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7 PM COMPILATION

1st and 2nd Week March, 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
- ❖ Out of the box thinking for value edition
- ❖ Best cost-benefit ratio according to successful aspirants

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India's Informal Sector- Explained Pointwise

India's informal sector is the backbone of its economy, employing over 90% of the total workforce and contributing nearly 50% of GDP, as per the Economic Survey 2022-23. Despite its critical role, this sector remains largely invisible in policy discussions and economic planning.

India's Informal Sector

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), India has one of the world's largest informal economies, with over 400 million workers engaged in low-paying, precarious jobs without social security or legal protections. The NITI Aayog highlights that the informal sector is a significant driver of employment, particularly in rural areas, where 80% of informal workers are concentrated.

What is the present status of Informal sector in India?

1. Employment Distribution: The agriculture and allied sectors employ ~50% of the informal workforce (PLFS, 2022). Construction and manufacturing account for 15-20%, with most workers being "contractual" and "migrant." Domestic and gig work are rapidly growing but remain unregulated and precarious.

2. Income & Wages: Only 10% of informal workers earn above ₹10,000 per month (E-Shram, 2023). Wage disparities exist based on gender, caste, and geography. Women in informal work earn 35% less than men (ILO, 2022).

3. Social Security Coverage: Less than 20% of informal workers have access to pensions, health insurance, maternity benefits, or legal protections (NSSO, 2021). Schemes like PM-SYM (Pension Scheme for Unorganized Workers) and the E-Shram Portal exist but suffer from low enrollment and implementation gaps.

4. Migrant Workers & Labour Mobility: India has over 100 million migrant workers (Economic Survey, 2020-21). Lack of housing, portability of benefits, and job security exacerbates their vulnerabilities. Interstate

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disparities persist, with migrants from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, and Jharkhand dominating low-wage informal sectors.

5. Gig & Platform Economy: The gig economy is expanding rapidly in e-commerce, delivery, and ride-hailing services. However, platform workers lack social security, face algorithmic exploitation, and have no bargaining power (NITI Aayog, 2022).

What is the significance of the Informal Sector in India?

1. Economic Growth: Strengthening the informal workforce is critical for India's $5 trillion economy goal. The informal sector ensures low-cost production, affordable services, and a flexible labour supply for industries.

2. Employment Generation: The informal sector absorbs rural surplus labour, preventing mass unemployment. **For example**, the construction sector, predominantly informal, employs over 50 million workers. During economic downturns, informal jobs often serve as a buffer, as seen during COVID-19.

3. Urban Growth & Migration: Informal workers—construction labourers, street vendors, and transport workers—support urban economies. Migrants bridge labour shortages in industrial states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka.

4. Social Safety Net: In the absence of formal employment opportunities, the informal sector acts as a safety net for millions. Street vendors and domestic workers, though poorly paid, provide essential services to urban economies.

5. Cultural & Regional Diversity: The informal sector preserves India's cultural heritage through traditional crafts, handlooms, and small-scale industries. The handloom sector alone employs over 4.3 million workers, mostly women.

6. Women's Employment & Livelihoods: Women dominate informal sectors such as domestic work, home-based enterprises, and self-employment. Organizations like the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) have mobilized millions into cooperative structures.

What are the government Initiatives for the Informal & Unorganised Sector?

MGNREGA	Provides guaranteed wage employment to rural workers.
Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY)	Encourages employers to create new jobs and bring informal workers into the formal sector.
Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana (ABRY)	Supports job creation and social security benefits, especially to recover employment lost during COVID-19.
e-Shram Portal	Launched in 2021 to create a national database of unorganised workers. **a.** Provides an e-Shram Card with a unique 12-digit number. **b.** Helps the government track and support informal workers.

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Insurance & Pension Schemes	1. **PM Jeevan Jyoti Yojana (PMJJBY)** – Life insurance for workers. 2. **PM Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)** – Accidental insurance cover. 3. **PM Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan (PM-SYM) & NPS-Traders** – Pension for small traders and self-employed individuals.
Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PM-GKAY)	Free food grains for National Food Security Act (NFSA) beneficiaries, especially during crises like COVID-19.

What are the challenges faced by the Informal Sector?

1. Lack of Social Security: Over 76% of informal workers lack EPF, ESI, pension schemes, or paid leave (ILO's World Social Protection Report 2020-22). Most do not receive minimum wage protections, leading to income instability.

2. Exploitation & Low Wages: Informal workers often endure poor working conditions, with wages below the legal minimum. **For example**, urban construction workers often work 12-14 hours a day for meagre pay.

3. Precarious Working Conditions: Workplace safety is a major issue, with a high risk of accidents in construction, mining, and factories. The ILO (2021) estimates 48,000 annual workplace deaths in India—the highest globally.

4. Legal & Institutional Barriers: While the Labour Codes (2020) aim for "universal coverage," implementation remains weak. Informal workers struggle to unionize, limiting their bargaining power.

5. Vulnerability to Shocks: The informal sector is highly susceptible to economic and environmental disruptions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, millions lost their livelihoods overnight with no safety net.

6. Lack of Legal Protection: Many informal workers are not covered under labour laws. **For instance**, domestic workers are excluded from the Minimum Wages Act, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.

7. Health & Safety Risks: Workers in hazardous sectors like construction, mining, and brick kilns face severe health risks without protective gear or healthcare access.

What is the way Forward?

1. Strengthening Social Security: Implement the Code on Social Security, 2020, to extend coverage to informal workers. Expand schemes like Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan (PMSYM) and Ayushman Bharat to ensure broader inclusion.

2. Skill Development & Formalization: Invest in skill development to transition workers from low-productivity informal jobs to the formal sector. Promote micro-entrepreneurship through schemes like MUDRA Yojana.

3. Legal Reforms: Amend labour laws to include informal workers, ensuring minimum wages, workplace safety, and grievance redressal mechanisms. Ratify the ILO's Domestic Workers Convention (C189) for domestic worker protections.

4. Technology & Data-Driven Solutions: Leverage the E-Shram Portal to create a comprehensive informal worker database. Use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to map informal worker needs for targeted welfare schemes.

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5. International Best Practices: Learn from Brazil's Bolsa Família program, which provides conditional cash transfers, and South Africa's Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP), which offers temporary employment in public projects.

6. UN & ILO Recommendations: Implement ILO's Recommendation 204 for transitioning from informal to formal employment. Align with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth) for inclusive progress.

Conclusion

India's informal sector workers are the unsung heroes of its economy, yet they remain marginalized and vulnerable. As the ILO states, "Decent work is not just a goal; it is a driver of sustainable development." The NITI Aayog emphasizes that "the informal sector is not a problem to be solved but a reality to be managed." A multi-pronged approach—legal reforms, social security expansion, skill development, and adoption of global best practices—can transform India's informal sector into a pillar of strength.

As Mahatma Gandhi said, "The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members."

Read more– The Indian Express

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

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Urbanization in India- Significance & Challenges Explained Pointwise

Urbanization in India is at a turning point, with over 35% of the population residing in cities, according to Census 2011. By 2050, this figure is expected to rise to 50% (UN Habitat). The NITI Aayog's Urban Planning Reform Report (2021) highlights that urban areas contribute nearly 63% to the GDP, a figure projected to reach 75% by 2030.

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Urbanization in India

However, despite rapid urbanization, Indian cities rank low on global urban indices such as the Mercer Quality of Living Index and the Global Livability Index by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). The Economic Survey 2023-24 underscores urban transformation as essential to achieving the vision of a Viksit Bharat.

What is the present status of urbanization in India?

Infrastructure and Smart Cities	1. Poor road infrastructure and inadequate public transport remain key issues in metropolitan areas (NITI Aayog's Mobility Report 2022). 2. Traffic congestion costs India nearly $22 billion annually (Ministry of Road Transport and Highways). 3. The Smart Cities Mission (2015) aims to develop 100 smart cities, but only 50% of projects have been completed (NIUA).
Housing and Livability	1. India faces a shortage of 18.78 million housing units, mostly affecting low-income groups (MoHUA). 2. Slums constitute 17% of urban households (Census 2011), leading to poor sanitation and hygiene. 3. Indian cities rank low on Mercer's Quality of Living Index due to inadequate livability conditions.

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Urban Governance	**1.** The number of census towns increased from 1,362 in 2001 to 3,894 in 2011, contributing to urban growth but lacking proper infrastructure. **2.** Delayed recognition of urban areas results in haphazard development and regional disparities.
Environmental Sustainability	**1.** Air pollution levels in Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata exceed WHO safety standards (State of Global Air Report 2023), costing India nearly $95 billion annually (Clean Air Fund). **2.** 50% of India's 603 rivers are polluted, with critical contamination in the Yamuna and Ganga (CPCB 2022). **3.** Only 30% of wastewater is treated before disposal. **4.** Cities face extreme weather events such as flooding in Mumbai and Bengaluru and heatwaves in Delhi (temperatures nearing 50°C). **5.** Poor drainage systems and lack of green infrastructure worsen these challenges.
Economic and Employment Hubs	**1.** Indian cities contribute over 60% of GDP but face high unemployment rates, particularly in the informal sector (PLFS 2022). **2.** Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru alone contribute over 30% to national GDP.
Social Inclusion and Safety	**1.** Women's safety remains a major concern; NCRB data (2022) reports high crime rates in cities. **2.** Urban poverty and marginalization hinder equitable development.
Public Services and Livability	**1.** Only 62% of urban households have piped water supply (Jal Jeevan Mission Report 2023). **2.** Sanitation has improved under SBM 2.0, but sewage treatment remains inadequate, affecting water quality.

What is the significance of Urban Transformation in India?

1. Economic Growth and Global Competitiveness

- Well-planned cities attract investment; examples include Singapore, Dubai, and Shanghai.
- Smart urbanization can support India's goal of becoming a $10 trillion economy by 2035 (NITI Aayog).

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2. Benchmarking Global Cities

- **Bangkok**: Efficient metro and tourist-friendly policies.
- **London**: Seamless public transport, green spaces, and cultural hubs.
- **Dubai**: Business-friendly urban planning and investment incentives.
- **Singapore**: Clean governance, smart city initiatives, and sustainability.

3. Improved Livability

- Better urban planning enhances healthcare, education, and public services.
- Sustainable housing and clean environments can improve India's HDI ranking.

4. Climate Resilience and Sustainability

- Green infrastructure mitigates urban heat islands and pollution.
- Aligning with SDG-11: Sustainable Cities and Communities is essential.

5. Social Equity and Quality of Life

- Better transport, housing, and services can reduce inequality.
- Gender-sensitive planning is crucial, as 95% of women feel unsafe in Delhi (UN Women 2023).

What are the challenges of urbanization in India?

1. Infrastructure Deficiencies: Unplanned urban sprawl leads to inefficiency. India needs to invest $840 billion in urban infrastructure by 2036 (World Bank).

2. Environmental Constraints: Indian cities generate 62 million tonnes of solid waste annually, with only 25% scientifically processed (Swachh Bharat Mission 2023).

3. Governance Issues: 60% of India's urban areas lack structured development plans (MoHUA 2023).

4. Social and Economic Challenges: 25% of urban dwellers live below the poverty line (NSSO 2020).

5. Persistent Problems: Pollution, congestion, and poor public services remain unaddressed.

6. Financial Constraints: Municipal revenues contribute only 1% of GDP, compared to 7.4% in South Africa (World Bank 2024).

What is the Way Forward?

1. Sustainable Infrastructure Development: Expand Metro rail networks and BRTS (Bus Rapid Transit System) for improved public transport. Encourage transit-oriented development to reduce congestion and promote walkability.

2. Smart and Resilient Urban Planning: Implement Integrated Urban Planning models like Singapore's Master Plan 2019. Develop satellite towns and decongest major metropolitan areas.

3. Environmental and Climate Resilience Strategies: Increase green spaces through urban forestry initiatives like Miyawaki forests. Implement waste-to-energy plants and circular economy models as seen in Sweden.

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4. Strengthening Urban Governance and Financing: Strengthen the financial independence of ULBs through municipal bonds and PPPs. States must formally recognize census towns as urban areas to ensure access to funding and resources. Implement participatory governance models, drawing from the Curitiba model in Brazil.

5. Leverage the Urban Challenge Fund: Use the ₹1 lakh crore Urban Challenge Fund to incentivize cities to adopt long-term planning, invest in mass transit, and enhance sustainability.

6. Green Infrastructure and Sustainability: Develop Blue-Green Infrastructure like urban wetlands, green roofs, and afforestation. Promote electric mobility; FAME-II has accelerated EV adoption, but further incentives are needed.

7. UN-Habitat and Global Sustainability Goals: Align urban policies with UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. Integrate UN-Habitats New Urban Agenda principles into planning frameworks.

Conclusion

The next decade will shape the future of Indian cities. They can either become smart, green, and livable hubs or struggle with pollution, congestion, and insecurity. By drawing lessons from global cities, leveraging policy initiatives, and addressing governance and infrastructure gaps, India can transform its cities into world-class destinations.

As highlighted in the Economic Survey 2023-24, urban transformation is not just a developmental need but a strategic imperative for economic growth and public well-being.

Read more- The Indian Express

UPSC Syllabus- GS 1– Urbanization in India

Wetland Conservation in India- Explained Pointwise

Wetlands, often referred to as the earth's kidneys, are among the most productive ecosystems, providing critical ecosystem services such as water purification, flood control, and carbon sequestration. Globally, wetlands cover 6% of the Earth's land surface and support 40% of the world's species, as per the Ramsar Convention. However, since 1970, 35% of global wetland areas have been lost due to human activities like urbanization, agriculture, and pollution. **Wetland Conservation in India**

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Wetland Conservation in India

In India, wetlands are equally vital but face similar threats. The National Wetland Decadal Change Atlas (2017-18) reveals that India has 27,403 wetlands, covering 18.4% of the country's area. Despite their ecological and economic significance, wetlands are disappearing at an alarming rate of 2-3% annually, with 50% of India's wetlands already lost.

What is the present status of wetlands?

Global Scenario	Wetlands are declining at a rate of (-)0.78% annually, with 81% of inland wetland species and 36% of coastal species experiencing population declines since 1970, as per the Wetland Extent Trends (WET) index. Since 1900, 50% of global wetland area has been lost, with a decline of 35% between 1970 and 2015.

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Indian Context	1. India has 89 Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance), covering 1.34 million hectares. However, this represents only a fraction of the total wetland area.
	2. Wetlands cover 18.4% of India's land area (excluding rivers); 70% of these are used for paddy cultivation.
	3. The coastal wetlands span 6,750 sq. km, with "mangrove ecosystems" concentrated in Sundarbans, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Odisha, and Gujarat.
	4. Southern peninsular wetlands are largely man-made reservoirs, locally known as Yeris (tanks), essential for water storage and biodiversity conservation.
	5. 50% of India's wetlands have been lost due to encroachment, land-use change, and pollution. E.g. Pallikaranai Marsh and East Kolkata Wetlands have shrunk drastically due to urbanization.
	6. The Wildlife Institute of India reports that 70-80% of freshwater marshes in the Gangetic floodplains have been lost in the last five decades.
	7. Urban areas like Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata have lost 71%, 85%, and 36% of their wetlands, respectively, due to urbanization and pollution.
	8. Indian mangrove areas have shrunk from 700,000 hectares in 1987 to 453,000 hectares in 1995, with only 4,000 sq. km remaining today, as per remote sensing data.

What is the significance of Wetlands?

1. Ecological Importance: Wetlands are biological supermarkets, supporting a wide range of species, nutrient cycling, hydrological regulation and habitat heterogeneity. Also, it acts as carbon sinks, mitigating climate change by sequestering carbon. They also support biodiversity, hosting 40% of the world's species, as per the Ramsar Convention. **E.g.** the Sundarbans, a Ramsar site, is home to the endangered Bengal tiger and acts as a natural barrier against cyclones.

2. Economic Value: Wetlands contribute significantly to livelihoods. The East Kolkata Wetlands treat wastewater and support fisheries, generating an estimated $100 million annually.

3. Climate Resilience: Wetlands act as carbon sinks, sequestering carbon and mitigating climate change. They also regulate floods and droughts, providing "nature-based solutions" for climate adaptation.

4. Cultural & Recreational Value: Wetlands like Chilika Lake, Loktak Lake, and Wular Lake have spiritual, tourism, and aesthetic value.

5. Wetlands as Natural Disaster Buffers: Economic Survey (2020-21) recognizes wetland conservation as a Nature-Based Solution (NbS). Mangrove forests reduce storm surge heights by up to 50% (World Bank, 2021).

What progress has been made so far in wetland conservation?

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1. Policy Framework: India is a signatory to the Ramsar Convention (1971) and has designated 85 Ramsar sites. The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, provide a legal framework for wetland conservation. The National Committee on Wetlands, Mangroves, and Coral Reefs has identified 93 wetlands for priority conservation.

2. Government Initiative: National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA), ₹900 crore allocated. AMRUT 2.0 (2021), focus on "urban blue-green infrastructure" for wetlands. Namami Gange Programme, wetland rejuvenation along the Ganga River Basin.

3. Judicial Interventions: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) and the Meghalaya High Court have emphasized the need for wetland conservation through suo motu PILs and directives.

4. Global Initiatives: Ramsar COP14 (2022) in Wuhan & Geneva highlighted the need to link wetland conservation with global sustainability goals, including the SDGs, IPCC targets, and UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, Global Biodiversity Framework.

What are the Challenges in wetland conservation?

1. Urbanization and Land Use Change: Urban expansion has led to the loss of wetlands in cities like Mumbai and Chennai. The National Wetland Decadal Change Atlas shows a decline in natural wetlands due to infrastructure development.

2. Pollution: Industrial effluents and untreated sewage have degraded wetlands like the Bellandur Lake in Bengaluru, which famously caught fire due to pollution.

3. Climate Change: Rising temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns threaten wetland ecosystems. For example, the Sundarbans face salinity intrusion due to sea-level rise.

4. Lack of Awareness and Governance: Weak enforcement of conservation laws and limited public awareness hinder effective wetland management.

5. Biodiversity Decline: 81% of inland wetland species populations have declined since 1970 (WWF, 2022).

What is the Way Forward?

1. Integrated Management: Adopt an ecosystem-based approach to wetland management, as advocated during the Ramsar COP14. Integrate wetland conservation into urban planning and development policies.

2. Strengthening Legal Frameworks: Amend the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, to include stricter penalties for violations. Ratify and implement global agreements like the ILO's Recommendation 204 on transitioning to sustainable ecosystems.

3. Community Participation: Engage local communities in wetland conservation through programs like Community-Based Resource Management (CBRM). Promote eco-tourism to generate livelihoods while conserving wetlands.

4. Technological Interventions: Use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing for real-time monitoring of wetlands. Develop blue-green infrastructure in urban areas to restore wetland ecosystems.

5. International Best Practices: Learn from the Netherlands' Room for the River Program, which integrates wetlands into flood management. Adopt China's Sponge Cities Initiative, which uses wetlands for urban water management.

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6. Financial Mechanisms: Allocate funds for wetland conservation in the Union Budget and State Budgets. Leverage international funding mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Wetland Conservation Bonds to raise funds for restoration.

Conclusion

Wetlands are not just ecological assets but are vital for "ecological, economic, and social security." As the Ramsar Convention aptly states, "Wetlands are essential for a sustainable future." The Meghalaya High Court's intervention and the Ramsar COP14's emphasis on integrating wetlands into global development agendas underscore the urgency of mainstreaming wetland conservation.

India must adopt a holistic approach, combining legal, technological, and community-driven strategies, to conserve its wetlands. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "The earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed." Let us strive to protect our wetlands, ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come.
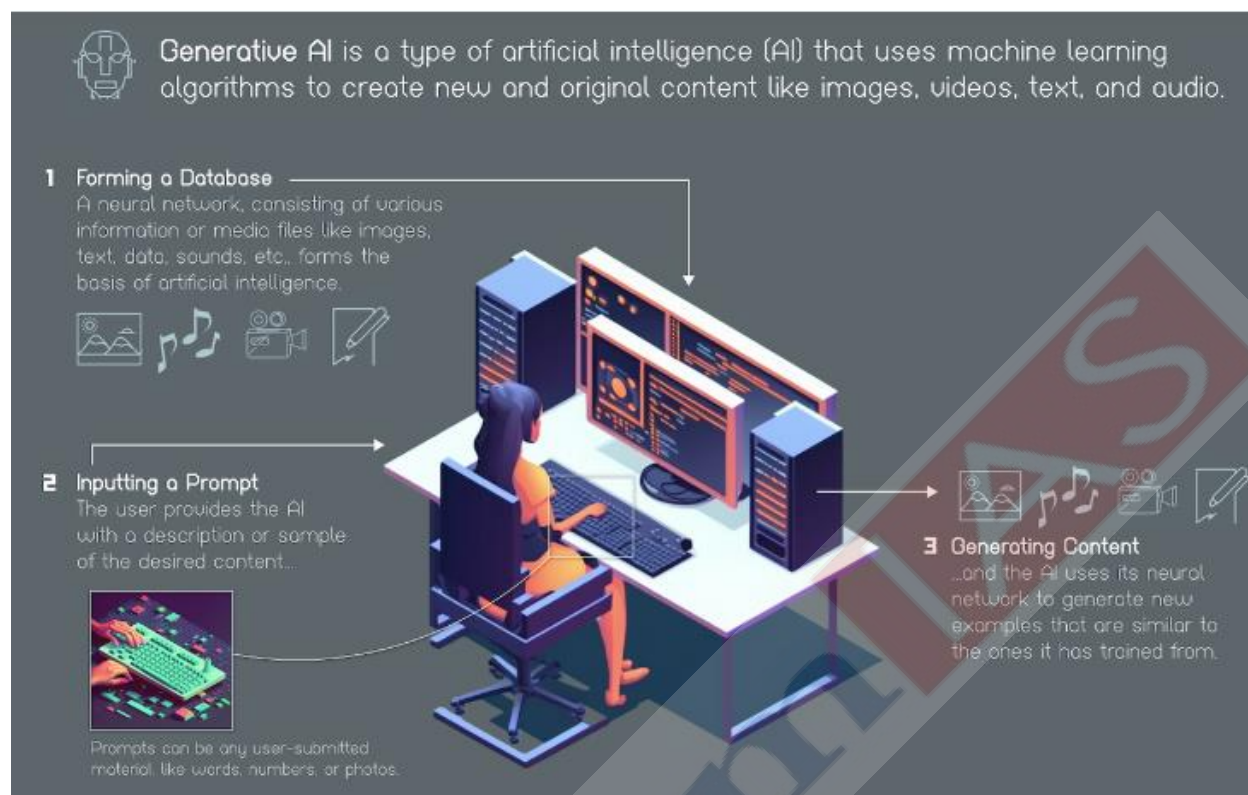
> **Read more**– The Hindu
>
> **UPSC Syllabus- GS 3**– Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Generative AI (Artificial Intelligence)- Explained Pointwise

After the introduction of ChatGPT, the focus of numerous governments, corporations, and businesses has shifted towards Artificial Intelligence, particularly in the realm of generative AI. Once just a buzzword, generative AI has quickly become a critical business imperative for Indian organizations, with most business leaders in India prioritizing AI adoption, according to a report.

What is Generative AI? Where does Generative AI fit in the AI discipline?

Generative AI- Generative AI is a type of artificial intelligence technology that can produce various types of content, including text, imagery and audio. The term 'Generative' refers to the ability of the models to create new data based on certain input parameters. **For ex-** A generative model is used to generate facial images by providing a set of parameters such as the eyes, hair, or skin colour etc.

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Source- WEF

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

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

What are the advantages of Generative AI?

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1. Writing and advertising- Generative AI is being used as a brainstorming companion by the writers. **For ex-** Drafting press releases, language translation, creating new advertisements based on existing ones.

2. Reading- Apart from writing, this technology is used as a reading tool. **For ex-** Auto Reading customer mails and segregating them based on complaints.

3. Chatting- Generative AI is also used for many special-purpose chatbot tasks. **For ex-** Government chatbots to help citizens get access to the right information on various schemes and policies.

4. Security Services- This AI technology can create front-on photos from photos taken at different angles and vice versa. This can be used in face identification systems to secure the airports, international border check-points etc.

5. Enhanced capability of Search Engine Services- Generative Artificial Intelligence has the capability to take search engine services to the next level. **For ex-** Text to Image translation to provide search results.

6. Improving Healthcare System- This technology has the potential to revolutionise the healthcare sector by improving the accuracy of diagnosis. **For ex-** Conversion of X-ray or any CT scan images to real images can improve the accuracy of diagnosis.

What are the Challenges with the Technology?

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

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

3. Use for Malicious Purposes- Generative AI systems can be used to create content for malicious purposes, such as deepfakes, disinformation, and propaganda. Nefarious actors may use AI-generated media to manipulate people and influence public opinion, like use for Post Truth Doctrine.

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

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

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

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

What should be the way Forward?

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

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

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

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

Ai has the potential to give society intelligent guidance on how to approach some of the biggest problems, like climate change and pandemics. In the coming times, AI will contribute to longer, healthier, and more fulfilling lives worldwide if used responsibly.

Read more– Business Standard

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3– Development in the field of IT

Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions: Significance and Challenges – Explained Pointwise

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 marked a historic step in India's democratic decentralization by institutionalizing Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). It mandated 33% reservation for women in Gram Panchayats, Block Samitis, and Zilla Parishads, later increased to 50% in many states. **Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions: Significance and Challenges**

Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions: Significance and Challenges

However, despite legal empowerment, a regressive practice known as "Pradhan Pati" (Proxy Sarpanch) has emerged, where male relatives—husbands, fathers, or brothers—control the decision-making process instead

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of the elected female representatives. This undermines the very essence of women's political empowerment at the grassroots level.

What is the present status of women participation in Local governance?

Women in PRIs	**1.** As of 2023, India has over 1.45 million elected women representatives (EWRs) in 2.5 lakh Panchayats, constituting over 46% of all elected members. **2.** The 73rd Constitutional Amendment mandates 33-50% reservation for women in PRIs, bringing more women into local governance.
States with 50% Reservation	Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Maharashtra, and Kerala have implemented 50% reservation for women in PRIs.
Global Gender Gap Report 2023	**1.** For the first time, the report included women's participation in local governance as an indicator. Globally, only 18 out of 146 countries have achieved over 40% representation of women in local governance. **2.** India ranks among the highest, with above 44% participation of elected women representatives in PRIs.

What is the significance of ending proxy leadership in PRIs?

1. Gender Empowerment – Ensuring that women sarpanches exercise real authority aligns with the spirit of reservation policies.

2. Inclusive Development – Women leaders prioritize issues related to women, children, and marginalized groups, leading to holistic rural development.

3. Democratic Integrity – Empowering women sarpanches strengthens grassroots democracy and restores public trust in local governance.

4. Economic Growth – Women's participation in governance drives economic growth by addressing gender-specific challenges and promoting inclusive policies.

5. Policy Prioritization for Women & Children – Studies indicate that villages led by women sarpanches prioritize maternal health, school infrastructure, and nutrition programs more effectively than male-led ones.

6. Enhanced Accountability & Transparency – According to the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA), panchayats with strong female leadership demonstrate lower corruption levels and better fund utilization.

7. Economic Survey & Budget 2023-24 Emphasis – The Economic Survey 2023-24 acknowledged the role of women-led development, stating that enhancing female participation in governance is key to economic resilience.

What are the challenges in ending proxy leadership in PRIs?

1. Patriarchal Mindset – Women are often seen as 'nominal' leaders, while their husbands make decisions.

2. Low Literacy & Awareness – Many elected women representatives lack formal education and political training.

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3. Male Domination in Decision-Making – Even in reserved seats, men influence policy decisions.

4. Lack of Political Will – Few mechanisms exist to monitor and prevent proxy governance.

5. Limited Digital & Financial Independence – Many women sarpanches lack access to smartphones, official transport, and dedicated assistants.

6. Complex Documentation – Lack of digital literacy prevents women from fully engaging with administrative functions.

7. Gender-Based Violence & Intimidation – Women leaders often face threats or coercion from male counterparts. E.g., Reports from Bihar, Rajasthan, and UP highlight cases where female sarpanches were forced to resign due to local power group pressure.

8. Low Remuneration – The honorarium for sarpanches is shockingly low (e.g., ₹4,500/month in Rajasthan), discouraging serious participation.

9. Misuse of Whistleblowing Mechanisms – Poorly implemented reporting systems allow political opponents to falsely accuse women leaders.

What are the government and other initiatives to increase women participation in PRIs?

1. Constitutional Provisions – The 73rd Amendment mandates one-third reservation for women in PRIs, with some states extending it to 50%.

2. Capacity Building Programs – The Ministry of Panchayati Raj conducts training programs under the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) to enhance women representatives' governance skills.

- Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan: Launched to train women elected representatives of PRIs.
- States are advised to hold separate Mahila Sabhas and Ward Sabhas to boost women's participation.

3. Digital Literacy Initiatives – Programs like Digital India and e-Panchayat equip women leaders with digital tools for better governance.

4. NGO Interventions – Organizations like PRIA (Participatory Research in Asia) and UN Women provide training, mentorship, and networking support for women sarpanches.

5. State-Level Innovations – Kerala and Rajasthan have introduced gender-sensitive policies and support systems for women leaders.

6. Committee on Proxy Representation (2023) – The Ministry of Panchayati Raj formed a committee in 2023 to examine cases of proxy leadership.

- **Exemplary Penalties**: Recommended for proven cases of proxy leadership, though the nature of penalties (monetary or physical) remains unspecified.
- **Multi-Pronged Strategy**: Suggested interventions include policy reforms, technological monitoring, peer support programs, and punitive actions.
- **Gender-Exclusive Quotas & Public Swearing-In**: Inspired by Kerala, the committee proposed exclusive women's quotas in panchayat subject committees and public oaths for women pradhans.

What is the way forward?

1. Legal Reforms & Institutional Strengthening

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- Enforce strict implementation of the 73rd amendment with stronger monitoring mechanisms.
- Introduce legal penalties for "Pradhan Pati" cases.
- Establish Women's Help Desks at Block & District levels.
- Recognize efforts against proxy leadership through awards like "Anti-Pradhan Pati Champions."

2. Capacity Building & Education

- Digital literacy and governance training for all women sarpanches.
- Gender sensitization programs to change community perceptions.
- Introduce a minimum education qualification (e.g., 12th grade) for sarpanches to ensure independent governance.

3. Financial & Administrative Empowerment

- Direct fund transfers to women leaders for financial autonomy.
- Simplify paperwork and administrative procedures for easy governance.

4. Political & Community Support

- Senior women leaders should mentor new representatives.
- Strengthen Self-Help Groups (SHGs) & Mahila Panchayats to support women leaders.

5. Successful Examples of Women Leadership

- **Chhavi Rajawat (Rajasthan)** – India's first MBA sarpanch who implemented rainwater harvesting & digital literacy programs.
- **Minati Barik (Odisha)** – Improved sanitation, health facilities, and women's safety in her Panchayat.

Conclusion

Ending proxy leadership in panchayats is crucial for real empowerment and strengthening democracy. Addressing systemic weaknesses, providing institutional support, and fostering capacity-building can ensure that women sarpanches exercise real authority and drive inclusive development. While government initiatives are a game-changer, success depends on sustained efforts to tackle deep-rooted biases and create an enabling environment for women leaders. The time has come to transform symbolic representation into real empowerment.

Read more– The Indian Express
UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Governance

Women in Corporate Leadership- Explained Pointwise

The representation of women in corporate leadership remains a persistent issue despite global efforts to promote gender inclusivity. However, despite initiatives aimed at fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), women continue to be significantly underrepresented in senior management and boardroom roles. **Women in Corporate Leadership**

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Women in Corporate Leadership

In 2023, only 34,879 women held senior management positions in India, compared to 186,946 men, according to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. Globally, the situation is similar, with women occupying just 7% of CEO roles and 17% of finance director positions in developed countries, as per Equileap's 2023 survey.

What is the present status of women's participation in Corporate leadership?

Leadership Gap	According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2023, only 32% of leadership roles globally are occupied by women
Senior Management	In India, the Economic Survey 2022-23 highlighted that women hold less than 5% of CEO or MD positions in NIFTY 500 companies
Promotions	The McKinsey Women in the Workplace Report reveals that for every 100 men promoted to managerial roles, only 87 women receive similar promotions
Board Positions	Women's representation in Indian boardrooms stands at 17.1%, lower than the global average of 19.7% (Deloitte Women in the Boardroom Report 2023).

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Industry Variations in India	**1. Highest representation**: Education (30%) and Government Administration (29%) **2. Moderate representation**: Technology, Information, Media, and Financial Services (19%) **3. Lowest representation**: Construction, Oil, Gas, Mining, and Utilities (11%)
India-Specific Growth	**1.** The inclusion of women directors on NSE 500-listed companies increased from 5% in 2011 to 18% in 2023. **2.** Women-led startups grew from 1,528 in 2017 to 17,001 in 2023. **3.** Women-led startups now constitute 47.6% of all startups recognized by DPIIT.
European vs. Indian Progress	European countries have shown more significant growth in women's representation on corporate boards compared to India. **For example**, Portugal increased its share of women directors from 5.9% in 2013 to over 35% by 2022, while India only reached 18.23%.
Global Statistics	According to Equileap research, only 7% of CEOs and 17% of finance directors in large companies in developed countries are women.

What is the significance of women's participation in Corporate leadership?

1. Economic Growth Multiplier: A Boston Consulting Group (BCG) study found that companies with higher gender diversity reported 19% higher revenue due to innovation.

2. Better Decision-Making: Diverse leadership teams contribute to balanced risk assessment and enhanced corporate governance.

3. Inclusive Work Culture: Women leaders promote empathetic leadership and employee-friendly policies, improving overall productivity.

4. Investor and Consumer Confidence: Companies with strong gender diversity often achieve higher ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) ratings, positively influencing investment decisions.

5. Risk Management: Women's considered approach to risk-taking enhances company efficiency, particularly during crises.

6. Innovation: Gender-diverse leadership teams demonstrate higher rates of innovation and creative problem-solving.

7. Stakeholder Relationships: Women leaders prioritize relationship-building and stakeholder engagement.

What are the challenges obstructing women's participation?

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1. India's Half-Hearted Approach: While the Companies Act, 2013, and SEBI regulations have increased women's board representation, the absence of binding quotas and enforcement mechanisms has limited progress.

2. Unconscious Bias & Stereotypes: Women are often perceived as less assertive or unsuitable for risk-taking roles.

- For example, women hold only 18% of board positions in the private sector and 13% in the public sector.
- In the judiciary, women constitute just 14% of High Court judges and 9% of Supreme Court judges.

3. Glass Cliff & Tokenism: About 50% of private companies and 30% of public companies in India have only one female board member, indicating tokenism rather than genuine inclusion.

4. Old Boy Networks: Entrenched corporate networks continue to perpetuate gender gaps.

5. Work-Life Balance Dilemma: The double-burden syndrome forces many women to exit mid-career due to inadequate parental leave policies and inflexible work structures.

6. Pipeline Leakage Problem: A lack of women in middle management positions results in a smaller talent pool for leadership roles.

7. Wage Disparity: The Global Gender Pay Report 2023 indicates that women in leadership earn **20-25% less** than their male counterparts.

What is the way forward?

1. Gender-Responsive Policies: Implement progressive maternity benefits, paternity leave, and family support structures to retain female talent.

2. Mandatory Boardroom Quotas: Countries like Norway have set 40% boardroom representation quotas, a model India could consider.

3. Indian Regulations:

- The Companies Act, 2013 mandates at least one woman director on the boards of certain public companies.
- SEBI requires at least one independent woman director on the boards of India's top 1,000 listed companies.

4. Equal Pay Legislation: Strengthening wage transparency laws to close the gender pay gap.

5. Leadership Training & Mentorship: Establish targeted training programs and women-exclusive professional networks to build leadership pipelines.

6. Bias-Free Hiring: Promote anonymous hiring processes to eliminate gender bias.

7. Incentivizing Companies: Offer tax benefits or funding support to organizations actively promoting gender diversity.

8. Implementation Approaches to Increase Women's Representation:

- **Mandatory inclusion:** Austria, Germany, France, etc.
- **Comply or explain approach:** Switzerland, Poland, Spain, UK

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- **Self-regulatory approach:** Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, etc.

Conclusion

Achieving true gender equity in corporate leadership requires a fundamental shift in mindset, policy reforms, and structural support. While progress has been made, breaking the glass ceiling demands collective action from governments, businesses, and society. The goal is not merely to increase the number of women in leadership but to foster transformative leadership that champions inclusivity, innovation, and long-term corporate sustainability.

Read more– The Hindu

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2– Issues related to women

Women Empowerment- Economic Political and Social- Explained Pointwise

8th march of each year is celebrated as International Women's Day. This day is to celebrate women power and remind us the crucial role women play in every domain of human life. However, women have been marginalised as a community, and they have been engaged in a long-drawn battle for equal women's rights. 'Women empowerment' is the only way forward to improve the status of women in the society. **Women Empowerment**

Source- JavaTPoint

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What is Women Empowerment? What are the different components?

Women Empowerment- Women empowerment is the promotion of women's sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choices and their right to influence social change for themselves and others. It is rightly said that empowering a man leads to empowering an individual but empowering a woman empowers an entire generation.

Types of Women Empowerment

1. Economic Empowerment- Economic empowerment means having equal access to work opportunities and ensuring their participation in all kinds of markets. This will help women break down all the barriers of inequality and defy traditional roles.

2. Political Empowerment- Political empowerment means women having equal access to leadership role in the political sphere. It also gives increased strength to women's right voices and issues in the political sphere.

3. Social Empowerment- Social empowerment aims to uplift the social status of women. Social empowerment aims to provide women equal say in the health, family decisions, marriage decisions, childbirth.

What are the advantages of Women Empowerment?

Economic Empowerment

1. When more women work, economies grow- Women's economic empowerment increases economic diversification and income equality for shared prosperity. According to UN Women, it is estimated that closing the gender gap could give the global economy a USD 7 trillion boost.

2. Growth of businesses- Business companies greatly benefit from increasing employment and leadership opportunities for women, which is shown to increase organizational effectiveness and growth. **For ex-** According to estimates, Companies with three or more women in senior management functions score higher in all dimensions of organizational performance

Political Empowerment

1. Proper functioning of Democracy- Women's political participation is a fundamental prerequisite for gender equality and genuine democracy. It facilitates women's direct engagement in public decision-making and is a means of ensuring better accountability to women. **For ex-** Women led SHGs and women rights movement.

2. Gender-sensitive policies- Political empowerment leads to gender-sensitive governance reforms. It makes the elected officials more effective at promoting gender equality in public policy and ensuring their implementation. **For ex-** Law to protect Sexual harassment at workplace

Social Empowerment

1. Social Justice- Women's Social empowerment is essential for achieving social justice. It helps in ending gender based discrimination, violence, and other forms of oppression. It also helps to create a more just and equitable society.

2. Sustainable Development Goals- Promotion of social empowerment of women will help in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in accordance with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

What are the Challenges with empowerment of Women?

Economic empowerment

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1. Unequal employment opportunities- Globally, the gender gap in labour force participation has been around 30% since 1990, with men's participation at around 80% and women's at 50%. Women also experience 'motherhood penalty' with reduction in employment opportunities for women having babies.

2. Employment in informal and vulnerable sectors- According to research by UN Women, nearly 60% of women's employment globally is in the informal economy. In low income countries it is as high as 90%.

3. Lack of pay parity- Women are paid less than men. The gender wage gap is estimated to be 20%. Women face the challenges of motherhood wage penalty and unpaid care works.

Political Empowerment

1. Low Representation of Women in Legislature- The representation of women in different legislative bodies remains low across India. **For ex-** According to the report of Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women, India ranks 148 out of 193 countries in the number of elected female representatives in parliament.

2. Lack of intra party democracy- The political parties lack intra party democracy, which prevents the development of top women leaders. The patriarchal nature of politics is a major challenge to women political empowerment.

Social Empowerment Challenges

1. Gaps in Male Female Literacy Rate- Lack of good girls schools with proper toilets, female infanticide, early child marriage and dowry have led to the educational disenfranchisement of women.

2. Health care Burden- Lack of access to sanitary products, menstrual hygiene and high incidence of cervical and breast cancers have increased the health burden on women in India.

3. Social Safety Concerns- Women are threatened by various acts such as feticides, domestic violence, rape, trafficking, forced prostitution, honour killings, sexual harassment at workplace. These have led to the marginalisation of women in the social sphere.

Read More- [Yojana September 2023 Summary]Women Empowerment-Explained Pointwise

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What have the achievements of Indian Women?

1. Avani Chaturvedi – Sky Warrior

Avani Chaturvedi became the first Indian proud woman to fly solo a fighter aircraft. She flew a MiG-21 'Bison', an aircraft known for its highest landing and take-off speed in the world.

2. Mithali Raj – Lady Tendulkar of Indian Women's cricket

During India's series against New Zealand Women – Mithali Raj became the first Indian woman who made India proud by playing in 200 ODI match.

3. Mary Kom – Ms. Knock-out

Mary Kom is the woman who made india proud by becoming World Amateur Boxing champion for a record six times, and the first woman from the country to win a medal in boxing at the Olympics.

4. Gita Gopinath – The Fiscal Scholar

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An Indian-American economist, Gita Gopinath became the First Woman Chief Economist at the IMF (International Monetary Fund).

5. Arunima Sinha – The Mount Everest Girl

Arunima Sinha became the world's first woman amputee to climb Mount Everest in 2013.

6. Usha Kiran – Youngest Female CRPF Officer

Usha Kiran became CRPF's first woman officer to be posted in the insurgency-affected Bastar region of Chhattisgarh.

7. Tessy Thomas – Missile Woman of India

Tessy Thomas is the first woman who made india proud to head an Indian missile project. Adding to it, with the successful launch of the Agni-V missile project, she also achieved a career milestone.

What are the government initiatives?

Economic Empowerment	**1.** Governments has been promoting equal pay for equal work through the four new labour codes. **2.** Government has established maternity leave and childcare policies through the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act 2017. **3.** It has also provided access to finance and entrepreneurship training for women, like the Mudra Yojana and the Mahila Udyam Nidhi Yojana.
Political Empowerment	**1. Nari Shakti Vandana Adhiniyam(Women reservation Act)-** Passed to provide 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies. **2**. **73rd and 74th amendment Act**– Provided 33% reservation to women in local bodies. Some states like Bihar have increased the women reservation in the local bodies to 50%. **3.** Govt has been encouraging political parties to nominate more women candidates and has been providing leadership training.
Social Empowerment	**1.** Government has focused on ending child marriage and safeguarded sexual and reproductive health rights through The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 and Medical Termination of Pregnancy Amendment Act of 2021. **2.** Government has been protecting women's land rights through Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP) and implementing gender-responsive budgeting, which are crucial steps towards achieving gender equality.

What should be the way Forward?

1. Better Education Opportunities- Better implementation of New Education Policy to ensure the protection of girls right to education and their right to be free from discrimination within educational institutions.

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2. Skilling and Micro Financing- Training women in non-traditional skills in accordance with the market demand, like machine textiles. Also, we need to focus on creating more public and private sector jobs for women.

3. Women's Safety- There must be strict implementation of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 to ensure safe working spaces for women. Also Panic Button, Nirbhaya Police Squad are some good steps in the direction of women's safety.

5. Improvement in Basic Amenities at Rural Level- The improvement in the health and education standards of women in rural areas will lead to all round development of women and a productive women workforce.

5. From Women Development to Women Led Development- Women should be reimagined as architects of India's progress and development, rather than being passive recipients of the fruits of development.

Read More– UN Women

UPSC Syllabus- GS 1– Issues related to women

India-Mauritius Relations- Explained Pointwise

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's forthcoming visit to Mauritius on March 11-12, 2025, to attend the country's Independence Day celebrations, underscores the deep and enduring ties between the two nations. With a new government led by Navinchandra Ramgoolam in power, this visit offers an opportunity to reaffirm and deepen the strategic partnership, ensuring it remains a cornerstone of India's foreign policy in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). **India-Mauritius Relations**

India-Mauritius Relations

What is the historical evolution of India-Mauritius Relations?

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India and Mauritius share an umbilical relationship, deeply rooted in history, demography, and culture. With nearly 70% of Mauritius' 1.2 million population of Indian origin, the bond extends beyond diplomacy to people-to-people and civilizational ties. India has been among the largest trading partners of Mauritius since 2005, and the relationship has evolved into a robust partnership spanning multiple areas.

Colonial Era & Early Connections (Pre-1947)	**1.** The Indian-Maurtian relations seeds were sown by the Indian indentured labourers who arrived in Mauritius under the British Rule. **2.** Mahatma Gandhi's visit in 1901 influenced the political consciousness of the Indian diaspora residing in Mauritius
Post-Independence Era (1947–1968)	**1.** India supported anti-colonial movements in Mauritius. India supports Mauritius in its territorial claim over the Chagos Archipelago. **2.** In 1968, Mauritius gained independence and India established its diplomatic relations with India.
Strengthening Bilateral Investment and Economic Ties (1970s–2000s)	India and Mauritius signed several key cooperation agreements. **1.** Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) was signed in 1983, making Mauritius a major route for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into India. **2.** Establishment of cultural institutions like Mahatma Gandhi Institute and the Indian Cultural Centre. **3.** Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPA) was signed.
Expanding Cooperation (2000–2010)	India supports Mauritius' satellite and IT development initiatives and also donates patrol boats to strengthen Mauritius' maritime security, defense cooperation agreement signed. India helps set up the Mauritius National Coast Guard Headquarters.
Strategic & Economic Deepening (2011–2020)	**1.** DTAA was amended to prevent tax evasion and round-tripping of funds, Mauritius joins India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative. **2.** India provides financial assistance for the Metro Express Project and Social Housing Scheme in Mauritius.

Recent Development (2021-Present):	2021- India and Mauritius signed the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA), India's first trade agreement with an African nation. Mauritius was included in India's Indo-Pacific strategy, boosting maritime security cooperation.
	2022: India assists in launching Mauritius' first satellite under ISRO collaboration.
	2023: Strengthening of digital partnerships in cybersecurity and fintech.
	2024: Expansion of India's Blue Economy cooperation with Mauritius. Both signed a protocol in March 2024 to amend their DTAA, incorporating a Principal Purpose Test (PPT) to combat treaty abuse and align with the OECD's Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) framework.

What is the significance of Mauritius for India?

1. Geo-Economic Significance:

- **Mauritius as India's FDI Hub:** Mauritius has been a major source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into India, which contributed $175 billion since 2000 under the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention (DTAC). This bilateral trade has grown from $206 million (2005) to $851 million (2023-24).
- **Economic Gateway to Africa:** Mauritius' bilingual population (English & French) and strong financial sector make it a bridge for Indian businesses entering Francophone Africa.

2. Geo-Political Significance:

- **Regional Cooperation:** Mauritius is a key partner in India's Indo-Pacific strategy and IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association) which makes it central to the diplomatic engagement in the Indian ocean countries.
- **Support for Mauritius Sovereignty:** India supports Mauritius' sovereignty claim over the Chagos Islands, in line with its principled stand on decolonization and support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, as well as its longstanding and close partnership with Mauritius

3. Security & Strategic Significance:

- **Indian Ocean Security:** The two countries have strong maritime security cooperation, given Mauritius' strategic location in the Indian Ocean. It's strategic location is very significant for India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative.
- **Countering China's Influence:** India's strengthening defense cooperation with Mauritius is indeed seen as a strategic move to counter China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- **Maritime Surveillance & Intelligence Sharing:** To enhance maritime surveillance and intelligence sharing, India has established a coastal radar chain in Mauritius and upgraded facilities on Agaléga Island for joint surveillance purposes. Furthermore, Mauritius has joined the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) located in Gurugram.

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- **Regional Security Cooperation:** Mauritius actively participates in the Colombo Security Conclave, collaborating with India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Bangladesh to address shared regional security concerns, including maritime security, counter-terrorism, and disaster management. This engagement underscores Mauritius's commitment to collective security in the IOR.

4. Indian Diaspora & Cultural Significance:

- **Historical & Cultural Ties:** With nearly 70% of its population of Indian origin, Mauritius shares deep historical and cultural ties with India..
- **Diaspora Benefits:** The extension of Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) privileges to Mauritians with Indian ancestry traceable up to the 7th generation significantly strengthens the enduring bond between the two nations, fostering deeper people-to-people ties and facilitating cultural and economic exchange through the diaspora.
- **Education & People-to-People Ties:** Through initiatives like ITEC and ICCR scholarships, as well as the Know India Programme (KIP), India actively engages Mauritian youth, fostering educational and training opportunities while connecting them with India's rich cultural heritage.

What are the areas of cooperation between India and Mauritius?

1. Economic Cooperation

- **Trade & Investment:** India has been one of Mauritius' largest trade partners, with exports including petroleum products, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and food items.
- **DTAA & CECPA:** In order to address concerns regarding tax evasion and Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) through Mauritius, India revised the DTAA in 2016 while subsequently, the CECPA in 2021 was implemented to facilitate smoother and more **transparent trade and investment** flows between the two nations.
- **Financial & Business Collaboration:** Mauritius has a well-developed banking sector, making it a financial hub destination for Indian businesses, like Mauritius is adopting India's UPI to make seamless, cashless payments in their country.
- **Indian PSUs:** Indian companies and PSUs play a crucial role in banking, construction, telecommunications, and energy sectors.

2. Infrastructure & Development Cooperation: India's commitment to Mauritius's development is demonstrated through a Special Economic Package of $353 million, supporting key infrastructure projects like the Metro Express, alongside a $500 million Line of Credit for ten priority initiatives, including the **National Archives,** Mauritius Police Academy, and the establishment of the first overseas Jan Aushadhi Kendra.

3. Military & Security Cooperation

- **Maritime Security:** India supplies patrol vessels (CGS Barracuda & CGS Victory) and assists in securing Mauritius' **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**. Mauritius participates in India-led VARUNA & MILAN naval drills. Oceanographic surveys through India's INS Sarvekshak mapped 25,000 sq. km of Mauritius' oceanic territory.
- **Anti-Piracy & Regional Stability: Surveillance & intelligence sharing using** coastal radar networks and Agaléga Island surveillance enhance maritime domain awareness.

4. Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Response

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- **COVID-19 Assistance:** India supplied 1 lakh free Covishield vaccines (2021) and additional doses. Sent 13 tonnes of medicines and an Indian Medical Team (2020).
- **Wakashio Oil Spill (2020):** India dispatched 30 tonnes of technical equipment, a 10-member response team, and INS Nireekshak for salvage operations.

What are the challenges in India-Mauritius Relations?

1. Declining FDI Inflows from Mauritius: The 2016 amendment of the DTAA reduced the attractiveness of Mauritius as an FDI conduit to India. E.g. FDI from Mauritius declined from $15.72 billion in 2016-17 to $6.13 billion in 2022-23, making Mauritius India's third-largest FDI source after Singapore and the USA.

2. Trade Imbalance & Limited Diversification: India's exports to Mauritius are significantly higher than Mauritian exports to India. **E.g**. In 2023-24, India's exports to Mauritius were $778 million, while Mauritius' exports to India were only $73 million, leading to a tenfold trade imbalance.

3. China's Expanding Influence: China has been increasing its economic and strategic presence in Mauritius, challenging India's influence. **E.g.** China built the Mauritius Supreme Court and has provided infrastructure loans, raising concerns over debt dependency.

4. Security Challenges: Maritime Issues & Drug Trafficking: The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) faces growing security concerns, including drug trafficking and illegal fishing. **E.g.** Mauritius has been a transit hub for drug trafficking networks in the Indian Ocean, which poses a security risk for India's maritime interests.

5. Slow Execution of Infrastructure Projects: Some India-funded projects in Mauritius have faced delays due to bureaucratic hurdles and implementation issues. E.g. The Metro Express Project, a key initiative under India's $500 million Line of Credit, faced initial considerable delays.

6. Concerns over Chagos Archipelago & Regional Diplomacy: India initially hesitated to support Mauritius' claim over the Chagos Archipelago, a British-controlled territory, due to strategic relations with the UK and the US. Mauritius expected stronger Indian diplomatic backing at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), but India maintained a diplomatic cautious stance, which led to some diplomatic friction.

What is the way forward?

1. Maritime Security & Strategic Cooperation: Strengthening maritime domain awareness through coastal radar networks, joint naval exercises, and real-time intelligence sharing. **E.g.** Similar to the White Shipping Agreement with France, while expanding the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) to include more IOR nations.

2. Advanced Economic & Trade Partnerships: Revising the DTAA to boost FDI flows, as seen in the India-UAE CEPA, while expanding CECPA to include IT, fintech, and renewable energy, following the India-Singapore CECA model. **E.g.** Leveraging Mauritius' SADC, COMESA & AfCFTA trade agreements to access African markets.

3. Unified Diaspora & Cultural Engagement: Strengthening institutions like the Mahatma Gandhi Institute and World Hindi Secretariat, similar to cultural preservation models in Fiji & Trinidad, while engaging the Indian-origin diaspora through business forums, academic exchanges, and Pravasi Bharatiya Divas-style summits.

4. Resilient Diplomatic Relations: Countering China's expanding influence through infrastructure grants, technology partnerships, and soft power, following India's successful diplomatic model in the Maldives, while ensuring regular high-level engagements. **E.g.** Like India-Japan Annual Summit, to maintain long-term trust and collaboration.

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5. Innovation-Driven Development & Skill Building: Enhancing youth and skill development programs through educational exchanges, following the India-UAE Skill Development MoU, while promoting fintech and digital payment integration, similar to India's UPI expansion into foreign markets.

6. Strategic Vision for the Future: Developing a 25-year roadmap for a "New India-Mauritius Partnership," similar to India-UAE Vision 2030, while integrating successful models like the India-Singapore Smart City Collaboration for Mauritius' urban development.

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UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- India and its neighborhood- relations

Tribunals in India- Explained Pointwise

Tribunal is a specialized, quasi-judicial body established to resolve specific disputes, such as administrative or tax-related issues. It adjudicates disputes, determines rights, and reviews administrative decisions. The number of pending cases in India exceeds 4.5 crore (as per the National Judicial Data Grid, 2024), highlighting the dire need for an efficient system. According to the Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021, the Government has merged and rationalized several tribunals, aiming to improve efficiency. **Tribunals in India**

What are the constitutional and legal provisions related to Tribunals in India?

The original Constitution did not include provisions related to tribunals. However, the 42nd Amendment Act of 1976 introduced Part XIV-A, titled "Tribunals," which consists of two articles:

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- **Article 323A** – Pertains to administrative tribunals.
- **Article 323B** – Covers tribunals for other specific matters

Provisions	Description
Article 323A	Grants Parliament the power to establish administrative tribunals for resolving disputes related to recruitment and service conditions of individuals employed in the Central and state governments, local bodies, public corporations, and other public authorities
Article 323B	Authorizes both Parliament and state legislatures to create tribunals for various matters, including industrial and labor disputes, foreign exchange, land reforms, elections, rent and tenancy rights, and more.

Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985

To implement Article 323A, Parliament enacted the Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985, empowering the Central Government to establish:

- **Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT)** for central government employees.
- **State Administrative Tribunals (SATs)** for state government employees.

What are the landmark judgement's related to tribunals in India?

S.P. Sampath Kumar v. Union of India (1987)	Recognized tribunals as substitutes for High Courts and upheld their constitutional validity.
L. Chandra Kumar v. Union of India (1997)	Declared that tribunals cannot act as substitutes for High Courts and must be subject to judicial review under Article 226 and 227.
Madras Bar Association v. Union of India 2014	Administrative support for all tribunals should come under the Ministry of Law and Justice.
Rojer Mathew versus South Indian Bank Limited & ors, 2019	The impact of amalgamation of tribunals should be analysed with judicial impact assessment.
Madras Bar Association versus Union of India, 2020	National Tribunals Commission should be set up to supervise appointments, as well as functioning and administration of tribunals.
Madras Bar Association versus Union of India, 2021	Struck down various provisions in tribunal reforms that undermined judicial independence.

What are the key developments in the Indian tribunal system?

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Pre-Independence Era (Before 1947)	The Income Tax Appellate Tribunal was established as India's first tribunal to reduce court workload and expedite tax dispute resolution
Post-Independence Era (1947–1980)	**1950**: Industrial Disputes (Appellate Tribunal) Act provided for an appellate tribunal to handle industrial disputes. **1969**: The First Administrative Reforms Commission recommended Civil Services Tribunals at national and state levels for service-related disputes. **1974**: The Sixth Law Commission suggested high-powered tribunals to reduce High Court case backlogs. **1976**: The Swaran Singh Committee recommended setting up **a. Administrative Tribunals** ((both at national level and state level) for service-related cases. **b. All-India Appellate Tribunal** for labor disputes. **c. Sector-specific tribunals** for revenue, land reforms, and essential commodities. **d**. Supreme Court oversight for tribunal decisions.
Golden Era of Tribunalization (1980–2000)	Establishment of several tribunals, including: **a. Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT)** – for administrative matters. **b. Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT)** – for financial sector disputes. **c. Film Certification Appellate Tribunal** – for film certification disputes. **d. Appellate Tribunal for Electricity** – for tariff-related cases.
2000–2016: Expansion of Tribunals	**2000**: **Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT)** – for resolving disputes between banks and borrowers. **2002**: **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** and **Competition Appellate Tribunal (COMPAT)** – to regulate fair competition. **2010**: **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** – for environmental disputes. **2016**: **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** & **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)** – for corporate and insolvency matters.

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2017- Merger of COMPAT with NCLAT	The Finance Act, 2017 reduced the number of tribunals from 26 to 19 based on functional similarity. It gave the central government authority to define qualifications, appointments, and service conditions for tribunal members.
Tribunal Reforms Act, 2021	The Tribunals Reforms (Rationalization and Conditions of Service) Bill, 2021 aimed to streamline the tribunal system. Nine tribunals were abolished, transferring their functions to existing judicial bodies, mainly High Courts.

Why are tribunals important, and what is their significance?

1. Speedy Justice: Tribunals are designed to offer faster dispute resolution compared to traditional courts. **E.g.** The Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions resolve cases within 3-6 months, NCLT expedited cases under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016, ensuring faster debt recovery.

2. Specialized Expertise: Tribunals were designed to handle complex, sector-specific disputes requiring technical expertise. **E.g** Power sector (APTEL), taxation (ITAT), corporate law (NCLAT), copyright (IPAB).

3. Reducing Court Burden: By handling specialized cases, tribunals reduce the workload of high courts and the Supreme Court. **E.g**. The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) has significantly reduced litigation burden in service-related disputes.

4. Economic Governance: Tribunals like the NCLT and DRT play a critical role in ensuring economic stability and ease of doing business. **E.g.** Creditors have recovered approximately Rs 3.55 lakh crore by resolving 1,068 insolvency cases under the IBC, 2016, as of September 2024 since 2016**.**

5. Environmental Protection & Protecting Fundamental Rights: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has played a pivotal role in environmental protection cases like the Vizag Gas Leak (2020)**.** It is also instrumental in addressing environmental issues, such as the Yamuna pollution case and illegal mining in Aravalli Hills.

6. Access to Justice: Tribunals provide a cost-effective and accessible forum for resolving disputes, especially for marginalized groups**.**

7. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR): Tribunals provide an alternative dispute resolution mechanism, which can be less adversarial and more conducive to finding mutually agreeable solutions.

What are various challeneges faced by Tribunals in India?

1. Case Backlogs Rising: As of 2023, the Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT) has over **215,431 pending cases**, with an asset recovery rate of just **9.2%** in 2022-23, far below the desired efficiency.

2. Mergers and Abolitions Causing Hindrance: The merger of tribunals like COMPAT with NCLAT has led to overburdened benches and loss of specialization.

3. Lower Vacancies and Poor Infrastructure: Tribunals like APTEL face chronic vacancies and lack adequate infrastructure, leading to delays. NCLT operated at 50% capacity in 2023**,** delaying crucial insolvency resolutions. Many tribunals lack digital case management systems, affecting efficiency.

4. Judicial Overreach: The Supreme Court's intervention in the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) ruling on the Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) dispute has raised questions about the legal standing of tribunals.

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5. Appointment Concerns: The trend of appointing retired judges and bureaucrats raises questions about post-retirement placements and expertise. **E.g.** The Ministry of Law and Justice controls appointments and budgets which reduces the administrative independence.

6. Lack of Uniformity: Different tribunals follow varying procedures, leading to inconsistency. For instance, the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT) and Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) have different rules for evidence submission.

7. Ineffective Implementation: The appointment process for tribunal members is slow and opaque, leading to prolonged vacancies. **E.g.** The Law Commission's 272nd Report (2017) recommended a central nodal agency, but no progress has been made.

8. Economic Impact: Delays in tribunal decisions have significant economic consequences. **E.g.** unresolved tax disputes worth ₹12 lakh crore are pending before various tribunals, affecting government revenue and investor confidence.

What is the Way Forward?

1. Establish an Independent Tribunal Oversight Body: Inspired by the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC), a Tribunal Commission should oversee appointments, funding, and administration. **E.g.** The Law Commission's 162nd Report suggested a **National** Administrative Appellate Tribunal above High Courts—an idea that needs revisiting.

2. Structured Tribunal Management System: A Central Tribunal Division within the Ministry of Law and Justice should be implemented to streamline operations. Case management technology and AI-based analytics should be deployed to track tribunal performance.

3. Implement a Double-Shift System to Expedite Disposal: To clear the backlog, tribunals should operate in two shifts, a proposal discussed in 2011 but never implemented. This would increase case disposals without increasing infrastructure costs.

4. Strengthen the Specialization and Independence of Tribunals: Instead of appointing retired bureaucrats, tribunals must have domain-specific technical panels to ensure subject matter expertise. Reduce judicial interventions by strengthening tribunal autonomy under the Tribunals Reforms Act.

5. Digital Transformation of Tribunals: Fully digitalize tribunal processes through an e-Tribunals initiative, ensuring real-time case tracking. Integrate online dispute resolution (ODR) mechanisms to reduce case inflow into traditional tribunals. **E.g.** The UK's HM Courts & Tribunals Service.

6. Minimizing Executive Control: The legislature should reduce bureaucratic control over tribunal functioning, as recommended in Rojer Mathew (2019) case.

7. Enhancing Judicial Autonomy: Ensure tribunals operate with minimal interference from higher courts, as emphasized in the L. Chandra Kumar vs Union of India (1997) case.

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UPSC Syllabus- GS 2– Quasi-judicial bodies

Rise of Quick commerce in India- Explained Pointwise

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Quick commerce is altering India's retail and last-mile delivery landscape. It stands out as a prominent trend in the country's e-commerce sector, leveraging the widespread availability of mobile internet and the rise of e-commerce.The sector is poised for massive growth, with India's quick commerce market expected to reach US$5 billion by 2025 and US$9.94 billion by 2029 as per some estimates. Key growth drivers include changing consumer preferences, increased e-commerce adoption, and demand for convenience among millennials and Gen Z.

Fig: As per IIM Ahamdabad, Future of Quick commerce in the Indian market.

What is a Quick Commerce?

Quick commerce, or Q-commerce, in India, refers to ultra-fast delivery (often within 10-30 minutes) of essential goods like groceries and personal care items, leveraging hyper-local fulfillment networks and technology. It's a growing trend driven by consumer demand for convenience and immediacy in urban areas.

Feature	Traditional E-commerce	Quick Commerce
Delivery Speed	Typically, 1-7 days or more	Few minutes to 1-2 hours
Delivery Range	Wide geographical coverage (national, international)	Limited to a small, local area (city, neighborhood)
Product Focus	Wide range of products (electronics, apparel, home goods, etc.)	Primarily daily essentials, groceries, convenience items, and ready-to-eat food

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Inventory Management	Centralized warehouses, distributed fulfillment centers	Localized micro-warehouses or dark stores
Order Size	Often larger, planned purchases	Smaller, immediate needs, impulse buys
Customer Needs	Planned purchases, variety, price comparison	Immediate gratification, convenience, urgent needs
Pricing Strategy	Competitive pricing, discounts, promotions	May have slightly higher prices for convenience and speed
Logistics	Long-haul transportation, standard delivery services	Hyperlocal delivery, bike couriers, dedicated delivery fleets
Technology Focus	Website/app-based ordering, standard logistics tracking	Real-time inventory management, route optimization, rapid delivery tracking
Operational Cost	Lower operational costs per unit	Higher operational costs per unit due to rapid delivery and hyperlocal logistics
Examples	Amazon, Flipkart, eBay	Zepto, Blinkit (formerly Grofers), Dunzo, Swiggy Instamart
Target Audience	Wide spread audience	Urban, time-sensitive customers

What is the current status of quick commerce in terms of market size and growth?

1. Market Size: The Indian Q-commerce market, valued at $3.34 billion in FY 2024, is projected to reach $9.95 billion by 2029, growing at a staggering 76% YoY (Grant Thorton Bharat).

2. Market Growth: According to Chryseum Financial Services the Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) of quick commerce surged from $0.5 billion in FY22 to $3.3 billion in FY24, marking a staggering 280% growth over two years.

3. Market Leaders: The top three players, Zomato-owned Blinkit (46% market share), Zepto (29%), and Swiggy Instamart (25%)—dominate the sector (Motilal Oswal, FY 2025 Q1).

4. Consumer Base: Quick commerce caters primarily to urban households, with 20 million addressable households in metro and Tier 1 cities

5. Consumer Preferences: A Deloitte Consumer Survey (2024) found that 12% of urban consumers prefer Q-commerce, especially for food and beverages, driven by impulse purchases and immediate needs.

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6. FMCG Sales: According to Deloitte, large FMCG brands have seen a two-fold increase in Q-commerce sales, now comprising 35% of their total online sales.

7. Adoption Trends: Quick commerce platforms are growing at a rate of 20-25% faster than traditional e-commerce platforms, reflecting a significant shift in consumer behavior.

Why is Q-Commerce so effective, and what makes it successful?

1. Improving Urban Convenience: Q-commerce caters to late-night needs and unaddressed demand, offering services when traditional retail shops are closed (EY-Parthenon). With India's internet user base expected to exceed 900 million by 2025, increasing digital adoption will further fuel e-commerce expansion.

2. Dark Stores: The Backbone of Speed: These strategically located warehouses enable hyperlocal fulfillment, ensuring sub-20-minute deliveries.

3. Data-Driven Demand Forecasting: Platforms use customer app activity to predict seasonal trends, optimize inventory, and curate personalized recommendations.

4. Brand Awareness: According to IIM Ahmedabad, Q-commerce enhances brand visibility and consumer engagement for retailers.

- **Workforce Availability**: The availability of low-cost, employable manpower has been a key driver of Q-commerce's efficiency and growth in India (EY-Parthenon).
- **Expanding Reach to Tier-2 and Tier-3 Cities**: Quick commerce is extending its footprint beyond metros, catering to rising digital penetration in smaller cities. Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities accounted for 60% of India's total e-commerce demand in 2023, with a projected annual growth of 30% by 2025.

5. Employment Growth and Strengthening the Gig Economy:

- The sector is generating vast employment opportunities, especially for delivery personnel and warehouse workers. NITI Aayog's report on the gig economy projects 23.5 million gig workers by 2029-30, making up a significant share of non-agricultural employment.
- The availability of low-cost, employable manpower has been a key driver of Q-commerce's efficiency and growth in India (EY-Parthenon).
- No Time Restrictions, unlike retail stores that shut by 8 PM, Q-commerce fulfills late-night demand, capturing a previously unaddressed market segment.

6. Facilitating Emergency and Essential Deliveries:

- These platforms played a crucial role during Covid-19 lockdowns, ensuring uninterrupted supply of essential goods. Swiggy Instamart's partnership with Earth Fokus during Bengaluru's 2024 water crisis enabled the rapid distribution of water-saving aerators.
- Food, beverages, and daily essentials drive demand, while traditional e-commerce remains dominant for planned purchases (Deloitte, 2024).

What are the different challenges does quick commerce pose?

1. Anti-Competitive Practices: Quick commerce platforms face accusations of predatory pricing and deep discounting, aimed at eliminating competition (AICPDF complaint to CCI). Traditional retailers claim these practices create an uneven playing field, forcing small businesses to shut down.

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2. Algorithmic Price Manipulation & Differential Pricing: Platforms allegedly use customer data (location, device type, purchasing behavior) to implement differential pricing, disadvantage certain consumers. This raises concerns about fairness and transparency in pricing strategies.

3. Threat to Traditional Retail: Millions of Kirana stores and distributors face losses or closure due to the aggressive strategies of Q-commerce platforms (AICPDF). The shift in consumer preferences toward ultra-fast deliveries and discounts has reduced footfall in local shops.

4. Worker Exploitation & Delivery Rider Risks: Gig workers face poor working conditions, low wages, and road safety hazards due to high-pressure delivery targets. Protests by delivery riders in cities like Bengaluru and Mumbai highlight the lack of social security, insurance, and fixed salaries.

5. Unsustainability of the Business Model: Quick commerce relies heavily on discounts, cash burn, and investor funding, making it unsustainable in the long term. **E.g.** Zepto reportedly burned through ₹1,200 crore in Q4 2024, averaging ₹400 crore per month (Industry reports).

6. Environmental Impact of Rapid Deliveries: The sector contributes to carbon emissions and packaging waste due to reliance on motorbikes and single-use plastics. Despite initiatives like plastic-neutral deliveries, implementation remains inconsistent (Zomato, Swiggy).

7. Carbon Footprint of Rapid Deliveries: The quick commerce sector is contributing to rising carbon emissions and packaging waste, with most deliveries relying on non-sustainable practices. **E.g.** E-commerce transportation contributes significantly to **CO2 emissions,** with India accounting for 285g CO2 per parcel, making up 51% of total delivery emissions.

What are the Solutions for a Sustainable Quick Commerce Ecosystem?

1. Fair Competition & Regulatory Oversight: CCI intervention is essential to curb predatory pricing while fostering innovation (AICPDF complaint to CCI). Establish a National E-Commerce Regulatory Authority to monitor pricing, data protection, and monopolistic practices. **E.g.** EU Digital Markets Act & Digital Services Act**.**

2. Hybrid Retail Models & MSME Integration: Kirana store partnerships can blend hyperlocal expertise with Q-commerce efficiency (ONDC framework). Platforms should source inventory from MSMEs to ensure fair market access. **E.g.** China's JD Daojia & Alibaba's Freshippo.

3. Stronger Gig Worker Protections: Enforce **Code on Social Security, 2020** to mandate fair wages, insurance, and safety measures. Diwali delivery worker video (2024) sparked debate on low pay; gig workers need fixed hours and accident coverage**. E.g.** California's Proposition 22.

4. Delivery Time & Safety Standards: Regulate **minimum delivery timelines for non-essential goods** to prevent over-speeding and rider fatigue. Bengaluru traffic police fined riders ₹30.57 lakh in Nov 2024, highlighting risks of rushed deliveries. **E.g.** South Korea's Delivery Speed Regulation: Caps maximum daily working hours.

5. Sustainable Logistics & Green Supply Chains: Introduce eco-friendly packaging mandates and promote EV-based delivery fleets under the FAME scheme. India's e-commerce CO_2 emissions: 285g per parcel (51% of total delivery emissions); urgent shift to green logistics needed. **E.g.** Germany's DHL GoGreen Initiative**.**

6. Data Privacy & Consumer Protection: Enforce Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 to regulate customer data usage and pricing transparency. 48% of shoppers reported incorrect deliveries; 20% received counterfeit products—stricter consumer protection needed.

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7. Standardized Grievance Redressal Mechanisms: Mandate transparent escalation processes for refunds, damaged goods, and complaints. A central ombudsman for consumer issues can speed up resolutions and boost trust.

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