

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Bihar, one of the oldest inhabited regions of the world, has a rich and diverse history that dates back to ancient times. It has been a cradle of civilization, culture, and learning, contributing significantly to India's historical and cultural legacy.

1. ANCIENT PERIOD

A. Prehistoric and Vedic Age

- **Prehistoric Settlements:** Evidence of human habitation in Bihar can be traced back to the Neolithic Age. Sites like Chirand in Saran district have revealed tools and artifacts from prehistoric times.
- **Vedic Civilization:** Bihar formed a significant part of the ancient Aryan settlements and was referred to as "Magadha" in Vedic literature.

B. Rise of Magadha

- **Haryanka Dynasty (544–413 BCE):** Bimbisara and Ajatashatru were notable rulers who expanded Magadha's territory and influence.
- **Shishunaga and Nanda Dynasties:** Established Magadha as a prominent kingdom in North India.

C. Mauryan Empire (322–185 BCE)

- **Chandragupta Maurya:** Founded the Mauryan Empire with Pataliputra (modern-day Patna) as its capital. **Ashoka the Great:** Renowned for spreading Buddhism, issuing edicts, and establishing a welfare state.

D. Gupta Empire (320–560 CE)

- **Golden Age of India:** The Gupta Empire, with its capital at Pataliputra, saw advancements in science, literature, and art. Scholars like Aryabhata and Kalidasa flourished during this period.

2. MEDIEVAL PERIOD

A. Early Medieval Era

- **Pala Dynasty (750–1170 CE):** Centered in Bihar and Bengal, the Pala rulers were patrons of Buddhism and established the famous Nalanda and Vikramshila Universities.
- **Decline of Buddhism:** The Islamic invasions led to the destruction of many Buddhist institutions.

B. Delhi Sultanate and Mughal Period

Bihar became a strategic province under the Delhi Sultanate and later the Mughal Empire. Akbar's administration integrated Bihar into the Mughal empire, promoting agriculture and trade.

3. MODERN PERIOD

A. British Rule

- **Colonial Exploitation:** Bihar was part of the Bengal Presidency and suffered under exploitative policies. Permanent Settlement of 1793: Introduced by the British, it affected the agrarian structure and peasantry.

B. Role in India's Freedom Struggle:

- **Champaran Satyagraha (1917):** Mahatma Gandhi's first civil disobedience movement against the exploitation of indigo farmers.

- **Revolutionary Movements:** Bihar was a hub for nationalist leaders like Rajendra Prasad, Jayaprakash Narayan, and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati.
- **Quit India Movement (1942):** Bihar played an active role in the struggle for independence.

4. POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

- **Formation of Bihar:** Post-independence, Bihar was restructured, and in 2000, Jharkhand was carved out as a separate state.
- **Economic Challenges:** Despite its historical significance, Bihar faced challenges like poverty, underdevelopment, and governance issues.
- **Recent Developments:** Initiatives in education, infrastructure, and governance aim rejuvenate the state.

Key Contributions of Bihar to Indian History

- **Education:** Nalanda and Vikramshila Universities were global centers of learning.
- **Religious Heritage:** The origins of Buddhism and Jainism are rooted in Bihar.
- **Political Legacy:** Bihar was home to the first republic (Vaishali) and played a central role in shaping ancient and modern political systems.

Note- Place important focus on the Role of Karpoori Thakur and his influence in shaping up the social justice movement in Bihar. Also, focus on the glory of Nalanda University and the newly opened Nalanda University campus.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDICES OF BIHAR

Bihar, one of India's most populous and historically significant states, has made strides in human development but continues to face numerous challenges. Human Development Indices (HDI) provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing the state's progress in areas such as health, education, and standard of living. This analysis is crucial for understanding developmental disparities and identifying areas for policy intervention.

1. Human Development Index (HDI): *The HDI is a composite index measuring average achievement in three key dimensions:*

- **Health:** Life expectancy at birth.
- **Education:** Mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling.
- **Standard of Living:** Gross National Income (GNI) per capita.

2. Bihar's HDI Ranking (2021-2022)

- **National Context:** Bihar ranks among the lowest in HDI compared to other Indian states. According to the India Human Development Report (IHDR) and NITI Aayog's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index, Bihar's HDI value is significantly below the national average.
- *Bihar's Human Development Index (HDI) ranking in 2022 was 37, with an HDI of 0.540.

3. Key Indicators of Human Development in Bihar

A. Health

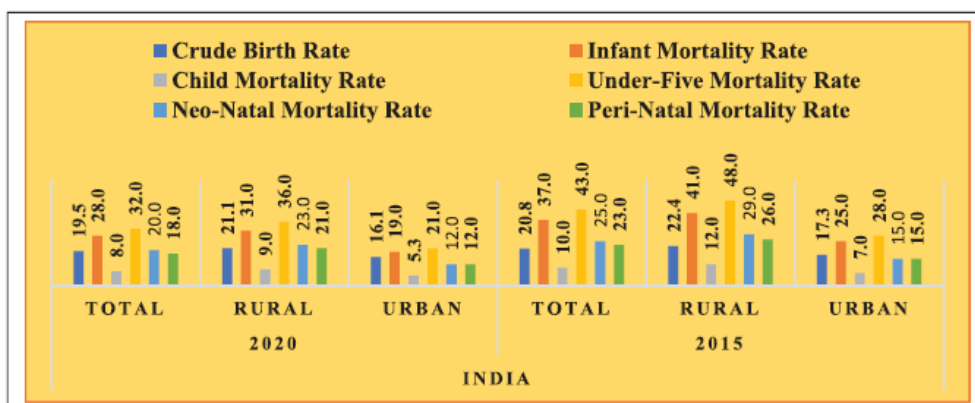
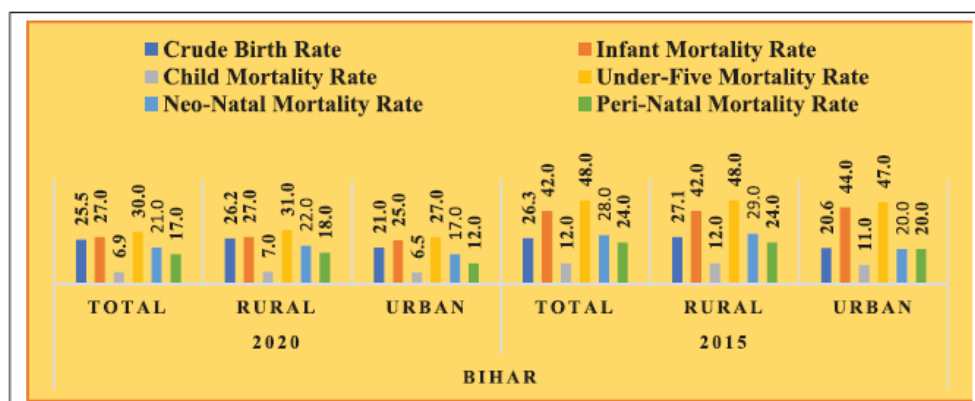
- **Life Expectancy:** The life expectancy in Bihar has improved to 69.5 years, comparable with the national average of 70 years.

| States/India | 2010-14 | | | 2016-20 | | |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Male | Female | All | Male | Female | All |
| Bihar | 67.8 | 68.4 | 68.1 | 69.7 | 69.2 | 69.5 |
| Chhattisgarh | 63.3 | 66.3 | 64.8 | 63.5 | 66.8 | 65.1 |
| Jharkhand | 66.2 | 66.9 | 66.6 | 70.5 | 68.9 | 69.6 |
| Madhya Pradesh | 62.5 | 66.0 | 64.2 | 65.5 | 69.5 | 67.4 |
| Odisha | 64.7 | 67.1 | 65.8 | 69.1 | 71.4 | 70.3 |
| Rajasthan | 65.5 | 70.2 | 67.7 | 67.1 | 71.7 | 69.4 |
| Uttarakhand | 62.9 | 65.4 | 64.1 | 67.5 | 73.9 | 70.6 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 69.1 | 74.5 | 71.7 | 65.3 | 66.7 | 66.0 |
| India | 66.4 | 69.6 | 67.9 | 68.6 | 71.4 | 70.0 |

Source : Sample Registration System (SRS), Office of the Registrar General, India

• Mortality Rates

- Bihar has shown considerable improvements in the mortality rates with IMR and Under-Child Mortality being lesser than the national average. (Source- Bihar Economic Survey 2023-24).
- Crude birth rates continue to be higher than the national average.



- **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR):** Bihar's MMR is 118 per lakh live births which is higher than the national average of 97 per lakh live births. (Sample Registration System (SRS) 2018-20).
- **Institutional Deliveries-** Institutional Deliveries have increased from 38.7% to 88.6%. (Bihar Economic Survey 2023-24)
- *Despite improvements in mortality indicators, Bihar suffers from a shortage of healthcare professionals and facilities, with a doctor-patient ratio well below WHO standards.*

B. Education

- **Literacy Rate:** As per the 2011 Census, Bihar's literacy rate is 61.8%, the lowest among Indian states. The gap between male literacy (71.2%) and female literacy (51.5%) highlights significant gender disparities.
- **Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education:** The GER of Bihar in higher education has increased to 17.1% in 2021-22, however it is still below the national GER of 28.4%. (AISHE 2021-22).
- **School Dropout Rates:** High dropout rates, especially among girls, remain a major concern due to socio-economic and cultural factors.

C. Standard of Living

- **Poverty Levels:** Bihar has the highest poverty rate in India, with over 50% of the population identified as "multidimensionally poor" (NITI Aayog's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)).
- **Per Capita Income:** The Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) per capita is ₹ 50,735, significantly lower than the national average of ₹ 1,50,007 (2022-23).
- **Unemployment:** The state's unemployment rate hovers around 14%, higher than the national average of 7.6% (CMIE, 2023).

4. Challenges to Human Development

- **Economic Backwardness:** A predominantly agrarian economy with low industrialization.
- **Social Inequalities:** Deep-rooted caste, gender, and regional disparities hinder equitable development.
- **Infrastructure Deficits:** Poor connectivity, power shortages, and lack of urbanization.
- **Governance Issues:** Inefficient implementation of welfare schemes and administrative bottlenecks.

5. Government Initiatives and Progress

- **Health:** Programs like Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) and Ayushman Bharat have improved maternal and infant care.
- **Education:** Initiatives like the Bihar Student Credit Card Scheme and school meal programs aim to reduce dropout rates.
- **Skill Development:** The Bihar Skill Development Mission (BSDM) focuses on enhancing employability among the youth.
- **Poverty Alleviation:** Schemes like MNREGA and the Public Distribution System (PDS) play a crucial role in improving living standards.

RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS/HILLS IN BIHAR

Bihar, situated in the Indo-Gangetic Plains, is endowed with a diverse geographical landscape dominated by rivers and hills. These physical features play a critical role in the state's agriculture, culture, and biodiversity. A comprehensive understanding of Bihar's rivers and mountains is vital for aspirants preparing for the UPSC examination.

1. MAJOR RIVERS IN BIHAR

Bihar is often referred to as the “land of rivers,” with the Ganges and its tributaries shaping its geography and economy. The rivers can be classified into two categories:

A. Himalayan Rivers- These rivers originate in the Himalayas and are perennial, carrying water throughout the year.

- **Ganga River**

- **Origin:** Gaumukh in Uttarakhand.
- **Importance:** The lifeline of Bihar, flowing west to east, divides the state into North Bihar and South Bihar.
- **Key Cities:** Patna, Bhagalpur, Munger.

- **Gandak River**

- **Origin:** Nepal Himalayas.
- **Tributaries:** May include the Burhi Gandak.
- **Significance:** Fertilizes northern plains.

- **Kosi River**

- **Origin:** Tibet, near Mount Everest. Known as “Sorrow of Bihar” due to frequent flooding.
- **Role:** Major contributor to agriculture but prone to devastations.

- **Bagmati River**

- **Origin:** Nepal. Flows through districts like Sitamarhi and Muzaffarpur.

B. Peninsular Rivers- These rivers are rain-fed and seasonal.

- **Sone River:** Amarkantak Plateau, Madhya Pradesh. The tributaries are North Koel, Johilla.
- **Punpun River:** Tributary of the Ganga. Flows through districts like Patna and Aurangabad.
- **Falgu River:** Associated with religious sites like Gaya. Seasonal and primarily rain-fed.
- **Chandan River:** Important for Bhagalpur district.

2. MAJOR MOUNTAINS AND HILLS IN BIHAR:

Although predominantly a plain region, Bihar has several hill ranges and mountainous features that add diversity to its geography.

A. Rajgir Hills

- **Location:** Nalanda district.
- **Significance:** Associated with ancient history and Buddhism. Houses hot springs and ancient Jain and Buddhist sites. Venue for the ancient Magadha kingdom.

B. Kaimur Hills

- **Location:** Western Bihar, part of the Vindhyan range.
- **Features:** Known for waterfalls and plateaus. Rich in minerals and forest cover.

C. Shivalik Hills

- **Location:** Northern edge of Bihar, in districts like West Champaran.
- **Characteristics:** Part of the Himalayan foothills. Biodiverse region with forests and wildlife sanctuaries like Valmiki National Park.

D. Barabar Hills

- **Location:** Near Gaya.
- **Highlights:** Houses the Barabar Caves, India's oldest surviving rock-cut caves. Historically significant due to Mauryan Emperor Ashoka.

3. IMPORTANCE OF RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS IN BIHAR

Agriculture: Rivers like the Ganga and Kosi enrich soil fertility, making Bihar a leading agricultural state.

Floods and Challenges: Rivers like Kosi and Gandak often cause devastating floods, impacting lives and livelihoods

Steps to overcome Flooding Challenges

1. Controlling population pressure and encroachments near the river banks.
2. Hydrological Data Sharing mechanism with Nepal
3. Regular Desilting and Dredging operations
4. Wetland Development
5. Afforestation along the river banks
6. Embankments, Sluice gates and Barrages (Kosi Barrage)
7. River Interlinking (Kosi-Mechi, Burhi Gandak-None-Ganga)

Steps to Overcome Flooding in Patna

1. Strengthening Drainage and stormwater Infrastructure
2. Restoration of Lakes and Ponds of Patna
3. Green Belts along the river Ganga
4. IoT sensors in drains and enhanced capacity of STP

PLACES OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE IN BIHAR

Bihar, one of the oldest inhabited regions of the world, boasts a rich cultural heritage shaped by centuries of history, religion, and tradition. The state is home to several sites of immense cultural and historical importance, making it a treasure trove for heritage enthusiasts and a vital topic for UPSC aspirants.

1. BODH GAYA

- **Significance:** Recognized as the place where Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree.

Key Attractions:

- **Mahabodhi Temple:** A UNESCO World Heritage Site, this temple is an architectural marvel and a major pilgrimage destination for Buddhists worldwide.
- **Bodhi Tree:** Believed to be a descendant of the original tree under which Buddha meditated.
- **Relevance:** Central to Buddhist history and philosophy; significant in India's soft power diplomacy.

2. NALANDA

- **Significance:** One of the world's oldest universities, Nalanda was a center of learning and intellectual exchange from the 5th to 12th centuries CE.

Key Attractions:

- **Nalanda Mahavihara:** A UNESCO World Heritage Site, comprising ruins of monastic and scholastic institutions.
- **Nalanda Museum:** Houses artifacts excavated from the ancient university.
- **Relevance:** Highlights India's ancient education system and intellectual heritage.

3. RAJGIR

- **Significance:** Known for its association with both Buddhism and Jainism, Rajgir was the first capital of the Magadha kingdom.

Key Attractions:

- **Vishwa Shanti Stupa:** A peace pagoda symbolizing harmony.
- **Griddhakuta Hill:** Where Buddha delivered several sermons.
- **Hot Springs:** Considered sacred and therapeutic.
- **Relevance:** Integral to the cultural and spiritual landscape of ancient India.

4. VAISHALI

- **Significance:** Considered one of the earliest republics in the world and a significant site in Jain and Buddhist traditions.

Key Attractions:

- **Ashokan Pillar:** Erected by Emperor Ashoka to commemorate Buddha's last sermon.
- **Vishwa Shanti Stupa:** A prominent Buddhist pilgrimage site.
- **Relevance:** Reflects the socio-political and religious advancements of ancient India.

5. PATNA (ANCIENT PATALIPUTRA)

- **Significance:** Once the capital of the Mauryan and Gupta Empires, Patna has been a center of political, cultural, and economic activities.

Key Attractions:

- **Kumhrar:** Archaeological remains of Pataliputra.
- **Golghar:** A granary built by the British.
- **Patna Sahib:** Birthplace of Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Sikh Guru.
- **Relevance:** Highlights the continuity of Bihar's historical significance from ancient to modern times.

6. VIKRAMSHILA

- **Significance:** An ancient university established by the Pala dynasty, second only to Nalanda in prominence.

Key Attractions:

- **Ruins of Vikramshila:** Include stupas, monasteries, and temples.
- **Monastic Cells:** Depict the architectural brilliance of the era.
- **Relevance:** Symbolizes Bihar's rich educational and cultural legacy.

7. SONEPUR (HARIHAR KSHETRA)

- **Significance:** Hosts one of Asia's largest cattle fairs, the Sonepur Mela, with deep roots in tradition and folklore.

Key Attractions:

- **Hariharnath Temple:** Dedicated to Lord Vishnu and Shiva.
- **Sonepur Mela:** Famous for its cultural vibrancy and trade.
- **Relevance:** Highlights the blend of religion, culture, and commerce.

8. MADHUBANI

- **Significance:** Renowned for its traditional Madhubani painting, a globally recognized art form.

Key Attractions:

- **Craft Villages:** Display vibrant murals and art.
- **Folk Traditions:** Reflect the social and religious life of the region.
- **Relevance:** Highlights Bihar's contribution to Indian and global art.

PLACES OF ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE

Bihar is not only rich in cultural and historical heritage but also possesses significant environmental diversity. Its rivers, wetlands, forests, and wildlife sanctuaries contribute to ecological balance and biodiversity conservation.

1. Valmiki National Park and Tiger Reserve

- **Location:** West Champaran district, at the foothills of the Himalayas.
- **Significance:** Bihar's only national park and part of the larger Valmiki-Chitwan-Parsa Tiger Conservation Landscape. Home to tigers, leopards, elephants, and a variety of flora and fauna. Declared a Tiger Reserve in 1990.
- **Relevance:** Demonstrates Bihar's efforts in wildlife conservation and its role in Project Tiger.

2. Vikramshila Dolphin Sanctuary

- **Location:** Stretch of the Ganga River between Sultanganj and Kahalgaon in Bhagalpur district.
- **Significance:** India's only sanctuary for the endangered Gangetic dolphin, declared as India's National Aquatic Animal. Supports diverse aquatic biodiversity, including otters, turtles, and various fish species.
- **Relevance:** Highlights issues related to riverine ecosystems, pollution, and conservation efforts under the National Ganga River Dolphin Project.

3. Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Location:** Kaimur district, along the Kaimur Hills.
- **Significance:** Largest wildlife sanctuary in Bihar. Rich in biodiversity with species like leopards, sloth bears, and chinkaras. Features waterfalls, lakes, and ancient caves, adding ecological and historical value.
- **Relevance:** Addresses issues related to habitat conservation and ecotourism.

4. Kanwar Lake Bird Sanctuary

- **Location:** Begusarai district.

- **Significance:** Asia's largest freshwater oxbow lake. A vital wintering ground for migratory birds like the Siberian crane, bar-headed geese, and painted storks. Declared a Ramsar site in 2020. Relevance: Discusses wetland conservation and the Ramsar Convention's role in preserving biodiversity.

5. Bhimbandh Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Location:** Munger district.
- **Significance:** Known for its natural hot springs and forested areas. Habitat for species like sambar deer, nilgai, and wild boar. Rich in medicinal plants and serves as a buffer zone for nearby ecological hotspots.
- **Relevance:** Connects biodiversity with geothermic phenomena and medicinal plant conservation.

6. Baraila Bird Sanctuary

- **Location:** Vaishali district.
- **Significance:** A haven for native and migratory birds. Supports wetland ecosystems and nearby agricultural communities.
- **Relevance:** Highlights human-wildlife interaction and sustainable agricultural practices near wetlands.

7. Rajgir Hills (Environmentally Rich Zone)

- **Location:** Nalanda district.
- **Significance:** Dense forests supporting diverse flora and fauna. Key to maintaining ecological balance in the region.
- **Relevance:** Integrates environmental conservation with heritage tourism.

8. Sanjay Gandhi Biological Park (Patna Zoo)

- **Location:** Patna.
- **Significance:** One of the largest zoological gardens in India. Plays a role in wildlife education, breeding programs, and recreation.
- **Relevance:** Focuses on ex-situ conservation and urban biodiversity.

FAQS ON WHICH THE STUDENTS SHOULD FOCUS

1. Pataliputra was once a flourishing center of many kingdoms. Why is Bihar often considered backward despite its historical significance?
2. Bihar was growing rapidly until the 1970s. What caused the decline in its growth trajectory afterward? Why did it later earn the label of a BIMARU state?
3. Why is the Bihar government demanding special category status, and how justified is this demand?
4. Generally, there is a negative perception of Bihar on a national and international level. What is your perception of Bihar? What measures would you suggest for managing the perception of Bihar on a national and international level?
5. What is the significance of the caste survey undertaken by the Bihar Government? How can a caste survey help uplift the lower sections of society? What are the concerns with such caste surveys.
6. Bihar was divided into two states. How are both Bihar and Jharkhand performing post division? Which is better, smaller states or larger ones?
7. What is the Jeevika Mission? Why has this mission succeeded in Bihar while other SHG related initiatives have struggled previously?

8. What are the reasons behind the recurring flood problem in Bihar. What measures can you suggest in mitigation and adaptation to this natural disaster.
9. Recently Bihar grabbed negative headlines for several bridge collapses. What are the reasons behind such free fall of bridges. As a civil servant how would prevent such incidents?
10. What values are essential for a civil servant, particularly in a state like Bihar? How would you address the issues of mafia activity and corruption in Bihar?
11. Share details about the ancient Nalanda University and the newly established one. How is the new Nalanda University performing? Can it achieve the legacy of its predecessor? What factors are necessary to become an institution of that stature?
12. Why is the Panchayati Raj system not functioning effectively in Bihar?
13. What is Bihar's RTPS service? Why did it succeed in Bihar but not in other states?
14. At what levels is societal change required in Bihar? What unique initiatives are being undertaken by the Bihar government in this regard?
15. What have been the significant announcements for Bihar in Budget 2024-25 as part of Purvodaya package?

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