



7 PM COMPILATION

3rd and 4th Week Feb, 2025

Features of 7 PM compilation

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

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India's need of DOGE- Explained Pointwise

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Washington and his meeting with Elon Musk have sparked discussions on how India can adopt innovative governance models like **USA's DOGE** (Department of Government Efficiency). DOGE focuses on cutting government wasteful, streamlining bureaucracy, and improving efficiency. For India, adopting a similar institutional framework can help realize the mantra of Minimum Government, Maximum Governance.



Source- X (formerly twitter)

Why does the concept of DOGE appeal in India?

- 1. Large Government Size-** India's government remains a lethargic, wasteful behemoth, with **48.47 lakh employees** and **67.95 lakh pensioners** draining taxpayer money. Salaries and pensions consume a significant portion of state budgets, leaving little for development.
- 2. Redundant and overlapping ministries-** Many ministries and departments overlap in functions, such as, **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** vs. **Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying**. Further there is the presence of redundant ministries like the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**– an outdated institution meant for controlling media rather than facilitating it.
- 3. Inefficiencies in government setup-** The Indian office setups reflect India's socialist-era inefficiencies where 10 employees often do the work of one.

4. Presence of outdated posts- The continuation of outdated posts like **collectors**, a **colonial legacy** that continues to control district development without modern governance tools.

5. Economic Losses- McKinsey Global Institute (2021) has estimated that **inefficiencies in public service delivery** cost India 3% of GDP annually.

6. Delayed Reforms and Public Discontent- Critical policies, such as **labour reforms** and **land acquisition**, often face bureaucratic bottlenecks. Further, delays in accessing basic government services contribute to a trust deficit between citizens and the state.

What advantages does the implementation of DOGE present?

1. Rationalization of Expenditure- For India, which spends heavily on salaries and pensions for 48.47 lakh employees and 67.95 lakh retirees, DOGE could be a game-changer in realizing Modi's vision of **MIGA** (Make India Great Again).

2. Fiscal Prudence- Implementation of DOGE could **free up funds** currently wasted on **redundant ministries** and **overstaffed offices**, redirecting them to critical areas like healthcare, education, and infrastructure.

3. Efficient Governance- **Streamlining bureaucracy** would improve service delivery, reduce corruption, and make the government more responsive to citizens' needs.

4. Boost to Private Sector Growth- DOGE would help in **reducing bureaucratic red tape**, which can attract foreign investment and stimulate job creation.

5. Enhanced Global Competitiveness- A more efficient governance structure will enhance India's **Ease of Doing Business rankings**.

What are the Challenges in implementation of DOGE?

1. Political Resistance- Closing ministries and reducing government jobs would face strong opposition from bureaucrats and politicians who benefit from the status quo.

2. Unemployment Concerns- With government jobs being a preferred career choice, large-scale cuts could generate unemployment concerns.

3. Bureaucratic Resistance- The bureaucracy remains resistant to large-scale downsizing due to political influence and employment dependencies.

4. Populist Constraints- Certain state governments (Tamil Nadu, Karnataka) struggle with fiscal discipline due to populist policies.

5. Implementation Challenges- Adapting the DOGE model to India's complex bureaucracy would require strong political will and effective execution.

6. Public Perception- The government must ensure that reforms are seen as pro-people rather than anti-employee.

What measures can be adopted for enhancing government efficiency?

1. Legislation for Efficiency- India should establish **Indian Department of Government Efficiency** (IDOG) to audit and restructure bureaucratic operations, Inspired by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Singapore's Public Service Division (PSD).

2. Merge Redundant Ministries- Overlapping departments like **Agriculture** and **Animal Husbandry** should be combined into a single ministry. Further, the redundant ministries like Ministry of Information and Broadcasting can be downsized and reoriented in approach.

3. Performance-Based Employment- Introduce **Key Performance indicators** (KPIs) and **real-time monitoring** for civil servants. Public-Private Efficiency Task Force must be formed to recommend and oversee structural reforms.

4. Optimization of Government Assets- Unused government assets should be utilized for **revenue generation**. Further, there should be acceleration of digitization & automation to reduce human resource dependency in governance.

5. Gradual Implementation- A phased approach to downsizing, ensuring re-skilling and alternative employment opportunities should be implemented for affected government employees.

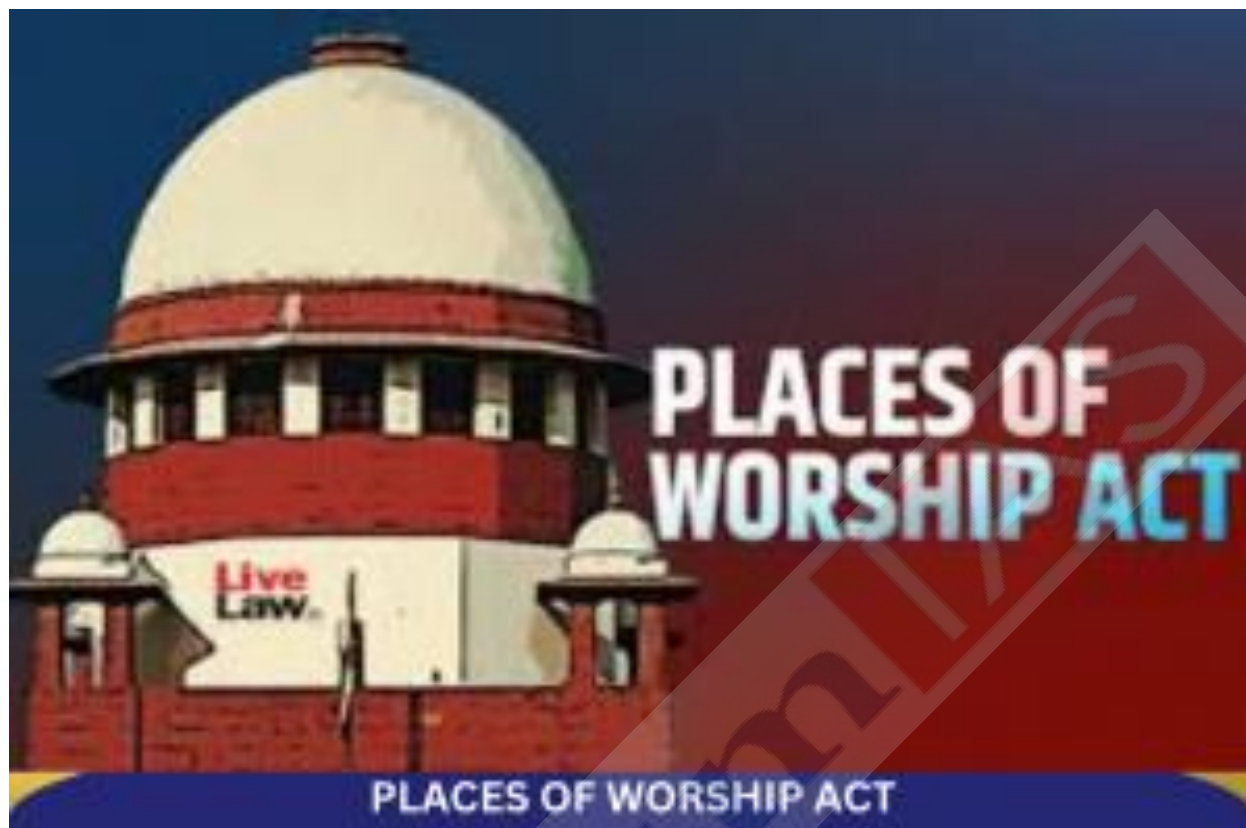
6. Global Best Practices- Learn from countries like Denmark and South Korea, which have successfully reduced government expenditure while improving public services.

India's journey towards Minimum Government, Maximum Governance requires bold reforms to eliminate bureaucratic inefficiencies and wasteful expenditure. By streamlining ministries, commercializing government assets, and abolishing outdated posts, India can free up resources for development and create a more efficient, responsive, and accountable government. In Make India Great Again, adopting DOGE could be the first step towards realizing this vision.

Read More- [The Deccan Herald](#)
UPSC Syllabus- GS 2 Governance

Places of Worship Act 1991- Explained Pointwise

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna has **barred new petitions challenging the Places of Worship Act, 1991**. While rejecting fresh filings, the Supreme Court has allowed intervention petitions introducing new legal grounds. The Act prohibits altering the religious character of places of worship as they stood in 1947, except for the Ram Janmabhoomi dispute. The recent **Sambhal and Ajmer Sharif shrine disputes**, has also 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.

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

Prohibition of Conversion (Section 3)	Prevents the conversion of a place of worship , whether in full or part, from one religious' denomination to another or within the same denomination.
Maintenance of Religious Character (Section 4(1))	Ensures that the religious identity of a place of worship remains the same as it was on August 15, 1947 .
Abatement of Pending Cases (Section 4(2))	Declares that any ongoing legal proceedings concerning the conversion of a place of worship's religious character before August 15, 1947, will be terminated , and no new cases can be initiated .

Exceptions to the Act (Section 5)	<p>a. The Act does not apply to ancient and historical monuments, archaeological sites, and remains covered by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.</p> <p>b. It also excludes cases that have already been settled or resolved and disputes that have been resolved by mutual agreement or conversions that occurred before the Act came into effect.</p> <p>c. The Act does not extend to the specific place of worship known as Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, including any legal proceedings associated with it.</p>
Penalties (Section 6)	Specifies penalties, including a maximum imprisonment term of three years and fines , for violating the Act.
Read More- The Places of Worship Act, 1991	

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

Disaster Management Bill 2024- Explained Pointwise

Recently, the Government of India introduced a bill proposing **several amendments to the Disaster Management Act 2005**. These amendments to the act mainly aim at **improving the operational efficiencies** in responding to a natural disaster. Though the Bill seeks to significantly expand the role and responsibilities of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), however, it misses the opportunity to upgrade and strengthen the institutional status of NDMA.

What are the Important Changes introduced in the Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill 2024?

Establishment of Urban Disaster Management Authorities	The amendment Bill seeks to establish an Urban Disaster Management Authority headed by the Municipal commissioner for large metropolitan cities, which often comprise many districts. This can help in having a unified and coordinated approach towards city-level disasters such as urban flooding.
Mandatory for the States to raise SDRF	The Disaster Management Act 2005, did not make it mandatory for the states to raise State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) . The size and capacity of the SDRFs in the states vary significantly. The Bill proposes to make it mandatory for every state to raise and maintain an SDRF.

Legal Status to National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC)	The amendment Bill gives legal status to the NCMC . It makes NCMC the nodal body to deal with disasters with ' serious or national ramifications .'
Enhanced role of NDMA	The Bill proposes to significantly expand the role and responsibilities of the NDMA. It will take stock of the entire range of disaster risks to the country, including risks from emerging disasters .
Shift of responsibilities in the preparation of Disaster Plans	The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and State Disaster Management Authorities will be responsible for preparation of disaster plans at the national and state levels. Earlier, the disaster management plans were prepared by the National Executive Committee and State Executive Committees.
Creation of Disaster Databases	The NDMA will be required to create and maintain a national disaster database with information on the assessment of the disaster, fund allocation, expenditure, and preparedness and mitigation plans . The SDMA's will also need to create state-level disaster databases .
Compensations	The Bill proposes that the NDMA should recommend guidelines for minimum standards of relief to be provided to people affected by disasters. This includes a recommendation on compensation amounts in case of loss of lives, damage to homes and property, and loss of livelihoods .
Clarified definition of Disasters	The Bill clarifies that the definition of Disasters does not include man-made disasters caused due to law-and-order situation. For ex- Loss of lives, suffering, or property damage in a riot would not fall in the disaster.

What are the concerns with the Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill 2024?

The Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, 2024, raises significant concerns as it overlooks participatory governance, accountability, and efficiency. Instead of addressing the gaps in the Disaster Management Act (DMA), 2005, the Bill dilutes critical provisions, weakening its framework.

- 1. Top-Down Terminology-** The Bill **employs top-down language** like '**monitor**' and '**guidelines**' instead of inclusive terms such as 'supervision' and 'direction.'
- 2. Less focus on Community Engagement-** Critics argue that the Bill **excludes local communities**, which global frameworks like the Yokohama Strategy and Sendai Framework recognize as first responders.
- 3. Weak Acknowledgment of Local Roles-** The Bill fails to integrate the roles of local communities, panchayats, and NGOs. Historical events like **Cyclone Aila (2009)**, **Kedarnath floods (2013)**, and **Kerala floods (2018)** have highlighted the proactive role of locals leading initial rescue efforts before the arrival of official teams.
- 4. Ignorance of Intersectional Vulnerabilities-** Critics argue that the Bill does not address intersectional discrimination, **leaving vulnerable groups such as women, the disabled, lower castes, and LGBTQIA communities exposed to systemic neglect**. It disregards the importance of inclusive datasets to capture layers of discrimination.
- 5. Absence of Performance Evaluation-** The Bill lacks mechanisms for assessing district authorities' preparedness.
- 6. Removal of Relief Standards-** **Sections 12 and 13** of the **Disaster Management Act 2005**, which mandated minimum relief standards and loan repayment assistance, have been removed. Similarly, Section 19, which

ensured State compliance with relief standards and provided for widows, orphans, and livelihood restoration, has been dropped without replacement.

7. Reduced Enforcement Provisions- Mandatory enforcement measures in Sections 35(2b) and 35(2d) that promoted disaster preparedness have been removed.

8. Neglect of Animal Welfare- The Bill completely ignores animal welfare during disasters, despite the thousands of animals affected during a disaster.

9. Lack of Regional Collaboration- The Bill fails to address regional cooperation despite rising zoonotic and epizootic diseases. It overlooks frameworks like the 2011 SAARC Agreement on Rapid Response to Natural Disasters and potential partnerships with SAARC, BIMSTEC, and BRICS.

What is the Disaster Management Act, 2005? What is the objective of the Act?

The Disaster Management Act, 2005 was enacted in India to provide a **comprehensive framework** for **disaster management** across the country. The Act encompasses **11 chapters** and **79 sections**, focusing on effective disaster management, risk reduction, and rehabilitation efforts.

Objectives of the Disaster Management Act 2005

a. Disaster Management Policies- The Act seeks to formulate and execute disaster management policies.

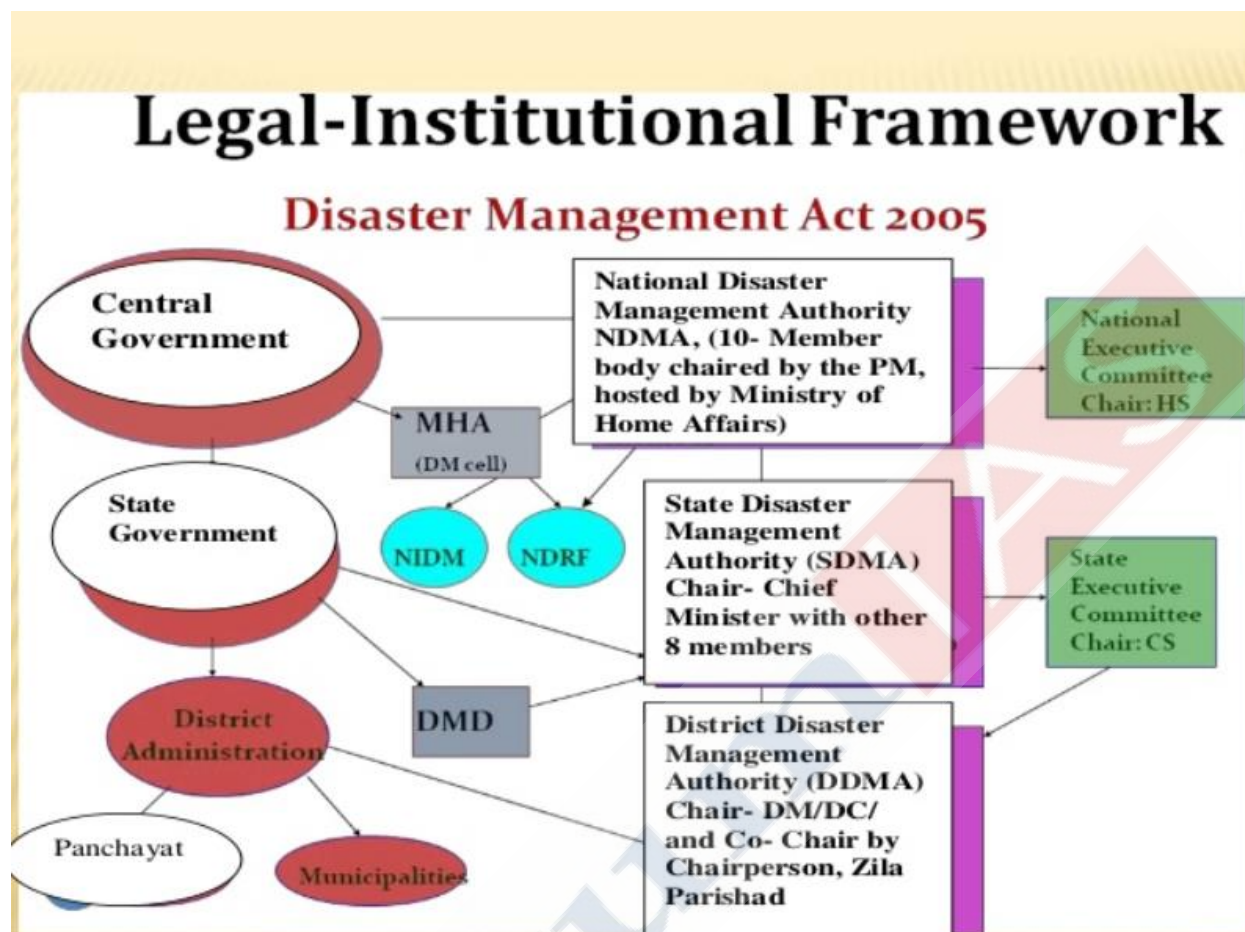
b. Disaster prevention and Mitigation- The act seeks to provide necessary measures for disaster prevention, mitigation, by enhancing preparedness and capacity building for the anticipated forthcoming calamities.

c. Disaster Relief- The Act seeks to provide financial aid and assistance to the disaster-affected state and people.

Legal-Institutional Framework of the DM Act 2005

Institutions	Role	Composition
First Tier		
National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) (Section 3)	Act as the central body for disaster management policies, plans, and guidelines (Section 6)	Chairperson- Prime Minister Members- Ministers of State for Home Affairs, Agriculture, Atomic Energy, Science & Technology, and other relevant ministries Vice-Chairperson and other members- As nominated by the Chairperson
National Executive Committee (NEC)(Section 8)	Assist the NDMA in performing its functions and ensure compliance with the directions.	Chairperson- Home Secretary Members- Secretaries to the Government of India in various departments, Chief of the Integrated Defense Staff of the Chiefs of Staff Committee
National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) (Section 42)	Training, research, and capacity-building institution.	Director- Appointed by the Central Govt. Members- Experts and professionals in disaster management and related fields

National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) (Section 44)	Special response force for disaster situations	Control- Director-General appointed by the Central Government Composition- Various battalions from Central Armed Police Forces
Second Tier		
State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) (Section 14)	Lay down the state disaster management plan and policies	Chairperson- Chief Minister Members- Ministers nominated by the Chief Minister, including the Minister for Disaster Management
State Executive Committee (SEC) (Section 20)	Ensure that the state's disaster management plan is implemented with coordination and monitoring.	Chairperson- The state's chief secretary Members- Department secretaries, as determined by the state government.
Third Tier		
District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) (Section 25)	Organize, plan, and carry out disaster management initiatives at the district level.	Chairperson- District Magistrate Co-Chairperson- Elected representative of the local authority Members- Include the Chief Medical Officer, Superintendent of Police, and additional district-level personnel nominated by the state government.
Local Authorities (Section 41)	Execute disaster management procedures in compliance with district and state plans.	Composition- Consists of town planning authorities, municipalities, district and cantonment boards, Panchayati Raj establishments, and other organizations in charge of urban development and planning.



Source- Slide Share

Funding Framework Provided by the Disaster Management Act 2005

The funding framework of the Disaster Management Act (DMA) 2005 in India is primarily structured around two key financial instruments- the **National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF)** and the **State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)**.

National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF)	The NDRF is established to provide timely financial assistance for immediate relief and rehabilitation during disasters. The NDRF is funded by the central government , and its utilization is governed by guidelines issued by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) .
State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)	The SDRF operates at the state level, complementing the NDRF. Each state government is required to establish its own SDRF to address local disaster management needs. The SDRF is funded through contributions from both the central and state governments , with the central government typically providing a significant portion of the funding.

What is the Significance of the Disaster Management Act 2005?

1. Establishment of Legal institutional Framework- The Act has led to the creation of the **NDMA, SDMA**s at the state level, a National Disaster Response Force (**NDRF**), and a National Institute of Disaster Management (**NIDM**). These institutions help in mitigating disasters by promoting disaster-related research, training, awareness, and capacity building.

2. Disaster Mitigation- The institutional framework provided by the Disaster Management Act, has **served India well in dealing with natural disasters**. Over the years, it has helped in saving thousands of lives, and has provided **relief, rescue and rehabilitation services**.

3. Emphasis on Disaster Risk Reduction- The Act emphasizes the importance of disaster risk reduction by promoting the **integration of disaster management into development planning processes**. For **ex- National Disaster Management Policy in 2009 and National Disaster Management Plan in 2016**, stress on the importance of Disaster Risk reduction which is the main aim of the Act.

4. Facilitation of Resource Allocation- The Act provides for the establishment of the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Funds (SDRFs) to ensure **timely financial assistance** for disaster response and relief operations.

5. Promotion of Community Participation- The Act recognizes the importance of community participation in disaster management by **emphasizing the role of local authorities and community groups** in disaster response and recovery efforts.

What are the Challenges with the Disaster Management Act in India?

Institutional Challenges

1. Absence of vice-chairperson of NDMA- The post of Vice chairman of NDMA has been **vacant for about a decade**. The absence of Vice-chairperson has **deprived NDMA of the leadership** and the **necessary political heft to deal with states** and other Government agencies.

2. Lack of administrative financial powers- NDMA **lacks administrative financial powers**, and routing of every small decision through the Home Ministry is an inefficient and time-consuming process.

3. Staff-Shortage in NDMA- The NDMA is severely short-staffed at the top. There are only three functioning members in NDMA. Earlier, the NDMA would have **six to seven members**, with each in charge of a specific type of disaster.

4. NDMA's Invisibility during major crises- The Disaster Management Act has been criticised for its inadequate project planning and execution. National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) was **nearly invisible during major crises** like the **COVID-19 pandemic**.

Functional Challenges

1. Ineffective integration and prioritisation of disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts- Disaster risk reduction (DRR) **efforts** are **critical for mitigating the impact of disasters**. Comparative studies have highlighted the lack of integration of disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts with the developmental works.

2. Ineffectiveness in addressing Public Health Crises- The Act lacks functional provisions to comprehensively address the relief, rescue and rehabilitation in cases of **epidemics and bioterrorism**.

3. Lack of emphasis on Man-made hazards and Climate change risks- The Act has **not effectively addressed** the systemic and cascading nature of **climate-change related disasters and man-made disasters**.

4. Centralised and Top-Down Functioning- The centralized and top-down functional nature of the Disaster Management Act has often led to the **neglect of local and community-based interventions** crucial for long-term resilience and recovery.

Funding Challenges

1. Inadequate Funding- The allocated funds are insufficient to meet the actual needs during large-scale disasters. This has led to delays in response and recovery.

2. Bureaucratic Delays- The disbursement process prescribed by the DMA has met with bureaucratic hurdles, hindering timely assistance to affected populations.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Revision of key definitions- Section 2 of the Act should be amended to include explicit definitions for 'hazards,' 'prevention,' and 'mitigation.' This will provide consistency and clarity throughout the Act.

2. Inclusion of disaster prevention chapters- Chapters that explicitly address disaster prevention and include comprehensive prevention plans should be introduced and included.

3. Enhanced accountability measures- Judicial oversight to hold officials accountable for their actions under the Act must be enhanced under the Act. This would enhance transparency and effectiveness of the Act.

4. Modernization of early warning systems- The early warning and forecasting clauses must be updated to incorporate modern technologies such as GIS and AI. This would improve prediction accuracy and response in cases of Disaster.

5. Community engagement and policymaker involvement- Community awareness of disaster risks and management strategies should be enhanced. The active engagement of policymakers and stakeholders in supporting and implementing disaster risk reduction and management initiatives, should be prioritised.

6. Special resource allocation- Specific annual budget allocations for disaster management must be designated to ensure adequate funding for Disaster Management.

Adopting these recommendations can transform the Disaster Management Act of 2005 into a more effective tool, promoting a proactive, organized, and successful approach to disaster management in India.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS-3 Disaster Management

India-Qatar Relations- Explained Pointwise

India's relationship with Qatar has evolved into a strategic partnership, marked by significant developments in trade, energy, and security. The recent visit of Qatar's Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, to India in February 2025 underscores the deepening ties, with agreements to double bilateral trade to 28 billion and Qatar's pledge to invest 10 billion in India. This partnership is pivotal for India's energy security, economic growth, and geopolitical influence in West Asia.

Key Highlights of the Recent India-Qatar Bilateral Engagement

Trade Expansion- Both nations have set an ambitious goal to double bilateral trade from \$14 billion to \$28 billion by 2030. India and Qatar have also agreed to double bilateral trade by 2030 and explore a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

Financial & Economic Collaboration- India and Qatar have signed a Revised Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement to prevent fiscal evasion. Further, there will be operationalization of UPI in QNB's Points of Sales in Qatar.

Investment- Qatar has committed to investing \$10 billion in India, focusing on sectors such as infrastructure, technology, manufacturing, food security, logistics, and hospitality.

Security & Counter-Terrorism- Both leaders of India and Qatar have unequivocally condemned terrorism, including cross-border terrorism. Further, there will be strengthening of intelligence sharing, law enforcement collaboration, and cybersecurity measures.

Regional & Global Cooperation: India and Qatar have pledged to work together on UN reforms, particularly the Security Council. Further, there will be strengthening of ties within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with Qatar facilitating India-GCC strategic dialogue.

What is the history of India-Qatar diplomatic relations?



Source- Britannica Encyclopedia

1971	India was among the few countries which recognized Qatar soon after its independence in 1971.
1973	India and Qatar established full diplomatic relations in 1973. Year 2023, marks the 50 years of the bilateral diplomatic relations.

2008	Visit of PM Manmohan Singh to Qatar marked a significant turning point in India-Qatar Relations.
2015	The Emir of Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani visited India in 2015.
2016	PM Narendra Modi visited Qatar in 2016.

What is the significance of India-Qatar Relations?

Political Significance- Qatar's membership in **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** is politically significant for India, especially concerning issues like Kashmir. Also, India needs support of Qatar for **UNSC permanent membership**.

Energy Security- Qatar is the largest supplier of LNG to India. LNG makes up almost **50% of our LNG imports**.

Strong economic and trade ties- India is among the **top four largest export destinations** for Qatar (Qatar exports to India- LNG, LPG, chemicals and petrochemicals, fertilisers, plastics). India is also among the **top three sources of Qatar's imports** (India's key exports to Qatar include cereals, copper articles, iron and steel articles, vegetables, fruits).

Strong Business Presence of Indian Companies- Several Indian Companies like L&T, Wipro, TCS and TechMahindra operate in Qatar.

Large Expatriate Community and Remittances- Around **8 lakh Indian expatriate community** live and work in Qatar. The flow of remittances (**around 750 million dollars**) and safety of Indian expatriate community, makes Qatar vital for India's interest.

Defence and strategic co-operation- India and Qatar have signed a **Defence Cooperation Agreement for stronger defence cooperation**. The maritime relations are further strengthened by **Exercise Zair-Al-Bahr**.

Vibrant Cultural Exchanges- Cultural events organised by community organizations affiliated to the **Indian Cultural Centre (ICC)**. Qatar was a co-sponsor of India's resolution for **declaration of June 21 as International Yoga Day**.

What are the Challenges in the India-Qatar Relations?

Trade Imbalance: India's trade deficit with Qatar remains high, with Qatari exports dominating the trade basket.

Energy Security Dependence: India relies **heavily on Qatar for LNG imports** (over 40% of its total LNG needs). Any geopolitical instability or disruptions in supply chains (such as price hikes or policy changes) could impact India's energy security and economic growth.

Regional Geopolitical Dynamics: The **Israel-Hamas conflict** and **US-Gulf tensions** pose challenges to India's balanced diplomacy.

Diaspora Concerns: Labor rights issues and occasional anti-India narratives in Qatari media require diplomatic attention. **For ex- Kafala System**.

Anti-India Narratives: Some Qatari media outlets and social media influencers have echoed critical narratives about India's internal policies, particularly concerning religious and human rights issues.

What Should be the Way Forward?

Strategic Alignment: Focus on long-term partnerships in energy, technology, and infrastructure.

Regional Stability & Diplomacy: Utilize Qatar's mediation role to navigate conflicts in West Asia and Afghanistan.

Economic Diversification: Reduce trade dependency on LNG by expanding into technology, fintech, and advanced manufacturing.

Institutional Frameworks: Establish joint business forums and investment treaties to facilitate smoother economic cooperation.

Conclusion

The India-Qatar strategic partnership marks a significant milestone in India's West Asia policy, offering immense opportunities for economic growth, energy security, and geopolitical influence. By addressing challenges like trade deficits and diaspora welfare, and leveraging Qatar's mediation role in regional conflicts, India can strengthen its position in West Asia. The partnership, rooted in mutual trust and shared interests, is poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the region and advancing India's global aspirations.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- International Relations

India's Tech Education Problems- Explained Pointwise

India, home to the **third-largest startup ecosystem (DPIIT)** and a **booming IT industry**, is facing a **paradox**—while the **demand for tech talent is surging**, the **quality of tech education in India is declining**. According to recently released **India's Graduate Skill Index 2025** by Mercer-Mettl report there has been a **drop in overall employability from 44.3% in 2023 to 42.6% in 2024**. Similarly, **TeamLease Digital's report** finds that only 45% job seekers are employable in Indian IT-tech sector due to skill crunches. This mismatch between tech education skills and industry requirements raises concerns about India's ability to sustain its digital economy.



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What is the present status of Tech Education in India?

1. Market and Valuation- The EdTech sector is valued at **\$7.5 billion** (2024) and is projected to reach **\$29 billion by 2030**, growing at a CAGR of 25.8%, with over 100 Mn paid users. Skill development, K12, test preparation, and online certification are the fastest growing subsegments of India's edtech sector. This space has five unicorns: PhysicsWallah, LEAD, Eruditus, upGrad, and Vedantu.

2. Declining Quality of Engineering Institution- Of 3,500+ engineering colleges, over **50% face low enrolments** due to poor faculty, outdated curricula, and lack of research infrastructure. Also, **2/3 MTech seats in India's engineering colleges lie vacant** (AICTE Report 2023). NAAC's 2023 assessment found that only 10% of institutions offer tech programs with an 'A+' rating (Academic Bank of Credits, Ministry of Education).

3. Skill Gap and Outdated Curriculum- Indian graduates lack industry-relevant skills, especially in AI, blockchain, and cybersecurity, with only **46% of graduates employable in AI/ML-driven roles** (Mercer-Mettl). Universities still focus on rote learning rather than problem-solving, coding proficiency, and innovation.

4. Limited AI Research and Patents- According to the Stanford AI Index 2024, China produced 4x more AI research papers than India. The US remains the leader in high-impact AI research. India holds <1% of global AI patents, while China leads with 60%.

What is the significance of Tech Education in India?

Driving Economic Growth- The IT sector contributes 8% to GDP, employing 5M+ professionals (NASSCOM 2024). A well-trained tech workforce could add \$1 trillion to India's economy by 2030 (McKinsey 2023).

Boost to Innovation and Startups- India ranks 3rd globally in startups ecosystem, yet only 30% of tech startups survive beyond three years due to lack of expertise.

Enhanced Employability and Global Competitiveness- 2024 WEF Report ranks India 112/130 nations in terms of workforce readiness for Industry 4.0. With the rise of AI-driven automation, tech skills are crucial to prevent large-scale unemployment.

Strengthening National Security- India is facing rising cyber threats, yet there are only 10,000 cybersecurity professionals graduate annually, far below the 1 million demand projected by CERT-IN (2024). Improved tech education will lead to strengthening of national security.

Increased Demand of tech professionals- Global capability centers (GCCs) and non-tech sectors like BFSI, communication, media and technology, retail and consumer business, life sciences and healthcare, engineering research and development, and energy and resources, have expanded entry-level hiring of tech professionals.

What are the challenges in tech education in India?

1. Doctoral Deficit- Despite producing the **world's second-highest number of engineering graduates**, **India lags behind the US and China in doctoral programmes**. The numbers reveal a stark disparity, as India has only one-third of the number of PhD holders compared to the US and one-fifth compared to China. This shortage at the advanced research level directly impacts innovation and intellectual property creation.

2. Industry-Academia Gap- Only **7% of colleges have strong industry tie-ups** (AICTE 2023). Internship opportunities in tech sector remains scarce.

3. Faculty Shortage and Quality of Teaching- **35% of engineering faculty positions are vacant** (AICTE 2024), with many professors lacking industry experience.

4. Brain Drain and Migration of Tech Talent- Over 50,000 Indian engineers migrate annually to the US, Canada, and Europe for better opportunities (MEITY Report 2023). India struggles to retain top talent due to low salaries, research limitations, and bureaucratic hurdles.

5. Limited Focus on Emerging Technologies- Only 15% of universities offer courses in AI, blockchain, and quantum computing (AICTE 2024). While DeepSeek-V2 and GPT-4 are globally competitive, India has no major homegrown generative AI product at scale.

6. Digital Divide in Tech Education- Rural students struggle with poor internet access and limited exposure to coding and IT skills. Only 18% of government schools offer basic computer education (ASER Report 2023).

What steps have been taken for reforming the tech education landscape of India?

Policy Initiatives & Implementation

1. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020- Introduction of coding from Class 6, multiple entry-exit options in higher education with focus on experiential learning.

2. Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH)- A comprehensive digital platform designed to synergize and transform the skills, education, employment, and entrepreneurship landscape in India.

3. Development of AI-Powered Educational Platforms- Collaborations between the government, educational institutions, and tech companies have led to the creation of AI-powered platforms such as DIKSHA, NISHTHA Online, and SWAYAM.

Infrastructure Development

1. Smart India Hackathon- Engaged 2M+ students, solved 500+ real-world problems, and generated 200+ startup ideas since 2017.

2. Technology Innovation Hubs- Under the NM-ICPS, 25 Technology Innovation Hubs (TIHs) have been established in reputed institutes across the country and each TIH has been assigned a Technology Vertical in the areas of advanced technologies.

Industry-Academia Partnerships

1. Future Skills PRIME- NASSCOM-Meity partnership aimed at making India a Digital Talent Nation.

2. Infosys Springboard- Infosys launched this platform to provide free online courses in programming, AI, and data science to students and professionals.

What should be the Way Forward?

1. Industry-Aligned Curriculum and Skilling Initiatives-

- Mandating AI, data science, and cloud computing as part of core engineering courses.
- Collaborations with tech giants like Google, Microsoft, and TCS for updated course modules and certifications.
- Government programs like Skill India and NASSCOM's FutureSkills Prime should be scaled up.

2. Strengthening Research and Innovation-

- Increasing R&D spending from 0.7% to 2% of GDP to match global standards.
- Encouraging tech startups in universities with dedicated incubators.
- Incentivizing patent filings through subsidies and mentorship programs.

3. Digital Infrastructure and Accessibility- Expanding high-speed internet and smart classrooms in rural India. Free or subsidized coding courses and e-learning platforms for underserved students.

4. Faculty Development and International Collaboration- Upgrading faculty training programs with industry exposure. Hiring foreign professors and fostering global university tie-ups.

5. Bridging the Gender Gap in STEM- Scholarships and mentorship programs for women in tech. Mandatory diversity policies in educational institutions.

6. Retaining Indian Talent- Higher salaries, tax incentives, and research grants to keep top engineers in India. Creating more AI & deep-tech job opportunities to reduce brain drain.

India stands at a critical juncture—either tech education becomes a bottleneck or a launchpad for global leadership. By reforming curricula, fostering industry-academia collaboration, and investing in emerging technologies, India can position itself as a leader in innovation and economic growth. The futureDESIGN, futureLABS, and futureSKILLS strategy aligns with India's vision for Viksit Bharat 2047, making technology the driving force for the nation's future.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Issues Related to Education

Ragging in India – Challenges & Measures Explained Pointwise

Ragging in educational institutions has been a persistent issue in India, often resulting in severe physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students. Despite strict legal provisions and Supreme Court directives, incidents of ragging continue to occur, as highlighted by the **recent cases in Kerala's Government College of Nursing, Kottayam**, and Government College, Karyavattom, Thiruvananthapuram. This article explores the issue of ragging, its impact, reasons for its persistence, and measures to eradicate it effectively. **Ragging in India**



Source- The Indian Express

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What is the definition of Ragging?

The Supreme Court of India, in the **Vishwa Jagriti Mission v. Central Government (2001) case**, defined ragging as any act that:

- Involves disorderly conduct, spoken or written words that tease or treat a fresher/junior rudely.
- Displays **rowdy or undisciplined behavior** causing annoyance, hardship, or psychological harm.
- **Instills fear or apprehension** in freshers/juniors.
- Forces students to perform acts they wouldn't normally do, leading to shame or embarrassment.
- Adversely affects the physical or mental well-being of students.

Ragging can take many forms, including physical, psychological, sexual, or verbal abuse, often leading to severe consequences such as depression, anxiety, and even suicides.

What are the recent incidents of ragging and related statistics?

Despite efforts to curb ragging, incidents continue to be reported across the country. Some concerning statistics include:

Kerala Case (2025)	A video from a Government Nursing College in Kottayam showed a student being tied and assaulted, highlighting the persistent issue of ragging.
UGC Helpline Data (2009-2023)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Over 8,000 ragging complaints were logged. 2. Complaints increased by 208% from 2012 (358 complaints) to 2022 (1,103 complaints). 3. 78 student deaths allegedly due to ragging between 2012 and 2023.
State-wise Data	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Highest student deaths: Maharashtra (10), Uttar Pradesh & Tamil Nadu (7 each), Telangana (6), Andhra Pradesh (5), Madhya Pradesh (4). 2. Highest complaints: Uttar Pradesh (1,202), Madhya Pradesh (795), West Bengal (728), Odisha (517), Bihar (476), Maharashtra (393).
Institutions with most complaints	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Banaras Hindu University (BHU) – 72 complaints. 2. Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology, Bhopal – 53 complaints. 3. MKCG Medical College, Berhampur – 49 complaints.

What are the consequences of Ragging?

1. Impact on Victims

- **Physical harm:** Cases of injuries, disabilities, and even deaths due to violent ragging.
- **Psychological trauma:** Victims suffer from anxiety, depression and suicidal tendencies.
- **Academic disruption:** Fear of harassment leads to loss of focus, absenteeism, and declining performance.
- **Health issues:** Stress-induced problems like insomnia, eating disorders, and substance abuse.

2. Legal consequences for Perpetrators:

- **Criminal Charges:** Ragging is punishable under various IPC sections, including:
 - Section 323 – Causing hurt

- Section 506 – Criminal intimidation
- Section 509 – Outraging modesty
- Section 306 – Abetment of suicide (in extreme cases)
- **Academic Penalties:** Suspension, expulsion, blacklisting from institutions, and loss of scholarships.
- **Career Damage:** Criminal records can lead to disqualification from government jobs and private employment opportunities.

3. Impact on Educational Institutions

- **Loss of reputation:** Institutions known for ragging face negative media attention and declining admissions.
- **UGC & Government Action:** Colleges failing to curb ragging risk funding cuts, de-recognition, and legal action under UGC Clause 9.4.
- **Campus environment:** A culture of fear and violence disrupts learning and student well-being.

4. Impact on Parents & Society

- **Emotional & Financial Burden:** Parents of victims suffer mental distress and financial hardships due to medical and legal expenses.
- **Erosion of Trust:** Society loses faith in educational institutions as safe spaces, leading to increased calls for strict anti-ragging laws.

What are the challenges in combating Ragging?

1. Weak Enforcement of Regulations– Despite Supreme Court directives and UGC regulations, enforcement remains ineffective.

- **Clause 9.4 of the UGC Regulations** allows action against non-compliant institutions, yet it has never been enforced since 2009.
- Institutional apathy leads to ragging complaints being dismissed as trivial conflicts.

2. Lack of awareness and sensitization

- Many seniors are unaware of the severe psychological and legal consequences of ragging.
- Institutions fail to conduct effective orientation programs to educate students on the dangers of ragging.

3. Fear of reporting

- Victims hesitate to report due to fear of retaliation from seniors.
- Social stigma discourages victims from speaking out, as they fear being labeled weak.

4. Ineffective grievance redressal

- Many anti-ragging committees exist only in name, lacking real authority or action.
- Complaints are often ignored or not resolved in a timely manner.

5. Inadequate monitoring & grievance mechanisms

- Poor CCTV surveillance and lack of digital complaint tracking reduce transparency and accountability.
- Inefficiencies in anti-ragging helplines result in many cases going unreported or unresolved.

6. Cultural Acceptance

- **“Initiation Ritual” Mindset:** Many seniors perceive ragging as a tradition to bond with juniors.
- **Peer Pressure:** A cycle of abuse continues as former victims impose the same experiences on newcomers.

What are the committees and legal framework against Ragging in India?

- 1. Raghavan Committee (2007)**- Recommended mandatory anti-ragging affidavits, FIR filing, disciplinary actions, and sensitization programs.
- 2. Unny Committee (1999)**- Emphasized student safety, institutional accountability, and grievance redressal.
- 3. UGC Regulations (2009)**- Allowed strict penalties for institutions failing to prevent ragging. These regulations were based on the recommendations of the Raghavan Committee.
- 4. Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**- New criminal provisions to address ragging under wrongful restraint, criminal intimidation, and assault.
- 5. State-Specific Anti-Ragging Laws**- Kerala (1998), Maharashtra (1999), Andhra Pradesh (1997), Assam (1998) have strict anti-ragging laws.
- 6. Information Technology (IT) Act (2000):** Cyber ragging (e.g., online harassment or bullying) can be prosecuted under the IT Act. Section 66A (now repealed) and **Section 67** (publishing obscene material) were used to address online ragging.

Supreme Court guidelines on Ragging

Vishwa Jagriti Mission v. Central Govt (2001): The Supreme Court mandated strict anti-ragging measures in educational institutions.

Institutional Responsibilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set up Anti-Ragging Committees & Squads for surprise checks and complaint redressal. 2. File FIR within 24 hours of a confirmed ragging incident. 3. Display anti-ragging guidelines prominently on websites and campuses. 4. Make students submit affidavits annually pledging not to engage in ragging.
Legal & Administrative Measures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish UGC's 24×7 Anti-Ragging Helpline (1800-180-5522). 2. Impose monetary fines, rustication, and debarment from exams for offenders. 3. Require mandatory sensitization programs for students and faculty.

What is the way forward?

1. Strengthening legal & institutional framework

- Invoke UGC Clause 9.4 against non-compliant institutions.
- Fast-track trials and strict punishment for offenders.

2. Technology-driven monitoring

- Install AI-based CCTVs in hostels and campuses.
- Create anonymous digital complaint tracking systems.

3. Awareness & Behavioral change

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- Conduct mandatory anti-ragging workshops.
- Implement student mentorship programs to foster inclusivity.

4. Strengthening reporting mechanisms

- Improve UGC helpline accessibility.
- Establish anonymous online reporting portals with direct police alerts.

5. Community and peer involvement:

- Mobilize senior students to act as mentors and promote a positive campus culture.
- Engage parents and local communities in anti-ragging initiatives.

Conclusion

Despite strong laws and Supreme Court guidelines, ragging continues to plague India's education system. A multi-pronged approach involving legal action, institutional reforms, technology integration, and cultural change is essential. Strict enforcement and student-led initiatives can create a safe and inclusive academic environment, free from the menace of ragging.

Read more– [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS2– Governance- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education

Telangana Tunnel Collapse- Explained Pointwise

Eight workers have been trapped inside the collapsed **Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel** in Telangana's Nagarkurnool district. The incident occurred when a **three-meter section of the tunnel's roof collapsed** during maintenance work to repair a leak. Out of the 70 workers present, most managed to escape, but eight individuals remain unaccounted for. **Telangana Tunnel Collapse**

The rescue mission faces **significant challenges due to the accumulation of water and silt in the tunnel**, with approximately 200 meters filled with debris. Specialized teams of the Indian Army, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), and a group of 'rat miners' from Uttarakhand have been deployed to assist in the rescue operations.



Source- Indian Express

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What is the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel? What are the key features of the SLBC tunnel?

The Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel is a **crucial irrigation project** in Telangana. It is designed to **supply water from the Krishna River** to **drought-prone areas** in the **Nalgonda** and **Mahbubnagar districts**. It is part of the larger Srisailem Lift Irrigation Scheme, which aims to improve water accessibility for agriculture and drinking purposes.

Key Features of the SLBC Tunnel:

- a. Length:** The tunnel is approximately 50 km long. It is one of the longest tunnels in India for irrigation.
- b. Purpose:** It has been designed to carry water from the Srisailem Reservoir to regions that face chronic water shortages.
- c. Location:** The tunnel runs through the Nallamala Hills in Nagarkurnool district, Telangana.

The project has faced multiple delays since its inception, primarily due to geological challenges, financial constraints, and technical difficulties.

What are the possible reasons behind the Telangana Tunnel Collapse?

- 1. Weak Geological Conditions-** The tunnel passes through the Nallamala Hills, which consist of **fragile rock formations**. Continuous exposure to high water pressure may have weakened the rock structure over time. The presence of **fault lines** or **loose rock formations** made the tunnel section vulnerable to collapse.
- 2. Water Seepage and Leakage-** According to reports, the maintenance work was being carried out to fix a leak. This indicates **pre-existing structural weaknesses** due to **water seepage** and **leakage**.
- 3. Poor Maintenance and Delayed Repairs-** The SLBC tunnel has been under construction for over two decades, and has been facing multiple delays. **Lack of timely inspections** and **maintenance** could have allowed cracks and weak spots to go unnoticed.
- 4. Structural Instability-** The caving in of 3-meter section of the tunnel roof suggests **weak concrete reinforcement** and **erosion of support structures**.
- 5. Human and Technical Factors-** Lack of real-time monitoring for detecting early warning signs like vibrations or minor cracks, further **exacerbated the risk of tunnel collapse**.

What are the methods of Tunnel Excavation used in India?

In India, two methods of Tunnel Excavation are employed-the drill and blast method (DBM), and tunnel-boring machines (TBMs).

Techniques	Method of Excavation	Use and Advantages
Tunnel-boring machines (TBMs)	TBMs bore the rock from the front using a rotating head. The portion of the excavated tunnel is supported by installing precast concrete segments.	TBMs are used when the rock cover is up to 400 metres tall . TBM method was used for construction of tunnels for the Delhi Metro.
Drill and Blast Method (DBM)	DBM involves drilling holes into the rock and loading them with explosives. When the explosives are detonated, the rock breaks apart.	DBM method is used for mountains which are 1000-1200m high . DBM is used for tunnel

		construction in the Himalayas, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttarakhand.
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TBM method is much safer but expensive, when compared with the DBM method.

What are the initiatives taken for ensuring safe tunnel construction mechanism in India?

- 1. Creation of Tunnel Zone department in the MoRTH-** A tunnel zone department has been created in the Ministry with a mandate to build the capacity for excellence in tunnelling, preparation of guideline on design and construction of tunnel.
- 2. Constitution of Expert Committee on Tunnel-** This expert committee has been created for resolving technical issues which arise in implementation of Tunnel Projects in the country.
- 3. Indian Standard Code for Tunnel Construction-** The Indian Standard Codes-**IS 15026 (2002)** and **IS 4756 (1978)** have been issued for tunnel Construction. This code prescribes the guidelines for tunnel design, lighting and ventilation.
- 4. IRC Codes for Tunnels-** **IRC code 2019 for tunnels** is being implemented to ensure the road tunnels which are constructed, are as per the international standards.
- 5. Implementation of other standard codes in tunnel construction-** Integrated Tunnel Control Systems (ITCS), The Work in Compressed Air Regulations 1996, Emergency Evacuation and Rescue Plans for tunnels & RDSO (Research Designs and Standards Organisation) guidelines must be properly implemented.
- 6. International Tunnelling and Underground Space Association safety practices in tunnel construction-** According to these guidelines on the safety practices in tunnel construction, particular attention should be given to the means of escape in an emergency situation like **specific escape routes marked by signs** and **contingency plan**.

What should be the way forward to ensure safe tunnel construction?

- 1. Detailed geotechnical studies-** Currently, in India the design and construction of a tunnel project is done simultaneously. More detailed geotechnical studies like the **petrographic analysis, needs to be done to incorporate in the design and the construction of the tunnel project**.
- 2. Regular monitoring by specialist geologist-** Regular site visits of an independent specialist geologist must be conducted to check for **probable failures** and to **determine the rock's stand-up time**. (Rock-stand up time- It is the duration for which a rock can remain stable without any support. Support is given to the rock within its stand-up time.)
- 3. Supports provided to the tunnel must be tested for adequacy-** Supports of the tunnel like **shotcrete** (sprayed concrete that works as a membrane to prevent parts of the rock from falling), **rock bolt** (a long anchor bolt for stabilising rock excavations), **steel ribs** and **tunnel pipe umbrella** need to be properly tested for its adequacy to prevent tunnel collapse.
- 4. Arrangements for safe evacuation in case of collapse-** There must be **deployment of NDRF personnel & proper safety equipments** to ensure safe evacuation in case of any mishap. The construction companies must submit a **safety plan** along with the bid for the projects.

Tunnel-building technology is around 200 years old and, if executed properly, tunnels aren't dangerous.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Disaster Management

Right to Information Act- Explained Pointwise

The introduction of the Right to Information (RTI) Act was a landmark moment for Indian democracy, as it empowered citizens to seek transparency from the government. The Act was seen as a tool to curb corruption and enhance public accountability. However, despite its strong legal framework, the Act has failed to meet expectations, and democracy remains largely unaffected.



Source- The Daily Guardian

What is Right to Information? What is the Philosophical basis of the Right to Information?

Right to Information- The right to information is the right which ensures that the **public become 'citizens' rather than becoming 'subjects'** in a democratic state, by having unhindered access to the flow of information regarding the functioning of the different arms of the government- legislature, executive and judiciary.

Philosophical Basis of Right to Information- The **philosophical basis** of Right to Information can be found in the **thoughts of Aristotle**. According to Aristotle, **Liberty and equality**, which are the foundational values of Democracy, **can be attained only by the citizen's unhindered right to attain information about the functioning of the government**. The information available to each person and society at large shapes individual personality, political and social identity, and economic capability.

Recognition in International Law-

a. Recognised as Foundational Principle of UN- The United Nations (UN) recognised this right from the start, in 1946. The General Assembly resolved that **Freedom of Information is a fundamental human right** and the **touchstone for all freedoms** to which the United Nations is consecrated.

b. Recognition in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights- The right to Information was made a legally binding obligation after its affirmation in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

As a result, the right to access information has been **firmly enshrined in international human rights law**.

What is the history of the constitutional recognition of Right to Information in India?

The Right to information **has not been mentioned explicitly** as a fundamental right in the constitution. SC has held **Right to Information (RTI) to be a derivative of Article 19 (1) (a) which grants the freedom of speech and expression**. RTI is also linked to the Indian constitution's Right to Life and Personal Liberty (Article 21).

State of U.P. v Raj Narain (1975)	SC held that the right is implicit in the right to freedom of speech and expression , explicitly guaranteed in Article 19 of the Indian Constitution.
S.P. Gupta v. President of India (1982)	SC asserted the right of the people to know about every public act and the details of every public transaction undertaken by public functionaries.
People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India case	SC elevated the status of right to information to a human right and linked it to right to life enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution.

Legislative Recognition- The RTI movement by **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS)**, and judicial emphasis on RTI, compelled the Parliament to enact the **Right to Information Act in 2005**.

RTI Act 2005 aims to provide a practical regime for citizens to obtain information from public authorities, as well as to promote transparency and accountability in the work of all public authorities.

What is the significance of the Right to information Act?

1. Exposing corruption- RTI has been used as a weapon to expose the issues of corruption, nepotism and favouritism in India. **For ex- CWG scam, coal allocation scams were exposed** through the use of this **right exercised under the RTI Act, 2005**.

2. Ensuring transparency in functioning of the executive- The RTI Act has been used to enhance the transparency in the functioning of different government departments. **For ex- Public Distribution System transparency in UP**.

3. Strengthening of Democracy- The has provided the citizens the **right to ask questions** and **the right to get answers from the public authorities**. This has strengthened democracy in India through active participation of the public.

4. Change in Govt work culture from secrecy to openness- The use of the Right to Information Act has mandated officials in every office to change their attitude and duty from **one of secrecy to one of sharing and openness**. **For ex- Maintenance of public records**.

5. Teeth to judiciary to invalidate laws encroaching fundamental rights- The Act has given more teeth to judiciary to invalidate laws which promote veil of secrecy and encroach fundamental rights. **For ex- Recent invalidation of the Electoral Bonds scheme which promoted anonymity in political funding**, on the grounds of violation of the right to information.

What are the challenges with the Right to Information Act?

1. Misuse of the Act- Sometimes the different types of information sought has no public interest and has been used to misuse the law and harass the public authorities. **For ex- Attainment of publicity by filing RTI and a vindictive tool** to harass or pressurize the public authority.

2. RTI vs Official Secrets- There are certain Govt functions which demand a veil of secrecy for protection of national interest and maintenance of public order. **For ex- Demand of Right to information about Rafael Aircraft procurement**, which could have led to the public availability of information about its specifications. This could be utilised by hostile neighbours to counter the advantages.

3. RTI vs Right to Privacy- RTI and the right to privacy conflicting to each other in certain cases. This conflict has been used to draft certain contentious legislations and schemes. **For ex- Govt defence of the denial of information in the electoral bonds scheme on the grounds of protection of donor's privacy.**

4. Low awareness level- Awareness level about this right is low, especially among the **disadvantaged communities** such as **women rural population, OBC/SC/ST population.**

5. Executive's apathy- The right has been subjected to executive's apathy in recent times. **For ex- The RTI Amendment Act 2019, which downgraded the powers and position of the CICs and ICs.**

6. Non- application on Political Parties- The right cannot be exercised to seek information from the political parties. Political parties are the pillars of Indian democracy. **The non- application of the RTI on political parties pose a grave threat to Indian democratic setup.**

7. Bureaucratic Control- Most Information Commissioners are **retired bureaucrats** who **resist sharing power with citizens.** They treat their roles as post-retirement benefits.

8. Low Case Disposal Rate- High Court judges dispose of over 2,500 cases per year, but RTI commissioners clear fewer cases. They should ideally handle over 5,000 cases annually.

9. Long Delays- The RTI Act mandates 30 days to provide information, but commissions have no time limit, leading to backlogs over a year.

10. Weak Enforcement- Commissioners rarely use penalties against officials who deny information.

How have the Supreme Court rulings changed the RTI Act?

CBSE vs Aditya Bandopadhyay- In 2011, the Supreme Court ruled in *CBSE vs Aditya Bandopadhyay* that RTI should not burden the administration. It said indiscriminate RTI requests could slow governance. According to critics, this decision has discouraged information sharing and painted RTI users as troublemakers.

Girish Ramchandra Deshpande vs CIC- In 2012, the Supreme Court ruled in *Girish Ramchandra Deshpande vs CIC* that personal information could be denied under Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act. According to critics, the Court ignored the part of the law that required officials to prove why the information should be denied. This ruling became a precedent, making it easier to reject RTI requests.

What should be the way forward?

1. Re-affirmation of the right to information as a cardinal virtue of democracy- The SC through its verdicts, **like in the case of electoral bonds**, must re-affirm the right of information as a cardinal virtue of democracy.

2. Making the information available in local languages- The information associated with the RTI Act and its functioning **must be made available in the local language**, considering the diverse nature of our country.

3. Education about the right- Education about the right to know **should be made mandatory at the school level in our new education policy** to develop a sense of responsibility and vigilant citizenship in the forthcoming generation.

4. Making RTI applicable on Political parties- The parliament **must bring the Political parties under the ambit of RTI** to ensure proper functioning of the Great Indian democracy.

5. Code of Conduct- A code of conduct must be evolved for the Central and State Information Commissioners. It is imperative for the commissioners to keep a strict distance from government heads and officialdom.

The Supreme Court's guidelines in *DDA vs Skipper Construction (P) Ltd* should be followed in letter and spirit. The SC ruled that (a) High Courts must resist the temptation to exercise their writ jurisdiction in order to correct errors made by the SICs/CICs; (b) If the High Court quashes a CIC/SIC order, it must categorically find that the order was without jurisdiction or palpably erroneous.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Governance

Steps to Reclaiming India's Cooperative Dream- Explained Pointwise

India's cooperative movement, dating back to the early 20th century, was designed to democratize credit, empower rural populations, and counter exploitative intermediaries. Over time, cooperatives have played a crucial role in agricultural credit, dairy production, and rural marketing. In recent times, the government has placing immense importance on cooperative driven development.



Figure 1. Source- Cornell Cooperative Enterprise Programme

What is the present status of Cooperative Sector in India? What have been the government steps in this regard?

As per the Economic Survey 2022-23, India has over **8.5 lakh cooperative societies**, covering around **30 crore members**, with PACS forming the backbone of the rural credit system. There are more than **65000 functional Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) across country**. The government's plan to establish two lakh PACS and has taken several measures for the same:

1. New Model Bylaws- The government through the new model

bylaws has allowed PACS to expand beyond traditional territories, promoting modernization and diversification.

2. Phased Rollout of PACS- The government has been implementing PACS in two phases

Phase 1: Establishment of 32,750 cooperatives with NABARD, 46,000 dairy cooperatives with NDDDB, and 5,500 fishery cooperatives with NFDB.

Phase 2: Expansion to cover 15,000 new villages.

3. Liquidation of Defunct PACS- The government has been establishing SOPs to **replace non-functional cooperatives**, unlocking opportunities in 15,000 new villages.

4. Inclusivity Focus- There has been an **explicit emphasis** on the participation of women, Dalits, and tribals, fostering social and economic equity.

5. Global Supply Chain Integration- Leveraging PACS for forward and backward linkages, addressing past limitations in market access and competitiveness.

6. Digital Integration- Initiatives like **micro-ATMs** and **RuPay Kisan Credit Cards** have been introduced to modernize PACS operations. NABARD, NDDDB, and NFDB have been actively involved in the establishment of cooperatives in their respective sectors.

7. Alignment with Budget 2023-24- The government has allocated Rs.900 crore to strengthen PACS under the Cooperative Development Fund.

What is the Significance of Cooperative Sector in India?

1. Grassroots Empowerment- By democratizing credit and resources, PACS can empower rural populations and reduce dependency on intermediaries.

2. Rural Development- Integration of Cooperatives into global supply chains can enhance market competitiveness and boost farmer incomes.

3. Promoting Financial Inclusion- PACS serve as the first point of credit access for small and marginal farmers. PACS account for 41 % of the KCC loans given by all entities in the Country and 95 % of these KCC loans through PACS are to the Small and Marginal farmers.

4. Social Equity- Inclusivity measures can foster social harmony and economic equity among marginalized groups.

5. Agricultural Productivity- PACS can play a pivotal role in enhancing agricultural productivity through better credit access and value-added services.

What are the Challenges with the cooperative sector in India?

1. Growing Political Interference- Many cooperatives have become vote banks, which are being controlled by local elites, which have sidelined marginal farmers and labourers.

2. Inefficient Management- Lack of professional governance has led to financial mismanagement and operational failures.

3. Lack of financial viability and sustainability- Excessive reliance on government subsidies have made the cooperatives economically fragile and uncompetitive. Many PACS struggle with high NPAs due to poor loan recovery mechanisms and inadequate risk assessment.

4. Operational Inefficiency- Slow adoption of technology, including digital platforms for loan processing and record-keeping, have reduced the operational efficiency of cooperatives.

5. Limited Inclusivity- Women, Dalits, and tribal communities have been historically excluded from decision-making roles in the cooperatives.

6. Fragmented Approach- Most cooperatives remain sector-specific, failing to integrate into value chains, reducing market efficiency.

What should be the Way Forward?

1. Data-Driven Approach- Conduct comprehensive surveys to identify areas where PACS are most needed, thereby optimizing resource allocation.

2. Grassroots Participation- Involve local communities in decision-making to foster ownership and accountability.

3. Public-Private Partnerships- Collaborate with the private sector to access modern technology and global markets.

4. Policy Consistency- Ensure consistent policy implementation across states with cooperation between central and state governments.

5. Focus on Value Addition- Expand PACS activities to include food processing, cold storage, and export facilitation.

6. Professionalization of Management- Capacity-building programs must impart financial literacy and modern management skills.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Governance

Status of Nuclear Energy in India- Explained Pointwise

Nuclear energy has emerged as a **cornerstone** of India's quest for energy security, sustainable development, and **technological leadership**. With a growing population and rapid industrialization, India's energy demand is projected to **double by 2040**. Nuclear energy, with its low carbon footprint and high energy density, offers a viable solution to meet this demand while aligning with global climate goals. India's **three-stage nuclear program**, centered on uranium, plutonium, and thorium, is a testament to its long-term vision for energy independence. From powering homes to propelling submarines and advancing space exploration, nuclear energy is integral to India's strategic, economic, and scientific aspirations.



Status of Nuclear Energy in India

What is the present status of Nuclear Energy in India?

Civil Nuclear Power	<p>Number of Operational Nuclear Power Plants- India has 22 operational nuclear reactors with a total installed capacity of 7,480 MW (as of 2024).</p> <p>New Nuclear Projects- Several new reactors are under construction, including Kudankulam (Units 3-6), Gorakhpur Haryana Anu Vidyut Pariyojana, and Kaiga Units 5 & 6, expected to add nearly 7,000 MW in the next decade which will add 8,000 MWe by 2031.</p> <p>Indigenous Reactor Technology- India has developed Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs), Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR), and is progressing towards thorium-based Advanced Heavy Water Reactor (AHWR).</p>
Nuclear in Defense	<p>Nuclear-Powered Submarines- India has developed INS Arihant, the country's first indigenous nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN), and is working on INS Arighat and additional units.</p> <p>Nuclear-Capable Missiles- India has a range of nuclear-capable missiles, including Agni (I-V), Prithvi, and K-15 (Sagarika).</p> <p>Nuclear Research and Collaborations- India collaborates with the IAEA, Russia (Rosatom), and the US (123 Agreement) for nuclear technology exchange, while advancing indigenous research at BARC, IGCAR, and NPCIL.</p>
Technologies in Use and Development	<p>PHWRs- The backbone of India's nuclear program, using natural uranium as fuel.</p> <p>Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs)- The 500 MWe Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) is under development, aiming to use plutonium and thorium for fuel.</p> <p>Molten Salt Reactors (MSRs)- It is still in the research phase, focusing on thorium utilization.</p>

	Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) - These reactors are being explored for deployment at retiring coal plant sites.
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What is the significance and importance of Nuclear Energy?

- 1. Energy Security**- The three-stage nuclear program aims to utilize thorium, ensuring long-term energy independence. Nuclear power accounts for about **3% of India's electricity generation** but is targeted to reach **22% by 2050**.
- 2. Clean Energy**- Nuclear power is a low-carbon energy source, contributing to **India's Net Zero by 2070 goal**. It complements renewable energy by providing base-load power, ensuring grid stability.
- 3. Space Exploration**- Nuclear energy powers **radioisotope thermoelectric generators** (RTGs) for deep-space missions, such as Chandrayaan and Mangalyaan.
- 4. Defence**- Nuclear-powered submarines and missiles enhance India's strategic deterrence and second-strike capability. Indigenous development of nuclear reactors and weapons reduces dependency on foreign technology.
- 5. Medical Advancements**- BARC-developed radiopharmaceuticals aid in cancer treatment, with India producing over **50 radioisotopes for medical use**.
- 6. Food Preservation**- Nuclear technology enhances food irradiation, increasing shelf-life and preventing spoilage.

What have been the government schemes for the promotion of Nuclear Energy?

Three-Stage Nuclear Program	Stage 1: PHWRs using natural uranium. Stage 2: Fast Breeder Reactors using plutonium and thorium. Stage 3: Thorium-based reactors for sustainable energy.
Bharat Small Reactors (BSR)	It aims to deploy small modular reactors in collaboration with the private sector.
International Collaborations	Indo-US Nuclear Deal - Facilitated access to global uranium markets and advanced technologies. Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreements - Signed with Russia, France, USA, Japan, and others for fuel supply and technology transfer. Nuclear Insurance Pool (2016) - Mitigates risks associated with nuclear energy projects.

What are the Challenges associated with Nuclear Energy?

1. Technological and Infrastructure Challenges

- a. High Initial Costs**- Nuclear plants require significant capital investment compared to coal or renewables.
- b. Limited Indigenous Uranium Supply**- Dependence on imports hinders energy security.
- c. Delayed Project Completions**- Kudankulam and PFBR projects have faced repeated delays.

2. Safety and Environmental Concerns

- a. Radiation Risks**- Safety concerns post-Fukushima impact public perception.
- b. Nuclear Waste Management**- India lacks robust long-term nuclear waste disposal mechanisms.

3. Regulatory and Political Challenges

Public Opposition- Protests in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have stalled nuclear projects.

Policy Uncertainty- Frequent changes in regulations delay private sector participation.

4. Geopolitical Constraints

NSG Membership Roadblock- India's non-signatory status to the NPT limits access to advanced nuclear technologies.

Global Uranium Market Volatility- Prices and supply chain disruptions affect India's nuclear fuel procurement.

What should be the Way Forward?

1. Accelerate Thorium-Based Reactors- Given India's vast thorium reserves, fast-tracking **AHWR deployment** is crucial for the growth of nuclear energy.

2. Enhancing Private Sector Involvement- Allowing greater participation of companies like **L&T, Tata, and Reliance** in nuclear infrastructure can boost innovation.

3. Expanding Public Awareness and Transparency- Addressing misconceptions through public engagement can improve acceptance.

4. Strengthening Global Collaborations- Expanding partnerships with **France, Russia, and the US** for technology exchange and uranium supply.

5. Developing Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)- Investing in **indigenous SMR designs** can complement large nuclear plants.

6. Focus on Nuclear Waste Management- Setting up **deep geological repositories** for spent nuclear fuel.

7. Leveraging AI and Digital Tools- Integrating **AI-driven safety systems** and predictive maintenance can enhance reactor efficiency.

India's nuclear energy program is not just about powering homes; it is about powering the nation's aspirations. From ensuring energy security to advancing space exploration and strengthening national defence, nuclear energy is a strategic asset for India. The journey from uranium to thorium symbolizes India's transition from energy dependence to energy independence. With bold initiatives, technological innovation, and strategic collaborations, India is poised to harness the full potential of nuclear energy. As the world moves toward a low-carbon future, India's nuclear energy program stands as a beacon of sustainable development and technological leadership. The dream of "Viksit Bharat" is not just a vision; it is a mission powered by the atom.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Science and Technology

Delimitation Exercise in India: Balancing Democracy and Federalism- Explained Pointwise

The recent spat between the Centre and Tamil Nadu over delimitation has again opened up one of the most crucial debates of democracy- **the question of representation**. The **last delimitation happened in 1975**, after which Indira Gandhi put a freeze until 2000. A year later, Parliament again froze the number of members of the Lok Sabha and state assemblies till 2026. The delimitation of constituencies for the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies is to be carried out on the basis of the **first Census after 2026**. Due to this inordinate delay, several issues related to democracy, demography and federalism await the fifth delimitation exercise.



What is Delimitation? What is the constitutional status behind Delimitation in India?

Delimitation refers to the process of **redrawing the boundaries of electoral constituencies** to ensure **fair representation** based on **population changes**.

Delimitation Commission- The Delimitation Commission is a statutory body responsible for determining the boundaries of various constituencies in the country for the purpose of elections. It is governed by the **Delimitation Act, 2002** and is conducted by the Delimitation Commission under **Articles 82** and **170** of the Indian Constitution. The objective is to provide equitable representation to all regions while maintaining the principle of **one person, one vote**.

What is the significance of Delimitation Exercise in India?

1. Political Representation and Electoral Fairness- Ensures democratic legitimacy through equitable distribution of seats in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. **E.g.** The 2002 Delimitation Commission led to a **better voter-per-MP ratio in urban and rural areas** and prevented malapportionment, ensuring each MP represents roughly the same number of citizens.

2. Upholding Democracy- The Reduces gerrymandering (political manipulation of electoral district boundaries to advantage a party, group, or socioeconomic class within the constituency) , ensuring fair electoral contests. **E.g.** Supreme Court in **Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India (2006)** upheld the importance of delimitation for fair democracy.

3. Socio-Economic Equity- The Delimitation Exercise enhances representation for marginalized communities and Scheduled Tribes. **E.g.** The J&K Delimitation Commission **allocated more seats to Jammu** to address past disparities.

4. Strengthening of Federalism- The Delimitation process ensures equitable representation among states, balancing national unity with regional autonomy. **E.g.** The **42nd Amendment's population freeze prevented southern states with lower population growth from losing representation**, thereby upholding the spirit of cooperative federalism, crucial for India's unity.

5. Administrative Efficiency- The Delimitation exercise ensures a manageable voter-to-representative ratio, aiding governance. **E.g.** **Mumbai and Bengaluru saw improved electoral administration post the 2002 exercise.**

6. Electoral Integrity and Governance- The Delimitation process aligns representation with new demographic realities, as seen in global examples like the **UK Boundary Commission**.

What are the concerns associated with Delimitation Exercise?

1. Population vs. Development- Southern states argue that delimitation based solely on population would penalize them for successful family planning and economic development. **E.g.** **Tamil Nadu's fertility rate is 1.6**, while **Bihar's is 3.0**.

2. Federalism at Risk- States with low population growth may feel politically marginalized, leading to North-South divide concerns. There are concerns that the Delimitation Exercise can create federal Imbalance as states with better governance may feel punished for controlling population. **E.g.** **Sarkaria Commission (1983) warned against excessive centralization of power.**

3. Manipulation- There are concerns that political parties may influence constituency boundaries for electoral gains. **E.g.** **Allegations of bias in the J&K delimitation process (2022).**

4. Delays and Political Resistance- There are instances of increased political resistance as seen in the case of **Justice Kuldip Singh-led Commission (2002)** facing pushback from political parties unwilling to lose seats.

5. Economic Disparities- Southern states argue that **higher revenue generation** (GST collections, per capita income) should be factored into representation.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Implement Expert Recommendations- The following commissions have suggested the following reforms for ensuring federal balance and delimitation needs.

Sarkaria Commission (1983): Suggested a balanced approach between federalism and national unity.

Punchhi Commission (2010): Proposed equal weightage to population and governance needs.

2. Ensure Transparency and Independent Oversight- The Election Commission's autonomy should be strengthened to ensure fair delimitation process.

In **Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India (2006)**, SC emphasized the need for fair representation while balancing federal concerns.

In **TN Seshan v. Union of India (1995)**, SC highlighted the importance of an independent delimitation body.

3. Constitutional and Legislative Reforms- Amend **Articles 81 and 82** to ensure balanced regional representation and Introduce proportional representation models used in Germany and Canada.

4. Policy Suggestions

Weighted Representation Model: Combining population size, economic performance, and governance.

Independent Delimitation Commission: Free from political interference.

Phased Implementation: A gradual transition to prevent political instability.

Delimitation is a delicate balance between democracy and federalism. While it ensures equal representation, challenges related to regional disparities, population dynamics, and governance issues must be addressed. The Supreme Court and Election Commission must play a proactive role in ensuring transparency and fairness. A balanced approach grounded in constitutional values, expert recommendations, and global best practices—is essential to uphold India's democratic and federal ethos.