



## 7 PM COMPILATION

**1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> week January, 2026**

### Features of 7 PM compilation

- ❖ Comprehensive coverage of a given current topic
- ❖ Provide you all the information you need to frame a good answer
- ❖ Critical analysis, comparative analysis, legal/constitutional provisions, current issues and challenges and best practices around the world
- ❖ Written in lucid language and point format
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### Aravallis – Significance & Recent Controversy – Explained Pointwise

The recent SC order regarding the Aravalli Range & mining in the region has stirred the controversy. The order that adopted a uniform definition to identify the “hills & ranges” & froze the new mining leases until the MoEFCC had prepared a sustainable mining plan for the landscape, and said mining should be prohibited in the “core” areas, with an exception for critical, strategic & atomic minerals notified under MMDR Act – which the court has called a ‘strategic exemption’.

#### What are Aravallis?

- The Aravallis (or Aravalli Range) are one of the oldest mountain systems in the world (>2bn years old), predating even the Himalayas.
- They are a series of ancient fold mountains that act as the “ecological spine” of Northwest India.
- The range stretches approximately 670 to 800 km in a northeast-to-southwest direction.
- States Covered: It spans four major regions: Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat.
- Highest Point: The highest peak is Guru Shikhar on Mount Abu in Rajasthan, standing at 1,722 meters (5,650 feet).
- While they were once as high as the Himalayas, millions of years of weathering and erosion have reduced them to “residual” mountains or hills.
- The range is primarily made of metamorphic rocks like quartzite, marble, and granite. It is a major source of minerals including copper, zinc, lead, and high-quality marble.



#### What is the significance of Aravallis?

The “Green Shield” Against Desertification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Sand Barrier: Without these hills, the desert sands would have long ago encroached upon the fertile agricultural lands of Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh.</li> <li>Dust Filtration: They act as a physical filter, trapping massive amounts of dust and particulate matter from the desert, which would otherwise devastate the air quality of the Delhi-NCR region.</li> </ul>
Groundwater & Water Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Sponge Effect: The Aravallis act as a massive recharge zone of groundwater. The fractured and weathered rocks of the range allow rainwater to percolate deep into the earth, recharging the aquifers that sustain the drinking water and irrigation needs of cities like Gurugram, Jaipur, and Delhi.</li> <li>Source of Rivers: Several seasonal and perennial rivers, including the Luni, Banas, and Sahibi, originate here, supporting local ecosystems and agriculture.</li> </ul>
Climate & Monsoon Regulator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guiding Monsoons: The Aravallis help guide monsoon clouds towards the northern plains and the Himalayas, ensuring more even rainfall distribution.</li> <li>Temperature Buffer: Studies have shown that forested areas of the Aravallis can be 2-3°C cooler than surrounding urban areas, helping mitigate the “urban heat island” effect during intense heatwaves.</li> </ul>
Biodiversity Hotspot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wildlife Corridors: They serve as a critical corridor for animals like leopards, striped hyenas, and jackals to move between protected areas like Sariska Tiger Reserve and the Delhi Ridge.</li> <li>Medicinal Flora: The range is home to diverse native plant species adapted to semi-arid conditions, many of which have significant medicinal value.</li> </ul>
Historical & Economic Significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cradle of Civilization: The range supported early metallurgical hubs, providing copper and gold to the ancient Harappan Civilization.</li> <li>Source of Critical, Strategic &amp; Atomic Minerals: Aravallis are believed to have potential for minerals which are strategically important for India, including base metals in certain established belts, minerals such as Tungsten &amp; other bulk minerals including stones &amp; rocks.</li> </ul>

#### What is the recent controversy regarding the Aravallis?

- The controversy revolves around a recent Supreme Court ruling that redefined what technically qualifies as an “Aravalli hill,” sparking fears that vast portions of the range could lose legal protection.

- In November 2025, a Supreme Court bench led by the then Chief Justice accepted a new uniform definition for the Aravalli Hills.
- According to the new definition accepted by the SC, only landforms rising 100 metres or more above the local ground level were to be legally classified as “Aravalli Hills.”
- The government argued this provided a “scientific and uniform” standard to replace the vague definitions that varied across Rajasthan, Haryana, Gujarat, and Delhi.
- Environmentalists, scientists, and local communities immediately protested the ruling, leading to the #SaveAravalli movement.

### What are the concerns raised against the SC order?

1. The “100-Metre” Exclusion:
  - According to an internal assessment by the Forest Survey of India (FSI), this definition would exclude nearly 90% to 92% of the Aravalli system.
  - Unlike the “young” Himalayas, the Aravallis are ancient and heavily eroded. Most of their ecological value lies in low-lying ridges and hillocks that are much shorter than 100 metres but serve as critical barriers and water recharge zones.
  - Critics also argue that the committee suggesting this definition was dominated by bureaucrats rather than independent ecologists, leading to accusations of “pro-industry” bias.
2. Fragmentation of the “Green Barrier”:
  - The order defined a “range” as two or more such 100-metre hills within 500 metres of each other. Critics argued this creates a “structural paradox.” By protecting only the “peaks,” the valleys and lower slopes between them could be opened for mining or construction.
  - Breaking the continuity of the range creates “gaps” through which the sands of the Thar Desert can drift into the fertile plains of Haryana and Delhi, accelerating desertification.
3. Further Deterioration of Air Quality: Lower ridges below 100 metres are crucial as wind-breaks; breaching them would open “gaps” in the Aravalli green wall, allowing dust and hot winds from the Thar Desert to sweep more freely into Delhi, Haryana and western UP.
4. Threat to Water Security: The lower hills & slopes are the most effective at groundwater recharge. These areas act as a “sponge” for rainwater. If they are de-classified as Aravallis and handed over for real estate or mining, it could lead to a catastrophic drop in the water table for cities like Gurugram, Faridabad, and Delhi, which are already water-stressed.
5. Opening the Door to Mining: If a hill is less than 100 metres tall, it would no longer be legally protected as “Aravalli land.” This would allow state governments to grant mining leases in areas previously considered sensitive.
6. Contradiction of Previous Jurisprudence: Since the early 2000s, the Supreme Court has traditionally used a 3-degree slope criterion (any land with a slope steeper than 3 degrees) to identify hills. Moving to a height-based threshold was seen as a major “U-turn” that ignored decades of established environmental law.

The Court has stayed its November 2025 judgment & proposed a high-powered expert committee and frozen the use of the 100-metre definition until a full, scientific and holistic reassessment of Aravalli protection is completed.

### What can be the way forward to save the Aravallis?

1. Re-defining “The Range” Scientifically:

- The 3-Degree Slope Rule: Reverting to the Forest Survey of India's (FSI) long-standing recommendation to define a hill based on its slope ( $>3^\circ$ ) rather than its absolute height. This protects the low-lying ridges that are functionally vital.
  - Landscape Continuity: Defining the Aravallis as a continuous geological unit. Instead of protecting isolated "peaks," the valleys, foothills, and small hillocks between them must be treated as a single, protected ecosystem.
2. The Management Plan for Sustainable Mining (MPSM): The Supreme Court has mandated the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) to create a master plan – which includes:
- No-Go Zones: Permanent bans on mining in "involute" areas like tiger corridors (Sariska-Delhi), wetlands, and groundwater recharge zones.
  - Calibrated Extraction: Allowing mining only for critical minerals (like copper or zinc) in designated, low-impact zones, rather than a blanket ban which often leads to the rise of illegal "sand mafias."
  - Restoration Bonds: Requiring mining companies to deposit funds upfront for the mandatory ecological restoration of a site once mining is completed.
3. The Aravalli Green Wall Project (2026-2030): This massive restoration project is the primary "offensive" strategy to save the range:
- The 5-km Buffer: Creating a continuous green belt across 29 districts in four states to block the eastward march of the Thar Desert.
  - Native Species Reforestation: Moving away from monoculture plantations and planting native species like *Kikar*, *Dhok*, and *Salai* that can survive with minimal water and provide a habitat for local wildlife.
  - Rejuvenating Water Bodies: Using ancient techniques like *Johads* (check dams) to catch rainwater within the hills to recharge the drying aquifers of Gurugram and Delhi.
4. Technological Oversight:
- Satellite Monitoring: Using real-time GIS and satellite imagery to track changes in hill volume and forest cover.
  - Drone Patrols: Deploying "Anti-Mining Task Forces" equipped with drones to monitor remote parts of the range that are otherwise inaccessible.
5. Community-Led Conservation:
- Eco-Tourism: Promoting sustainable trekking and nature parks (like the Gurugram Biodiversity Park) to create local jobs that don't depend on mining.
  - Village Forest Committees: Empowering local communities (Van Mitras) to protect the hills, as they are the first to feel the impact of falling water tables and leopard sightings.

UPSC GS-1: Geography  
Read More: [The Hindu](#)

## Solid Waste Management in India – Explained Pointwise



### Solid Waste Management in India

The **Solid Waste Management in India** remains an Achilles heel for India. The Supreme Court of India **recently criticized the solid waste management in New Delhi**. There are more than **3,800 tones of untreated solid waste** in Delhi alone. This waste reaches landfills and threatens public health and the environment. Proper steps need to be undertaken for safe disposal and treatment of solid waste in India.

#### What is a Solid Waste?

- Solid Waste: Solid waste refers to any **unwanted or discarded material** that is not in a liquid or gaseous state. The solid waste includes a **wide range of materials** generated from various sources such as **households, industries, commercial establishments, construction sites, and institutions**.
- Types of Solid Waste:
  - Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) – Household, commercial, market waste.
  - Biomedical Waste – Hospitals, clinics (requires special handling).
  - Electronic Waste (E-waste) – Phones, laptops, appliances.
  - Construction & Demolition (C&D) Waste – Debris, bricks, tiles.
  - Industrial Waste – By-products from factories, often hazardous.
  - Plastic Waste – Single-use plastics, packaging material.

#### What is the status of Solid Waste generation in India?

Status of Solid Waste Generation in India:

- According to a study published in 'Nature' – India is the biggest plastic polluter in the world – releasing 9.3mT of plastic waste annually – which is equivalent to around 20% of global plastic emission.
- According to CPCB report, only ~50% of total solid waste generated in the country is treated. The processing of solid waste in India has improved significantly, from **19% in 2015-16** to **~50% in 2020-21**. In the corresponding period, the proportion of solid waste landfilled has **fallen from 54% to 18.4%**.

The total quantity of Solid waste generated in India per Day	~ <b>1,60,000</b> Metric Tonnes Per Day (TPD)
Waste Collection per day	~ <b>1,53,000</b> Metric Tonnes Per Day (TPD) Waste Collection efficiency is ~ <b>96%</b> .
Waste treatment per day	~ <b>80,000</b> Metric Tonnes Per Day (TPD) Only <b>50%</b> of the total waste is treated.
Waste Landfilled per day	~ <b>30,000</b> Metric Tonnes Per Day (TPD) <b>18.4%</b> of the total waste generated ends in landfill.
Unaccounted Waste Generation	~ <b>50,000</b> Metric Tonnes Per Day (TPD) <b>31.2%</b> of the total waste generated remains unaccounted.

About 50-55% of the waste generated in Indian cities is biodegradable wet waste, about 35% is non-biodegradable wet waste and 10% is an inert component.

### What are the Challenges with Solid Waste Management in India?

1. Rising Waste Generation: Rapid economic growth **has raised the consumption levels in the economy**, which has in turn increased the waste generation. Further, **the expansion of digital economy** is leading to a **multifold increase in e-waste generation**. Rising plastic waste generation in eco-sensitive regions like Himalayas are choking the fragile ecosystems present there. *For ex- A Planning Commission Report had estimated that India will generate 165 million tonnes by 2030.*

2. Lack of proper Waste Management: India lacks proper waste management and disposal techniques.

- Inadequate Infrastructure: Many urban and rural areas lack proper infrastructure for waste collection, segregation, transportation, processing, and disposal.
- Collection & Treatment: While collection rates are improving, a significant portion of the generated waste remains uncollected.
- Poor Processing: Only **50% of the waste** produced is actually processed in India. **~30% of waste is not accounted** and **~20% ends up in landfills**, reflecting poor waste disposal method.

- Incorrect and Inadequate Segregation Techniques: There is poor segregation of waste at source. Hazardous waste and e-waste is not sealed and labelled leading to improper disposal. *For ex- Valuable materials like aluminum and plastics end up in landfills instead of being recycled.*
- Reuse/recycling of waste: Reuse and recycling of waste is predominantly an informal economy, lacking access to advanced technology.
- Financial Constraints: Local municipal bodies often face budget limitations hindering investments in modern waste management systems.

3. Littering and Illegal Dumping: Due to poor disposal methods, **almost half of waste is placed in uncontrolled dumps and landfills**. A substantial amount of untreated waste, approximately 24%, ends up in landfills, many of which are unscientific and overflowing. These landfills are the **source of generation of methane gases, leachates, and landfill fires**, adversely affecting the surrounding environment

4. Lack of land resources: The urban areas in India lack adequate land resources to set up waste processing plants. *For ex- Waste processing plants in Delhi need large land parcels, of about 30-40 acres each for treatment.*

5. Lack of public awareness: Lack of **public awareness regarding proper waste management practices**, contributes to littering and improper disposal habits.

6. Lack of regular waste collection services: The **lack of regular waste collection services** adds up to the **building up of waste as well as littering**. Illegal dumping in open areas and waterbodies increases the pressure on the municipal body, warranting more resources for clean-up.

7. Lack of proper data: Lack of data regarding the quantity & quality of waste generated & processed in India is a major roadblock in its management. The data regarding the rate of waste generation in India is under-estimated & of waste collection is over-estimated. For e.g. according to the official estimates, the plastic waste generation rate in India is 0.12 kg/capita/day, while according to the study published in 'Nature', it is as high as 0.54 kg/capita/day. The agencies in India claim to collect 95% of the waste generated, however, these official statistics do not include rural areas, open burning of uncollected waste or the waste recycled by the informal sector.

8. Informal Sector: The informal sector, consisting of ragpickers and recyclers, plays a crucial role in managing and extracting value from waste, though often under hazardous conditions.

9. Waste Composition: A large percentage of Indian waste is organic, offering potential for composting and bio-methanation. However, the increasing proportion of non-biodegradable waste like plastics and e-waste presents management challenges.

### What are the harmful impacts of poor Waste Management?

1. Health Issues: The improper waste management leads to several health issues such as:

- Open burning of waste leads to formation of harmful particles which can cause **lung diseases**.
- Poor collection of solid waste leads to garbage dumps which act as **breeding ground for rats and mosquitoes** etc. Mosquitoes act as carriers of diseases like malaria and dengue.

2. Environmental Issues: Improper waste management techniques lead to various environmental problems such as:

- **Unscientific dumping in landfill** leads to **formation of harmful chemicals** which permeate into soil and groundwater. This renders groundwater unfit for drinking and cause multiple diseases

- Waste in landfills leads to formation of harmful gases leading to air pollution. *For ex- Around 90-98% of landfill gases are made up of methane and carbon dioxide, remaining 2-10% includes nitrogen, oxygen, ammonia, sulphides, hydrogen and various other gases.*
- A lot of land-based waste eventually **ends up in sea leading to marine pollution.**

3. Economic Impacts: Improper waste management usually has grave economic impacts such as:

- **Expansion of landfills occupy useful land**, leading to wasteful utilization of an economic resource.
- Poor waste collection leads to clogging of drains, which has become a factor in urban flooding, leading to economic losses.
- **Poor waste management leads to general filth in cities**, which impacts tourism potential.

### What have been the Government interventions for Solid Waste Management?

Policy and Legal Framework for Waste Management in India	The Government of India (GoI) has formulated various Rules and Regulations. These rules are updated periodically and have been formulated under the <b>Environment Protection Act, 1986</b> . These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Solid Waste Management Rules</li> <li>b. e-Waste Management Rules</li> <li>c. Plastic Waste Management Rules</li> </ul>
Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Mechanism	EPR is a policy approach in waste management that <b>makes producers responsible for the entire lifecycle of their products</b> , including their collection, recycling, and disposal. In 2022, EPR initiatives utilizing market mechanisms were implemented for plastic packaging, <b>E-waste, battery waste, and used oil.</b>
Swachh Bharat Mission for Solid Waste Management	Central assistance is provided under Swachh Bharat Mission for solid waste management, including plastic waste management in urban and rural areas.
Compost Banao, Compost Apnao Campaign	It is a multi-media campaign launched by MoHUA on waste-to-compost under SBM-(U). The aim is to <b>encourage people to convert their kitchen waste into compost to be used as fertilizer</b> and to reduce the amount of waste getting to landfill sites.
Promotion of Waste to Energy	The <b>Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)</b> launched Program on Energy from Urban, Industrial, Agricultural waste/residues and Municipal Solid Waste to promote setting up of <b>Waste-to-Energy projects and to provide central financial assistance.</b>

GOBAR-Dhan Scheme	This scheme promotes the conversion of cattle dung and organic farm waste into biogas and organic compost in rural areas.
National Action Plan for Municipal Solid Waste Management	This plan by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) outlines strategies for waste minimization, utilization, recycling, processing, and environmentally sound disposal.
Mission LiFE	<p>Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) is an India-led global mass movement to encourage individuals and communities to adopt sustainable, climate-friendly lifestyles and reduce mindless consumption.</p> <p>Mission LiFE actions are organised around themes such as energy conservation, water saving, waste reduction, sustainable food systems, reduced single-use plastics, healthy lifestyles, and e-waste management.</p>

### What should be the Way Forward?

1. Scientific Waste Management: The waste management planning should be based on **sound scientific and engineering studies**. They should consider **waste composition, capital and long-term operating costs, transport distances**, and the **geographical location of waste processing and disposal facilities**.
2. Smart Waste Management System: In the long term, technology like (Internet of Things) can be integrated into waste management. *For ex- RFID-enabled door-to-door waste collection monitoring can enhance collection efficiency and GPS based vehicle tracking can help in real time monitoring.*
3. Emphasis on Recycling, Resource recovery & Processing: Policies supporting recycling and recovery of resources from waste must be implemented stringently. Waste processing methods like **composting, vermicomposting** and **bio-methanation** should be adopted for treating organic waste. Establish efficient material recovery facilities (MRFs) and support the formalization of the recycling sector.
4. Scaling up Waste-to-Energy: Bio-methanation (anaerobic digestion) which uses microorganisms to convert the organic waste into methane, can be used as fuel. **Bio-methanation plants** should be scaled up. Also, **Refuse-Derived Fuel (RDF) which consists of plastics, paper, and textile waste**, having good calorific value, can be used to generate power in waste-to-energy projects.
5. Polluter Pays Principle:
  - Waste Management Rules which have incorporated '**Polluter Pays Principle**', need to be stringently implemented to penalize non-compliance.
  - Polluter pays principle casts absolute liability on the polluter for the harm caused to the environment & extends not only to compensate the victims of pollution but also the cost of restoring environmental degradation.
  - While the liability is clear under this principle, but the process of determining an equitable compensation is difficult as it must account for both tangible & intangible damages inflicted on environment & the affected communities. To overcome this, the Courts have modified the principle into 'Government Pays Principle' under which it is the government which has to pay the compensation

to the affected individuals & recover the same from the polluters, until the damage caused to the ecology is fully reversed.

6. Increasing Public Awareness: **Self- help groups, residents' welfare associations, and community-based organizations** should be encouraged to educate and acquaint people with beneficial waste management strategies, including separation, recycling modes, and drop off centers for recyclables, as well as composting.

7. Data collection: There is an urgent need to collect & provide reliable data about waste generation & its composition in the country for its effective management. We need to know how much of the waste is being generated, where & how it is being managed for finding an effective solution. We also need to have data regarding the infrastructure that has been built over the years for waste management & such infrastructure needs to be geotagged to help in proper disposal of waste.

8. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR): To effectively operationalize the EPR, the producers, importers & brand owners that have a legal obligation to collect the waste, can collectively form kiosks across the country to collect the waste from local bodies – so that all the waste that is covered under EPR can be deposited & effectively managed.

9. Circular Economy Model: The circular economy model underlines waste as a resource. India needs to move away from a linear to circular mode of waste management – with the twin objectives of minimizing waste & recovering energy & other resources.

Conclusion:

According to the SC of India, environmental protection is not only a regulatory obligation but also a constitutional imperative which aims to safeguard the fundamental rights of the individuals & preserve the ecological balance. Thus, it is the right time to hold the waste management system in the country accountable to the people whose health is impacted by the land, water & air pollution caused by unmanaged & mismanaged waste all across the country.

Read More: [The Hindu, The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus: GS III, Conservation, Environment Pollution and Degradation.

### Venezuela Crisis – Causes & Consequences – Explained Pointwise

Following months of pressure on Venezuela & blaming the Venezuela government & military for being involved in drug trafficking that are harming the American people, the U.S. under Trump administration decided to attack the Venezuelan capital & forcibly apprehended the Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro & flies him to the U.S. He will now face the charges of drug trafficking & narco-terrorism in New York court. The military operation, known as Operation Absolute Resolve, has triggered a wide-range of short-term & long-term consequences.



Source: European Commission

### What are the reasons behind USA's intervention in Venezuela?

1. **Drug Trafficking:** In 2020, the U.S. indicted Nicolás Maduro and other high-ranking officials for narco-terrorism, alleging they led the “Cartel de los Soles” to flood the U.S. with cocaine.
2. **The “Backyard” Policy:**
  - Intervention in Venezuela fits a long U.S. tradition of treating Latin America as a strategic sphere of influence under the Monroe Doctrine.
  - Under a revived Monroe Doctrine, the U.S. seeks to eliminate the influence of Russia, China, Iran, and Cuba, which have provided Maduro with financial, military, and intelligence support.
  - US leaders explicitly cast Venezuela, along with Cuba and Nicaragua, as part of an “axis of socialism” and a source of regional instability, suggesting regime change there is about reshaping the Western Hemisphere's ideological map.
3. **Strategic Energy Asset:** U.S. refineries, particularly on the Gulf Coast, are specifically designed to process Venezuela's heavy crude. Direct intervention is seen by the current administration as a way to secure a stable, non-Middle Eastern energy supply and lower domestic fuel prices.
4. **Critical Minerals:** Beyond oil, Venezuela possesses vast deposits of gold, bauxite, and rare earth elements. Access to these is increasingly viewed as a national security priority for the U.S. to compete with China's dominance in high-tech manufacturing.
5. **Regional Instability:** The collapse of Venezuela's economy led to one of the largest migration crises in history. U.S. officials argue that intervention is necessary to stabilize the region and facilitate the return of millions of displaced persons.
6. **Human Rights:** The U.S. State Department has frequently cited human rights abuses, the suppression of political opponents, and “fraudulent” elections (2013, 2018, 2024) as justifications for applying “maximum pressure” on the Maduro regime.
7. **Economic Model:** The nationalization of assets (including those of U.S. companies like ExxonMobil and General Motors) under Hugo Chávez and later Maduro created a deep-seated economic rift that the U.S. aims to “correct” by reopening markets.

### What can be the consequences of such an intervention in Venezuela?

1. **Political Instability:**

- Maduro's capture and transfer to New York for trial on narcoterrorism charges leaves a fragmented leadership, with opposition figures and military remnants vying for control.
  - The U.S. administration has expressed intent to "run" Venezuela temporarily. However, analysts warn this could lead to internal power struggles among the remaining Maduro loyalists and the fragmented opposition.
2. Civil Unrest: Pro-government militias (known as *colectivos*) and military factions may launch an insurgency or guerrilla-style resistance, leading to prolonged civil conflict or even a civil war.
  3. Geopolitical Polarization: Rivals such as China, Russia, and Iran have condemned the "blatant use of force," viewing it as a return to "gunboat diplomacy." Critics fear this may embolden other nations to launch similar unilateral strikes elsewhere (e.g., tensions regarding Taiwan or Iran).
  4. Long-term Oil Outlook: If the U.S. successfully modernizes Venezuela's decaying infrastructure, global oil supply could eventually increase by 2-3 million barrels per day, potentially lowering long-term energy prices. However, the short-term remains volatile due to the risk of sabotage on pipelines and refineries.
  5. Refugee Crisis: Intense fighting or a collapse of public order could trigger a fresh wave of migration into neighboring countries like Colombia and Brazil, further straining regional resources.

#### What can be the impact on India's interests?

1. Energy Security: India is largely shielded from immediate supply shocks because its reliance on Venezuelan crude had already plummeted. In 2024-2025, Venezuela accounted for only 0.3% of India's total oil imports due to ongoing U.S. sanctions.
2. Oil Imports: Indian private refiners, like Reliance Industries (RIL), possess some of the world's most sophisticated "complex" refineries designed to process the heavy, sour crude that Venezuela produces. If the U.S. stabilizes the region and lifts sanctions, India could resume high-volume imports, helping to diversify away from Russian and Middle Eastern oil.
3. Recovery of "Stuck" Assets and Dividends: India has nearly \$1 billion in dividends and payments stuck in Venezuela's oil system. Projects like *San Cristóbal* and *Carabobo-1* have been non-functional or underpaid for years.
4. Resumption of Production: A post-Maduro administration backed by the U.S. might allow OVL (ONGC Videsh Ltd) and Oil India to restart operations at these stranded oilfields, turning "dead" assets back into active energy sources for India.
5. The "Monroe Doctrine" Precedent: Analysts suggest the intervention signals a "harsher global order" where sovereignty is increasingly conditional. This puts pressure on India to secure its overseas assets in other volatile regions (like Africa or Central Asia) that may be subject to similar great-power maneuvers.

#### What can be the way forward?

1. U.S. Provisional Oversight: President Trump has stated the U.S. will "run the country" via a designated group until a "safe and judicious" transition is arranged. Secretary of State Marco Rubio clarified this as "leveraging control" over key assets rather than day-to-day administrative governance.
2. Debt Restructuring: A new government will need to negotiate the massive sovereign debt (over \$150 billion) owed to Russia, China, and various private bondholders. The U.S. may use its "management" of oil revenues as a bargaining chip in these negotiations.
3. Counter-Insurgency: Neutralizing pro-Maduro *colectivos* (armed militias) and ensuring the military remains in barracks. A "peacekeeping" or "advisory" force may be needed to prevent Caracas from sliding into gang-led anarchy.

4. Engage multilaterally: Push through UN, BRICS, G20, and Global South forums for de-escalation, humanitarian aid, and respect for sovereignty, aligning with Brazil and others.
5. Humanitarian Surge: Activating the \$606 million UN Humanitarian Response Plan for 2026 to address the immediate food and medicine shortages that the conflict might exacerbate.
6. Energy & Economic Safeguards:
  - a. Diversify imports: Accelerate discounted Russian, US, and Middle Eastern crude deals to buffer price spikes; monitor heavy-sour premiums affecting refiners.
  - b. Pursue opportunities: Negotiate favorable contracts in restructured Venezuelan oil sector, potentially unlocking \$1B for Indian firms like ONGC.

UPSC GS-2: [International Relations](#)

Read More: The Hindu

### Anti-Defection Law & The Role of Speaker – Explained Pointwise

The Tenth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, also known as the Anti-Defection Law, was inserted by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985, to curb the growing menace of political defections which destabilized governments in the post-1967 era. However, in recent years, the issue has once again taken center stage due to partisan actions by Legislative Speakers, resulting in erosion of democratic values and legal safeguards. Recently, the Telangana Legislative Assembly's Speaker dismissed the petition to disqualify 10 MLAs who have allegedly defected after the 2023 Legislative Assembly election results. His actions have been criticized by the members of the opposition parties of the State as being unilateral & biased.

#### What is the Tenth Schedule?

- The 10th Schedule of the Constitution, also known as Anti-Defection Law, addresses disqualification of MPs and MLAs for defection, a response to the political instability of the late 1960s when “party-hopping MLAs” toppled multiple state governments.
- Under the 10th Schedule, a member of either Parliament (MPs) or a State Legislature (MLAs/MLCs) can be disqualified if:
  - Voluntary Resignation: They voluntarily give up their membership of the political party on whose ticket they were elected.
  - Defying the Whip: They vote or abstain from voting in the House contrary to the directions (the “whip”) issued by their political party without prior permission.
  - Independent Members: An independent candidate joins any political party after being elected.
  - Nominated Members: A nominated member joins a political party after six months from the date they took their seat.
- Exceptions:
  - Merger: If at least two-thirds of the members of a legislative party agree to merge with another party, they are not disqualified.
  - Presiding Officers: A person elected as the Speaker or Chairman can resign from their party to maintain neutrality and can rejoin it after they leave the office without facing disqualification.
- Deciding Authority: The power to decide on disqualification rests with the Presiding Officer of the House (the Speaker in the Lok Sabha/Assemblies and the Chairman in the Rajya Sabha/Councils).
- Judicial Review: Originally, the law stated the Presiding Officer's decision was final and could not be challenged in court. However, in the Kihoto Hollohan case (1992), the Supreme Court ruled that the

Speaker acts as a tribunal, meaning their decision is subject to judicial review by High Courts and the Supreme Court.

- The 91st Amendment (2003):
  - Removed the “Split” provision: Previously, a “split” by one-third of a party’s members was protected. This was removed to prevent mass defections.
  - Ministerial Limit: It capped the total number of ministers (including the PM/CM) at 15% of the total strength of the Lok Sabha or State Assembly.
  - Holding Office: A member disqualified under the 10th Schedule cannot hold any remunerative political post or ministerial position until they are re-elected.

#### Evolution of Defection Law

Period	Development/Event	Speaker's Role	Examples
1985	52nd Constitutional Amendment Act inserts the Tenth Schedule into the Constitution.	Speaker given sole adjudicatory powers on disqualification of members.	Speaker acts as quasi-judicial authority under Tenth Schedule.
1992	Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu (SC) upholds the constitutionality of Tenth Schedule, but allows judicial review of Speaker's decision.	Speaker's decision subject to judicial review, though he remains the initial authority.	SC: “Speaker acts as tribunal; not above the Constitution”.
1998-2003	Rise in coalition politics; loopholes like split (1/3rd rule) used to avoid disqualification.	Speaker's bias becomes evident; mass defections legalized under 'split' provision.	Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Goa saw misuse of split clause.
2003	91st Constitutional Amendment removes the split provision (1/3rd) and introduces merger provision (2/3rd).	Speaker continues to decide on disqualification, including verifying mergers.	Aimed at tightening law but allowed mass defections under 'merger' loophole.
2020	Keisham Meghachandra v. Speaker, Manipur: SC suggests Speaker should not have exclusive powers.	SC recommends independent tribunal headed by a retired judge.	Speaker delayed decision for over 3 years; defector became Minister.

2023	SC in Maharashtra case (Shinde vs. Thackeray): directs Speaker to decide within reasonable time.	Court sets specific deadlines for Speaker's decision.	October 2023: SC orders Maharashtra Speaker to decide within 2 weeks.
Ongoing Debate	Law Commission (1999), Dinesh Goswami Committee (1990), and others suggest reforms.	Push to remove Speaker's adjudicatory power; proposal for independent authority.	Recommendations remain unimplemented; discussed in Presiding Officers' Conferences.

### What is the Significance and Importance of an Independent and Neutral Speaker?

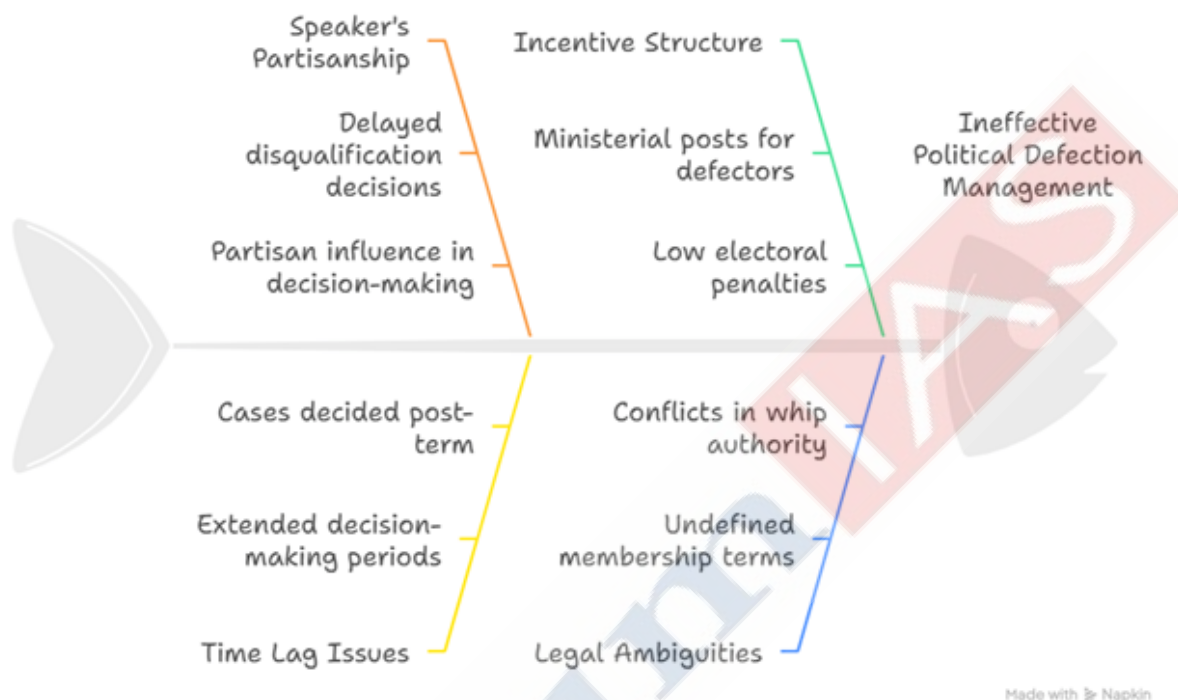
1. Guardianship of Legislative Integrity: The Speaker is expected to promote institutional neutrality, rule of law and to act as a quasi-judicial authority under the Tenth Schedule, but when partisanship takes precedence, it jeopardizes constitutional morality e.g. The 2020 Arunachal Pradesh defection case Supreme Court reiterated, "neutrality of the Speaker is critical to democratic stability".
2. Timely Adjudication and Trust in Institutions: The 2023 Constitution Bench in Keisham Meghachandra Singh v. Speaker Manipur reiterated that delays in disqualification proceedings violate the spirit of democracy.
3. Check on Political Horse-trading: The absence of an impartial Speaker allows post-election defections to the ruling party, as seen in Karnataka (2019) and Goa (2017).
4. Constitutional Expectation: The Speaker is expected to embody "propriety and impartiality," as noted by a five-judge Constitution Bench in May 2023, ensuring the Tenth Schedule's objective – to stabilize governments – is upheld.
5. Judicial Perspective: Erstwhile SC justice Gavai's observation that a speaker's "indecision" cannot defeat the anti-defection law's purpose emphasizes the need for neutrality. The Supreme Court's invocation of Article 142 powers in cases of non-compliance further reinforces this.

### What are the government Initiatives and institutional Developments?

1. All India Presiding Officers Conference (2021-2023): Discussed reforms in Speaker's powers under the anti-defection law. Multiple officers expressed that "Speakers' roles must be reviewed".
2. 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003: Made merger provisions more stringent by raising the requirement to two-thirds of members for party mergers.
3. Supreme Court's Role as Constitutional Guardian: Article 142 has been invoked to "ensure justice is not defeated by technicality or partisan silence" – SC has directed Speakers in Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Telangana to act within a "reasonable time frame."

### What are the challenges to the Autonomy and Integrity of Speaker's Role?

## Political Defection Challenges



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1. Structural Partisanship & Political Capture: Speakers are elected by ruling parties and often act in a politically motivated manner e.g. Maharashtra defection case (2022) where delay benefited defectors who joined the ruling coalition.
2. Procedural Vacuum & Legal Ambiguity: The Tenth Schedule is silent on timelines for deciding petitions. Exceptions include a "merger" where at least two-thirds of a party's members agree, as amended by the 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003 (up from one-third in 1985).
3. Limited Jurisdiction & Constitutional Boundaries: Courts cannot dictate the decision of the Speaker but can only ensure timely adjudication, limiting judicial recourse.
4. Legal Ambiguities: No definition of voluntary giving up membership and Whip's authority vs. conscience vote conflicts e.g. Average 2.3 years for disqualification decisions (ADR 2022 study), 68% cases decided after MLA's term ended (PRS 2023).
5. Misuse of Delay to Influence Governance: Defectors are inducted as Ministers or enjoy influence before eventual disqualification e.g. Defecting MLAs get ministerial posts in 71% cases (CMS 2021 study), only 12% of defectors lost subsequent elections (Trivedi Centre 2023).
6. Democratic Fatigue & Electoral Cynicism: Frequent defections with impunity undermine public faith in electoral processes.
7. Institutional Opacity & Role Ambiguity: No penalties or disciplinary procedures exist for Speakers who delay decisions.

**What should be the Way Forward?**

1. Independent Tribunal Mechanism: Establish a neutral tribunal headed by retired judges to decide disqualification pleas, as recommended by Law Commission and NCRWC.
2. Statutory Timeline for Decision: Amend the law to provide a maximum of 60 days to decide defection cases.
3. Code of Conduct for Presiding Officers: Create binding norms and codes for neutrality and accountability.
4. Constitutional Remedy & Democratic Safeguard: Allow courts to intervene if decisions are unduly delayed, using Article 142 for enforcing timelines.
5. Public Accountability and Electoral Penalty: Launch civic education campaigns and promote electoral punishment for defectors.
6. Strengthening Intra-Party Democracy: Empower parties to uphold ideological integrity and reduce dependence on post-election deals.
7. Global Best Practices:
  - In UK and Canada, Speakers are strictly non-partisan and elected by a secret ballot across party lines.
  - In South Africa, a Judicial Commission handles defection matters, not the Speaker.
8. Committees Recommendations:
  - The Dinesh Goswami Committee (1990) and Law Commission's 170th Report (1999) recommended divesting the Speaker of adjudicatory powers under the Tenth Schedule.
  - NITI Aayog and National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC) have advocated for setting up an independent tribunal headed by a retired judge.

Conclusion: In the words of SC, "It is about time that the Parliament review its expectation that the Assembly Speakers & Chairmen will live up to the dignity of their high office & crush the evil of political defection by deciding disqualification proceedings against legislators in time & without favour".

Read more– [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure

### **Skill Development in India – Challenges & Initiatives – Explained Pointwise**

Over the last decade, India has built one of the largest skilling ecosystems in the world. Between 2015 & 2025, India's flagship skilling programme, PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana, has trained & certified around 1.4cr candidates, Still, the employability outcomes remains uneven, and PLFS data show that wage gains from vocational training are modest & inconsistent, particularly in informal employment, where most workers are absorbed, offering limited recognition for certified skills & very less visible improvement in quality of life.



What are the challenges or limitations in India's skill development programme?

- 1. Skill Mismatch:** According to the *India Skills Report 2025*, only about 54.8% of Indian graduates are considered employable. Many training programs still focus on outdated curricula that don't reflect current industry needs in AI, robotics, or the green economy.
- 2. Low Placement Rates:** PMKVY 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 had placement rates of roughly 18-23 percent, dropping to about 10 percent in PMKVY 3.0, indicating limited translation of training into jobs.
- 3. Lack of "Skin in the Game":** Many employers do not recognize government certifications, preferring their own internal training or private certifications (like those from Google or AWS) which they find more rigorous.
- 4. Weak Apprenticeships:** While the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) has grown, it still accounts for a tiny fraction of the total workforce compared to countries like Germany.
- 5. Failure of Sector Skill Councils (SSCs):** SSCs were created to act as industry-facing institutions that define standards, ensure relevance, and anchor employability. SSCs have not only failed to fulfill its mandate but have largely limited themselves to standard creation.
- 6. Aspiration Gap:** Traditional degrees are still seen as the only path to social mobility. Vocational courses are often viewed as a "last resort" for those who fail in mainstream academics.
- 7. Rural Disconnect:** Training centers are often clustered in urban hubs, leaving rural youth to deal with long travel times and high opportunity costs.
- 8. Gender Barriers:** Women face additional hurdles including limited mobility, lack of childcare at centers, and societal restrictions, leading to lower participation in high-growth technical trades.
- 9. Fragmented Ecosystem:** The entire skill development ecosystem in India is fragmented: training is delivered by one entity, assessment by another, certification by SSCs, and placement by someone else. This fragmentation has eroded trust & diffuses the responsibility without consequences.

**What are the various initiatives for skill development of the labour force in India?**

<b>Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 (PMKVY 4.0)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides short-term training, reskilling, and upskilling.</li> <li>• Introduces 400+ new courses in emerging technologies, including AI, 5G, cybersecurity, green hydrogen, and drone technology.</li> <li>• Promotes on-the-job training (OJT) and recognition of prior learning to equip workers with globally recognized skills.</li> <li>• Aligns with other government initiatives such as PM Vishwakarma, PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, National Green Hydrogen Mission, and NAL JAL Mitra, enabling cross-sector skill impact.</li> <li>• Target Beneficiaries: Individuals aged 15–59 years.</li> </ul>
<b>Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (PM-NAPS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aims to expand apprenticeship training across industries.</li> <li>• Provides 25% of the stipend (up to Rs. 1,500 per apprentice per month) through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).</li> <li>• Expands apprenticeship opportunities in AI, robotics, blockchain, green energy, and Industry 4.0.</li> <li>• Focuses on small establishments, MSMEs, aspirational districts, and the North-East Region.</li> <li>• Target Beneficiaries: Individuals aged 14-35 years.</li> </ul>
<b>Sector Skill Councils (SSCs)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SSCs are industry-led, autonomous bodies that act as the primary link between the government's skilling policy and the actual requirements of the workforce.</li> <li>• They were established under the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to ensure that training isn't just happening in a vacuum but is directly aligned with what employers actually need.</li> <li>• Core functions:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Setting Standards: They create National Occupational Standards (NOS) and Qualification Packs (QP).</li> <li>ii. Assessment and Certification: They conduct exams and practical tests to certify that a trainee has actually mastered the required skills.</li> <li>iii. Labour Market Information (LMIS): They track sector-specific data to predict which jobs will be in demand over the next 5 years, helping the government decide where to allocate funds.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<p>iv. Train the Trainer (ToT): To ensure quality at the grassroots, SSCs train and license the instructors who work at various training centers across the country.</p>
Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A community-driven vocational training program aimed at women, rural youth, and economically weaker sections.</li> <li>• Provides low-cost, flexible skill development programs.</li> <li>• Linked with initiatives like PM JANMAN and Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society (ULLAS) to ensure inclusive skilling.</li> <li>• Target Beneficiaries: Individuals aged 15-45 years.</li> </ul>

What can be the way forward to improve skill development in India?

1. **Mandatory Apprenticeships:** Transitioning from optional to mandatory apprenticeship-linked degrees (e.g., the PM-NAPS expansion). This ensures students spend 50% of their time on the shop floor or in an office rather than just a classroom.
2. **Industry-Integrated ITIs:** Modernizing Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) where companies like Tata, Maruti, or Google “adopt” centers to install the latest equipment.
3. **Academic Credit Bank:** Under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, credits earned from a welding or coding certificate can now be transferred to a formal university degree. Embed vocational subjects as electives from Class 8 under NEP 2020, with credit transfer between academic and skill streams for seamless mobility.
4. **Global Mobility:** Signing Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreements (MMPAs) with countries like Germany, Japan, and France to ensure Indian certifications are recognized globally.
5. **Enforce Accountability:** India’s skilling challenge is a failure of accountability, not of intent or government funding. Thus, focus on enforcing accountability in the institutions of the skilling ecosystem, especially in SSCs. Until SSCs are held accountable for employability, certification will remain symbolic rather than economic.

**Conclusion:** When skills are embedded in degrees, when industry is treated as co-owner, and when SSCs are made answerable for placement outcomes, skilling move from fragmented welfare intervention to a pillar of national economic empowerment.

UPSC GS-3: Indian Economy  
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## Public Health Sector- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

India's public health system struggles with chronic underfunding, privatization, policy failure, and social inequalities. At the same time, the risk factors for disease are steadily rising due to policy gaps & systemic policy failures. The consumption of ultra-processed foods is driving an epidemic of non-communicable diseases, while unchecked air, water, and soil pollution, along with climate change are pushing millions into poverty. In this scenario, the role of public healthcare becomes even more important.

In this article, we will look at what constitutes a public health and the public health sector in India. We will look at the challenges faced by the public health sector in India. We will also look at the significance of a robust public health sector in India and the ways to achieve it.



Figure 1. Source- WHO

**What constitutes Public Health? What is the structure of public health sector in India?**

**Public Health:** According to WHO, "Public health refers to all **organized measures to prevent disease, promote health, and prolong life** among the population as a whole. Its activities aim to **provide conditions** in which people can be **healthy** and **focus on entire populations**, not on individual patients or diseases."

**Categorisation of Public Health:** Public health needs can be broadly categorised into three groups.

Protection against Diseases of Poverty faced by the Poor and Vulnerable	It includes diseases such as <b>tuberculosis, malaria, undernutrition, maternal death</b> , bouts of illnesses due to food and water-borne infections leading to <b>typhoid, hepatitis, and diarrhoeal diseases</b> . These are faced by the poor and the vulnerable.
Protection against Environmental issue related diseases faced by the Middle Class	It includes <b>air, water, waste management, lack of drainage facility, failure to ensure healthy foods and eateries, road traffic accidents, climate change</b> and <b>the rise of chronic illnesses</b> .
Curative Public healthcare	Curative care needs of a population are the most popular needs in public health. Provisioning of curative care is the <b>most critical and controversial policy question</b> in public health.

**Levels of Public Health Sector in India:**

Primary Healthcare	<p>India's primary health sector consists of sub-centers (SCs) and primary health centres (PHCs), which form the foundation of the public healthcare system.</p> <p>Sub-centers: These are the <b>most peripheral units</b>, serving populations of 5,000 in plain areas and 3,000 in hilly/tribal areas.</p> <p>Primary Health Centers: These are the first point of contact with <b>a qualified doctor</b>, serving <b>populations of 20,000-30,000</b>. Each PHC is expected to have <b>4-6 beds</b> and provide promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative care.</p> <p>The poor and the vulnerable rely on primary healthcare institutions of the public sector for primary-level care. It is the most affordable public health service and is closer to their places of residence.</p>
Secondary Healthcare	<p>The secondary health sector in India consists of Community Health Centers (CHCs), which serve as referral units for PHCs.</p> <p>CHCs are <b>30-bed hospitals providing specialist care</b> in medicine, surgery, obstetrics &amp; gynaecology, and paediatrics. There is one CHC for every <b>80,000-120,000 population in plain areas</b> and <b>40,000-60,000 population in hilly/tribal areas</b>.</p>
Tertiary Healthcare	<p>The tertiary health sector consists of <b>district hospitals, medical college hospitals, and other highly specialized facilities</b>.</p> <p>District Hospitals are <b>100-300 bed facilities</b> providing specialist care, located at the district level.</p> <p>Medical College Hospitals are <b>tertiary care teaching institutions</b>, located in state capitals and major cities.</p> <p>Specialized Tertiary Healthcare Facilities: These include <b>regional cancer centres, mental health institutes, trauma centres, and other super-speciality hospitals</b>.</p> <p>The tertiary sector provides highly specialized care and acts as a referral point for the secondary and primary levels of the health system.</p>

**What are the Government initiatives that have been launched for the development of Public Health Sector in India?**

National Health Mission (NRHM) and National Health Mission (NHM)	<p>The NHM and NRHM have focused on <b>strengthening public sector healthcare</b> through <b>architectural correction</b>. Efforts have been undertaken to follow the principles of primary health by strengthening the primary healthcare institutions under these missions. These have led to the development of <b>1,53,655 sub centres, 25,308 primary health centres (PHC) and 5,396 community health centres (CHC)</b> as per the rural health statistics, 2015.</p>
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Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)	It is a <b>publicly funded health insurance scheme</b> (PFHI) that provides financial protection to over <b>100 million families</b> for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.
Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs)	The government is working towards <b>transforming primary health centres into HWCs</b> to provide comprehensive primary healthcare services, including <b>preventive and promotive care</b> .
Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana	PMSSY aims to <b>enhance tertiary care capacities and strengthen medical education in the country</b> by setting up <b>new AIIMS</b> (All India Institutes of Medical Sciences) institutions and <b>upgrading existing government medical colleges</b> .
Jan Aushadhi Scheme	The Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) aims to <b>provide quality generic medicines at affordable prices</b> through Jan Aushadhi Kendras.
National Digital Health Mission (NDHM)	NDHM aims to create a <b>digital health ecosystem</b> , including health IDs for citizens and the establishment of a national digital health infrastructure.

What are the existing challenges in the public health sector in India?

- 1. Inadequate Access to Healthcare:** Inadequate access to basic healthcare services remains a critical public health issue, particularly in rural and underserved areas. For ex- **Shortage of health Infrastructure and health professionals** (shortage of around 600,000 doctors).
- 2. Myopic focus on short-term results:** There has been focus on promotion of initiatives that promise immediate results, such as **opening new hospitals, subsidised treatments, and populist health policies**. The **neglect** of the **holistic development of primary and secondary healthcare capabilities** has led to deterioration of public health sector in India.
- 3. Low Healthcare expenditure by the Govt:** The **government** (Centre and states put together) spends about **Rs 2.8 lakh crore**, that is roughly around **1.1% of the GDP**. This is extremely low when compared to other government health expenditure in countries like **China (3%), Thailand (2.7%), Vietnam (2.7%) and Sri Lanka (1.4%)**.
- 4. Lack of adequate emphasis on critical areas:** There has been lack of adequate attention to critical areas such as **sanitation, disease surveillance, and public health education**, which are important to maintain population health and prevent disease outbreaks. For ex- **Lack of long-term strategies like understanding vector control or developing effective vaccines** in case of dengue.

5. **Profit-Driven Pharma Sector:** The pharmaceutical industry's profit-driven nature **often sidelines areas such as public health**. There has been a loss of trust towards healthcare providers (private sector due to commercial interests). For ex- **Medical marginalisation of TB patients in India**.

6. **Lack of a Comprehensive Approach:** India's current public health approach is **physician-centric**, without **adequate focus on expertise from various fields** such as environmental science, sociology, urban planning, and economics.

7. **Lack of Preventive Care:** Preventive healthcare is undervalued in India, despite its importance in reducing disease incidence and healthcare costs. This is especially significant as India faces a '**triple burden**' of disease, comprising **communicable diseases** (like tuberculosis and malaria), **non-communicable diseases** (such as diabetes and heart disease), and **emerging infectious diseases**.

**What are the advantages of robust public health sector in India?**

1. **Improved the Access to Healthcare:** The Lancet in its latest study ranked **India at 145th among 195 countries in terms of quality and accessibility of healthcare**, behind its neighbours China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Bhutan. Thus, there is a need to improve the public health sector by making it more accessible by **improving the quality of medical professionals and infrastructure**.

2. **Improved Health Outcomes:** Robust public healthcare leads to early detection and treatment of diseases, resulting in improved health outcomes and a decrease in the burden of illness. For ex- **Early detection and treatment of Non-Communicable diseases like Cardiovascular Diseases**.

3. **Reduction of Financial Burden:** Improved public healthcare services can **alleviate the financial burden and improve household financial stability** by reducing the high out of pocket expenditure. For ex- According to the WHO, **55 million people fall into poverty or deeper poverty every year** due to catastrophic expenditures on health.

4. **Social Justice:** Universal healthcare and publicly funded health system provide timely, effective and free care, irrespective of social class. This in turn promotes social justice and **fulfillment of DPSP principles**.

**What Should be the Way Forward?**

1. **Implementation of the NITI Aayog Action Plan for Health:** It has recommended to focus on public health through **significantly increasing government expenditure on it (2.5% of GDP)** and prioritize preventive care rather than provide curative care.

2. **National Commission for Healthcare Cost Management:** The government should appoint a **National Commission to make recommendations for the spending on healthcare systems** and monitor its performance.

3. **Separating Health from Political Processes:** Public health decisions should be based on **scientific evidence and long-term goals** rather than short-term political interests.

4. **Nutrition Support:** Investments in nutrition programmes will have positive long-term implications for health and productivity.

5. **Comprehensive Approach:** Effective public health management should **encompass preventive measures, policy formulation**, community health, environmental health, etc.

6. Universal health coverage: State governments should **draw up blueprints for universal health coverage** and begin experimenting and innovating with pilot programmes.

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UPSC Syllabus- GS Paper 2 Social Justice – Issues relating to Health.

### Central-State Transfers – Explained Pointwise

Central transfers have become a subject of intense debate. In this article, we will explore the importance & criticisms against central transfers & what could be the way forward in this regard.

What does Central Transfers means?

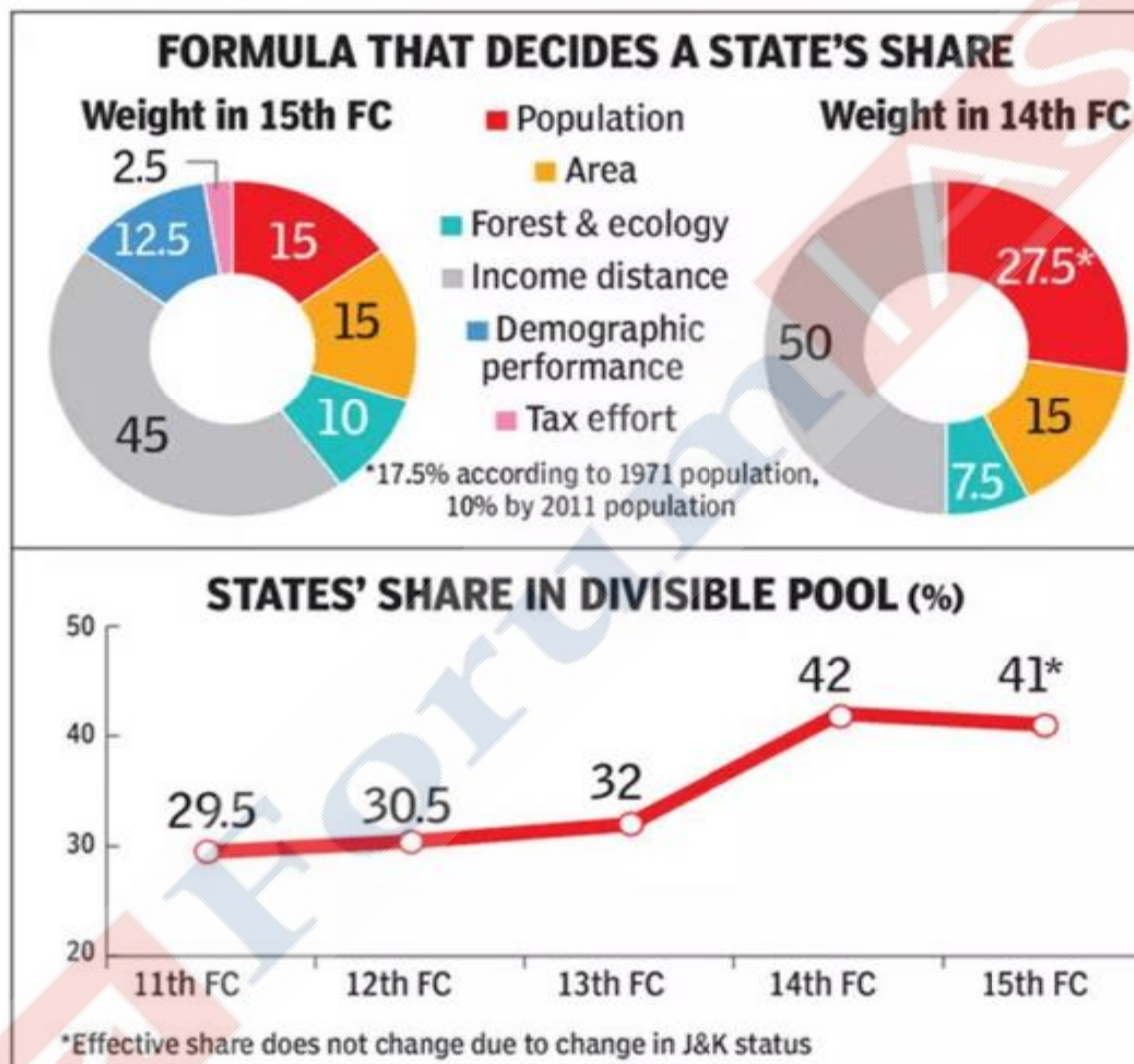
- Central Transfers refer to the financial resources allocated by the central government to state governments in India to address fiscal imbalances and support public expenditure.
- These transfers primarily occur through tax devolution and grants recommended by the Finance Commission. They ensure equitable resource distribution across states with varying revenue capacities. Finance Commissions determine both the overall share to States & the formula for tax devolution.
- There are two main reasons for these transfers:
  1. Vertical Equity: Ensuring that states have enough money to perform the duties assigned to them by the Constitution.
  2. Horizontal Equity: Reducing the gap between rich and poor states. For example, a state with less industrial activity needs extra help to provide the same level of education or infrastructure as a wealthy state.

Types of Central Transfers:

Tax Devolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A fixed percentage of the total taxes collected by the Centre is shared with states. This is currently around 41%.</li> <li>● e.g. Sharing of GST or Corporation Tax.</li> </ul>
Grants-in-Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Specific sums of money given to states. These can be “untied” (spend on anything) or “tied” (must be used for a specific project).</li> <li>● e.g. Disaster relief funds or revenue deficit grants.</li> </ul>
Centrally Sponsored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Funds provided for specific national priorities where the Centre and State share the cost.</li> </ul>

Schemes (CSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e.g. <i>National Health Mission</i> or <i>PM Awas Yojana</i>.</li> </ul>
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## HOW THE BOOTY IS DIVIDED



What is the importance of Central Transfers?

### 1. Correcting Vertical Imbalance:

- The Constitution gives the Centre more “buoyant” (high-growth) tax powers like Income Tax and Customs, while States handle high-expenditure items like health, education, and police.
- Without transfers, states would perpetually be in debt or unable to fund basic public services. Central transfers ensure that states have enough liquidity to function effectively.

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**2. Promoting Horizontal Equity (Reducing Regional Gaps):**

- Not all states have the same economic potential. A highly industrialized state like Maharashtra can generate more revenue than a landlocked or mountainous state like Bihar or Himachal Pradesh.
- Transfers use an “Equalization” principle. By giving a larger share of funds to poorer or geographically disadvantaged states, the system ensures that a citizen in a low-income state still gets access to a basic level of healthcare and schooling.

**3. Maintaining Fiscal Stability & Insurance:**

- The Central government can borrow money on better terms than individual states and has a larger “reserve” to handle shocks.
- During disasters (like floods or pandemics), the Centre provides emergency grants to help states recover without collapsing their local budgets.
- If one region’s economy slows down, transfers act as a form of “inter-regional insurance,” keeping the local administration running despite the dip in local tax collection.

**4. Implementing National Priorities:**

- The Centre often wants to achieve nationwide goals, such as “Electricity for All” or “Universal Vaccination.”
- Through Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS), the Centre provides “tied” funds that incentivize states to follow a national development roadmap. This ensures that even while states have autonomy, the country moves toward common developmental targets.

**What are the criticisms against Central Transfers?**

- 1. The “North-South” Divide:** States like Karnataka, TN & Maharashtra argue that they contribute disproportionately to central tax revenue but receive relatively smaller shares through tax devolution. Southern states criticize transfers for using population as a metric. They argue they are being “punished” for successfully implementing population control and growing their economies, while “failing” states receive more funds.
- 2. “Conditionality” and Tied Grants:** Many transfers come as “conditional grants” (like Centrally Sponsored Schemes). This forces the states to spend on central priorities rather than local needs, turning states into mere “administrative arms” of the center.
- 3. One-Size-Fits-All Approach:** Centralized schemes often fail to account for regional diversity. A scheme designed for a mountainous region may be irrelevant or inefficient for a coastal state, yet the state must implement it to receive the funding.
- 4. Political Favoritism:** Discretionary grants (those not mandated by a formula) are criticized for being used as political tools to reward “friendly” state governments or penalize opposition-led ones.
- 5. Lax Tax Effort:** If states know they will receive a guaranteed transfer from the center, they may have less incentive to broaden their own local tax base or collect taxes efficiently. This is often called a “perverse incentive.”
- 6. Gap-Filling Approach:** When transfers are designed to cover state deficits, it encourages states to overspend, knowing the central government will eventually “bail them out” to maintain national stability.

7. **Dependency Trap:** Over time, states may become “transfer-dependent,” where their entire budget planning relies on central volatility rather than sustainable local growth.
8. **Transfer of Inefficiency:** Taking money from high-performing, industrialized states and giving it to low-performing ones can sometimes lead to a “transfer of inefficiency,” where capital is moved from high-return areas to low-productivity regions.
9. **Transparency in the “Divisible Pool”:** Central governments are often accused of using “cesses and surcharges” (which are not shared with states) to keep a larger portion of the tax revenue for themselves, shrinking the actual pool of money available for transfer.

What should be the way forward?

1. **GSDP-based Formula:** A higher weightage for GSDP share in the central transfer formula would better reflect the accrual of central tax revenues, acknowledge the contributions of States to national income, and improve the perceived fairness & credibility of India’s inter-governmental fiscal transfer system.
2. **Expansion of the Divisible Pool:** A major demand is to include Cesses and Surcharges in the pool of taxes shared with states. Currently, these are kept entirely by the Centre and have grown to over 10% of Gross Tax Revenue, effectively shrinking the states’ actual share below the recommended 41%.
3. **Higher Devolution Target:** Some experts and states are calling for the vertical share to be increased from 41% to 50% to account for the states’ increased burden in social sector spending (health, education, and climate resilience).
4. **Rewarding Performance:** Moving beyond just “population” and “income distance,” the 16th FC is expected to give higher weight to Tax Effort and Demographic Performance. This rewards states that have successfully controlled population growth and improved their own tax collection.
5. **Equity vs. Efficiency:** While “Income Distance” (giving more to poorer states) remains vital for national stability, there is a push to make the formula less “linear.” This ensures that developed states aren’t disincentivized from further growth.
6. **Empowering Local Bodies:** Recommendations suggest doubling the Inter-Governmental Transfers (IGT) to urban and rural local bodies, recognizing cities as “engines of growth” that require massive infrastructure funding.
7. **Streamlining CSS:** Centrally Sponsored Schemes (like MGNREGA or Ayushman Bharat) are often seen as “one-size-fits-all.” The states should be given more flexibility to adapt these schemes to local needs rather than imposing rigid 60:40 or 50:50 funding ratios.
8. **Institutionalizing a “Loan Council”:** To manage the high debt levels of both Centre and States, a permanent body could oversee fiscal deficit targets, replacing the ad-hoc nature of current limits.
9. **Integrating Technology:** Using AI and data analytics to track “Tax Accrual” vs. “Tax Collection.” This would help identify where economic value is actually created (e.g., in manufacturing hubs) versus where corporate taxes are filed (e.g., headquarters in Mumbai).

UPSC GS-2: Indian Polity

Read More: [The Hindu](#)

### POCSO Act – Salient Features & Challenges – Explained Pointwise

Over the past few years, courts around the country as well as human rights activists have sought a review of the POCSO Act with respect to cases that involve consensual sexual relationship between teenagers aged 16-18 years. In the present framework, a consensual adolescent relationship is hard to distinguish from coercive abuse. Thus, several members of the civil society have written about not to criminalize such consensual relationship & recommended adding an exception to the Act which would preserve the protective intent of the Act while preventing its misuse against adolescent relationship that are not exploitative in nature.

In this regard, let us understand the POCSO Act. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was enacted in June 2012 and came into force in November 2012. The Act has played an instrumental role in addressing sexual offences against children. Yet the frequency of sexual offences against children has risen alarmingly in the last few years. There have been several challenges in the implementation of the Act, including the rise in pendency of cases and low conviction rate.

**What is the background to the enactment of the POCSO Act?**

- Despite strong constitutional (Articles 15(3), 21A, 24, 45 etc.) and international legal frameworks towards strengthening child rights, India's legal system lacked any dedicated provision against child sexual abuse for long.
- The criminal law (IPC) failed to recognise sexual assault and exploitation of children as separate offences. The offences under IPC, intended to criminalize sexual offences against women, fell short of addressing the complexities, social impact & mental impact of sexual exploitation of children.
- In *State of Punjab v Major Singh (1966)*, while addressing the appeal in a child sexual assault case where the accused was charged with section 354 of IPC, (assault with the intent to outrage her modesty), the High Court of Punjab acquitted the accused holding that a girl of seven and a half months does not possess womanly modesty, and therefore, the provision does not apply to the case. The Judgment was later overturned but showed shortcomings of the (then) existing provisions.
- IPC provisions failed to criminalize the instances of sexual assault and molestation of boys. The nature of the criminal trial under the Code for Criminal Procedure, 1973 did not account for the special needs of child witnesses who were victims of sexual offences and the support they need to participate in the criminal justice process.

## International Conventions on Child Rights

### The Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1924)

- The Declaration listed **5 principles** directed toward the **development of children**. However, these principles considered children as an object of protection, **instead of holders of rights**. The Declaration **did not put any obligation** on the member States.

### Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959)

- It was adopted by the UNGA in 1959. The Declaration recognised the need for the protection of children against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation.

### International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966)

- Article 10 recognised that children and young persons should be **protected from economic and social exploitation**. **Employment of children in work harmful** to their health, life or likely to hamper their normal development should be **punishable by law**.

### United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1990)

- It was adopted by UNGA in 1989 and entered into force in 1990. It offered a **legally binding instrument** that recognised children's rights. It established a **Committee on the Rights of the Child** to monitor the progress of the member States in realising the goals envisioned by CRC. It recognised State parties' obligation to **protect children from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation**.

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### Reports of the Law Commission:

- **42nd Report (1971):** Inclusion of a dedicated provision to penalize the offence of sexual abuse of children of all ages and sex.
- **156th Report (1997):** Opined that the existing provisions against sexual offences were sufficient to address this issue.
- **172nd Report (2000):** Recommended a major amendments to address the offence of child sexual abuse and exploitation including amendment to IPC Section 375 to make it gender neutral, increase penalty in case of sexual offences committed by near relatives and persons in position of trust, penalizing touching any part of the body of an adolescent with sexual intent etc.
- **283rd Report (2023):** The Commission explicitly advised against lowering the age of consent from 18 to 16.

### Precursor to POCSO Act:

- In 2003, the State Government of Goa enacted Goa Children's Act to promote child rights and children's development in the State and counter rise of child abuse rackets in the State.
- In 2005, the Department of Women and Child Development prepared the Draft Offences against Children (Protection) Bill, to address different offences targeted against children, including sexual offences. The Ministry of Home Affairs suggested that there should be separate comprehensive legislation against child abuse.
- In 2007, a Report 'The Study of Child Abuse' published by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (based on ~12,500 children) found that 50.76% of children surveyed reported having faced one or more form of sexual abuse, indicating seriousness of the issue.
- In September 2010, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, prepared the draft Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Bill, 2010. After long discussions, the POCSO Act

was passed by the Parliament in June 2012 and was enforced on the occasion of Children's Day on November 14, 2012.

**What are the salient provisions of the POCSO Act?**

- 1. Confidentiality of the victim's identity:** The POCSO Act lays out the protocol for the media and imposes the obligation to conceal the name of the child victim, until the Special Court gives its permission for the information to be made public.
- 2. Gender-neutral Provisions:** The Act doesn't make a difference based on the gender of the victim or the assaulter. Any person under the age of 18 is considered a child, and in some cases, the courts have even found women guilty of sexually abusing children.
- 3. Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Cases:** Often families try to hide intra-family child abuse offences. In order for the POCSO Act to work properly, third parties who know or suspect these crimes must report them. These laws have been made based on the idea that children are weak and helpless and that it is society's job to protect their best interests.
- 4. Child-friendly Investigation and Trial:** The POCSO Act lays down the procedure of investigation and trial which has been formulated keeping in mind the needs of a child. These include procedure for recording of statement, medical examination and designation of special child friendly courts.
- 5. Differentiate various sexual abuse:** This Act distinguishes between a wide variety of forms of sexual abuse, including non-penetrative and penetrative assault, and sexual harassment among others. The Act lays down stringent punishment for exposing children to, or using them to create Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM or child pornography).

**What revisions have been made to the POCSO Act?**

In 2019, concerned with rising cases of sexual offences against children and in response to coming to light of certain heinous sexual crimes committed against children, the Ministry of Women and Child Development introduced an amendment to the Act to deter offenders and ensure safety for children. The amendment made the following changes:

- 1. It increased the minimum punishment for penetrative sexual assault from 7 years imprisonment to 10 years and aggravated penetrative sexual assault from 10 years imprisonment to 20 years.**
- 2. It also introduced the punishment of the death penalty for the offence of aggravated penetrative sexual assault.**
- 3. It introduced offences for transmitting or propagating pornographic materials involving a child and failing to destroy or report such pornographic materials.**

**What are the shortcomings in the working of the POCSO Act?**

- 1. At the Trial Stage:** The challenges at this stage include:
  - a. Lack of Special Courts in all the districts.**
  - b. Lack of Special Public Prosecutors for Special Courts.**
  - c. Non-compliance with the timelines prescribed by the Act.**
- 2. At the Post-Trial Stage:** While final compensation may find a mention in the sentence order, interim compensation finds no mention in any orders of the Special Courts. Often the disbursal of compensation is delayed.
- 3. Hurdles in implementation:** There are several hurdles:

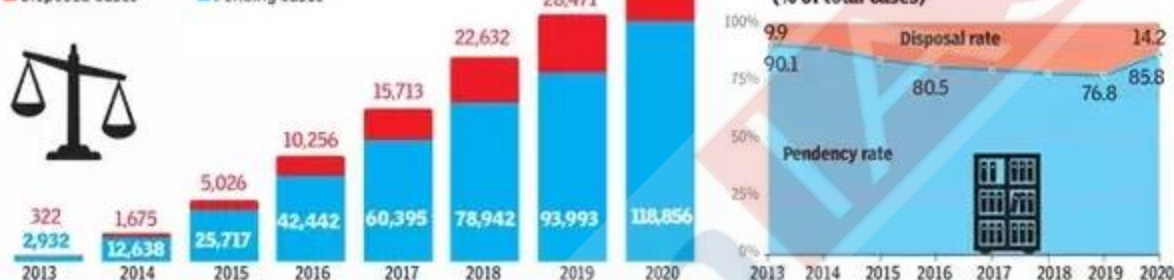
- a. The slow pace of designation of Special Courts.
- b. Delay in investigation and filing of chargesheets.
- c. Non-appointment of support persons for child victims.
- d. Delay in disposal of POCSO Cases.

**4. Pendency of Cases:** The pendency of POCSO cases has reached 85% in 2020.

### Pendency Rose Sharply In 2020 As Covid Hit

The total number of POCSO cases reported on eCourts rose steadily between 2013 and 2020. But though the share of pending cases in total POCSO cases had been declining consistently, there was a sharp increase in 2020, which could be attributed to the fact that the district judiciary did not function at its usual capacity during the Covid-induced lockdowns, leading to poor disposal. While the number of cases disposed rose between 2013 and 2019, the number of cases disposed fell sharply from 2019 to 2020.

**Disposed and pending cases, 2013-2020**  
 ■ Disposed cases ■ Pending cases



Source: Times of India

5. **Legal Aids Create Nuisance:** Many legal aids add extra information to make the case stronger. Many times false information is added in the complaint. This only creates issues in the moving forward of the case.
6. **Inadequate awareness about the POCSO Act:** A 2020 study on Child Sexual Abuse Awareness and Attitudes by World Vision India found that only 35% children and 32% caregivers were aware about the POCSO Act. The awareness varied across urban, rural and tribal areas with tribal areas being the least aware.
7. **Inadequate Training of Various Stakeholders:** Child Protection System involves a lot of stakeholders like Private and Government Medical Practitioners, Juvenile Justice Boards, Law Enforcement Officials (Police), Judges, Public Prosecutors etc. All stakeholders should be aware of their own as well other stakeholders' responsibilities. At present, there is lack of adequate training for many stakeholders e.g., Private medical practitioners are usually the first point of contact for child victims but no mandatory training is provided to enable them to handle cases of child sexual abuse effectively.
8. **Weaponization of the Act by the Families:** Over the years, the POCSO Act is being weaponized by the families to punish the young persons, especially the young men in romantic relationship with young women. Thus, the statute which was designed to shield against predatory violence has been subverted into enforcing parental authority & traditional social boundaries.
9. **Low Conviction Rate:** Even though the disposal rate of the cases registered under POCSO Act by the fast track special court has increased to 109%, however, the conviction rate has declined from 35% in 2019 to 29% in 2023. Thus, faster trials have not meant fairer verdicts.

# Disposals up, convictions down

The trend of faster case disposals raises questions about investigative capacity, forensic delays and support systems for children

## Year-wise disposal and conviction data (2019–25)

Year	Disposal rate /Case resolution	Conviction rate
2019	<b>10.8%</b> of total pending trials completed	<b>34.9%</b> (National average, NCRB*)
2020	<b>5.0%</b> (Sharp decline due to COVID-19 lockdowns and court closures)	<b>39.6%</b> (Temporary spike reported during pandemic year)
2021	<b>71%</b> (67,734 cases disposed of out of 95,238 registered)	<b>32.2%</b> (Resumption of declining trend)
2022	<b>88%</b> (97,616 cases disposed of out of 1,11,357 registered)	<b>~30%</b> (National trend; variations reported across studies)
2023	<b>90%</b> (1,06,919 cases disposed of out of 1,19,016 registered)	<b>29%</b> (National average, NCRB)
2024	<b>87%</b> (1,06,982 cases disposed of out of 1,22,500 registered)	<b>19%</b> (Fast track special courts; ~81% acquittals)
2025	<b>109%</b> (87,754 cases disposed of against 80,320 registered)	Conviction outcomes uneven; State-wise variation remains high

(Sources: National Judicial Data Grid via Lok Sabha Q.1018;

\*National Crime Records Bureau Crime in India 2019-2023)

Source: The Hindu

What steps can be taken to enhance effectiveness of the POCSO Act?

The Vidhi Center has provided several recommendations to improve the functioning of the Act:

### 1. Legislative and Policy Recommendations:

- Reduce the age of consent from 18 to 16 years with adequate safeguards.
- Hold public consultations with domain experts before making any substantive amendments to the Act.
- Stipulate a time limit for consideration of disbursement of interim compensation to the victim.

### 2. Making POCSO Courts Functional:

- Appoint adequately trained Special Public Prosecutors exclusively for POCSO courts where they have not been appointed. Progress for this can be monitored by respective High Courts.
- Establish Vulnerable Witness Deposition Centres, with appropriate infrastructure, in all POCSO courts in accordance with the Supreme Court judgment in *State of Maharashtra v Bandu @ Daulat and Smruti Tukaram Badade v State of Maharashtra*.

- c. Employ a 'hybrid' approach for recording of evidence wherein the evidence of certain witnesses like doctors, forensic experts can be recorded virtually.
  - d. Ensure the appointment and continuous presence of support persons in every pre-trial and trial stage.
  - e. Create mechanisms to enable judges and prosecutors to have the required skill set to deal with the 'vicarious trauma' they experience when dealing with cases of heinous sexual offences committed against children.
  - f. Specifically train judges to write operational compensation to allow for timely and effective disbursement of compensation to victims.
3. Increasing awareness about the POCSO Act:
- a. Include age-appropriate information about POCSO in school curriculum, including information on helplines like Childline.
  - b. Impart POCSO awareness training to school staff. Include POCSO in the curriculum of students undergoing teaching courses like B.Ed, M.Ed etc.
4. Capacity building at all levels: Conduct periodic integrated capacity building programmes for stakeholders with a focus on sensitivity training.
5. Forensic Science Laboratories (FSLs): The Report also recommends to set up more Forensic Science Laboratories (FSLs) while improving the capacity and infrastructure of existing ones.
6. The "Romeo-Juliet" Clause: The Supreme Court has urged the Centre to consider a specific clause (often called the "Romeo-Juliet law" in other countries) that would exempt consensual adolescent relationships from the most severe rigors of the Act.

**Conclusion:** Despite its progressive provisions, the lacunae in the implementation of the POCSO Act has reduced its efficacy. The perennial problem of judicial pendency has affected the POCSO Special Courts with pendency rising, and time required to dispose cases increasing gradually. The advent of digital technologies and associated concerns (like child pornography) are going to make addressal of child abuse more challenging in future. The recommendations provided by the Vidhi Centre are worthwhile which, if implemented, can go a long way in addressing the issues with the functioning of the POCSO Act.

Read More: [Indian Express](#), [The Times of India](#), [The Times of India](#), [Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy](#), [The Hindu](#), [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus GS-2: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

### Article 6 (A6) of Paris Agreement – Explained Pointwise

The adoption of the Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism (Article 6.4) at COP29 marked a milestone in the transition from the Clean Development Mechanism & has paved the way for a more rigorous, transparent, and globally aligned crediting framework under the Paris Agreement. In this entire scenario of climate finance, India has transformed from a cautious negotiator into one of the most proactive global players in the Article 6 landscape.

**What is Article 6 of Paris Agreement?**

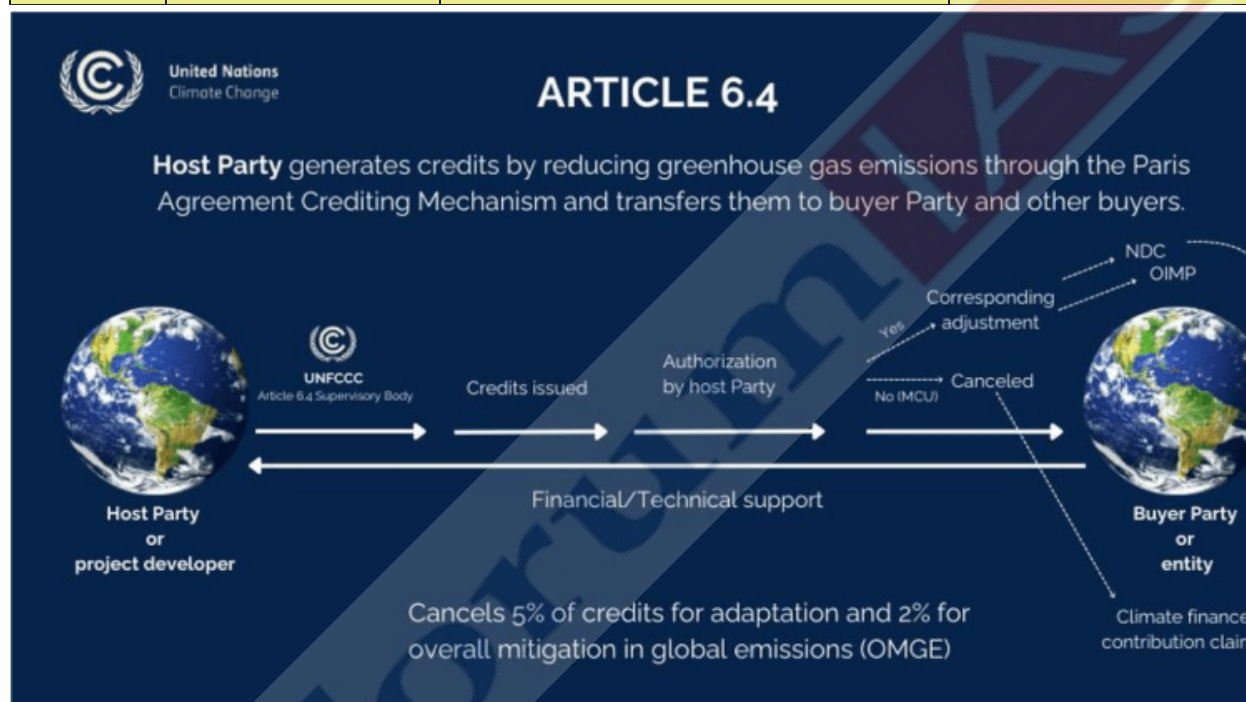
- Article 6 (A6) of the Paris Agreement deals with international cooperation between countries to help them meet their climate targets (NDCs – Nationally Determined Contributions) in a cost-effective and transparent way.
- It allows countries to work together, trade emission reductions, and support sustainable development, instead of acting completely alone. Thus, it effectively creates the framework for a global carbon market.

### 3 Pillars/Pathways of Article 6:

Article 6 is divided into three main “paths” for international cooperation:

Pathway	Known As	How it works	Key Terminology
Article 6.2	Bilateral/Multilateral Trading	<p>Countries can transfer emission reductions between themselves.</p> <p>Requires corresponding adjustments so the same reduction is not counted twice.</p> <p><i>e.g. If India reduces extra emissions and transfers them to Japan, India subtracts them from its count, and Japan adds them to its own.</i></p>	ITMOs (Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes)
Article 6.4	UN Carbon Market	<p>Creates a centralized global carbon market, supervised by the UN.</p> <p>Generates verified carbon credits from projects (renewables, afforestation, methane capture, etc.).</p> <p>It replaces the old Kyoto Protocol’s “Clean Development Mechanism.”</p> <p>The Article 6.4 mechanism is now active, allowing companies and countries to trade credits under a unified UN standard.</p>	PACM (Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism)

Article 6.8	Non-Market Approaches	<p>Focuses on cooperation without carbon trading.</p> <p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Technology transfer</li> <li>○ Climate building</li> <li>○ Climate finance</li> <li>○ Policy coordination</li> </ul>	NMAs (Non-Market Approaches)
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Source: The Hindu

What is the potential of Article 6?

- 1. Cost Reduction:** The World Bank and IETA estimate that Article 6 could reduce the total cost of implementing national climate targets (NDCs) by more than \$250 billion per year by 2030.
- 2. Efficiency:** It allows “buyer” countries (often wealthier nations with high domestic costs for greening heavy industry) to fund projects in “seller” countries where the same dollar can remove much more CO<sub>2</sub> (e.g., through massive reforestation or rapid solar deployment).
- 3. Emission Gap:** If countries reinvest the \$250 billion they save, Article 6 has the potential to remove an additional 5 gigatonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year by 2030 at no extra cost. This is roughly equivalent to the annual emissions of the United States.
- 4. Beyond Net Zero:** The Overall Mitigation in Global Emissions (OMGE) rule means that every trade under the UN-led market (Article 6.4) automatically “retires” 2% of the credits. This ensures that the market isn’t just a zero-sum game but actually results in a net benefit for the atmosphere.

5. **High-Integrity Standards:** Article 6 creates a “Gold Standard” for carbon credits. Credits authorized by the UN are seen as lower risk for investors, potentially unlocking trillions in private capital for projects in the Global South.
6. **Adaptation Funding:** Unlike previous agreements, Article 6 has a built-in “tax” for good. A 5% levy on trades under Article 6.4 goes directly to the Adaptation Fund, providing a predictable stream of billions of dollars for vulnerable nations to build sea walls, drought-resistant crops, and early warning systems.

**What has been various initiatives undertaken by India with respect to Article 6?**

1. **The “Positive List” of Eligible Activities:** To operationalize both Article 6.2 & 6.4, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) released a finalized list of 13 eligible activities. The list prioritizes capital-intensive, emerging technologies rather than old-style offsets such as Green Hydrogen and Green Ammonia, Renewable Energy with Storage (specifically the stored component) etc. It can fundamentally shift the country’s emission profile & significantly contribute to the acceleration of India’s economic growth trajectory.
2. **India-Japan Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM):** Signed in August 2025, this is India’s most significant Article 6.2 deal. It allows Japanese companies to invest in Indian green projects (like Green Hydrogen) in exchange for a share of the carbon credits (ITMOs). India is currently in advanced negotiations with the EU, Singapore, and the UAE to create similar corridors for trading high-integrity carbon credits.
3. **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS):** Launched by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), this scheme creates a compliance market for heavy industries (like steel and cement).
4. **National Carbon Registry:** India has established a centralized digital registry to track every credit generated. This prevents “double counting” – a major requirement for Article 6 compliance – by ensuring a credit sold to Japan is subtracted from India’s national tally (Corresponding Adjustment).
5. **NDAIAPA:** India established the National Designated Authority for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement. This high-level inter-ministerial committee is the “gatekeeper” that decides which projects get the green light for international sale.

**What should be the way forward for India with respect to Article 6?**

1. **Prioritizing “Hard-to-Abate”:** India’s “Positive List” focus on high-cost, emerging technologies. India should use Article 6 funds specifically for sectors where domestic capital is insufficient – such as Green Hydrogen in steelmaking and Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).
2. **Finalizing “Corresponding Adjustments”:** India must operationalize its National Carbon Registry to seamlessly subtract any credits sold to countries like Japan or Singapore from its own national inventory. This prevents “double counting” and maintains global trust.
3. **Digital MRV (Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification):** India should lead in using blockchain, AI, and satellite imagery to track carbon sequestration (especially in the new Mangrove and Forestry methodologies) to provide real-time, tamper-proof proof of impact.
4. **Price Stability Mechanisms:** India should implement a Price or Supply Adjustment Mechanism (PSAM). This would prevent the market from being flooded with cheap credits, which could crash the price and discourage industry investment.
5. **Expanding Bilateral Corridors:** Beyond Japan, India should fast-track Article 6.2 deals with the EU (to help Indian exporters navigate the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism/CBAM) and ASEAN countries.

6. **Leading on Article 6.8 (Non-Market):** India can use this often-ignored “non-market” path to secure technology transfers and direct grants for climate-resilient infrastructure, moving beyond just “trading” to “transforming.”
7. **Streamline Project Clearance:** According to a research done by CEEW, the carbon projects in India take over 1600 days to register for Agriculture, Forestry & Other Landuse Projects, as compared to just 400 days elsewhere in Asia. To correct this, a Steering Committee should be created at the cabinet level to offer broader guidelines & regularly take stock. For A6 projects, where land & multiple stakeholders are often involved, a single-window clearance system is essential.
8. **Build & Strengthen Removal Market:** The global demand for carbon removals is rising. A6 provides an ideal platform to build a domestic market for activities like Biochar & Enhances Rock Weathering, positioning India as a supplier of high-quality removal credits.
9. **Strengthen South-South Collaboration:** India can take the lead in building shared systems, knowledge networks, and financing models across developing countries.

**Conclusion:** India’s participation in the A6 mechanism hold critical significance as it can translate into transfer of advanced tech, support to R&D, strengthen bilateral relations & channel much needed climate finance into the economy. This can be a lever for socio-economic transformation that aligns with India’s domestic climate goals.

UPSC GS-3: Climate Change  
Read More: [The Hindu](#)

### Digital Arrest Fraud- Concerns and Way Forward- Explained Pointwise

Amidst the rising number of digital arrest cases, the Central govt has constituted a high-level Inter-Ministerial Committee (IDC) with the mandate to examine the real-time issues faced by the enforcement agencies, and to identify the relevant legislations & implementation gaps related with the digital arrest fraud cases.

Digital arrest fraud is a new form of cybercrime in India. As of January 2026, the Supreme Court of India has noted that victims (primarily the elderly) have lost over ₹3,000 crore to this fraud. These cyber crimes have **seriously grave concerns** and, hence, these must be addressed at the earliest.

**What is Digital Arrest? What is the modus operandi?**

- Digital arrest is a cyber fraud technique in which criminals psychologically trap a person online, making them believe they are under arrest or investigation and coercing them into transferring money.
- Digital arrest involves cybercriminals **posing as law enforcement agents** (from the CBI, Narcotics Department, or Reserve Bank of India) who claim that the **victim is involved in illegal activities** like movement of drugs or a suspicious package. The victims are tricked into **remaining under constant visual surveillance** via Skype or other video conferencing platforms until the criminals’ demands are met.
- The victim is not physically detained, but is mentally confined through fear — hence the term *digital arrest*.

# 'DIGITAL ARREST'

PTI  
GRAPHICS

## What exactly is 'Digital arrest'?

- New **cyber fraud**
  - Accused video call and **pose as law enforcement agency officials**, like CBI or customs officials
  - They **give threats of arrest** in the name of **fake international parcels of banned drugs**
  - **Organised economic crime** operated by **cross-border crime syndicates**
- 

Source- PTI Graphics

Modus Operandi of Digital arrest:

Caller ID Spoofing	Scammers disguise their phone number to look like it is from a <b>legitimate government office</b> or <b>police department</b> . Scammers also reach out via video calls using <b>WhatsApp</b> or <b>Skype</b> .
Intimidation	Victims are falsely accused of crimes like <b>drug trafficking</b> or <b>money laundering</b> , and are <b>shown fake documents</b> and <b>setups</b> that mimic police stations. The scammers use fear tactics, such as threatening for jail-term or property seizure, to create urgency.

Isolation	Victims are instructed to <b>remain on the call</b> and <b>not to contact anyone else</b> . This creates a sense of urgency and fear. The fraudsters also use <b>deepfake videos</b> and <b>fake arrest warrants</b> to impersonate officials of law enforcement agencies.
Demands for Money and Personal Identity Theft	The fraudsters demand immediate payment, often via <b>gift cards</b> , <b>wire transfers</b> , or <b>cryptocurrency</b> , which would make the money transfer difficult to trace. Some scammers ask for <b>Aadhaar Details</b> , <b>Bank account details</b> , and <b>other personal information</b> , which are later used for identity theft.

# 'DIGITAL ARREST'



## How Fraudsters Trick Victims and Evade Police (1/2)

➤ They use **studios** modelled on police stations and government offices while video-calling victims



➤ They wear **uniforms** to appear genuine

➤ They play **police sirens** in the background and send **fake IDs** to make the 'digital arrest' seem real

Source: PTI Graphics

# 'DIGITAL ARREST'



## How Fraudsters Trick Victims and Evade Police (2/2)

- They use **third-party** bank accounts
- They tell victims that the investigation is **confidential**, deterring them from discussing it with anyone
- They transfer money received from victims into **fraudulent accounts**, cash it out and split it among themselves



Source: PTI Graphics

### Examples of Digital Arrest Fraud Cases:

Digital arrest fraud cases have not only targeted the vulnerable groups, but also wealthy individuals as well. Vast sums of Money have also been stolen from wealthy individuals.

Vardhman Director's case	Group	Scammers duped the textile industry doyen <b>S P Oswal</b> into transferring <b>Rs 7 crore to their bank accounts</b> , by posing as CBI Officers and intimidating him on false money laundering cases.
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Fake impersonation as CJI	There have been cases where a person impersonated Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, faked hearing a matter on skype and thereafter passed an order.
NRI Doctor Couple Defrauded in Delhi	In a sophisticated “digital arrest” scam, an elderly NRI doctor couple in South Delhi’s Greater Kailash was duped of around ₹14.85 crore by fraudsters. Scammers posed as law enforcement and investigative officials, claiming the couple was under investigation and threatening immediate legal action if they didn’t cooperate. Over more than two weeks, the couple was kept under continuous video calls, intimidated and coerced into transferring huge sums of money to accounts controlled by the criminals.

#### Rise in Digital arrest cases:

- a. The **Ministry of Home Affairs** (MHA) in March 2024, issued a press release, **alerting people** against **incidents of blackmail** and **digital arrest** by **cyber criminals** impersonating Police authorities, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Narcotics Department, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Enforcement Directorate and other law enforcement agencies.
- b. As per the **National Crime Records Bureau** (NCRB) **data**, a significant rise in cybercrimes have been reported in the last few years- **10,395** in 2020, **14,007** in 2021 and **17,470** in 2022.

#### What are the reasons behind rise in the digital arrest cases in India?

1. **Rapid Digitalisation without Matching Awareness:** There has been an explosion of smartphones, online banking, UPI & digital payments in India. However, the legal awareness about arrest procedures has not growth at the same pace. Many citizens are not aware that arrests cannot happen online. This creates a trust gap which has been exploited by the scammers.
2. **Fear of Law Enforcement & Social Stigma:** Fraudsters exploit the fear of police, courts, ED, CBI & the shame linked to the allegations like money laundering or drugs. Victims comply silently instead of verifying with the authorities.
3. **Sophisticated Social Engineering:** Scammers use fake official uniforms, IDs, court orders & caller ID spoofing to confine the victim into a psychological trap. Thus, cybercriminals are using technological and psychological tactics to target citizens.
4. **Availability of Digital Tools to Criminals:** Criminals have easy access to devices & tools like SIM Box, encrypted communication apps, mule bank accounts – using which they are able to route calls & SMSes, bypassing international charges, making foreign calls appear local & funnel the stolen money through mule accounts within minutes, making it impossible for Police to freeze the funds in time.
5. **The “Shame” Factor:** Many victims, especially high-ranking professionals or the elderly, do not report the crime due to the embarrassment of being “duped,” allowing scammers to operate without fear.

6. **Serious Allegations:** By accusing victims of “Money Laundering,” “Narcotics Trafficking (MDMA),” or “Terror Financing,” scammers trigger a “fight or flight” response. The fear of social stigma and a permanent criminal record makes people desperate to “settle” the matter.

What are the concerns with the rising Digital Arrest Fraud cases in India?

1. **Financial Losses:** The financial losses to the victims become impossible to recover because the scammers request payments through untraceable methods like **cryptocurrency**, **gift cards**, or **wire transfers**. The financial loss due to digital arrest have grown from ₹91 crore in 2022 to ₹1,935 crore in 2024.
2. **Negative emotional and Psychological Impact:** Victims feel intimidated and psychological pressure, which can lead to anxiety, stress. The scammers use **threatening language** and **claim serious consequences** like **jail time**, **asset seizures**, or **even deportation**.
3. **Data Leaks:** Large-scale data breaches (from insurance portals, travel sites, etc.) provide scammers with a “lead list” that includes the victim’s name, Aadhaar number, and financial status, making the initial “official” call sound incredibly credible.
4. **Targeting the “Wealthy & Vulnerable” (Seniors):** Senior citizens and retired professionals often have significant life savings but may not be fully aware of the latest cyber-tactics.
5. **Organized Cross-Border Syndicates:** These are no longer individual hackers but organized “Cyber-Slavery” hubs, mostly operating out of Southeast Asian countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar). Scammers are given scripts, trained in Indian accents /languages, and taught how to navigate Indian legal terminology (BNS/BNSS).
6. **Use of ‘Deepfakes’ & AI:**
  - a. **Visual Authenticity:** Scammers now use AI to create high-quality deepfake videos of real IPS officers, CBI directors, or even sitting judges.
  - b. **Virtual Courtrooms:** Fraudsters set up elaborate “studio” backgrounds that mimic police stations or courtrooms. On a WhatsApp or Skype call, a victim sees what looks like a genuine judicial proceeding.
  - c. **Voice Cloning:** AI can now mimic the voice of a family member “calling from the police station,” adding an emotional layer of panic that overrides logical thinking.

What have been the efforts of the government to control these frauds?

Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC)	Formed in December 2025, this high-powered panel is chaired by the Special Secretary (Internal Security) and includes members from RBI, MeitY, DoT, and Ministry of Law. Their mandate is to identify legal gaps and ensure “time-bound compliance” by social media platforms to block scammers.
Role of CBI	In 2025, the Supreme Court granted the CBI a countrywide jurisdiction to probe digital arrest cases. This allows the CBI to bypass the need for specific state permissions, enabling them to dismantle interstate and international syndicates more effectively.

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)	The Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C), part of the <b>cyber and information security division</b> of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, is dedicated to <b>address rising cybercrime</b> . Between January and April 2024, I4C recorded Rs 120.30 crore in losses by Indians due to digital arrest scams.
Joint Cyber Coordination Teams (JCCTs)	Based at the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), these teams focus on “hotspots” like Mewat, Jamtara, and Ahmedabad. They coordinate raids across state lines to catch the “mule account” holders and technical operators.
International Spoofed Calls Prevention System	The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has deployed a system that identifies and blocks international calls that manipulate the “Calling Line Identity” (CLI) to appear as Indian phone numbers (+91).
Mass Blocking of Identifiers	By the end of 2025, the government had successfully blocked: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7.8 lakh+ SIM cards linked to fraud.</li> <li>• 2.9 lakh+ IMEI numbers (mobile devices).</li> <li>• 83,000+ WhatsApp accounts and 3,900+ Skype IDs used for digital arrests.</li> </ul>
Inter-ministerial committee against transnational crime	In May 2024, an inter-ministerial committee, <b>comprising various law enforcement and intelligence agencies</b> , was <b>established to address the increase</b> in transnational cybercrimes targeting Indians, especially from Southeast Asian countries like Cambodia.
1930 Helpline & NCRP	The National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (cybercrime.gov.in) and the 1930 toll-free number allow for the immediate reporting of fraud.
CFCFRMS (Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting System)	This backend system links police with banks. If a victim reports a fraud within the “Golden Hour,” the system can freeze the funds in the scammer’s account before they are siphoned off.



Samanvaya & Pratibimb Platforms	These AI-driven tools provide real-time mapping of cyber-criminal locations and help law enforcement agencies track the movement of money across different states.
Uniform Inter-State Laws	Under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the government is working to ensure that “Digital Arrest” is explicitly defined as a distinct criminal act of extortion and impersonation, removing any legal ambiguity.

#### What Should be the Way Forward?

- 1. Instant Freezing without FIR:** Building on the Supreme Court’s December 2025 directive, I4C and banks should be allowed to freeze suspicious accounts immediately upon a 1930 report, even before a formal FIR is filed. The first 60-120 minutes (called the ‘Golden Hour’) after a fraud occurs are critical for fund recovery.
- 2. AI-Driven Transaction Monitoring:** Mandating banks to deploy AI/ML models that flag “unusual velocity” (e.g., a senior citizen suddenly transferring a large sum to a new account). This “speed-breaker” approach can halt transactions until a secondary verification is performed.
- 3. SIM & IMEI Blacklisting:** Aggressive use of the Sanchar Saathi portal to block not just the SIM, but the entire handset (IMEI) of identified scammers. By January 2026, over 9 lakh SIMs have been blocked, but the goal is to make the hardware itself unusable for any network.
- 4. Mule Account Liability:** Making banks legally and financially accountable for “Mule Accounts” opened with weak KYC. If a bank branch consistently hosts accounts used in scams, then penalize the branch or its management.
- 5. “Cyber-Diplomacy”:** India is pushing for a specialized BRICS or G20 Cyber-Task Force to allow for the rapid extradition of scammers and the dismantling of “Cyber-Slavery” compounds across borders.
- 6. VoIP Regulation:** Tightening the gateway for international VoIP (Internet) calls that spoof Indian numbers (+91). The DoT is moving toward a system where unverified international headers are automatically dropped by telecom providers.
- 7. Specialized Cyber-Courts:** To improve the currently low conviction rates, set up dedicated courts to handle digital fraud. The first conviction in 2025 (West Bengal) where nine scammers were given life imprisonment has set a precedent for “deterrence through harsh sentencing.”
- 8. Actions at the personal level:**
  - a. Staying Calm:** On receiving a suspicious call, one should do not panic. A person should take a moment to assess the situation.
  - b. Verification of Identity:** The personal information should not be shared over the phone or video calls.
  - c. Documenting Evidence:** A person should try to record the call or take screenshots for evidence. This documentation can be crucial in the times of need of reporting the scam.
  - d. Contacting Authorities:** In case of digital arrest cases, a person should report the incident to local police or through national cyber helplines (1930).

9. Education and awareness: Education and awareness is the key to avoid digital arrest frauds. Understanding that digital arrests are fraudulent can help the masses recognize and avoid such scams.

Conclusion: In a recent *Mann Ki Baat*, the Prime Minister issued a specific mantra to combat this: “Ruko, Socho, Action Lo” (Stop, Think, Take Action). This should become the immediate mantra at the individual level to prevent the digital arrest scam in India.

<p><b>‘DIGITAL ARREST’</b></p> <p>What to do if someone calls and threatens you with arrest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Stop all further communication and disconnect from the internet immediately</li> <li>➤ Report the incident to local police or cyber crime authorities by calling <b>1930 (24/7 helpline number)</b></li> <li>➤ Contact your bank and freeze accounts or change passwords if necessary</li> <li>➤ Keep evidence like call recordings and screenshots</li> </ul> <p>Source- PTI Graphics</p>	<p><b>‘DIGITAL ARREST’</b></p> <p>How do you avoid getting scammed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Never trust unsolicited calls claiming to be from law enforcement agencies</li> <li>➤ Verify caller's identity by contacting directly through official number</li> </ul>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Do not share details like passport, PAN card, etc. over voice call</li> <li>➤ Install cyber security alert applications</li> </ul> <p>Source- PTI Graphics</p>	<p><b>‘DIGITAL ARREST’</b></p> <p>Steps to take if you're already a victim and have lost money</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Immediately report the transaction and request for a freeze</li> <li>➤ File a complaint with the Cyber Crime Cell (cybercrime.gov.in)</li> <li>➤ Seek help from the police to assist in protecting your assets</li> </ul> <p>➤ Gather all evidence for the authorities: logs, messages, and transaction details</p> <p>Source- PTI Graphics</p>
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Read More- [The Indian Express](#), [The Hindu](#)  
UPSC Syllabus- GS-3 Internal security challenges (Cyber Security)

### Iran Protests – Causes & Consequences – Explained Pointwise

Iran has plunged into another crisis. What began as a localised strike by shopkeepers in Tehran's Grand Bazaar on December 28 has now snowballed into the largest uprising against the Islamic Republic since 1979 Revolution that toppled the Shah regime & brought the Islamic regime to power. The severe repression by the security forces against the protestors has led to killing of over 2500 people. The US President has warned Iran that the US may take military action over the killing of peaceful protestors. The Indian government has also issued the advisory to Indians in Iran to leave the country immediately.



Source: Indian Express

What are the reasons behind the protests?

<p><b>ECONOMIC</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hyperinflation:</b> Annual inflation has consistently exceeded 40-50% in recent years, with food and housing prices soaring even faster. This has utterly eroded purchasing power and savings, pushing millions into poverty.</li> <li>• <b>Unemployment &amp; Underemployment:</b> Official youth unemployment is around 20-25%, but real figures are likely higher, especially among educated youth and women. This creates a massive pool of disillusioned, frustrated young people with little future prospects.</li> <li>• <b>Currency Collapse:</b> The Iranian rial has lost over 90% of its value against the dollar in the past decade. This collapse makes imports prohibitively expensive and destroys real wages.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SOCIAL</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Women's Rights and State-Mandated Morality Laws:</b> The 2026 uprising is built on the social foundation laid by the 2022 Mahsa Amini protests. These protests have moved beyond specific dress code laws to a broader social demand for the dismantling of the theocratic legal system that treats women as second-class citizens.</li> <li>• <b>Youth Frustration:</b> Over 60% of Iran's population is under 30. This young, urban, and connected generation has grown up with access to global culture (via VPNs and social media) but lives under a system with strict social codes and limited political expression.</li> <li>• <b>Ethnic and Religious Minority Grievances:</b> The protests started in the Kurdish region and quickly spread to Baluch, Arab (Khuzestan), and Azeri regions. These groups face cultural repression, economic marginalization, political under-representation, and harsh state crackdowns.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Corruption:</b> Social justice in the country has fallen victim to structural &amp; systemic corruption that has spread from highest levels of power to the lowest layers of the bureaucracy.</li> <li>● <b>Water and Energy Shortages:</b> Chronic mismanagement has led to a severe water crisis and frequent power blackouts. In a resource-rich country, the inability to provide basic utilities has become a symbol of state failure.</li> </ul>
<b>POLITICAL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Theocratic Structure:</b> Iran's political system combines elements of a theocracy and a republic, with ultimate authority vested in the Supreme Leader (Ayatollah Khamenei), who is not elected by popular vote and controls the military, judiciary, and state media. This structure marginalizes the elected government (President and Parliament) on key issues, leading to public frustration with unaccountable power.</li> <li>● <b>Suppression of Dissent:</b> Systematic repression of political opposition, civil society, independent media, and labor unions has left citizens with few legal channels to express discontent. The protests thus become an outlet for pent-up political frustration.</li> <li>● <b>Israel-US Strikes (2025):</b> In mid-2025, a series of military strikes by Israel and the US severely damaged Iran's nuclear and missile infrastructure. This exposed "cracks" in the regime's security, emboldening protesters who saw the state as vulnerable.</li> </ul>
<b>EXTERNAL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>U.S.-Led Sanctions:</b> Severe economic sanctions, particularly those reimposed by the U.S. after its withdrawal from the JCPOA (Iran nuclear deal) in 2018, have crippled Iran's economy. This led to hyperinflation, currency devaluation, unemployment, and shortages of essential goods, fueling public anger.</li> <li>● <b>Global Solidarity Campaigns:</b> Hashtags like #MahsaAmini (2022 protests) trended globally, drawing international attention and moral support. Diaspora communities and activists abroad helped amplify voices from inside Iran.</li> <li>● <b>Strategic Reversals:</b> The fall of the Assad regime in Syria (2024) and the military degradation of Hezbollah and Hamas throughout 2024-2025 have shattered the regime's image of regional dominance.</li> </ul>

What has been the response by major players/stakeholders?

### 1. Iranian Government:

- **Official Narrative:** State media and officials consistently label protests as "riots" instigated by "foreign enemies" (primarily the U.S., Israel, and Saudi Arabia) to undermine national security and stability.

- Security Response: Deployment of security forces (IRGC, Police), mass arrests, internet shutdowns, and harsh judicial measures (including death sentences for some protesters).
- 2. Iranian Civil Society & Protestors:**
  - Sustained Resistance: Despite crackdowns, sporadic protests continue, often adapting to tactics like nighttime chanting, graffiti, and strikes.
  - Broadened Demands: Initial triggers (e.g., hijab enforcement, economic woes) have evolved into calls for systemic change, with slogans like “Woman, Life, Freedom” and explicit rejection of the Supreme Leader.
- 3. International Actors:**
  - United States: Trump has issued a series of “MIGA” (Make Iran Great Again) warnings, stating that if the regime hangs protesters, the U.S. will “come to their rescue.” The U.S. has threatened a 25% tariff on any country that continues to do business with Iran.
  - Russia: Backed Iranian government, blaming the West for destabilization. Strengthened military and economic ties with Tehran amid Ukraine war isolation.
- 4. United Nations:** Independent fact-finding missions established by the Human Rights Council to investigate violations.

What could be the impact of the crisis on the region?

- 1. Economic Disruptions:** The region is critical to global energy (Iran produces 4% of global demand), food, or trade routes (e.g., the Strait of Hormuz (20% of global supply passes through the Strait), Suez Canal), disruptions can spike prices and cause shortages worldwide. Economic collapse can exacerbate poverty, unemployment, and inequality.
- 2. Escalation of Proxy Wars:** Iran supports non-state actors across the region (e.g., Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen, Shia militias in Iraq/Syria). Internal instability or a shift in Iran’s foreign policy could either reduce support (if Iran turns inward) or increase aggression (if hardliners escalate to project strength).
- 3. Regional rivals’ actions:** Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the UAE could see an opportunity to weaken Iran’s strategic position, potentially increasing covert or diplomatic pressure.
- 4. Refugee Crisis:** If violent repression occurs, increased refugee movements could affect neighboring Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iraq.
- 5. Ideological Ripple Effects:** Successful protest movements in Iran could inspire reformists or opposition groups in other regional states, especially where youth frustration and economic grievances are high. Conversely, a harsh crackdown might demoralize democracy movements elsewhere, showing the difficulty of challenging entrenched authoritarian systems.

What could be the consequences of the crisis on India or Indian interests in the region?

- 1. Chabahar Port:** Chabahar is India’s most critical strategic asset in the region, serving as a bypass to Pakistan for trade with Afghanistan and Central Asia. While India secured a 10-year agreement for the Shahid Beheshti terminal in 2024, the U.S. recently revoked a long-standing sanctions exception. India is currently operating on a temporary waiver valid only until April 2026.
- 2. Trade Disruptions:** Iran has historically been one of India’s top markets for agricultural exports, but this trade is currently in a state of suspension. The collapse of the Iranian Rial has made it impossible for Iranian importers to honor contracts. Over ₹2,000 crore in dues to Indian Basmati exporters are currently stuck.

- 3. Energy Security & Inflation:** India has not imported Iranian oil since 2019, but the regional crisis still impacts its energy bill. Instability in the Strait of Hormuz (a chokepoint for 20% of global oil) has led to price volatility. For every \$10 increase in oil prices, India's current account deficit typically widens by billions, driving up domestic fuel costs and inflation.
- 4. Safety of Indian Diaspora:** Escalation could fuel proxy wars in the region, affecting Indian expatriate communities (≈8 million in the Gulf), and raising security concerns for India. India has issued a "Strong Leave Now" advisory for its 10,000+ citizens in Iran (mostly students and pilgrims).
- 5. Afghanistan Impact:** Iran is a key player in Afghanistan. Instability could spill over, affecting India's interests in Afghan stability and development projects.
- 6. Terrorism & Radicalization:** Regional unrest could embolden extremist groups, potentially affecting India's internal security, especially in Kashmir.
- 7. Balancing Act:** India maintains relations with Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. A crisis would force difficult diplomatic balancing, especially if pressured to choose sides. If the crisis involves U.S.-Iran tensions, India may face secondary sanctions pressure, complicating energy and trade ties with Iran.
- 8. China's Role:** China's influence in Iran (via Belt and Road Initiative, strategic partnerships) could grow during a crisis, potentially marginalizing India's regional role.

Read More: [The Indian Express](#)  
UPSC GS-2: International Relations