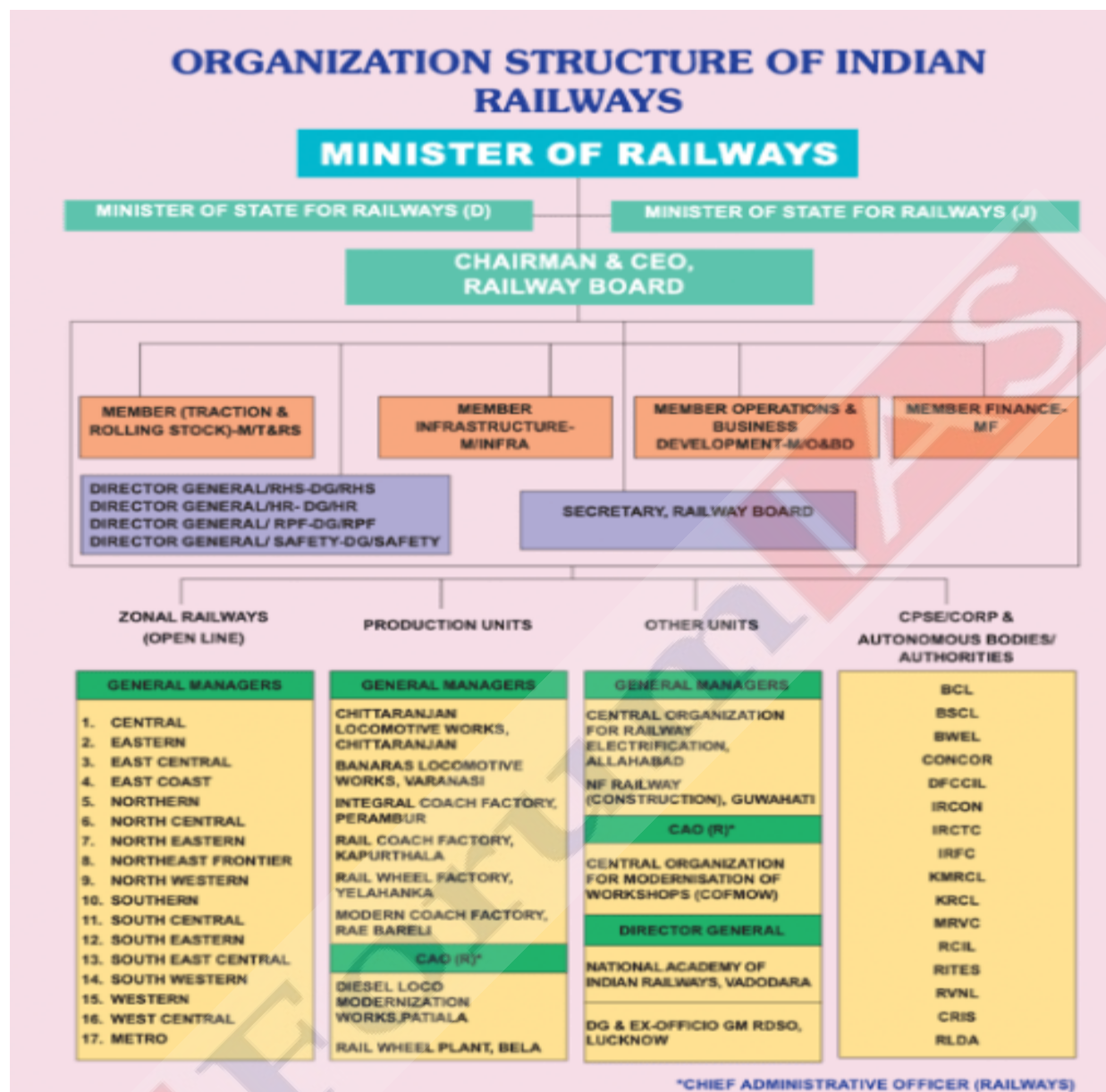
**1. Constitution of the Railway Board-** It authorizes the **Central Government** to **decide the number of Board members, as well as their qualifications, experience, and terms** and **conditions of service**. It also defines the manner of appointment for the Chairman and Board members.

**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.

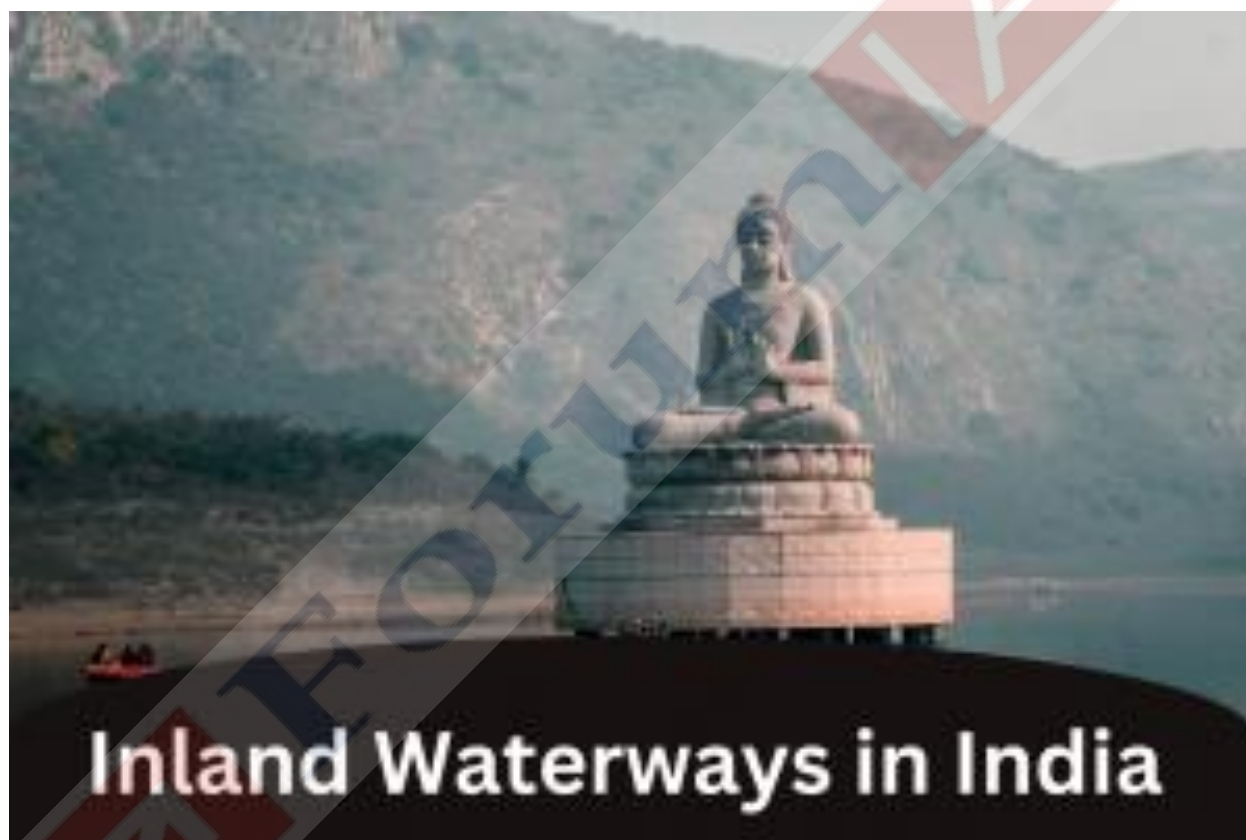
**4. Decentralization with oversight**– While granting autonomy to railway zones, **mechanisms for effective oversight and accountability** must be established to prevent inefficiencies.

**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

### Inland Waterways in India- Explained Pointwise



Recently, the Central Government launched the **Jalvahak scheme** to **boost long-haul cargo movement** via inland waterways. The scheme incentivizes cargo transport on **National Waterways 1** (Ganga), **National Waterways 2** (Brahmaputra), and **National Waterways 16** (Barak) and provides an opportunity for the trade interests to explore movement of cargo via waterways with positive economic value proposition. The Jalvahak scheme offers **reimbursement** of up to **35% of the total operating expenditure incurred**.

In this article we will look at the status of Inland waterways sector in India. We will look at its advantages and the initiatives taken for its development. We will delve into the challenges that the sector faces with the way ahead for the sector. **Inland Waterways in India**

**What is Inland Water Transport (IWT)? What is the status of Inland waterways in India?**

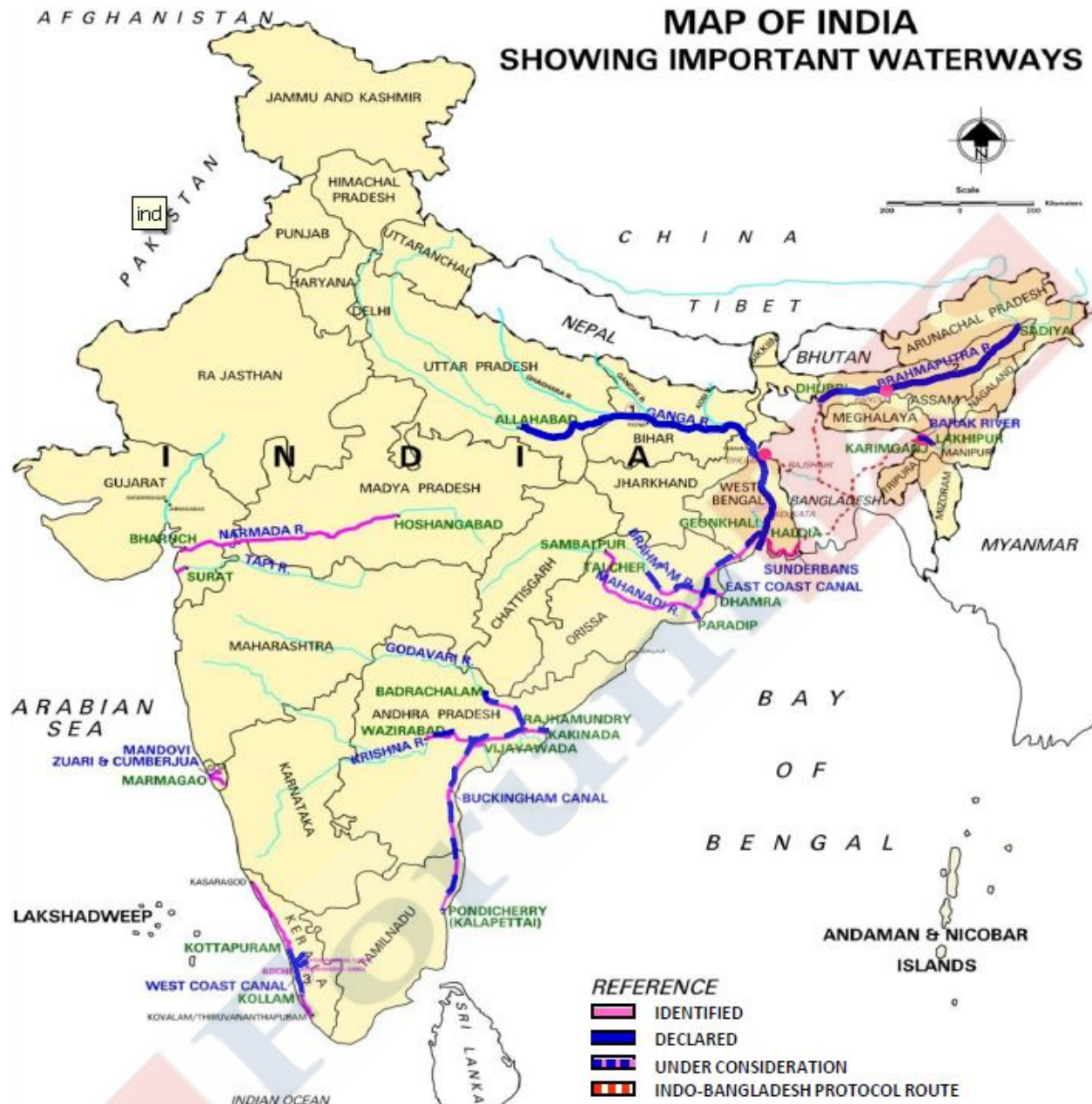


**Inland Water Transport-** Inland water transport refers to the **transportation of people, goods, and materials** via waterways such as **rivers, canals, lakes, and other navigable bodies of water** that are located within a country's boundaries.

**Inland Waterways in India-** Under the National Waterways Act, 2016, **111 waterways** (including 5 existing and 106 new) spread over **24 States** have been declared **National Waterways (NWs)** for development of Inland Water Transport (IWT) in the country. On the basis of outcome of techno-economic feasibility study and Detailed Project Report (DPR), **26 NWs** which were **found viable for cargo and passenger movement**.

Sl. No	NW	Details of Waterways	Length (Km)	STATES	Status
1	NW 1	Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly River System (Haldia - Allahabad)	1620	Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand & West Bengal	Development taken up with Assistance from World Bank Jal Marg Vikas Project
2	NW 2	Brahmaputra River (Dhubri - Sadiya)	891	Assam	Development taken up as per approved SFC for FY 2020-21 to 2024-25
3	NW 16	Barak River (Lakhipur -Tuker Gram)	121	Assam	
4	NW 3	West Coast Canal (Kottapuram - Kollam), Champakara and Udyogmandal Canals	205	Kerala	Mostly Operational Waterways and development and maintenance work taken up under Phase-I DIB approval.
5	NW 4	Krishna River (Vijayawada – Muktyala)	82	Andhra Pradesh	
6	NW 5	Dhamra-Paradip via Mangalagadi to Pankopal	233	Odisha	
7	NW 8	Alappuzha- Changanassery Canal	29	Kerala	
8	NW 9	Alappuzha - Kottayam – Athirampuzha Canal	40	Kerala (Alternate route: 11.5km)	
9	NW 27	Cumberjua River (Cortalim-Ferry to Sao MartiasVidhanParisad)	17	Goa	
10	NW 68	Mandovi River (Usgoan bridge to Arabian Sea)	41	Goa	
11	NW 111	Zuari River (Sanvorden bridge to Marmugao Port)	50	Goa	
12	NW 86	Rupnarayan River (PratapPur to Geonkhali)	72	West Bengal	
13	NW 97	Sunderbans Waterway (Namkhana to AtharaBankiKhal)	172	West Bengal	

14	NW 40	Ghagra River (Faizabad to ManjhiGhat)	345	Bihar &U.P.	
15	NW 52	Kali River (Kodasalli Dam to Sadashivgad Bridge, Arabian Sea)	53	Karnataka	
16	NW 44	Ichamati River (Bridge at Gobra to Bansjhari near Bangladesh Border)	63	West Bengal	
17	NW 57	Kopili River (BanthaiGaonTinali Bus Stop to Chandrapur No.2 confluence with Brahmaputra)	50	Assam	
18	NW 31	Dhansiri River (MorongiT.E. village Bridge to Numaligarh)	110	Assam	
19	NW 10	Amba River (Arabian Sea, Dharamtaar Creek to Nagothane ST Stand)	45	Maharashtra	
20	NW 28	Dabhol Creek Vasisti River (Arabian Sea at Dabhol to Bridge at Pedhe)	45	Maharashtra	
21	NW 25	Chapora River (Bridge near Maneri village to Morjim, Arabian Sea)	25	Goa	Mostly Operational Waterways development for 2030.
22	NW 37	Gandak River (Bhaisalotal Barrage to Hazipur)	296	Bihar &U.P.	
23	NW 73	Narmada River (Pandhariya to Gulf of Khambhat)	226	Maharashtra & Gujarat	
24	NW 85	Revadanda Creek - Kundalika River System (Arabian Sea at Revadanda to Bridge near Roha Nagar)	31	Maharashtra	
25	NW 94	Sone River (Sone Barrage, Dehri to Confluence with the Ganga)	141	Bihar	
26	NW 100	Tapi River (Hatnur Dam to Gulf of Khambhat)	436	Maharashtra & Gujarat	



**Increase in cargo movement-** The cargo movement on national waterways has increased to over 133 million tons. The cargo volume through the inland waterway has recorded a CAGR growth of 22.1% over a period of ten years from FY 2014 to FY 2024.

### What are the advantages of Inland Waterways in India?

- 1. Lower Transportation Costs-** Inland water transport (IWT) is considerably cheaper than road and rail transport. It is reported to be 60% cheaper than road transport and 20-30% cheaper than rail.
- 2. Fuel and energy efficiency-** It is a fuel and energy efficient medium of transportation as compared to the other modes of transport like rail and road. A/c to the [Integrated National Waterways Transportation Grid Study](#) states that **one litre of fuel** will move **24 tons** through **1km on road, 85km on rail** and **105 km on inland water transport**.

**3. Environment Friendly-** IWT emits 10 times less carbon dioxide per ton-kilometer compared to road transport, contributing to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

**4. Less Land Requirement-** Utilization of waterways minimizes the need for extensive land acquisition. The land acquisition is often a contentious and time-consuming process associated with road and rail projects.

**5. Employment Generation-** The development of inland waterways is labor-intensive, creating jobs in various sectors such as river conservancy, vessel operation, terminal management, and tourism.

**6. Better connectivity-** IWT helps in creating seamless interconnectivity connecting hinterlands along navigable river coasts and coastal routes. Further, riverine routes are likely to play a crucial role in connecting the north-eastern states to the mainland.

**7. Tourism Development-** Inland waterways can boost tourism through initiatives like river cruises. This helps to enhance passenger movement and also promote cultural and heritage tourism along riverbanks.

#### What are the government initiatives for the development of Inland Waterways in India?

<b>Maritime India Vision 2030</b>	Inland Water Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) aims to increase the modal share of freight movement through IWT from 2% to 5% and traffic volume to more than 200 MMT in line with the Maritime India Vision 2030.
<b>Jal Marg Vikas Project</b>	Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) aims at capacity augmentation of navigation on National Waterway-1 (NW-1).The project is being implemented by GOI with technical assistance and investment support of the World Bank.
<b>Sagarmala Programme</b>	It aims at enhancing multi-modal connectivity including rail, inland water, coastal and road services.
<b>Interlinking of Rivers Programme</b>	The project is expected to offer potential benefits to the inland waterways transport sector through navigation.

#### What are the challenges in Inland Waterways in India?

IWT is the most economical mode of transportation, especially for bulk cargo like coal, iron ore, cement, food grains and fertilizer. However presently the IWT sector remains underutilized at a share of 2% in India's modal mix due to the following challenges-

**1. Infrastructural/Technical challenges-** There is challenge of Inadequate depths in Indian rivers, especially northern rivers which suffer from high siltation. This necessitates extensive dredging of Indian rivers.

**2. Lack of adequate Terminals-** There is a shortage of modern terminals and maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facilities for vessels, impacting their operational efficiency.

**3. Environmental Concerns-** Dredging activities necessary for maintaining navigability can lead to environmental degradation (like riverbed damage, aquatic species damage) and community resistance due to fears of displacement or ecological harm.

**4. Technical Limitations-** Low vertical clearances from bridges obstruct the passage of bigger vessels and the lack of Night Navigation Facilities such as Differential Global Positioning Systems (DGPS) hampers safe navigation at night.



**5. Institutional and Regulatory challenges-** The IWT sector is often burdened by regulatory complexities and overlapping jurisdictions among various government agencies. **For ex-** Multiple authorities including the Central Inland Water Corporation Limited (CIWTC Ltd), port authorities and state governments.

**6. Lack of funds-** Dredging as well as infrastructure for IWT requires huge investments. However, both public and private funding in the sector is low.

### **What should be the Way Forward for the development of Inland Waterways in India?**

NITI Aayog has recommended the following measures for the development of Inland Waterways in India.

**1. Streamline the governance of inland waterways-** NITI Aayog recommends streamlining the regulatory structure and bringing an overarching body to oversee Inland Water Transport.

**2. Develop measures for year-round navigation-** Efforts should be made to develop deeper stretches of the river, i.e., at least 2.5 m to 3 m to achieve year-around navigation. Further the adequate maintenance of rivers, including continuous dredging to maintain adequate water depth for servicing shipping lines should be ensured.

**3. Ease restrictions on river-sea movement-** Utilizing a single vessel for both inland and coastal waters, lowers transport costs and minimizes handling. The **state authorities** should **draw up coordinates for inland vessel limits under the Inland Vessel Act** for their coastal waters

**4. Creation of Inland Waterways transport hub in the North East-** State governments should commence work on dredging and channel stabilization to **create about 20 new ports in the Brahmaputra and Barak rivers**. The protocol for Inland Waterways between Bangladesh and India should be extended for at least 10 years to reduce uncertainty.

**5. Strengthen public-private partnership-** Private players can undertake terminal development, cargo and passenger handling, and building low-draft vessels and related repair facilities.

**6. Increasing economic activities along the Inland waterways-** **PM Mitra parks, Mega food parks**, should be located along the inland waterways route to encourage use of National Waterways (NWs).

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

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Infrastructure

## India Sri-Lanka Relations- Explained Pointwise



Recently the Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's visited India as part of his first international trip since assuming office. The visit, which took place from December 15 to 17, 2024, focused on various key areas including economic cooperation, energy security, and regional stability. The visit has yielded significant outcomes, which aims at strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries. **India Sri-Lanka Relations**

### Key Outcomes of the Visit

- 1. Economic Cooperation-** The Sri Lankan president expressed his gratitude for **India's substantial financial assistance aimed stabilizing Sri Lanka's economy following its severe financial crisis in 2022**. The establishment of an electricity grid connection and a multi-product petroleum pipeline between India and Sri Lanka, was also discussed.
- 2. Defense and Security Commitments-** Dissanayake in a joint statement assured Prime Minister Modi that Sri Lanka would not allow its territory to be used in any manner that could threaten India's security. This commitment is particularly significant given the rising concerns over China's influence in the region.
- 3. Development Projects-** Several development initiatives were announced, such as the **Indian Housing Project** and **renewable energy projects tailored for the Tamil community in Sri Lanka**, and **India's assistance in training 1,500 Sri Lankan civil servants** over five years.
- 4. Regional Stability-** The discussions also reaffirmed mutual interests in **fostering regional security** through platforms like the **Colombo Security Conclave**.



Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Dissanayake with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday. (PTI)

Source- Indian Express

### What has been the history of relationship between India and Sri Lanka?

<b>Ancient Ties and Cultural Relations</b>	India and Sri Lanka have a <b>shared legacy</b> of historical, cultural, religious, spiritual and linguistic ties that is more than 2,500 years old. <b>Buddhism is one of the strongest pillars</b> connecting the two nations and civilizations from the time of the Great Indian Emperor Ashoka.
<b>Civil War and Indian Intervention</b>	Relations between India and Sri Lanka began to sour in the 1980s due to the Sri Lankan Civil War. The war primarily involved the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).
<b>Indo-Sri Lankan Accord (1987)</b>	<p>In an effort to resolve the conflict, India signed the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord with Sri Lanka, which aimed to provide regional autonomy to Tamil areas. This included deployment of the <b>Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF)</b> to maintain peace.</p> <p>However, this intervention <b>faced significant backlash</b> and <b>ultimately led to India's withdrawal in 1990</b> after considerable military engagement and casualties.</p>

<b>Post-Civil Relations</b>	<b>War</b> After the end of the civil war in 2009, India played a <b>crucial role in reconstruction efforts in Sri Lanka</b> . However, tensions resurfaced due to <b>India's stance on human rights violations</b> during the civil war and the subsequent UN resolutions.
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### India's help during the recent economic crisis in Sri Lanka

During Sri Lanka's severe economic crisis in 2022, India played a crucial role in providing substantial support. India extended a credit support amounting to approximately **\$4 billion**.

**Credit Lines and Currency Support-** India also extended **\$400 million currency swap** and deferrals on trade liabilities worth about **\$500 million** due to imports from India.

**India's support during Debt restructuring-** India was the first country to provide a **letter of support for Sri Lanka's debt restructuring to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, facilitating the start of the IMF process.

**Humanitarian Aid-** The humanitarian aid included the **essential goods and services** aimed at alleviating the immediate hardships faced by the Sri Lankan population.

All this good will and radically improved India's bargaining power with Sri Lanka. India's efforts had also resulted in some tangible outcomes-

- India signed a deal with Sri Lanka to develop **Trincomalee oil tank farm**.
- India's National Thermal Power Corporation is also going to develop a **100-megawatt power plant in Sampur**, a strategic point at the Trincomalee's natural harbour.
- Sri Lanka cancelled a **Chinese company's licence to build a micro electricity grid close to India**.

### What is the importance of Sri-Lanka for India?

**1. Strategic location-** Sri Lanka is strategically located in the Indian Ocean. The **East-West maritime route** passing around the island state carries around **two-thirds of the world's oil** and **half of the world's container transportation**.

**2. Maritime security-** Sri Lanka is home to ports that have the potential to become important maritime hubs (**Hambantota Port**) and securing the strategic Sea Lanes of Communication in the Indian Ocean.

**3. Geographical proximity to India-** Sri Lanka is located very close to India. Moreover, India has **invested heavily in Sri Lanka after the end of the civil war in 2009**, and after the **unprecedented economic crisis in 2022**. Hence, it wants to safeguard its strategic interest.

**4. Maintenance of stability, peace, and security-** The recent rising aggressive footprint of China in the Indian Ocean region makes Sri Lanka even more **significant in terms of maintenance of stability, peace, and security**.

### What have been the other positive developments in India-Sri Lanka Relations?

**1. Commercial Relations-** India and Sri Lanka enjoy a vibrant and growing economic and commercial partnership, which has witnessed considerable expansion over the years.

a. **India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA)-** **India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA)** in 2000 has contributed significantly towards the expansion of trade between the two countries.

b. **Bilateral trade-** India was Sri Lanka's largest trading partner, with an overall bilateral trade of **USD 5.5 billion** in 2022.

c. **FDI Investment from India-** India is also one of the largest contributors to **Foreign Direct Investment** in Sri Lanka. According to the Central bank of Sri Lanka, the total FDI from India so far exceeds **US\$ 2.2 billion**.

**2. Development Cooperation-** Sri Lanka is one of India's major development partners and this partnership has been an important pillar of bilateral ties between the two countries over the years.

a. **Grant commitments-** The overall commitment by India is more than **USD 3.5 billion**. Grant projects cut across sectors such as education, health, livelihood, housing, industrial development etc.



b. **Demand driven development partnership-** Demand-driven and people-centric nature of India's development partnership with Sri Lanka have been the cornerstone of this relationship.

### 3. Cooperation in Maritime Security-

a. **Joint Exercises-** The **SLINEX naval exercises** have become one of the most visible manifestations of Indo-Sri Lanka cooperation in maritime security.

b. **Partnership in regional maritime security architecture-** Sri Lanka is a part of India's regional maritime security architecture, with Sri Lankan coastal surveillance radars being integrated to the **International Fusion Center – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)** at Gurugram in India.

### What are India's concerns with Sri-Lanka?

1. **Rising Chinese Footprint-** China is spreading its tentacles in Sri Lanka by **bagging the project** to develop an **airport in capital Colombo**. India remains concerned due to lack of a level playing field for economic projects in Sri Lanka, with the Sri Lankan government at times openly siding with the Chinese.

2. **India's security concerns-** The regular movement of Chinese naval vessels, particularly submarines and the so-called research ships, is a **matter of grave security concern** to India.

3. **Safeguarding India's strategic interests-** The environmental groups, which are an important part of the NPP, have demanded the **scrapping of the Adani group backed renewable energy project**. India is concerned about protecting its strategic interest in the island nation, especially after giving millions of rupees in aid and loan to Sri Lanka.

4. **Exclusion of minority groups-** India is concerned regarding the **exclusion of Tamils and Muslims** from the governance structure of the newly formed government.

5. **Fishing disputes-** Despite reaching an agreement 47 years ago through the **1974 Indo-Lanka Maritime Boundary Agreement**, India and Sri Lanka have not yet resolved their maritime disputes, like **Katchatheevu Island dispute**. Indian fishermen continue to cross the maritime border into Sri Lanka in the **Palk Strait**, resulting in encounters with the Sri Lankan Navy, leading to tensions and assaults.

6. **Tamil issue-** There is concern regarding Sri Lanka's lack of measurable progress in fulfilling its commitment to finding a political solution to the Tamil issue. The Tamil community in Sri Lanka has been demanding the **implementation of the 13th Amendment** that provides for devolution of power to it.

### What Should be the Way Forward?

1. **Addressal of India's security concerns-** India's security concerns must be taken care of and the newly elected Sri Lankan government must take care that the **China does not disrupt Indian shipping movements** or use **visits to Sri Lanka for spying on India**.

2. **Use of Diplomatic Skills-** India should use its diplomatic skills to ensure that a **power project** awarded to Adani Energy in northern Sri Lanka **is not reviewed**.

3. **Wait and Watch Policy-** India must follow a wait and watch policy like done in the case of Maldives, and should refrain from hasty diplomatic decisions and rush.

4. **Operate within the established framework-** India's relationship with Sri Lanka is framed within India's '**Neighbourhood First**' policy and '**SAGAR**' framework. Both the nations, must aim to work within the laid down framework.

[Read More- The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- India and its neighbourhood relations

## Delimitation Commission- Explained Pointwise



In the ongoing Winter session of the parliament many **opposition MPs have sought assurances** from the government on their commitment to **implement women's reservation by conducting caste census, and the delimitation exercise by 2029**. According to the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, women reservation will come into effect only after delimitation is carried out based on the figures of the first census conducted after the passage of the Act. This has brought the issue of Delimitation Commission into focus.

### What is the Delimitation Exercise? What is the constitutional Basis of Delimitation Exercise in India?

**Delimitation** is the act or process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a country to reflect the changes in population. In India the task of delimitation exercise is assigned to a **high power body**. Such a body is known as **Delimitation Commission or a Boundary Commission**.

#### Constitutional basis of Delimitation Commission

<b>Article 82</b>	Article 82 mandates the <b>Parliament</b> to enact a Delimitation Act and constitute Delimitation commission after every Census.
<b>Article 170</b>	Article 170 provides for the division of territorial constituencies of states by <b>the Delimitation Commission</b> after every Census.

**Absolute powers to the Commission-** Delimitation Act mandates that the **Delimitation Commission's orders are final and cannot be questioned before any court** as it would hold up an election indefinitely. When the

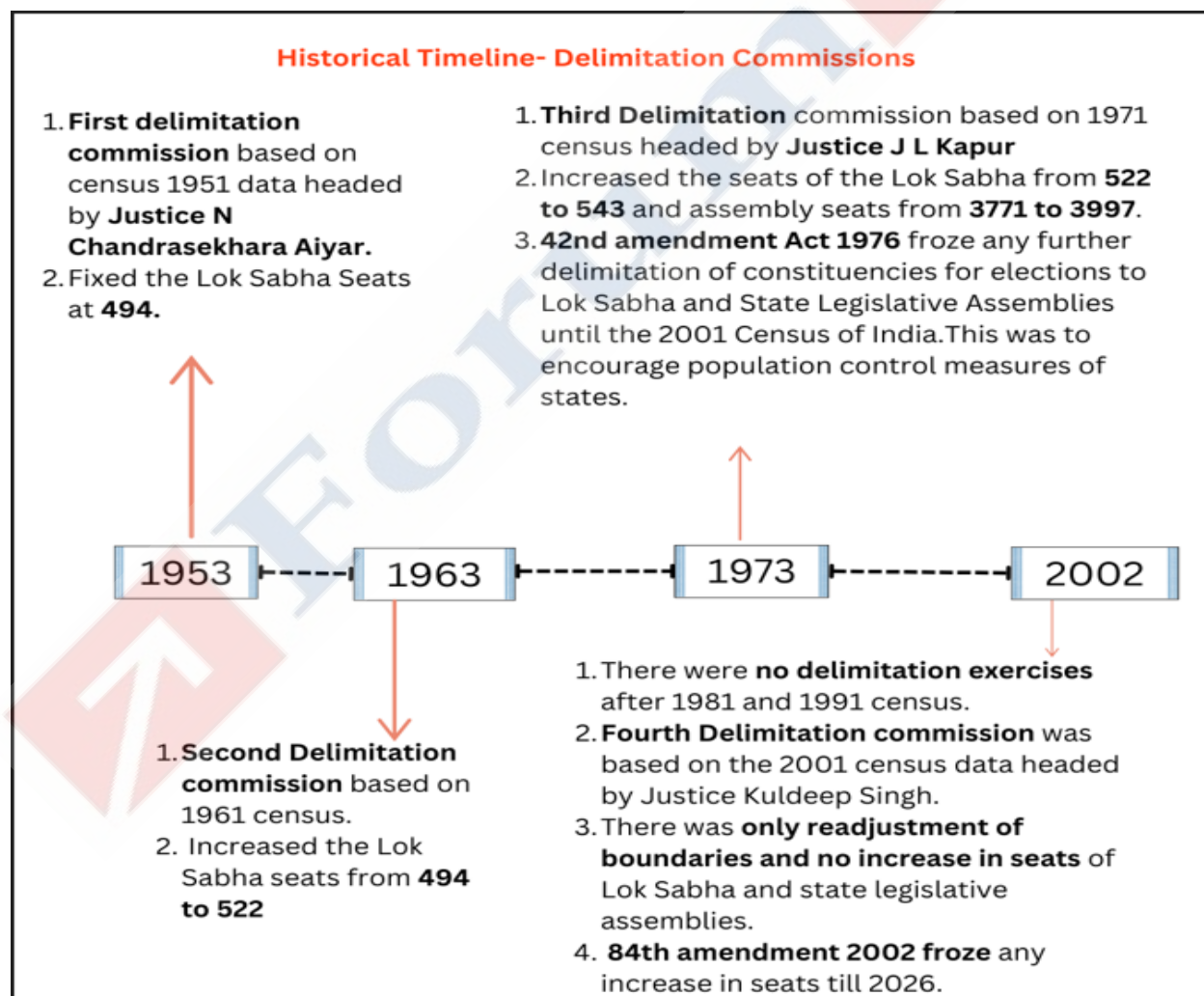
orders of the Delimitation Commission are laid before the Lok Sabha or State Legislative Assembly, they cannot effect any modification in the orders. The Delimitation Commission is to work without any executive influence.

### Composition of Delimitation Commission

<b>Appointment</b>	The Delimitation Commission is appointed by the <b>President of India</b> and works in collaboration with the <b>Election Commission of India</b> .
<b>Members</b>	Retired Supreme Court judge ( <b>Chairperson</b> ) Chief Election Commissioner Respective State Election Commissioners

### Historical Timeline of Delimitation Exercises

The Union government creates the Commission once the Delimitation Act is in effect. Under the Delimitation Acts of 1952, 1962, 1972, and 2002, Delimitation Commissions were established four times- in 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002. The commission was not created after the 1981 and 1991 Censuses.



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### What is the Significance of Delimitation Exercise?

- 1. Ensuring Proportional Representation-** Delimitation Exercise provides **equal representation to equal segments of population**. The Delimitation Commission chooses the number and boundaries of the constituencies in such a way that the population of each seat is the same, as far as possible.
- 2. Reservation of seats for SCs and STs-** Delimitation exercise conducted by the delimitation commission **specifies seats in areas with sizable scheduled castes and scheduled tribes** population which are to be reserved for those communities.
- 3. Impartial Exercise-** The Delimitation Commission is a panel with legislative backing but it **operates independently of the government and political parties**. Rulings of the commission cannot be challenged in the parliament or any courts. This ensures its impartial functioning in the delimitation exercise.
- 4. One Vote one Value-** The delimitation exercise by the Commission ensures that the **sacred principle of "One Vote One Value" is followed**.

### What have been the criticisms of the Delimitation Exercise in India?

- 1. No change in the number of seats despite increasing population- 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act 1976** froze the number of seats of the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies based on the census 1971 figures. Further the **84th Constitutional Amendment Act** also froze the number of seats based on 1971 census till 2026. Thus the delimitation exercises by the delimitation commission are **only cosmetic changes with the alteration of boundaries only**.
- 2. Skipping of the delimitation exercise-** Even though the constitution mandates the conduction of delimitation exercise after each census, governments have skipped the creation of delimitation commissions after the **1981, 1991 and 2011 census**. Growing population is not reflected by these delimitation exercises.

### What are the Challenges with Conducting Delimitation Exercise in India?

- 1. Disadvantageous for States that have controlled their population-** Delimitation exercise is **disadvantageous to states that have controlled their population(Southern States)**. Delimitation will benefit states that have not controlled their population as they will end up with higher number of seats in the Lok Sabha **(Like Bihar and UP)**.
- 2. Disadvantageous for regional parties-** Southern regional parties like **DMK, TDP, YSRCP** that have presence in their states only will be in a disadvantageous position. **Their share of seats and bargaining power will decrease** in the Lok Sabha.
- 3. Can fuel separatist movement-** The delimitation exercise based on the recent census data can fuel separatist regional movements like **Dravida Nadu** and it will hamper the federal political structure of the Country.
- 4. Delay in the implementation of Women's reservation-** The Women reservation bill/Nari Shakti Vandana Adhiniyam has been linked with the delimitation process. Since delimitation is itself a contentious issue this **can delay the implementation of women Quota**.

### What Should be the Way Forward for the delimitation exercise?

- 1. Development of National Consensus-** Any step towards delimitation exercise must be based on National Consensus and the fears of the regional Political parties must be addressed.
- 2. Incentivizing the population controlling states through Finance Commission-** The Finance commission must evolve formula to reward the states which have controlled their Population financially.
- 3. Introduction of Flexible Frameworks-** The Delimitation Act should be amended to allow periodic reviews every 10 years, synchronized with the decennial Census, to reflect demographic changes without long gaps.



**4. Public Participation Platforms-** There should be focus on the Introduction of digital platforms for citizens to provide feedback on proposed boundaries, ensuring transparency and inclusivity.

**5. Strengthen the Delimitation Commission-** The autonomy and authority of the Delimitation Commission must be enhanced by ensuring that its composition includes demographers, statisticians, legal experts, and representatives of civil society.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)  
UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Polity

### Redistribution of wealth and Wealth Tax in India- Explained Pointwise



India's taxation structure has undergone significant reforms in recent times, which has resulted in broadening of the tax base. However, there are **persisting challenges in generation of adequate revenue to fund public goods and social sectors**. As per the Union Budget 2024-25, the Centre's tax collection is projected at **11.78% of GDP, with direct taxes contributing 7%**. This remains low compared to global standards, impacting investments in critical sectors like education and healthcare. This has called for demands for redistribution of wealth and imposition of Wealth Tax in India. **Redistribution of wealth and Wealth Tax in India**

**What are the Constitutional Provisions which provide for the Redistribution of Wealth? How has the redistribution of Wealth been applied historically?**

**Constitutional Provisions for redistribution of Wealth**

<b>Preamble</b>	The Preamble to the Constitution aims to secure to all citizens <b>social and economic justice, liberty, and equality</b> .
<b>Fundamental Rights</b>	The fundamental rights listed in Part III of the constitution guarantees liberty and equality for the citizens.
<b>Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)</b>	Article 39(b) and (c) of DPSP contain principles that are <b>aimed at securing economic justice</b> . They provide that <b>ownership and control of material resources of the society</b> should be <b>distributed to serve the common good</b> . The operation of the economic system should not result in concentration of wealth to the common detriment.

### Policies and Measures taken for Redistribution of Wealth after Independence

#### a. Curtailment of the Right to Property through various amendments-

**Right to Property** was originally envisaged as a **fundamental Right** under **Art 19(1)(f) of the constitution**. It further provided that under **Article 31** the state shall pay compensation in case of acquisition of private property.

Since the Government wanted flexibility in acquiring land for land reforms and public welfare, it curtailed the scope of right to property through various amendments.

Article	Amendment and Year	Brief Explanation about the Amendment
<b>31 A</b>	<b>1st Amendment 1951</b>	Provided that laws made for acquisition of estates etc. shall not be void on the ground that it violated fundamental rights, including right to property.
<b>31 B</b>	<b>1st Amendment 1951</b>	Made laws placed under the ninth schedule were to be immune from judicial review on the grounds of violation of fundamental rights.  However, In the Coelho Case (2007), the SC held that laws placed in the ninth Schedule after April 24th 1973, (the date of the Kesavananda Bharati judgment) can be challenged if they violate fundamental rights or the basic structure of the Constitution.
<b>31 C</b>	<b>25th Amendment 1971</b>	Provided primacy to the DPSP under Articles 39 (b) and (c). Laws made to fulfil these principles shall not be void on the ground that it violated fundamental rights, including the right to property.

In the **Kesavananda Bharati case (1973)**, the Supreme Court **upheld the validity of Article 31C** but made it subject to judicial review.

In the **Minerva Mills case (1980)**, the Supreme Court ruled that the **Constitution exists on a harmonious balance** between **fundamental rights and DPSP**.

#### **b. 44th Amendment Act which abolished Right to Property as a Fundamental Right**

The 44th amendment act 1978, **omitted right to property as a fundamental right** and made it a **constitutional right under Article 300A**. This was done to avoid excessive litigation directly in the Supreme Court by the propertied class.

**c. 'Socialistic Model of Economy'**- Policies like **Nationalisation of banking and insurance, extremely high rates of direct taxes (Even up to 97%), Estate duty** on inheritance, tax on wealth and **The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 (MRTP Act)** that restricted private trade were adopted. These were aimed at reduction of inequality and redistribution of wealth among the poorer sections.

However, these **measures stifled growth** and also **resulted in the concealment of income/wealth**. Taxes like estate duty and wealth tax generated revenue that was much less than the cost incurred in administering them.

#### **What has been the Government economic policy in the post-liberalisation era for wealth redistribution?**

Indian economy adopted the modern liberal welfare economist model, with the Govt opening up the economy to private players, raising resources through taxes and redistributing them using a welfarist approach.

- The Indian economy has **moved from the closed economy model** towards **liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation** in the 1990s.
- The **new industrial policy was adopted in 1991** to empower market forces, improve efficiency and rectify deficiencies in the country's industrial structure.
- The **MRTP Act was repealed** and **replaced with the Competition Act, 2002** and income tax rates were reduced considerably.
- Estate duty was abolished in 1985** and wealth tax in 2016.

The market driven economy **has resulted in additional resources** for the government that has helped in **bringing people out of abject poverty**. For ex- India has registered a **significant decline in multidimensional poverty in India** from **29.17% in 2013-14 to 11.28% in 2022-23**.

However, these policies have not been able to address the growing problem of inequality in India. There has been concentration of Wealth in the hands of few.

#### **What is the need for redistribution of Wealth and Wealth Tax in India?**

- 1. Rising wealth and income inequality in India-** In the post-liberalisation period of the Indian economy, the wealth and income inequality has been rising in India. According to a report by the World Inequality Lab, **the top 10% of the country's population** have a **share of 65% and 57% of the wealth and income respectively** as of 2022-23. The **bottom 50%** have a meagre share of **6.5% and 15% of the wealth and income**, respectively.
- 2. Lack of Inclusive Growth-** The Gini wealth coefficient in India has gone up from **81.3% in 2013 to 85.4% in 2017 (100% represents maximal inequality)**. The growth in India has not been inclusive.
- 3. Creation of meritocratic society-** It will help in **creation of a meritocratic society** by **chipping away the advantages the children of the wealthiest families** enjoy by accident of birth. The redistribution of initial endowments can help in the establishment of optimal social state.
- 4. Reduction of Intra generational inequalities-** The inheritance tax **reduces Intra-Generational Inequality** and **promotes Inter-Generational Equity** by preventing the concentration of income and wealth in the hands of a few.

#### **What are the Challenges to redistribution of Wealth in India?**

**1. Political Resistance-** Redistributive policies face resistance from powerful interest groups and vested interests, including wealthy individuals and corporations. **For Ex- Opposition** by the **dominant landholding classes** to the **Land reform policy** in India.

**2. Large Informal Economy-** Redistribution of wealth fail to reach informal economy, which are characterized by **low wages, lack of job security**, and **limited access to social protection**. This makes it challenging to effectively address the income inequality.

**3. Deep-rooted Social Inequalities-** There are **deep-rooted** caste, gender, religious, and ethnic inequalities in India. These social inequalities **perpetuate economic disparities** and **hinder the effectiveness of redistributive policies**, as marginalized groups face barriers in accessing resources and opportunities.

**4. Capacity Constraints-** India's institutional capacity to implement redistributive policies effectively is limited by bureaucratic inefficiencies, inadequate infrastructure, and resource constraints. **For ex- Corruption and leakages in the welfare schemes.**

#### What Should be the Way Forward?

**1. Introduction of Inheritance tax with higher threshold-** A inheritance tax with higher threshold needs to be introduced for redistribution of wealth in India. **For ex- A moderate inheritance tax of 10-15%** (like other Asian countries such as the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand) on **India's 101 billionaires who are more than 65 years old** and collectively own ₹10.54 trillion can create a financial base of wealth redistribution.

**2. Strengthening of institutional capacity and governance-** The governance mechanisms must be strengthened, to ensure the efficient delivery of welfare services and benefits. **For ex- Plugging the leakages in the welfare schemes.**

**3. Socio-Political consensus-** Socio-Political consensus must be created on **progressive taxation and welfare programs** to address income inequality and promote equitable wealth distribution.

**4. Attenuation of Govt Policies-** The Govt policies must be **reframed in line with the current economic model so that Innovation and growth is not curtailed**, but the benefits of growth should reach all sections, especially the marginalized sections. **For ex- Resource based Development Policies.**

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Indian Economy, Inclusive Growth



## Female Labour Force Participation Rate- Explained Pointwise + Infographic



India's Low Female Labour Force Participation rate is a big threat to India's Demographic Dividend. India still has not cracked the code of getting women to work in time. Any further delay in improving the female labour force participation in productive sector, will be detrimental to India's dream of becoming a developed nation by 2047. **Female Labour Force Participation Rate**



## Female Labour Force Participation Rate

- » Female Labour Force Participation Rate is a ratio of the number of women who are part of the labour force to the number of women in the working age (greater than 15 years of age). A woman is considered to be a part of the labour force if she/he is either employed or actively looking for work.
- » Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) is consistently increasing in India over the years. It has increased from **24.5% in 2018-19** to **37% in 2022-23**.
- » However, according to the World Bank, Indian women's participation in the formal economy is among the lowest in the world. India needs to improve its low FLFPR to reap its rich demographic Dividend

### Reasons for low FLFPR

- » The High Degree of Informalisation discourages women from participating in the labour force. **95% of India's working women are informal workers (ILO)**.
- » **Missing Manufacturing sector jobs** and limited number of jobs in services for women.
- » Gender Pay Gap and Glass ceiling. India has one of the **largest gender gap in median earnings** of full-time employees (ES 18)
- » **Pinkification of Jobs** limit the role of women to specific job profiles like nursing, teaching, gynaecologist.
- » **Unpaid care, child care and domestic chores**, has hindered women's ability to participate in the labour force
- » **Educated Unemployment phenomenon**- Unavailability of jobs that match the high female education levels
- » **Safety Concerns** like violence against women and sexual harrasment at workplace

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



### Advantages of FLFPR

- » Economic Boost- Gender parity in the workforce can **improve India's GDP by 27%** (IMF).
- » Tackle the phenomenon of **feminisation of poverty** which is a result of informalised women workforce
- » Improvement in Social Indicators like the **MMR and IMR**
- » Enables women to play a greater role in decision-making like **family planning**
- » Fulfilment of Global Commitments like **SDG-1, SDG-5, SDG-8**



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### What is Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR)?

Female Labour Force Participation Rate is a ratio of the number of women who are part of the labour force to the number of women in the working age (greater than 15 years of age). A woman is considered to be a part of the labour force if she/he is either employed or actively looking for work.

#### FLFPR trend in India

1. Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) is consistently increasing in India. However, it is still very less compared to the developed nations.

2022-23	37%
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2021-22	32.8%
2020-21	32.5%
2019-20	30%
2018-19	24.5%

2. The simple average of the FLFPR of the five southern Indian states (Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala) is 13% lower than the five northern states of Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand. This defies the conventional belief that southern states, with high literacy and women empowerment indices, will have high FLFPR.

3. There are only four states (Assam, Bihar, Haryana and Delhi) with an FLFPR of less than 25%. Delhi has the lowest at 14.8%.

4. According to the World Bank, Indian women's participation in the formal economy is among the lowest in the world. Only some parts of the Arab world perform worse than India in terms of FLFPR.

#### What are the reasons for low Female Labour Force Participation rate in India?

1. **High Degree of Informalisation**– According to a 2018 study by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), more than 95% of India's working women are informal workers. The absence of social security net in the informal sector discourages women from participating in the labour force.

2. **Missing manufacturing**- Lack of alternative employment opportunities in manufacturing and the limited number of jobs in services for women, has also suppressed FLFPR in India.

3. **Gender Pay Gap and Glass ceiling**- According to the Economic Survey 2018, **India has one of the largest gender gap in median earnings of full-time employees**. Such discriminatory practices at workplace adversely affects FLFPR.

4. **Pink Jobs**- The societal notions about 'gendered occupations' limit the role of women to specific job profiles like nursing, teaching, gynaecologist etc. There are tangible and intangible barriers to entry of women in multiple professions like heavy engineering, law enforcement, armed forces etc.

5. **Cultural practices**- Unpaid care, child care and domestic chores, has hindered women's ability to participate in the labour force. In a patriarchal society, many women are not allowed to work after marriage.

6. **Increase in Household Income**- The rise in household incomes in both the rural and urban areas has provided women the choice to not take up jobs.

7. **Safety Concerns**- High incidents of violence against women discourages women to work in the night like their male counterparts. Further, instances of sexual harassment at workplace induces women to opt out of labour force.

8. **Educated Unemployment**- Women are going for higher education, as seen in Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of secondary education. The lack of availability of jobs that match the high female education levels also contributes to the low FLFPR.

9. **Legally sanctioned restrictions**- Many States continue to **restrict women's participation in hazardous jobs in factories and commercial establishments**. For ex- women are not allowed to work on stone-cutting machines, shop floor of boilers, etc.

10. **Political Vacuum-** The current Lok Sabha has only 14.4% women, despite women constituting around 50% of Indian population. The lack of gender perspectives inhibits formulation of a comprehensive policy that encourages women participation in economic activities.

### What is the significance of enhancing Female Labour Force Participation?

1. **Economic Boost-** According to the IMF, gender parity in the workforce can **improve India's GDP by 27%**.
2. **Tackling poverty-** It helps to tackle the phenomenon of feminisation of poverty, which is a result of highly informalised work performed by women.
3. **Improvement in Social Indicators-** Encouraging more women to enter the formal workforce will improve indicators like Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR).
4. **Self Confidence and Dignity-** Financial independence enables women to play a greater role in decision-making like family planning.
5. **Global Commitments-** Improving FLFPR is related to achievements of **SDG 1** (No Poverty), **SDG 5** (Gender Equality), **SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and **SDG 10** (Reduced inequalities).

### What steps have been taken by the Government to enhance Female Labour Force Participation?

<b>Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017</b>	The Act more than doubled the duration of paid maternity leave for women employees to 26 weeks. It proposed an option to work from home after this period, on mutual agreement with the employer. It made crèche facilities mandatory for establishments employing 50 or more women.
<b>Anganwadi centres under the ICDS</b>	They provide maternal and child nutritional security, a clean and safe environment, and early childhood education. Thus, they facilitate the ability of women to re-enter work post-childbirth.
<b>National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013</b>	Apart from providing affordable food, it entitles pregnant and lactating mothers to a cash transfer of at least INR 6,000. This is done to break the compulsion for early returning to work.
<b>Stand up India</b>	The scheme facilitates bank loans for setting up a new enterprise in manufacturing, services, agri-allied activities, or the trading sector by SC/ST/Women entrepreneurs. It provides bank loans between INR 10 lakh and up to 1 crore.
<b>The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013</b>	It is a legislative act in India that seeks to protect women from sexual harassment at their place of work

### Conclusion and Way Forward

1. **Child Care Subsidies-** **Child-care subsidies** should be provided to free up mothers' time to enter the labour force, which would have significant implications in increasing female employment.



2. **Comprehensive approach to improve women labour force participation-** A comprehensive approach aimed at improving skill development, access to child care, maternity protection, and provision of safe and accessible transport, is needed.

3. **Removal of the legally sanctioned legislation-** States should review legislations like the Factory Act, Shops and Establishment Act etc. and liberalise the restrictions on women. The best practices from well performing States can be adopted across all States. For ex- **Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are the only two states that allow women to work in all processes in all establishments.**

4. **Creation of Self Help Groups-** The focus should be on creation of more Self Help Groups. They are of immense reliance and drastically enhance women participation as seen in case of **Kudumbashree model of Kerala.**

5. **Use of innovative solutions to enhance female retention in industries-** Public crèches can be operated at worksite clusters such as near industrial areas, markets, dense low-income residential areas, and labour nakas. This model has been tested successfully by **Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Sangini** in some Indian cities.

6. **Accounting for Care economy-** We need to account for care economy in the GDP calculations.

### Conclusion

There is a need to take multiple steps to augment the female labour force participation in India in order to realise the numerous social and economic benefits that accrue from greater presence of women in the workforce. It can help India move from women-centric development to women-led development.

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

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

## India-China Relations after the LAC Disengagement- Explained Pointwise



The recent **special representative meeting between India and China**, held on December 18, 2024, marked a **significant step towards normalizing relations between the two nations** after years of tension. This meeting was the first formal engagement of its kind in nearly five years, with **India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval** and **China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi** leading the discussions.

This meeting is seen as a critical move towards stabilizing India-China relations, particularly after a period marked by military standoffs and heightened tensions since 2020. The constructive dialogue reflects both countries' recognition of the need for peaceful coexistence and cooperation on shared interests, despite lingering disputes over territorial boundaries. **India-China Relations after the LAC Disengagement**

### What were the Key Outcomes of the Special Representative meeting?

**1. Affirmation of Disengagement-** Both sides positively affirmed the implementation of the disengagement agreement reached on October 21, which aimed at reducing tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. This agreement has allowed for patrolling and grazing in relevant areas, which is crucial for maintaining stability

**2. Six-Point Consensus-** The representatives reached a six-point consensus that includes:  
Resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage to Tibet.  
Enhanced cooperation on cross-border rivers.  
Promotion of trade at the Nathu La Pass.  
Strengthening confidence-building measures and sustainable peace along the border

**3. Framework for Future Cooperation-** Both parties agreed to explore a fair, reasonable, and mutually acceptable framework for resolving boundary issues, drawing from political guiding principles established in 2005. They emphasized a step-by-step approach, starting with less contentious issues before addressing more complex matters

**4. Commitment to Peace-** The discussions underscored the importance of maintaining peace and tranquility at the borders to facilitate normal bilateral relations. Both sides committed to refining management rules in border areas and enhancing diplomatic and military coordination

**5. Future Meetings-** Plans were made for further meetings of the Special Representatives mechanism in India next year to continue dialogue and cooperation on these issues

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

**1. Patrolling Protocols-** The agreement allows both nations to **resume patrols along previously established routes**. The agreement effectively aims to return to the status quo that existed before the tensions escalated in 2020.

**2. Disengagement Process-** The agreement also seeks to complete the **disengagement process**, which has been a focal point of negotiations over the past four years.

**3. Reduction of Military Presence-** According to the agreement, both India and China will **slightly withdraw their forces from current positions to prevent confrontations**. Regular monitoring and review meetings will be instituted to ensure compliance with the new protocols.

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

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

**1. De-escalation of Tensions-** The agreement marks a move towards de-escalation in a region where both countries have maintained heavy military presence. The agreement reduces the **likelihood of confrontations** like **Galwan 2020** and fosters a more stable environment along the border.

**2. Restoration of Diplomatic Relations-** Successful implementation of the agreement could facilitate the resumption of higher-level diplomatic engagements in forum such as **BRICS, SCO**.

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

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

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

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

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



Figure 4. Source- The Tribune

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

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

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

resolution of dispute.

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

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

#### What should be the Way Forward?

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

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

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

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

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- International Relations

### India State Of Forest Report- Explained Pointwise

Recently, the **India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023** has been released by the Minister for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, at the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun. The report, published **biennially by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) since 1987**, provides an in-depth assessment of forest and tree resources based on remote sensing data and field surveys. The recently released report is the **18th report in the series**. **India State Of Forest Report**





Source- The Indian Express

### What are the key features of India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023?

The report provides comprehensive data on forest cover, tree cover, mangroves, growing stock, carbon stock, forest fires, and agroforestry. Special thematic insights into forest health and characteristics have been included in the report.

<b>Forest and Tree Cover</b>	The Forest and Tree cover of the country is <b>8,27,357 sq. km</b> which is <b>25.17 percent</b> of the <b>geographical area of the country</b> . The total forest cover consists of <b>7,15,343 sq km (21.76% of geographical area)</b> while the total tree cover consists of <b>1,12,014 sq km (3.41% of geographical area)</b> .
<b>Increase in Forest and Tree Cover</b>	There has been an increase of <b>1,445 sq km in forest</b> and <b>tree cover</b> compared to 2021. There has been an increase of <b>156 sq km</b> in the forest cover while the tree cover has increased by <b>1,289 sq km</b> .  <b>Top four states</b> showing <b>maximum increase in forest and tree cover</b> are <b>Chhattisgarh</b> (684 sq km) followed by <b>Uttar Pradesh</b> (559 sq km), <b>Odisha</b> (559 sq km) and <b>Rajasthan</b> (394 sq km).  <b>Top three states</b> showing <b>maximum increase in forest cover</b> are <b>Mizoram</b> (242 sq km) followed by <b>Gujarat</b> (180 sq km) and <b>Odisha</b> (152 sq km).
<b>States having largest area under Forest and Tree Cover</b>	States having largest area under Forest and Tree Cover are <b>Madhya Pradesh</b> (85,724 sq km), <b>Arunachal Pradesh</b> (67,083 sq km) and <b>Maharashtra</b> (65,383 sq km).

	States having the largest area under Forest Cover are <b>Madhya Pradesh</b> (77,073 sq km.), <b>Arunachal Pradesh</b> (65,882 sq km) and <b>Chhattisgarh</b> (55,812 sq km).
<b>States having largest percentages of geographical area under forest cover</b>	<b>19 states/UTs</b> have above <b>33 percent of the geographical area</b> under forest cover. Out of these, eight states/UTs namely <b>Mizoram, Lakshadweep, A &amp; N Island, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Manipur</b> have forest cover above 75 percent.  <b>Lakshadweep</b> (91.33%), <b>Mizoram</b> (85.34%), and <b>Andaman &amp; Nicobar Islands</b> (81.62%) have the highest forest cover relative to geographical area.

<b>Mangrove Cover</b>	The total mangrove cover is <b>4,992 sq km</b> in the country.
<b>Growing stock of India's forest and trees</b>	The total growing stock of India's forest and trees outside forests is estimated as <b>6430 million cum</b> , of which <b>4479 million cum</b> is inside the forests and <b>1951 million cum</b> outside the forest area.  There is an increase of <b>262 million cum</b> of total growing stock as compared to the previous assessment which includes an increase of <b>91 million cum</b> inside the forest and <b>171 million cum</b> outside the forest area.
<b>Increase in Bamboo bearing area</b>	The extent of bamboo bearing area for the country has been estimated as <b>1,54,670 sq km</b> . As compared to the last assessment done in 2021 there is an increase of <b>5,227 sq km</b> in bamboo area.
<b>Additional Carbon Sink</b>	Compared to the base year of 2005, India has already reached <b>2.29 billion tonnes</b> of <b>additional carbon sink</b> as against the target of <b>2.5 to 3.0 billion tonnes</b> by 2030.

### What are the concerns highlighted by the India State of Forest Report, 2023?

- 1. Loss of Forest Cover in the Western Ghats-** The IFSR 2023 for the first time included an assessment of forest cover across the Western Ghats. According to the report, the area earmarked as eco-sensitive zone by the Centre has seen a **loss of 58.22 sq km of forest cover** since 2013.
- 2. Loss of Dense Forests-** There has been loss of dense forests of around 24,651 sq km (6.3%) since 2003. Since 2021 the **total loss of dense forest** has been around **3,913 sq km**, which is **larger than Goa** in terms of area.
- 3. Loss of mangrove cover-** The **natural disaster** and **hazard-resilient mangrove species** have seen a **decrease of 7.43 sq km** in the country compared to 2021. A prominent decrease was recorded in Gujarat at a loss of 36 sq km, followed by a 4.65 sq km decrease in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- 4. Decrease in the forest cover in Northeast-** The northeastern states continued to record a declining trend in forest cover. As per the 2023 assessment, the decrease of forest cover in north eastern states has been around **327.30 sq km**.
- 5. Forest and tree cover behind the national goal-** **National Forest Policy, 1988** provides for having a **minimum of 1/3rd of total land area of country** under forest or tree cover as a national goal. However, the

present forest and tree cover of the country, which is **25.17 percent of the geographical area of the country**, remains behind the national goal.

**6. Plantation vs Natural forest Dilemma-** While there has been growth in the area of plantation, there exists a **dilemma between the growth of plantation and natural forest**. Plantations are often monocultures, vulnerable to fire, pests, and disease, while natural forests are more biodiverse, store more carbon, and support ecosystem stability. Experts have cautioned **against the over-reliance on plantations** to compensate for natural forest loss.

### **What are the reasons behind the increase in forest cover in the country?**

The increase in forest cover in India, as highlighted in the India State of Forest Report 2023, can be attributed to several key factors. Following are some of the factors behind the increase in forest cover in the country-

**1. Afforestation Programs-** Large-scale plantation drives under government schemes like **National Afforestation Programme (NAP)** and **Green India Mission (GIM)** have significantly contributed in increasing forest cover.

**2. Promotion of agroforestry-** The adoption of agroforestry practices, through initiatives like the **Sub-Mission on Agroforestry (SMAF)**, has encouraged farmers to grow trees alongside crops, resulting in enhanced tree cover.

**3. Community Participation-** The involvement of local communities through **Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs)** has boosted conservation efforts and reforestation programs in the country.

**4. Technological Interventions-** Use of **advanced remote sensing technologies** and **forest monitoring systems** has facilitated better forest management and detection of degraded areas for restoration.

**5. Ecotourism and Awareness Campaigns-** Growing awareness about biodiversity and climate change has led to enhanced participation in conservation efforts and tree-planting initiatives. **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives** have supported afforestation programs, adding to the green cover.

### **What additional measures can be taken to increase the forest cover in the country?**

**1. Incentives for Tree Planting-** The government should provide financial incentives, tax benefits, and subsidies to individuals and organizations for tree planting. **For ex-** China's **Grain-for-Green Program** compensates farmers for converting farmlands into forests.

**2. Land Restoration Programs-** The degraded lands should be restored through **soil restoration** and **watershed management**. **For ex-** **Ethiopia's Tigray Reforestation Project** has reclaimed arid lands through terracing and tree planting.

**3. Enhanced Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)-** The government must collaborate with industries and NGOs for funding and implementation of green projects. **For ex-** **The Toyota Green Wave Project in Japan** supports forest restoration.

**4. Seed Banks and Nurseries-** Seed banks and nurseries should be established to provide quality planting material. **For ex-** The **Millennium Seed Bank Project (UK)** preserves seeds for future forest restoration.

The ISFR 2023 provides critical data for monitoring forest resources and supports policymakers, planners, researchers, and environmentalists. It highlights India's progress in forest conservation, carbon sequestration, and sustainable management of natural resources.

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

## National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)- Explained Pointwise



Recently, Former Supreme Court judge **Justice V Ramasubramanian** was appointed by the **President of India Shri Droupadi Murmu** as the chairperson of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). However, the principal opposition party has issued a dissent note and has called the selection process of NHRC chairperson and members as “fundamentally flawed”. The dissent note has held the selection process as a **pre-determined exercise** (relying on numerical majority to finalize the names), ignoring the established tradition of mutual consultation and consensus.

In this article, we will have a look at the institution of NHRC, the procedure of appointment of NHRC members. We will look at the successes and failures of NHRC as an institution. We will also look at the way ahead for the institution.

### What is NHRC? What is its Mandate?

**NHRC-** NHRC is a **statutory body** established under the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993**. The Commission is the watchdog of human rights in the country. It is a **multi-member body** consisting of a chairperson and five members.

<b>Chairperson</b>	The Chairperson is a <b>retired chief justice of India</b> or <b>a judge of the Supreme Court</b> .
<b>Members</b>	<b>One Member</b> who is, or has been, a Judge of the Supreme Court <b>One Member</b> who is, or has been the Chief Justice of a High Court



	<b>Three Members</b> , to be appointed from amongst persons having knowledge and practical experience in matters of human rights, one of whom shall be a woman
<b>Appointment</b>	The chairperson and members are <b>appointed by the President</b> on the recommendations of a <b>six-member committee</b> consisting of Prime Minister as its head, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Leaders of the Opposition in both the Houses of Parliament, Central Home Minister
<b>Tenure</b>	The chairperson and members are <b>appointed for the term of 3 years or till the age of 70 years</b> , whichever is earlier.
<b>Reappointment</b>	The chairperson and members are eligible for reappointment.

### Mandate of NHRC

- 1. Investigation-** Investigating complaints or failure of any **public official** regarding the rights' violation, either suo moto or after receiving a petition.
- 2. Prevention and Safeguard-** Monitoring the **living conditions of the inmates** and to make recommendations thereon. Reviewing statutory safeguards or treaties for the protection of human rights.
- 3. Intervention-** NHRC intervenes in any proceeding **involving any allegation of violation of human rights pending before a court** with the approval of such court.
- 4. Human rights-** NHRC review the factors, including acts of terrorism, that **inhibit the enjoyment of human rights** and recommend appropriate remedial measures.
- 5. Awareness-** NHRC **spreads human rights literacy amongst various sections of society** and promotes awareness of the safeguards available for the protection of these rights through publications, the media, seminars and other available means.

### What are the Provisions for Protection of Human Rights in India? What are the successes and failures of NHRC in Human rights protection in India?

**Human rights-** Human rights are **rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual** guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by courts in India

#### Provisions for Protection of Human Rights in India

- 1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights-** The UDHR principles have been adopted by India to guarantee human rights.
- 2. Right to equality (Art 14-18) of the Constitution-** This guarantees **equality before law, prohibition of discrimination** on grounds of religion, race, caste, gender or place of birth, and **equality of opportunity in matters of employment, abolition of untouchability and abolition of titles.**
- 3. Right to freedom (Art 19-22)-** This guarantees the **freedom of speech and expression**, assembly, association or union or cooperatives, movement, residence, and right to practice any profession or occupation, **right to life and liberty, protection in respect to conviction in offences and protection against arrest and detention in certain cases.**
- 4. Right against exploitation (Art 23 and 24)-** This prohibits all forms of **forced labour, child labour and traffic of human beings.**

**5. Bandhua Mukti Morcha V. Union of India (1984)**- SC held that Art. 21 guarantees Right to Life. The meaning of life under this article means a life of not only animal existence but life with human dignity

### Successes of NHRC

Since its formation, the NHRC has widely dealt with issues relating to the application of human rights. Despite its limitations, **NHRC has been striving to provide human rights relief to citizens in India**. Some of the success stories are mentioned below-

- a. Campaigns against **discrimination of HIV patients**.
- b. Intervention in the cases of Child sexual abuse and violence such as **Nithari Village in Noida, UP**.
- c. **Suo-moto cognisance** in the case of **killing of 10 people in police firing during Anti-Sterlite protest in Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu**.
- d. Intervention in the case of **killing of Rising Kashmir editor Shujaat Bukhari** after an appeal via press, by a network of editors and media practitioners.

### Failures of NHRC in Human rights Protection

However, NHRC has failed in securing Human rights to all, which are evident from these examples-

- 1. Existence of Custodial Torture and extrajudicial killings**- The recent **Sathankulam case in Tamil Nadu** is proof of existence of custodial torture. Extrajudicial Killings like fake encounters, mob lynching, etc. have not stopped in India.
- 2. Arbitrary Arrest and Detention**- Both the NHRC and SHRC both **have failed to control them due to their lack of powers**.
- 3. Prevalence of Gender based Violence**- Violence and discrimination against Women, Children like rape, murder, sexual abuse are also prevalent in India.
- 4. Prevalence of Manual scavenging**- Manual Scavenging is still prevalent in India. According to the 2011 Census, there are more than 26 Lakh insanitary latrines in the country. Even though the government enacted a law and NHRC given its recommendations, the practice still exists in India.
- 5. Suspension of 'A' status by GANHRI**- The **suspension of 'A' status by GANHRI for two consecutive years (2023 and 2024)** marks a significant setback for NHRC and its international standing.

### What are the other Limitations/Challenges faced by NHRC in India?

- 1. Status of recommendatory Body**- NHRC is **only a recommendatory body**, without the power to enforce decisions. The lack of authority to ensure compliance, can sometimes lead to the outright rejection of its decision.
- 2. Lack of effective investigation powers**- NHRC **lacks an independent investigative machinery** to enquire into complaints. Further, the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993**, prohibits NHRC from pursuing investigation of an event, **if the complaint was made more than one year after the incident**. Therefore, many genuine grievances remain unaddressed.
- 3. Jurisdictional Limits**- NHRC **cannot address human rights violations** committed by **private parties**. NHRC cannot investigate the violation in case of armed forces and has to rely on the report of the Centre.
- 4. Lack of effective enforcement powers**- NHRC **lacks authority to penalise the authorities** that fail to implement its orders.
- 5. Post retirement club**- NHRC has become a **post-retirement destination for judges, police officers and bureaucrats with political clout**. The composition of the commission which is heavily judicial has given it a **court like character**.
- 6. Lack of funds and functionaries**- The **inadequacy of funds, functionaries**, and the bureaucratic way of functioning, hampers the effectiveness of the commission.

### What Should be the Way Forward?

- 1. Enhanced enforcement powers-** The **decisions of NHRC should be made enforceable** by the government. The efficacy of commissions will be greatly enhanced if their decisions are made enforceable by the government.
- 2. Revamping the membership structure-** The members of NHRCs **should include civil society, human rights activists, minorities**, etc. rather than ex-bureaucrats. The search cum selection committee must ensure transparency in the selection of members.
- 3. Independent Staff-** NHRC should have its **independent investigating staff** recruited by the commission directly. The present practice of deputation of staff must be stopped.
- 4. Developing scientific Human rights framework-** NHRC must explore creating a scientific human rights framework tailored for India.

Read More- [Livemint](#)

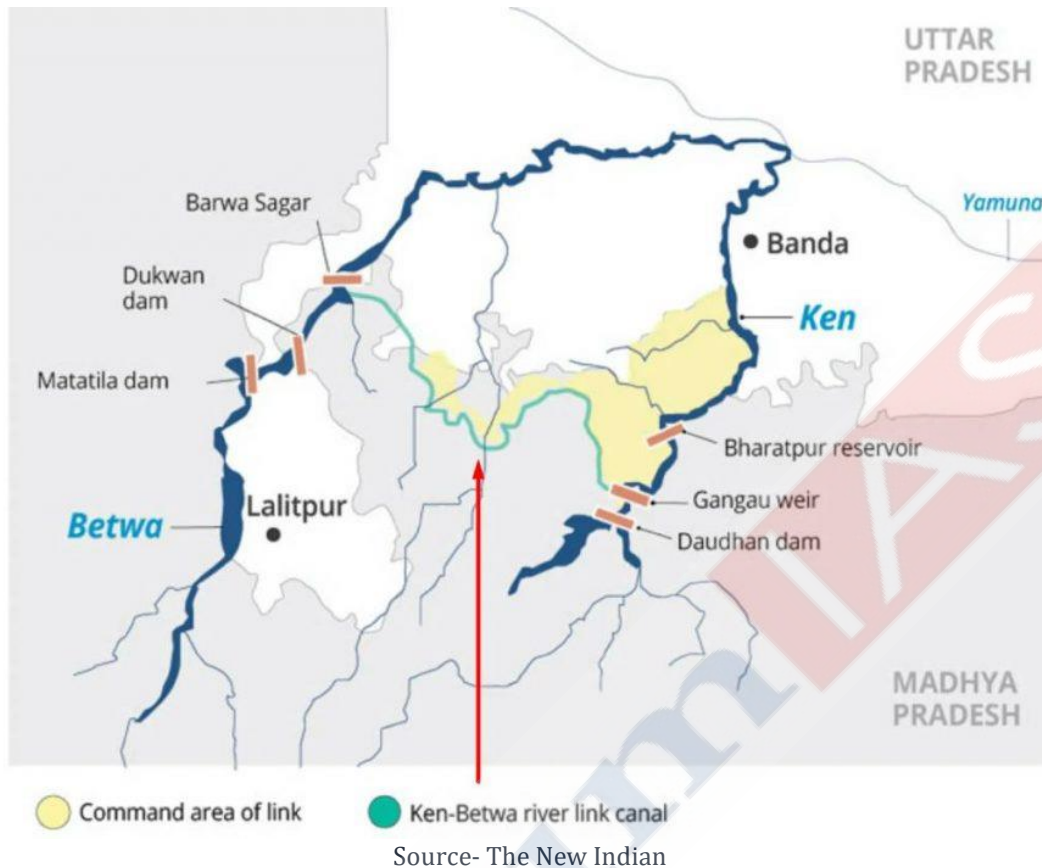
UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Indian Polity- Non Constitutional Bodies

### Interlinking of Rivers in India- Explained Pointwise

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the **Ken-Betwa River Linking Project** (KBLP) on December 25, marking the 100th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The Ken-Betwa River Linking Project is a **landmark infrastructure initiative** aimed at addressing water scarcity and promoting development in Bundelkhand. However, there are **concerns** regarding **environmental degradation, wildlife displacement, and rehabilitation**, which merit a detailed discussion on the issue of river interlinking projects in the country.

#### What is the Ken-Betwa River Linking Project?

The KBLP aims to transfer water from the Ken River to the Betwa River, both tributaries of the Yamuna. The project includes a 221-km-long canal, featuring a 2-km tunnel. The project aims to provide irrigation for **10.62 lakh hectares** (8.11 lakh ha in Madhya Pradesh and 2.51 lakh ha in Uttar Pradesh), **drinking water supply for 62 lakh people** and **generation of 103 MW hydropower and 27 MW solar power**.



This is the first initiative under the **1980 National Perspective Plan for interlinking rivers**, which includes 16 peninsular and 14 Himalayan links.

### What is the National River Linking Project (NRLP)?

NRLP, formerly known as the National Perspective Plan, proposes to connect 14 Himalayan and 16 peninsular rivers with 30 canals and 3,000 reservoirs to form a gigantic South Asian Water Grid. The initial plan to interlink India's rivers came in 1858 from a British irrigation engineer, *Sir Arthur Thomas Cotton*.

NRLP includes two components:

**Himalayan component-** This component aims to construct storage reservoirs on the Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers, as well as their tributaries in India and Nepal. It will connect 1) the **Ganga and Brahmaputra basins** to the **Mahanadi basin**, and 2) the **Eastern tributaries of the Ganga** with the **Sabarmati and Chambal river systems**.

**Peninsular component-** It includes **16 links that propose to connect the rivers of South India**. It envisages linking, 1) the Mahanadi and Godavari to feed the Krishna, Pennar, Cauvery, and Vaigai rivers, 2) the Ken river to the Betwa, Parbati, Kalisindh, and Chambal rivers, 3) West-flowing rivers to the south of Tapi to the north of Bombay, and 4) Linking some west-flowing rivers to east-flowing rivers.

The NRLP is managed by **National Water Development Agency (NWDA)** under the Ministry of Jal Shakti. NWDA was set up in 1982, to conduct surveys and see how feasible proposals for interlinking river projects are. Recently, it has been reported that the Centre is deliberating on creation of a **National River Interlinking Authority (NIRA)**. It will have powers to set up SPV for individual link projects.

**Previous examples of river-linking in India-** In the past, several river linking projects have been taken up. For instance:

a. Under the Periyar Project, transfer of water from Periyar basin to Vaigai basin was envisaged. It was commissioned in 1895.



b. Godavari River has also been formally interlinked with the Krishna River at Ibrahimpatnam (near Vijayawada) in Andhra Pradesh in September 2015.

### What are the advantages of Interlinking of Rivers?

- 1. Addressing the Hydrological Imbalance of India-** India has a large-scale hydrological imbalance with an effective rainfall period of 28 to 29 days. Some regions receive very high rainfall while some face droughts. Interlinking would enable the transfer of water from **flood-prone regions** to **drought-prone regions**.
- 2. Improvement of inland waterways-** Interlinking of rivers will create a network of navigation channels for the growth and development of inland waterways in India.
- 3. Aiding irrigation potential-** The interlinking of rivers has the potential to **irrigate around 35 million hectares of land in the water-scarce western peninsula**. This will help India to create employment, boost crop outputs, and farm incomes.
- 4. Generation of hydropower-** The interlinked rivers have the potential to generate a total hydropower of around 34 GW. This will help India to reduce coal-based power plant usage and will help to achieve India's targets under Glasgow Climate Pact and under the Paris agreement.
- 5. Drinking water supply-** The project envisages a supply of clean drinking water amounting to 90 billion cubic meter. It can help in the resolution of the issue of drinking water scarcity in India.
- 6. Boost to industries-** Interlinking of rivers has the potential to provide around 64.8 billion cubic meter of water for industrial use.
- 7. Environmental benefits-** protect wildlife in the summer months due to water scarcity. It can also reduce forest fires occurring in India due to climatic conditions.
- 8. Waterline Defence-** India can also explore an additional line of defence in the form of waterline defence by the interlinking of rivers.

### What are the issues/challenges in Interlinking of Rivers?

The interlinking of rivers project has a variety of challenges. They are,

- 1. Impact of the Climate change-** Reports point out that Climate change will cause a meltdown of 1/3rd of the Hindu Kush Region's glaciers by 2100. So, the **Himalayan rivers might not** have '**surplus water**' for a long time. The investment of billions of money in the interlinking of rivers might yield benefits only for a short time.
- 2. Human cost of Displacement-** There are challenges of loss of livelihood and displacement of people especially, the poor and tribal people located near the forests.
- 3. Huge financial cost-** NRLP is a highly capital-intensive project. In 2001, the total cost for linking the Himalayan and peninsular rivers was estimated at **Rs 5,60,000 crore**, excluding the costs of relief and rehabilitation, and other expenses. The **cost-benefit ratio might no longer be favourable** for the implementation of river interlinking projects.
- 4. Impact on ecology and biodiversity-** With the ecology of every river being unique, letting the waters of rivers mix may affect biodiversity. Also, when most of the rivers in the country are polluted, this may cause mixing of a less polluted river with a more polluted one.
- 5. International Challenges-** Countries like Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh will be impacted due to the NRLP. Bangladesh has fears that the water diversion from the Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers to India's southern states, will threaten the livelihoods as well as its environment.
- 6. Inter state Disputes-** Water is a state subject in India. So the implementation of the NRLP primarily depends on Inter-State co-operation. Several states including Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and Sikkim have already opposed the NRLP.

**7. Infrastructural Challenges-** The government is proposing a canal irrigation method for transmitting water from one area to the other. The maintenance of canals is also a great challenge, as it includes preventing sedimentation, clearing logging of waters. Further, the government faces the challenge of acquisition of large-scale lands for the smooth implementation of the project.

#### What should be the way forward?

**1. Efficient utilisation of existing resources-** Integrated water resource management is the key for India. Curbing water demand by efficient utilisation of existing water resources should be prioritised before making big-ticket investments in river interlinking under NRLP.

**2. Efficient Groundwater management-** The focus of India's water resources should be about nurturing its Groundwater system. It should include identification and protection of groundwater recharge mechanisms, installation of artificial recharge and regulation of groundwater use at aquifer level.

**3. Virtual water-** India should also push for the concept of virtual water. **For example-** When a country imports one tonne of wheat instead of producing it domestically, it is saving about 1,300 cubic meters of the local water. The local water can be saved and used for other purposes.

**4. National Waterways Project (NWP)-** As per some experts, the govt should consider the National Waterways Project (NWP) instead of the NRLP. Under NWP, water from a flooded river will flow to the other. It acts like a water grid, similar to a power grid. It just needs 1/3rd the land required for interlinking of rivers, is open to navigation throughout the year and involves zero pumping. Furthermore, it can irrigate almost double the land and has a 76% more power generation capacity (60 GW) compared to the interlinking of rivers project.

**Read More-** [The Indian Express](#)  
UPSC Syllabus- GS 1- Indian Geography

### 70 Hours Work Week- Explained Pointwise

Recently, Infosys Founder **Narayan Murthy** again suggested '70 hours work week' to improve India's labour productivity and competitiveness. He emphasized the need to improve India's labour productivity, citing Germany and Japan as examples. This idea of long working hours as a measure to improve the country's work productivity has drawn both support and criticism. Zoho CEO Sridhar Vembu has called the idea a 'demographic suicide'.

#### What is Productivity and what are its types?

**Productivity-** Productivity measures how efficiently inputs like **labour** and **capital** are used to produce outputs such as goods and services.

#### Types of Productivity

<b>Labour/Work Productivity</b>	<p>(1) Measures the output produced per hour of work. For ex- for a GDP of \$1 trillion with its people working 20 billion hours, the labour productivity is \$50 per hour.</p> <p>(2) It is directly linked to increased wages, better living standards, and consumer's purchasing power.</p>
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<b>Capital Productivity</b>	<p>(1) Measures the output produced by using physical assets like machinery, buildings and equipments.</p> <p>(2) It indicates how efficiently investments in physical assets are used, impacting profitability and competitiveness.</p>
<b>Total Factor Productivity</b>	<p>(1) Measures the output produced by advancements in innovation and technology.</p> <p>(2) It reflects efficiency improvements, technological progress, and innovation in an economy.</p>

**What is the status of India's labour productivity and working hours?**

#### Indian Labour productivity status as per the ILO Data

India	India's hourly output stands at <b>\$8.47</b> . Indians work an average of nearly <b>48 hours per week</b> .
France	France's hourly output stands at <b>\$58</b> . Average workweek is around <b>30 hours per week</b> .

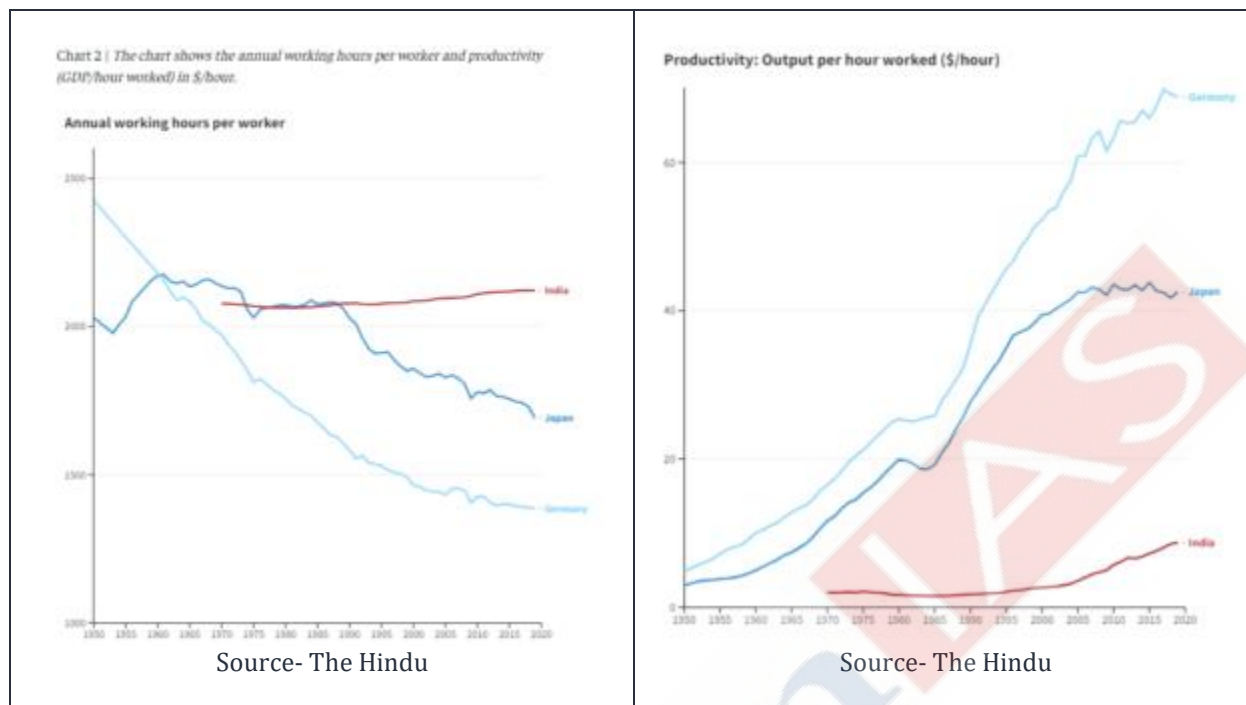
#### Young India's working hours

(1) Time Use Survey in India 2019 data shows that young Indians aged 15-29 currently work around **7.2 hours a day in rural areas** and **8.5 hours a day in urban areas**.

(2) A State-wise comparison of the time spent on work in urban areas is higher than in rural areas. Uttarakhand ranks first, with young people from the State working for an average of 9.6 hours a day.

#### Mr. Murthy's rationale for long working hours taking the productivity increase of Japan and Germany by long working hours

Germany and Japan after the second world war encouraged their workforce to put in extra hours of work per day to boost the economic productivity. The average working hours was between **2,200 to 2,400 hours per year**, which came down to **8.3 to 9 hours of work per day**, adhering to a five-day work week without holidays.



However, 70 hours work week would translate to 14 hours per weekday. This would be even more than what Japan and Germany reached in the post world war era.

### What are the arguments in favour of '70 hours work week'?

**1. Increased Productivity-** Advocates argue that a longer workweek could potentially result in higher productivity due to more time spent on tasks and projects. **Ex- Japan and Germany productivity push due to longer working hours.**

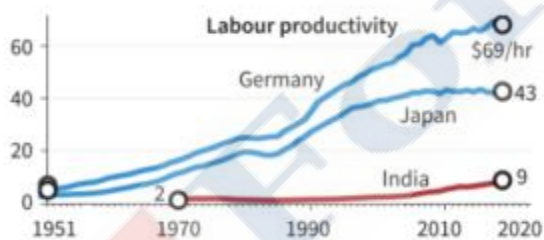


Figure 5. Source- The Hindu

**2. Higher Economic Growth-** It might boost economic growth as more work hours could contribute to increased production and innovation. It can help India reach the goal of **\$5 trillion economy**.

**3. Increased Global Competitiveness-** In a globalized world, longer work hours might help Indian professionals remain competitive in the international job market. **Ex- Financial Sector in India can match the global standards which work round the clock.**

**4. Potential for higher tax revenues for the government-** Increased economic activity and higher incomes due to longer working hours result in greater tax revenues. This can be used for public services and infrastructure development.

**5. Opportunity for Skill Development-** Individuals can achieve mastery in one's chosen field by investing extra number of hours at work. For Ex- Out of the 70 hours, one can assign 40 hours to his/her professional responsibilities and set aside 30 hours for personal skill enhancement.

**6. Leveraging the Demographic Dividend for Nation Building-** India needs a dedicated labour force where young individuals are willing to put in 70 hours of work per week for the service of nation-building.

### What are the arguments against the '70 hours work week'?



**1. Decline in productivity with Long Working Hours-** Research shows that productivity declines significantly after 50 hours of work per week and drops further after 55 hours. Germany and Japan **further increased productivity by reducing working hours to 1,400-1,600 hours a year.**  
Ex- World's most productive countries have the least work week days.

### Most Productive Countries, 2015

Rank	Country	GDP per hour worked	Employed Population	GDP (USD)	Average work week (hrs)
1	Luxembourg	\$ 93.4	405,600	\$57b	29
2	Ireland	\$ 87.3	1,989,400	\$302b	33.5
3	Norway	\$ 81.3	2,753,000	\$318b	27.3
4	Belgium	\$ 69.7	4,601,200	\$498b	29.8
5	United States	\$ 68.3	151,000,000	\$18,037b	33.6
6	Denmark	\$ 67.6	2,829,000	\$270b	27.2
7	France	\$ 65.6	27,523,000	\$2,648b	28.2
8	Germany	\$ 65.5	43,057,000	\$3,857b	26.3
9	Netherlands	\$ 65.4	8,792,000	\$818b	27.4

Figure 6. Source- TIME

**2. Burnout and Mental Health-** Workers who put in 70 hours a week are more prone to experience **burnout, higher levels of stress and mental health problems.** Extended work hours may negatively impact an individual's health and work-life equilibrium.

**3. Increased healthcare costs due to stress-related issues-** Longer hours can result in higher healthcare costs, as stress-related health problems become more prevalent.

**4. Negative Effect on Family Life-** Long work hours can make it more difficult to meet personal and family obligations, strain relationships within the family and disturb the work-life balance.

**5. Diminished Creativity and Innovation-** Overworked People frequently exhibit less creativity and innovation. Tiredness can hinder one's capacity for original thought and problem-solving.

**6. Work Quality-** Longer hours do not always translate into better work. Tired employees are more prone to make mistakes and do **subpar work.**

**7. Exacerbation of gender Inequalities-** Extended work hours may have a disproportionate impact on women, who often **shoulder greater caring and home obligations,** hence exacerbating gender inequalities.

**8. Danger of Exploitation-** Employers may take advantage of a culture of extended work hours, which could result in unpaid overtime, subpar working conditions, and **abuses of workers' rights.**

**9. Negative Impact on the Community and Society-** Long work hours can reduce participation in the community and society, which can have a negative impact on volunteering work and social cohesiveness.

### What should be the way forward for Increasing productivity without increasing the work hours?

**1. Technological Adoption-** We must Invest in modern technologies and automation to streamline processes and improve productivity.

**2. Skills Enhancement-** Skill India Mission must be implemented properly to provide skill training and education to workers.

**3. Upgradation of Infrastructure-** We must develop better transportation infrastructure to reduce commuting time and increase accessibility to workplaces.

**4. Fostering Innovation-** We must encourage research and development (R&D) activities to drive innovation, leading to improved products and services and increased productivity.

## Conclusion

Finally, while N.R. Narayana Murthy's proposal for a 70-hour workweek for young Indians aims to increase productivity, it should be carefully evaluated in light of the potential negative effects on work quality, burnout, mental health problems, and work-life balance. **Writing good employment rules** requires striking a balance between the needs of the job and the welfare and personal development of the employee.

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UPSC Syllabus- GS Paper 3 Indian Economy – Employment and labour productivity.

## Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2023-24- Explained Pointwise



The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2023-24 was recently released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). The Survey highlights a rise in the share of spending on food in rural and urban households. However, non-food items continuing to dominate overall expenditure.

All India Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES), is a **survey conducted by the NSSO every five years**, to ascertain the household spending habits. However, Govt had junked the last survey results of 2017-18, citing '**data quality issues**'. Post that, the survey methodology underwent a revision. Now, MoSPI has published **back-to-back surveys** for 2022-23 and 2023-24 to check the robustness of revised methodology and stability of results for consumption expenditure.

### What is the All India Household Consumption Survey?

**1. About the Survey-** The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) is conducted to **gauge household spending habits**. It provides crucial insights into household consumption patterns, their living standards and overall well-being.

**2. Interval of the Survey-** It is a **quinquennial survey (recurring every five years)**. It is conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (**NSSO**), (which now comes under the **National Statistical Office** in the **MoSPI**).

**3. History of the Survey-** The survey has been conducted every five years, since 1972-73. The survey results were junked in 2017-18 due to 'data quality issues'. Now, new surveys are being conducted in 2022-23 and 2023-24, according to new methodology.

**4. New Methodology-** In the new methodology, several new features have been introduced-

- Segregation** of the consumption basket into three broad categories- **food items, consumables and services**, and **durable goods**.
- Inclusion of questions** seeking inputs on **free items** and **subsidies** under welfare schemes, such as food grains.

**What are the recent findings of the All India Household Consumption Survey?**

### 1. Increase in Average Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE)

**Significance-** An increase in the per capita expenditure of households indicates **rising disposable incomes of households, narrowing inequality** between rural and Urban areas, and **declining poverty levels**.

- Rural per capita consumption expenditure** has **increased more sharply** as compared to **urban expenditure** in the period from 2011-12 to 2022-23. Rural-urban consumption gap reduced to 69.7% in 2023-24, down from 71.2% in 2022-23 and 83.9% in 2011-12.
- The average MPCE for rural households has increased to **Rs. 4,122**. It has **increased by 9.3%** from **Rs 3,773 in 2022-23**. In 2011-12, the rural household MPCE was Rs 1,430.
- The average MPCE for urban households has increased to **Rs. 6,996**. There has been an **increase of 8%** from **Rs. 6,459 in 2022-23**. In 2011-12, the urban household MPCE was Rs 2,630.

### 2. Dominance of Non-Food Expenditure in both Rural and Urban MPCE

Non-food items accounted for **53% of total expenditure in rural areas** and **60% in urban areas**. Major contributors of non-food expenditure includes conveyance, clothing, bedding and footwear, and entertainment.

### 3. Increase in the share of Food Expenditure

Despite the dominance of non-food spending, the share of food expenditure increased slightly for both rural and urban households.

- For rural areas, the share of food expenditure has increased to **47.04% in 2023-24** from **46.38% in 2022-23**.
- For urban areas, the share of food expenditure has increased to **39.68% in 2023-24** from **39.17% in 2022-23**.

### 4. Narrowing Rural-Urban Gap in MPCE

The gap between rural and urban spending has decreased to approximately **70%**, down from **71% in 2022-23**. This indicates a stronger growth rate in rural consumption compared to urban areas.

### 5. Regional Consumption Patterns

**States in western, northern, and southern India**, including Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Karnataka, have reported **higher per capita spending than the national average**. In contrast, **eastern and central states** like Bihar, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh have recorded **lower spending levels than the national average**.

### 6. Gini Coefficient Decline suggests improvements in consumption equality

- In Rural Areas- It fell from 0.283 in 2011-12 to 0.266 in 2022-23, and further to 0.237 in 2023-24.
- In Urban Areas- It has declined from 0.363 in 2011-12 to 0.314 in 2022-23, and to 0.284 in 2023-24.

The Gini coefficient, a measure of inequality, has shown a decline in both rural and urban sectors, suggesting improvements in consumption equality.

**What is the significance of the All India Household Consumption Survey?**



**1. Changing the weightage of components to accurately capture inflation-** The consumption expenditure survey serves as a benchmark for **assigning** and **changing the weightage** for different components of **Consumer Price Index** (CPI). **For ex-** Lowering the weightage for food in CPI in accordance with the survey data.

**2. Macro analysis of the economy-** The Household consumption expenditure survey data is used by the economists to analyse the structural shifts in the Indian economy and take further measures, like **rebasings the GDP** and **the poverty levels**.

**3. Assessment of economic growth trends and inequalities-** The Household consumption expenditure survey indicates a **narrowing gap in per capita** spending between rural and urban India. However, it also **highlights the wide income gaps** within households, with the top 5% of households spending significantly more than the bottom 5%.

**4. Fine-tuning tool for Policymakers-** The Imputed MPCE provides critical insights for policymakers to **fine-tune social schemes** by understanding evolving consumer's expenditure behaviour.

**5. Compass for the State governments-** State governments can use the survey to **reorient their budgetary strategies** to increase disposable incomes in the hands of people by learning from states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

**6. Fore-casting tool for the Industry-** The survey provides the industries an **insight into the changing consumer behaviour**, which helps them to refine their strategies and tap into emerging markets.

#### What are the Challenges with the survey?

**1. Small Data Set-** The survey has covered 2.61 lakh households. This is a small sample size for a **large and diverse country like India**.

**2. Temporal and Regional Variations-** Incorporating accurate seasonal variations and regional disparities in household expenditure is another major challenge to obtain accurate survey results.

**3. Risks of Pent-up Demands-** The survey has been conducted after two long years of COVID in 2020 and 2021. The year **2022** in which the survey was conducted has been a **year of pent-up demand**, as the last two COVID years had witnessed suppressed demands.

#### What Should be the way forward?

**1. Putting the data to fine-tune the social programs-** The All India consumption expenditure survey data must be used to fine tune various social security schemes like **PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana**, being run by the Govt by measuring their impact.

**2. Regularisation of the survey-** The new survey methodology must be institutionalised at the earliest to **establish the usual quinquennial survey cycle** (recurring every five years).

**3. Changes in the bases of Inflation Indices need to be awaited-** Since the survey was conducted in a year of Pent-up demand, any changes to the weights of different parameters in the inflation indices based on the survey results **will introduce significant bias**.

An accurate, transparent, and comprehensive consumption expenditure survey data will help in shaping a more inclusive and equitable society.

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